# 8 Starry starry night

## Fantasies of homogeneity in documentary films about Kvens and Norwegian-Pakistanis

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### Introduction

This chapter examines and compares two documentary films about old and new minority groups in Norway, in light of the notion of national fantasy (Berlant 1991) as “a narrative support, a story that gives consistency to the nation and its subjects” (Fortier 2008). The documentaries explore issues of national identity and belonging in relation to the Kven and Norwegian-Pakistani communities. The interest in examining these specific documentaries together arose from the fact that they were both produced by members of their respective communities, share “insider” perspectives, were aired on Norway’s national public television channel, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), and targeted broad audiences. NRK’s self-proclaimed societal mission is to “strengthen and develop democracy”, and to contribute to a “better understanding of society, each other, and ourselves” (NRK 2017). NRK also has an explicit inclusionary goal, which can be understood in relation to its efforts to provide a platform for minority groups. Both films also address the impact of assimilationist policies on minorities, but do so via allying themselves in complex and contrasting ways with majority and minority perspectives. In doing so, they tell stories of families which highlight the consequences of the Norwegian state’s interventionist approach to family life. Both documentaries also feature journeys outside Norway, which provide insights into the ways in which cultural difference is imbricated in understandings of the nation. Finally, on a symbolic level, we imagine that old and new minorities can learn from each other. As such, we read the two films as being in dialogue with each other, suggesting that the Kven documentary contains both a symbolic warning, and a promise to its Norwegian-Pakistani counterpart.

Kvens are generally defined as people of Kven/Finnish[1] heritage from Northern Norway and are perceived as a white minority who have been racialised in different ways from that of the Sámi population. They are present in Norwegian historical sources from the ninth century, but mainly migrated from what is today Finland, and in some cases via Sweden,[2] to present-day Norway in the first half of the eighteenth century (Niemi 2010).

While there are no official government statistics based on ethnicity, a 2000 survey estimates that there are approximately 10,000 to 12,000 people in the Northern Norwegian regions of Troms and Finnmark who speak Kven or Finnish (Niemi 2010 p. 158).

Immigration from Pakistan began in the 1970s, and most Norwegian-Pakistani communities are concentrated in Southern Norway in the Oslo area. These amount to what some sources estimate to be more than 30,000 people, spanning several generations (Erdal and Oeppen 2013; Døving 2009). As such, the Norwegian-Pakistani community represents a sizable segment of the overall population of migrants and their descendants, that is to say, 940,000 (or around 17 percent) of the more than five million people that comprise the broader Norwegian population (Statistisk sentralbyrå [SSB] 2018).

The 2011 Kven film, *Under en annen himmel* [*Under another sky*], is a documentary in the poetic genre, directed by Anstein Mikkelsen. The film is based around a family narrative that involves the director and his great grandmother. It is aimed at mainstream audiences (in the sense that it explains Kven culture), but it can also be read as an attempt to recruit Norwegians with Kven heritage to identify as Kven, through narratives that aim to revitalise and revalorise this identity. *Frivillig tvang* [*Willingly coerced*] is an expository documentary from 2014, directed by Ulrik Imtiaz Rolfsen. It explores the complex identity negotiations Norwegian-Pakistanis face around integration, focussing on areas of family life such as marriage and eldercare.[3] *Frivillig tvang* aims to explain the worldviews of Norwegian-Pakistanis to Norwegian audiences, and Rolfsen claims his “insider status” gives him special insight into this task. Documentary film is here understood as a social practice which “constructs narratives and meanings”, and which enable us to “locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes sense of itself” (Turner 2006, p. 3). This chapter addresses how narratives and meanings located in these two films provide evidence of the ways in which Norwegian society has and does make sense of itself and its ‘others’, in relation to the concept of a national fantasy of homogeneity.

