

# Woman or Warrior?

## The Construction of Gender in Old Norse Myth

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Dóttir Bjarmars var með barni þat var mærl einkar fögr. Sú var vatni ausin ok nafn gefit ok kölluð Hervör. Hon fæddisk upp með jarli ok var sterk sem karlar, ok þegar hon mátti sér nökkut, tamðisk hon meir við skot ok skjöld ok sverð en við sauma eða borða. (Bjarmar's daughter was with child; and it was a girl of great beauty. She was sprinkled with water, and given a name, and called Hervör. She was brought up in the house of the jarl, and she was as strong as a man; as soon as she could do anything for herself she trained herself more with a bow and shield and sword than with needlework and embroidery [HS,10]).<sup>2</sup>

This example from *Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra* gives us an excellent opportunity to examine and understand the gender roles in what is traditionally

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<sup>1</sup> Nagy argues in his forthcoming essay "Can Myth be saved?" that the word myth, deriving from *muthos*, can or should be used in its most extensive way and then the "reality of this *muthos* is the plot of narration." Nagy, forthcoming, pp. 1-8. I take this opportunity to thank Stephen Mitchell, William Layher, Joseph Harris and Malte Herwig for helpful comments on this paper.

<sup>2</sup> *Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra* 1960. Hereafter cited parenthetically as (HS) in the text.

called the patriarchal society of the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Hervör was a woman who trained herself for male duties, thus leaving behind conventions of female role behavior. It is true that she is only a literary fantasy but it is helpful to use literary fantasies as case studies in discussing the construction of gender.<sup>4</sup> As Clover argues, the literary fantasy, if collective, “has much to tell about the underlying tensions of the society that produced it” and that “when the subject is one such as woman, which the ‘legitimate’ sources treat only scantily, the literary fantasy takes on a special importance.”<sup>5</sup> Clover further argues for a one-sex cultural model of gender where focus is on the binary opposites of power/powerless instead of the question of male/female.<sup>6</sup> This model does not, however, offer an explanation of the transgressive behavior of females in Old Norse myth. I argue that it is also important to look at female sexuality and the two different images of the “erotic” or the “non-erotic” woman proposed by Linke about the birth of men and the cultural construction of gender.<sup>7</sup> In this paper I will explore these gender roles and the function of the remarkable phenomenon of the warrior woman dressed as a man in chain mail and the queen with her own army; the maiden king.<sup>8</sup> I also extend the notion of gender to include transgender.<sup>9</sup> Rather than distinguishing between discrete binary opposites as Clover and Linke do, the notion of transgender locates the human or social behavior in an intermediary space, the “somewhere” in-between the poles.

As the story about Hervör proceeds we are told that “Hon gerði ok optar illt en gott” (She did more harm than good [HS,10]). When she was told to behave less badly she ran away to the woods and killed for her pleasure. When

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<sup>3</sup> The question of gender has been widely discussed among scholars who represent different views of how to interpret this issue. Jochens notes the social construction of gender, she writes “the Christian message was a fundamentally liberating force that included women as well[...]women were better off during the Christian period and in Christian countries than they had been before and elsewhere.” (Jochens 1995, p. 2). Clover and Linke discuss the cultural image of gender and do not include Christianity in their arguments.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Clover 1986, p. 36. Mitchell also stresses the fact of looking at the sagas as a literary fantasy, maybe without a certain message about morality or education; however, the narratives still reflect the insight view of “the cultural and psychological dilemmas of their audience”. Mitchell 1991, pp. 126-127.

<sup>5</sup> Clover 1986, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Clover 1993, op cit.

<sup>7</sup> Linke 1992, pp. 265-288.

<sup>8</sup> The term maiden king and *meykongr* are from Whalgren’s dissertation: *The Maiden King in Iceland*, 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Transgender is a term used for someone who crosses the barriers of gender but not the ones of sex, i.e. someone who lives in the gender opposite to the one given by birth. This term is discussed by Feinburg 1996, pp. IX-XVII, 3-9, and Butler 1990, pp. vii-xii, 1-34. Feinburg notes that the binary opposites most commonly used with gender are not enough, and that the language is one of the barriers as there are only two pronouns for human beings, male or female. Feinburg also asks questions as to why societies only recognize two sexes and that people belonging to this group have to fight for their existence. Hence they call themselves Trans Warriors.

