

## **ÖLICK MY LEGS AND I'M ON FIREÖ. A LIFE ACCORDING TO PJ HARVEY.**

© Ilkka Levä 2009

### **Abstract for the Violence and Network Society**

**School Shootings and Social Violence in Contemporary Public Life Conference** Nov. 6-7th, 2009, Helsinki

In the songs of English born singer-songwriter PJ Harvey (born Polly Jean Harvey 9 October 1969) a critical distance is constructed in a variety of ways: demanding a lover to öask her nameö instead of just making love (Oh My Lover), begging him to ölick her legsö and telling him that she will make him ölick her injuriesö (Rid of Me), calling him öweakö and wanting to östroke itö and örub it better 'till it bleedsö (Rub -til It Bleeds), telling him her name as öF U C Kö and being ötwenty inches longö (50ft Queenie), call upon him to give her back öher memoryö (Yuri-G), making suicide by drowning herself to a sea (Water), asking öTarzan I'm pleading stop your fucking screamingö (Me-Jane), wanting to get öman-sizedö (Man-Size), saying that the dress he bought to her is öfilthy tight and filthyö (Dress) and that she will öfruit flowerö herself öinside outö because she is öhappy and bleeding forö him (Happy and Bleeding).

These quotations used here are valuable information for the imagination because they confirm something that the common sense masculine imagination already knew: that a woman is a bitch judged by her ways of acting in these songs. And yet these words do something else than reassure us. They have some disturbing quality. They are full of uncontained affects. In my paper I tangle this uncontainment as öimage of thoughtö and öa styleö, öa lifeö according to PJ Harvey. I apply here the theories of Marquis de Sade read by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and art historian Camille Paglia. In *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953 ö 1974* Deleuze (2004, p. 262) states that: öReason is always a region carved out of the irrational not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it and only defined by a particular kind of relationship among irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, and driftö.

In my paper I propose that by distancing and making difference in these openly violent lyrics PJ Harvey is taking a standpoint, constructing herself an immanent ölifeö and facing the propulsion of being. She is rejecting the individuality which is based on (schizo-paranoid) identity offered us by the capitalist consumer society. I see this rejection of fitting in here as a concept of living the life of parallel evolution, a rhizome where one is able to maintain the flux of being her own way without needing to identify oneself as an individual identity. Instead of that one can speak here her being a dividual. That is: the affirmation of the life according to PJ Harvey. The analysis of PJ Harvey as conceptual personae can be extrapolated to our contemporary society. This way its ethical implications are huge to our thinking, acting, living, and modes of childrearing. Being becomes becoming. These reverberations will be discussed in my paper.