Norway’s relation to its others is built on a self-image of being a “markedly homogeneous” country, before the onset of more recent overseas migrations in the early 1970s (Bjørklund and Bergh 2013, p. 12). The myth of initial homogeneity ignores Norway’s longstanding immigration history and complex relationship with ethnic and indigenous minorities (including the Kvens), who have been subject to harsh assimilation and exclusionary policies (McIntosh 2015, p. 312). From the early nineteenth century, Kvens were perceived as a threat by the Norwegian state, in light of concerns about a potential Russian expansion in the north, and related fears that Kvens would be loyal to Finland and/or Russia in the event of war (Niemi 2005). An official strategy of Norwegianisation was initiated in the late 1800s and aimed to counter this threat by enforcing “prejudicial linguistic and cultural policies” against both the Kvens and the Sámi people. The main mechanism of state intervention was via the school system, which established Norwegian as the

main language, and included the establishment of boarding schools where the Kven and Sámi languages were forbidden (Sollid 2013). This led to situations where children were unable to communicate with members of their own family, and to what is now the endangered status of the Kven language (Eldia 2013). The Norwegianisation policy persisted well into the 1970s.

The 1980s marked a turning point in the status of indigenous people and national minorities. In the 1980s, Norway finally recognised that the Sámi had "historically been present in the area when the Norwegian state was established" (Ryymin, Chapter 2). Following this, in 1990, the Sámi were recognised as an indigenous people, as a result of Norway signing and ratifying Convention No. 169 concerning *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (Lindqvist 2009). As of 1998, Kven/Norwegian-Finns, Roma, Romani/Tater, Jews, and Forest Finns were recognised as national minorities in Norway. Sámi, Kven, Romanes, and Romani are also officially recognised as minority languages that are protected by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which entered into force in 1998. Following several years of debate, in June 2017 the Norwegian Parliament decided to establish a commission to examine Norway's former assimilation policy towards the Kven and Sámi populations (Norske kveners forbund (NKF) [The Norwegian Kven Association] 2018).

While these measures are testimony to recent political acknowledgements of historic ethnic diversity, *the image* of initial homogeneity persists, both in social science and historical research, as well as in the popular imaginary (see *Ryymin* in this book). Ryymin citing Tvedt (2017, p. 111) notes that as recently as 2017, historical debates around immigration, development aid, and other policy areas have referred to the Norway of the 1960s as a sparsely populated and exceptionally ethnically and culturally homogeneous land, soon to be transformed into a diverse nation by an influx of labour migrants. Ryymin further contends that in the context of welfare states—where the idea of a fully functional welfare system is viewed as being contingent on homogeneity—the presupposition of initial sameness means that increased migration can, by default, be regarded as a potential threat (*Ryymin*).

As elsewhere in Scandinavia, this perceived threat—primarily associated with migration from states with Muslim populations—has led to rising Islamophobia; to media attention and state intervention around issues of forced marriage and the veil; as well as to suspicions about welfare tourism and migrants' "inability" to adjust to 'Western' values (Wikan 2002; Keaton 2006; Bowen 2010; McIntosh 2015). Whereas in the Nordic welfare states, integration used to be discussed in relation to participation in work and education (Keskinen 2017), more recently it has become infused with the idea of moral and cultural values as being intrinsic to proper citizenship (Olwig 2011; Keskinen 2017). Proper citizenship is thus reframed within a largely moral framework which intimates that Norwegian values are essentially imbued with goodness, equality, and democracy (McIntosh 2015, p. 312). As a result, racialised minority families who are regarded as morally inadequate, and as

representing a potential threat to social norms, have increasingly become the targets of public policy (Keskinen 2017).

According to Berlant, citizenship is increasingly being privatised with "the intimate public spheres [being] produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed towards the family sphere" (1997, p. 5). This focus on the intimate dimensions of citizenship serves to naturalise the opposition between "good citizens" who embody cultural norms of liberal individuality and "proper" heterosexuality, and marginalised minorities who need to be "freed" from the burden of constraints which they are considered unable to liberate themselves from (Keskinen 2017, pp. 157–158). The failure of minorities to fully integrate is then attributed to either indoctrination or unwillingness, which in turn enables migrants to be considered responsible both for their own integration, and for the perceived erosion of the nation's social norms (Lentin and Titley 2011; Goldberg 2011).

