

THE SCANNER

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



ISSUE #02

THE SCANDINAVIAN AND NORDIC STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:

Pg. iii

Credits:

Pg. iv

Forward by Ashley Samsone:

Pg.v

Section 1, Norway:

Pg.1

Norway's Secret weapon:
The Underground Press During
the German Occupation of
Norway by Nina Mjaaset
Pg. 2

Section 2, Finland:

Pg.15

The Summer That Never Was:
Nostalgia in 'The Summer
Book' by Alex Hewlett-
Bowbrick
Pg.16

Section 3, Sweden:

Pg. 30

Creation of National Identity in
Sweden through
Homonalism by Boshra
Moheq
Pg. 31

Section 4, Scandinavia:

Pg. 44

Subversive Sex: Anti-
Christianism as a Means of
Healing in Thelma and Border
by Pranidhi Bisht
Pg. 45



The Scanner editorial board and the authors of Volume 2 acknowledge that the land on which we learn, teach, create and gather is on the unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wə'yəm (Musqueam) people.

INTRODUCTION

The Scanner is a project created, run, and published entirely by students in the UBC Scandinavian and Nordic Student Association, and students in the Nordic Minor Program at The University of British Columbia. Founded in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this journal was designed with student innovation, creativity, and dedication to sharing academia in mind. Here, students have the opportunity to showcase their hard work and varying talents.

The Scanner accepts papers that are written by UBC undergraduate students. Papers can be from any class or faculty, as long as the topic is relevant to the Nordic Countries: Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland, and Sápmi, the land of Europe's Indigenous Sami. Papers are reviewed anonymously to prevent any biases by the editors. The journal hopes to provide a place for not only academic papers written within the Scandinavian and Nordic Program but across different departments at UBC.

For further information, please contact the UBC Scandinavian and Nordic Student Association.

2021-2022
EDITORIAL TEAM
ISSUE #2

Editor-in-Chief:

Ashley Samsone

Design & Layout Editor:

Maija Laine

Editors:

Emily Mao

Ashley Samsone

Frida Törnqvist Schölde

Delaney Westby



FORWARD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Working with the team on the second issue of *The Scanner*, I was lucky enough to meet those that seek to uplift their peers through achievements and milestones made during their time at UBC. I am convinced that this journal is proof that students strive to always do their best and are willing to go above and beyond to create impactful and meaningful work with each other, and lasting legacies.

I am honoured to be part of the founding team and having the opportunity to being Editor-In-Chief for a second term. Now having worked on *The Scanner* for three years, there is lots to learn when it comes to setting up a student journal, and understanding what its existence within the community means for everyone involved. The publication of the first issue suddenly secured a place at UBC for *The Scanner*, and we needed to ensure the future of this journal, and how to maintain the hard work and integrity that student authors and editors put into this project. To say I overthought this issue is an understatement. In the end, our team trusted each other to align all the moving parts, and found what it was that gave us a solid foundation: rigorous academic work, creativity, and innovation. These three pillars are at our core, alongside the promise of showcasing the talent and hard work of our Nordic minors, and UBC students. To our esteemed readers, I present to you the second edition of *The Scanner*.

To give you a small teaser of what you will find in this edition, be prepared to be swept away by the images you will encounter that accompany each thought-provoking paper. Divided into four topics, each section will walk you through the Nordic landscapes these articles are written about, to ‘set the scene’ before you dive in. From a variety of analyses from literary and historical lenses, to the political scopes and cultural backdrops, there is something to learn here for everyone.

Thank you to the Nordic Program, particularly Lena Karlström and Ann-Kathrine Havemose, here at UBC. Without the both of you and your endless support, we would not have the outreach that we do. Thank you to the editors on the 2021-2022 Editorial Board: Frida Törnqvist Schölde, Delaney Westby, and Emily Mao who spent countless hours from the shortlist meeting to time spent with our authors. Thank you to our Design & Layout Editor Maija Laine, who assisted in creating this beautiful layout. This journal would not be possible without all these student leaders and their dedication. Keep a lookout in 2023, as our journal shows no signs of slowing down.

All my best,

Ashley Samson,

Editor-In-Chief, 2021 - 2022



NORGE NORWAY

"JEG RIVER BRUENE MINE BAK MEG - DA ER
DET IKKE NOE ANNET VALG ENN FREMFOR."
- FRIDTJOF NANSEN

"I DEMOLISH MY BRIDGES BEHIND ME - THEN
THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT FORWARD."
- FRIDTJOF NANSEN



NORWAY'S SECRET WEAPON: THE UNDERGROUND PRESS DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION OF NORWAY BY NINA MJAASET

Abstract: Following the German invasion of Norway in 1940, Norwegian media was swiftly placed under strict surveillance and regulations by the occupying forces. With private radios confiscated and newspapers restricted to publishing news supporting the Nazi narrative, long gone were the days of free press. Still, the nation mobilized and maintained morale through an intricate underground network of news publications. Using gadgets discreetly donated by community members or equipment rescued from landfills, members of the underground press expanded the illegal operations while simultaneously increasing the associated risks. Thousands of Norwegian men, women, and children took part in these operations, risking their lives daily to ensure the Norwegian people remained informed.

A five-year prison sentence seems like an unjustifiable price to pay for possessing a newspaper, yet a quarter-million Norwegians took this gamble every week during the second world war. From 1940 to 1945, the daily lives of Norwegians were overshadowed by oppression and fear caused by their German invaders; nonetheless, they prevailed in creating a widespread network of publications to combat the Nazi propaganda machine. By controlling the means of production, the Germans had a stranglehold on Norwegian media, forcing the people to create their own manufacturing system. United under the constant threat of the Gestapo, the free press resistance had to stay elusive and wily. Through such oppressive circumstances, the Norwegian underground press was built by thousands of patriots risking their lives for free speech, through bootleg operations and crude technology.

On the morning of April 9, 1940, Germany launched a full-scale invasion on Norway, forcing the mountainous nation out of its previously declared neutrality and signalling the start of what came to be a five-year long occupation. Although Norway had prepared for the possibility of another war, the invasion came as a shock to most Norwegians. Within a mere 12 hours, Norwegian media was under German control. "Our aim is not to take over the affairs of the Norwegian press," stated the German Corvette Captain Klaus-Friedrich Hahn as he introduced the comprehensive set of media rules to the members of the Norwegian press late afternoon April 9.¹ From that day onward, the Norwegian press was not to publish any information contradicting German military power and reports relating to military and foreign policy were to be approved by military censorship prior to publishing. However, it did not take long for the occupying forces to realize the current

restrictions did not satisfy their need for media control and the protection of German interests. Whereas the leading news reporters had already fled north alongside the Norwegian royal family and government, the remaining press workers were now under even stricter conditions.²

Several of the largest Norwegian newspapers were taken over by Germans or Norwegian Nazi sympathizers while disobeying publications were fined, prosecuted, or forced to shut down their operations entirely. Come Summer 1940, all news publicized in Norway had been sifted and refined, and Norwegians were only permitted to listen to German radio stations. In September, the complete Nazification of the Norwegian press began. As one newspaper discreetly wrote in a publication, "That which we speak is but a fraction of what we think."³ In September, the complete Nazification of the Norwegian press began. As one newspaper discreetly wrote in a publication, "That which we speak is but a fraction of what we think."³

Though Norwegian journalists meticulously attempted to conceal droplets of truth within their works, the need for factual reporting untouched by German hands was urgent. The publishing of the first illegal newspapers began in the fall of 1940, although the majority began their operations after the occupying forces confiscated all private, Norwegian-owned radios in fall 1941. The need to cover daily international and local news became even more significant with the loss of the radio, inspiring the underground press to expand its operations. Hidden in basements and attics, the underground press operating across the country was Norwegians' sole source of free press during the occupation,

churning out thousands of publications daily.

