

# The Scanner



University of British Columbia



*Scandinavian and Nordic Cultural Association*

## Issue 01

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We acknowledge that the land on which we learn and gather is on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓íl̓wətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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# *2020-2021 Editorial Team*

## *Issue 1*

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Welcome to the UBC Scandinavian and Nordic Cultural Association's inaugural issue of *The Scanner*. The idea and founding of this journal happened during the summer of 2020, when everyone on the executive council of the Scandinavian and Nordic Cultural Association (and the world) was scattered across the globe in isolation. I, along with Frida Schöld and Flora Huo, would meet with our 6-to-9-hour time differences, armed with our tea and coffee, to discuss what this could look like over many late nights and early mornings. We wanted to do something for the 2020-21 school year that would allow students to be active and feel included in our small community, but also to reach out to other students who wanted to collaborate on something that was creative and academically rigorous. And so, as Editor In Chief, I am honoured to present *The Scanner*.

*The Scanner* is an undergraduate journal, created, written, and edited by undergraduate students here at the University of British Columbia. It aims to publish academic papers that are specific to topics in Scandinavian literature, film, politics, culture, and history. Thus, whether it be in this issue or in future ones, expect to see content about Iceland, Greenland, Finland, Åland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the Faroe Islands. The journal hopes to provide a place for not only academic papers written within the Scandinavian Program, but across different departments, if the topic is relevant. To give you a small taste of what is yet to come, within this issue you will find essays about women in the Viking Age, Scandinavian crime fiction and how women are portrayed, sports, mythology and nature, and a historical look into Denmark during the Second World War.

This journal would not be here if it was not for the support and hard work of the 2020-2021 *Scanner* editorial team to bring this issue to life. We thank Lena Karlström and the Scandinavian Program here at the University of British Columbia for the continuous support and guidance, the students, and the Scandinavian and Nordic Cultural Association for the platform to spread the word about our journal. Their encouragement and patience helped us get through the learning curves, technical difficulties, acquiring the most accessible place to publish, being patient when our original timeline did not work out, and overall being supportive during a very difficult year. I extend my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to everyone involved. The vision and design of our first issue would not have been possible without the work of *The Scanner's* Design Editor, Ella Davey, who contributed many meaningful hours and dedication to the images and art you find throughout the journal. It is truly a masterpiece. Thank you to Wesley Choi, our Layout Editor, for coordinating and aiding in the concept of the journal's formation. Outreach and communication to those who submitted, as well as the person who was the main link between the editorial team and its authors, was handled by our Chief-Submissions-Officer, Kailee Wark, whose organization and time was greatly appreciated. To the Editorial Board for their dedication, research, and for editing every draft with a keen eye, I am very grateful to Boshra Moheq, Laurel Dabb, Frida Schöld, and Sally Kann. A further congratulations to those who submitted their essays for the inaugural publication is also needed.

Without you all, there would be no journal. I truly wish for everyone to see their work published and feel proud of being part of a journal we created as a community.

Ending this year as the first Editor In Chief of *The Scanner*, I am delighted to pass the title onto Wesley Choi, who I believe will do an amazing job as he takes the lead and shares his vision for the 2021-2022 year. Without further ado, on behalf of the editorial team, I welcome you to enjoy the inaugural issue of our undergraduate journal, *The Scanner*.

Ashley Samsone  
*Editor In Chief*



# Norse Mythology and Nature

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01

# The Business of “The Master Builder”

## By Sarah Schatz

### Abstract

Neil Gaiman’s novel, *Norse Mythology*, contains renditions of Norse myths with a familiar cast of characters – Thor, Loki, Odin, Freya, and more. The myths explore the many common themes within Norse mythology, such as their contradictory nature, magic, life and death, and gods screwing things up. This paper will focus on the myth, “The Master Builder” in which a mysterious visitor and his horse arrive in Asgard, offering to build a wall around the gods’ realm.

However, as a price for the wall the visitor requires Freya’s hand in marriage, the sun, and the moon. While the gods ponder this offer, Loki inevitably gets involved and makes things difficult. Should the gods’ take this stranger up on his offer? This paper will explore this question and “The Master Builder” myth in an unconventional manner - through a business lens by applying common business theories.



On the surface, Norse mythology and business seem like two entirely different worlds. Business is the domain of numbers, psychology, commerce, and corporations. Norse mythology, on the other hand, is all about gods and goddesses, magic, nature, giants, dwarfs, and many other mystical beings and goings on. If someone were to rave about their acquisition of an eight-legged horse in the business world, they would likely be met with concern and derision. The connection between business and mythology is unclear and slightly uncertain, but this sense of obscurity is emblematic of Norse religion itself. At their foundations, business and Norse mythology both occupy explanatory roles in society - business through frameworks and models, and Norse mythology through saga and magic. Just as a thunderstorm can be explained by Thor, the behaviour of informed versus uninformed buyers can be explained through a simple trading model. Furthermore, case studies are a common and effective means of teaching students how to use business principles. These simulations of real-life scenarios present potential problems in businesses that require the students' analysis from a variety of angles – be it finance or organizational behaviour. A Norse myth can be treated as a case study. Thus, “The Master Builder” from Neil Gaiman’s Norse Mythology, will be analyzed using the business principles of net present value, risk and reward, negotiation, market research, sales, and commercial law.

From a business perspective, the case of “The Master Builder” begins with the decision many companies face: whether to take on a new project. The gods must decide whether to proceed with the gamble of Freya, the sun, and the moon in exchange for a wall protecting Asgard (Gaiman 69-89). When deciding whether or not to take on a new project, real life firms conduct a net present value (NPV) analysis, which involves the time value of money. One dollar today is not worth the same as one dollar in the future because of inflation (i.e. what costs \$1 today may cost \$2 in the future). Thus, when looking at the costs and benefits of the project, which may materialize at different time periods, they must be expressed in today’s dollars. The NPV itself involves subtracting the project’s costs from its benefits and discounting them back into present day dollars to account for the time value of money (Kenton). If the NPV is positive, the project should be taken on, if it is negative, then it should not. Since this project takes place over a finite time frame of one winter, the value of future benefits is uncertain as the value of the dollar changes. This is why the future value must be expressed in the value of the dollar today. This is where risk and reward come in. If the dollar is worth less in the future, this could lead to a loss as the benefits are not worth as much ( $NPV < 0$ ). If the dollar is worth more in the future, then there would be a positive outcome ( $NPV > 0$ ). Thus, there is risk in paying for the project when there is uncertainty about actually getting the reward. However, in this case, the gods are unlikely to pay the stranger cash for the wall and observe the fluctuations of the dollar over time. Instead, the gods were utilizing the sun, moon, and Freya’s hand in marriage as currency for a protective wall. In this case, there is a parallel between the value of the dollar and the completion of the wall. The gods only have to pay the stranger for the wall if it is completed within one season. A high future value of the dollar means more benefits and fewer losses, where the failure to complete the wall in one season means the same thing for the gods. On the other hand, a low future value means more loss and no benefit, corresponding with the completion of the wall on time, where the cost (sun, moon, Freya), greatly exceeds the benefit (having a wall). In fact, the loss of the sun and moon means the loss of time, which signifies that Ragnarok is nigh. Alternatively, the completion of the wall without the loss of their bargaining chips would protect Asgard from the giants. This means that the gods would be risking an accelerated arrival of Ragnarok. Additionally, the gods were risking Freya’s hand in marriage, which would have led to the most important goddess being in the hands of giants.

This would unsettle the balance of male gods and female goddesses in Asgard and a lack of balance in Norse myth means one step closer to Ragnarok. It is a very high risk, high reward situation, for one must be compensated greatly for taking greater risks. This is known as the risk-return tradeoff (Chen). Furthermore, the costs of the project must be determined in order to calculate the NPV.

This is where the area of human resources enters the equation. The proposed wall requires labour and resources, which come at a cost. In this case, the labour and resources come from the mysterious stranger, but not for free. As such, negotiation is required, reminiscent of real-world situations where deals are negotiated to determine the price of acquisitions, the salary of employees, or disputes between labour unions and employers. In an average bargaining session, there is always a starting point (Steen et al. 345). In “The Master Builder,” the starting point originates from the stranger when he requested the sun, the moon, and Freya’s hand in marriage in exchange for the construction of a wall for the gods over a winter, summer, and another winter. The gods were displeased with this offer, as the costs vastly outweighed the benefits. The giant’s starting point was far past the gods’ resistance point; the absolute worst offer they would be willing to accept, which would be to actually pay for the wall (Steen et al. 346). Thus, the gods were left with the options to either reject the offer or come back with a counteroffer. Since the gods’ target point (their ideal outcome of the negotiation), was a free, high quality wall, they opted to return with a counteroffer suggested by Loki (Steen et al. 346). Their counteroffer demanded that the stranger build the wall by himself in one season - an impossible timeframe - and only receive payment if he was successful. Unfortunately for the gods, this was past the stranger’s resistance point, which was to complete the wall in one season with the help of his horse. Therefore, the stranger suggested a final counteroffer, equal to his resistance point, which the gods accepted. “The Master Builder,” provides an immersive example of distributive bargaining. The outcome of distributive bargaining is that one side gains at the expense of the other, a win-lose situation (Steen et al. 347). Either the stranger can gain Freya, the sun, and moon, while the gods lose the three, or the gods gain a high quality wall while the stranger loses time and energy for nothing. Yet there still remains the question of why the gods decide to present a counteroffer in the first place and what that counteroffer consists of. Marketing provides that answer.

Market research is an essential part of any stream of business, but tends to fall under the umbrella of marketing. Marketing centers around having the right product for the right price using the right promotion at the right place via the right distribution (McDaniel 3). The purpose of market research is to execute activities that generate information and guide marketing decisions (McDaniel 6). Loki is the market researcher in “The Master Builder,” as he conducted activities that generated information in the form of observational research. He used this observational research to guide the marketing decision of the gods’ wall deal. Observational research is research completed through the observance of how people interact with their environments (McDaniel 115). Loki is an intelligent and cunning trickster, and in order to be successful in his trickery, he must truly know the victims of his ploys. In “Treasures of the Gods,” he cut Sif’s hair because he knew it would infuriate both Sif and Thor, and in “Death of Balder,” he exploited Hod’s insecurities about his brother to manipulate Hod into using the mistletoe to kiss – sorry, kill – Balder (Gaiman 238-239). He does this again in “The Master Builder,” when he took advantage of the gods’ occasional lack of foresight to convince them that it would be impossible for the stranger to finish building the wall in three seasons. So, limiting the timeframe even further would guarantee that they would not have to give up anything. Loki’s sales pitch to the gods was quite convincing, including cogent rhetorical statements such as: “what this stranger is proposing to do is, to make no bones about it, quite impossible”,

“[i]f on the first day of summer any of the wall is unfinished - and it will be - then we pay nothing at all,” and, “[t]here is no risk to us of losing Freya, let alone the sun or moon,” (Gaiman 74-75). It seems that through his observational research, Loki determined that the gods were risk averse, so when he formulated his sales pitch, he stressed the lack of risk involved. He also shortened the time frame for their counteroffer in order to further push the gods into accepting his idea. He essentially convinced his fellow gods that their project would almost certainly have a positive NPV, allowing for benefit with no loss. In reality, the risk was much greater, but only Loki knew that with confidence.

This is where, unfortunately for Loki, commercial law comes in. This is assuming that Loki has a form of ‘contract’ with the gods explicating his position as their advisor throughout the negotiation process. Loki has acted as a powerful corporation, with much more knowledge and expertise than the average consumer, in this case, the gods. Loki took advantage of the consumer to secure the corporation a better outcome. Freya played the part of a consumer who had already been spurned by the company (as Loki tricked her in the form of a seal and stole her gold necklace) and thus is wary of trusting the company in the future. The ‘Corporation of Loki’ does not have Freya’s seal of approval. However, there were no Yelp or Google Reviews at the time, so all Freya had was her word. While more extreme, her suggestion of sentencing the party responsible for getting the gods into the deal to death is parallel to the condemning of a corporation for forming a contract with an unconscionable party, breaking fiduciary duty, and fraudulent misrepresentation (Smyth et al. 76, 81, 171). Unconscionability is present in deals where there is unequal bargaining power between parties and the more powerful party receives the more advantageous result (Smyth et al. 171). Loki had all the bargaining power within his ‘contract’ with the gods because he knew that the stranger actually had a good chance of completing the wall. Thus, Loki stood to benefit through the wall’s completion as it would bring chaos and Ragnarok, which Loki wanted. In addition, Loki broke another law: his fiduciary duty to the gods. Fiduciary duty is duty imposed on a person who stands in a special relationship of trust and loyalty to another (Smyth et al. 76). This person must act in the best interest of the party for which this duty exists. Loki betrays the trust placed in him by the gods as he acts against their best interests by giving them advice with the goal of harming them. A third illegal action of Loki was fraudulent misrepresentation. Fraudulent misrepresentation is an untrue statement or omission of fact believed and relied upon (Smyth et al. 81). Loki said it was “impossible” for the wall to be completed in such a short time frame and that there was “no risk” in losing Freya, when in reality it was more than possible. The usual punishment for these offences is damages, which provide an alternate completion of the project or even monetary compensation in order to place the injured party in the position they would have been in if the contract was completed properly (Smyth et al. 171). In this case, Loki was sentenced to death. However, he accepted the plea deal of preventing the party from getting injured to lessen his punishment. His alternative would have been to stand trial and allow the party to be injured, resulting in his death. Becoming a mare to distract the stranger’s horse and render the stranger unable to do complete the wall on time prevented injury from befalling the gods, and Loki’s beautiful baby foal, Sleipnir, was worthy damages.

In conclusion, Norse mythology and business both provide explanations for social behaviour and real-life transactions. People in 2020 take on projects, as did the Vikings, and where the Vikings may have consulted the gods for advice, people today may consult an NPV analysis. The gods must interact with different species with different values just as we interact with each other today, and the principles of negotiation are advantageous in each. Information has always been important, as Odin sacrifices his eye for it, and companies today pay (or sacrifice) thousands of dollars for valuable market research. In mythology there is the essential balance of cosmos and chaos, while in business there is the balance of assets and liabilities. With retrospective analysis and an open mind, it is evident that the themes and principles of Norse Mythology are still widely applicable in the mundane realm of real-life modernity.



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# Evaluating the Morality of the Gods: A Philosophical Approach

By Zachary Besler

## Author's Note

This paper assumes the reader has a working familiarity and level of comfort with Neil Gaiman's "Norse Mythology" book. The author and editors encourage anyone who has not already done so to read this book, and "The Mead of Poets" myth in particular, before reading this paper, both to ensure full comprehension and suitability of the subject matter. This paper and the aforementioned myth are fraught with morally questionable and emotionally/physically harmful actions. This paper seeks to interpret these actions (committed by gods) and assess the implications for modern society. Reader discretion is advised.

