

The Meanie Club

– Gendered violence and post-punk narratives of love in *Miss Farkku-Suomi* by Kauko Röyhkä and *Dorfpunks* by Rocko Schamoni.

Abstract

This article examines love, relationships, intimacy and gendered violence in fictionalised punk biographies by authors and post-punk recording artists Kauko Röyhkä and Rocko Schamoni. Punk rock's DIY aesthetic emphasises self-fashioning and shock value. Where mainstream impression management, in the sense of Goffman's micro-sociology, aims at hiding one's 'stigma' in the presentation of the self, punk makes the individual's 'stigma' the main feature of self-fashioning. This attitude is at odds with the ways in which the lover, in particular the Barthesian wretched lover, seeks to appear as attractive to the object of their affection. *Miss Farkku-Suomi* ('Miss Denim Finland', 2003) and *Dorfpunks* ('Village Punks', 2004) tell similar stories of transgressive self-fashioning leading to a re-instatement of hegemonic masculinity and heteronormative love narratives. This article contextualises these findings regarding male punk writing by comparing them to the autobiography of female punk musician and writer Viv Albertine.

Keywords

Love, relationships, intimacy, violence, punk, popular music, masculinity.

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1 Introduction

Kauko Röyhkä (*1959 in Valkeakoski, Finland, as Jukka-Pekka Välimaa) and Rocko Schamoni (*1966 in Lütjenburg, Germany, as Tobias Albrecht) are prolific recording artists and writers. In terms of artistic genealogy their books inhabit an aesthetically distinct space informed by punk rock and post-punk. Post-punk refers here to the wide spectrum of popular music from the late 1970s to the early 1980s which was inspired by punk rock and pushed boundaries in all directions such as electronic music, goth, synth pop, ska and new wave. In this article, I examine representations of a male punk youth spent in provincial settings. The love narratives presented in *Miss Farkku-Suomi* ('Miss Denim Finland', 2003)¹ and *Dorfpunks* ('Village Punks', 2004)² will be at the centre of my interpretation. They clearly express the tension between norm and deviation inherent in coming-of-age stories. Particular attention will be paid to the representation of gendered violence which is a remarkable feature of the two books. The rootedness of both oeuvres in punk rock's DIY aesthetic and its emphases on self-fashioning and shock value generates a complex relationship between emotional authenticity and outlandish imagination.

The punk aesthetic is characterised by turning a person's 'stigma', which conventionally would be disguised, into the main feature of impression management.³ Where mainstream aesthetics gloss over characteristics of a person which are perceived as less desirable (such as poverty or 'ugliness'), punk aesthetics

¹ Kauko, Röyhkä, *Miss Farkku-Suomi* (Helsinki: Like, 2007). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

² Rocko Schamoni, *Dorfpunks* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 2007). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

³ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

highlight these characteristics. To be perceived as inappropriate, tasteless and even disgusting is a badge of honour for a punk (DP 107, 138, 170; MFS 157). However, punks, too, seek love and intimacy, which is where normative behaviour comes back into play. Stigma management is essential for the lover, especially the Barthesian wretched lover, as they will seek to present themselves as attractive to potential love interests.⁴

My main question for both books is how the narratives negotiate the objectives of punk and post-punk aesthetics, which are focussed on self-fashioning, shock value, disgust and displays of indifference, in relation to the tactics of seeking and finding love and intimacy, which are more concerned with being perceived as attractive and even pleasant. This contradiction is to be understood in a wider context of the complex relationships between taste, disgust, presentation of the self, and love. Good taste, in the influential theory of Bourdieu, is the hallmark of the bourgeoisie. Working-class taste in a society dominated by the bourgeoisie is at best a pastiche and at worst disgusting to the educated observer.⁵ Punk aesthetics are not a working-class aesthetic as such. Mixed in its class-base, punk aesthetics provided young people of mostly white backgrounds with ways of distinguishing themselves by alienating authorities, teachers and parents of all classes. Shouted, aggressive lyrics, distorted guitars, shambolic rhythm sections, 'gobbing',⁶ torn and soiled

⁴ Michael Gratzke, 'Love is what People say it is. Performativity and Narrativity in Critical Love Studies', *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, 6 (2017)

<http://jprstudies.org/2017/04/love-is-what-people-say-it-is-performativity-and-narrativity-in-critical-love-studiesby-michael-gratzke/> [accessed 21 June 2018]

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁶ Spitting as expression of rejection or appreciation.

clothes, horror make-up, and 'bad' hair-dos all serve the same purpose of signalling fundamental opposition. Punk proactively solicited the disgust one may feel experiencing the taste of other social groups. Before becoming a fashion and youth culture based on shared identity markers, punk was anti-taste by deliberately being distasteful or disgusting.

In cultural terms, the disgusting is the opposite of good taste. Punk, however, uses the disgusting in the place of good taste. This leads to a cultural field in which good taste and bad taste become interchangeable. Punk, therefore, undermines the notion of taste. Bad taste, which is perceived as good, is a feature punk shares with camp. Susan Sontag, in her *Notes on Camp*, states that camp is characterised by 'artifice and exaggeration' as well as 'sympathy modified by revulsion'.⁷ She compares this to the representation of violence in modern art, naming amongst others Artaud and Kafka.⁸ Where avant-garde art plays out the tension of morals and aesthetics, camp chooses to look at the world purely in terms of aesthetics. Sontag concludes that camp does not simply reverse the good/bad dichotomy of taste, it leaves it behind thus opening up the mode of finding the good taste in bad taste.⁹ These parallels between punk theory and camp theory are obvious.

Punk and camp styles likewise have much in common. They favour form over function, they are excessive and theatrical which is expressed in over-the-top ornament and customisation. However, mainstream punk is often associated with displays of hypermasculinity which stand in marked contrast to camp styles.

⁷ Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', in *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage 2010), p. 275-292, (pp. 275, 276).

⁸ Sontag, *Notes*, p, 287.

⁹ Sontag, *Notes*, p, 292.

Dorfpunks engages with issues of hypermasculinity in its discussions of excesses of violence. *Miss Farkku-Suomi* is more concerned with sexual transgressions. These representations could be read as distant echoes of Sontag's claim that Artaud and Kafka are linked to camp. However, the largely realistic setting of the two books invites further investigation in a less abstract fashion which we will undertake below. In order further to highlight the masculine character of the experiences and representations of Røyhkä's and Schamoni's central characters, I will contextualise my findings in a brief reading of *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys* (2014),¹⁰ the autobiography of punk musician and writer Viv Albertine whose perspective differs markedly for two reasons: she is a woman, and she was involved in the metropolitan inception of punk in London in the 1970s. The comparison will reveal that displays of indifference as well as solicitation of disgust are shared characteristics between male and female punk youth in the period. Romance is equally fraught for this female punk who at times dismisses the idea altogether and at other times indulges in complicated and intense relationships with charismatic men. Clear differences arise in the relationship between violence and the female punk experience. Viv is the target of neglectful, violent and sexually violent behaviour rather than the perpetrator. Equally, the meanness cultivated by Røyhkä's and Schamoni's characters is not present in the character of Viv but in her close friend Sid Vicious.

¹⁰ Viv Albertine, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys, Boys* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Before we engage with close readings and narratological analysis of the three books, the following section introduces Røyhkä and Schamoni in their public personas, which are to be understood as outcomes of creative self-fashioning and, therefore, part of their respective oeuvre.

