

Deconstructing Epidermal Art and the Female Goth in Nordic Millennial Fiction: The Joys of Vulgarity in Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*¹

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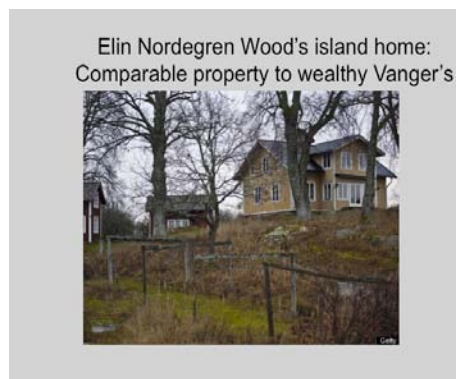
Abstract Stieg Larsson's best seller is purportedly about the violence men inflict on women, but it also can be read, at least humorously, as an essay on the recent cultural phenomenon of tattoos. It turns out *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is more about Elvis Presley than ink.

Key words Best seller; crime; rape; tattoos; Elvis Presley; cultural literacy

(slide 1) Let's start with what we really want to know about Sweden. (slide 2) In Sweden "a small, secluded island reachable from Stockholm only by ferryboat" costs a couple of million dollars.² You can find in the accompanying illustrations a picture of the island house of Elin Nordegren, Tiger Wood's ex. (slide 3) You can also see a picture of her tattoo, at least according to one website.³



slide 1



slide 2

I am sure, dear listeners, that you will be as disappointed as I was to learn that *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* has almost nothing to do with tattoos. The book is part mystery, uncovering the identity of a serial killer of women; part what is coming to be called the workplace novel, with a journalist hero; and part super female action hero story. There are only three references to Lisbeth Salander's body art, one of which comes when she applies make-up to cover her neck, where she has the tattoo of a wasp; the dragon is on her back. **(slide 4)** In Swedish the title of the book is *Men Who Hate Women: Män som hatar kvinnor*, **(slide 5)** as it is in Spanish, Italian (*Uomini che odiano le donne*), and **(slide 6)** French, which does have a word for hate, but instead reads men who don't "love" women (*Les hommes qui n'aiment pas les femmes*), which is very different. I can't say exactly why the British editors changed the title, but I suspect sex had something to do with it. The American publisher followed suit, as did the Chinese. **(slide 7)** In Chinese the title is the girl (nǚ hai) with the dragon character (long wen) on her body (shen). The de is the all purpose possessive marker: 龙纹身的女孩 (*Long Wen Shen De Nǚ Hai*) .

Elin Wood's Tattoo (maybe not)



slide 3



slide 4



slide 5



slide 6



slide 7



slide 8

Lisbeth Salander does not add any tattoos during the course of the three volumes of the Millennial trilogy, but she does hack into many computers. **(slide 8)** One of the characters compares her to Pippi Longstocking, the adventurous heroine of a series of Swedish stories. But where Pippi wants to ride her horse, Lisbeth, also a natural red-head, fights injustice. The evils she fights are men who use macho instead of emotion to get her into bed first, and second, the workplace and the world at large, except for motorcycles small enough for her to ride.

“It’s hard not to like Lisbeth Salander,” wrote Louise Roug in *Newsweek*, when the new movie version starring Rooney Mara and Daniel Craig came out in December. “For one thing, her sense of purpose is admirable.” Roug then quotes director David Fincher:

“Horrible things happen to her. And she wanders home. And she sits there. She lights a cigarette, and she fumes. And you don’t know what’s going on in her head. The next time you see her, she’s got a Taser and a 30-pound chrome dildo, and she’s got a plan. You don’t need her to say ‘This is not right what’s happened to me, and I have to make it right.’ You see her at the hardware store, buying tape and zip ties and black ink.” (Roug)

Actually—this is me talking—you *do* need to hear her say “This is not right”, which is why the book is much better than the film, which my wife and I walked out of halfway through. We got bored with the violent sex scenes. She said, “Can we go?” And I said: “This is not a make-out movie. Let’s leave.”