Bjarmarr, the jarl and Hervör's grandfather, heard of this he gathered his men and they seized Hervör and brought her home. She then stayed home, but still neglected the domestic duties associated with a woman. The servants grew tired of Hervör's behavior and told her the truth about her parentage: that her father Angantýr was of a lower class, that he had a reputation for being a berserk (HS,3). Hervör now wants to avenge her father who has been slain. In a poem she tells her grandfather how she will become like a man: "Skal skjótliga/um skör búa/blæju líni/áðr braut fari:/mikit býr í því,/er á morgin skal/skera bæði mér/skyrtu ok ólpu"(I will wrap swiftly /around my hair /a linen headgear /ere I hasten away; /much rests on it, /that when the morning comes /cloak and kirtle /be cut for me [HS,11]).

Hervör calls herself "Hervarðr" and departs to become the captain of a band of vikings. Her father is buried on Sámsey and "Hervarðr" goes ashore to meet her dead father and talk to him. He eventually gives her the magic sword Tyrfingr (HS,12-15), a clear token of male power. Both her appearance and behavior are now conforming to a male role model. Androgyny has been much discussed among scholars who note the significant difference between male and female androgyny, where the distinction is made between the negative moral of a man behaving or dressing like a woman, while females dressing like men are not considered to be as negative.<sup>10</sup> Both the Norwegian Gulaping Law and *Grágás*, the Icelandic law code, express the view that anyone who dresses like the opposite sex and women who wear weapons as a man must be punished.<sup>11</sup>

Ef kona klæðist karlkæðum eða sker sér skör eða fer með vopn fyrir beytni sakir, það varðar fjörbaugsgarð. Það er stefnumælt um karla ef þeir klæðast kvenna kæðnadði (If a woman dresses in men's clothing or cut her hair like a man or uses weapon in a dangerous way, that should be punished by the lesser outlawry [fjörbaugr = life money]. It is the same punishment if a man dresses like a woman).<sup>12</sup>

A woman, however, who dressed like a man was mostly regarded as being headstrong or bold, a troublemaker.<sup>13</sup> The question is, then, if the authors of the sagas accepted women warriors or maiden kings as belonging to a different gender, as the narratives do not mention prosecution or punishment. Still, cross-dressing is considered to be something of a "problem" because the cultural

<sup>10</sup> Linke 1992, p.276.

<sup>11</sup> Keyser, R. and Much, P.A, eds. 1846-95. *Norges gamle Love undtil 1387*.

<sup>12</sup> Karlsson, Gunnar, ed. 1997. *Grágás* (Konungsbók), p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> In *Laxdæla saga* Þórðr Ingunnarson declares himself divorced from his wife Auðr who dresses like a man. This became a problem for Þórðr who asks Guðrún what the penalty was for a woman who dressed like a man. She answers him "Slíkt víti á konum at skapa fyrir þat á sitt hóf sem karlmanni, ef hann hefir höfuðsmátt svá mikla, at sjái geirvörtur hans berar, brautgangssök hvárttveggja" (that the same penalty applies to women in a case like that as to a man who wears neck opening so wide that his nipples are exposed both are grounds for divorce [*Laxdæla saga*, ch. 35]). Women dressed like men are called "karlkonur", this term, however, is not used for either Hervör, Þorbjörg or Brynhildr.

gender model mentioned earlier is seriously challenged when faced with androgynes and maiden kings which do not fit into the model of gender defined by binary opposites. Here transgender would be a better term for those who socially act in the intermediary sphere between the poles.<sup>14</sup>

If we now return to Hervör, we are told of a woman who was the captain of a band of vikings, who showed no intention to spend her life in the domestic sphere, but rather to revenge her slain father in battle. How was it possible for the audience to accept her change? The idea of using literary fantasies can be of great help in understanding the "underlying tensions" in the cultural model of gender roles.<sup>15</sup> Even if Hervör acts as the leader of the band of vikings, she is suspected of being a woman. King Guðmundr's remarks about Hervör's appearance indicate how complex a question it is to define gender. He says "mun yðr þykkja í manni þessum minni hefnd, en þér ætlið, því kvennaman ætla ek hann vera" (for your vengeance on this man will seem smaller than you now think, because it is my guess that he is a woman [HS,20]). The seminal point of this discussion resides in the changes back and forth in the socially-defined gender roles described in the narratives, and how the audience accepts Hervör's behavior as a man, but the opposite scenario would not be acceptable, according to the laws. And it should be noted how ambivalent the attitude is towards Hervör: is she a man, or is she a woman?<sup>16</sup>