2 Biographies, works and public personas

Røyhkä has long courted controversy,¹¹ for example by claiming to be Satanist,¹² or recently by criticising the Finnish #MeToo debate.¹³ As a natural dissenter, Røyhkä suspects that any consensus is a conspiracy to impose a single view. This attitude can be traced back to the zine *Tilt-Zeitung* to which Røyhkä contributed in 1979-80. In the third issue, he describes the attitude of his reformed band as more obnoxious ('vittumaisempi', literally 'more cunt') than before.¹⁴ The band's name is *Narttu* (Bitch). In the novel, this is changed to *Torttu* (tart in the sense of baked goods or female genitalia, MFS 212). The zine itself is mentioned as well (MFS 200). The *Tilt-*

¹¹ Kauko Røyhkä (virallinen), Facebook posts on 20 March, 21 March, 22 March, 26 March 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/Kauko-R%C3%B6yhk%C3%A4-virallinen-160605993987116/> [accessed 21 June 2018]

¹² Mikko Numminen, 'Mies jonka maine on pilalla', *Ylioppilaslehti*, 1997 <http://ylioppilaslehti.fi/1997/10/mies-jonka-maine-on-pilalla/> [accessed 21 June 2018]

¹³ Saku Schildt, 'Kauko Røyhkä ottaa kantaa Aku Louhimies -kohuun', *Soundi*, 20 March 2018 <https://www.soundi.fi/uutiset/kauko-royhka-ottaa-kantaa-aku-louhimies-kohuun-oligo-aivan-pakko-tuoda-asia-julkisuuteen-ja-koko-kansan-retosteltavaksi/> [accessed 21 June 2018]; Leena Ylimutka, 'Kauko Røyhkä puolustaa Aku Louhimiestä', *Iltalehti*, 21 March 2018 https://www.iltalehti.fi/viihdeuutiset/201803212200826221_vd.shtml [accessed 21 June 2018]; Aapo Siippainen, 'Jörn Donner ja Kauko Røyhkä ottavat kantaa Louhimies-kohuun', *Helsingin Uutiset*, 21 March 2018 <https://www.helsingin uutiset.fi/artikkeli/621089-jorn-donner-ja-kauko-royhka-ottavat-kantaa-louhimies-kohuun-jos-nainen-sanoo-ei-se> [accessed 21 June 2018]; Kalle Kinnunen, 'Muistatko kun olit mies, Kauko Røyhkä', *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 21 March 2018 <https://suomenkuvalehti.fi/kuvien-takaa/muistatko-kun-olit-mies-kauko-royhka/?shared=4416-fd2cebba-999> [accessed 21 June 2018]

¹⁴ Taina Tampax, 'Hjälp! Narttu onkin keskiluokkalainen paskabändi', *Tilt-Zeitung* 3 (1980), 36-38 (p. 37) <http://oranssi.net/pienlehdet/lehdet/output-62.pdf> [accessed 21 June 2018]

Zeitung interview is attributed to a Taina Tampax who may have inspired the character Anki in *Miss Farkku-Suomi*.¹⁵ Taina expresses her anger at having to interview a band who are not punk but 'shit' and 'middle-class'.¹⁶ The accusation of being middle-class echoes with Røyhkä's first interview on television which shows him dressed in a new-wave skinny suit expressing 'middle-class' opposition to mainstream rock.¹⁷ This is an example of impression management, as Røyhkä was brought up by his mother in modest circumstances.¹⁸ The suit, the arrogance and the term 'middle class' intend to provoke a reaction. The lyrics of the track 'Steppailen' (I step dance) on Røyhkä's eponymous debut album lists the people who will be aggrieved when they see the poetic 'I' step dance: mothers, punks, people in leather jackets, politicised young people and disco freaks.¹⁹

In another zine article, Røyhkä explains ironically which types of men are cool in 1980. They are either well dressed like David Bowie and play with ambiguity (but only to pick up girls), or they are more overtly masculine like Iggy Pop.²⁰ Vælde and his male friend Sasu mark the beginning of their friendship by kissing in public because they lack the physical presence of Iggy Pop (MFS 104-6). This choice is part

¹⁵ Røyhkä thinks the interviewer was Bamse (Martina Torppa), RukiVehr's (Seppo Saarela's) girlfriend, which would match with the couple Anki and Sasu in the novel. *Facebook* message by Røyhkä to the author, received 18 March 2018.

¹⁶ The title cited in footnote 14 translates as: Help! Narttu really is a middle-class shit band.

¹⁷ Jukka Lindfors, 'Røyhkeä Røyhkä vm/1980', *Yle Elävä Arkisto*
<https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2006/12/22/royhkea-royhka-vm1980> [accessed 21 June 2018]

¹⁸ Olli Kangassalo, 'Kauko Røyhkä, kaduttaako olla Kauko Røyhkä?', *Yle Areena*
<https://areena.yle.fi/1-3725534> [accessed 21 June 2018]

¹⁹ Kauko Røyhkä, 'Steppailen' (lyrics), *LyricWiki*
http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/Kauko_R%C3%B6yhk%C3%A4:Steppailen [accessed 21 June 2018]

²⁰ Kauko Røyhkä, 'Mies 1980 eli Kuinka isketään rotupeppua nuorisoravintolassa', *Tilt-Zeitung* 3 (1980), 20-22. <http://oranssi.net/pienlehdet/lehdet/output-62.pdf> [accessed 21 June 2018]

of their strategy to be as controversial as possible. Vælde has the stigmas of being fatherless and poor (MFS 58, 143, 297), overweight (MFS 22, 24, 28, 45, 51, 57, 62, 70, 234, 263, 274) and artsy (MFS 7, 13, 27) to manage.

Kauko Röyhkä's public persona is set up for notoriety but also locks him into a perception of being an incorrigible relic.²¹ There is, however, a different way of reading his books which we will give some credit in this analysis. His first novel, *Tien laidalla Waterloo* ('By the side of the road Waterloo', 1980), received praise from iconic feminist writer Rosa Liksom for its unflinching honesty, accomplished style, and the use of surprising flights of fantasy.²² The main character Mara returns frequently in his reflections to his past relationship with Hannele whom he affectionately (!) calls Elukka (animal, beast). It takes them a week to break up. The process starts with a trivial argument and Mara 'not being particularly bothered' to make up ('minua nyt ei erityisemmin huvittanut', 35, emphasis on *huvi* (fun) mine)²³ because he has been in a bad mood all week. Hannele then crosses an invisible line by visiting Mara's home thus exposing his unspoken stigma. His mother's insistence on being introduced angers Mara who swears at her. He manhandles Hannele out of the door and takes her for a walk to the river, crossing a railway bridge on foot. On the other side he tells her casually ('ihan huvin vuoksi', just for fun, 36, emphasis on *huvi* (fun) mine) that their 'story' ('tarina') is over. Subsequently, when Mara sees

²¹ Tuomas Karemo, 'Kauko Röyhkä ja romaani Tien laidalla Waterloo', *YLE Arena* <https://areena.yle.fi/1-3912143> [accessed 21 June 2018]

²² Karemo, 'Kauko Röyhkä', *YLE Arena*.

²³ The verb 'huvittaa' can be translated as 'to entertain or 'to amuse'. It also denotes 'being in the mood' for something. Its root is 'huvi' (fun). Mara is in this quote 'not in the mood' to make up with Hannele. 'Huvi' also features in the next passage.

Hannele around town, he is filled with regret, but he is not prepared to let his guard down. Therefore, he projects indifference.