The book is as vulgar as the movie, but in all the *right* ways. By vulgar I mean common, of the people, with a nice tang of indecency, from indecorous, not right, unsuitable. It goes with another word I will be using, *louche*. The word means seedy, unrefined. It comes from Latin “luscus” or one-eyed. When something is *louche*, we

squint at it, or turn our eyes away. Lisbeth is wonderfully *louche*. For example, where in the movie after Lisbeth decides to get revenge on her guardian who sexually forces himself on her, we can only watch her smoke; in the book, we read her thoughts, which seem logical but are really not what a nice person thinks:

“She rejected the option of using a gun. Acquiring a gun would be no great problem, but the police were awfully good at tracking down firearms. ... She considered a knife, which could be purchased at any hardware store, but decided against that too. ... She thought about using a bomb of some sort. Building a bomb itself would not be a problem.” (Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* 242)

Lisbeth’s Salander’s ability to think gives her agency. She knows about right and wrong, but she’s not so sure it applies to her. She is like a vengeful goddess out of Homer or Euripedes’ *Medea*, or one of those wicked medieval French fairies, whose excessive anger and revenge are often out of proportion to the offenses they perceive against them. Her name conjures up the old snake women of the house of Lusignan, who held Cyprus against the infidels during the Crusades: Salandar sounds like Salamander.

For snakey-skinned, *louche* Lisbeth, tattoos are some kind of homeopathic defense against violence. She is also a self-fashioning voodoo doll. She sticks needles into herself to harm others.⁴ Her charms work because the book’s audiences believe in action at a distance, a form of popular science, like warp speed. Lisbeth not only hacks computers, she hacks people—and if you think I’m kidding, wait till you get to the end of the third volume. All forms of violence are mystically connected in this book.

Because of some horrific experiences as an adolescent Lisbeth is a ward of the state, and a nasty man named Advokat Bjurman has charge of her bank account. Nonetheless that bomb she considers building would have been the revenge not of innocent girl of fourteen, which is how old Lisbeth looks, but of a twenty-four-year-old woman who engages in oral sex because she decides she needs the money. She is as ready to blow up Bjurman as she was willing, admittedly under duress, to—and here I will follow Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* and not repeat the disgusting phrase Lisbeth uses. In the event, Lisbeth manages to make a video of their second sexual encounter, which is much more violent than she bargained for. When she returns for their third meeting, she tases Bjurman, sodomizes him in return for what he did to her, tells him her video makes him her slave, and then takes two hours to tattoo his chest and belly with the words “I am a sadistic pig, a pervert, and a rapist.”

Naturally the movie messes things up. The voyeuristic movie leads us to think that Lizbeth has that certain sexual device, which so intrigued the director, as the result of a lesbian affair, a one-night pick-up in the book which the movie starts with and lingers over. In the book the device belongs to Lizbeth's tormenter, not to her. She finds it in his roomful of sex toys, right along with a whip, which she gets to flick over his, shall we say, sensitive area—way too much for our macho movie makers to include, but the reason, I take it, why reviewers agree that the ladies love this book. (slide 9) "I think," says Edward Kastenmeier, Larsson's American editor, "many or most of those readers are women worldwide and so I do think it speaks to them." "You know," he says, "we would love to have her strength. We would love to have her independence. This is a woman who no one really tells her what to do and I think we admire that and I think that it appeals to us. And I think also the role she's put in by society and particularly men in society fills us with righteous outrage. We're outraged on her behalf" (Kastenmeier).

I love the subtle shift from "women worldwide" to "us". Edward knows well enough that men like to read about vulgar women, and not all women admire the book. Diane Rehm, on National Public Radio, reads an email from Delaney, who says: "I'm disappointed that you highlighted this book on your show. It's not great literature. It's just popular, in part, because of the titillating nature of sexual sadism directed at women. Yuck. Bad taste." At which point Diane, who loves the book, turns to Deirdre Donahue, another guest, for support: "I have to say," says Ms. Donahue, the book critic for USA Today, "I really enjoyed the first two books and I found them fascinating page-turners. I have to say I am slightly astonished that people seem to think that this has—I found them, frankly, better written, more interesting, but I think they're in the same genre, frankly, as *Silence of the Lamb* and *The Da Vinci Code*. It's all about secret conspiracies."

Now I have to confess that I read this book because my son recommended it to my wife, who wanted me to read it so that I would have read something that normal people read, and not be so English professorish. For the record Clare says that *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* "is exciting. It is a good book you can get lost in, and it is not so badly written that you can't bare to read it." This is true enough. I finished all three volumes of the Millennial Trilogy two summers ago and therefore I think I surprised Venetria when she called to ask if I would review this trashy little book. I hope I surprised her. For the fact is that when I finished all three volumes, I felt somehow unclean after wading through so much vulgarity. To purify myself, I read through all of Faulker, which I had been meaning to do. Faulkner offers a superior version of what is still arguably a trashy approach to fiction, which is to weave a misty attack on what everyone in his right mind would never deny is an ultimate evil.