Operating at such high capacities did not come without complications or risk. From 1940 to 1941, any involvement in the underground press was punishable by up to five years in prison. On October 12, 1942, Josef Terboven announced that the death penalty would await those who listened to illegal broadcasts, those involved in the printing and distribution of illegal newspapers, and even those who merely received a copy.⁴ With arrests occurring weekly, it was no secret that the underground press was a risky affair. Still, the resistance members kept the operations running with a great deal of finesse and courage. The underground press relied primarily on radio messages to gather news from Norway and beyond, utilizing rebuilt broken radios and illegal radios hidden away prior to the confiscations. Additionally, allied airplanes would secure radio senders and receivers in parachutes and drop them to Norwegian resistance members on the ground.⁵ Due to the high risk associated with the underground press, receiving and printing would occur at two separate sites. Typically, one or two individuals operated the radio at a secure location, taking shorthand notes as they listened to broadcasts from the BBC and messages from Norwegian politicians and reporters exiled in England.

Young girls and boys would run the receivers' abbreviated notes to the printing office, where they were expanded upon and typed. Although several of the writers were journalists by trade who had either lost or quit their job or did underground work on the side, "most of them were people who wrote their contributions because they felt they were needed in the circumstances."⁶ Similarly, the

printing process was largely "unprofessional," with most publications not using regular presses and a couple even hand-writing their issues. Most of the operations used regular typewriters, with a stencil setting, before duplicating the publications with mimeograph machines. The mimeograph machine was the first widely used duplicating machine, copying writings by forcing ink through a stencil onto paper.

As the occupying forces closely monitored the regular printing presses in Norway, the mimeograph machine was a low-cost alternative that was relatively easy to find, hide, and use. This alternate process was not, however, without risk. The purchase of both mimeograph machines and printing paper was high on the Gestapo's watch list, making the acquisition difficult and dangerous. Therefore, paper manufacturers and companies close by would secretly transport paper and equipment to the printing locations to support the bustling underground press. Most publications had a largely no-frills approach with the primary incentive of simply conveying vital information to the Norwegian people.

The daily newspapers were printed on both sides of a single quarter-size sheet of paper, whereas a weekly summary of the news would typically come in booklet form, with four to eight pages. Although the layout was bare-bones and the writing rudimentary, the trust between publisher and reader had never been greater. Following the printing process, "newspaper boys" would deliver the newspapers to mailboxes, distribution centers, offices, schools, universities, and select, cooperating post offices.⁷ A majority of the illegal press movements took place in the cities,

and two-thirds of the publications were situated in the capital Oslo; however, the underground activities were not restricted to urban areas. A majority of the illegal press movements took place in the cities, and two-thirds of the publications were situated in the capital Oslo; however, the underground activities were not restricted to urban areas. Publications in Oslo and other cities frequently sent issues to rural districts where they were reprinted and redistributed in the area.⁸

The duplication of original issues was highly encouraged by resistance movements, and the concept of intellectual property was entirely ignored during the five years of occupation. Rather than a desire to acquire the largest audience, the leading motive of the newspapers was to keep the entirety of the Norwegian population informed. The efficacy and reach of the operations were demonstrated in 1944 when the Germans commanded young men across the country to report for forced labour. Underground publications across the nation urged all men to refuse registration, and 50,000 men went into hiding.⁹ With countless reproductions and single issues circulated through the neighbourhoods, it is impossible to accurately count the total readership of illegal newspapers. Yet there is reason to believe the readership did not stray too far from the numbers before the war, even though fewer people obtained a copy outright.¹⁰ Approximately 300 different newspapers were regularly released from 1940 to 1945, 10% of which were daily publications, with a weekly average circulation of 231,907 copies.¹¹ The secret operations were tremendous, and despite the underground press requiring large quantities of equipment and machinery, the most crucial part of the assembly line was the people involved.

From radio transcription to secret paper deliveries, about 20,000 Norwegian men, women, and children took part in the illegal press work during the occupation.¹² The underground newspapers became a morale booster for many Norwegians during the war, particularly to those involved in the publication and distribution process. With a wide variety of tasks required to keep the operations running, the underground press provided an opportunity for everyone, including the elderly and children, to participate in the resistance and contribute to the safekeeping of the Norwegian people. Though involvement was proven dangerous, the newspapers "... were the unifying force among the people of Norway that enabled them, in spite of increasing persecution, to remain firm and hopeful during the long days and dark nights of more than five years of Nazi occupation."¹³ Regardless of purges, arrests, and executions, there was rarely a shortage of individuals looking to help the underground press carry on.

The "London News" publication provides an example of such determination and camaraderie.¹⁴ First released on the 15th of September 1941, in Oslo, the "London News" paper was one of the most extensive publications in Norway, eventually circulating roughly 4000 copies daily. However, the paper was especially vulnerable to the Germans' witch-hunt against resistance members due to its vast reach. Although the publication would frequently change its printing location, in July 1942 the Gestapo arrested around 40 of the "London News" distributors and workers and confiscated all equipment; yet replacement workers were at the ready. By early fall the paper reappeared under a new name. Parallel to "London News," the Gestapo's frequent investigations

forced most publications to move around and re-publish their works under new names constantly. One Oslo newspaper allegedly moved 600 times throughout the war, changing its name about as many times, but the Gestapo never succeeded in shutting it down.¹⁵

The grit and determination displayed by the Norwegians involved came to define the underground press movement, much more so than the machinery employed. Although the radio enabled the secret publications to receive critical information and the mimeograph machine allowed for efficient reproduction of written content, the underground newspapers would never have been "...the backbone of Norway's articulate resistance" without the people's repeated commitment to the cause.¹⁶ The Germans' attempts to quash the underground press were constant and merciless, with many contributors of the operation never making it to liberation day on May 8, 1945. Nonetheless, the desire for freedom and truth saturated the underground movement, serving as a *raison d'être* for publications and supporters across the nation.

References:

1 Rune Ottosen, "Chapter Five: Betrayal, Heroism and Everyday Life in the Norwegian Press during the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945," in *Freedom of the Press*, ed. Søren Dosenrode (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co KG, 2010), 62.

2 Following their narrow escape on April 9, 1940, the Norwegian government, king, crown prince, and leading reporters fled to the north of Norway. On June 7, their journey continued to London, where they established the Government-in-exile, sometimes referred to as the London Cabinet.

3 Katherine Lyon, "Norway's Secret Weapon," *Free World* 3, no. 1 (1942): 52.

4 Katherine Lyon, "Norway's Secret Weapon," *Free World* 3, no. 1 (1942): 52.

5 Katherine Lyon, "Norway's Secret Weapon," *Free World* 3, no. 1 (1942): 52.

6 Olav Brunvand, "The Underground Press in Norway:," *Gazette* (Leiden, Netherlands), September 16, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001654926300900210>, 130.