This account of Mara being rude to his mother and mean to his girlfriend can be understood as an endorsement of this behaviour or an honest account of the emotions and expressions of a young man. For decades Røyhkä's writing has been hovering with skill and consistency between the deliberate provocation of *Tilt-Zeitung* and the stripped-down honesty of *Tien laidalla Waterloo*. Within the fictional world of *Miss Farkku-Suomi*, Vælde works on his debut novel whose content appears to be a combination of *Tien laidalla Waterloo* and the actual *Miss Farkku-Suomi* (MFS 240-3). This observation strengthens the interpretation that Røyhkä's aesthetic universe is consistent. In a recent sequel to *Miss Farkku-Suomi* called *Poika Mancini* ('Boy Mancini', 2013) Vælde returns to Oulu. The main character Mancini is a heightened version of a charismatic young singer-songwriter, whereas Vælde has established himself in Helsinki's music scene. In combination the novels offer two versions of a musical youth: you eventually grow up (Vælde) or you die young (Mancini).

Schamoni's early years are not as well documented. His first publication, the novel *Risiko des Ruhms* ('Risk of fame', 2000) came out twenty years after Røyhkä's debut.²⁴ Schamoni's first record is the 1987 single *Liebe kann man sich nicht kaufen* ('You cannot buy love', Weserlabel).²⁵ This fun-punk ditty combines a faux naïve

²⁴ Rocko Schamoni, *Das Risiko des Ruhms* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 2000) and in 2007 reissued as 'Director's Cut'.

²⁵ Rocko Schamoni, *Liebe kann man sich nicht kaufen* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVg4FQA0bJQ> [accessed 22 June 2018]; Weserland - Label, *Diskographie* <http://www.weserlabel.de/diskographie/> [accessed 22 June 2018].

singer-songwriter tone with anti-capitalist lyrics. The song title is mentioned in *Dorfpunks*, the narrative of which ends in 1986 (DP 197). Around the same time, the narrator claims, Roddy started writing down nonsensical everyday conversations which he would later turn into radio plays (DP 199). This is a reference to Studio Braun (Rocko Schamoni, Jacques Palminger, Heinz Strunk) who since 1998 have been recording and performing spoken word, music and radio plays which are often based on prank phone calls. In 2012 they released a mockumentary film about an electro-pop group called Fraktus. They have also toured as Fraktus. Where Røyhkä has developed a single public persona, Schamoni has been experimenting with multiple versions of himself such as King Rocko Schamoni, the left-field crooner, as Bims Brohm, Mike Strecker, Georgie Snyder and 14 Euro (all for Studio Braun) and most recently as an intellectual who engages in literary correspondences.²⁶

Deception and misdirection are key to Schamoni's engagement with the public and the media. He mocks expectations by over-affirming them in a deliberately amateurish fashion which sends the message: My art looks 'rubbish' because I am 'recycling' your 'ugliness' (DP 182). A look at the paratexts of *Dorfpunks* and its predecessor *Risiko des Ruhms* confirms Schamoni's careful use of personas. The cover of *Dorfpunks* shows a young man, possibly Schamoni, who has fallen asleep wearing a children's costume cowboy hat and a red and white striped t-shirt. An electric guitar is leaning against him. This is set against wood-effect wallpaper we may associate with a petty-bourgeois home. On the back cover, the author apologises for the revelatory character of the book. *Risiko des Ruhms* offers an obviously fabricated

²⁶ Christoph Grisseemann, Rocko Schamoni, *Ich will nicht schuld sein an deinem Niedergang. Ein moderner Briefwechsel* (München: Piper 2016).

(auto-) biography of the narrator and the wider 'Hamburger Schule' music scene.²⁷ The paratexts of the 2007 version comprise two pictures of the author. On the front cover, Schamoni wears a dinner suit and is apparently getting married to a mannequin in a wedding dress. On the back cover, he poses in a completely white ensemble holding a pistol which resembles his styling in the music video to 'Der Mond' (1999).²⁸ The text on the back cover plays with conventional reader expectations: 'dieser knallharte Tatsachenroman' ('this hard-hitting novel based on facts'), 'Ereignisdichte' ('density of events'), 'schockierende Memoiren' ('shocking memoirs'). This satirical use of marketing language chimes with Schamoni's other artistic outputs as a singer, actor and Studio-Braun prankster. In summary, in these two novels Schamoni over-affirms coming-of-age stories. Readers of *Risiko des Ruhms* understand this picking up *Dorfpunks*.

Any analysis of Schamoni's writing needs to take this layered impression management into account: the autobiographical detail, which appears to have been incorporated in *Dorfpunks*, is hard to verify independently.²⁹ This technique is mirrored in the narrated world of *Dorfpunks*: Roddy Dangerblood makes up stories for his zine about bands he has never seen and some of which never existed (DP 143-4).³⁰ While Røyhkä verifiably has punk/new-wave credentials, Schamoni may have fabricated his to some extent which would be completely in line with the DIY ethos

²⁷ Schamoni, *Risiko*, p. 171-191.

²⁸ Rocko Schamoni, *Der Mond* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLZBK3807iE> [accessed 22 June 2018].

²⁹ Katharina Derlin, *Es muss eine Ambivalenz und ein Bruch her. Formen und Funktionen der Selbstinszenierung bei Rocko Schamoni* (Baden-Baden: Tectum, 2014). p. 26-27, 76 passim. André Menke, *Pop, Literatur und Autorschaft. Literarische Strategien und Inszenierungen bei Wolfgang Welt, Rocko Schamoni und Rafael Horzon* (München: iudicium, 2016), p. 202.

³⁰ So do Vælde and Sasu (MFS 200).

of early punk. Consequently, we can safely assume that the 'Club der Gemeinen' (Meanie Club, DP 186-7) never existed outside the fictional world of Schamoni's *Dorfpunks*.³¹ The narrator claims that he founded it with Campino, a real-world punk rocker of Tote-Hosen fame. To obtain membership one had to do something mean every day. The examples given are childish (DP 186-7). Still, positive reference to being mean is a common trait between Schamoni's and Röyhkä's characters.

3 Context: punk-rock narratives in popular literature

The two books by male authors discussed here present narratives of love in the context of fictionalised post-punk biographies of male teenagers from the perspective of middle-aged male authors. Schamoni employs a middle-aged narrator, whereas Röyhkä's novel is written, apart from the final chapter, from the perspective of the young protagonist. The books reveal many similarities, not the least that neither the protagonists nor the authors would be comfortable with being reduced to the label 'punk'. Röyhkä and his character Vælde in *Miss Farkku-Suomi* find inspiration in proto-punk music (Lou Reed, Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, New York Dolls) which they discover at the time, when punk comes to northern Finland. He is not that impressed with punk rock from the UK (MFS 150, 169). Vælde is the actual nick name of young Jukka-Pekka Välimaa.³² Schamoni's young alter ego Roddy Dangerblood starts out as a teenage hard rocker (DP 19, 27:

³¹ However, in this interview Schamoni claims the 'Klub der Gemeinen' did exist: Frederick Jötten, *Ich sage gerne peinliche Sachen über mich* http://www.frederik-jotetten.de/interviews_sch.htm [accessed 22 June 2018].