In Faulkner's case that is slavery as practiced in America, particularly the Mississippi version before and after the Civil War. In Larsson's case, the surface issue is violence against women. Neither exposé makes much sense at the practical level. Faulkner only tells musty horror stories, with a few biblical echoes to make them seem like, well, *The Da Vinci Code*. Larsson claims there are 4000 wards in Sweden whom the state has found unfit to control their own bank accounts, a couple of whom *might* be female and vulnerable to nasty men like Advocat Bjurman, who in the book by the way is fifty and fit, not fat and horrible as in the movie.



slide 9



slide 10

(slide 10)⁵ As Ms. Donahue said on the Diane Rehm show, “You know, the two protagonists have super human abilities to punish the evil. I mean, it’s the – they’re certainly very fun, but this is not great literature. . . . On one hand, [Stieg Larsson is] Mr. Feminism, there’s a very strong feminist tone. On the other hand, though, this is a very sexually graphic disturbing book about really creative ways to torture and kill women.”

“Edward,” intones Diane Rehm, referring to the editor in charge of the books at Alfred Knopf. “Well,” says Edward, “[Larsson] felt very strongly about the issues he worked for. He obviously was supremely dedicated to helping women and the disenfranchised in his society.” Well, hello “disenfranchised”—of whom, I can report, the most disenfranchised in the book are the villainous Russian muscle men who wander about after the break-up of the former Soviet Union, but no one, I can assure you, cares a whit about the rights of Baltic Sea gangsters. No, Mr. Kastenmeier knows it is time to drop the subject of Larsson’s ideas, and move on instantly, without a tell-tale pause, to Larsson’s craft : “He [Larsson] also was steeped in mysteries. He had read a huge number.” The suggestion is that Larsson was a superhero himself, to go with this two protagonists, who according to Deirdre Donahue, “have super human abilities. . . . We want Lisbeth to be our friend,” she says, “to help her because she is really kinda the 21st century computer hacker. She could help you do anything, but

men want to be Mikael Blomkvist. He—you know, James Bond had to at least chase the women. This guy, he is just some sort of healer out there. I mean, to meet him is to take off your clothes and jump on him. I mean, it's astonishing. It's actually charming, but at a certain point, you do begin to roll your eyes, at least we females—I mean, he is like the bumble bee of love."

Well, I'm rolling my eyes, and not only because I prefer "female" to be used adjectively, not nominatively. I have a deliciously horrible book here and so many ways I can go, so many miles of vulgarity. Shall we review all the women with whom Mikael Blomkvist sleeps? We shall not. Instead, we shall talk about meaning. Our theme is vulgarity. We shall talk about tattoos.

Personally, I can't stand them. Of course, I am sure, very sure, that no one cares what I think. I have not taught English for thirty-four years at Purdue for nothing; sometimes I don't even care what I think myself. But let's try to see both sides of the issue. These days this is called not fairness but cultural literacy, a term that has been well illustrated in the first two Books and Coffee talks this year. Two weeks ago Carolyn Johnson used cultural literacy to explain how we understand a black woman whose mother's genes have been stolen and sold by white doctors. And Kristen Bross used this approach to reconstruct the experience of a Native American at Harvard in 1670. Seems just the thing for a tattooed 4'11" computer genius daughter of a Russian mobster mixed up with Swedish fascists and whose brother is some kind psycho terminator—that's just a hint of what you have to look forward to if you make it to volume three, *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

Looking at tattoos from the viewpoint of the culturally literate, we can say that they are a fashion, and like fashion, beyond reason. Fashions change with the times, all the rage one day, ridiculous the next. Who can stand in judgment of what people wear? There is no right or wrong. You might as well tell the sea waves to stop. Fashions are vulgar, because vulgarity is of the people, by the people and for the people. Whether your view of a particular bit of vulgarity is positive or negative depends on your culture, or, if you are an outsider to the culture, your cultural literacy. **(slide 11)** Being an outsider, I sought out an insider. His name is Ryan, and he works on Main Street in Lafayette, Indiana. I forgot to ask him if these places are still cozily called "parlors." But he was very genial, eating his lunch there. Aunt Polly could have been in the back room, although I don't think that was she pressing the trigger intermittently on the tattoo machine that was buzzing the whole time we talked.