8 Brunvand, "The Underground Press in Norway.," 131.

References continued:

9 Brunvand, "The Underground Press in Norway.", 129.

10 Brunvand, "The Underground Press in Norway.", 131.

11 Hallén, "Norway's Underground Press during the Occupation.", 344.

12 Brunvand, "The Underground Press in Norway.", 126

13 Hallén, "Norway's Underground Press during the Occupation.", 347 .

14 "London-nytt": The name of the publication in its language of origin.

15 Hallén, "Norway's Underground Press during the Occupation.", 346.

16 Hallén, "Norway's Underground Press during the Occupation.", 347.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arstad, Svein, Louise Thommessen, Erling Eikli, and Mathias Brandt. “Illegal presse var et viktig våpen under 2. verdenskrig - men kampen om sannheten pågår fortsatt.,” May 22, 2020.
<https://forsvaretsforum.no/dokument-illegal-presse-kina/illegal-presse-var-et-viktig-vapen-under-2-verdenskrig---men-kampen-om-sannheten-pagar-fortsatt/125239>.
- Brunvand, Olav. “The Underground Press in Norway:” *Gazette* (Leiden, Netherlands), September 16, 2016.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001654926300900210>.
- Hallén, Burgit. “Norway’s Underground Press during the Occupation.” *Journalism Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (December 1, 1947): 343–47.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107769904702400407>.
- Hostmark, Cecilie. “De Ble Tvunget i Arbeid – Klar Tale.” Accessed March 7, 2022.
<https://www.klartale.no/tema/2012/10/20/de-ble-tvunget-i-arbeid/>.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CONTINUED

- Luihn, Hans. “Den Frie Hemmelige Pressen i Norge under Okkupasjonen 1940-45 : En Fortellende Bibliografi - Nasjonalbiblioteket.” Accessed March 2, 2022. <https://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/65ec896bc64ee25c9ff9631a819fa5c5? lang=no#11>.
- Lyon, Katherine. “Norway’s Secret Weapon.” *Free World* 3, no. 1 (1942): 49– 53.
- Norgeshistorie, Om, and konservering og historie (IAKH) ved UiO Institutt for arkeologi.
- “Illegale aviser - Norgeshistorie.” Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/andre-verdenskrig/1709-illegale-aviser.html>.
- Nygaard, Silje. “‘Send den videre’: Illegale aviser i det okkuperte Norge.” *Vox Publica*, September 30, 2016. <https://voxpathica.no/2016/09/send-den-videre-illegale-aviser-i-det-okkuperte-norge/>



BIBLIOGRAPHY CONTINUED

- Ottosen, Rune. "Chapter Five: Betrayal, Heroism and Everyday Life in the Norwegian Press during the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945." In *Freedom of the Press*, edited by Søren Dosenrode, 59–79. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co KG, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845224701-59>.



SUOMI FINLAND

“MUUTAMAT HÄDÄN HETKET OPETTAVAT IHMISELLE
VIISAUTTA ENEMMÄN, KUIN VUOSIKYMMENIEN TASAISET
OLOT.”

- MARIA JOTUNI

“A FEW MOMENTS OF DISTRESS TEACH A PERSON
MORE WISDOM THAN DECADES OF STABLE
CIRCUMSTANCES.”

- MARIA JOTUNI

THE SUMMER THAT NEVER WAS: NOSTALGIA IN 'THE SUMMER BOOK' BY ALEX HEWLETT- BOWBRICK

Abstract: Tove Jansson's idyllic tale of Finnish summer in *The Summer Book* is broken down through the lens of nostalgia, lending itself as a canvas for readers to imagine and recollect their pasts. The feelings of fleeting memory and time dilation are both essential to the story, and analyzed in this paper to show how fundamental they are to creating that childhood sense of timelessness and fuzziness which constitute the phenomenon of nostalgia almost everyone can understand. In the same way that we can never return to the time we are nostalgic for, *The Summer Book* immerses its readership in a world they can never replicate and yet they never experienced to begin with, raising questions around the nature of nostalgia. Do we nostalgically long for the past, or most abstractly for the things that are forever beyond our reach?



There is something undoubtedly profound about the emotional connection felt between humans when harkening back to the past. In spite of the diversity of human experiences, fleeting memories of the past as well as a longing for the childhood imperfectly captured by these memories remain some of the few universal bonds which people can form with one another. Tove Jansson's *The Summer Book* effectively harnesses these human emotions by creating an uncanny sense of longing for the past within readers, regardless of how greatly their lived experiences may differ from those depicted in the book. The choice of language and setting throughout the novel is more concerned with creating abstract sensations of memory than necessarily telling any one story. In fact, the result is a plot that is driven by one predominant sensation, that of nostalgia. This nostalgia is the most important focal point for understanding the emotional impact upon a hypothetical reader. Another component just as important to the story is time dilation: warping chronology to make weeks seem like hours and many summers seem as though they were one. *The Summer Book* succeeds in connecting to its readership by utilizing nostalgia as manifested in time dilation as well as fleeting memories. It is because of this evocation of nostalgia that the reader is able to project their own memories of the past and childhood onto the story, thus giving it an impressive quality of familiarity rarely achieved in literature.

It is of course impossible to discuss *The Summer Book* and its ability to create a feeling of nostalgia in its readership without fully understanding what it means to experience nostalgia or feel nostalgic. The term itself is easily misinterpreted as being synonymous with a whole host of other emotions trying to

describe some kind of affinity or longing for the past but it in fact has very distinct roots from other sensations and emotions. Nostalgia was originally thought to be synonymous with homesickness and regarded as a kind of medical condition suffered by soldiers and mercenaries in Europe during the 17th century.¹ By contrast, the modern English use of the word has a “bittersweet nature” due to the fact that while it can “connote a pleasant or good time in the past, the fact that the individual is removed from that ideal situation can trigger sadness and a sense of loss”.² This definition raises one of the most important and unique aspects of nostalgia which is essential to understanding its role in *The Summer Book*.

It is of course impossible to discuss *The Summer Book* and its ability to create a feeling of nostalgia in its readership without fully understanding what it means to experience nostalgia or feel nostalgic. The term itself is easily misinterpreted as being synonymous with a whole host of other emotions trying to describe some kind of affinity or longing for the past but it in fact has very distinct roots from other sensations and emotions. Nostalgia was originally thought to be synonymous with homesickness and regarded as a kind of medical condition suffered by soldiers and mercenaries in Europe during the 17th century.¹ By contrast, the modern English use of the word has a “bittersweet nature” due to the fact that while it can “connote a pleasant or good time in the past, the fact that the individual is removed from that ideal situation can trigger sadness and a sense of loss”.² This definition raises one of the most important and unique aspects of nostalgia which is essential to understanding its role in *The Summer Book*.

