

# Norwegian Articles

11/09/2001

To whom it may concern

My name is Eddie Paul McGuinness - an Irishman living in Oslo.

These are samples of some articles that are tongue-in-cheek observations on both Norway and Ireland.

They are in first draft at the moment and can be called something like ...

**‘From Galway to Norway’**

The intention is to parody the commonality and differences that exist between our two countries.

Thanks

Ed

## OH MY GOD! ... IT'S THE VIKINGS

The first contact the two great nations of Ireland and Norway had with each other was, tragically, the Vikings.

### **A Wee Bit of History**

To prevent the incessant wars between themselves, the Scandinavian Vikings had split up North Europe between them. Sweden got Russia and the Baltic States area, Denmark got Britain and Norway got Ireland and Iceland.

But Norwegian Vikings were clearly brighter than their Danish and Swedish brethren because they came to where the real loot was. They had been plundering the Irish monasteries in Northern Britain and decided to come to the source.

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Anyway, no matter how you doctor the first contact between us ... it was definitely not a great start, let's face it.

*(The greatest spin doctor in the world would have to hang his head in defeat.)*

And the first thing they did when they arrived was to give the country a new name – as all cheeky immigrants do.

For innumerable centuries, we had called our country Eireann or Eire or (*in Latin*) Hibernia, depending on what mood we were in. So, to avoid confusion ... the Vikings called it Ireland.

Nobody knows for sure why they did this but, God bless their pagan souls, that's what they called it. And 1,200 years later we're still running around calling it Ireland and still wondering what the hell an 'ir' is anyway.

### Aside

*Norwegians explained to me that an 'ir' was the name the Vikings gave to the main deck support on their boats - but couldn't explain why they named a whole country after that.*

But, in all likelihood, because we called it Eire - so they called it Eireland - which they shortened to Irland - which, in time, became called Ireland by the Anglo Normans - and which we, because of our friendly accommodating Irish civility, continue to call it by this name to this day.

### **Another Wee Bit of History**

Prior to this contact, Ireland had been the leading centre of Greek and Roman (Classical) civilization during the Dark Ages in Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire.

*Although there were sparks of learning in some areas of mainland Europe, Ireland was the shining light and was referred to as the Island of Saints and Scholars. (And it was from Ireland that monks sailed forth and established some of the greatest European universities that still exist to this day.)*

Prior to the Norwegian invasion, Irish monasteries had been using all their hard-earned money to make religious artefacts (crucifixes, chalices, croziers etc.) of solid gold and devout monks had taken generations to painstakingly create beautiful, illuminated manuscripts of the Gospels.

To the illiterate Vikings, these priceless books were worthless and soon discovered to be good at lighting the fires that ...

- ◆ melted the gold artefacts
- ◆ burned the monasteries
- ◆ cooked the slaughtered cows

But in many ways the Vikings were more advanced than us. There was boat-building and ... and ... well ... there was boat-building and ... and ... did I mention boat building?

Anyway, 'thanks' to these boats they could be on the distant Irish horizon one minute and, another minute, running up the beach like demented Hells Angels bursting into a Classical Music concert (tragically thinking it was a heavy metal concert but got the date wrong because they were hammered).

### Aside

*This is not an unfair analogy because it is now known that the Vikings 'bravery in battle' was attributed to taking magic mushrooms and other hallucinogenics washed down with a manly helping of strong home-brewed alcohol.*

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Picture the scene of an early raiding party arriving at an Irish monastic settlement - deranged on mushrooms and/or moonshine, shouting bizarre incantations to Pagan Gods and wildly waving their swords and axes in the air - and a very startled man and woman peering out from their cottage.

**Seamus :** 'Are you sure you don't know them, Mary?'

**Mary :** 'No, Seamus. I told you! They must be friends of yours.'

**Seamus :** 'Well ... unless I knew them when I was younger ....'

**Mary :** 'Maybe we should invite them in for a cup of tea, anyway.'

The pleasant welcoming words of Seamus and Mary would undoubtedly be their last words on this Earth – well, except for ‘Oh, my God’ and ‘Please, have mercy’ and ‘Aaggghhhh’ etc.

And, as an aperitif, Mary (and maybe even Seamus and – God love us all – maybe even a few of their farmyard animals) would be unceremoniously raped.

Afterwards, while wiping his bloody sword on Seamus’s jumper, Olav would marvel at the material from which it was made and turn to his friend Svein - who was more experienced at plundering and raping in Ireland.

**Olav :** ‘What’s he wearing, anyway?’

**Svein :** ‘They call it a *geansai*.’

**Olav :** ‘A *geansai*. Hah!

*(laughing Brian Blessed style)* What a silly name.

I will take it back to Torhild and see what she thinks of it.’

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On arrival home, Torhild would, at first, beat Olav over the head with the solid gold crucifix present he also brought her.

*(She, like poor Olav, would have absolutely no idea of the value of the crucifix – the monetary value or, of course, the spiritual value.)*

She would be beating him up for getting all the bloodstains and sword slashes on her *geansai* present – which wasn’t even wrapped properly (*why the hell can’t men wrap presents properly?*).

## A Modern Perspective

*Torhild, like the other Viking women, was angry at his feeble attempts at being nice because she knew her man was having sex (i.e. raping) every woman he met on his 'adventures' and he was always gone for many months at a time so she was severely pissed off because she knew it was only a matter of a few weeks till he would be off again with his mates (raping and plundering for a few more months) and making yet more lame attempts to be nice to her on his return.*

*(Extremely reminiscent of modern Hells Angels and their women – surely you must admit?)*

So, she would unceremoniously throw the solid gold crucifix into the dung heap where it belonged – the useless beating instrument that it was (*Olav's face was bloodied but not permanently disfigured*) – before composing herself as best she could with many long breaths, sitting quietly down with the other Viking women surrounding her and everyone eventually settling into the arduous task of deciding what this goddam *geansai* was anyway.

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A generation or two later, the Norse women would finally discover that a *geansai* was constructed by knitting together the spun wool of a sheep. (*How weird can these goddam weird Irish get?*)

**And so, the Norwegian *genser* was born.**

And Olav's descendants could, at last, throw off their awkward and smelly animal skins and be warmer and more flexible whilst killing Irish people on their subsequent plundering raids (aka 'adventures') against any of Seamus and Mary's descendants who may have survived.