## Abstract

Norse mythology is rife with contradictions. One way to capture the messages these myths (and their inconsistencies) are trying to tell us is to analyze them through different philosophical lenses. This paper analyzes the most morally questionable behaviour demonstrated by a god in Norse Mythology – the actions that Odin undertook to recover the Mead of Poetry (from "Mead of Poetry", Gaiman, 2017). I will use different ethical perspectives, specifically Utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Virtue Ethics theory, to determine if Odin behaved in morally permissible ways.

I will argue that the gods do not always act in morally permissible ways, which might make them more relatable to us in society; after all, while we may think that "the gods created us in their vision", the reverse is the only definite in terms of cosmology. With the resurgence of Norse Mythology in modern religion and organized belief, such as with the Ásatrú, I will discuss how virtue ethics theory is related to the fundamentals of the religion; ramifications that this may have on society; and how we should act morally.

Those familiar with Norse Mythology will quickly identify that the “gods are good” and “giants are bad” thought process is too simple. Odin broke oaths (“The Master Builder”, Gaiman, 2017) and slept with a giantess (Gunnlod) in order to steal mead (“The Mead of Poets”, Gaiman, 2017). Giants, on the other hand, have hosted parties for the gods (“Hymir and Thor’s Fishing Expedition”, Gaiman, 2017) and built walls to protect them (“The Master Builder”, Gaiman, 2017). It is perhaps more accurate to say that the gods are on the side of “order”, while the giants are on the side of “chaos”, and that sometimes gods and giants venture over to the other’s domain to eventually serve their own agendas. But again, Thor needed to be restrained by giants so as to not inadvertently create too much chaos, such as when he caught the Midgard Serpent in “Hymir and Thor’s Fishing Expedition” (Gaiman, 2017). What, then, are we supposed to make of this? And more importantly, if one is only speaking in terms of “order and chaos”, then the entire issue of “good” and “evil”, or morality, appears to have been conveniently sidestepped. To address this moralistic chasm, we can rely on philosophical tools to evaluate the actions of the gods and assess whether the gods act in morally permissible ways - and gain insights into our own behaviours as a result.

In the myth “The Mead of Poets” (Gaiman, 2017), a group of dwarves murdered Kvasir - a god who was the living embodiment of knowledge and wisdom - and created the mead of poetry from his blood. The dwarves sought to control possession of this potion, essentially monopolizing access to an essential gift that would benefit all of society if it was released to the public (an extremely troubling moral action in its own right - but that is another paper for another issue of this journal). In response, Odin acts in many morally questionable ways to recover the mead of poetry, specifically: killing slaves (p. 140), working the land to build trust (p 142), sleeping with the giantess Gunnlod (p. 147-148), and stealing the mead (p. 150). But were these actions morally permissible?

### **The Utilitarian’s Views on Odin’s Actions**

Utilitarian ethical theory is based on three fundamental concepts: Hedonism, Equal Consideration, and Consequentialism (Findler, Smolkin, & Bourgeois, 2019, p. 24). Hedonism states that pleasure is the only intrinsic good, and pain is the only intrinsic bad (p.24). Equal Consideration demands that we weigh and value each person’s (or god’s, giant’s, or dwarf’s) pleasure and pain equally. Lastly, Consequentialism states that the best, or morally permissible action, is the action whose consequences provide the most amount of pleasure, or the least amount of pain.

The consequences of Odin’s actions broke the heart of the giantess Gunnlod; nine slaves died; and the gift of poetry was returned to the gods so that all gods, goddesses, and humans could have the gift as well. Overall, while a few individuals experienced some pain, the flipside (namely, allowing dwarves and giants to have the gift of poetry instead) would have prevented our society from having such a gift, and this would be a worse outcome for the largest number of individuals. Therefore, as Odin is morally permitted to do whatever it takes to secure the mead with the gods for the benefit of society, his actions in the myth are, indeed, morally permissible, according to Utilitarians.

### **Challenges with the Utilitarian Perspective**

Although philosophers can critique each of the three key considerations in utilitarianism, the largest critique is that it is too simple (Findler, Smolkin, & Bourgeois, 2019, p. 27). For while it makes intuitive sense that the consequences of our actions should influence the permissibility of these actions, it seems much less likely that this should be the only moral consideration.



One might also wish to assess one's intentions. There is also something about manipulating people that seems inherently immoral, but Utilitarian theory is unable to fully account for this.

### **The Kantian View of Odin's Actions**

Ethical theorists who assess morality through one's intentions are called Kantians. If someone does the "right" thing, such as donating to charity, but does not feel joy when doing so, or does so for their own gain (personal recognition, tax credits), then the action has zero moral worth (Findler, Smolkin, & Bourgeois, 2019, p. 34). Kantians have two philosophical tests to determine whether an action is morally permissible or not: The Universal Law Formulation of the Categorical Imperative (p. 36), and the Humanity Version of the Categorical Imperative (p. 38).

The Universal Law Formulation of the Categorical Imperative states that we must all "only act upon those maxims that you, at the same time, can wish all others to do" (p. 36). If it is impossible to imagine everyone doing the action you are evaluating, then this is a contradiction in conception, and therefore must never be done (p. 36). If it is possible to imagine everyone doing the action, but the person evaluating the maxim cannot wish everyone to do the action, this is a contradiction in will, and therefore can be permissible in rare situations (p. 36).

The Humanity Version of the Categorical Imperative states that we must "always treat rational beings as rational beings, and never as things" (p. 38). Kantians define rational beings as those who have Categorical Imperatives, or the ability to act because it is the right thing to do, irrespective of personal thoughts or desires (p. 35).

Applying these tests to Odin's actions, it becomes quite clear that Kantians do not support him. Exploiting a giantess (presumed to be a rational being) sexually to make her vulnerable, and leveraging this vulnerability to steal from her, raises many concerns for Kantians. For Odin does not treat the giantess as a rational being (someone who would not want to be sexually manipulated), but rather as a thing (a tool to acquire mead). This action therefore violates the Humanity Version of the Categorical Imperative and is morally impermissible.

Further, killing anyone is also seen as morally impermissible to Kantians, as it fails the Universal Law Formulation of the Categorical Imperative through contradiction in conception – we cannot imagine everyone killing everyone, because then there would be no society left. Therefore, no one should ever kill anyone. You can imagine just how uneasy the gods might feel upon hearing this statement.

### **Challenges with the Kantian Perspective**

The most significant limitation to Kantian's tests is that some people may be able to determine different Categorical Imperatives to test in an action and draw a different conclusion. For example, Odin may claim that he is acting on the imperative to "honour and respect the deaths of friends and family", by reclaiming the Mead of Poetry. Because we can imagine everyone acting to honour and respect the deaths of loved ones, and we can also will everyone to respect the deaths of their loved ones, this appears to be morally permissible. The "lawn fanatic" example provided in Findler, Smolkin, and Bourgeois (2019) on page 41 notes that someone could imagine and will the execution of everyone who trespassed on a lawn, given a fair warning. Odin may follow a similar line of thought by imagining and willing anyone to avenge the wrongful deaths of their friends and families, in any way necessary. Therefore, it appears the Universal Test of the Categorical Imperative can seemingly allow actions as morally permissible when others would not view these as such - a significant challenge if we were to rely solely on this perspective.

## **The Virtue Ethics View of Odin's Actions**

Unlike the previous two theories, virtue theory principally finds morality not in actions, but in character. Virtue ethics is inherently not dogmatic - rather, it accepts that the infinitely nuanced intricacies of morality are not codifiable, and as such, no finite list of rules can ultimately direct moralistic behaviour. Instead, as virtues are considered “positive character traits”, we can assess morality by asking if the person is acting as we would anticipate a virtuous person would (Findler, Smolkin, & Bourgeois, 2019, p. 54). Two key concepts encompass virtue theory: The Doctrine of the Mean (p. 55), and Eudaimonia (p. 54). The Doctrine of the Mean notes that the vices of excess or insufficiency surround every virtue. For example, when considering the virtue of honesty, lying is certainly a vice, but so too is brutal honesty, as this is not being tactful and sensitive to the person's needs (p. 55). Eudaimonia, or “flourishing happiness” (p. 54), indicates that living a virtuous life means acting morally and experiencing happiness. Crucially, the contingency between moral actions and happiness must be learned. This allows for an interesting extension on the Kantian perspective: an individual whose actions, such as helping someone in need, seem virtuous (and by extension, moral), but who feels no happiness doing so, is not acting virtuously. Kantians and virtue ethicists might suggest that this individual's intentions may be to gain fame, external recognition, or financial incentives - which a virtue ethicist would promptly thereafter denounce as vices of greed. However, the discerning reader will make quick note of the contradiction - this will be addressed in the section on challenges with this perspective below.

When analyzing Odin's actions, we can see many vices, specifically: greed, lust, indifference, deceit, and unfaithfulness, to name a few. It is difficult to imagine that a virtuous person would pretend to love someone only to deceive them and steal from them. The sheer volume of vices is indicative of a weak moral character. Therefore, at first glance, a virtue ethicist would declare Odin's actions morally impermissible.

### **Challenges with the Virtue Ethics Perspective**

As mentioned above, perhaps a meta-philosophical issue with the virtue ethics perspective relates to the moral permissibility afforded to a virtuous person for acting virtuously and by nature, personally gaining by experiencing happiness as a result. What is the directionality of the relationship between acting virtuously and experiencing happiness? Is acting to experience happiness not inherently greedy in its own right? What, apart from arbitrary and potentially self-conflicting virtues, are to separate a virtuous person from someone without a moral compass who very much enjoys the actions that they take?

Virtue ethicists would argue that ultimately, regardless of ethical perspective, humans will act in ways to increase their own happiness - the key is to ensure that these actions promote positive values in society.

A subsequent issue is the lack of dogma, which is both a strength and a weakness - it does not provide the sturdy rules that Utilitarianism and Kantianism provide. Given that the framework of Virtue Theory only states that moral permissibility is based on whether a virtuous person would see the action as virtuous, the potential for ambiguity is again larger. Odin, attempting to rationalize his behaviour, may suggest that he was exercising the virtue of justice by avenging Kvasir's death, and given that ignorance is a vice, attempting to expand knowledge by recovering the mead would also be virtuous. However, virtue theory assesses whether actions were executed virtuously or viciously, and Odin leaves some clues that he may be acting more viciously (with malicious intent) than virtuously. Odin used the name “Bolhverkr” to disguise himself, which means “worker of terrible things” (p. 140). Odin was also grinning in the dark as he told Gunnlod lies, demonstrating that he was taking pleasure in being deceitful (p. 149).

Given the evidence from the myth, and considering the unique contributions that each ethical perspective makes to the decision of morality, particularly as they pertain to character and intention, it appears Odin's actions were not morally permissible. The last section will discuss the implications of immoral gods (or other powerful role models) on society.

### **Virtue Ethics Theory and the Ásatrú Perspective on Moral Responsibility**

When assessing the recent revival of Norse mythology through the Ásatrú religion, the latter relies on nine key virtues as the bedrock of its core values. These virtues, according to Rudgley (2018) are “courage, truth, honour, fidelity, discipline, hospitality, self-reliance, industriousness, and perseverance” (p. 233). What does it mean, then, when our gods do not always obey these virtues? For Odin clearly did not demonstrate the virtues of truth and fidelity throughout Mead of Poets.

An initial, knee-jerk interpretation may suggest that as we created the gods in our vision, and we are imperfect beings, the immoral behaviours of the gods simply reflect our imperfections. However, while we should not expect ourselves to be perfect, we should also learn from the mistakes that the gods already made, and our own mistakes, to inform our future decisions. For it is one thing to commit moral errors, and another to repeat them. Ultimately, the ability to optimally use virtue ethics is limited by the ability to correctly identify the most salient virtues in a given moral dilemma - but this ability relies on the wisdom accumulated through experience (Findler, Smolkin, & Bourgeois, 2019, p. 80).

### **Final Reflections**

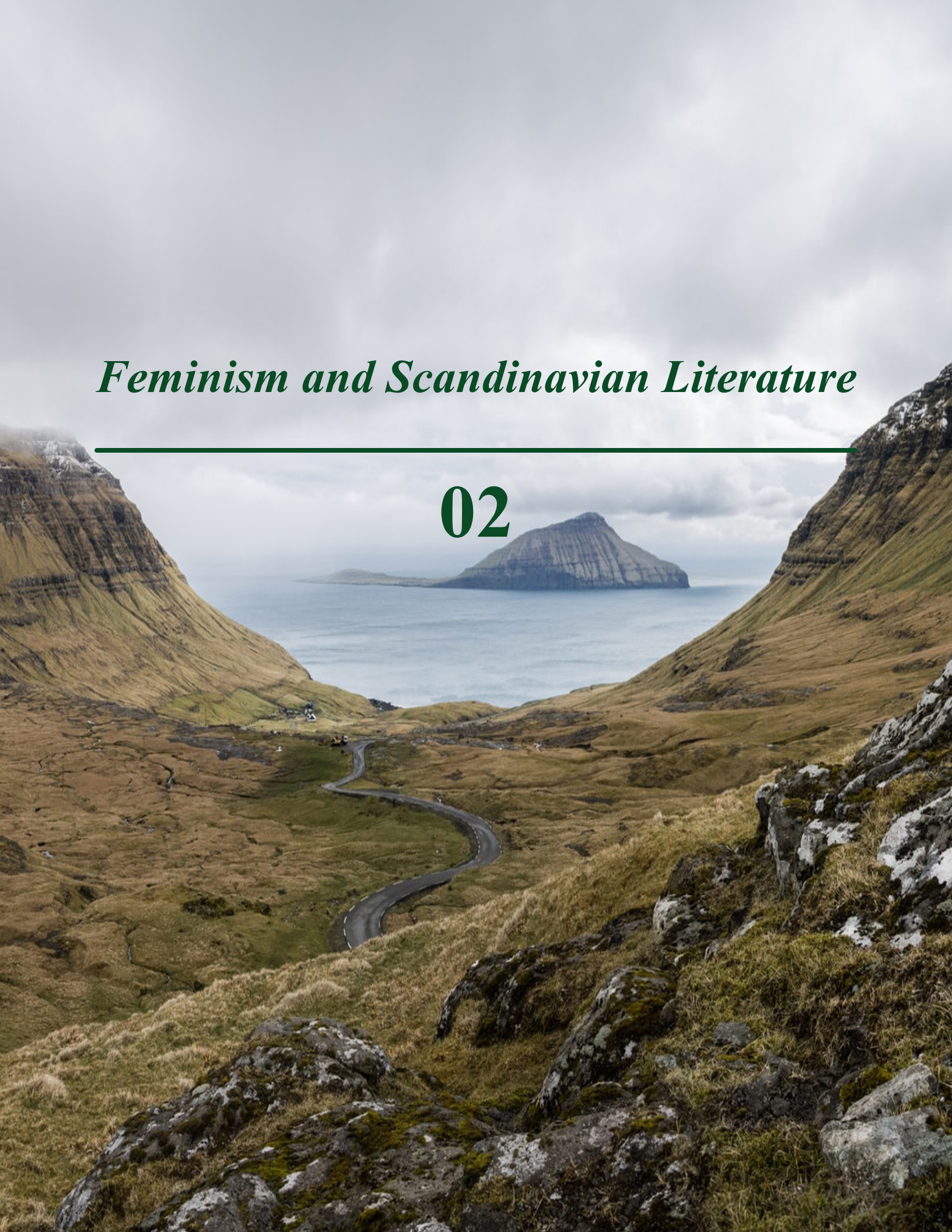
When we critically assess our role model's actions through different philosophical lenses, we can uncover an entire new layer of the mythology's interpretation. There are many contradictions in Norse mythology: this paper has demonstrated how we can truly capture the messages they are trying to tell us; reflect on the concepts the myths are asking us to ask ourselves; and use both of these as springboards for assessing our own thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours. What were the consequences of Odin's actions (Utilitarianism)? What were Odin's intentions (Kantianism)? What innate, virtue-based character does Odin have (Virtue Ethics)? How can Odin act morally in the face of injustice? If you are of the volition that Odin did act morally, because his actions were against giants and dwarves ('lesser' beings than gods or humans), and for the betterment of society: if Odin did the same actions against humans or other gods, does this change your perspective? Should wisdom and knowledge be shared with the world, no matter the cost? What are the limits of our expectations for virtuous living? Which virtues are the most critical in certain situations? The myths are more than just stories; they provide deep insight into how we should treat each other in society and be the best versions of ourselves.