³² Olli Kangassalo, 'Kauko Röyhkä, kaduttaako olla Kauko Röyhkä?', *Yle Areena* <https://areena.yle.fi/1-3725534> [accessed 21 June 2018]

‘ideal soundtrack for becoming a man’), moves through UK-inspired punk (DP 39, 48, 55), and finally creates a niche for himself by repurposing easy-listening music. In the 1980s, this would have alienated punk friends and liberal parents alike, although it would have been broadly compatible with *Neue Deutsche Welle*, an umbrella term to describe a wide range of music in the early 1980s from new wave with German lyrics to neo-*schlager*.³³

Röyhkä and Schamoni extensively employ irony, sarcasm and surrealist imagination in texts which transcend the specifics of their respective provincial setting in Oulu and Lütjenburg. There are different plausible ways of contextualising Kauko Röyhkä’s and Rocko Schamoni’s books. In this section, I start by situating *Miss Farkku-Suomi* and *Dorfpunks* in post-2000 *popliteratur* (‘pop literature’) before proposing an alternative context in post-punk writing in the next section. *Popliteratur* is an umbrella term used in German literary criticism to denote 1960s literature which was inspired by the beatnik generation, or a 1990s trend of ostentatiously consumerist representation which served as an antidote to then mainstream *littérature engagée*, or a loose grouping of diverse authors inspired by or coming from techno or indie rock of the 1990s. In German academic discourse, Nick Hornby is frequently cited as the inspiration for *popliteratur* since the 1990s.³⁴ However, a better comparison for *Dorfpunks* and *Miss Farkku-Suomi* is Mikael Niemi’s *Populärmusik från*

³³ Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende deine Jugend. Ein Doku-Roman über den deutschen Punk und New Wave* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 327.

³⁴ Barry J. Faulk, ‘Love and lists in Nick Hornby’s High Fidelity’, *Cultural critique* 66 (2007), 153-176; Mikko Keskinen, ‘Single, Long-Playing, and Compilation: The Formats of Audio and Amorousness in Nick Hornby’s High Fidelity’, *Critique* 47 (2005), 3-21. Matthias Mertens, ‘Robbery, assault and battery. Christian Kracht, Benjamin von Stuckrad Barre und ihre mutmaßlichen Vorbilder Bret Easton Ellis und Nick Hornby’, in *Pop-Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Jürgen Schäfer, *Text & Kritik Sonderband* (2003), 201-217.

Vittula (Popular Music from Vittula, 2000). Niemi's novel, is set in the Swedish village of Pajala in the 1960s. The narrative is characterised by sarcasm and an over-affirmation of otherness.³⁵ The stigma of being a Finnish speaker from the impoverished far north of the country, combined with the austere Laestadian Protestantism of the region, fuels the book's imaginary. The veneer of civil Swedish society is constantly under threat from quasi-tribal rituals including sauna competitions, heavy teenage drinking, corporal punishment and historic blood feuds. In this book, the people of the Torne River Valley inhabit a liminal space which is neither properly Sweden nor properly Finland. A provincial setting is always problematic, as it invites more or less sophisticated forms of (self-) mythologisation and (self-) orientalisation which resemble colonial settings. The tourism researcher Juha Ridanpää, who travelled to the actual Pajala, describes Niemi's literary Pajala as a 'state of mind' and playing field for the author's surrealist imagination rather than a representation of the geographical location.³⁶ Matthias Langheiter-Tutschek argues that provincial characters such as those in *Populärmusik från Vittula* exercise colonial mimicry in the sense of Homi Bhabha's theory. He likens the surplus (or overactive imagination) of mimicry to the excess of puberty as depicted in Niemi's narrative.³⁷ According to Langheiter-Tutschek, provincial mimicry and the pubescent mind effectively do the same thing: they produce excessive narratives. However, as puberty is a universal anthropological

³⁵ Juha Ridanpää, 'Imagining and re-narrating regional identities', *Nordia Geographical Publications*, 44:4 (2015), 65–73.

³⁶ Juha Ridanpää, 'Pajala as a literary place: in the readings and footsteps of Mikael Niemi', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 9:2 (2011), 103-117 (p. 114).

³⁷ Matthias Langheiter-Tutschek, 'Die Provinz als Kategorie in Mikael Niemis Roman *Populärmusik från Vittula*', *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* 25 (2004), 199-215 (pp. 208, 212).

feature of the human lifespan, readers who are not familiar with the specifics of the exoticised provincial setting can still be expected to relate to the narrative through their own experience of puberty. In this sense, Pajala, Oulu and Lütjenburg stand for any non-metropolitan setting, as there is an inner province or surrealist state of mind to many puberty narratives which is an expression of feeling alienated and marginalised.

Langheiter-Tutschek's interpretation is helpful in explaining why readers easily relate to coming-of-age stories. However, the experience of growing up as part of an ethnic or linguistic minority community is not present in the novels discussed in this article. Vælde's and Roddy's stigmas are about class; so are Viv's. Set in Finland and Germany respectively,³⁸ the cultural clashes of *Miss Farkku-Suomi* and *Dorfpunks* are fuelled by a radical non-conformism, which is not just rock and pop, but rather punk rock. Röyhkä describes life in Oulu in the 1970s as a choice between bourgeois, Christian respectability and an established Communist cultural scene which equally demands that people adhere to rigid beliefs and prescribed behaviours. Finland in this period was a western country and a parliamentary democracy but it was heavily dependent on the good will of its mighty Soviet neighbours. This resulted, according to Röyhkä, in a social and cultural stalemate, an imperative not to rock the boat.³⁹ Vælde's decision to focus on his self-fashioning should be read as an act of rebellion against a forced choice between two established modes of presentation. He identifies with the beatniks and outcasts of the 1960s in

³⁸ Dorfpunks calls the place Schmalenstedt but Schamoni in public readings uses Lütjenburg. Also the film adaption was (partly) filmed in Lütjenburg.

³⁹ Kauko Röyhkä interview by Periferia Productions (2007)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QyDhlZOHQI> [accessed 22 June 2018]

the USA. His 1960s clothing style and musical tastes are based on a rejection of the 1970s which coincides with punk but ushers in new wave.

In Schamoni's *Dorfpunks*, the political and cultural tensions of the 1980s are largely absent. Roddy and his friends are described as astoundingly ignorant of the outside world. There is an element of the picaresque fool to Roddy and later to Michael Sonntag, an older version of Roddy living in Hamburg, who is the main character in a series of books published between 2007 and 2016.⁴⁰ When Roddy and his punk friends go on a school trip to England and encounter a group of skinheads, it is claimed, they are not aware of any imminent danger (DP 63). Instead the young punks of Lütjenburg are in conflict with the customary agents of respectability: parents, teachers and police.

Roddy's stigma is not that he is provincial but that he is not provincial enough. The family moves to a small village outside Lütjenburg where Roddy sticks out as the son of teachers rather than farmers. He believes that he needs to appear 'hard' and to act violently to escape bullying and beatings (DP 12-8). This adopted hardness is expressed subsequently in looking wild and smelling bad. This image develops into something which is recognisable as punk. However, as 'ignorant' provincial punks Roddy and his friends create their own styles (DP 69, 116, 182). The punks from the nearby towns of Kiel and Eutin fit in better with established visual and musical codes of punk (DP 164).

4 'Violence is our money and we would like to settle the bill please.'

⁴⁰ Rocko Schamoni, *Sternstunden der Bedeutungslosigkeit* (Cologne: DuMont 2007), *Tag der geschlossenen Tür* (Munich: Piper 2011), *Fünf Löcher im Himmel* (Munich: Piper 2016).

A further comparison for *Dorfpunks* and *Miss Farkku Suomi* can be found in Irvine Welsh's writing, which, too, is rooted in punk literature, although the author's biographical punk credentials may also be fictitious.⁴¹ Welsh presents a popular version of what has been practised by punk writers such as Kathy Acker, Richard Hell and notably Stewart Home. Home marks an extreme of punk-related writing. Mixing pulp fiction brimming with sex and violence, extreme-left political discourse and avant-garde art manifestos into non-linear anti-novels, he has created a prankster-author persona which refracts into a long series of disgusting literary protagonists.