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## OH MY GOD! ... ITS THE VIKINGS AGAIN

Between the first raiding parties arriving in 795 and being finally defeated by the Irish in 1014, the Norwegians had control over much of the coastal areas of Ireland. Their success lay in the surprise and speed of the attack.

*It was Medieval Blitzkrieg (or, more accurately,  
Dark Ages Blitzkrieg - but you know what I mean).*

Shocked Irish 'defenders' would arrive on foot at the looted and burnt-out ruin that was their ancient and sacred monastic settlement ... long after the Vikings had left by sea. The raiders had somehow magically disappeared.

Irish boats were so bulky and with poor navigation by comparison, there is no way we could imagine such swift technology – let alone fight against it. (Actually, very reminiscent of modern day UFO encounters.)

Anyway, amongst the total carnage and destruction and many mutilated bodies the Irish defenders would find one monk who had managed to stay alive long enough to tell the tale and question him ...

**Irish Defender 1 :** 'The Vikings did it, you say. But where are they?'

**Irish Defender 2 :** 'Are you sure you didn't just imagine all this?'

**Irish Defender 3 :** 'Have you guys been drinking your ale again?'

**Irish Defender 4 :** 'Come on! Did you boys not have a little fight about who was the best illustrator on that book you are writing? Hmmm? Am I right?'

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Ironically, some Irish believe it was a surprise attack by the Irish, when the Norwegians were mending their boats at Clontarf, that ended the Viking age in Ireland in 1014.

### Aside

**This is not true.**

The Vikings knew that Brian Boru and his southern Irish clans were coming to attack Dublinia which was the biggest port in the Viking world and defending it was a priority.

*Dublinia was the most important city after Rome in Europe. But, unfortunately, it was important because of slave-trading :-)*

And the Dublin Vikings even had time to get massive help from their Danish brothers in Britain. A swarm of Viking ships had come across the Irish sea to help them in this fight.

**So the Irish won the Battle of Clontarf fair and square. OK.**

*(BTW. No bookie would give you any odds on the Irish winning that fight - but they did.)*

But, what is definitely true about this battle is that blitzkrieg - as a European military tactic - went out of fashion for the next 925 years ...

... until Heinz Guderian was able to convince Adolf Hitler that it wasn't such a bad old military tactic after all.

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## The Aftermath

### **But it wasn't just all war.**

*(The Vikings did have their sensitive moments ... almost, dare I say it ... feminine moments.)*

- *They built coastal settlements for trading and commerce and, for that reason, they were more 'modern' than we were.*
- *They never occupied the land of Ireland. When they settled down in their ports and stopped raping, plundering and murdering ... they were not a threat to us Irish.*

However, following their military defeat at Clontarf, naturally they thought they would have to leave Ireland but – they were very surprised by what happened.

The Irish only attacked them because they worshipped pagan gods and we let them stay provided they settle down to the difficult task of being Irish. They had to ...

- ★ stop worshipping Thor and Odin and their other pagan gods
- ★ adopt Christianity and forget all about Valhalla
- ★ adopt Irish surnames
- ★ and (*maybe the worst of all*) marry Irish girls

### Aside

*(Many historians, including myself, believe that the reason there is little trace of any Viking surnames in Dublin is because they took the surname of the Irish girl they had to marry.)*

But ... one can only imagine the titanic struggle there must have been with this new Irish identity (not least of which would have been having sex with Irish women.)

And ... adopting Christianity would have required, to put it mildly, some massive re-adjusting to these Vikings.

- On Sunday, they would have sat through the Mass in Latin probably thinking they were listening to the Irish language.
- And, after Sunday dinner, they would have probably sailed along the coast looking for a monastery to plunder.

### Old habits die hard

I can easily picture a very worried-looking priest in Dublinia delivering his sermon to a very suspicious looking audience.

‘... and ... and if there are any Vikings in the congregation, would they please refrain from murdering the monks in the nearby monastery. It's Sunday. Please, where's your heart?’

Of course, the 'former' Vikings would be looking up innocently at the priest with no idea of what he's saying.

And they would also have no idea that their souls would be in grave danger when they died – in mortal sin - if they continued with their favourite pastime of plundering monasteries.

And adopting Irish surnames must have been perplexing for their relatives back in Norway.

**Former Viking :** ‘No Mamma. My new name is ... Olav McLoughlin.’

**His Mamma :** ‘Olav Mc what?’

**Former Viking :** ‘McLoughlin. It means son of the Viking.’

**His Mamma :** ‘And what was wrong with your old name. What was wrong with Olav Goodsheepshagger? Answer me that.’

### Aside

*(I remember my own cousin being shocked when I told her that her name (McLoughlin) means 'son of the Viking'). She was a school teacher and was born and brought up in Scotland. That is not unique – most Scottish people don't know what their own Gaelic names mean. They are probably waiting for the English to tell them. That's how the English created their empire. Zero culture. Max violence. Total subservience.)*

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**Although the Vikings lived in coastal ports and didn't mingle with the Irish, there was some cross-fertilization between our two languages.**

*(Fertilization is probably the wrong word here - but so be it.)*

For example, you guys use the word *bra* exactly as in the Irish language and we use it a lot – just like you do.

In answer to a polite greeting like ‘How are you?’ you would say ‘*Det går bra*’ and, in Irish, we would say ‘*Ta me go bra*’. (Both mean ‘I’m great’.)

**I was convinced that we got that great word *bra* from you.**

**We have words like *álainn* and *deas* which would have done just as well. *Bra* seemed very out of place in Gaelic.**

Then I met a scholar of Old Norse and she assured me, after two weeks of her researching, that *bra* was not a word in the Viking language (Bokmål) when they arrived in Ireland.

So, it appears, after all, that *bra* is yet another Irish treasure that you guys took from us – or maybe, more accurately, from our women.

*(Yes. I do realise that bra is an English word for that item of women’s clothing which they got from the French word brassiere - but that was hundreds of years later. I was just making fun about the word, silly me.)*

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## Iceland

**The Vikings 'discovered' and named Iceland and then Greenland.**

- They gave Iceland that name to keep other potential settlers from Norway away from it because they wanted this green and fertile island for themselves.
- Greenland was far more bleak and covered in ice than Iceland and they gave it this name for the very opposite reason. They wanted to attract settlers there - and gave the illusion it was a green and fertile island.

