ABSTRACT

**What's The Fence for? Borderlines of the Heterosexual Family Home in Hand that Rocks the Cradle.**

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In my paper I will examine the physical borderlines of heterosexual home in the Hollywood thriller *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (US 1992, dir. Curtis Hanson). In the film the in-between spaces, like the glace house, the attic and the garden with a new fence, become meaningful scenes. A borderline can also be marked by an outsider lurking into the house through a window.

My starting point is Lynda Hart’s argument, that the heterosexual woman is a cultural construction, which is often supported by the representations of non-normative people, especially violent women. When analysing the physical borderlines in HRC I am especially interested in the use of the outsider characters to support the white heterosexual family ideology and heteronormativity.

In HRC the main conflict is between the good family woman a vicious nanny, who tries to take the wife’s place in the family. There is also a black retarded man helping with the house renovation and mostly working outside the house. He is framed guilty by the blond blue-eyed woman; the actual trespasser. In the end his force is needed to finally destroy the violent woman. Nevertheless he is ultimately an outsider. This character opens interesting questions of the relations of race, ethnicity, capability and heteronormativity.

The conventions of representing violent women in popular culture were changing in the 1980’s and early 1990’s. One of the new types of representations of a destructive woman was a trespasser moving about and around the heterosexual nuclear family or couple. There the main conflict in the end is between two women, the good family woman and the deviant and sexually different woman. The trespasser fully entered the screen in Hollywood thriller *Fatal Attraction* (US 1987, dir. Adrian Lyne). *Single White Female* (US 1992, dir. Barbet Schroeder) came out the same year HRC did. These movies ca be seen in the context of the recent crises of the nuclear family and heterosexuality. They can also have interpretations where the vulnerability of the heterosexual family institution is revealed.