Punk counter-culture was infused with violence. Being visible as a punk also put you at risk of being attacked in the street. The interview-based 'Doku-Roman' *Verschwende deine Jugend* ('Waste your youth', 2001) by Jürgen Teipel paints a vivid picture of the 1980s in Germany with eight separate descriptions of extreme violence (102-3, 128-9, 135, 139-40, 204-5, 241, 297). Extrabreit singer Kai Havaii contributes in his 'Rock 'n' Roll-Roman aus der Provinz' *Hart wie Marmelade* ('Tough like jam', 2008) a chapter on the band's New Year's Eve concert 1979 which descends from a food fight via deliberately urinating on people to a mass brawl.⁴² *Dorfpunks* describes left-wing militants attacking a small group of neo-Nazis (Berlin, DP 109-110); a punk being beaten up by skinheads (Berlin, DP 110); Nazi punks chasing Roddy and his friends (Hamburg, DP 121-2); and multiple altercations between punks, 'Bauern'

⁴¹ Ron Mackay, 'Would the real Irvine Welsh shoot up?', *The Observer*, 4 February 1996. <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/1996/feb/04/featuresreview.review> [accessed 9 March 2018].

⁴² Kai Havaii, *Hart wie Marmelade. Ein Rock'n'Roll-Roman aus der Provinz* (Berlin: Aufbau 2008).

('farmers' or countryside folk), and destitute alcoholics at the market square in Lütjenburg (DP 68-74). The local nightclub is the site of the most disturbing violent excesses culminating in a sustained attack by a motorcycle gang (DP 83-9):

Drinne brachen alle Dämme, eine Gewaltorgie began, wie sie der Laden noch nicht erlebt hatte. Auf dem Klo wurden Frauen vergewaltigt, Männer blutig und ohnmächtig geschlagen, ein Rocker wollte aus dem Exzess aussteigen, weswegen die anderen seine Kutte auf der Tanzfläche verbrannten und ihn halb umbrachten. (DP 88)⁴³

Violence in *Dorfpunks* is pervasive. Boys improvise weapons and go to battle against each other (DP 12-8); they terrorise people who terrorise them (DP 24, 28); they are cruel towards farm animals (DP 25) and domestic animals (DP 54, 141); they poach in the woods (DP 159-62). They are constantly cut and bruised which they consider a sign of valour (DP 18, 129). The most aggressive Lütjenburg punk, Honk, seeks out violence and enjoys, therefore, everybody's respect (DP 154). There is clear tension between young Roddy's obvious enjoyment of violence and the sanctimonious hindsight of the middle-aged narrator, who attributes this fetishization of violence to a lack of initiation rites for boys in the secular West (DP 26, 35).

However, it should not be overlooked that Roddy is a loser; he describes himself as such (DP 57, 80). In the chapter 'Gewalt ist unser Geld, und wir wollen gerne zahlen' ('Violence is our money, and we would like to settle the bill please'), Roddy is beaten up by a man nick-named Klodeckel ('loo lid'). Roddy vows to wait

⁴³ Inside all dams broke, an orgy of violence commenced on a scale the club had never seen before. Women were raped in the toilets, men were beaten to a pulp, a biker tried to distance himself from the excess, and consequently the others burned his colours on the dance floor and beat him until he was half-dead.

for revenge until Klodeckel becomes old and helpless (DP 70). In a public reading of this chapter, which is available on YouTube, Schamoni digresses from the text and speculates the right time for revenge may never come; that Klodeckel is invincible; that only death can beat Klodeckel.⁴⁴ This is a good example of self-mythologisation as a loser.

Miss Farkku-Suomi explores a different attitude towards violence which to an extent splits imagination from practice within the narrated world. Vælde is mostly worried about being beaten up. His acquired hard attitude serves as a deterrent to bullies and to attract girls who – Vælde thinks – like tough boys. This is stigma management for a young man who feels overweight and overlooked. Vælde muses: ‘Väkivaltaisuus on pelottava piire, jota on kuitenkin pakko kunnioittaa. Väkivaltaisen tyyppin kanssa on parempi pysyä väleissä, mutta samalla sitä kannattaa karttaa.’ (MFS 132)⁴⁵ When threatened, Vælde opts for a maximally violent pre-emptive strike, so that he can get a head start running away (MFS 13). His deep-seated fear of violence is expressed in a surreal scene in which violence is externalised: he is chased by the devil who then grows wings, hunts down the woman Vælde desires, and rips her flesh apart (MFS 162). In most of the novel, this overactive imagination of puberty is expressed in an obsessive over-analysis of people’s behaviour which Vælde perceives to be driven by a desire to wield power or to be close to the powerful in school, in Oulu, and in society.

⁴⁴ Rocko Schamoni, *Gewalt ist unser Geld und wir wollen gerne zahlen*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8q-3heGCHY> [accessed 22 June 2018]

⁴⁵ A violent disposition is a frightening trait which you nevertheless have to respect. It is better to be on good terms with a violent bloke, but at the same time it pays to keep your distance.

Välde differs further from Roddy in his fascination with sexual deviance. He is heavily influenced by Lou Reed's imaginary such as representations of prostitution, drug use and transgressive sex. His main love interest is Pirjo, nicknamed Pike. She is a talented singer, studies jazz dance, and wins a competition to become Miss Denim Finland. To Välde, she is perfect and out of his league. Her being unavailable leads to Välde starting two sexual relationships in parallel: one with Kara, who is nearly thirty and a globetrotting artist, and one with Katja, Pike's thirteen-year-old sister. Katja confirms in *Miss Farkku-Suomi* and *Poika Mancini* that Välde was a demanding boyfriend, and that she engaged in sex practices for which she lacked maturity such as being tied up and beaten with a strap (MFS 298, PM117). The age difference between Välde and Katja is discussed repeatedly in the novel. Although Välde has doubts whether a relationship would be viable and suitable (MFS 237-8, 246, 250-1, 254), he does not do much to stop Katja from expressing her love for him (MFS 247) physically and sexually (MFS 253, 268). Katja initiates all early encounters including the first time they have penetrative sex which turns out disastrously, as Katja's period has begun and the bed gets covered in blood like a crime scene (MFS 275). Afterwards Katja becomes more confident in demanding a relationship and boyfriend behaviours from Välde (MFS 278). Kara encourages Välde to pursue a relationship with Katja because their age difference is only small (MFS 279). Välde also feels that Pike and Katja are 'conspiring' against him to tie him to Katja rather than allowing him to carry on hoping for Pike's attention (MFS 279). Having experienced first success as a singer, Välde drops out of school and openly

has relationships with Kara and Katja in parallel (MFS 294). His libertinage seems complete.

Obviously, the relationship between Vælde and Katja poses questions about consent. The way in which Katja, Kara and later Pike seem to encourage Vælde may be understood as an excuse and a cover-up for statutory rape. Finland does not have a close-in-age exemption to the age of consent.⁴⁶

Röyhkä's and Schamoni's young alter egos choose to appear hard, mean and disgusting. They flirt with excesses of violence (and in Vælde's case sexual transgression) because it fits the tough image they have built up. Being tough generates respect: when Vælde has his first big gig at a music festival, the audience are won over by the good songs and the way in which Vælde deals with hecklers. In response men in the audience start shouting that Vælde is a 'rankka jätkä' (hard or intense bloke), that his music is 'rankka' and the performance, too (MFS 283-7).