To put it mildly, it must have been a helluva shock for the settlers when they arrived in Greenland.

*(And the poor souls who went there, to start a new life, all perished a few generations later in the terrible cold. This should be better documented in history than it presently is. Their memory should be properly revered.)*

But the really interesting part (for me) in the relationship between our two countries is the Irish connection to Iceland.

### **My Great Leap Forward**

A group of Icelandic women (that I was trying to chat up when I was young in a Dublin pub) once reprimanded my ignorance.

I reasoned that Icelandic genetics was made up of two thirds Norwegian and one third Danish. They vigorously protested and said it was two thirds Norwegian and one third Irish.

I was stunned at this revelation and researched it and it turned out ... they were right.

## Donegal

Not only did the Vikings steal everything made of gold and silver from Ireland but they also stole our lovely women - mainly from Donegal - and took them as 'wives' to Iceland.

The women were allowed to speak Gaelic to each other but not to their children. They had to speak Norse to their children - and so their language and culture was destined to die.

But, because the women had no choice other than to endure their bleak fate so far from home and knowing their Gaelic identity would die with them - they had no choice but to trick their Viking 'husbands'.

**They knew that music does not die so they  
taught their music to their children.**

The words had to be in Norse and this they did - but the music was Gaelic.

It was their (gallant and successful) attempt to preserve the wonderful haunting majesty of their doomed culture and a most powerful revenge to the situation they found themselves in.

To this day, one of the most beautiful musical sounds in this world is the traditional songs of Iceland.

*(Ironically, we have lost these sounds in modern Ireland – including Donegal – but they are still preserved in the cold lands of Iceland.)*

I lived in Norway for two years and I love all traditional music from all over the world, and I knew that you Norwegians can create great things – but you cannot create this great traditional music that Iceland has.

**And that's because this music comes from my ancestors ...  
from wonderful Donegal women ... from 1,200 years ago.**

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And so ... as all threats eventually do ... the Viking threat passed into history after Brian Boru's victory at Clontarf in 1014.

Ireland may have lost much of its prestige, books and riches - and its wonderful Donegal women - but it was free again ... for 150 years.

### **And then the English came.**

And every subsequent day, for the following 800 years of hell, the Irish would look back with nostalgia at the good old days when the Norwegians were the only thing we had to worry about ... and pine for the halcyon days of just Viking raids.

### **But ...**

Although, the Viking age came to an end a thousand years ago, it's still very real in the hearts and minds of us Irish.

And, sometimes, on these dark, pagan, Norwegian shores I can't help feeling that some - at least some - of that old 'culture' must still be alive and kicking in the hearts and minds of the very nice, civilized people I meet here.

And on that same shore and looking out at the beautiful golden sunset on the western horizon facing Ireland I can see fleets of majestic long boats adorned with colourful sails and oars heading out on another raiding adventure to that lovely, cultured, defenceless island that is my home.

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## ..... Epilogue .....

And - what happened to the Vikings?

I repeat - WHAT HAPPENED TO THE VIKINGS?

*(Although I suspect that the Vikings were the outcasts of society – nomadic rogue males, very like modern day Hells Angels – their genetics must have come from somewhere and still remains ... somewhere.)*

But every man in Norway today doesn't even go for a goddam beer with other men.

OK, beer is radically expensive and any man would be forgiven for selling his children to buy beer ... but surely there is a way around this?

**Their Viking ancestors would have found a way. Believe me - they would!**

When I first arrived, I was blue in the face asking men to come for a beer on a Friday or Saturday evening. Their responses would always start with ...

'... tomorrow my girlfriend and me have to take our baby to ...'

'... my wife and me are visiting her parents tonight, so ...'

After saturation, I couldn't take it any more. I would shout stuff like ...

'Your wife this, your girlfriend that. Jesus Christ! ... HELLO!'

'You are Vikings! Didn't anybody tell you?'

'Soon you guys will be breast-feeding your babies'.

## Resolution ?

Unlike many countries ... (England, USA, Japan and Germany come immediately to mind) ... Norway is a peace-loving nation, since it's flirtation with the nomadic rogue male 'adventures' of the Vikings, and has made attempts to come to terms with its awful past.

There is a history book in Norway for Primary School children which shows – in graphic pictures – Vikings with swords and axes killing monks who are praying. There are also pictures of books and monasteries being burned.

And the caption says ... **'This Is What We Did In Ireland'**

It is good that Norwegian Children admire their Viking past (navigation, boats etc.) but let them never forget what the Vikings meant to other countries – especially Ireland – the only country that was still preserving European civilization.

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When I'm out of a night in Oslo and maybe partook of a few beers – did I mention radically expensive beers – and I'm in the process of chatting up a girl ... I always say (and I love saying it) ...

'I'm Irish. I can be really bad to you. OK.'

- This normally gets the girls interested. Radically interested.
- Not only am I a bad boy, but I am a self-confessed bad boy.
- And I am a bad Irish boy because of all that was done to me by her fore-fathers.
- Can you get sexier than that? Hello?

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## **NAKED STATUES**

**There are surely very few countries in the world less suited to nudity than Norway.**

Although the climate is good and better than the west coast of Ireland, there is something fundamentally non-nude about this northerly location.

And yet, for some sadistic 'or maybe masochistic' reason, you guys delight in erecting statues that are completely nude.

In winter afternoons, I have often been walking nonchalantly along, humming merrily to myself – pretending I don't care.

But then I crack. I can take it no longer.

I desperately rush towards some poor naked girl with snow piled up on her naked breasts, bum etc. and desperately brush it off. I wrap my coat and scarf round her and hold her close to me to try to get some warmth back into her body as best I can.

And all you cold-hearted Norwegians just casually walk by, some of you even smiling or laughing, completely oblivious to the pitiful sight of a naked woman in the snow.

### ***Maybe ...***

*It betrays a basic nastiness in the Norwegian personality that could, at last, provide an explanation for the cruelty of the Vikings that has plagued so many historians and sociologists for centuries.*

*A strong sense of humanity and decency coupled with a cruel, heartless detachment co-existing in the same person is, to say the least, 'spooky'.*

## **That Poor Woman on Aker Brygge**

That poor woman on Aker Brygge is a particularly distressing example of the Norwegian desire for nakedness in a cold climate.