Ryan said he was not the owner of the place but an artist. He said he was from El Paso, Texas, and described himself as Mexican American. He said Latino was a suitable term. He considered tattooing a Latino art form, although others do it too. When asked how he got started, he said everyone where he was from was into art.

Ryan



slide 11

Never cut your body for the dead, and never get a tattoo. I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19.28



slide 12

He considers his tattoos a personal expression of himself. He wears them for himself, not for others to look at, which is why he generally keeps them covered and wears fingerless gloves; also the sun is not good for tattoos, as they will fade. He had a kind of Homeric nostos or longing for home about his tattoos; modern inks and designs are improving, he said, but even so he has a deep affection for his earlier, less artistic and less well done designs.

He grinned when I asked about whether people still asked for Chinese symbols; he liked the “still”, was surprised they haven’t faded out completely, like arm- and neck-chains, which he regards as passé.

He agreed that many customers are military, who favor battle crosses: the gun with the helmet. Not really art, in his view.

On whether women should get tattoos, he was contradictory. He says tattoos make women beautiful, but if a woman is already beautiful, he admits she doesn’t need a tattoo, and if she isn’t, a tattoo won’t really help her.

I couldn’t really get him to say whether tattoos were meant to put people off, to establish one as part of a group, to thumb one’s nose at authority. He insisted they were personal expressions. He was very nice, soft spoken, and he let me take his picture. At first he posed rather covered, but was willing to push up his sleeve when I asked him to. I stopped there.

(slide 12)⁶ I think I have given a fair case in favor of tattoos. The other point of view is that they are disgusting. They are not beautiful. They are for gangsters or people who are nuts. What will they look like in forty years? In America the old view was that tattoos are OK for sailors or soldiers who get drunk on leave. The army is a prison without walls. You had to wear a dog tag. The tattoo was the enlisted man’s personal answer to his oppression. The argument for tattoos is the same as for using drugs. Hey, man, it’s cool. But we know it’s not, even if it feels cool. The Bible forbids graven images on the body, although it’s amazing how ingenious people are on

the internet finding ways around that particular prohibition. Still there is something to the warning against worshipping the flesh. If tattoos are art, then they are like graffiti. You can defend graffiti, but everyone knows you need to erase it. And erasing Billy Bob Thornton after you've met Brad Pitt is not so easy.

Despite the attempts of the editors to glamorize tattoos by retitling this book, Stieg Larsson regards Lisbeth's tattoos as the products of her misfortunes as a social ward of the state. In the same way, Lisbeth herself considers tattooing a punishment for her attacker. Young ladies of all ages in the audience will ask themselves whether that batch of ink they want to mark themselves with is really a sign of your own personality, or rather the shadow of your prison bars.

Lisbeth is not immune to the sin of pride, by the way. At the end of the book she disguises herself as a voluptuous woman to steal funds from a particular villain's Swiss bank account. When she is done she throws away her wig, black tights, and expensive clothes but keeps the fake latex breasts she bought in a transvestite shop in Copenhagen. Larsson's own vulgarity about what he regards as proper to a woman peeks through here, for of course Lisbeth is just his fictional puppet.

Larsson does give Lisbeth some saving graces. For the most part Lisbeth is actually much more interested in good prose than vulgar tattoos. At work "Her reports were in a class by themselves . . . thorough and grammatically correct" (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* 41). When necessary she can speak "Oxford English" (563). Also "impeccable German" (564), with a Norwegian accent, for good measure. At another point in the book we are told that "Salander could see that Blomkvist was a fine writer" (101-102).

It is no stretch to assume that in having Lisbeth praise Blomkvist's writing, Stieg Larsson is having her praise his own book. Before he wrote his novels he was an ace investigative reporter too, and he knew how to write a paragraph. His style is in the Hemingway mold, and Hemingway was a very good reporter before he turned to fiction. Larsson's prose is easily translated into foreign languages, the mark of world literature today. It is paratactic, with limited lexis; that is, short sentences and paragraphs, easy word choice. A sample from just after the second assault on Lisbeth shows that the Swedish is almost too simple for the English translator, who introduces synonyms, such "remember what" instead of the first use of "kommer."

"Remember what we agreed. You'll come back here next Saturday."

"*Du kommer ihåg vad vi com överens om. Du kommer hit nästa lördag.*"

She nodded again. Cowed. He let her go.