The sensation does not merely make one long for the past or feel emotional about an event that happened, but it serves to contrast the positive memories of someone with their realization that by remembering, they cannot replicate that past which is gone, hence the bittersweet nature. That is exactly the experience of the story; a reader is not able to ever experience the events of the book first and foremost because they are fictional- but they are able to feel the emotional sensations described in the book as they project their own memories. Thus, creating that sense of nostalgia where there is no going back yet they look back fondly upon the events of the book as if they were their own. The experience of fleeting memories and time dilation both have their respective places within the nostalgic qualities of the book as they all relate to a certain longing for the past, specifically childhood and the melancholy feeling of knowing that these sensations were all experienced at one time as in the book, yet can never be captured in quite the same way again.

Throughout *The Summer Book* there is a continual fuzziness regarding time and how exactly it works in the story. The title of the book itself is ambiguous, as summer could be singular and yet it could just as easily refer to the concept of summer itself: the experience of many summers amalgamated into one book. Nevertheless, time does not work as would typically be expected which serves to create an ambiguity that helps place the reader in a state of childlike timelessness, where the concern is not when things are happening but rather what is happening, or perhaps more aptly what is being experienced. For instance, the opening lines of the book: “ It was an early, very warm morning in July and it had rained during the night”.³ This introduction seems quite

innocuous and it opens the story in two places which seem the natural beginning, both the “morning” as the start of the day and “July” the first full month of summer following the solstice. Read alone, this passage does not exactly create a sense of nostalgia as it may as well be the standard opening of a book in chronological order, where it is known exactly when the story starts and where it is going to progress. However, when contrasted with the openings of other chapters it becomes clear that this is not the chronological beginning, but rather more of an emotional beginning to the book, the first sequence of memories recollected. In the very next chapter there is a stark contrast: “One time in April there was a full moon, and the sea was covered with ice”.⁴ Not only is the chronology tossed aside, but the mood of the story is shifted, it goes from “morning” to a “full moon”, from “very warm” to a sea “covered with ice”.

Throughout *The Summer Book* there is a continual fuzziness regarding time and how exactly it works in the story. The title of the book itself is ambiguous, as summer could be singular and yet it could just as easily refer to the concept of summer itself: the experience of many summers amalgamated into one book. Nevertheless, time does not work as would typically be expected which serves to create an ambiguity that helps place the reader in a state of childlike timelessness, where the concern is not when things are happening but rather what is happening, or perhaps more aptly what is being experienced. For instance, the opening lines of the book: “It was an early, very warm morning in July and it had rained during the night”.³ This introduction seems quite innocuous and it opens the story in two places which seem the

“July” the first full month of summer following the solstice. Read alone, this passage does not exactly create a sense of nostalgia as it may as well be the standard opening of a book in chronological order, where it is known exactly when the story starts and where it is going to progress. However, when contrasted with the openings of other chapters it becomes clear that this is not the chronological beginning, but rather more of an emotional beginning to the book, the first sequence of memories recollected. In the very next chapter there is a stark contrast: “One time in April there was a full moon, and the sea was covered with ice”.⁴ Not only is the chronology tossed aside, but the mood of the story is shifted, it goes from “morning” to a “full moon”, from “very warm” to a sea “covered with ice”. This shift in time reveals a certain murkiness with regards to a linear story, and presents the possibility of the story being told not in sequence of events but in the sequence that they are remembered, thus there is no logical issue with April coming after July because it is the events that matter, not their timing.

A jump in time itself may not seem related to nostalgia, but the emotional impact on a reader by blurring the experience of time is indeed prevalent. In the words of Patrick Colm Hogan “Plot too involves its own distinctive set of emotions”.⁵ In essence, this means that it is not merely the events of the story which make a reader feel emotions, but rather the way these events are structured and laid out. In that sense, it is then the dilation of time and the ambiguity of when everything takes place that gives the feeling of nostalgia throughout *The Summer Book*. This is primarily because such ambiguity replicates human memory and therefore makes the audience feel the longing for a past where

days were blurred, just as a child would perceive them. The reader is confronted with the reality that the very act of recollecting the events of the story means that such events are unreachable. In the chapter titled 'The Scolder' there is a potent example of this ambiguous nostalgia when it is noted that "The neck of land out toward the point was completely transformed by the winter storms. There had never been anything but rocks out there, but now the whole shore was sand".⁶ The choice of the word "transformed" is influential for casting a sense of nostalgia as it creates a sense of change, of irreversible alteration from one state to another as the shoreline is clearly implied to have once been something that the reader is left to imagine, yet it is only evident that it is no longer what it was. When the narrator clarifies that "now the whole shore was sand" it creates that essence of nostalgia where there is a longing for those happy days when "there had never been anything but rocks out there" but the reader is forced into the melancholy present of accepting that by fondly remembering the rocks they have to reconcile that they have been worn down into sand (Jansson, 21).⁷

The "winter storms" are not given any particular placement in time- they could have occurred months prior to the chapter or over the course of years- but it is this ambiguity which also contributes to the sense of nostalgia as the causal effect is imperfect. All which is known is that over some period of time the land was changed to a point where it could no longer be reversed or returned to.⁸ The most important reason that this dilation of time evokes nostalgia is that "it is again part of our simulative capacities that we respond to simulations as we respond to comparable realities".⁹ In a sense, the reader is well aware that they had not personally experienced the past as presented in the

book, but by reading this text and simulating the feelings of longing for a past that is not their own, they are then faced with the reality of change and the reader is able to imprint their own experiences, whatever they may be.

This all serves to simulate the feelings of loss and happiness in the book which culminate in a very real feeling of nostalgia, even if that nostalgia is grounded in imagined events. It is not just the way that *The Summer Book* plays with time which evokes a feeling of nostalgia, but the way it creates sensations of fleeting time and memories through events in the book. The non-chronological format of the story arguably contributes to this feeling as each chapter feels emotionally connected but also disconnected enough that every moment is forgotten once it fades into the next chapter. Thus, the reader is made to feel a fondness for the events of each chapter but is always confronted with the fact that the next chapter will not continue the story, so every character interaction is lost to time as soon as it is over. This is coupled with the very direct sensation of how temporary and fleeting every moment in the story is from the perspective of its characters. For instance, after being quite mortified by the death of a seabird for most of a chapter, by the end Sophia says “What Scolder” as “she had forgotten the bird that died of love”.¹⁰ In this context there is an immense feeling of nostalgia as not only can most readers relate to that feeling of forgetting what was once important to them, but Sophia’s quickness to forget about something so upsetting as death creates a feeling of nostalgia for when she did feel upset about the bird's death.¹¹ When Sophia says “They don’t die now; they’re brand new and just married” she is quite clearly upset and insistent that it is not right that the bird was dead, and

while this is not an outwardly positive experience there is something positive about her learning about death and her care for such a small creature. She forgets about the death altogether, the effect is a feeling of nostalgia for when she did remember the bird and cared for its demise. There is a melancholy feeling in that the bird got its funeral but was promptly forgotten, and never again talked about in the story. Thus, it is Sophia's passion and subsequent forgetfulness which creates a kind of meta-awareness of just how fleeting and short-term the experience of all events in the book are.