**In fairness, she is not completely naked.  
She is wearing a hat and a pair of boots.**

And, let's face it, whether you are male or female or some other modern variant thereof, everyone will surely agree ... she has a radically sexy body.

*(That naked bum and pussy and incredible boobs with red pointing nipples are more perfect than nature could have created. OK.)*

However, these very same people must also surely agree that she may not be the brightest girl in the world.

Every day, she is just standing there naked in the freezing cold and the look on her face can only be described as ... perplexed.

'OK ... now let's see. *(she touches her head)* I remembered to put my hat on ... and *(she touches her feet)* I remembered to put my boots on.'

'But ... dammit ... I just can't help feeling ... I forgot something.'

**And why is she wearing both boots? Hello!**

**Surely if she was wearing just one boot – and maybe one glove, it would have completed the bizarre ensemble.**

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And what about Ibsen and Greig and other Norwegian icons who are strangely represented with ... all their clothes on. Amazing.

- Not even a pair of scandalously revealing swimming trunks.
- Not a speedos or thong in sight. Jesus ... why?

No doubt there will be those in the future who will insist that we should see them as nature intended and not shamefully covered in unnatural clothing.

*Soon you'll see a king of Norway standing there, majestically, with a sword in his hand and a crown on his head – stark naked except maybe for a pair of boots. Call me naïve ... (or old-fashioned conservative wanker, if you really must) ... but I have no interest in what his body, bum or 'thingey' looked like and I can't imagine anyone who would.*

And there's that other more disturbing question ...

What about the guy who carved the statue? How did he know what his 'thingey' looked like? Or, more disturbing still, the king had to stay naked for the many months he was carving the statue. Makes you think, doesn't it?

### **And shamefully ...**

There is no statue - naked or otherwise - to Knut Hamsun.

He had lived in England and America and hated Anglo-Saxon 'culture' as much as I do. But because of his very misinformed decision to support the Nazi Invasion - he is hated in Norway.

But I tell all young Norwegians that, in their lifetime, they must erect a statue to Knut Hamsun in the centre of Oslo. They HAVE to. It doesn't matter what their parents say.

He deserves his place as the Scandinavian James Joyce and he also deserves a statue. (*Oh and - please - preferably not a naked statue.*)

## Vigelands Parken

**Vigelands Parken was just too much for me. It really was. OK!**

Surely the idea behind this park was to shock the bejaesus out of any Christian soul who encounters it?

Hundreds of people – new-born babies, children, adults, middle-aged, old and very old people. All shapes and sizes of humanity. All naked.

Jesus Christ! What the hell is that.

*Unluckily, I saw it first when the temperature was about -15C.*

*And, although I've since grown accustomed to it since then ...  
and I can even go there unaccompanied by a stable-minded  
adult to look after me ... it still frightens me.*

It seems to be a cross between old-fashioned Communism and Nazi Aryanism. Although I'm not suggesting it has anything to do with either.

**But, there's no doubt, it is definitely pagan and very proud of it.**

**I've always suspected that Christianity is still  
'experimental' with you people up here.**

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## Irish V Norwegian Statues

In Ireland, I'm proud to say that all our statues are properly covered. We still treat our statues with the modesty and dignity we think they deserve.

Although it's not true that we don't have dirty statues. In fact, we have really dirty statues – covered in layers of pigeon shit. And it's all over their nice clothes as well.

And sometimes the bombardment of shit is so intense that we have no clear idea who the statue is supposed to represent.

### **I have no doubt ...**

If the current dumbing-down trend gets even worse in society ... (*television shows on prime time about who can fart the loudest etc.*) ... future generations of Irish people will truly believe we worshipped mounds of pigeon shit.

Until, one day, some inquisitive archaeologist will begin excavations and discover the statues underneath.

**And how come Norwegian statues are not similarly adorned with shit?**

It's not fair, although I admit it would cover some of the offending bits.

It baffled me for ages and - finally - there was only one logical conclusion that could be drawn from it all ...

**Pigeons are just as offended as I am by the shameful naked bodies on display and refuse to grace them with their presence (or shit).**

You can tell at a glance that pigeons are those kinds of creatures, can't you?

Proud of their feathers - however dull they may be - they are forever preening themselves and staying as presentable as possible

*(though, God love them, they are one of nature's ugliest birds and probably know it only too well ... hence the endless preening).*

And you will only ever see pigeons standing with their backs turned to the naked statues. Have you noticed that? Seriously, have you?

This is clearly a display of protest ... in righteous indignation of what humans are doing. (And may I be sold as admitting – I agree with the pigeons.)

And if, for whatever reason, the pigeons absolutely HAVE to turn facing the naked statue they will do so only by looking firmly at the ground on which they walk ... and never looking at the offending statue.

If you haven't already noticed this ... then go the nearest naked statue, hang around for an hour or two and just watch the pigeons behaviour. OK.

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**But, maybe I'm not seeing the bigger picture here.**

Maybe Norway has discovered the answer to the pigeon shit epidemic that has plagued the other cities of the world for centuries.

**Knowing that pigeons are sensitive souls, Norwegians keep their statues stark naked in the accurate assumption that any self-respecting pigeon will refuse to go anywhere near them.**

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## **NORWAY'S HERO**

### **A Wee Bit of History**

After the Battle of Waterloo – because Denmark had supported Napoleon and Sweden supported Britain – the Brits 'gave' Norway to Sweden and, understandably, the Norwegians resisted the new Swedish occupation.

In one incident, Swedish soldiers entered a farmhouse and put the men of the house at gunpoint. They were going to ambush a large number of Norwegian resistance fighters who were to pass that way and, naturally, they wanted nobody to warn them about what was going to happen.

Ignored by the soldiers, the farmer's 16 year old daughter was sitting by the fire. Ready to go to bed, she was wearing nothing except her flimsy night slip.

She knew her brother and father could do nothing - but she also knew that these Norwegian men, fighting for her country, would be slaughtered.

*And it's important to realise, she was too young to know any of these Norwegian fighting men or be in love with one of them or anything like that. So what she did had no personal motivation.*

Suddenly, she jumped up from the fire and ran out the door ... into the freezing air and snow.