Hon nickade igen. Kuvad. Han släppte henne. (Larsson, *Män som hatar kvinnor*

251)

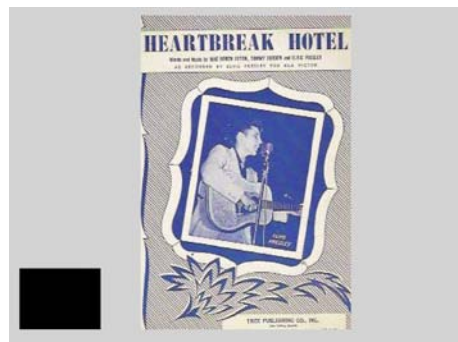
Just as the translator has freedom to work in the target language, so readers write their own code and read what they want into Lizbeth, or as Nora Ephron calls her, the girl who fixed the umlaut:

Lisbeth Salander was entitled to her bad moods on account of her miserable childhood and her tiny breasts, but it was starting to become confusing just how much irritability could be blamed on your slight figure and an abusive father you had once deliberately set on fire and then years later split open the head of with an axe. (Ephron)

(slide 13) Nora Ephron's point is that Larsson's prose is not perfect. People are always sitting down to eat gurkins at breakfast. They smoke too much and they drink coffee every other paragraph, one of the many ways Stieg Larsson handed bits of himself to his characters and the reason he died of a heart attack after trudging up seven flights of stairs the day he delivered his final manuscript to his publisher.



slide 13



slide 14

I have said little about Blomkvist's investigation into the shabby goings on of a wealthy family of industrialists, so I should mention that the true heroine of the book is not Liz but Blomkvist's teenage daughter, who has grown up well despite being abandoned by her absent father. She is a regular church goer and therefore able to recognize that a series of cryptic numbers associated with a serial killer of women actually refers to biblical verses, allowing Lisbeth and Blomkvist to crack the case and make the world safe for sex.

No doubt that if Larsson had lived to write all ten volumes of his projected Balzacian opus, Lisbeth would have turned out to be a superior mother, but in the fragment we have she tends to fall for men who would be described in French as

farouche, a word that means both timid and fierce, like an animal in the wild. We might say “dangerous” in the Michael Jackson, panther-video, sense. The word occurs in Jean Racine’s seventeenth-century tragedy *Phèdre*, where the heroine experiences the thrill of forbidden love when she falls for Hippolytus, the son of her husband Theseus. She is a so very vulgar she could be before Judge Judy. But also passionate, and the French do vulgarity so well I hardly even need to translate this passage, where fired by her mad love, she opens her heart to her step-son, whom she compares to his *farouche* father:

Oui, Prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée. / Je l’aime, non point tel que l’ont vu les enfers, /... Qui va du Dieu des morts déshonorer la couche, / Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche, ... Tel qu’on dépeint nos Dieux, ou tel que je vous voi.” (Racine, *Phedre* 121)

Yes, I languish (*je languis*), I burn (*je brûle*) for Theseus, he who traveled to hell and slept with the wife (*déshonorer la couche*) of the king of the dead, a man faithful (*fidèle*) but also proud (*fier*), even a little wild (*farouche*). . . just as we depict the gods, and just the type of man I see in you (*ou tel que je vous voi*). [my translation]

By the end of this book, Lisbeth, our modern Phaedra action hero, has fallen hard for Mikael Blomkvist. She buys her man a present and heads over to his apartment, but is dashed to find a rival, Mikael’s boss Erika Berger, already in bed with the butterfly of love. A quick word about the workplace novel. According to a recent *New Yorker*, the workplace novel is the bestselling genre of fiction in China today, and spreading around the world.⁷ Its features naturally include how to negotiate the roadblocks to sleeping around inside an organization, but just as important, how to get ahead, how to handle the person who wants your job, when to quit, and how to get revenge. It is the modern version of the old 1930s Soviet worker fiction, where God has been replaced by the Soviet State, and the happy jack hammer operator thinks only of the greater good, such as the dam they are building at the end of *Doctor Zhivago*. But the new workplace novel is even more proletarian, and bows to even falser gods, such as just keeping your job no matter what because you can be so easily displaced. The word proletarian comes from Latin *proles*, or seed. All seeds are the same, so if you are in the proletariat, you don’t matter.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo is more moral than that. I’ve mentioned Blomkvist’s daughter, and there are some discussions about the ethics of journalism, the villains are generally brutal enough that in our unthinking moods we accept

that they deserve whatever they get, and Lisbeth herself is certainly unique, not a replaceable proletarian, which is why we love her. But the book is vulgar, and so it needs a god more suitable than strained ideas of right and wrong, or three tattoos on its female action hero. The false god suitable for this book of fiction, it turns out, is that quintessence of *farouche*, that epitome of vulgarity both good and bad, Elvis Presley. **(slide 14)**