Clover's one-sex cultural model suggests gender as consisting of two poles or binary opposites, and she plausibly suggests that instead of using the terms male/female, one should discuss power/powerless. Clover argues that the sex-gender system in general is rather different in the Germanic, and above all in the Scandinavian culture, as compared to other cultures in the Christian Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> Linke, who in her essay argues for a model of gender similar to Clover's, also notes this difference, when arguing for the birth of men of two different kinds of mothers, the erotic mother and the non-erotic mother.<sup>18</sup> This difference also affects the offspring and Linke argues that the binary opposites of good/bad should also be included. Gender studies suggest that we examine carefully the information the narrative gives us about the circumstances under which the females who act like men are born. The connection between parents

<sup>14</sup> An exceptional example of crossing gender boundaries is to be found in *Flóamannasaga*. Þorgils needs to nurse a child, or the child will die. He decides to "skera mér geirvörtuna – ok svá var gört: fór fyrst ór blóð, síðan blanda, ok lét eigi fyrr af en ór fór mjólk, ok þar fæddiz sveinninn upp við þat" (he took a knife and pierced his nipple, and there came blood: then he let the child tug at it, and then there came water and milk, and he did not stop until milk came, and the boy was nursed upon it [*Flóamannasaga*, p. 43, 44]). Þorgils managed to keep the child alive, and he was only talked about as being a hero for his deed, not to be someone who must be punished for crossing the barriers of biological gender.

<sup>15</sup> Clover 1986, p.36.

<sup>16</sup> See earlier discussion about laws against men dressing as females, notes 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> Clover 1993, pp. 365-366.

<sup>18</sup> Linke 1992, pp. 265-288.

and children is in general rarely described in the narratives; with respect to women warriors, their relationship with their parents does not seem to be very close. Hervör's father, Angantýr, was dead even before she was born and the only description given about Hervör's mother, Sváfa, is that she married a berserk, about whom it was known that he and his brothers "illt eitt hafa gört" (have done nothing but evil [HS,4]). Could the fact that the author is telling us that Sváfa's "transgression" (i.e. crossing the social boundary and marrying someone who was not considered to be the perfect match) turned her into the erotic or bad mother who is connected with sexuality. This action in turn mandates that the offspring, Hervör, act in a way not connected to her biological gender, in contrast to male protagonists like Egill, Grettir and Skarpheðinn.<sup>19</sup> However, I argue that binary opposites – male/female, power/powerless, erotic/non erotic – in the model of gender roles are inadequate and that a focus on the intermediary sphere of transgender would bring us a better understanding of the construction of gender in the narratives.

With respect to gender, is it easier to define a maiden king or a woman warrior from the standpoint of the social construction of gender only rather than of biological gender. Several competing theories concerning how to interpret the question of gender are relevant to our discussion. Among feminist scholars, Scott argues for the importance of understanding the difference between biological and social gender, a view that anticipates in interesting ways Clover's cultural one-sex model of gender.<sup>20</sup> This theory would have been better applied in the case of Hervör if the author had described her as acting like a man throughout the saga. Hervör, however, never reaches the binary opposite of Clover's cultural model of gender roles, since she stays in between genders when acting as a man and then after being weary of raiding, she returns home to "settisk til hannyrðanáms" (do fine works with her hands [HS,20]).

The traditional image of gender in Viking Age Scandinavia is that of the woman as the keeper of keys of the household and the man as the one whom actively takes part in the realm outside the household.<sup>21</sup> There are, as we have seen, exceptions in the literature, such as the woman warrior, the maiden king, and other "traditional" headstrong women. Now I would like to address the differences between transgendered figures and the ones who retain femininity despite evil deeds.

In *Völsunga saga* we can find two strong women:<sup>22</sup> Brynhildr, the woman warrior, and Guðrún, who is headstrong but acts without chain mail.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> As discussed by Linke 1992, pp 265-288.

<sup>20</sup> Scott 1988b, pp. 3-49.

<sup>21</sup> Jochens 1995.