The Swedish soldiers were about to shoot but realised she was wearing no shoes or no clothes - so they just laughed.

They knew she HAD to return. They were from the same climate as she was and knew that nobody can withstand the cold, especially when it begins to freeze the naked feet.

So, they laughed and watched her run ... and run ... in her bare feet ... with no clothes on. And slowly their smiles disappeared.

She didn't come back. She kept running in the snow.

The Swedish soldiers were shocked - none of them expected this. They knew very well the pain that snow has on bare feet.

### Aside

*Once or twice, on the hills above Oslo, while walking in the forest there, I would experiment with this pain - to see how tough I was. I would take my boots and socks off and ... walk in the snow. There is no way I lasted a minute. The pain - when the cold passes the flesh and enters into the bones of the feet - is too terrible to endure.*

That girl could have turned back. The soldiers would have laughed at her etc. but that would have been it. They wouldn't have killed her or her family or anything bad like that. She knew that.

But she also knew that these brave Norwegian men fighting for her country would all be killed ... so she kept going.

**And she knew she was giving her 16 year-old life for men she didn't even know. And she also knew that, even if she stayed alive, she had very little chance of finding these men in the forest. Her sacrifice had such a little chance of succeeding – but that didn't stop her.**

***Nobody (including myself) can imagine this courage and this is what makes her sacrifice so special.***

Anyway, after many trials, she finally reached the freedom fighters in the forest and was still conscious enough to tell them where the Swedish soldiers were.

The men were very grateful but they also realised she was close to death.

The only chance to save her life was to cut her feet off. And this is what they did.

I'm sure everyone in this world, even people who had never even seen snow, can imagine the horror that followed.

The men used whatever implements they had to hack her frozen feet off. There was no anaesthetic in that forest.

But ... because of the powerful life force within her - she survived.

And she lived in a terrible way for another five years ... till she died.

**But she lived long enough to let the Swedish know they were not welcome in her country ... and they had to leave ... her country.**

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On the road outside Vigelands Parken there is a statue to that girl who gave her life for Norway.

Every morning, I would pass this statue and had to witness the snow piled up on her. Every morning, I would brush the snow off her feet. And every evening, when I returned, I would brush the snow off her feet again.

Few nations have a more powerful symbol of their country than you have. Ireland has many heroes, in our titanic struggle, but even we have nothing quite as special as this.

Every country has 'military men'. How many of these military men would have voluntarily let their feet freeze and end their life in an attempt to warn people they didn't even know?

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*(And, during the Nazi occupation, many people named their daughter after her to remind the Germans that they got rid of the Swedish before them.)*

**So, where is this wonderful girl now? Why is she nowhere to be seen!**

*(After I left Norway, I discovered, to my horror, that nobody even knows her name. I searched the internet. I visited many Norwegian Embassies. I contacted Vigelands Parken, the Dept. of Education and many others. No official knows her name.)*

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## WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU NORWEGIANS ?

**Why is her statue not in the centre of Oslo?**

**Her statue at Vigelands Parken is made of metal. Why has she not got electric heaters inside her statue to prevent any snow ever staying on her - especially her feet?**

**It's so easy to do this and it costs nothing.**

**She must never have snow on her feet. Don't you understand?**

**When all else is frozen in Norway, she must always be warm.**

**She is your country - full of splendour, strength and vitality.**

**She is the most spectacular physical creation on this Earth.**

**She is Norway.**

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## POLITENESS

Norwegians are genuinely good, straight, honest people. (Seriously, you are the type of people that anyone would want as a neighbour.)

In Mein Kampf, Hitler said his preferred Aryans were Nordic Aryans because ... 'If you look into their eyes you know they are telling you the truth'.

### **Lebensborn Children**

This explains why there are more Lebensborn children in Norway than any other country - including Germany. *And, after the war, the treatment of these innocent people was a crying disgrace - which is another thorny subject I would love to discuss. But let's not muddy the water now, shall we?*

(Even the English word 'shall' is taken from the Nordic and it means the same as the Germanic 'will'. I always tell my students to ignore 'shall' and just say 'will'.)

And I always thought that Frida, from the pop band ABBA, was a Lebensborn child, because that is what I was told, until I discovered in Norway that her father was a normal German soldier and not SS. I should have known that. Mea Culpa, Frida.

Anyway, I experimented with Hitler's theory and ... it's true.

A typical Norwegian would prefer to jump from the highest cliff in the land rather than to cheat or steal or tell a lie (and that country has the highest cliffs in the world).

You people can't imagine how admirable that quality is compared to the vast majority of the loathsome types who inhabit this lovely Earth.

## But Norwegians are not polite.

You are all probably sick of hearing this but it is the most obvious thing that strikes us poor unsuspecting foreigners who innocently stray onto these impolite shores ... without being forewarned.

And it is getting no better among the younger people even though they ape all the other mannerisms of the English-speaking world. Unfortunately, they seem to have gotten the worst of both worlds.

### *Incidentally ...*

*I have been warned many times in Norway to 'be aware' of the young generation. They are brought up with Anglo Saxon trash behaviour in movies and TV - and are imitating it. But the good news is ... I think they are fine (but maybe I'm already messed up by the same trash?). However, the next young generation may not be fine, so you must be ever vigilant and ever prepared to stop this Anglo Saxon trash behaviour whenever it rears it's ugly head.*

.....

### **For Example**

Recently, I was shopping in a nice supermarket in a nice part of town.

An older woman, clearly refined and cultured, casually banged her trolley against another woman's trolley and knocked it out of the way - because she wanted to get past her.

No polite word or smile was given and the other woman showed no malice and accepted this action as part of the normal shopping experience.

*(In my country, that would be a clear declaration of war - a very bloody war - or at least a violent feud that could continue for a few generations.)*

## Second Example

Another time, as I was walking on the pavement of my sleepy suburb, I saw an older guy trying to get his car moving with the back wheel stuck firmly in the frozen compacted snow.

He was alone and clearly needed another man to help him. I was the only man on the street but he didn't ask me.

So, taking the initiative and without a word from me or him, I lifted the back of his car so he could get it clear.

The wheel spun madly as it took off in first gear and, in the process, covered me all over in dirty street slush.