# *Feminism and Scandinavian Literature*

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02



# Vikings Were Women Too: A Look into the Significance of Women in the Age of the Vikings

By Safia Siobhán Boutaleb

## Abstract

The traditional view of an androcentric Viking culture has been challenged in recent years by the growing subdiscipline of gender archaeology, the study of historically under-researched individuals, which has highlighted the socioeconomic contributions made by women in antiquity. This research paper takes a gender archaeological approach by outlining the significance of women in Nordic myth and daily life during the Viking Age (750-1066 CE). By revisiting Norse mythology through the texts of Snorri Sturluson,

I argue that the influx of Christians to Iceland resulted in female deities, such as Freyja, who were considered equal to their male counterparts, such as Óðinn, being overshadowed by an increasingly masculine pantheon. Moreover, bioarchaeological re-examination of the Birka burial in Sweden has demonstrated that, contrary to previous interpretation, the Viking warrior buried within was female. Additional research into the Nordic funerary record in Western Europe further demonstrates that Viking funerary culture included women of high status.



For centuries, Vikings have captured the attention of people around the world. The iconic, and often inaccurate, image of the bearded male warrior in his horned helmet has made its way into literature, art and film. At his side, the media has graced us with the occasional spear-wielding female warrior, complete with braided hair and, once again, a horned helmet. Yet, what do we know of real Viking women? Were women active participants in Viking raids or included in warrior culture? The answer is complex and will be addressed in this paper, as I outline the social significance women held in Nordic culture during the Viking Age (~750-1066 CE) by looking at their representation in Norse mythology and the archaeological record (Price et al. 181; Jesch 1). In considering both their literary and funerary treatment, we are able to create an overall clearer picture of women's central position in Nordic culture.

### **What is a 'Viking'?**

The definition of a Viking is somewhat debated among scholars and its original meaning has changed over time (Jesch 8). One of its early known uses dates back to the 9th century CE, when an encamped group of individuals was described as a "heap of vikings" (Christiansen 2). The following centuries would see varied meanings for the word "viking" across Europe, as it was inscribed on runestones ("Vikingar"), in Anglo-Saxon chronicles ("robber") and in Skaldic verse ("raiders", "the enemy") (Christiansen 2). This paper will follow the definition noted by Christiansen (2002), wherein a Viking represents an individual involved in the occupation of raiding (Christiansen 3). Settlers not actively participating in raids (everyone else) will hereby be referred to as Norse people practicing Nordic culture in the Viking Age (~750-1066 CE), the period of time in which Viking activity was most prevalent across Europe (Christiansen 4; Jesch 8; Price et al. 181). This paper will therefore address the representation of both Viking and Norse women in Nordic culture.

### **Mythology**

Public perception of Viking culture stems largely from a vague societal recollection of Norse mythology, with its pantheon of masculine gods like Thor, Óðinn, Loki and Freyr. While this connection is not unfitting per se (as a lord of warriors, Óðinn was certainly worshipped and revered by Viking and Norse people alike), it is only one part of a larger picture of Viking worship (Mundal 295). For example, there are more names for goddesses in Norse mythology than there are names for gods and yet, we know very little about them, to the extent that many of their identities remain a mystery (Mundal 304; Ingham 2). While troubling, this gap in knowledge may have its roots in our sources for the old myths, The Poetic Edda and The Prose Edda (Jesch 134; Christiansen 41; Mundal 304).

The Poetic Edda is a 13th century manuscript of poems collected from both older Viking Age oral traditions and 13th century contemporary stories (Jesch 134). Conversely, The Prose Edda is a comprehensive "guide to poetry and mythology" composed in 13th century Iceland by Snorri Sturluson (Jesch 134). Sturluson was a Christian collecting oral stories in Iceland after its conversion from paganism to Christianity (~1000 CE), making the interpretation of the myths somewhat biased towards Christian morals, which did not always align with Nordic pagan culture (Jesch 134; Davidson 24; Ingham 13). There is an increasing recognition among scholars that the patriarchal nature of early Christianity may have served as a catalyst for the gradual omission of prominent female characters in the retelling of old myths (Jochens 2; Mundal 302). Nevertheless, the name of one goddess in particular, that of Freyja, appears repeatedly in both The Poetic Edda and The Prose Edda, despite the myths' proclivity for male gods (Ingham 1, 13). Thus, Freyja likely represents an aspect of pre-Christian Nordic culture, wherein goddesses held equal ground to gods in Norse and Viking worship.



While myth should always be considered cautiously, particularly when used as a means to interpret ancient attitudes towards women, it remains a useful resource when considered critically alongside archaeological or anthropological research.

### **Freyja**

Njord, in Noatun, afterward begat two children: a son, by name Frey, and a daughter, by name Freyja. . . . Freyja is the most famous of the goddesses. She has in heaven a dwelling which is called Folkvang, and when she rides to the battle, one half of the slain belong to her, and the other half to Odin. . . . It is good to call on her in love affairs.

(Sturluson chap. 8)

Snorri Sturluson's introduction of Freyja (see Figure 1) in *Gylfaginning* of *The Prose Edda* as "the most famous of the goddesses" immediately stresses her importance in the Norse pantheon (Sturluson; Ingham 33–34). Furthermore, Sturluson highlights Freyja's many names, noting she obtained them in her travels searching for her lost husband Óðr (Sturluson 2006, chap. 10; Näsström 68–75; Ingham 33). Freyja's names are Horn, meaning "flax", Mardol, meaning "gold", Sýr, meaning "sow" or "to shield", Vanadís, which meant "woman of the Vanir" and Gefn, which also meant "giving" (Sturluson 2006, chap. 10; Näsström 68–75; Ingham 33). In addition to Freyja's many identities, her true name is said to be the root of the word frur, meaning "lady", which according to Sturluson, was the title for "women of birth and wealth" (Sturluson chap. 8; Ingham 34). Here we see an array of names attributed to one goddess, illustrating the wide span of her influence across Nordic culture.

Freyja's presence is rivalled only by Frigg, the wife of the Alfather, Óðinn (Grundy 56). There is, however, some dispute in scholarship regarding the remarkable similarities between these two powerful goddesses, which has led many to believe that they may, in fact, have originated from one goddess (Freyja) and grown apart into two goddesses (Freyja, Frigg) over the course of generations of oral tradition (Grundy 56–57; Davidson 123). One key piece of evidence supporting this theory is the fact that Freyja's husband, Óðr, is undoubtedly a variation of the name Óðinn (Grundy 56). Likewise, the mythology tells of both goddesses engaging in sexual infidelity in exchange for a magical necklace (Grundy 57). Furthermore, Freyja's involvement with seiðr (witchcraft) together with her role as a battle-goddess pairs her alongside Óðinn, who fills a similar role as the Alfather (Grundy 61). Freyja and Óðinn are both gods who practice old magic and, according to Snorri Sturluson's telling of the myth, each of them receive one half of those slain in battle to their hall:

Folkvang it is called,  
And there rules Freyja.  
For the seats in the hall  
Half of the slain  
She chooses each day;  
The other half is Odin's  
(qtd. in Sturluson chap. 8)

Grundy (2002) suspects that Sturluson may have inadvertently committed to writing the remnants of a much older sect of Norse worship, in which Freyja and Óðr were the two most powerful gods, illustrating relative equality between a male and female character (Grundy 56, 61).

Scholars have posited that Sturluson's emphasis on Freyja may not merely be due to her rank among Norse goddesses, but also the attachment Norse and Viking people may have had to her and their consequent reluctance to renounce their worship of Freyja after the recent Christianization of Iceland (Ingham 34). This would explain Sturluson's passage stating, "Freyja alone remained of the gods, and she became on this account so celebrated that all women of distinction were called by her name" (Sturluson 239). Perhaps Snorri wanted to illustrate Freyja's fame among gods and mortals alike. Whatever his reasoning, the Norse people never quite lost sight of their favourite female character, as she can still be found in many place-names across southern Sweden and Norway (Davidson 115).

### **Archaeology**

Archaeology, which is the study of humanity through its material culture, has helped to enrich recent understanding of Nordic culture in the Viking Age by providing us with a glimpse into sites of historic occupation (Jesch 2). Funerary archaeology, which is the archaeological study of human burial, has further expanded our knowledge through critical analysis of features in Nordic burial contexts, such as grave goods, grave placement and body position (Price et al. 191, 194). This has proven to be particularly useful for studying the socioeconomic status of women through their funerary treatment, as a number of Viking Age female burials have now been excavated (Price et al. 191). These burials are crucial, as scholarship has largely excluded women from Viking culture (Price et al.; Jesch 1). This historic gap in research has led, in recent years, to an increased desire among scholars to re-examine historically sexed Viking burials, such as the case of the female Viking excavated in 'Birka chamber grave Bj.581' (Price et al.; Jesch 1).

### **A Viking Woman**

In the late 19th century, Hjalmar Stolpe excavated a Viking burial, which he labeled Bj.581 (Price et al. 182). The burial was located at Birka, a Viking Age settlement in modern Sweden that was once home to between 700-1000 Norse people during the 8th-10th centuries (Price et al. 182). Stolpe noted, even then, the grave's notable archaeological context, as it lay in close proximity to two other burials and a garrison building that contained many weapons, including swords, spears, shields, knives, axes, arrows, lanceheads and fragments of armour (Price et al. 188). Moreover, Bj.581 contained the remains of a well-dressed individual buried with a game board, game pieces, two horses and numerous weapons; leading Stolpe and others to interpret the burial (based on the presence of weapons) as one belonging to a male warrior of considerable status (see Figure 2) (Price et al. 183–84).

For over a century, the Birka burial was cited as an archetypal example of a Viking, with little to no disagreement (Price et al. 187). In 2017, Hedenstrierna-Jonson et al. published the results of their aDNA (ancient DNA) analysis on the Viking warrior, citing that the remains belonged to an individual whose sex was, in fact, biologically female (Price et al. 182). While it is important to clarify that one woman does not make an entire population of female Vikings, the implication of these results is still significant, as it illustrates that women could be Vikings (see Figure 3). Price et al. (2019) expand upon the results by saying, "We would be very surprised if she was alone in the Viking world; other women may have taken up arms in the same seasonal or opportunistic context as many male Viking raiders" (Price et al. 193). Archaeological research elsewhere has also shown that women were unquestionably valued participants in Norse society and their burials can be seen across Western Europe. Christiansen (2002) highlights that the 9th century boat burial of a woman at Oseberg, Norway is the richest boat burial ever to be found (see Figure 4) (Christiansen 17).

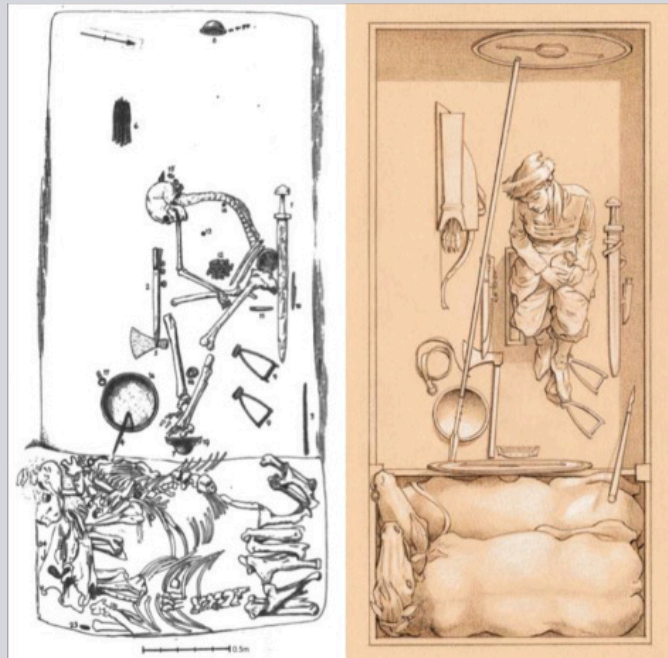
In addition, a separate 2015 study comparing aDNA with modern DNA from current Norwegian populations showed that, “Norse women may have been involved in the colonization of new territories during the Early Middle Ages” (Krzewińska et al. 6–7).

## Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated women’s social significance in Nordic culture during the Viking Age. The repeated inclusion of Freyja in Norse mythology illustrates the importance of goddesses in Nordic culture and how, in pre-Christian Iceland, Freyja was once upheld as equal in worship to the male character, Óðinn. After the arrival of Christianity, towards the end of the Viking age, religious and cultural shifts resulted in goddesses being gradually set aside in favour of an increasingly patriarchal pantheon of male gods. Archaeological analysis of Birka burial Bj.581, which had served as an archetypal male Viking burial for over a century, further demonstrated the historical existence of high-status Viking warrior women. These findings highlight implicit male biases within early interpretations of the funerary record, as well as the need to re-examine historically excavated Viking burials using up to date methods. Additional archaeological evidence of a female boat burial in Norway further demonstrates that women, like men, were the recipients of elite Norse funerary treatment. Both the literary and archaeological evidence illustrate widespread social recognition of women during the Viking Age, conclusively demonstrating that women raided alongside men as Vikings in western Europe, hopeful that their actions would lead them to the halls of Óðinn or Freyja.