Keskinen argues that governance via norms and practices which are based on assumptions of liberal individuality then come to define the symbolic boundaries of the nation and have exclusionary and racialising effects (Keskinen 2017). In Norway, such exclusionary practices conflate with the persistence of lingering fantasies of cultural homogeneity amongst the majority population, who are loathe to recognise "the simple truth", namely the undeniably heterogeneous nature of Norwegian society (McIntosh 2015). These lingering fantasies relate to what Hübinette (in the Swedish context) calls "white melancholia"—nostalgia for an imagined "pure white" past, where migration was the problem of other states (Hübinette and Lundström 2011; Hübinette 2012). It is through this sense that the idea of cultural sameness lives on. It persists via nostalgia for an 'innocent' past, and via continuing fantasies of total assimilation which produce non-assimilated others as outside the boundaries of the nation. As Fortier puts it, a fantasy of the nation is brought into being in the public domain "by repeatedly imagining that it exists and iterating it as something real, out there, that binds the 'national people' together" (Fortier 2008, p. 11). Following Berlant (1991), Fortier explains that fantasy in this sense does not correspond to its popular conceptualisation as a form of escape or fabrication, but can rather be understood as a means of self-protection, "a narrative support, a story that gives consistency to the nation and its subjects" (2008, p. 11). Moreover, the fantasy is not in opposition to social reality, but rather represents the necessary "psychic glue" (Rose 1998, p. 3) that enables the nation to consider itself whole, protecting it from the horrors of the "real" that threaten to disintegrate its unity (Fortier 2008, p. 12).

In this chapter, we look at the ways in which the stories of family and journeys outside the nation in *Under en annen himmel* and *Frivillig tvang* reinforce or resist the image of Norway as a bounded 'whole' nation, in the thrall of a fantasy of cultural sameness. We argue that the stories of family in *Under en annen himmel* challenge the fantasy by reviving the markers of a past Kven identity as potentially still available to Norwegians with Kven

heritage, and by imagining this identity beyond the geographic and symbolic boundaries of nation. In contrast, we argue that *Frivillig tvang* upholds the fantasy by symbolically ejecting non-assimilated Norwegian-Pakistanis from the boundaries of the state. Despite it giving a voice to Norwegian-Pakistanis who resist assimilation, this resistance is negatively framed by the film's narrator-director, who constructs Norwegian-Pakistanis as individuals who need to be freed from the burden of constraints they are considered unable to liberate themselves from (Keskinen 2017, pp. 157–158). In conclusion, we discuss why both films only fleetingly engage with the structural dimensions of racism and suggest that *Under en annen himmel*'s strategic silence on the mechanics of assimilation opens up new possibilities for inclusive citizenship, and in doing so shines a glaring light on *Frivillig tvang*'s blind spots.

## Under en annen himmel

In *Under en annen himmel,* Mikkelsen revives a past and potentially new Kven identity in a contemporary context in which Kvens have received political acknowledgment from the Norwegian state, but at the same time exist as a largely invisible section of society, melding into the mainstream Norwegian population. While the film addresses the consequences of the Norwegianisation policy—particularly the Kven community's gradual loss of language and culture—it remains silent on the ways the policy was enforced, and on the political and social factors which exacerbated these losses.

The main mechanism for enforcing the assimilation policy was the Norwegian school system (Sollid 2013). As the school system expanded within the second half of 1800, Norwegian was established as the country's main oral and written language. As of 1889, the use of Kven and Sámi was only permitted when "absolutely necessary" (Sollid 2013, p. 84). This meant that pupils acquired a different main language than their parents. They first became bilingual Kven-Norwegian, and subsequently monolingual Norwegians. Teachers also pressured parents to learn Norwegian, both in order to support their children's education, and to navigate other "official Norwegian domains" (Sollid 2005 in Sollid 2013, p. 84). This linguistic policy was reinforced by the establishment of boarding schools where Kven and Sámi languages were forbidden. By 1940, approximately 20 such schools were present in Northern Norway. This led to a situation where children would no longer understand Kven and could not speak to members of their family who did not speak Norwegian.

The Second World War had a dramatic impact on the long-term destinies of the Kvens. In 1944, Hitler ordered the north of Norway to be destroyed via a scorched earth policy. Everything of potential use to the Soviet enemy was destroyed. Harbours, bridges, and towns were dynamited, and every building torched. For the Kven population, this meant that language loss was now followed by the loss of virtually all their material possessions, including boats, tools, and instruments. These losses—coupled with the onset of modernisation,

and the internalisation of the social stigma of a century of Norwegianisation—extinguished any remaining resistance to integration, making claims to an explicit Kven identity even harder. It was not until the late 1980s that there was a resurgence of Kvens aligning with this identity, coupled with attempts to revitalise the language; this was spearheaded by the establishment of the Norwegian Kven Association in 1987, and followed by the 1998 recognition of Kvens as a national minority. In 2005, the Kven language as an official minority language was formally recognised through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Today, the estimated number of active users of the Kven language is approximately 1500 to 2500, and it is described as one of the most endangered languages in Europe (Eldia 2013).