And he just drove away without even a wave or a 'Thank You' or a 'Sorry about that' out the window.

**Maybe I was not incandescent with rage but what I  
felt could well be described as ... very close.**

Still angry at his extreme impolite behaviour when I got home, my girlfriend, shocked at my 'over-reaction', tried to explain to me that Norwegian men don't expect to be thanked for doing the right thing.

People just help each other. That is normal. It is expected.

**Apparently ...**

**What I did was the natural, decent thing to do and to thank  
a man for doing the natural, decent thing ... is to insult him.**

.....

She then described the very different experiences she had living in Ireland which she couldn't understand - as many foreigners can't.

She was a bundle of nerves, walking on egg-shells all the time with people saying 'Excuse me' and 'Sorry' and 'I beg your pardon' etc. while she was walking on the street or shopping or whatever.

She could never figure out what they had done wrong to her and had to apologise for it ... and she didn't know what her response should be.

### **SHE DID NOT SEE WHAT THEY WERE SAYING SORRY FOR**

As best I could, I explained that ...

- We say sorry if we even walk in front of a person's line of vision.
- We don't have to touch them or obstruct them in any way.
- We even say sorry back to any person who says sorry to us.

She was baffled by this idea of politeness – and who can blame her.

For us, it is just nice to be polite (to the point of being over-polite) so we do it as much as we can.

**For Norwegians, this makes no sense.**

**I think the Norwegians and the Irish are both right.**

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## ON THE BUSES

Completely unlike Dublin buses, Oslo's buses are wonderfully on time and civilized in every way ... except for one curious twist.

While the Norwegian reluctance to talk to strangers is an understandable part of their North European nature, the problem is that travelling on a public bus forces us to be civil and talk to complete strangers – whether it's in our nature or not.

It's just an 'unfortunate' consequence of living in a city like Oslo with 600,000 people and not knowing all of them on a first name basis.

Every time I'm on a bus and there's a woman 'trapped' on the inside of the seat, I go through the usual sweaty-palm trauma of trying to guess at which stop she wants to exit.

I constantly check for all the non-verbal cues I've learned ...

- sudden erratic shuffling
- clutching tightly at her handbag
- staring at me accusingly for no apparent reason

I even conjure up all my innate telepathic powers (that I'm told I must have) in an attempt to anticipate when she is going to make her move.

Sometimes, when I can take it no longer and I'm convinced I've detected one of the tell-tale cues, I stand up at the next stop to allow her to exit and ... nothing happens.

She just sits there motionless with the same vacant expression.

In my frustration, I will say something like ‘Do you want to exit’ to which she will curtly reply ‘No’ and silently curses her bad luck at sitting next to a **total idiot**.

And, worse than being a total idiot, he has the cheek to talk to a stranger on a public bus. Clearly, he is a **dangerous total idiot**.

.....

I have no doubt that a good Norwegian, if their entire range of non-verbal cues do not work, has two choices and, unfortunately, neither of them includes saying ‘Excuse me’. They can either ...

- Go past their stop and remain seated until the person beside them exits, which could be five kilometres past their stop.
- Smash the window with their fists and painfully squeeze themselves out of the bus leaving a lot of mangled clothing, flesh and blood behind on the jagged glass.

In fact, it should be part of the teaching of good manners in good schools that a Norwegian, when using public transport, should always carry a large hammer for such occasions (as Thor did).

And, if they forget to bring their hammer, they should refuse to take a seat and remain standing in the aisle throughout their journey – rather than running the dreadful ignominy of having to say ‘Excuse me’.

.....

## Irish V Norwegian buses

During my last trip to Dublin I had to use a public bus from a distant suburb to the city centre. I sat on the upper deck which was practically empty.

A cheery looking man entered, waddled along the aisle and plopped down beside me. Almost every seat was empty but he sat beside me :-o My understandable foreboding was unfounded, however.

‘It’s terrible weather we’re having, isn’t it?’

He was just looking for a talking companion – which he clearly does every time he is on a bus – and sitting on an empty seat would defeat that purpose. And so, we had a great conversation for the next half hour.

In similar circumstances, a Norwegian would go into a state of catatonic shock or else react in the opposite way - which are both equally wrong. They would either ...

🚫 shut the person down with a defensive posture and remain mute

🚫 or, mindful that they are away from home, they would innocently accept any buffoon – and there are indeed many of these – as a nice friendly guy that they must respond favourable to.

It’s hard to get the balance right. There’s a lot of disgruntled, boring types out there who treat their fellow passengers as the only captive audience they will ever have in their life.

**But, that said, a simple ‘Excuse me’ does not mean you have to commit yourself to a half hour’s conversation with the person you are trying to squeeze past. And it would alleviate one of life’s little traumas in a world that surely has enough of them.**

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## RELIGION

Catholic teaching is based on 'mea culpa' (my fault) and the Church's concept of good Catholic morality goes something like this ...

- ▶ *I'm to blame for all that has happened to me because I'm a sinner.*
- ▶ *Please forgive me. Although, of course, I realise I do not deserve to be forgiven. (It's a ... 'Get on Your Knees and Thank God you are finally on Your Feet' ... kinda thing.)*

So, it's easy for them to accept any humiliation and degradation on this Earth because they somehow deserve it and also (*and this is the big syrupy bit the Church throws in*) – their reward will be so much greater in Heaven.

The Irish will thank God for everything – arriving at the pub at 11:35pm and finding it's still open or discovering one day that the family dog is finally house-trained or, most amazing of all ... the weather.

'It's a lovely day, thank God.'

It's pointless explaining to them that their God pours rain on them all the time – day after miserable day – for the other 364 days in the year, or that most people in the world have lovely days like this all the time and they don't thank God at all.

**Most of the people who have lovely weather never even heard of God.**

**The Irish somehow find it in their hearts to ignore the unfairness of this.**

**They probably feel they don't deserve even one good day in a year.**

.....

## **Protestantism is a very different kettle of fish.**

Lord, you created me and you know what you're doing. And you created me in your own likeness – as the Good Book says. Therefore, I'm just like you. Isn't that right?

We're both like each other in so many, many ways. In fact, we are all Gods really. If you think about it.

Maybe I'm not as great a God as you – maybe not – but we are both Gods nevertheless.