<sup>22</sup> *Völsunga saga* 1965, p. 35. Hereafter cited parenthetically as (VS) in the text

<sup>23</sup> Theodore Andersson discusses the problem of the central figures in *Völsunga saga*. Even though it seems like it is Sigurðr who would be the hero, Andersson argues that it is in fact Brynhildr who is the heroine of the saga. The title of the saga itself and the poems are a few of the

Brynhildr is presented as follows:

Sigurðr gekk í skjaldborgina ok sá at þar svaf maðr ok lá með öllum hervápnum. Hann tók fyrst hjálminn af höfði honum ok sá at þat var kona. Hon var í brynju, ok var svá föst sem hon væri holdgróin. (Sigurd went inside the fort and saw a man there, asleep and lying in, full armor. First he removed the helmet from his head and saw that it was a woman. She had on a hauberk and it was as tight as if grown into the flesh [VS,35])

This description contradicts everything that a woman should be, namely a good mother in her own home. In this case we have a young woman dressed like a man, in a coat of mail, sleeping inside a fort. After waking up Brynhildr, Sigurðr tells her that he has heard of her beauty and wisdom, and now he wants to put these to the test (VS, 23). Surprisingly enough, Brynhildr tells us how she has fought in battles and won. After too many victories, Óðinn talks to Brynhildr, he: "kvað mik aldri síðan skyldu sigr hafa ok kvað mik giptask skulu. En ek strengða þess heit þar í mót at giptask engum þeim er hræðask kynni" ([he] said that I should never again win a victory, and that I was to marry. And in return I made a solemn vow to marry no one who knew the meaning of fear [VS, 35]). Here are we told not only about a woman who fights but also has contact with the mightiest of the Æsir, Óðinn. Óðinn reimposes the male order on the narrative by telling Brynhildr that she will not win a fight again and that she has to abandon the life of a warrior and become a wife and mother instead. She has to return to her gender role given by birth. Guðrún was also said to be beautiful, wise and courtly. However, she stays at home, and dreams about getting married. She is the one, of course, who will marry Sigurðr (VS,43-48). A comparison between the two women would indicate that Brynhildr is in the sphere of transgender and Guðrún is acting within the boundaries for her biological gender.

In *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* we are introduced to a woman acting as a maiden king; Þornbjörg, the daughter of King Eirík and Queen Ingigerð.<sup>24</sup> She is introduced as follows:

Hún var konu vænni ok vitari, þeria er menn vissu. Hún fæddist upp heima með feðr sínum ok móður. Svá hafa menn sagt af mey þessari, at hún var hverri konu kænni, þeiri er menn höfðu sprun af, um allt þat, er kvenmanns handa kom. Þar með vandi hún sik burtreið ok skilmast með skjöld ok sverð. Hún kunni þessa list jafnframt þeim riddurum, er kunnu vel ok kurteisliga at bera vápn sín (She was unusually good looking and intelligent, and thought there wasn't a girl to compare with her. She was brought up at home by her father and mother, and it's said she was better at all the feminine arts than any other woman. She used to tilt on horseback too, and learnt to fence with a sword and shield, mastering these arts as perfectly as any knight trained in the courtly skill of plying his weapon [HSG, ch. 4]).

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discussed problems but also the change in focus from Brynhildr to Sigurðr in the end of the saga. Reasons for this could have been that the parts of the saga derived from different legends and the author/compiler's view of gender. Andersson 1980, pp.74-79.

<sup>24</sup> *Hrólfs Saga Gautrekssonar* hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as (HSG)

There is a slight difference between Hervör and Þornbjörg. They are differently introduced in the narratives: Þornbjörg has a “good” relationship with her parents, she learns all the female arts as a child, and she was better than any other woman. At the same time she practises male arts like horseback riding. Hervör, on the other hand, is never described as having spent time on female arts, not until she grew tired of raiding, then she went home and practised domestic skills (HS,20). However, they both fight like men in the liminal period between adolescence and womanhood, but they disappear differently from the narratives. Hervör returns home and starts to embroider while Þornbjörg once again enters the battlefield to rescue her husband. Wahlgren argues that the maiden king fits into a defined pattern: she is a young woman, unmarried, wise and beautiful. She turns down every proposal and she is capable of ruling a country on her own. A young male hero sets out to win her and does so, even though he will meet many difficulties before the end of the story.<sup>25</sup> However beautiful and bold the maiden kings and the woman warriors are said to be, they fight as men for a while but when the hero comes along and captures their hearts, they leave their roles as woman warriors. This description fits Þornbjörg perfectly. As a young woman she asks her father to let her rule a part of the country, to be able to both govern and command the men entrusted to her. She also tells her father:

Er þat enn í þessu máli, ef nokkurir menn biðja mín, sem ek vil ekki játa, þá er kíkara, at ríki yðvart sé í náðum af þeira ofsa, ef ek held ansvar í móti þeim (There's one more point, if anyone asks to marry me and I don't want him, there'll be a better chance of your kingdom being left in peace if you leave the answers to me [HSG, ch. 4])

The description of maiden kings and woman warriors as being in a pre-pubertal state is noted by Jochens, who argues that lack of awareness of their own sexuality contributes to their not having found their "gender-identity" yet.<sup>26</sup> I agree with this conclusion to a certain extent, as the discovery of their sexuality is the reason for abandoning their lives as fighters, but I argue that it is necessary to define this period of existence in-between the poles, to focus on the discussion of transgender. These young women return home after having discovered their sexuality and they devote themselves to embroidering and other domestic tasks.

As for Hervör, she ceases to fight after having grown weary of being out with the band of vikings, and she returns home to “settisk til hannyrðanáms” (do fine works with her hands [HS,20]), even before she meets the husband to be. The story about Brynhildr in *Völsunga saga* is told a bit differently. Sigurðr tells her: “Engi finnsk þér vitrari maðr, ok þess sver ek at þik skal ek eiga, ok þú ert við mitt æði” (No one is wiser than you, and I swear it you I shall marry, and

<sup>25</sup> Wahlgren. 1938. Warrior women and “Maiden Kings” are also discussed by Jochens in her book *Old Norse Images of Women*, pp. 87-112.

<sup>26</sup> Jochens 1996, pp. 87-112.

we are ideally suited). She replies: “Þik vil ek helzt eiga, þótt ek kjósa um all men” (I should wish to marry you, even though I might have the choice of all the men there are). “Ok þetta bundu þau eiðum með sér” (And this they swore, each to the other (VS,40)).

Brynhildr knows that she has to marry, as Óðinn earlier told her so. Does that mean that she has to change her life completely? She has so far not spent much time at home, she has not yet taken care of a household, and she is only familiar with and really good at being out in armor and fighting. However, after having opened her heart for Sigurðr she changes. In the following chapters of the saga we are told how Brynhildr returns home and that she: “sat í einni skemmu við meyar sínar. Hon kunni meira hagleik en aðrar konur. Hon lagði sinn borða með gulli ok saumaði á þau stórmerki er Sigurðr hafði gert, dráp ormsins ok upptöku fjórings ok dauða Regins” ([she] lived in her own quarters with her maidens. She was more skilled in the domestic arts than other women. She was working her tapestry with gold thread and embroidering on it the great deeds performed by Sigurðr, the slaying of the dragon, the seizure of the treasure and the death of Regin [VS, 42]). This is a completely different Brynhildr from the one we first met when she slept in her chain mail. Brynhildr now acts within the given roles for her gender, but problems will arise when someone wants to return to the role of gender given by birth after having acted outside the frames for the given model, in the sphere of transgender. We know by now that Brynhildr will not have a happy ending to her life, as told in the saga.

A similar story is told about Þornbjörg, who changes her name to King Þorberg. The saga even discusses her using the masculine pronoun about herself. King Hrólfr Gautrekssonar is advised to marry Þornbjörg. He gets her father’s consent, as the father is unhappy with his daughter’s masculine way of acting:

Nú með því at mér er hennar þessi framferð ekki at skapi, því at hún gerir af sér mikit ofbeldi, því at engi maðr skal hana þora at kalla öðruvísi en með konungs nafni, utan hann þoli af henni nokkut harðrétti. Nú ef þú vill sækja þessa konu þér til handa [...]svá kyrrir hjá öllum ykkrum samskiptum (I don’t like her behavior at all, she keeps committing one injustice after another, and no one’s allowed to call her anything but the name of king without getting a rough handling for it. If you’re determined to win her at all cost, then [...], we’re willing to give our consent.[HSG, ch. 9]).

