



Mats Greiff, Professor of History and Chair at the Department of Historical Studies at Malmö University in Sweden

Mats Greiff earned his Ph.D. in 1992 at Lund University (Sweden). His doctoral thesis was on proletarianization, feminization and trade union organizing among Swedish industrial white-collar workers 1840-1950. His thesis work, thus, was within his main research interest, which is labor and labor market history from a class and gender perspective.

1994-1995, Mats Greiff was a visiting researcher at Department of Modern History, Trinity College, Dublin. During his stay he conducted a project on female textile workers in Northern Ireland and their struggle to improve their life and work conditions. Another product of this stay was a book on the ethnic and political split within the Belfast working class, 1870-1914.

During the last ten years, Mats Greiff's research interest has moved from focusing directly on labor history to different forms of popular culture. In a major research project on the history of Swedish horse- and harness racing, he wrote on gender and other power relations within harness racing and harness race watching. His other focus during the last years has been on popular music and societal change. He has published a couple of articles on rock music and generational formation in the former GDR as well as on feminism in country music, including an analysis of the lyrics of Dolly Parton from a class and gender perspective.

During his career Mats Greiff has contributed to the development of teacher education at Lund and Malmö universities, and he was instrumental in the creating of History as a separate subject when Malmö University was established in 1998. In 2004, he became a full professor at Malmö University where he has also been a member of the university board and chairperson of the research board in the School of Education.

During his stay at Marshall University this fall, Mats Greiff is going to study the transformation of popular music and societal changes in Appalachia. During the 1920s and early 1930s, traditional Appalachian folk music was transformed into a modern professionalized and commercialized country music. In this transformation process the older lyric tradition expressing women's experiences became eroded. Instead men's experiences and male perspectives became prevalent in the lyrics sung on records and broadcasted on radio. During the following several decades, country music lyrics

contributed to a conservative construction of men's and women's role in society and the family. It was not until the last decades of the twentieth century this was seriously challenged as some individuals, for instance Kitty Wells, Loretta Lynn, Hazel Dickens and Dolly Parton, adopted more feminist perspectives in their lyrics.

The transformation in the 1920s and early 1930s coincided with significant social and economic changes in Appalachia. A proletarianization process among large groups of smallholders had started already in the nineteenth century and continued into the 1930s. Particularly during the depression families were forced from their land or at least men were forced to migrate, attempting to provide for their families through wage labor. At about the same time work in both coal mining and forestry – main industries in Appalachia – changed dramatically. Scientific management was introduced in connection with the mechanization of work. As a consequence, work became much more disciplined and freedoms for the workers were curtailed. Compounded, these social and economic processes threatened a hegemonic masculinity.

In his research, Mats Greiff emphasizes how the transformation of music in the 1920s and 1930s was related with the social and economic changes and in particular how it was related with threats posed to hegemonic masculinity. In a later part of the project, he will also analyze the more recent change in the music and the reemergence of more feminine perspectives.

During his stay in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology he is interested in using the University's oral history archive, which has a lot of material of interest, and the library. He also plans to perform fieldwork in West Virginia, including oral history interviews and collecting other kinds of materials.

*Towards the end of the term, Mats Greiff will give a public presentation on his research to the department and Marshall community. **This presentation will be announced on our website.***