**Figure 1** - 19th century artist’s interpretation of Freyja (Näsström 73)



**Figure 2** - Side by side comparison of the chamber grave plan and what archaeologists think it may have looked like when constructed (Price et al. 185-186)



**Figure 3** - Artist's interpretation of the female viking in Bj. 581. Clothing, weaponry and horse are based on the burial's contents (Price et al. 1993)



**Figure 4** - Map of high status female burials in Sweden, Denmark and Norway (Christiansen 18)



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# Mother/Nature Nexus: Exploring Maternity and the Natural World in Gräns and Woman at War

By Britt Macleod

## Abstract

In this paper, the author performs close readings and a comparison of the Icelandic film *Woman at War* (2018) by director-writer Benedikt Erlingsson and the Swedish film *Gräns* (2018) by director-writer Ali Abbasi, exploring the ways in which the directors conflate the maternal with the natural and draw a parallel between the protagonists' relationships with nature and their maternal instincts and aspirations. Employing semiological and filmic analyses in conversation with feminist discourses,

the author establishes connections between the distinct narratives in how each of the women at the centre of these films commune with and advocate for nature whilst following and reflecting (often subtly or covertly) maternal impulses in myriad ways. In analyzing the action, shots, and characters in each of these films, a deeper understanding of each protagonist is reached by the end of the paper which asserts the importance of maternity as a central theme in these narratives.

The films *Gräns* by Ali Abbasi and *Woman at War* by Benedikt Erlingsson explore the distinct journeys of their female protagonists to motherhood by linking motherhood to nature and the natural. For both Erlingsson's Halla and Abbasi's Tina, a reflexive relationship with nature, the use of nature as a site of preparation and manifestation of their dreams of motherhood, and the presence of an opposing patriarchal force underscore the idea of the maternal being intertwined with the natural for these narratives.

Both films suggest a maternally-inflected, reflexive relationship between nature and the protagonists. For each character, nature can be viewed as an emotional touchstone, and in turn, each performs restorative actions for nature. Throughout *Woman at War*, Halla takes inspiration from the natural world, established early on as she takes an energizing breath from the mossy ground at 00:05:13 (and later at 1:08:00) while on the run from the scene of the first of her anarchic acts that we witness. Later (00:06:32) she successfully hides herself beneath a lip of soil whilst fleeing from those who pursue her in a helicopter and would seek to end her environmental crusade of "sabotage" (*Woman* 00:48:18). She entrusts her secret wish of motherhood to the earth when she feels all hope is lost, having been tracked down by the authorities, burying the photograph of little Nika under the moss while the Ukrainian ensemble looks on. Here (1:22:00) nature becomes a site of protection in another sense, offering Halla a place to conceal her dreams. The assistance Halla receives from nature allows her to intensify her crusade and push towards completion, which aids her journey towards motherhood as well. Using a sheep's carcass, and later, submerging herself in a freezing stream, she is again able to hide from her pursuers (*Woman* 1:07:14-1:08:55).

Although more fraught than in the case of Halla, for Abbasi's Tina, there is a similar reciprocal nurturing and protective relationship between her and nature. When Tina feels threatened, she goes to nature for comfort. Several times we see her walk barefoot into the forest or swim nude in the lake, usually after moments of alienation. Close-up shots of Tina's fingers show that she, like Halla, simultaneously draws energy from nature and returns an affectionate touch (*Gräns* 00:43:17). In one scene, Tina leaves her home where she has been neglected by her freeloading boyfriend, Roland, and is visited by a moose (with whom she seems to be acquainted). Later when Roland forces himself on Tina, a fox-friend checks in on her through her window (*Gräns* 00:32:50). The natural world is drawn to Tina as much as she is to it. As with Halla's world in *Woman at War*, a clear line can be drawn in *Gräns* between the natural realm (which Tina leans into both instinctively, then more purposefully when following her ancestral history) and the industrialized, capitalist realm of humans. This rift is evident when Tina drives her neighbours to the hospital— though the relationship is friendly and trustful, there is a clear barrier of understanding. The couple cannot sense the deer that dart in front of them as Tina does, and, importantly, they cannot then understand how she was able to do so, visibly unnerved by this even while they are grateful. This scene underlines the idea that wherever Tina goes, she remains on the fringes, and that an important aspect of this marginalized status is her connection with nature. This is perceptible in the distinction between Tina's relationship to wild animals versus Roland's domestic dogs. While wild creatures and Tina display mutual respect and understanding, Roland's dogs bark aggressively at her and she views them with fear and apprehension. Later, when Tina has learned of her true identity and is gripped by traumatic revelation, sadness and loneliness, she is able to stand up for herself, snarling back at the dogs and forcing them and Roland out of her home. In this scene Tina has drawn the power to defend herself from nature itself. Demonstrating that she has always been pulled to nature and, notably, that it has always signified an instinct within her about her troll identity, Tina recounts to Vore that she used to fantasize about seeing faeries as a child,

pointing out a special place in the forest, which can be read as a site of escape which she unwittingly sought from her human existence, not just the adversity she faced (Gräns 00:45:05).

In discrete ways, Halla and Tina perform a covert preparation for their maternal roles through their commitment to nature. In her manifesto, Halla reveals concern for future generations as one of the drivers of her anarchic actions, imploring the public and the government to enact environmental change for the sake of “our children and grandchildren” (Woman 00:40:35). In many ways, Halla ties the notion of motherhood and providing for future generations to her environmental mission. Evidently, part of her reason for undertaking this mission is to satisfy her maternal impulses, or rather, that maternal instincts are inextricably linked to her environmental crusade. It is not so much that she has taken up environmental anarchy in lieu of motherhood, but rather that crusading for the environment inherently goes hand in hand with the maternal impulse. Erlingsson shows that Halla’s eco-terrorism and active motherhood cannot exist at the same time (at least not in the same way), further reinforcing this concept. When the welcome intervention of Nika appears, Halla must see to completing her mission and relinquishing her role as eco-anarchist. She can no longer use the same methods to pursue environmental change, but must concentrate on preparing to become a parent and trust that by being a good parent she will pass on values to her child which will continue the crusade. She will invest in the future in a new way through the raising of Nika. In fact, Halla’s covert anarchy is her covert preparation for motherhood, as is evidenced in the moment when she pins Nika’s photo over the map on her wall as she begins to craft her manifesto. Nika and the prospect of motherhood informs how Halla approaches the writing of her manifesto; the two parts of her life are merging, influencing one another. This is underlined by the merging of the film’s two main musical entities which occurs when Halla ‘distributes’ her flyers. The whimsical Icelandic band that has been supporting her metatheatrically as a sort of chorus blends musically with the Ukrainian ensemble that has represented the intervention of Nika (and motherhood). Abbasi presents Tina’s yearning for motherhood with more subtlety, although, arguably, its presence is just as powerful for Tina as for Halla, and equally bound to nature. For Tina, this concept of covert preparation manifests in the way she has remained curious about her innate connections to the natural world, effectively remaining receptive to her troll identity, searching for answers and finding comfort in nature, even if her trollness was imperceptible to her at the time. At the end of the film, one can infer that Vore has survived and sent Tina one of the fertilized hiisits (changelings) which he has birthed— that this is her biological child. Observing how Tina reacts to her baby, it is evident she held a dream of motherhood all along. This revelation further contextualizes (along with the scenes of revelation about her trollness and sexual/romantic encounters with Vore) the way and the level to which Tina has been blocked and traumatized by her life experiences, how she has been othered, and consequently been unable to envision motherhood for herself (the way that Halla does). The scene in which Tina confesses her “chromosomal flaw” to Vore (00:45:38) reveals her resignation to the idea that she cannot biologically bear children, but her sadness and certainty also seem to suggest that, unlike Halla who has held on to hope, she has given up on the idea of being a mother full-stop. Having internalized the prejudice towards her, Tina is self-loathing to the point that she cannot imagine herself as a maternal figure. However, aside from the obvious biological factors that magnetize Tina to Vore, part of her attraction to him is that he helps her to connect to something that she has already been trying (unsuccessfully) to access on her own. In seeking a mate in him, she opens herself up to what she never saw as possible before— seeing herself as a sexual being, and as a mother. Ultimately, we can imagine Tina becoming a successful mother— which will be achieved through the reconciling of her troll-identity with her human upbringing,



a discovery which will be greatly supported by her connection with the natural world.

If we view Halla and Tina as maternal forces, then we can also identify that each has a foil, coming in the form of a destructive patriarch, manifesting metaphorically in the case of Halla, and in more literal, interpersonal ways in Tina's case. In *Woman at War*, it is the State, the government, the capitalist industrial companies ravaging the environment, and the masses, which Halla confronts— a collective force of united ideology which aligns to form a destructive patriarch and provides a foil to Halla's constructive, proactive matriarchal energy. If Halla's moves toward motherhood and her defensive actions on behalf of future generations secure her both as a constructive maternal figure and an individual connected to nature and the distinct natural environment of her country, then the retaliatory actions of the State and members of the public show those entities to be destructive not only to the environment (in perpetuating industrial practices that harm it), but also destructive to future generations on a human level. Tina on the other hand is confronted by similar destructive patriarchal forces, represented by Vore and her human dad. In *Gräns* it is a force legible as colonial which has stripped Tina of many defining features of her species and troll culture. Her tail has been cut off, her biology remains a mystery to her, her parents were abused, ultimately killed (either deliberately or due to poor conditions in the facility they were held in), and none of these things have been acknowledged. Tina has spent her life constantly feeling othered at the indirect behest of her dad who, either in an attempt to protect her, help her assimilate, or to avoid pain, kept her past secret, conditioning her to human life. Of course, ultimately, whatever her dad's intentions, his choice to augment Tina's body and keep her identity a secret have caused her more pain. When she discovers the truth, she not only has it to grapple with but also the pain of knowing that her whole life her parents have lied to her. This can be read as an imbalance of power but also as a lack of respect for natural order, as Tina's dad has taken it upon himself to make choices that disrupt Tina's relationship to her world, her culture and her body. Another important interpersonal example of the destructive patriarch in Tina's life is found in Vore. Biologically speaking, it may be more appropriate to classify these trolls as intersex, but in terms of how these characters diegetically perform and present gender in relation to humans, it reasons to align them with the gender binary. With that in mind, Vore in a clearly decipherable way, exhibits an ease with the power he possesses, which is at least in part due to his masculinity—his own reading of himself, and the reading of him by others, as male. Conversely, Tina is informed by the fact that she has been read and had to perform in the human world as female/feminine. With his power, Vore is able to manipulate Tina, working towards his own destructive goals (some of which are directly related to fatherhood and literal destruction). As the holder and bearer of knowledge to Tina, he is the sole individual in the story who can show her who she really is (although, not in the way either of them might have intended) and he teaches her about troll culture, about her own body, about sex (he is her first sexual encounter), but he does so selectively. By only telling Tina the truth partially and incrementally, Vore holds control of the situation and holds her affection. Furthermore, in being dishonest about his intentions and his crimes against human children, he violates Tina's conception of an ideal relationship to the natural world. For Tina, humans are part of that world and although there is a clear separation between her species and theirs, she nevertheless cares about humans, while Vore on the other hand operates by a moral code which does not recognize humans as equals. His main objective is to seek revenge against humans, who have wronged his species, and to see his race continue. This solidifies him as a foil to Tina because while she looks forward, possesses hope and strives for compromise and reconciliation (both within herself, and between trolls and humans), Vore would see the future she imagines destroyed, being stuck in the past, obsessed with retribution.

Similarly, Halla's hopes for the future and conscious attempts to awaken people to the need for policy change and environmental rehabilitation, as it were, are concerned with the future (the idea of construction itself relies on forward-thinking), while the destructive patriarchal forces in the film oppose by effectively aiming to preserve stasis, holding to the damaging industrial practices of the past. The end of *Gräns* sees Tina beginning to carve out a new future for herself, her baby representing the peace she has longed for. Nurture has won over nature; Tina has won over her traumatic past. Tina cares about humans, about practicing empathy, and we can imagine her raising her baby with these beliefs in mind as an integrated troll in human society.

The final images of these films are lasting ones which confirm a mother/nature nexus. *Woman at War* features a dynamic shot of Halla holding Nika in her arms wading through waist-deep water, the fused Icelandic-Ukrainian musical ensemble following behind. As the shot zooms out, a helicopter flies overhead, symbolizing the sustained threat of political/industrial interference with nature. Nevertheless, Halla moves forward with Nika in tow, the blended band, representing the two aspects of her maternal-environmentalist impulses moving with them, the anarchic Icelandic half of the ensemble quiet (at least for now), letting the other side of Halla, the other method of activism, take focus. *Gräns* leaves its audience with the image of Tina's face smiling down at her baby. Having just fed the infant an insect, she seems to be filled with a sense of peace and pleasure at seeing her baby contented, nourished by what her troll-self foraged, and by the empathy her human-self can offer. This shot and the opening one bookend the film, evincing the personal growth Tina has undergone and self-acceptance she has found. For each character, motherhood is a lifelong dream that she thought might never be realized, and in experiencing it finally, she can imagine a better future for herself, her child and for the natural world.

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# The Female Gaze in Hans Rosenfeldt's *The Bridge* and Niels Arden Oplev's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Men Who Hate Women)

**By Caitlin Hyland**

The Female Gaze is a concept pioneered by director and writer Jill Soloway in her seminal 2016 talk at the Toronto International Film Festival. Her framework presents an avant-garde mode of depiction for filmmakers and theorists providing a useful methodology for interpreting visual media through a feminist paradigm. This essay will use this toolkit to compare and contrast *The Bridge* (created by Hans Rosenfeldt) and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (directed by Niels Arden Oplev and based on the novel by Stieg Larsson), both of which attempt to project third-wave feminism through their lead characters Saga Norén and Lisbeth Salander, with varying degrees of success. To unpick the underlying similarities and contradictions between these characters and the techniques that govern the way they are presented on screen, particular attention will be paid to critical scenes that highlight their respective stylistic representations within the genre of Scandinavian crime fiction.

Scandinavian crime fiction's female characters have come to embody traits that are reflective of third-wave feminism.<sup>11</sup> In her essay "From Periphery to Center: (Post-Feminist) Female Detectives in Contemporary Scandinavian Crime Fiction," Nete Schmidt characterises third-wave feminist roles as independent and self-reliant while simultaneously having their own doubts, flaws and fears. These 'flaws' or 'imperfections' are what make these characters relatable and believable (451). Although both Saga Norén and Lisbeth Salander are independent, intelligent, strong-willed women who embody Schmidt's description, the way they are portrayed in the films is quite different insofar as it relates in their relationship to the Male and Female Gaze. These frameworks are conveyed through particular film techniques that result in a very different audience experience.<sup>22</sup>

Since its inception, film has been dominated by the Male Gaze which has continued to survive in the mainstream unchallenged. The term originates with Laura Mulvey who defined it in her essay "Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure" in 1975. The Male Gaze refers to the way film depicts the world, especially women, from the male point of view, positioning women as objects on display for male visual pleasure. In Mulvey's words, "woman as image, man as bearer of the look" (6-18). There are three parts to the Male Gaze all of which combine to present the woman as a spectacle characterised by her "to-be-looked-at-ness": the characters in the film, the camera or cameraman and the spectator. The Male Gaze is universally present as it is a structural format that has reflected the values of the institutionalized patriarchy throughout the history of film.

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1 Third-wave feminism is sometimes used synonymously with 'post-feminism,' however opinions are split on the validity of this term. The term is meant to distinguish this new feminism from second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism is critiqued for emphasising feminism in terms of difference and thus reinforcing the male-female binary and lacking an awareness of intersectionality. However, the term 'post-feminism' is criticised because it implies we exist in an era where feminism is no longer pertinent, and an argument this paper profoundly rejects.