King Hrólfr finally wins her heart and then she immediately returns home:

Gjarna viljum vér, at þú hættir styrjöld þessi, ok viljum vér, attu takir upp kvenligr atferðir ok farir í skemmu til móður þinnar. Síðan viljum vér gifta þik Hrólfi konungi Gautrekssyni, því at vér vitum enga hans jafningja hingat á Norðrlönd [4]Eptir þat gekk hún til skemmu, en gaf í vald Eireki konungi vápn þau, er hún hafði borit. Settist hún til sauma með móður sinni, ok var húnhverri mey fegri ok fríðari ok kurteisari, svá at engi fannst jafnfrið í norðrálfu heimsins. Hún var vitr ok vinsæl, málsnjöll ok spakráðug ok ríkynd (The King said, ‘We’d be very pleased if you’d stop this fighting and turn to feminine matters in your mother’s boudoir. After that, we’d like to marry you to King



Hrolf Gautreksson, because we haven't come across his equal anywhere in Scandinavia.' [...] She went over to the budoir, handed her weapons over to King Eirik, and began working at embroidery with her mother. She was the loveliest, most polished and courteous woman in the whole of Europe intelligent, popular, eloquent and the best of advisers, but imperious too [HSG, ch.13]).

Þornbjörg's personality is completely changed, and she acts the powerless part if we use Clover's cultural model for gender that consists solely of binary opposites. She gives up her weapons and follows her husband. It is said that Þornbjörg and King Hrólfr came to love each other dearly. Indeed, this example fits into Wahlgren's ideas about the story of the maiden king with a happy ending. The story about Þornbjörg can be seen as an exception because in general the frames for the roles of gender are not flexible enough to allow a change in the way you act, as you cannot act both outside and inside of your group, and if you cannot be defined as belonging to one of the binary opposites, the intermediary space is where you can act before returning back to your biological gender, and in some cases, change gender completely.<sup>27</sup>

So far we have only looked at women who start out to act in a gender that is unrelated to body, outside their own biological gender, the sphere of transgender. Hervör, Brynhildr and Þornbjörg all dressed like men, had armor and weapons. Guðrún, on the other hand, is only presented as acting within the frames of the cultural model for gender. She is the unmarried daughter staying with her parents. As the saga proceeds, she acts differently, but she never leaves her domestic and feminine sphere. After Sigurðr's death, Guðrún remarries King Atli and moves to his court, but there is little love between them. Guðrún intrigues in the plot between her husband and her brothers, where her brothers finally get killed. Guðrún has two sons by King Atli, and she kills them to take revenge for her brothers. She tells her sons that she will kill them, and she slits their throats. When the king asks for his sons, Guðrún coldly tells her husband this:

Þú hefir misst þína sona, ok eru þeira hausar hér at borðkerum hafðir, ok sjálfr drakktu þeria blóð við vín blandit. Síðan tók ek hjörtu þeira ok steikta ek á teini, en þú azt. (You've lost your sons, and here are their skulls used as drinking cups and you yourself drank their blood mixed with wine. Then I took their hearts and roasted them on a spit and you've eaten them [VS,72]).

How cruel can Guðrún be? What woman can be without any feelings for her children and unable to show any compassion? She is, however, still acting within the frames for her biological gender, according to previous discussions, but she is not showing solidarity with her group, as a mother in general does not kill her children. Why is she not excluded from her own group of gender according to the model of binary opposites? One explanation for this must be that in whatever she does, she acts as a woman, and only so, and never enters

<sup>27</sup> Scott 1988a, pp. 43-44.

the sphere of transgender. She has never been a warrior in armor or a maiden king. She has never refused to marry or tried to rule a country, she is a woman who seeks revenge in the only way she can, and that is to kill what her husband loved most.

The most interesting part of the analysis of the woman warrior or the maiden king is not to look for a happy ending, an ending that would place them back within the role of acting female. I argue that it is necessary to look at what happens to them and their behavior when they let themselves feel love. After discovering and experiencing their own sexuality they return to their given place within society, the domestic sphere. They now act as wives and mothers, but it does not always work out for the best and the ending of the saga can be anything but happy. Then the question is if it is their acting within the concept of transgender that hinders them from returning to, and then acting within, the given roles for the biological gender. Wahlgren writes that the happy consummation does not come until the very end of the story, when the couple is finally united. Our examples can be used to combine Clover's cultural model for gender—where the binary opposites are not the biological gender—with the discussion of Linke's model for the non-erotic or the erotic mother, and finally look for the binary opposites of good and bad. This combination would lead us to the discussion of the intermediary space between genders, transgender, i.e. a new interpretation of gender that will lead us to new conclusions and hopefully to a better understanding of gender in the narratives from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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