After each chapter all the reader is left with is the knowledge that the events transpired and the feeling that they had come and gone within a span of weeks, if not years, before the next chapter. This sensation is brought forth once more near the end of the book where the end of summer itself is discussed from Grandmother's perspective as she ponders where the time went: "Every Year, the bright Scandinavian summer nights fade away without anyone's noticing. One evening you have an errand outdoors, and all of a sudden it's pitch black".¹² There are multiple levels to the nostalgia and longing here, on the one hand Grandmother is struck by the sudden end of summer and the "bright Scandinavian summer nights" rapidly descending into "pitch black" in a very clear and jarring sense of nostalgia, as she looks back upon a very clearly brighter and happier time while acknowledging the present darkness by contrast.¹³ The reader in this instance is made to feel simultaneous nostalgia by proxy of Grandmother as she thinks about the beginning of that summer, but at the same time this nostalgia for the summer operates at a higher level as the reader is aware the book is coming to an end,

and therefore is made to feel a kind of artificial nostalgia for the Grandmother but also a very real nostalgia for the beginning of the book, knowing that there is nothing beyond the end of the pages.

However, it is because the story evokes those feelings of nostalgia for an earlier time that the reader is then able to foster their own nostalgia by proxy. It is as Isak Winkel Holm said, "The literary work, then, is not only cognition but also perception: a sort of prosthetic sense which enables the reader to sense the world through the consciousness of another".¹⁴ In the context of the story, as the grandmother laments the summer the reader is able to acquire that "prosthetic sense" of nostalgia she feels while applying it in different ways, as they are both nostalgic from her perspective but also nostalgic for their own reading of the book. *The Summer Book* is then understandable not just as a story but as an experience of the disjointed fleeting memories of summers that have passed, it is a direct portal for the reader to experience the nostalgia of memories that are not their own precisely because it is told more as a string of fragmented events akin to human memory rather than a reliable and thorough account as is common in literature.

Tove Janssons's *The Summer Book* stands out from most fiction since it does not necessarily tell a story but rather it relays an experience that therefore feels more genuine because the takeaway from this experience is so subjective to each person. Thanks to its structure and format this feeling of genuineness then enables the reader to truly experience the nostalgia of the book because they themselves are feeling the sensations of every

chapter as if it was their own dreamlike stream of consciousness. Since the story is able to vividly capture human sensations the reader is forced to confront the gulf between what they feel and what is real. As anyone is taught from a young age, the events of a fictional story are not real, and yet the feelings evoked from the story are undoubtedly genuine and real, as if the reader had lived through the events themselves. This is precisely what builds nostalgia in the story: the contradiction between the genuine emotions evoked and the fictitious circumstances from which they arise, which can never be experienced again because they were never truly experienced to begin with. The implications here perhaps warrant further study, as it is admittedly bizarre to conclude that a piece of fiction is capable of creating nostalgia when that sensation is premised upon longing for the past. If nostalgia spans beyond personal memory but can be an artificial or cultural construct, then that raises the question, whether humans are exclusively longing for the past, or is the past just the first thing conceived of when people try to imagine something they cannot ever have again? What is certain, though, is that, in spite of any real-world likeness, *The Summer Book* creates a very real longing for the summer that never was, and never will be.

References

1 Janelle L. Wilson, "REMEMBER WHEN...": A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 56, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 297, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42705763>.

2 Wilson, "REMEMBER WHEN" 297.

3 Tove Jansson, *The Summer Book*, trans. Kathryn Davis (New York: New York Review of Books, 2008), 5.

4 Jansson, "The Summer Book" 8.

5 Patrick C. Hogan, s.v. "Affect Studies," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* (2016), accessed April 19, 2022, 17, <https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-105>.

6 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 21.

7 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 21.

8 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 21.

References

9 Hogan, "Affect Studies," 18.

10 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 23.

11 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 20.

12 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 164.

13 Jansson, *The Summer Book*, 164.

14 Isak Winkel Holm et al., "Sensation," in *Literature: An Introduction to Theory and Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 97, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474272001.ch-009>.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hogan, Patrick C. "Affect Studies." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, 1-29. 2016. Accessed April 19, 2022.
<https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-105>.
- Jansson, Tove. *The Summer Book*. Translated by Kathryn Davis. New York: New York Review of Books, 2008.
- Wilson, Janelle L. "'REMEMBER WHEN...': A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 56, no. 3 (Fall 1996), 296- 304.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42705763>.
- Winkel Holm, Isak, Lasse Horne Kjældgaard, Lis Møller, Dan Ringgaard, and Peter Simonsen. "Sensation." In *Literature: An Introduction to Theory and Analysis*, 93-106. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474272001.ch-009>.

SVERIGE

SWEDEN

“DET NUVARANDE ÖGONBLICKET ÄR BETYDELSEFULLT, INTE SOM EN BRYGGA MELLAN DET FÖRFLUTNA OCH FRAMTIDEN, UTAN PÅ GRUND AV DESS INNEHÅLL, SOM KÄN FYLLA VÅR TOMHET OCH BLI VÅR, OM VI ÄR KAPABLA ATT TA EMOT DEM.” - DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

“THE PRESENT MOMENT IS SIGNIFICANT, NOT AS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE, BUT BY REASON OF ITS CONTENTS, WHICH CAN FILL OUR EMPTINESS AND BECOME OURS, IF WE ARE CAPABLE OF RECEIVING THEM.”

- DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

CREATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SWEDEN THROUGH HOMONATIONALISM BY BOSHRA MOHEQ



Abstract: Using the term “homonationalism” as coined by Jaspir Puar, this paper explores the ways in which certain queer identities have been used within Sweden as markers of progress and superiority, and consequently have been used as tools of exclusion for racialized “Others.” Beginning by looking at the history of queer rights within Sweden, the paper establishes how all non-heteronormative identities were initially on the margins of society, but with recent political trends, certain ‘palatable’ queer identities have been accepted into mainstream mainstream society, demonstrating that the line of exclusion has shifted the focus from the basis of sexuality to the basis of race. This essay will further look into, first, the specific depictions of non-Western states within Swedish media and how that plays into a

sense of homo-nationalism. Then it examines the way in which homo-nationalism has been used as a tool by right-wing politicians to move forward anti-immigrant agendas. Finally, the paper looks at the role of homo-nationalism in the securitization of the Swedish state by exploring the relationship between queerness and the military.

Creating a sense of national identity is integral for a nation state, as it plays a significant role in the way that citizens conceptualize themselves in relation to their home state as well as in relation to other states. The creation of an “us vs. them” dichotomy has been a big part of the agenda of those in power, as it encourages a sense of unity and nationalism within citizens which motivates them to defend their state regardless of who the opponent is. In the past few decades, certain queer identities and rights have been used to create national values and norms, which states have used to promote themselves as more progressive than others. This essay will discuss the ways in which queer rights have been used in the creation of a national identity by focusing on Sweden as a case study. This homonationalism can be demonstrated through the ways in which media portrays African countries and their opinions towards queer issues, how the military performs the image of an ‘accepting’ national self, and the rhetorics used by political actors to distance themselves from the Other and further right-wing agendas.

The term homonationalism was originally coined by Jasbir Puar.¹ Puar described homonationalism as “a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states.”² Puar also intended for homonationalism to be used as a tool to analyze the ways in which sexuality works in nation-building processes on the global sphere.³ These nation-building processes also include the creation of the national subject, which within a Scandinavian context often refers to white, middle-class, able-bodied and though increasingly less, straight individuals.