2 Although this essay is only dealing with the Male Gaze and the Female Gaze, it is worth noting both of these depictions also demonstrate what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson terms "the stare." The stare "is an intense visual exchange grounded in the social and in appearance." (McHugh 540) McHugh uses this concept to describe the kind of looking used by investigators and distinguishes this look from the gaze. "Whereas the erotic gaze objectifies, sexualises, and genders, the stare generates social and forensic meanings, interrogating the shocking, the strange, and the traumatic." (McHugh 541) Both Saga and Lisbeth engage the Stare as detectives. The stare presents an alternate way of looking that exists outside of the hierarchical structures of the Male Gaze and perhaps offers insight into further developing theories of the Female Gaze.

While the Male Gaze and the Female Gaze are constructs that use indicators of gender to illustrate dominant-subordinate relationships, the Female Gaze is not simply an inversion of the traditional power structure embodied in the Male Gaze. Rather, the Female Gaze is an alternate way of seeing and experiencing visual media that exists outside of conventional dominant-subordinate structures. Like the Male Gaze, Soloway defines the Female Gaze in three parts: feeling-seeing, the gazed-gaze and the returned gaze. By feeling-seeing, Soloway means that a character is filmed employing innovative film techniques that use the body “with intention to communicate feeling-seeing,” obliging an audience to relate physically and emotionally to the character (17:24-21:13). It is not sufficient for the audience to watch the character from a distance; rather, the frame must “share and evoke a feeling of being in feeling” (17:58-18:01). The second component is the “gazed gaze” which the filmmaker achieves when they show the audience “how it feels to be the object of the gaze” (21:14-22:53). The filmmaker’s goal here is to make the audience aware of what it is like to be a spectacle for voyeuristic pleasure, which Soloway notes is a challenging task. The third aspect of the Female Gaze is returning the gaze where the feeling of being objectified is reversed onto the spectator. The ambition here is to evoke in the audience an awareness of what it is like to be the object of the gaze. In Soloway’s words, “It says we see you, seeing us. It says, I don’t want to be the object any longer, I would like to be the subject, and with that subjectivity I can name you as the object” (22:54-24:09). Achieving a complete realisation of all three legs of the Female Gaze is certainly challenging and Soloway confesses there are few, if any, examples of completely successful projects. Nevertheless, the Female Gaze remains a useful analytical construct through which to interpret representations of characters in visual media.

The significance of the Female Gaze as an apparatus is apparent from a comparison between *The Bridge* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. As protagonists, both Saga and Lisbeth share characteristics that break from gender stereotypes and emphasise third-wave feminist attributes. The audience experiences Saga as a sexually liberated, self-sufficient woman who defies gender norms; she is open and comfortable about the topic of sex and engages in casual sex. While Lisbeth has a different personality, she also displays qualities of independence, sexual liberation and self-reliance, and like Saga engages in casual sex. Further, both protagonists break from the stereotypical female character in other ways. Lisbeth is presented as androgynous, queer and particularly violent — traditionally a male attribute, while Saga is removed from the stereotypical role of wife and mother. When her police partner Martin asks if she has any children she replies “Why would I want them?” in an offhand manner that challenges the very validity of the question. Indeed, where Saga’s partner Martin is emotional, family oriented and motivated by instinct, Saga is analytical, factual and emotionally detached. This subtle inversion of gender stereotypes embodied in these two characters serves to question the relevance of gender norms for female protagonists.

Despite their similarities in terms of personal attributes, there are important differences between the protagonists that are conveyed through the directors’ use of film techniques to inform and shape the audience’s perceptions. Whereas *The Bridge* positions Saga Norén as a progressive embodiment of third-wave feminism through its disruption of the Male Gaze and use the Female Gaze, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* frames Lisbeth Salander solely through the Male Gaze, ultimately presenting her as a regressive male fantasy. The principal differences between these two works are best illustrated through the prism of the Female Gaze. In *The Bridge* Saga is implied to have a form of autism or Aspergers syndrome which positions her outside of the mainstream and serves as a device to disrupt the Male Gaze (McHugh 539).



She is often shown with unbrushed hair, wearing the same clothes repeatedly and openly changing her shirt at work, illustrating her lack of self-consciousness as a woman on display. The point was well made by Kathleen McHugh in *The Female Detective*, *Neurodiversity*, and *Felt Knowledge* in *Engrenages* and *Bron/Broen* where she asserts that because Saga is unaware of the Male Gaze she is unable to watch herself being watched, subverting standard conventions of the gaze by complicating it and throwing it off (543-544). In the first scenes of the pilot episode, Saga is subjected to Martin's gaze but this quickly changes when he is confounded by her obliviousness to expected feminine norms. However, not satisfied with just disrupting the Male Gaze, *The Bridge* also consciously incorporates the feeling-seeing element of the Female Gaze. In a scene 34-36 minutes into episode 3, season 3, Saga experiences a panic attack after finding her friend Hans badly injured. This scene is successful because it forces the audience to feel Saga's stress as she unravels. The audience hears the ringing in her ears. It feels the way her body shuts out everything around her. It shares her blurred vision as she organises the glasses and plates in the cupboards, reinforced by the camera work that mimics her pace and jerky movements. The shot changes and the audience can see her colleagues watching her while the ringing remains. The camera switches back to Saga, and the audience experiences her sense of isolation and panic. When she smashes the glass and throws the dish rack, the camera moves rapidly back as though repelled by the force of her frustration. The camera then shifts to a closeup, pulsing in and out, mimicking her breathing which obliges the audience to share in her instability. The spectator is not so much watching her as sharing her experience. This scene also succeeds in deploying the gazed gaze, part two of the Female Gaze, as Saga becomes aware that she is being watched. When her boss, Linn Björkman, enters the room, the spectator feels Saga's panic as she realises she is being observed by an authority figure. It is clear Saga feels assaulted by Linn's gaze as her eyes flicker around unsure of how to react and drawing the audience into her state of unease. Although Linn is a woman, she holds authority over Saga and watches her through a hierarchical structure that makes Saga feel self-consciously aware that she is the object. This is reinforced for the audience by the way Saga jumps in response to Linn's attempt to console her. Saga's sudden transformation from obliviousness to heightened awareness of being watched, that is being the object of the gaze, brings home to the audience the violating and intrusive nature of the Male Gaze. This scene does not fulfil the requirements of the third component of the Female Gaze insofar as Saga does not return the gaze. Nevertheless, the use of the first two elements achieves a powerful effect, making the audience more empathetic to Saga as a character.

The success of *The Bridge* in deploying the Female Gaze contrasts with the techniques used in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Niels Arden Oplev certainly had an opportunity to use the Female Gaze to enhance the film's underlying message of the systematic abuse of women, as expressed in the film's Swedish title *Men Who Hate Women*. Instead, he elected to frame the film through the traditional mechanism of the Male Gaze and Lisbeth, despite her third-wave characteristics, is objectified and subjected to the voyeuristic gaze of the other characters, the camera and the audience. The rape scenes in particular would have provided an opportunity to use the Female Gaze to augment the spectator's empathy with Lisbeth. However, the film employs traditional Male Gaze techniques which positions the audience as a removed bystander and as a result there is no feeling-seeing. The rape scenes are difficult to watch but, positioned as an outside viewer, the audience does not fully experience Lisbeth's personal trauma. Indeed, in the first rape scene the camera focuses for an equal amount of time on the rapist, Nils Bjurman. In the second rape scene the same techniques are employed and the audience's point of view is constantly being shifted.

There are closeups of Lisbeth and the camera syncs with her movement, flirting with the feeling-seeing aspect of the Female Gaze, but is quickly removed to a more distant perspective. Much of the time again is spent focusing on Bjurman and the spectator sees things Lisbeth cannot, positioning the spectator as a removed viewer witnessing the event as opposed to feeling with Lisbeth. The audience's removed position also undoes the potential for the presence of the second part of the Female Gaze — the gazed gaze. The audience sees Lisbeth as the object of the Male Gaze, however because they do not experience her trauma with her they also do not feel her experience of being objectified. The director's use of the camera reinforces the Male Gaze and involves the audience in objectifying her.

The film continues to make use of the Male Gaze though an inversion of power structures when Lisbeth 'punishes' her rapist by raping him. Some commentators have argued that Lisbeth's use of violence should be interpreted as a legitimate feminist response (De Welde 19). However, closer analysis suggests that such violence is better understood as an inverse of the Male Gaze. By responding to the dominant-subordinate structures with violence, Lisbeth is in a perverse way reinforcing these same power structures. Using violence to assert her dominance over Bjurman essentially relies on the same framework that traditional dominant characters operate. Thus, she is not challenging the framework of oppression within which the Male Gaze thrives. Lisbeth's use of violence can only be said to succeed as a feminist response if the dominant-subordinate relationship is seen as synonymous with the masculine-feminine relationship (De Welde 19). However, the masculine-feminine relationship is merely one of many constructed manifestations of the dominant-subordinate relationship. If one accepts that gender is performed and is a structured binary separate from sex, then we can see how a woman who takes on a traditional dominant role, in this case masculine violence, is ultimately reinforcing the traditional power structure (Butler 356-366). Female violence against men does not by itself disrupt the Male Gaze nor transform the story into a feminist narrative. As Soloway explains, "Even with a female hero, action movies are still the Male Gaze. They are usually -- if not always -- either written, directed or produced by cis-men so we're still talking about male projection and fantasy." Although the plot condemns violence against women, Lisbeth still plays towards male desire. Initially presented as aloof, mysterious and angry, when she enters into a relationship with Mikael Blomkvist her co-investigator, Lisbeth is made accessible and is legitimised as a male fantasy. Her relationship juxtaposes with the parts of her character the film has laid out for the audience and is a conventional and orthodox plot point that is inconsistent with the narrative of the film (Murphy 196). Lisbeth's character, although it contains feminist qualities, is presented through the Male Gaze objectifying her and playing into male fantasy and desire.

This essay set out to compare and contrast the success of *The Bridge* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* as examples of contemporary feminist visual media. Particular attention was paid to Soloway's analytical construct, the Female Gaze, as a method to assess each work through a feminist paradigm. The Female Gaze advocates film techniques and character development that result in enhanced subjectivity for female characters, escaping the dominant Male Gaze and immersing the audience in the character's experience. While both works had ambitions to articulate third-wave feminist values, the differing approaches taken by the directors led to different degrees of success. Aspects of the Female Gaze were present in *The Bridge* indicating a more progressive depiction of Saga Norén that challenges common visual structures and ways of seeing and experiencing. From this perspective, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was less successful insofar as Lisbeth Salander's strongly independent character was ultimately presented through traditional techniques preventing it from reaching its full expression as a

feminist piece of work. The power and longevity of the Male Gaze is difficult to overcome, however, in light of the popularity of *The Bridge* hopefully there will be more pieces that employ parts of the Female Gaze and continue to challenge and question the hegemony of the Male Gaze and its subversive representation of female characters.

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# Experiences of the Female Body in Scandinavian Crime Fiction

By Kate Checknita

## Abstract

On a physiological, psychological, and social level, the way in which individuals relate to their bodies is complex and multifaceted. Considering the pervasive gender expectations in Western society, the way in which cisgender women specifically relate to their bodies is an incredibly interesting topic of discussion. One way to exemplify the divergences of female body relationships is through the analysis of female characters in the Scandinavian crime fiction genre.

Lisbeth Salander in Niels Arden Oplev's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* simultaneously parallels and diverges from Rhea Nielsen in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *The Locked Room*. This essay will compare and contrast the relationship that Lisbeth and Rhea have with their bodies in two distinct dimensions: their body-self relationship, as well as their body-other relationship.



Whether experienced consciously or unconsciously, the psychological relationship an individual has with their physical body is extremely influential on one's emotions and behaviour. This relationship can be defined in two related but distinct ideas, known as the "body-self" and "body-other" relationships. This paper will analyze the ways in which two cisgender women in Scandinavian crime fiction experience the body-self and body-other relationship. Specifically, Lisbeth Salander in Niels Arden Oplev's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and Rhea Nielsen in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *The Locked Room* will be used to demonstrate how cisgender women specifically relate to their physical bodies.

What is meant by both "body-self" and "body-other" relationships? As is apparent in the name, the body-self relationship has been defined as the way in which an individual relates to their body (Underwood 377). The body can be understood as a physical representation of the inner experience, and therefore is tied to several aspects of one's sense of self. The way one thinks about their body, modifies their appearance, or relates body movement to external consequences are just some of many examples of body-self relationships. The closely related construct of "body regard" is defined by Muehlenkamp et al. as "how one perceives, cares for, and experiences the body" (481). The term body regard most often is discussed in the context of understanding eating disorders, as well as non-suicidal self-injury and suicide, with having low body regard being a risk factor for willingness to engage in painful or risky behaviour (Muehlenkamp et al. 486).

In contrast, body-other relations reflect the body and self as an interpersonal construct that mutually affects and is affected by social others. The concept of the body-self relationship underlies body-other relations, but this construct specifically focuses on the perception and influence that others have on the body. This type of relationship is especially relevant for cisgender women, whose appearance and sexual desirability has socially been determined as a primary feature of their identities. Frederickson and Roberts present a key component of female body-other relations in what they call objectification theory, understood as the observation that "girls and women are typically acculturated to internalize an observer's perspective as a primary view of their physical selves" (173). With sexual objectification being only one type of objectification, the consequence of taking this view of oneself has been linked to several negative outcomes, such as a stronger emergence of gendered behaviour, shame, appearance anxiety, and an overall disrupted sense of self (Frederickson and Roberts 180).

Lisbeth Salander from *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* can now be analyzed in relation to these two constructs. Although body-self relations and body regard are interrelated concepts, Lisbeth's experience of the two strongly diverge and are driven by distinct psychological processes. First, it is interesting to consider her body-self relationship in the reflection of her character in her physical appearance. Lisbeth's personality can best be described as a constellation of both admirable and unhealthy traits, but underlying almost every aspect of her character comes down to her desire to be both unconventional and independent. Her defensive, unemotional, and guarded sense of self clearly stems from her past experiences and trauma, particularly involving her physically abusive stepfather. The way that she resultantly goes about interacting with others, and more specifically with figures of authority, reflects a strong sense of distrust and need for solitude. For example, Lisbeth maintains a consistently hostile attitude when interacting with superiors at her work by openly defying dress code and commands, and additionally clearly prefers working independently. While in some ways Lisbeth can be described as a victim of circumstance due to the adverse situations she constantly ends up in, her resilience, strength, and power to fight back is what makes her such an unconventionally feminine character.

For example, her method of seeking revenge on her abusive guardian Bjurman, although disturbing to watch, reflects her positive character trait of being incapable of seeing herself as a victim with no power or control.