And you never went to Church one day in your life. Therefore, it's OK that I don't go either. Right?

And there's no way we should have to kneel down in front of you, is there? I'm sure you know that. We are both Protestants.

We're all equals here, right? There shouldn't be any favouritism. This should be a relationship based on equality and mutual respect for each other.

I mean, we don't ask you to kneel before us, do we? (Well, not all of us ask this, anyway. )

Naturally, it's good that we bow down before our king - because he would kill us otherwise. Clearly, he is superior to both of us.

**And Manifest Destiny was a lovely gift you bestowed on us, your equals. And, just as you did, so we also invade the lands of the non-Protestants. It is obvious the Catholics tore that page out of the Bible – but we both know it should be there.**

.....

**The down side of Protestantism is that there isn't enough rules.  
Really tough rules that frighten the bejaesus out of them.**

Have a look if you wish. It's the secret of any religion's success and the reason why Catholicism and Islam is getting stronger.

Matt Talbot (an Irish saint? Or soon to be, I imagine?) persecuted himself. The self mortification of his body was akin to the early Irish 'saints'.

In essence, he was an Irish Norwegian – except he did it for religious reasons.

*You people persecute yourselves constantly for no religious reason at all.  
Why do you eat fake butter, fake milk etc. without any religious pretext?*

You would all be saints in Ireland today - and not Vikings at all - if you branded yourselves properly.

.....  
**If you had played your cards right Olav  
Goodsheepshagger, you would now be St.  
Olav the First of Ireland, renowned for your  
fondness for sheep.**  
.....

Strangely enough, you Norwegians have a really powerful saint called St Sunnova. She was an Irish saint who came from Ireland on a boat with 12 male monks (*very messianic you'll have to admit – definitely the female Jesus*).

Anyway, when she arrived in Norway, the local pagans were so impressed with her that they let her establish a monastery.

**(The truth probably was that the Norwegians thought  
she was an extremely liberated woman with 12  
husbands and so she needed a really big house.)**

Sunnova is still a really popular name in Norway today and Norwegians are stunned that it isn't even a name used in Ireland and never was - or so is my understanding. *(Clearly it is a Norwegian corruption of a name that was maybe popular back in Old Ireland. Irish scholars, please advise me here!)*

.....

And, even stranger, I had the extreme displeasure of enduring a prolonged alien Close Encounter of the Norway Kind in Oslo with none other than ... an Orange-Woman.

I lived with her for a week and she instantly hated me the minute she met me and there was no Earthly reason why.

Her friend – my girlfriend – was constantly reassuring me that I was paranoid and I truly believed I surely must be. It was illogical that her friend would instantly hate me for no reason at all.

Then, one day, I stumbled upon her secret. She was an Orange-Woman with friends in Northern Ireland. And she supported the Protestant people there in their discrimination against Catholics. She hated all Catholics - for no reason - and she clearly numbered me amongst her targets.

**It was shocking that such a primitive mind-set existed  
in a modern non-sectarian place like Norway.**

I have no idea how popular this Orange thing is with Norwegians but I suspect it was just another shining example of my amazing bad luck (Thank you God) to be put living with the only Orange Neanderthal in Norway.

*And one can only hope that some day she will venture tentatively into the light of the Modern World and experience the enlightened people therein. (And bring Orangemen, Nazis, Klu Klux Klan, Monarchy Worshipers, Witch Burners, Military Scumbags and other Medieval fellow-travellers with her.)*

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## **NORWEGIAN PRICES**

**You don't have to live in the Arab world to know that asking for a price lower than the retail price is ... normal.**

It's seriously OK, folks. Trust me! There is nothing wrong with it.

But haggling of any sort in Norway is extremely bad behaviour and I was reprimanded severely on this point on many memorable (though confused) occasions.

*When prices go up people are queuing outside. When prices go down people stay away from the shop. What the hell is that all about?*

*Surely, all this fear of being normal is going a wee bit too far.*

And I have to go to Sweden to buy meat and whiskey. Let me repeat ...

### **I HAVE TO GO TO SWEDEN TO BUY MEAT AND WHISKEY**

The prices of meat and whiskey are very high in Sweden but cheap by comparison to the staggering Norwegian prices. The human imagination is simply not designed to contemplate these demented Norwegian prices.

#### **For example ...**

If there was a shop in Antarctica and all the stuff had to be flown over thousands of miles of ocean ... with heaters permanently on to prevent everything freezing ... then one would expect high prices. Right?

But that is the normal supermarket prices in Norway.

## A Wee Bit of Geography

- Only 3% of Norway is arable. Yes, 3% - not 30%
- 3% is a truly shocking figure.
- Norway is a country almost entirely composed of rock.
- The only 'flat bit' is the ocean.
- So it was obvious, a long time ago, the ocean is where your future lay.
- And this is why you became the 'great' maritime explorers, affectionately known as Vikings.

OK. So, you guys don't have enough land to feed the people. And that's why everything has to be floated in.

*The only solution is that Norway will just have to invade Denmark (it's OK. Denmark is 'cool' country. And they did it to you. They'll understand). Then you can get food prices down to a very expensive level and not the mind-boggling, totally insane prices you have now.*

.....

Once, I was returning from Sweden with two bottles of whiskey and meat (which was, as usual, melting and had to be got to my fridge in Oslo asap). I was stopped at the border and my offending two bottles of whiskey were discovered. Any amount of meat was ok - but only ONE bottle of whiskey.

When questioned, I admitted that I was aware that only one bottle of whiskey was allowed to cross the border.

The police were going to take my two bottles of whiskey from me AND charge me with an offence. Christ Almighty!

**Having two bottles of whiskey was akin to being a drug smuggler.**

Something fundamental inside me snapped at this point. (*And I didn't care how my frustration would be received by these uniformed hard men.*)

'Come on guys! You asking an Irishman not to drink is like me asking you not to breathe.'

Thankfully, they laughed and didn't charge me with a crime. But they took my precious two bottles of whiskey which had cost me a small fortune.

No doubt they had a party that night. God dam their black heathen souls.

.....

And there are many people on a Friday night who take the boat to Denmark and then come back again to Oslo.

### **Try to understand this ...**

They are going to Denmark but they don't get off the boat.  
They are just taking the boat to Denmark – and returning on it.