*Under en annen himmel* is thus produced in a context where Kven identity is politically unproblematic to revive, in the sense that it now represents no threat to the nation. At the same time, because of the extent of its linguistic and cultural erosion, it is an identity that is difficult to retrieve. Mikkelsen thus treads a delicate line between establishing loss, and re-establishing (some) presence. He tackles this challenge with an approach that combines a return to historical roots via tracing his family genealogy; by focussing on a geographical space—Børselv—as a locus for identification; and through childhood memories of his great grandmother. This narrative of family is then expanded to encompass a much larger story about migration and migrating cultures, but also touches on narratives of resistance to and within dominant cultures, which challenges the narrow confines of Norway's fantasy of a culturally monolithic 'whole' nation.

The film begins with images of Børselv, a small picturesque village by the Porsanger fjord in Finnmark, Northern Norway, overlayed with the story of Mikkelsen's ancestral relation to this village. These images can be seen as an attempt at establishing social markers for Kven identities. Yet the images are also framed in a manner that makes it clear that these identity-building images and practices only partly belong in present-day Børselv; they are memories from Mikkelsen's childhood, and practices that belonged primarily to his parents', grandparents' and great grandparents' generations. A voiceover reveals that Mikkelsen's ancestors migrated from the Torne Valley in Sweden to Børselv, and, as he explains, "no one lived in the Børselv valley when my Kven ancestors came. [And now] almost 300 years later, there is still a Kven village at the foot of the Hestnes mountain". As Mikkelsen describes how the first Kven settler, Samuli Kippari, came to Børselv in the mid-1700s, we are shown the area around Børselv, and images of traditional ways of using the land, including foraging activities like cloudberry picking; fence fishing and fly fishing in rivers; the building of river boats; as well as farming techniques. We also see images of the starry night sky, the northern lights, close-ups of berries, and coffee being made over an open fire by the river, as Mikkelsen explains how he understands cultural belonging as a Kven in Børselv.

The social and cultural markers that Mikkelsen refers to—which form the basis of Kven identity in his ancestral village—faded fast in the post-war era,

as increasingly fewer people maintained a self-sustaining lifestyle that involved living off the land through farming, fishing, and berry picking. Additionally, the language was disappearing fast, and since almost all of Finnmark was burnt down during the war, Mikkelsen's generation had little material and immaterial culture through which to build attachment. This may also explain why Børselv is so important in the film; Børselv is not only the place where Mikkelsen's ancestors settled, but is also a geographical space that can serve as one of several important ancestral homes for Kven identification. As well as being an important Kven settlement, Børselv is also the location of the Kven Institute, and of the Kippari festival, one of two Kven festivals where Kven culture and language is celebrated.

There is a dual function to the rare Kven artefacts which Mikkelsen shows and discusses. Their rarity points to cultural devastation, while their retrieval allows for the fostering of a sense of cultural belonging. The artefacts consist of the *rocker well* or *shadoof*, which is a construction connected to a well (it is comprised of a pole, a bucket, and a weight), and the musical instrument, the *kantele*. These are exceptional 'survivors', because the instrument has survived the war, and examples of the rocker well still exist, and can also be found in old photographs. The film also shows and describes other markers of cultural identity, such as the making of coffee cheese—hard cheese that is put in a cup of coffee and eaten with a spoon, very similar in texture to Indian paneer.

## Starry starry sky

After introducing the village, his ancestors, and their ways of life, Mikkelsen moves onto the central memory-based narrative of family, which leads him on a quest to rediscover his great grandmother's starry sky. He describes a moment in 1960 when his great grandmother was 90 years old and he was 4. He talks about the sky that he believes she must have been telling him about when she pointed to the heavens. He tells us that at the time, she understood little Norwegian, and he even less of her language, as she pointed to the sky and spoke in Kven. The quest to try to imagine the meaning of what she was trying to tell him takes Mikkelsen on a journey beyond Norway, which, as we will see, establishes affinities between Kven and other cultures. Mapping these affinities out across geographical spaces becomes a way for him to learn more about Kven culture, and thus also to imagine what his great grandmother might have been saying to him.