Now, to consider how Lisbeth's sense of self relates to the way that she physically presents herself, her body-self relationship can be understood to be quite strong. Her lack of adherence to gender norms is so clearly reflected in her appearance, from her dark makeup and hair, body piercings and tattoos, and alternative choice of dress. Unaffected by her professional working environment, Lisbeth chooses to present herself in a way that parallels her disregard and disrespect of male authority figures. Furthermore, her unwillingness to be emotionally vulnerable is supported by her hardened physical exterior, almost as if to convey to others that she will always remain at a psychological distance. Even more specifically, Lisbeth's past experiences and resultant identity are illustrated through her various tattoos, giving further support of characterizing her body-self relationship as being strongly tied. Her dragon tattoo, after which the movie is obviously named, parallels her trauma and connection to fire after her childhood experience of burning her stepfather alive. In this way, Lisbeth's experience of body-self relation can be summarized by the interconnectedness of her physical and psychological identity.

Interestingly, Lisbeth's body regard cannot be described as being as stable as her body-self relationship. As mentioned previously, an individual's willingness to put themselves in physical danger may be driven by having low body regard (Muehlenkamp et al. 486). As part of Lisbeth's rebellious and resilient character, her internal motivations arguably are reached at the cost of her physical safety. This is evident from examining Lisbeth's interactions with her legal guardian, Nils Bjurman, who sexually exploited Lisbeth by means of withholding her financial resources. Although she did not foresee how seriously the situation would escalate, Lisbeth went to Bjurman, knowing that he would attempt to sexually abuse her, with the intention of capturing incriminating evidence in order to blackmail him for money, rather than protecting herself and reporting his financial and sexual manipulation to the authorities. In this way, Lisbeth can best be described as self-sacrificing, and uses her body as a tool for reaching her aims with little regard for physical safety. Similarly, her reactions to Bjurman's abuse, as well as to the physical abuse she experienced from teenagers in a subway tunnel, reflect an emotional disconnection from the harm she just experienced. After getting punched in the face in the tunnel, Lisbeth hardly appears shaken by the experience and simply tends to her physical wounds as if they are no big deal. In this way, Lisbeth seems particularly insensitive to experiencing psychological harm from and physical pain she is exposed to.

Although Lisbeth's body-self relationship can be characterized as being relatively fragmented, her body-other relationship is overall very stable. What is interesting about Lisbeth is that while it appears that she is able to see how others are perceiving her, arguably taking the observer's perspective as described by objectification theory, her awareness of these perceptions does not result in the psychological consequences described by objectification theory. To reiterate the unconventionality of Lisbeth's appearance, the judgement she receives from others does not result in her conforming to a traditionally feminine style. Additionally, although she certainly experiences a great deal of sexual objectification from Bjurman, the way in which she approaches sexual relationships in her personal life does not indicate a sense of internalized objectification. Lisbeth chooses to sleep with Blomkvist and a woman that seems to be based on her own desires, rather than being unconsciously motivated by wanting these individuals to perceive her as an object of sexual gratification.

It is clear that Lisbeth's defiant sense of self allows her the psychological strength of not falling victim to internalized objectification, further embodying her as an admirable female character.

Turning now to Rhea Nielsen from *The Locked Room*, the strength of her body-other relationship in many ways parallels that of Lisbeth's. The primary social context in which the reader observes Rhea is with Martin Beck, who she meets as a result of Beck's investigation on Svärd. Through the development of their relationship, one of the most fundamental aspects of Rhea's character that becomes apparent is her candidness and transparency with her actions. Specifically, her behaviour, mannerisms, and tendency to say exactly what she is thinking does not change according to who she is interacting with. A primary example of this is Rhea's openness about her political attitudes, stating that "the [capitalistic] system encourages them to exploit people," (168), despite the fact that she herself is a landlord and therefore a contributing agent to the system she is criticizing. Rhea conveys the same motherly, nurturing, and direct sense of character to Beck, who she later develops an intimate relationship with, as she does with the tenants in her building. The consistency with which Rhea presents herself to other characters in the book would not be observed if she had a poor body-other relationship, as her internalized perception of herself would change according to who is perceiving her.

Furthermore, Rhea's expression of her sexuality does not convey the idea that she sees herself as someone who is being sexually objectified. In fact, Rhea's approach towards Beck reflects a sense of dominance over him, as Beck looks to her actions as a way to guide his own. As she begins the topic of conversation about their sex lives, Rhea nonchalantly says to Beck: "Perhaps I should inform you that for the time being I'm no sort of a lay." (267), clarifying any ambiguity about the nature of their relationship based on her own preferences. Interestingly, Rhea chooses to display her body to Beck in an intimate manner directly after saying this and is described by the authors in an erotic manner; "...flat rounded breasts. Rather large light-brown nipples." (267). Similar to how Lisbeth is sexually objectified by Bjurman but does not fall victim to such circumstances, so too is Rhea objectified by the authors but remains unaffected by this objectification in her actions. If Rhea could be characterized as someone with a poor body-other relationship, her actions towards Beck would be much more clearly reflective of someone who views themselves as an object of sexual desire. For example, Rhea could have chosen to sleep with Beck even though she previously stated that she wouldn't, thereby putting his sexual desires above her own.

Rhea's body-self relationship can also be understood as being consistently stable, which somewhat differs from Lisbeth's experience of this relationship. One way in which these characters relate similarly to their bodies is the strong link between their senses of self and the way that they physically present themselves. Thinking about Rhea as someone who is characterized by authenticity, her introduction in the novel includes a physical description that very much embodies this trait. Not knowing who is knocking on her door, Rhea enters the scene with dripping wet hair, bare feet, and an old comfortable cardigan. Similarly, the authors describe her eye gaze as direct, explaining that "she looked him straight in the eyes as if she were always ready to come to grip with things, of whatever sort they might be." (160). Lisbeth's physical embodiment of her character is arguably more direct than Rhea's, as both her personality and appearance are very unconventional, but Rhea's comfort in presenting herself to a stranger in her most natural and authentic form similarly shows the ties between her sense of self and her physical appearance.

Understanding Rhea's experience of high body regard can best be observed through the way in which she takes care of her body.

This is where Lisbeth and Rhea's characters diverge, as Lisbeth has previously been characterized as someone with low body regard. In the same way that Rhea is genuine in her interactions with others, so too does she treat her body with respect and comfort that is apparent in her eating habits. Rhea describes herself as someone who is constantly eating throughout the day, and notably states that "A few pounds one way or the other don't change a human being. I'm always myself." (167). Rhea's way of showing self-care and respect for her body is allowing herself to eat whenever she wants, without concern for the physical effects that overeating might result in. Not being able to observe the way in which Rhea protects her body from physical harm, one can assume that based on her comfort with her body, Rhea would be less willing or able to put herself at risk in the same way that Lisbeth does.

There are many ways in which an individual can relate to their body, which has specific implications for cisgender women who are often subject to internalized objectification and overall negative views about their bodies. Two characters in the genre of Scandinavian crime fiction, Lisbeth Salander and Rhea Nielsen, are both similar and different in their experiences of the body-self and body-other relationships. Rhea and Lisbeth share an infallible body-other relationship, as both women act and present themselves in ways that appear to be little affected by others. Lisbeth's body-self relationship can be best described by strong ties between her sense of self and her appearance, but based on her willingness to submit herself to threat, appears to have low body regard. Opposingly, Rhea can be described as having high body regard as a result of her tendency to treat her body with respect, yet she parallels Lisbeth's physical embodiment of her identity in her body-self relationship. Understanding the complicated relationship cisgender women have with their bodies is an important and ongoing topic of discussion, and through the analysis of these literary characters, a greater sense of clarity about the nature of these relationships has been achieved.

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# Working Women and the Male Gaze

By Leor Elizur

## Abstract

The landscape of the Scandinavian crime fiction genre has changed markedly since the 1990s, specifically in the portrayal of female characters and the representation of female authors. Traditionally, female characters in Scandinavian crime are depicted as love interests or victims while men are the heroes who solve the crime; falling into gendered stereotypes of women as objectified and sexualized and men as strong and heroic. The shift in the genre since the 1990s has shown an increase of female authors and a diversified representation of female characters,

who are now portrayed as having successful careers and are not necessarily tied to family. Using the characters Anette Brolin from the novel *Faceless Killers* and Freyja from the novel *The Legacy*, this paper explores the changing landscape of gender in Scandinavian crime fiction. The novel *Faceless Killers* by male-author Henning Mankell depicts women, specifically Anette, as one-sided characters who are objectified and sexualized by the male gaze. On the other hand, *The Legacy* by female-author Yrsa Sigurðardóttir includes well-rounded and empowered female characters, namely Freyja.

Gender plays a large, yet implicit, role in the Scandinavian crime genre. Women are often victims or love interests, whereas men are protagonists and the ones who solve crimes. Until the late 1990s, about one to two of all published Scandinavian crime novels per year were written by women (Karlström, “February 3rd: Breaking the Genre- Women”). In 1997, Liza Marklund won the Swedish Crime Queen competition with her novel ‘The Bomber’ and marked the beginning of the female and feminist perspective in crime novels (Karlström, “February 3rd: Breaking the Genre- Women”). Today, the majority of Swedish crime novels are written by women and have highlighted the stories of working women balancing their career and family life, as well as less traditional, eccentric female characters who are not tied to their family (Karlström, “February 3rd: Breaking the Genre- Women”). The female perspective in crime has expanded to other countries, such as Iceland, and marks a change in the portrayal of female characters in the genre. This perspective is important in shifting the genre away from the male gaze, which refers to the act of depicting women and the world from a masculine, heterosexual perspective that represents women as sexual objects for the pleasure of the male viewer (Karlström, “February 5th: Breaking the Genre- Women”). The novel *Faceless Killers* by male-author Henning Mankell depicts women as one-sided characters. Even working women, namely Anette Brolin in *Faceless Killers*, are objectified and sexualized. Anette is subjected to the male gaze even though she is a working woman in a position of power. On the other hand, *The Legacy* by female author Yrsa Sigurðardóttir includes well-rounded and empowered female characters. Specifically in this novel, Freyja is a working woman who is not subjected to objectification and the male gaze. Anette and Freyja both represent working women in their novels, but they are treated and regarded by the men in their lives in completely different ways; Anette is subjected to the male gaze while Freyja is not.

Not only are Anette and Freyja subjected to the male gaze in different ways, but they also each represent different waves of feminism. Although both are working women, they have different priorities in their lives. In the second wave of feminism, women are encouraged to join the workforce but are still expected to have a family (Karlström, “February 12th: Breaking the Genre- Women”). Anette can be tied to the second wave of feminism which portrays women as balancing the conflicting expectations and responsibilities of motherhood, family life, and career (Karlström, “February 12th: Breaking the Genre- Women”). Anette is a married woman who has young children and even though she has moved to Ystad for her job, her husband and children are still living in Stockholm (Mankell 130). She goes back to Stockholm to visit them every two weeks, but they come to see her only when they can or when they feel like it (Mankell 131). Anette’s sacrifices to keep her family together are much bigger than the sacrifices that her family makes; as a woman, she is expected to be responsible for keeping her family together. Anette is inherently tied to a man, her husband, and is therefore presented to the reader from the heterosexual perspective. On the other hand, Freyja represents the third wave of feminism which is more about self-fulfillment and equality of women, no matter their situation (Karlström, “February 12th: Breaking the Genre- Women”). The third wave of feminism does not emphasize the role of women as mothers and supports women’s personal choice regarding motherhood (Karlström, “February 12th: Breaking the Genre- Women”). Freyja does not have a husband or children; even though most of the time she seems confident and independent in this choice, this can sometimes be shaken. When Freyja is asked to house Margrét for a few days, she takes offense to the fact that she is the only one suitable because she “has no life” and is the only one at her job who is single and without children (Sigurðardóttir 205). Although we sometimes see that Freyja wants to have a partner, readers are still exposed to a successful woman who does not fit the traditional narrative of what a woman is expected to be like.

In *Faceless Killers*, the first introduction that readers have of Anette is a description of her outward appearance. Immediately upon meeting her for the first time, Kurt Wallander says that “the woman who opened the door was very striking and very young...She couldn’t be more than 30. She was wearing a rust-brown suit that he was sure was of good quality and no doubt quite expensive” (Mankell 88). Anette is immediately reduced to her outward appearance: her age, her physical appearance, and her dress. Her high career status as a public prosecutor becomes much less important than her appearance and throughout the novel, Wallander lusts after her in increasingly inappropriate ways. To contrast this, in *The Legacy*, the reader’s first introduction to Freyja is at her work, Children’s House, during Margrét’s first interview (Sigurðardóttir 53). Immediately, readers see Freyja as a career-oriented woman, the director of the Children’s house who has been given the responsibility of leading the Children’s House involvement in the murder case (Sigurðardóttir 53). Her outward appearance is much less important than the work she is doing. When her appearance is mentioned, it is made obvious that she is not dressing the way she is for any man. For example, when Huldar and Freyja go to pick up clothes for Margrét, she is dressed nicely for lunch with her friends but says that “the idea that he [Huldar] might think she’d dressed like this to impress him was intolerable” (Sigurðardóttir 107). Freyja’s dress and appearance are not for the male gaze.

The differences between the portrayals of women in *Faceless Killers* and *The Legacy* go beyond their outward appearance and can also be seen in the perspectives that the readers get to read. In a very literal sense, Anette is subjected to the male gaze. Throughout the novel, we only hear about her from Wallander’s male perspective. Readers never hear Anette’s perspective, nor is she ever given any autonomy or agency in the story. Her role is mainly to play the one-dimensional inappropriate love interest of the main character and to highlight Wallander’s obsession and unhealthy relationships with women. On the other hand, in *The Legacy*, readers often get to hear the narration from Freyja’s perspective. This allows readers to experience the female perspective and see her as a well-rounded character who has her own life that is not just in relation to the male protagonist. Her voice empowers her. Even though Freyja mostly has interactions with other men in the story (Huldar, her brother, and her ex-boyfriend), her story is mainly her own. We see Freyja acting with her own agency. If the reader did not get to hear Freyja’s perspective, then she likely would have been subjected to the same male gaze as Anette. To exemplify this, after Huldar offers to fix her floorboards, Freyja realizes that there is a gun underneath and removes it (Sigurðardóttir 359). Without Freyja’s perspective on what happened, both Huldar and the readers would assume that she is doing this so that she can impress Huldar, a man, by being able to fix the floor. Additionally, Freyja is a protagonist in her story and readers can see the story unfold from her point of view. On the other hand, in *Faceless Killers*, Anette only plays a supporting character to a man.

The relationship between the female characters and the main characters in *Faceless Killers* and *The Legacy* also contributes to their objectification. The relationship between Anette and Kurt Wallander is a very tense and misogynistic one. Wallander hates that Anette is in a position of power and is also an attractive woman. This hate soon turns into an intense attraction to her. Wallander is a more obviously misogynistic character than Huldar and often calls women ‘bitches’ (Mankell 84). Upon meeting Anette, Wallander cannot even look her properly in the eye and later thinks of her as a ‘babe’ (Mankell 89). He soon becomes obsessed with her, wanting to call her at night and even thinking that he loves her, even though she is married and has kids (Mankell 132). Eventually, in a display of his power over her, he tries to sexually assault her (Mankell 215).