The boat is called the Dansk Båt (Danish boat). But the majority of people who travel on it call it the Dans Båt (Dance boat).

These long-suffering, price-demented, Norwegians actually buy a return ticket for the boat trip to Denmark just to drink the 'cheap' alcohol on board (which is radically expensive to the rest of the world) - and return to Oslo the next morning. They don't even get off the boat.

**It's cheaper to buy a return ticket to Denmark and have a drink and a bit of dancing and return than have a 'night out' in Oslo.**

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## THE LANGUAGE

In my futile attempt to 'blend in', I took an intensive course in the Norwegian language.

*(It was eight hours a day - without a word of English. But, like the cowardly loser I am, I chickened out after a few months.)*

The ferocity of the Norwegian language can sometimes be shocking to my gentle soul. Even words that are supposedly nice (well, nice in other languages) sound so severe.

**Koselig** = kind and nice.

*(Sounds like something to be avoided at all costs.)*

**Stakkers** = poor

*(Sounds like something we would drive into a hard wall with a large hammer.)*

**Kjærlighet** = love *(Jesus Christ! Who would have imagined that)*

**Kjærlig** = loving

*(They both sound like something we would scream aloud if we hit our thumb with that large hammer.)*

**Morsomt** = happy / humorous.

*(Sounds like something that happens to your stomach after a big night out on the town. Or, more likely, the Dance Boat.)*

.....

## Miracle Breakthrough

But I have great advice for terrified students of the Norwegian language.

I have learned to just put an '*isk*' on the end of a complicated English word and, hey presto – I have a Norwegian word.

OK. I have a Norwegian word (maybe not THE proper Norwegian word but a Norwegian word, nevertheless).

It was indeed a miracle breakthrough in my education and I do it a lot.

And, even if it leaves some people looking bewildered and amazed, I know it's just a matter of time before the word I invented is incorporated into their language.

- ▶ I'm a trail-blazer and future generations will remember the hero who invented it.
- ▶ In many ways, therefore, I am a creationist.
- ▶ Or maybe I'm just a ... creationistisk :-)

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## ROMANTIC LOVE

The Norwegians can be described as definitely not the most exuberant in the area of declarations of romantic attraction or love.

*In that way, I am very similar to them and admire their staunch stand on ephemeral (poofy) language like that.*

- ❏ The word LOVE is too powerful a word to be thrown away on basic stuff like ... admiring someone or something.

'I love that movie', 'I love the way she laughs' 'I love the embrace of the Autumn air on my neck'. Jesus!

- ❏ The word LOVE was designed for a far grander arena than how you feel about a song or painting or countryside or character from history or whatever benign the subject.

It is a monolith word around which lesser emotional words revolve. This powerful word cannot be diluted and watered-down till it has lost almost all of it's potency and is left insipid and undesired.

- ❏ How can anyone want the juvenile American use of the word ... where you can fall in love with someone on a Saturday night and fall out of love on Thursday.
- ❏ But tragically, that is how most people use the word (even in non-American countries). It is as disposable as the wrapping paper on a McDonald's hamburger and it's strength is dependent on whatever way the wind is blowing.

## *'Jeg elsker deg'*

**It seems that a good Norwegian does not use the words *'Jeg elsker deg'* (I love you) very often. If at all.**

But I am reliably informed that a good Norwegian will finally say *'Jeg elsker deg'* on very rare occasions like when his wife gives birth to their third baby. But, as most Norwegians never reach that amount of babies, *'Jeg elsker deg'* forever remains just a romantic fantasy for his poor woman.

However, a person in a romantic relationship who feels the need to express how they feel about their partner may do so. The Norwegian language does cater for this extreme but, thankfully, very rare event.

*'Jeg er glad i deg'* (I am glad in you) is what they say.

And I think it's great. I really do. (Dare I say ... I love it ?)

*'Jeg er glad i deg'* has all the longing in it that makes it perfect.

The longing to say something more powerful but, for some reason, cannot.

And the lovely part is that each person understands this longing when their partner says it and they feel this same longing within themselves.

So, both people are empowered by what they can't say.

That's what makes it such a perfect expression.

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## **PLACE-NAMES**

The name that was given to a place is the most important part of its identity.

For example, in America, if you were heading for Rotten Creek in Death Valley you would have a fair idea that this was a pretty inhospitable place and so named by the early settlers. And its purpose was to warn you of danger.

Other names, like Sorrento and Vico, acquire a certain magic because of the beauty of the Bay of Naples from where those names derive.

**And Norway is regarded as being the most spectacular place in the world. It is a physical masterpiece.**

*(Hence the lovely part in 'The Hichhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' where God is thanked for creating such a beautiful Earth and he proudly says 'I got an award for Norway'.)*

But your place names? Hello? The most beautiful mountains on Earth and you call them ... High Mountain 1, High Mountain 2, High Mountain 3.

Come on! I know the Germanic mind is very different from the Gaelic one and not big on poetry or things of the soul - but really!

Surely even the Germanic mind can do better than that.

It must be hell for tour operators ...

‘And we are now cruising along Big Fjord 78 with the majestic High Mountain 93 and High Mountain 94 on either side ...’

The Norway coastline is about 3,000 miles long and by the time you reach North Norway and are being asked to observe the physical beauty of High Mountain 749, no matter how spectacular it is ... you are definitely not interested at this point.

.....

Once a Norwegian friend, disgruntled at my observation, wanted clarification.

‘So, what would that lake and mountain be called in Ireland?’

‘Well, something like Old Woman Mountain and Lake of Dreams.’

*(Incidentally, while the translation seems cold, it sounds great in Gaelic).*

And I realise that the sheer number of mountains, lakes and fjords in Norway would mean that even Shakespeare himself would be hard pressed to find original names for them all. But surely some attempt should have been made to give them a proper identity?

### Aside

The Native Americans had a similar naming procedure for their spectacular landscape as we Irish did which were given Anglo-Saxon names like Rocky Mountains, Great Lakes etc.

*(In Ireland, the Anglo-Saxons did a phonetic translation from the Gaelic - which sounds horrendous in English. Cill (church) and even Coill (wood) were both translated as ... Kill ... in keeping with violent Anglo-Saxon 'culture' ... and these ridiculous Anglo names we are still left with today.)*

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