At the end of the book Lisbeth buys a present for Michael to cement their love despite twenty years age difference—and remember Mikael is a stand-in for Larsson, and so should be considered ten years older, and she looks fourteen, and so might be thought to be ten years younger, which gives a satisfyingly biblical vulgarity to the forty-year age difference between them. The Latin Bible is not called the Vulgate for nothing. But let us finish:

She needed some excuse to knock on his door. She had not given him any Christmas present, but she knew what she was going to buy. In a junk shop she had seen a number of metal advertising signs from the fifties, with embossed images. One of the signs showed Elvis Presley with a guitar on his hip and a cartoon balloon with the words HEARTBREAK HOTEL. **(click slide button to play 10 seconds of the song *Heartbreak Hotel*)** She has no sense for interior design, but even she could tell that the sign would be perfect for the cabin in Sandhamn. It cost 780 kronor, and on principle she haggled and got the price knocked down to 700. She had it wrapped, put it under her arm, and headed over to his place on Bellmansgatan. (Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* 589)

You will notice that the words “Heartbreak Hotel” are not in the balloon. And what is translated as a sign in metal is in the original Swedish a “reklamskytar”, or billboard on a placard, or poster, in short, a regular movie poster. Larsson’s problem was that there is no such object because *Heartbreak Hotel* was never an Elvis movie. It was a 1956 record, Elvis’s second big hit. **(slide 15)** There was a poster for the movie *Love Me Tender* **(play music for *Love Me Tender* for 10 seconds, including what Clive Davis calls the money note: “all my dreams come tru-u-u-e”)** but that would be too obvious. Larsson wants us to feel that tough-guy Lisbeth is going soft but not that she is quite yet on the path to middle-class motherhood. He has to save her for two more novels.

To maintain her mystery, and to show his superhero literary technique, Larsson does a switch. **(slide 16)** It turns out there was Elvis movie in 1957 called *King Creole* that fits all the facts of Liz’s case perfectly. In it Elvis plays a singer who does not know much about the world. He is mixed up with mobsters in a seedy southern

town, just like the Arkansas Bill Clinton grew up in at the same time—that's the same former president who played *Heartbreak Hotel* on his saxophone on Arsenio Hall's show in 1992. In a key scene Clinton—I meant Elvis, is such a nice guy that he relents when the woman he has cornered in a flop house sheds tears. And that, it seems, is what Lisbeth wants, R-E-S-P-E-C-T—not another tattoo. She flirts with tender love, but winds up in *Heartbreak Hotel*, and Larsson has to keep her there for now, which is why he gives the name of Elvis's record to the hot-sheet joint in *King Creole*. The truth we find when we tear away the veils of Stieg Larsson's moral posturing is that he does not want Lisbeth to escape from the imaginary world where the *louche*—you can see it in Elvis's woman, looking just like Liz—can hook up with the *farouche*, Mikael Blomkvist, alias Stieg Larsson, alias their idol, the king himself (start music for song *Burning Love* and read over Elvis singing the lyrics “hunk a hunk of burning love”), that hunk a hunk (VOLUME UP) of vulgarity in all its glory, the reason you read (“HUNK A HUNK OF BURNIN' LOVE”) this book!



slide 15



slide 16

Notes

1. I would like to thank Judy Ware for explaining all the hard parts of the book to me. Judy Ware, who will retire in May, 2013, has been the indispensable schedule deputy for the English Department for much of the time that I have taught at Purdue University.
2. For more information, see http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/12/11/tiger-woods-swedish-home_n_388814.html.
3. At least one internet site identifies the woman in slide 3 as Elin Nordegren, but according to Snopes.com, the photograph is not of Elin Nordegren but a nude model pretending to be her.
4. Lisbeth tests her tattoo machine on herself before going after Advokat Bjurman.
5. Clockwise from the right: Samus Aran, Wonder Woman, Sock'er Mom, Storm, and Zelda.
6. The man with tattooed arms in the accompanying slide is Brian Qualley <[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/us/even-critics-of-safety-net-increasingly-depend-on-it.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/us/even-critics-of-safety-net-increasingly-depend-on-it.html?_)

r=1&pagewanted=2>.

7. For more information, see Chang, Leslie T. “Working Titles: What do the most industrious people on earth read for fun?” *The New Yorker*, February 6, 2012: 30-32.

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