Therefore, all individuals that fall outside the boundaries of these categories are viewed as 'Others' and are thus excluded from the idea of a citizen.⁴ They are often the 'them' in the "us vs. them" and not viewed as worthy of protection by the state. This paper will demonstrate the ways in which a national identity has been created through the usage of queer rights to form the basis of exclusionary public sentiments.

Sweden is often viewed as one of the most "progressive" countries in the world due to its high rates of GDP⁵ and its fairly socialist public policies.⁶ 200 years free of war and corruption has led the people of Sweden to prosper economically and to have the privilege of turning their public attention toward a myriad of social issues. Sweden originally legalized same-sex marriage in 2009 and same-sex couples have had the ability to petition to adopt since 2003, with public attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals having been much more positive in comparison to other countries worldwide.⁷ Swedes do not hesitate to acknowledge themselves as extremely progressive due to this acceptance and take pride in doing so. These attitudes have led to the conceptualization of Sweden as "the epitome of progress, democracy, and the civilized benevolent West" creating a sense of homonationalism.⁸ It is important to note that not all queer identities are provided with this protection from the threat of the (racialized) Other, as they fall outside of the white, able-bodied, gender-conforming, and well-earning idea of a gay individual that has been promoted by the Western state. Previously, all members of the queer community were conceptualized as the Other along the lines of sexuality rather than race. However, this narrative has slowly changed and white able-bodied, gender-conforming and

well-earning queer individuals have become the 'right' and far more palatable kind of Other. The kind of Other that Swedes can proudly point to and praise their own progressivity.

An analysis of the ways in which non-Western states are portrayed in Swedish daily newspapers, such as Sundsvall Tidning or Svenska Dagbladet exhibits that this sense of pride in allowing Swedish gay and lesbian individuals to have rights has led to a sense of superiority over other states.⁹ Katarina Jungar and Salla Pelotenen's analysis of daily Swedish newspapers demonstrates that Swedish homonationalism "makes possible a transnational discourse on Western modernity and superiority, while simultaneously producing racialized bodies of pathologized nationalities."¹⁰ By establishing certain queer identities as worthy of protection by the state, Sweden asserts Western modernity, and thus superiority over the non-Western world, and also perpetuates this discourse on the international sphere. By doing so, Swedish homo-nationalism also establishes the non-Western nationalities as the Other from which protection is needed, while also othering and excluding non-white queer identities within Sweden.

This attention that the media places on the laws against gay marriage in Africa positions African and Arab countries as the antithesis of the progressive West, thus creating a regressive, undemocratic, and traditional Other. By accepting certain queer identities, the West is painted as superior to African countries and cultures.¹¹ In doing so, homonationalism also allows other queer issues to become invisible by solely focusing on marriage laws, thus reinforcing heteronormative institutions. Additionally, it also completely fails to address the ways in which these

normative Western claims tend to control non-normative (and non-Western) sexualities through establishing what is an 'acceptable' queer identity and what is not.¹² Homonationalism thus helps create a national identity (an "us") by also contrasting Swedish norms against African political and cultural norms (a "them"). This rhetoric not only creates a divide between racialized minorities and Swedish subjects, but is also used by political actors to further right-wing agendas.

The homonationalism that has been demonstrated previously by media's conceptualization and understanding of African queer laws continues to be used as a tool to further right-wing agendas by right-wing political actors in Sweden. In fact, these actors are the ones who are most blatant in regards to the way in which they describe Swedish and Western superiority in contrast with middle eastern norms and cultures. As Katharina Kehl discusses in her article, right-wing political actor Jan Sjunnesson has utilized homonationalism to "increasingly enlist LGBT rights in nationalist, xenophobic and racist projects of exclusion" similar to other right-wing political actors across Europe.

Kehl argues that by utilizing queer rights and conceptualizing them as Swedish norms, these actors construct a threatening racialized Other and once again create an "us vs. them" dichotomy. Much like Puar described in her literature, the question of "how well do you treat your homosexuals?" has begun to be used as a measuring tape determining the progressiveness of a state. By proudly claiming that they treat their homosexuals justly, political actors antagonize non-Western states and by extension, antagonize any racialized individual within the West.

This homo-nationalism that is built on a narrative of threat and protection allows it to be easily integratable into right-wing populist rhetoric. It is also specifically white queer individuals that play the most central role in this narrative by being the 'right' kind of other, as they become a minority group that gets included in the narrative for the sole purpose of excluding racialized others.

The creation of an "us vs. them" is more important in the military than elsewhere, as the military requires its personnel to have enough passion for the state to be willing to sacrifice their life for it. Research has shown that the composition of genders and sexualities plays a significant role in "performative enactments" of the state. Being viewed as gender-friendly and gay-friendly has become a marker of progress and therefore "gender-conscious militaries contribute to performances of national Selves and simultaneously [discipline] external Others through (the threat of) armed violence." The Swedish military has adopted this strategy in its marketing campaigns, by flaunting its tolerance for the 'right' sexualities and genders, such as the recent launch of a campaign in support of Sweden's Pride, headed by the image of a white woman and white man with rainbow-coloured face paint stating "We don't always march straight." The utilization of this strategy clearly illustrates that being thought of as progressive due to equal marriage laws is known as a trait of Swedish identity. It also works to construct the idea that the *raison d'être* for the Swedish Armed Forces is this progressiveness and the protection of these rights from the aforementioned Other.

However, this ongoing sense of homonationalism yet again renders any queer issue outside of marriage laws invisible,

and ignores the fact that a lack of tolerance for queer rights exists within Sweden. This conceptualization of the Swedish Armed Forces as protectors of rights and progress implies that any Other is a constant threat to Swedish identity and well-being. Any queer identities that fall outside of the accepted gay man or lesbian woman are also pushed aside, in order to create room for more “palatable” queer identities. This narrative also has the potential to spread into a conversation regarding the protection of racialized queer individuals from their own government. This narrative has the possibility to pave the way for international intervention and forms of neoimperialism in the name of queer rights. As Strand and Kehl state “By rendering equality between all genders and sexualities a national trait, Sweden is performatively enacted as an ‘extremely’ equal, tolerant and progressive nation/state, currently under threat from traditional Others.” This demonstrates a rhetoric that is produced by the media, pushed by right-wing political actors and used by the Swedish military in order to paint Sweden as superior to the non-Western world.

This essay has demonstrated the ways in which homonationalism is utilized to create a Swedish national identity. This is often done through the creation of an “us vs. them” dichotomy which gives rise to narratives of threat from non-Western (and specifically African and Middle Eastern) states and actors. The way in which African countries are understood and discussed in daily newspapers indicates the way Swedes believe they have a sense of moral superiority due to their acceptance of (certain) queer identities. Further, the utilization of queer rights in marketing strategies of the Swedish Armed Forces places queer rights as a concept that requires protection by Western (Swedish) powers from the threat of non-Western (African and Middle

Eastern) Other. Finally, right-wing political actors within Sweden utilize their inclusion of certain acceptable queer identities as tools to push an anti-racialized Other agenda.