This inappropriate relationship contributes to Anette's objectification by positioning her as an object of Wallander's desire. The relationship between Freyja and Huldar is uncomfortable in a different way: they had a one-night stand in which Huldar faked his name and occupation and escaped the next morning before Freyja woke up (Sigurðardóttir 57). In their relationship, it often seems that Freyja has the upper-hand. For example, the first time they meet again at Margrét's interview, Huldar is the one who feels uncomfortable. When he first enters the room, he is "discontented to find himself blushing" (Sigurðardóttir 62), and again when they meet at Margrét's house "his obvious discomfort restored her [Freyja's] self-confidence and filled her with satisfaction" (Sigurðardóttir 104). Both Wallander and Huldar have tense and uncomfortable relationships with Anette and Freyja, but the difference is in where the power lies in the eyes of the reader. Between Wallander and Anette it seems that Wallander has the power, he even allows others to call her a 'bitch' (Mankell 234). On the other hand, Freyja seems to have the power in her relationship with Huldar since she is often cold to him and does not give him a second chance after he lied to her during their one-night stand. This is evident in almost every interaction they have, where Freyja makes sure to keep the conversations short and curt.

Anette Brolin and Freyja both represent successful working women in *Faceless Killers* and *The Legacy*, respectively, but while Anette Brolin is often objectified and sexualized, Freyja is not. They also each represent different waves of feminism. Anette Brolin represents the second wave, where the main concern of women is balancing their career with their family. Freyja represents the third wave, where women are liberated to have any lifestyle that they choose for themselves, whether or not it involves children. Additionally, Anette Brolin's appearance is often sexualized and created to appeal to her male co-worker, Wallander. On the other hand, Freyja specifically makes a point of not tailoring her appearance to please men. Readers see Anette Brolin primarily through the perspective of the male gaze, mostly because readers never get to hear her perspective, only Wallander's perspective of her. Being a protagonist in the novel, Freyja's perspective is often heard which shifts the reader away from the male gaze and male perspective. Lastly, the relationship between Anette Brolin and Wallander is different from the one between Freyja and Huldar. In the relationship between Anette Brolin and Wallander, Wallander desperately wants Anette even though he knows he can't have her, and he inappropriately lusts after her and yearns for her. The relationship between Freyja and Huldar shows a different power dynamic where Freyja holds most of the power and can keep Huldar at arm's length. Anette Brolin from the novel *Faceless Killers* and Freyja from the novel *The Legacy* are therefore exemplary characters to describe the evolving landscape of gender in Scandinavian crime fiction.



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A scenic view of a coastal town at dusk, with mountains in the background and a body of water in the foreground. The town is nestled in a valley, surrounded by steep, rocky slopes. The water is calm, reflecting the soft light of the sunset. The sky is a mix of blue, orange, and pink hues. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

# *Scandinavian History and Culture*

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03

# The Danish National Character and the 1943 Rescue of Denmark's Jews

By Norman Gladstone

## Abstract

In the European countries conquered by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, one, some or all of the following actions took place against the local Jewish population: discrimination, incarceration, ghettoization, transportation, enslavement and murder. This happened in all German-occupied lands. There was, however, a notable exception in Denmark where the Danish Jewish population led a wartime life no different than all other Danes. This reprieve lasted for over three years until October 1943 when the Germans moved to transport Danish Jews to death camps. Before the German roundup of Jews happened, a spontaneous rescue by Danish civilians hid the majority of the Jewish population and, over a three-week period, secreted them to safety in nearby neutral Sweden.

What the Danes achieved was one of the greatest civilian rescues of the Second World War. This paper explores the role that the Danish national character played in the success of the rescue. Thousands of ordinary Danes took it upon themselves to take a moral stand against a massive injustice that was about to be perpetrated upon fellow citizens. Particular weight will be placed upon Denmark's deep-rooted democracy, teachings from historical enlightenment, codes of conduct and cultural values, with further acknowledgement of Sweden's humanitarian offer of sanctuary. Ultimately, what this paper endeavours to illustrate is that given a population's moral action combined with a practical means of escape, the Nazi's plans for Denmark's Jews were, for the most part, nullified.

On 9 April 1940, Nazi Germany launched an unprovoked and surprise military attack on neutral Denmark. Denmark surrendered to Germany within hours of the invasion, resulting in five years of German occupation. The immediate introduction of discriminatory and murderous policies against the local Jewish populations was a hallmark of German occupation during the Second World War. Astonishingly, a tentative exception was made in Denmark; its Jewish population of approximately 7,500 lived their lives indistinguishable from that of the general population during the first three years of occupation. The safety of the Danish Jews lasted until October 1943 when the Nazis moved to make Denmark judenrein (clean of Jews). In response to this move to forcibly deport Denmark's Jews to an unknown fate, a startling phenomenon occurred: thousands of Danes acted spontaneously to protect and transport the Jews to safety in Sweden. Examining aspects of that rescue in the context of the German-Danish dynamic of occupation will reveal that the positive traits of the Danish "national character" were instrumental in achieving one of the greatest civilian rescues of the Second World War.

Upon Denmark's surrender, an extraordinary arrangement was struck whereby the Germans honoured Danish political independence and the royal house in exchange for Danish cooperation (Yahil 32). While most Danes shared the common feelings of anxiety and fear in those early days of occupation, the Danish Jews felt particularly vulnerable (Hæstrup 15). Jewish community leaders advised all members to stay calm and place their trust in the Danish government (Hæstrup 17). This trust was based on confidence in the country's institutions to protect its Jewish citizens, as it had done for so many years previously. That the Danish Jews were left in relative peace in the early years of the occupation is remarkable. To understand this, consideration must be given to the German objectives in occupying Denmark. In addition to being part of the protective northern flank within Germany's grander plan for invading Norway and Western Europe, Denmark was the source of high-quality foodstuffs and industrial supplies, including armaments (Petrow 33; Kirchhoff 95). In addition, the overarching Nazi racial politics embraced the Danes as fellow "Aryans" and accorded them a privileged status within the greater German realm. In the early years of occupation, this fraternal feeling manifested itself as a relatively benign occupation to showcase a "model protectorate" (Kirchhoff 95). This affection bestowed upon the Danes by the Germans was rarely, if ever, reciprocated, notwithstanding that there was a small Danish Nazi party and a few thousand Danes volunteered to fight with the Waffen SS on the Eastern Front (Lidegaard 33). Throughout the occupation, the Germans were fixated on preserving the status quo, lest the flow of Danish goods to Germany be endangered (Kirchhoff 95). Foregoing any action against Denmark's Jews was an inconsequential price to pay to maintain cordial relations with the Danes.

The Danish government and Folketing (parliament) were staunchly democratic and functioned accordingly; all citizens benefitted universally and equally (Yahil 36). King Christian X embodied the ideals of the nation and expressed solidarity with the Danish Jewish community; both he and the government made it clear the Danish Jews had their support (Yahil 13-14). Unlike some other parts of Europe, where the antisemitic "Jewish Question" pertaining to the status of Jews within a country's borders was fiercely debated, such a question occupied virtually no space in the Danish national consciousness or dialogue as there were no perceived problems (Yahil 43). Despite what was happening in neighbouring Germany in the 1930s, antisemitism found little fruitful ground in Denmark. Although antisemites and Danish Nazis did exist, such elements represented a minority. Subscribing to Nazism was considered "un-Danish" and traitorous (Bak 16).



The traits of the modern Danish national character were shaped by influences of the Enlightenment and by exceptional, inspirational luminaries. Of the latter, there was, as an example, N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), a Danish pastor and prolific poet, philosopher, author and teacher. As a theologian, Grundtvig took issue with Lutheran dogma by proclaiming that the order of life was to be a human being first and then a Christian (Pelikan 177). By acknowledging God as the Creator, all people were bound together more profoundly than any human construct or barrier (Pelikan 177-179). This was an enduring lesson for tolerance. Grundtvig is credited as the founder of the Folk High School (Folkehøjskole), a unique system of extended learning, which democratized education. It succeeded in providing new cultural and national content and consolidated the Danish spirit of democracy and humanity (Yahil 37). The foundation of Danish democracy was the Constitution of 1849 and subsequent amendments, which included a broad range of civil rights (Færkel 3). By the 1930s, the Danish welfare state was firmly established (Færkel 4-5). Also influential on the Danish national character was the Law of Jante, a series of socially accepted commandments for behaving modestly. These precepts spoke to the responsibilities all citizens have towards society (Rydahl 98-106). What these brief mentions above provide are inklings of the multitude of influences that shaped the Danish national character. In an even broader sense, it was this same character and the majority's belief in democratic rule and discipline that allowed for the orderly function of the state, especially under the extreme duress of German occupation.

In the general election of 23 March 1943, held surprisingly, with German approval, the Danish Nazis received 2.1% of the vote and three seats in the Folketing. The Social Democrats and three other major mainstream parties combined to win 93% of the vote ("Denmark Election 1943"). This was a resounding endorsement of the sitting government, democratic ideals and, indirectly, a rebuff of the German occupation. An unintended consequence of the general election was a sense of empowerment amongst the population and growing dissatisfaction with the policy of cooperation. Many felt that "cooperation" was synonymous with "collaboration," with little to distinguish the two (Kirchhoff 104). In addition, German losses in Russia and North Africa and the Allied invasion of Italy emboldened the Danes to act in the belief that the war's end was imminent. Spontaneous, sporadic acts of sabotage and rioting increased across the country. The embryonic underground resistance movements grew in strength, by both numbers and deeds. By August 1943, the situation had deteriorated so dramatically that the alarmed occupying Germans, under Reich Commissioner Dr. Werner Best, demanded the Danish government bring order to the country and institute the death penalty for sabotage. The Danish government refused both demands, and on 29 August 1943 Best imposed martial law. The Danish government resigned in protest to which the German army responded by placing the king under house arrest, interning remaining units of the Danish military and police and assuming executive governing powers (Bak 17). The German "velvet glove" policy had transformed into the "iron fist," and, with it, the danger to the Danish Jews increased exponentially.

With a state of emergency in place, Best, under pressure from his superiors, saw an opportunity to rid Denmark of its Jews. With Berlin's backing, a plan was developed for a roundup of Jews on the evenings of 1-2 October 1943. On 28 September 1943, Georg Duckwitz, the German embassy's shipping expert, either on his own initiative or on Best's orders, revealed the plan of the impending arrest of Jews to the Danish Social Democratic leaders, with whom he had close relations (Paulsson 446). What followed were a series of events that were extraordinary for their spontaneity, speed and decisiveness.

Social Democratic politicians passed the information on to the Jewish community leaders who, in turn, urged all members to go into hiding (Melchior 133-134). Soon, others outside the Jewish community were spreading warnings (Yahil 238). The German plans had become an open secret.

A majority of the Jews found refuge with Gentile friends or business associates (Melchior 134). In the days and weeks that followed, Danes, both friends and strangers, unhesitatingly offered accommodation (Yahil 240). The ultimate rescue plan, as hazy as it was at the time, was to secret the Danish Jews on fishing boats to neutral Sweden. The Danish Freedom Council (Frihedsrådet), the underground resistance coordinating body, hurriedly gathered Jews and found refuge for them in villages and towns along Øresund in anticipation of getting them across the water (Melchior 134). Copenhagen's Bispebjerg Hospital admitted Jews as patients under false names and only "discharged" them once sea transportation had been arranged (Yahil 241-242). It is estimated that 2,000 Danish Jews passed through Bispebjerg (Yahil 244). The Danish Lutheran Church played no small role, either. Bishop Hans Fuglsang-Damgaard issued a letter that was read aloud in all Danish churches on 3 October 1943, informing Danes of the Jewish plight and urged congregants to act on their conscience (Yahil 236). Danish churches hid many Jews throughout this period.

On 1 October 1943, the first raids on Jewish homes were conducted resulting in 284 arrests, while an additional 190 were captured afterwards. In total, 464 Jews, of which 101 were non-Danish Jewish refugees, were sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia (Hæstrup 51). Also, on 1 October 1943, nearby neutral Sweden openly broadcast its willingness to give unconditional asylum to Jews (Paulsson 451-452). In the end, approximately 7,900 people managed to escape to Sweden, including 686 non-Jewish spouses married to Jews and non-Danish Jewish refugees (Hæstrup 49). Without the critical participation of Denmark's fishermen, who took enormous risks, combined with Sweden's sanctuary, the consequences would have been catastrophic for the Jews.

There was a high financial cost to this rescue operation and escape hinged on money as most Danish fishermen charged for transport (Bak 37). There is, however, no known case of any Jew left behind because of an inability to pay (Yahil 262). As for other costs of abandoning homes, the Municipality of Copenhagen paid the rent for 97 Jewish apartments from October 1943 to May 1945 as well as storage charges for 350 households (Bak 41-42). Municipal employees also went to the Great Synagogue on Krystalgade and removed Torah scrolls and other valuables for safekeeping (Bak 42-43).

In the historiography of this event, there is a hypothesis that a conspiracy existed amongst the top-ranking Germans in Denmark to allow the Jews to escape intentionally (Paulsson 431-464). It appears that Werner Best, amongst other reasons, wanted to maintain the peaceful flow of Danish goods to Germany. In his estimation, a mass roundup of Jews could seriously damage supplies and ruin his relationship with the Danes. There is strong evidence (the details of which make for a separate study) that the Germans did not seriously intend for the roundup of the Jews to succeed (Paulsson 436). However, it should be emphasized that neither the scheming Best nor the duplicitous Duckwitz were motivated on humanitarian grounds. Such was the murky, and still unclear, world of Nazi careerists and opportunists (Yahil 139-146). In no way whatsoever does German connivance diminish what was achieved during the rescue. Amongst the Danes, Jews and non-Jews alike, no one could have known that German intentions were anything but malicious and that the perceived danger was anything but real. No one could have possibly known the extent of German orchestration.

There is no record in this research that indicates that once Jews were captured, that the Germans were inclined towards any acts of compassion. Nearly all of the captured Jews were transported to Theresienstadt, where 51 died. It is troubling to consider that the entire Jewish population of Denmark could have perished had it not been for the immediate and decisive acts of humanity of the rescuers.

It took the courage, work, daring and decency of the Danes, coupled with the open sanctuary of nearby Sweden, to make the rescue of their fellow Jewish citizens a success. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 Danes were involved in the rescue operation (Paulsson 458). The Danes proved their humanity beyond all reasonable doubt and validated their solidarity through action. No less admirable were the Swedes, who demonstrated great humanity. Unquestionably, Sweden provided rare shelter in the storm of the Holocaust. As for the return of the Jews to Denmark in 1945, Rabbi Marcus Melchior states the decisive proof of Danish decency was how genuine the welcome was upon their homecoming (151-152).