Where violence goes too far for the protagonists, it is projected onto outside forces of evil such the biker gang in *Dorfpunks* and the devil in *Miss Farkku-Suomi*, or onto other characters as in the novel *Avec* (2006). Another technique Röyhkä uses is to insert short stories of a violent nature into his novels, sometimes with little explanation such as in *Tien laidalla Waterloo* (1980), *Silvia* (1997) and *Job* (2007).

5 Punk or love?

⁴⁶ *Police in Finland*

http://poliisi.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/intermin/embeds/polisiwwwstructure/43865_POL_TP_esite_ENG_26.1_FINAL.pdf?d4bc70320a27d388 [accessed 22 June 2018]

In terms of love narratives, *Dorfpunks* and *Miss-Farkku-Suomi* are to a large extent concerned with the classic trope of unobtainable, idealised female love interests. Vælde is, in spite of his constant scheming, single-minded about the object of his true affection. He presents as wilfully mean and indifferent, but he is not as resilient as he likes to project in his impression management. At the end of *Miss Farkku-Suomi*, he is deeply shaken when he finds out that Pike, who has died in a coach crash, had always loved him (MFS 303). Roddy's affection is more fleeting and for a long time he prefers the company of his friends over intimacy with a girl. Towards the end of *Dorfpunks*, he finds love and experiences freedom (DP 201). There is, however, a mock poetic epilogue which alludes in dark tones to the fact that the first-person narrator will have lost his youth and his love (DP 203).

The representation of intimacy and sexual relationships in *Dorfpunks* is split into three biographical phases: pubescent crushes, punk indifference, and first attempts at being in love. The first period features Inka, a hippie lodger who is half-Guatemalan and claims to be part of the band Kraftwerk's friendship networks (DP 20); Celine, 'the Princess of Love' (DP 31), who visits Lütjenburg at weekends with her well-to-do parents; and Sibylle, 'the Queen of the Disco Planet' (DP 36). With Celine Roddy fails to move from friendship to romantic love. With Sibylle, who is sexually liberated, Roddy fails to make any impression. In the next phase, the clique of punks in Lütjenburg, the 'Drop-Out Gang' (DP 55), become Roddy's new family, help him cope with depression and frequent thoughts of suicide. Sexuality is a burden to them. The boys who secretly admire fashionable girls with long hair ('Poppermädchen mit langen Haaren'), project indifference to appear untouchable

(DP 78-9). When some girls match Roddy with Evelyn, who has some sexual experience, Roddy 'fails' (DP 80). This scene is followed with an 'exciting rendezvous with loneliness' (DP 81) which sees Roddy masturbate in the middle of a country road, eyes closed, and the engine noise of a car approaching. The release of orgasm is here linked to the imagined release of suicide. With Jennifer Roddy experiences the best kiss ever in full moon light (DP 148) but the relationship does not develop because emotionally he keeps his distance (DP 189-90).

Finally, Roddy falls in love with Maria and starts to prioritise their relationship over spending time with his punk friends. They initially talk about love and sex which leads to Roddy's next kiss under a full moon (DP 191). He eventually chooses between punk and love which appear mutually exclusive:

Was hast du über die anderen gedacht, als die sich auf Liebe einließen? War das jetzt die Entscheidung? Punk oder Liebe? Durfte ich mich für die Liebe entscheiden? All meine Zweifel zerstreuten sich, wenn wir telefonierten oder uns trafen. Wir verbrachten Tage im Bett, nur unterbrochen von kurzen Exkursionen in die Küche, um Nahrung zu besorgen. Wenn mich Freunde anriefen und mich fragten, ob ich Zeit und Lust hätte rauszukommen, antwortete ich: "Ach, nö, kein Bock, wir sind schon im Bett, vielleicht die nächsten Tage oder so...", und legte schnell auf, bevor ich die Flüche am anderen Ende hörte. (DP 192)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ What did you think of the others, when they gave in to love? Was this the decision? Punk or love? Was I allowed to choose love? All my doubts dispersed, when we talked on the phone or met up. We spent days in bed, only interrupted by short excursions to the kitchen, to fetch sustenance. When my friends called on the phone and asked whether I fancied

Young Roddy, as told by his middle-aged narrator, hesitates one more time to declare his love but then finds clarity in his heart:

Ich konnte mich nicht von hier wegbewegen, mein Herz fand ein Bild,
entschied sich in diesen Minuten und gab mir auch die geistige Klarheit.
Natürlich wollte ich sie, sie und niemand anders, nur sie, wie konnte ich das
bloß überlegen? Ich schlich zu ihrem Fenster, es war verschlossen. Vorsichtig
ging ich zur Vordertür, hier war geöffnet. Auf Zehenspitzen schlich ich an der
Schlafzimmertür der Eltern vorbei, den Flur entlang und zu ihrem Zimmer.
Ich betrat es und stand vor ihrem Bett. Das Zimmer lag im Dunkeln, aber das
Mondlicht fiel auf ihr Gesicht. Sie hatte die Augen geschlossen. Ich beugte
mich über sie, da öffnete sie die Augen und schaute mich an. Ich ließ mich auf
die Knie nieder. Sie flüsterte: "Und wofür hast du dich entschieden?" (DP
193)⁴⁸

He has chosen love, and for the first time he feels that he is 'at home' (DP 193). This at-home-ness is an expression of the 'ontological rootedness' romantic love, if mutual, is supposed to provide to the lover.⁴⁹ Punk Roddy Dangerblood has become love-normative in the bourgeois world. However, there remains some doubt which is encapsulated in the author's use of clichéd language. Roddy, who in direct speech

going out, I responded: 'Erh, no, not really, we are already in bed, maybe like another day...', and hung up quickly before I could hear the cursing at the other end.

⁴⁸ I could not leave, my heart found an image, decided in these minutes and also gave me clarity of mind. Obviously, I wanted her, her and no-one else, only her, how could I even think about this? I crept to her window, but it was closed. Cautiously I went to the front door, it was open. I tip-toed past her parents' bedroom door, down the hall to her room. I entered and stood by her bed. The room was dark, but her face was lit by moonlight. Her eyes were closed. I bent over, as she opened her eyes and looked at me. I sank to my knees. She whispered: 'What is your decision?'

⁴⁹ Simon May, *Love. A History*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011), p. 13, 36.

is down to earth and barely finishes his sentences (DP 177-8), has a verbose inner monologue laden with tropes of genre romance (DP 193, 196). This excessive production of romantic discourse just weeks after Roddy's statement that he did not understand love (DP 189) is an example of the productivity of the provincial or pubescent imaginary as well as the satirical power of over-affirmation. Another example can be found in the narrator's overly enthusiastic use of adjectives to describe the girls Roddy admires. None of them has fewer than three adjectives against their character: Celine is 'größer, strahlend, verlockend, sie war bereit für die Liebe' (taller, more radiant, tempting, she was ready for love, DP 32); an Italian girl is 'wild, verrückt, hübsch und machte allerlei verlockende Andeutungen' (wild, crazy, pretty and dropped lots of tempting hints, DP 94); Jennifer was 'so lässig, so selbstbewusst, so reif, so schön und klar' (so laid-back, so self-confident, so mature, so beautiful and clear, DP 149); the girls in the café near the pottery he describes as: 'wirklich hübsche Mädchen, intelligent, gebildet, gut angezogen, jung, offen und neugierig' (truly pretty girls, intelligent, educated, well dressed, young, open-minded and curious, DP 172).