References

- 1 Jasbir Puar *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Second ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Jasbir Puar "Rethinking Homonationalism." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2) (2013) 336-339.
- 2 Puar, 2007, 337
- 3 Katarina Jungar and Salla Peltonen "Acts of Homonationalism: Mapping Africa in the Swedish Media." *Sexualities* 20 (5-6) (2017) 715-737.
- 4 Puar, 2007, 338
- 5 The World Bank "GDP per capita: PPP (current international \$) - Sweden" (2019)
- 6 Carsta Simon "Why Norwegians Don't have their Pigs in the Forest: Illuminating Nordic 'Co-Operation.'" *Behavior and Social Issues* 26 (1) (2017) 172-186.
- 7 BBC NEWS "Sweden legalises gay adoption." *BBC News* (published: June 2, 2003).
- 8 Jungar and peltonen, 717
- 9 Jungar and peltonen, 726
- 10 Jungar and peltonen, 732
- 11 Jungar and peltonen, 733
- 12 Jungar and Peltonen, 733

References Continued

13 Janelle L. Wilson, "REMEMBER WHEN...": A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 56, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 297, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42705763>.
Wilson, "REMEMBER WHEN" 297.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BBC NEWS. 2002. "Sweden legalises gay adoption." published: June 2. BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2028938.stm>
- Cheong, Ian. 2022. "Swedish Armed Forces says supporting LGBTQ pride is part of army's 'core values'" published: August 3. Rebel News.
- Jungar, Katarina and Salla Peltonen. 2017. "Acts of Homonationalism: Mapping Africa in the Swedish Media." *Sexualities* 20 (5-6): 715-737.
- Kehl, Katharina, Institutionen för globala studier, Göteborgs universitet, Gothenburg University, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, School of Global Studies, and Faculty of Social Sciences. 2018. "'In Sweden, Girls are Allowed to Kiss Girls, and Boys are Allowed to Kiss Boys': Pride Järva and the Inclusion of the 'LGBT Other' in Swedish Nationalist Discourses." *Sexualities* 21 (4): 674-691.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Puar, Jasbir K. and e-Duke Books Scholarly Collection 2017. 2017;2018;. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Second ed. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Puar, Jasbir. 2013. "Rethinking Homonationalism." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2): 336-339.
- Simon, Carsta. 2017. "Why Norwegians Don't Have Their Pigs in the Forest: Illuminating Nordic 'Co-Operation.'" *Behavior and Social Issues* 26 (1): 172- 186.
- Strand, Sanna, Katharina Kehl, Institutionen för globala studier, Göteborgs universitet, Gothenburg University, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, School of Global Studies, and Faculty of Social Sciences. 2019. "'A Country to Fall in Love with/in': Gender and Sexuality in Swedish Armed Forces' Marketing Campaigns." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21 (2): 295-314.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The World Bank. 2019. "GDP per capita: PPP (current international \$) - Sweden"
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=SE>



SCANDINAVIA SKANDINAVIEN

"LIVET KAN KUN FORSTÅS BAGLÆNS; MEN DET SKAL
LEVES FORLÆNS."

- SØREN KIERKEGAARD

"LIFE CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD BACKWARDS; BUT IT
MUST BE LIVED FORWARDS."

- SØREN KIERKEGAARD

SUBVERSIVE SEX: ANTI-CHRISTIANISM AS A MEANS OF HEALING IN THELMA AND BORDER

BY PRANIDHI BISHT



Abstract: The supernatural is a historically extant phenomenon occurring in Scandinavian folklore from the early ages. Deeply engraved into the culture of the region, Scandinavian media is known for its exploration of witches and trolls, labelling them as Satanist sinners and highlighting their negative impact on society. Today, Scandinavian films have seemingly moved away from this rhetoric, opting to explore supernatural in a more subversive way. By combining the sins of ‘paganism’ and ‘sexuality’, films like Joachim Trier’s

Thelma (2017) and Ali Abbasi’s *Border* (2018) subvert the traditional Christian thought portrayed in older Scandinavian cinema to explore how these sins can aid in healing various trauma. This paper aims to evaluate these films through a post-Christian lens, and analyze how they utilize sin, rather than the more commonly used themes of virtue and faith, to remedy their characters’ internal struggles with the self.

Ever-present in Scandinavian media, the element of the supernatural is indelible to the culture either through the idea of the Pagan witch or through the creation of the folkloric 'troll'. Historically used to promote the idea of 'Christian forgiveness', the supernatural is pervasive within Scandinavian horror, from Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan* (1922) to Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009). Being at the end of the Christian conversion shift within the European region, Scandinavian films used the fear of Pagan communities to promote Christianity, often through the use of 'the witch'.¹ The existence of the supernatural being inherently anti-Christian allowed for filmmakers at the time to set the tone of sin and virtue. It is often used in opposition to stories wherein characters have 'found God' to heal. However, this is directly subverted in contemporary filmmakers Joachim Trier and Ali Abbasi's *Thelma* (2017) and *Border* (2018), wherein anti-Christianity is directly rooted in the main characters' journeys towards healing, rather than trauma.

Thelma tells the story of the titular character and her peregrination into acceptance of her same-sex attraction and the mystical powers that come with her anxiety towards it, despite the disapproval of her religious, Christian, parents.² *Border*, on the other hand, explores the outsider and the consequences of forced identity through the lead character, Tina, and her self-discovering journey of finding out that she is a troll, raised as a human.³ Neither of the films subscribe to the horror genre, rather taking up the coming-of-age route in order to truly subvert the idea of the supernatural terror, opting to view it as supernatural healing instead. This paper aims to analyze *Thelma* and *Border* through a post-Christian lens in an attempt to better understand its use of

sexuality and the supernatural as a means of healing from various trauma. For the purpose of this paper, the term anti-Christian is not synonymous with Christian hatred, but rather used in the sense that the films reject the classic Christian ethics.

Premarital/extramarital sex and sexual morality are popular topics within the Christian canon, often being associated with sin under God's eyes. Both *Thelma* and *Border* begin their characters' journeys through the depiction of intense sexual attraction; while in *Thelma*, this desire is shown through Thelma's random seizures, in *Border*, it is shown through Tina's immediate attraction to Vore over her abusive boyfriend, Roland. Thelma's journey begins when she arrives at her university in the city, opting to go to a library to study where she is confronted with beautiful women; one sitting down next to her triggers a seizure⁴ for which she is continuously hospitalized throughout the remainder of the film. Thelma's same-sex attraction is in and of itself a sin under God's eyes, something that she is aware of and tries to keep repressed. Her rejection of her attraction towards Anja is routine, similar to her rejection of smoking, drinking, or engaging in blasphemous activities. This repression in favour of Christian ethics further worsens Thelma's seizures, thus deposing Trier's anti-Christian rhetoric not only through her same-sex attraction, but through the psycho-kinetic powers that Thelma begins to experience as a result of her repression. This is further explored after Thelma and Anja's first kiss after the performance art show, where Thelma's sexual and romantic desire towards Anja deepens resulting intense guilt. Thelma's religious trauma not only subverts the idea of religious healing, but promotes the idea of harm as a result of devout religiousness –

a direct opposition towards the idea of 'Christian forgiveness'. Thelma's supernatural powers are a direct stand-in for a coping mechanism in regards to her religious guilt, coming in uncontrollable bursts of intense emotion, thus directly linking the anti-Christian rhetoric with the power of using the supernatural to heal. Thelma's plot and characters are a direct allusion to the biblical story of Adam and Eve: Anja's middle name is revealed to be 'Adams'⁵ and Thelma's is revealed to be 'Eve'.⁶ This revelation is important to one of the most pivotal moments within the film: the scene in which Thelma's strong Christian resolve is finally overpowered by the sin of desire. At about 00:52:15, Thelma is shown to give into her peer pressure and smoke a joint, which is later revealed to be fake.