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, there has been an insatiable quest to try to understand this calamity in all its manifestations. Amongst many other things, the Holocaust seriously undermined all notions of civilized behaviour. In the morass of this incoherence, there appears to be a psychological need to look for heroes and tenaciously hold onto myths. Acts of courage and cowardice, humanity and inhumanity are often characterized in metaphorical terms of lightness and darkness. In such a paradigm, Denmark shines brightly. However, as a cautionary note, there are realities of the events of 1943 that cannot be ignored. While most Danes acted nobly and truly represented the best of the Danish national character, others betrayed those ideals. There were Danish informers, traitors and exploiters. Some Danes took up arms for the German cause. What this tells us is that the Danes were real people who exhibited the entire gamut of the human condition. Decidedly, there were significantly more saints than sinners, and it was these Danes who preserved their cultural values in theory and practice (Yahil 394). What made Denmark unique amongst the occupied nations of Europe in the Second World War is that it did not allow antisemitism to take root; when it came to the rescue, the Danes did not see these fugitives from the Nazis as Jews, but as fellow countrymen in distress who were experiencing an outrageous injustice (Lidegaard 352). What frames Denmark's reputation is the humanity and moral courage the Danes exhibited in 1943 to save their fellow human beings, and the welcome they bestowed upon them when they returned in 1945. These were the traits of the Danish national character that brought enduring honour to that country.

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# The Law of Jante in Scandinavian Sport

By Roman Sorokin

## Abstract

The Law of Jante is not a binding law, but a sociocultural norm where the focus is on community and society as a whole rather than the individual. It is critical in shaping interactions between people in Scandinavia, especially in their sports through various ways such as holding other sports associations accountable if the Law is challenged, punishing individuals either socially or criminally if they “break” the Law, refraining from including bold individuals in sports associations, etc. This paper confirms that the Law of Jante is strictly followed in the Scandinavian sports world by looking at specific

cases in the Scandinavian countries and analyzing them through the lens of the Law of Jante. Upon examination, it seemed clear that the Law of Jante was observed and followed in each of the three scenarios: the Norwegian cross-country skier Therese Johaug’s doping scandal, the 2008 UEFA Euro qualifying match between Denmark and Sweden, and the decision to keep Swedish soccer star Zlatan Ibrahimović out of the Swedish national soccer team for the FIFA World Cup. This indicates that in Scandinavia, the Law of Jante still applies in settings where individuals can showcase their talents or stand out.



The Law of Jante [Danish: Janteloven, Swedish: Jantelagen] was formulated by the Dano-Norwegian author Axel Sandemose in 1936, where it intended to portray the “Scandinavian mentality and how Scandinavians relate to each other” (Cappelen and Dahlberg 419). It states that no one shall be different than the other, nor should they stand out; no person in Scandinavian society should believe that they are more valuable than anyone else. It is interesting to examine where the Law of Jante applies to all pillars of Scandinavian society, namely sports, which is a prime societal category for individuals to showcase their talents and abilities – in other words, the best place to stand out or show that you are “more valuable”. If there was any part of Scandinavian society that would break the Law of Jante, it would be sport. Therefore, there was a desire to research the question of “does the Law of Jante play any role in Scandinavian sports?” The findings were surprising, not only was the Law of Jante followed in the sports world, but it seemed to be even more harshly followed than in any other aspects of Scandinavian society. The two specific sports where this was evident were cross-country skiing and soccer. In those sports, anyone who seemed to defy the Law of Jante, or who drew attention to themselves, received harsh criticism and/or punishment. Thus, this essay will argue that the Law of Jante plays a significant role in Nordic sports as evident through the examples of the responses of Norway and Sweden to the doping scandal of a female Norwegian cross-country skier; in the controversial 2008 UEFA Euro qualifying match between Sweden and Denmark; and, in Zlatan Ibrahimović’s absence from the Swedish national soccer team in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

### **Therese Johaug’s Doping Scandal**

In October 2016, Norwegian three-time Olympic cross-country medalist Therese Johaug tested positive for the banned steroid Clostebol. It was stated that this drug was detected in her body due to the application of a sun lotion that her doctor, Frederik Bendiksen, prescribed (“Norwegian Cross-Country Skier”). What is interesting to note here is the manner in which Johaug, the Norwegian media, the Norwegian sports tribunal, and the Swedish media handled this scandal. Therese Johaug herself decided to blatantly blame the doctor, stating that she had “zero guilt for what happened” and would do “everything” to prove she was innocent (Johannessen). This response broke the Law of Jante, with the cross-country skier stating that she had no blame and that it was all in the fault of another individual, instead of being humble and accepting her mistake. The blame can be accredited to the doctor Bendiksen for not realizing that the substance Clostebol in the sun lotion is a mild anabolic steroid which helps build muscle. However, the Court of Arbitration for Sport did not exempt Johaug from responsibility, stating she could have prevented her positive test had she been better informed about the components of the lotion – especially since the cream tube’s outer packing has a large label on it that is clearly marked with a “doping” sign (Johannessen; Dunbar).

The Norwegian media’s response to this scandal also broke the Law of Jante. Just prior to the Johaug scandal, another cross-country skier, Martin Johnsrud Sundby, was suspended due to his excessive use of asthma medicine for non-therapeutic purposes (Wagner and Kristiansen 129). However, the Norwegian media attempted to shift the blame away from the athletes and support personnel who might intentionally dope to gain an unfair advantage, by putting it on the administrative systems which monitor and assist elite athletes (Wagner and Kristiansen 130). Surprisingly, it was not only the media that attempted to do this, but also the Norwegian sports tribunal, which banned Johaug for only 13 months in mid-February 2017, noting that the balm was approved by a team doctor (Dunbar). The national tribunal shifted the blame away from Johaug.

They sentenced her lightly to ensure that she would be eligible to participate in the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang by backdating her ban to October 18, 2016. This way her ban would end by the end of 2017 (“Johaug Given 13-Month Ban”). Dissatisfied with the sentence length, the Switzerland-based Court of Arbitration for sport revised the ban by extending its length to cover the Winter Olympic games (Dunbar). The Norwegian media and their sports tribunal broke the Law of Jante by attempting to shift the blame away from these individuals who doped, blaming other forces at work, and trying to get Johaug to compete in the prestigious Winter Olympic Games. Furthermore, on opinion pages, many Norwegians believed that the criticism coming from others was due to the suspicion caused by other nations’ envy and not because of their mistakes (Wagner and Kristiansen 130). This did not sit well with their Nordic neighbor, Sweden.

Swedish media, noticing the lack of accountability on the Norwegian end for the positive doping tests, criticized them harshly for it. Swedish tabloids used phrases like “you must be punished” when referring to the fate of Johaug and “too good to be true...?” questioning the success of the Norwegian cross-country skiing program in the last couple of years (Wagner and Kristiansen 130-131). Norway’s Swedish counterparts were clearly angered by the way the Norwegians responded to this scandal, disapproving of their “Norwegian arrogance” and their lack of humility (Wagner and Kristiansen 131). Although this anger can be ascribed to the skiing rivalry between the two countries, it still goes to show how important the Law of Jante and a sense of humility is in the Nordic countries. The practice of this law is best exemplified by the quote of Swedish anti-doping expert Åke Andrén-Sandberg, from the Swedish Sport Confederation, who stated that when it comes to doping, everyone must get the same treatment, no matter if they are “huge, strong, unseemly, and stupid weightlifters” or “sweet, kind, nice Norwegian skiers” (Wagner and Kristiansen 131).

### **The Infamous 2008 UEFA Euro Qualifying Match Between Denmark and Sweden**

On the night of the 2nd of June 2007, Denmark and Sweden competed in a very crucial soccer match which determined whether Denmark would stay in the race of making the 2008 UEFA European Football Championship tournament in Austria and Switzerland, trailing five points behind Sweden (Martinez). The hopes seemed to wither away as Sweden gained a commanding 3-0 lead after the first 26 minutes of play. Despite this, Denmark managed to miraculously crawl back into the game, scoring three unanswered goals and tying the game 3-3 by the 75th minute (“Copenhagen Contest Goes to Sweden”). However, things would go downhill for Denmark in the 89th minute when Danish defensive midfielder, Christian Poulsen, punched Swedish player Markus Rosenberg in the penalty area. The referee, Herbert Fandel, presented Poulsen a red card for the behavior and awarded Sweden a penalty shot. Seconds after the decision, a Danish fan sprinted to attack Fandel, but another Danish player was able to stop and intercept the attack. After the incident, Fandel made a quick decision to end the game and award Sweden a 3-0 forfeit victory. This loss proved costly for the Danish football club, as they would go on to miss the European tournament (Martinez).

Like Johaug’s case, many would go on to criticize the Danish fan and Christian Poulsen for their respective behavior. The Danish Crown Prince Frederik, who was present at the game, later said that “it was something worse and a very embarrassing behavior from the Danish side” (Christensen). Both Deputy Police Commissioner Flemming Steen Munck of the Copenhagen Police and Danish Minister of Justice Lene Espersen expressed very similar concerns, that Poulsen’s behavior was completely unacceptable as it would send a message to the younger population that violence is appropriate when conducted on the soccer pitch (“Justitsminister”; “Politikommisær”).

In response to these criticisms, Christian Poulsen expressed shame for his action, responding to the question of whether there is a difference of beating a man on the street or soccer pitch by saying that it was “just wrong” and admitting that he “went way over the line” (“Politikommisær”). This was a clear manifestation of Janteloven. Instead of replying boldly or refusing to apologize, Poulsen decided to humbly declare that he regretted his flare of emotion and that this should not have occurred in the first place. It also illustrates how critical people can be to someone who decides to take drastic actions like Poulsen did in the game. What is interesting to note, however, is the way the Danish coach Morten Olsen replied to the incident. Although he did condemn Poulsen, saying that there is “no place on this stage for this sort of thing”, he also removed some of the blame from him, adding that he “wasn’t the only one to blame for the episode” (“Denmark-Sweden”). This is another demonstration of Janteloven, where Olsen, instead of putting the guilt on one person, stated that others were to blame here as well.

Harsher criticism was given to the Danish perpetrator, Ronni Nörvig. The Danish Football Union [Danish: Dansk Boldspil-Union; DBU] decided to file a lawsuit against Nörvig for lost entrance fees to games (Rizau). Furthermore, Danish tabloids asked the public to identify him because he was responsible for Denmark’s loss against Sweden (Camptown). Nörvig was harassed by the Danish public for ‘standing out’, deciding to run out on the pitch and disrespect the decision of a person of authority. Like Poulsen, Nörvig regretted his actions, saying that he wanted to “apologize to Denmark, Sweden and the referee for [his] inhuman behavior [...] People in Denmark hate me, but I have no feeling yet what the reaction in Sweden is, other than they of course believe I am an idiot” (“Denmark-Sweden”). Nörvig knew that what he did was wrong; standing out by taking an action that was unprecedented and irresponsible was something he immediately knew he should not have done. Overall, the way that Denmark, the Danish national soccer team, and the perpetrator behind the crime of attacking the referee responded to the embarrassingly awarded 3-0 loss to Sweden in the 2008 UEFA Euro qualifying match showcases the Law of Jante at work.

### **The Law of Jante Defied: The Case of Zlatan Ibrahimović**

After soccer star Zlatan Ibrahimović announced retirement from the Swedish national soccer team following their disappointing run in the 2016 UEFA Euro championship, the team ironically began to find success. During the qualifying stage for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, Sweden was able to finish second behind (future World Cup champions) France and ahead of third-place Netherlands in their qualifying group, finally beating Italy in the playoffs to make it to 2018 FIFA World Cup. They were able to do all of this without Ibrahimović in the squad (Brown). As a result, in a poll conducted by a Swedish research consultancy, which asked whether or not to have Ibrahimović in the Swedish squad, 63% of respondents stated that they would prefer if he remained out of it for the upcoming World Cup (Jones). However, the brash Ibrahimović ignored this opinion, constantly hinting at his return in the World Cup in 2018 with statements like it would be “up to him” whether he made a comeback (Press Association Sport Staff).

Ibrahimović is one of those Scandinavian individuals who, on the face of it, completely disregards Jantelagen; he has always been known for his arrogant behavior. To demonstrate this, when asked about his thoughts on the homogenous, collective style of play that the Swedish side is known for playing, he criticized it, arguing that “everyone has his own style of play [...] but precisely in Sweden it is eleven men and everyone must be the same. This is not who I am” (Frank 711). Ibrahimović is known to be a person who refuses to blend in and follow the rules.

He always loves to put on a show, to show his magnificence. One of the main reasons he did not play long with the Spanish soccer giant FC Barcelona, was because he equated it to a “Communist or Social Democratic equality hell” where no one was allowed to be different nor show any fits of intense emotion or rage (Frank 712). This was completely contrary to the type of player Ibrahimović is; he tries to be a one-man show and prove that he is the best on the team. He is the complete opposite of Michael Laudrup – a legendary Danish midfielder who manifests the Law of Jante through his modest and soft behavior on the pitch – whom Ibrahimović is usually compared to when it comes to the debate of picking the best Scandinavian soccer player. However, Ibrahimović’s style of play did not sit well with the Swedish national team coach Janne Andersson. Andersson, unlike Ibrahimović, embraces Jantelagen, stating that the word his players must emphasize most when discussing themselves is “collective”. Andersson wanted to create a team that was anti-Zlatan, a team stronger because it was weaker. After the implementation of this change, the team was reported to be more relaxed; letting go of the pressure that was mounted on them by Ibrahimović to play at a certain standard (Smith). Therefore, it was not surprising that Andersson, when hearing about the speculations that Ibrahimović might come back to join the team in the World Cup, had this to say: “[Ibrahimović] has not called me, but he’s definitely not included in the plans for the World Cup” (Jones). Andersson’s plan to have a non-Zlatan, collective, and humble Swedish team could be argued to have been a smart choice. The Swedish team was able to advance all the way to the quarterfinals in the 2018 FIFA World Cup before being ousted 2-0 by a stronger English opponent. Andersson is continuing to coach the Swedish side, with his style of play proving to work: his Swedish side was able to qualify for the currently postponed 2020 UEFA Euro championship, finishing second in their qualifying group behind Spain. In the end, it can be said that Swedish soccer superstar, Zlatan Ibrahimović’s absence from the Swedish national soccer team in the 2018 FIFA World Cup, can be mainly attributed to the Swedish coach following Jantelagen when organizing the team.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, it is evident that the Law of Jante holds prevalent in modern Scandinavian society, including sports, more than 80 years since it was originally conceived. It shows that if one decides to stray away from the Law of Jante, they will be severely punished for it, forcing them to apologize and/or blend back into the rest of society, or face the consequences. This was evidently exemplified in the cases of the Norwegian cross-country skier Therese Johaug’s doping scandal, the 2008 UEFA Euro qualifying match between Denmark and Sweden, and with Ibrahimović’s dismissal from the Swedish national soccer team. It implies that the Law of Jante not only applies in the daily lives of Nordic people, but also in collective organized activities like sports. It indicates that it is not an insignificant social norm, but one that shapes the overall Nordic identity. Therefore, it can be said that the Law of Jante is not only an optional lifestyle in Scandinavia; it is a way of life.

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