The fable⁵⁰ of *Dorfpunks* ends on a high, when Maria and Roddy's mother pick Roddy up from pottery school in Büsum for the last time. Roddy feels liberated. He is his own boss now (DP 201). The narrative, however, ends with the dream sequence in which an unidentified first-person narrator in a moon-lit night visits their childhood home. They engage with two ghostly figures like 'narrow balloons'. They want to float away with the narrator who lets go of the rope and experiences

⁵⁰ I am using here the difference between fable and plot (emplotment), the *syuzhet* introduced by Russian formalism.

inner peace and liberation: 'Ich weiß, wer diese beiden sind: Meine Jugend und meine Liebe' (I know who these two are: my youth and my love, DP 203). This vignette introduces renunciation as a positive choice. Hereby *Dorfpunk* moves from nostalgic indulgence in pubescent excess to the alleged moral maturity of high literature.

The fable of *Miss Farkku-Suomi* is that the protagonist does not get together with the most beautiful girl in class, Pike. He succeeds in having an open relationship with an older artist, Kara, and a dalliance with Pike's younger sister. Some years later he returns to his home town and gets to read the diary of Pike who has since died. It is then that he realises that she had always loved him. The plot, on the other hand, starts with a short scene in which Vælde is the only one not invited to Eerikäinen's after-party. Kara pleads with the host, an influential journalist and writer, but to no avail. Vælde rides home on his push bike weighing up that Kara, who is normally proud and distant, gave him a kiss on the cheek but that she is also under the spell of local celebrity (MFS 5-6). This sets the scene for the main thread of the narrative which is Vælde's carefully planned rise to local celebrity. Unlike Roddy, he does not want to mock the adult world or to change the system in knocking Eerikäinen off his pedestal. He wants to replace Eerikäinen.

The next chapter predicts Vælde's destiny: Pike remarks that Vælde has good imagination and will probably become a writer (MFS 10). Vælde, who has contemplated suicide, finds meaning in life from Pike's prediction (MFS 17). At a school disco (MFS 21-3), Pike asks Vælde for a dance. The narrative focusses on his turmoil: he is dressed badly, he is overweight, he becomes sweaty and gets an

erection. This leads to the theme of poverty (MFS 29, 31, 44, 45). The teenage boy does not yet know how to manage his set of social stigmas, but he is artistic (MFS 35) and opinionated (MFS 37-9). He hates the conformism of Finnish society (MFS 37) and loves American underground music and art. To him, Lou Reed is an antidote to the toxic masculinity of Finnish men (MFS 39). We are told that Välde is not a bully (MFS 14, 47) but he has a cynical and obnoxious ('vittumainen') streak (MFS 64).

At her birthday party, Pike leads Välde onto some sea ice which terrifies the boy who is smitten by her risk-taking attitude. He later summarises:

Minä en tietenkään ole kiinnostunut kenestäkään muusta kuin Pikestä. Pike on ylivoimaisesti kaunein kaikista. Pike on kummallinen, itsemurha hautova ja anarkistinen. Kaikista tarjokkaista hän valitsi minut. Mutta miksei hän voinut bileissä tulla syliini istumaan nin, että kaikki olisi kunnolla nähneet, että me ollaan yhdessä? [...] Enkö ole sittenkään tarpeeksi hyvä hänen poikaystäväkseen? (MFS 88)⁵¹

Following his epiphanic moment, Välde turns into a wretched lover who smells bad (MFS 88) and vomits (MFS 91-2). His disgust in himself marks an important difference between punk aesthetics and new-wave aesthetics. Välde is involuntarily disgusting. Pike's subsequent display of indifference reignites suicidal thoughts in him (MFS 96).

⁵¹ I'm obviously not interested in anyone but Pike. Pike is by far the most beautiful of all. Pike is strange, anarchistic and contemplates suicide. She chose me over all other hopefuls. But why could she not come to me at the party and sit on my lap so that everyone would have properly seen that we are together? [...] Am I after all not good enough to become her boyfriend?

When Pike starts going out with a rich boy, Vælde is saved by a new arrival in his circles, Sasu, a young man who paints, plays in a band, and behaves badly. Sasu knows and likes the same bands, singers and writers (MFS 103-6). This is the point in Vælde's young life, when he finds the resolve to make changes. He writes a list of things he needs to do, which include learning to sing in English and to play the guitar, losing weight, wearing more interesting clothes, making up a past for himself, and cutting his hair short (MFS 111). Vælde decides to self-fashion as hard and obnoxious ('vittumainen', MFS 117, 181). His ambition quickly develops and, as soon as he has joined Sasu's band, he kicks out the drummer and bass player (MFS 129). In Sasu he has a role model and in Kara, whom he now meets, he finds the kind of woman he would like to date. Sasu and Kara embody rock 'n' roll (MFS 138-9). Vælde wants to steal her from Eerikäinen (MFS 142) because Eerikäinen occupies the space of a respected provocateur who has licence to make fun of his communist and feminist readership (MFS 140-1).

Vælde starts to write songs which are mostly about Pike, whom he recognises as his 'muse' or maybe just her 'divinely beautiful bottom' (MFS 187). He dislikes Sasu's girlfriend Anki who is sexually liberated, starts fist fights, hates the system, and wants to create her own zine (MFS 201-9). Vælde systematically carves out a place in Kara's life by hanging around her house doing odd jobs (MFS 179), and by getting her to talk about her relationships (MFS 223-228). He eventually says he loves her (MFS 228) but in the end she rejects him as too young and too fat (MFS 235). This is when Katja seizes the moment. She is in love with Vælde, listens to the

records he likes, and reads books he recommends (MFS 237, 245). Välde likes the idea of moulding her:

Katselen Katjaa salaa. Miksei se voisi olla edes 15? Silloin se olisi jo seurusteluiässä, ja ehkä jonkinlainen seksikin olisi mahdollista. Jos sen jalat olisivat viisi senttiä pitemmät, niin voisin unohtaa Piken ja Karan ja kaikki muut ja tehdä Katjasta itselleni sopivan tyttöystävän. [...] Herrajumala, mikä kusipää olen. Mutta en voi sille mitään. (MFS 246)⁵²

Välde and Katja spend time together but he is embarrassed to be seen with her and would prefer if Pike were the only one to know of the relationship, as he wishes to make her jealous (MFS 254). Only when other young men remark how attractive Katja looks, does Välde start to feel 'pride' (MFS 271) as the 'owner of a woman' (MFS 272). The reverse applies to Kara who does not want to be seen with Välde (MFS 262) until he has had his first successes as the singer of a new band formed around him by a local promoter. For Välde, Pike remains the most coveted prize (MFS 279). It gives him great pleasure that she visits him backstage just before his big gig cementing his reputation as a ladies' man (MFS 281). Once the press has declared Välde the next big thing and 'annoyingly self-confident' (284), he feels entitled to stop attending school, to move in with Kara, and to continue seeing Katja. He subsequently moves to Helsinki and after some ups and downs becomes a published writer and recording artist.

⁵² I secretly watch Katja. Why can't she be at least 15? She would be the right age for dating, and perhaps some kind of sex would be possible. If her legs were five centimetres longer I would forget Pike and Kara and all the others and turn her into a girlfriend who suits me. Jesus, what an arsehole I am. But there's nothing I can do about that.

However, having reached his goals, why does reading Pike's diary after her death derail him? Katja sees him run away nearly losing his footing (MFS 303). A possible answer lies in the interplay between emotional authenticity and stigma management. Roddy and Vælde see themselves as losers. They struggle with depression and have suicidal thoughts. Roddy's brief moment in love and free of constraints is overshadowed by the middle-aged narrator's knowledge of subsequent loss of love and youth. Vælde's parallel relationships with Kara and Katja are intimate but based on their recognition of his newly achieved public status as a local celebrity. Pike, whose early death cleanses her from having turned her affection to the rich boy, is the only woman with whom Vælde experienced an intimate moment which to him felt entirely authentic. Pike embodies beauty, sexuality, risk and anarchy to Vælde. Her character becomes mythological as his muse.