This ingress into debauchery, and Thelma's first conscious sin, triggers a hallucination in which she visualizes her feelings towards Anja, as well as her shame and self-hatred for having them. Thelma and Anja both appear to look demonic with glowing red skin as they kiss, heightening Thelma's frantic attraction. As Anja further pleases Thelma with the 'apple' of sin, the biblical snake appears out of her hand, almost phallic, as it enters Thelma's mouth, thus 'taking her virginity' and 'corrupting Eve'.⁷ This subverted image of Adam and Eve featuring two women rather than a man and a woman exemplifies the anti-Christian stance that the film takes by rejecting the most famous Christian moral of a man only laying with a woman; this is taken further by having them engage in premarital sex, adding to the sin. Throughout the film, Christian imagery is used against itself as Thelma's powers and her control over them increase. For Thelma, her father is God - an ever-present being who she calls to repent

for her sins, controlling her motives and desires. As Thelma gains independence and begins to accept her sexuality, she baptizes her father with fire, burning him alive;⁸ this further subverts Christian rhetoric as Thelma, rather than accepting God, accepts her supernatural powers (or 'witchcraft') into her life, thus freeing her from her Christian burden, and beginning her journey of healing.

In *Border*, Tina's journey to healing begins almost immediately after she meets Vore. While the film is not set around Christianity, or religion, it is assumed that the society lived in by the characters is post-Christian, due to the location being Sweden where the society is prominently secular. Early on in the film, Tina is shown to be introverted and subdued when meeting others, rejecting the sexual advances of her boyfriend, Roland, by swatting his hand away from her thigh.⁹ She is distant with him, preferring the company of animals or walking outdoors than spending time with him. In her relationship, Tina feels no desire, happiness, or fulfillment; however, at her first meeting with Vore, there is a clear immediate attraction between the two. Tina begins to lean in as if she is going to kiss him, but resists the urge.¹⁰ This inkling of desire and attraction, to a man she is not in a relationship with, exemplifies the anti-Christian rhetoric of the extramarital affair, taken further when Tina and Vore begin to 'date' while she is still in a relationship and living with Roland. While Christianity scribes marriage to be the strongest bond that should not be challenged under any circumstance whatsoever, the audience roots for Tina's relationship with Vore, wanting better for her as she finds someone who looks similar to her, someone who she feels a connection with and does not feel trapped with.

Once it is revealed that Tina is a troll, a supernatural being present in many Nordic cultures, Tina begins her process of healing. For Tina, the idea that she is a troll immediately pins her as an anti-Christian character, however, Tina actually accepts Christian rhetoric to begin her healing as a contrast to Thelma. Trolls, in the Nordic folklore, hunt and kill Christians by smelling their blood. They are not creatures created by God; rather, they are creatures that kill and eat God's creation (humans). Vore also exemplifies this idea, as while it is not explicitly stated that he hates humans because they are God's creation, his hatred towards humanity can be seen as anti-Christian because of the species he is a part of. Tina's acceptance of her troll-being happens after the scene in which she unveils her penis and begins to have sex with Vore.¹¹ While this happens before Tina finds out that she is a troll, it is a pivotal moment in her journey towards her acceptance of her identity. Vore allows her to be herself without shame, and not only fulfills her sexually, but is like-minded and like-abled with her in ways that humans could never be. After this scene, Tina begins to live her life in a more troll-like manner, accepting the supernatural part of herself over her identity as a human; behaving in an anti-Christian way.

Tina's rejection of the Christian morals of fidelity and acceptance of the anti-Christian element of the supernatural allow her to begin healing; she is seen to be happier in her new way of life, and is able to muster up the courage to break up with her boyfriend, Roland, and ask him to leave the house. Similar to Thelma's ending, with Thelma accepting the supernatural in a religious way, Tina shows signs of accepting Christian morals in a subversive way. When asked by Vore to meet him at the guest house after finding out that he is a human trafficker, Tina visits

him and tells him that revenge is not the answer, and that while trolls are not human, compassion is available to everyone.¹² This adherence to the Christian rhetoric of 'love thy neighbour', is inherently subversive as deemed by Tina's very existence. Being an entity that will never be accepted by the Christian faith, a troll, she still lives by the Christian rules in an already post-Christian world. By choosing to follow these Christian rules despite the -- rejection she would face, Tina allows herself to heal from her trauma caused by humans by embracing the very people who would not welcome her, making her the 'bigger person'.

To conclude, both films employ anti-Christian rhetoric by focusing on sexuality in order to promote emotional healing for their characters. While *Thelma*'s approach is more straightforward in its stance, *Border* does so with a post-Christian perspective and without any explicit mention of religion. In *Thelma*, Christianity is the driving force of the titular character's life, controlling *Thelma*'s desires, her motivations, and her choices; she keeps up the facade of the 'good Christian girl' despite having desires that her religious family would not allow. By embracing her sexual desire towards women, *Thelma* welcomes her family's secret 'witch' powers, thus championing the supernatural sin over Christian virtue. Through this she is able to escape the abuse of her family, allowing her to find solace in the supernatural and heal from her trauma. For *Tina*, this is done in a similar manner; she embraces her identity as a troll, an anti-Christian supernatural figure, despite it being the cause of her ostracization. By embracing her troll-self, she chooses to be free of the social constraints and the abusive treatments humans place onto her,

beginning her journey of healing. Ultimately, both Thelma and Tina are better for rejecting Christian values, with both films successfully subverting the audience's expectations of having 'typical Scandinavian characters' that would adhere to these customs, thus creating rich, emotional storylines of healing.

References

- 1 Emma Robinson, "Witches in The Scandinavian Horror Film", *Cinema Scandinavia*, no. 1 (April 2014): 37-38
- 2 Trier, Joachim, dir. *Thelma* (Norway: Motlys, 2017), Digital.
- 3 Abbasi, Ali, dir. *Border* (Sweden: META Film, 2018), Digital.
- 4 Trier, *Thelma*, 00:08:59
- 5 Trier, *Thelma*, 00:14:36
- 6 Trier, *Thelma*, 01:03:13
- 7 Trier, *Thelma*
- 8 Trier, *Thelma*, 01:40:29
- 9 Abbasi, *Border*, 00:15:38
- 10 Abbasi, *Border*, 00:10:23
- 11 Abbasi, *Border*, 00:57:46
- 12 Abbasi, *Border*, 01:30:26



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbasi, Ali. 2018. *Border*. Digital. Sweden: META Film.
- Robinson, Emma. 2014. "Witches in The Scandinavian Horror Film". *Cinema Scandinavia*, no. 1: 37-38.
- https://www.academia.edu/6848264/Cinema_Scandinavia_Issue_1.
- Trier, Joachim. 2017. *Thelma*. Digital. Norway: Motlys.