DISCLOSING INTELLECTUAL EVIL
NARRATIVES OF GENDER, ETHICS AND POWER IN AMANDA CROSS’ AND ÅSA NILSONNE’S CRIME FICTION

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The paper will be addressing the subject of gender, ethics and power as depicted by two late 20th century female authors: British Amanda Cross, the author of several detective stories within the genre of so called ‘university fiction’ and Swedish Åsa Nilsonne, psychiatrist and the author of novels about medicine and crime. The genre of university novels is usually defined as stories about university milieu and academics, written by former students or academics. Detective stories about the university are a sub-genre, and as all crime fiction they are rather regarded as popular literature than high-brow writing. Women novelists have always been in minority within the genre of university fiction, and so have the detective stories by women authors. Still there are a couple of important British women novelists writing detective stories about Cambridge and Oxford. Amanda Cross is very interesting example, especially because the main character in her novels is a female academic, who gets involved in disclosing what I call the ‘intellectual evil’ in the purely intellectual milieu of Oxford colleges. In Sweden, the physician Åsa Nilsonne, is the only contemporary female author dealing with detective stories in the world of medicine. She does it a thrilling way, as she includes parapsychology and fantasy in her stories about human loneliness, pain and death. Also her main characters are women.

In the paper, I will be trying to show that both Cross’ and Nilsonne’s detective stories address the universal questions of life, professional ethics and power, as they appear in a gendered postmodern world. Also the narration itself I will analyze from a gender perspective, as both authors represent female contributions to the genre of crime fiction.