6 More than Mick's girlfriend.

Viv Albertine's *Clothes clothes clothes, music music music, boys boys boys* (2014) offers a metropolitan, female, working-class perspective on early punk and the author's life into the 21st century. In a parallel to *Dorfpunks*, Viv and her sister are described as cruel to pets and generally unemotional (CCC 6). Viv is from a young age drawn to bad boys (CCC 8). She gets into punk quite early. As a Londoner she sees all the cool bands, but this does not translate into feeling entitled to join or to start a band for the lack of female role models. Patti Smith's *Horses* makes a difference (CCC 79), but Viv remains prone to self-doubt which she perceives as a female trait. At the heart of punk, she dresses provocatively, combining fetish wear with torn clothes as

championed by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood whose shop she often visits. But she feels insecure (CCC 97-99) and constantly judged, especially by Westwood (CCC 127). There is an early punk normativity at work, at least against women, which makes it harder to develop one's own styles. Punk in London in the late 1970s is more closely tied to fashion than it would have been in provincial Europe.

On the other hand, Viv is quietly determined to make punk her own. She develops a style of playing the guitar not based on rock or blues (CCC 104) first with the Flowers of Romance and then the all-female band The Slits. Relationships in this environment remain casual. Viv thinks of romantic love as a con (CCC 133). Her on-off boyfriend Mick Jones from The Clash is much more romantic than her (CCC 99, 113). Viv describes her attitude in similar terms to those used by Rocko Schamoni: sex is less important than being part of a community; showing emotion is frowned upon (CCC 104). Her attitude changes somewhat, when she falls in love with Johnny Thunders (formerly of New York Dolls, CCC 143). Still, theirs does not develop into a sexual relationship because he is a drug addict with erection problems. Viv soon enters an intense intimate, yet sex-free relationship with 'beautiful and mysterious' Rob, the guitar player of Subway Sect (CCC 179, 185). This pushes her relationship with Mick over the edge. Where Vålde or Rocko dwell on their relationship failures, Viv sees these matters in a larger context. She describes leaving The Slits as emotionally much more taxing than losing Mick. In the first part of the book, female companionship and self-fashioning of an identity not determined by one's relationships with men (father, boyfriend, manager) are more important matters:

The pain I feel from the Slits ending is worse than splitting up with a boyfriend, my parents divorcing or being chucked out of the Flowers of Romance: this feels like the death of a huge part of myself, two whole thirds gone. Now that the Slits are over and Tessa has recovered, I've got nowhere to go, nothing to do; I'm cast back into the world like a sycamore seed spinning into the wind. I'm burnt out and my heart is broken. I can't bear to listen to music. Every time I hear a song I feel physical pain, just to hear instruments is unbearable, it reminds me of what I've lost. (CCC 250)

The depression Viv experiences having left The Slits is echoed in representations of poor mental health in *Miss Farkku-Suomi* and *Dorfpunks*. Another parallel is fatherlessness. Where Vålde feels stigmatised growing up without a father, Viv and her sister feel relieved when their abusive and violent father leaves his family (CCC 23-4). What a comparison of the three books throws into sharp relief is that being mean is a male (punk) behaviour much more than a female one. Albertine mentions how her friend Sid Vicious enjoys being deliberately mean to her and other people. To him, everything seems to be just for a laugh (CCC 118). This resembles Mara in *Tien laidalla Waterloo* and the way in which Röyhkä uses the root 'huvi' (fun) to describe his motivations. Sid's careless attitude extends to his relationship with violence:

Sid always says, he isn't a violent person, that he's a useless fighter, he'd rather run away from a fight than confront someone. But 'Sid Vicious' is becoming a persona he can't shake off, and he lets the myth build, plays up to it. (CCC 124)

Sid is also ruthless in his ambition. He throws Viv out of The Flowers of Romance before leaving the band to join The Sex Pistols (CCC 152). This is another parallel to Vælde in *Miss Farkku-Suomi*. The mythological version of Sid Vicious stands for a staged liberated hypermasculinity Vælde and Rocko admire to a certain extent. But *Miss Farkku-Suomi* does not end with Vælde's public validation as a 'hard' man who sings powerful songs. It ends with his becoming literally and figuratively unbalanced having discovered that Pike loved him. Rocko rejects punk-rock hardness earlier and plays with crooner smoothness and plain silliness. This contrasts with Viv's own investment in hardness. In one scene she wields a hammer and threatens to smash a man's knees, which earns her the reputation of being a 'nutter' and thus respect from her female band mates (CCC 160).

Early on in Albertine's narrative, the female body is associated with trauma (CCC 26). An unfaithful boyfriend infects her with an STD (CCC 57-8). She becomes pregnant and has an abortion under the judgmental conditions of the time, which leads to a bout of depression (CCC 191, 194). In Albertine's book, the character (or person) who most embodies the tension between female liberation through punk and the dangers associated with being a woman is Ari Up, the singer of The Slits. She is an underage hippie child who knows no inhibitions and has no filters. She is annoying and yet a great source of creative energy. She also attracts a great deal of male violence. She is stabbed at two different occasions and soon after raped (CCC 165, 170). Viv admires Ari for her resilience:

Being attacked, spat at, sworn at and laughed at is part of all our lives, but I think Ari's especially brave. Being so young, she is more vulnerable but she

never hides away, or adapts her clothes and behaviour to protect herself.

(CCC 165)

7 Conclusion

Provocation through disgusting behaviour, meanness and ostentatious indifference can be seen as means of resistance for loser characters such as the male teenage punks whose narratives we have examined. However, there is a tangible risk of playing into the hands of oppressive heteronormativity through flirtations with violence and abusive behaviour. Non-normative male punk identities are complicit in propping up what Connell terms 'hegemonic masculinity'. They use hypermasculine tropes as markers of distinction against mainstream society, although society accepts or even facilitates male dominance and male violence, albeit in more subtle ways. Although *Miss Farkku-Suomi* and *Dorfpunks* acknowledge female agency in matters of romance and relationships, this acknowledgment is undermined by their use of hypermasculine clichés. The interplay of norm and deviation in these books, which briefly opens spaces for a creative reimagining of the world, remains tethered to the dominant social order. Male losers' resistance against heteronormative order is possible but in these two books collapses back into compliance with that order. This collapse occurs where satirical over-affirmation becomes indistinguishable from the real threats and excesses of violence which are generated by any inequality. In this sense *Dorfpunks* and *Miss Farkku-Suomi* are revelatory rather than revolutionary

With regards to representations of love, the post-punk writing of Røyhkä and Schamoni displays a recognisable textual drift of normative love narratives but does not build up to a critical mass which would bring about a qualitative change to social norms around intimacy and relationships.⁵³ Their alternative love narratives ultimately align with heteronormative, mainstream narrative patterns and collapse into loss, death and despair just like a large proportion of contemporary high literature on love. This seemingly harsh judgement should not distract from the considerable achievements both books have. They attract readers with a promise of rock and youth nostalgia only to expose them to well-crafted re-imaginings of punk and post-punk aesthetics. *Miss Farkku-Suomi* does this as a drama; *Dorfpunks* as a farce.

⁵³ Gratzke, Love is what People say it is [accessed 21 June 2018].