The starry sky takes on the role of an important environmental marker of Kven culture. Mikkelsen talks about the fact that in many places, you cannot see the stars clearly because of light pollution. He explains that this is not the case in Børselv, where there is little pollution from lights, making the stars easy to spot—and even more so when he was a child, and the electricity supply in Børselv was unstable. By saying that there are few places left where you can see the stars, and where pollution has not encroached, the Kven starry sky assumes a sense of resistance towards modernity and the tenets of

dominant culture. Moreover, by connecting the Børselv sky to his great grandmother's knowledge, he is also articulating why it is important for Kvens today to learn about the starry sky in the manner of the old Kvens.

Mikkelsen ponders the ways in which his ancestors may have talked about and conceptualised the starry sky. This conceptualisation is of central importance to the film. He connects the cultural markers of identity, and then the starry sky, to other places in the world. The *rocker well* can be found in many countries, including in the Torne Valley in Sweden, in Finland, Estonia, Russia, Hungary, Romania, parts of the Middle East, and Egypt (where it may have originated); his ancestors brought the skill of fence fishing with them from the Torne Valley in Sweden, from which they migrated (this form of fishing is now prohibited); the coffee cheese is similar to Indian paneer, and is also commonplace today in Finland; the *kantele* is played in Finland,[4] and is also similar to an instrument used by Karelians in Russia. He compares the names of the Milky Way in Estonian, Hungarian, Estonian, Finnish, Sámi, and Kven, and notes that they are very similar. He explains that some of the images related to the conceptualisation of the sky are also similar across time and space, spanning Norse mythology to present-day Estonian, Kven, and Sámi, where the Milky Way is described as "the bird's way". The way in which the northern lights are described in the north of Finland is the same as the way they are described in Børselv, Mikkelsen notes, highlighting the Kven people's connections eastwards to Finland and Russia, as well as to the Sámi people.

What Mikkelsen is trying to illustrate is that there are similarities in the way the starry sky is talked about in other cultures and places, and in the linguistic roots of the word "sky" itself; both the word "sky" and its conceptualisation interpellate the tracing of patterns of migration and of historic connections between the Kven and other peoples. Mikkelsen uses linguistic connections to show how present-day Kvens draw on their own history of migration by using their language. This focus on connections through space and time can be read as a pro-migration stance, which subverts dominant fantasies of sameness. At the same time, the connection to the world beyond Norway is more that an act of resistance, it is also an act of cultural survival, since Mikkelsen *needs* to travel to find out about the meaning of the Kven sky and stars, because his language is dying out. The highlighting of this relation to spaces outside of Norway also emphasises that he and his Kven community are part of a greater cultural linguistic whole (the Finnish-Ugric language group) which excludes Norway. These wider cultural affiliations are not framed as an explicit stance against Norway. There is no anger expressed, no mention made of the Norwegianisation policy, only a curiosity to learn more, coupled with a palpable melancholy.

Mikkelsen describes that as children, he and his Kven peers had access to "the old world", where people lived from a combination of fishing, farming, and harvesting from nature. Yet when he was a child, he did not know the value of this access to the old world, and these traditional ways of life.

Implicit in this tale is the fact that he and his contemporaries also had access to the Kven language, which is now on the verge of dying out, and as children did not recognise its value. Mikkelsen then interviews Terje Aronsen, a key figure in the revitalisation of Kven language and culture, who points to a bleak prognosis for Kven identity: "I don't see very bright prospects for the future of Kven culture. An important part of Kven culture and ways of being builds on language, and when that disappears, a big part of identity also disappears". Significantly, Aronson here points to the focal point of the film—the starry sky—and identifies a central irony, namely that if Mikkelsen had learned the Kven language from his parents, he would have known what his great grandmother was talking about when she pointed towards the starry sky. Towards the end of the film, Mikkelsen ponders whether anyone will still live in Børselv in 300 years, who they will be, and what languages they will speak.

*Under en annen himmel* functions as a retrospective act of resistance to assimilation, past and present. It shines a light on the diverse practices and language of the Kven people in a way which positively embraces the migrations of peoples and cultures, destabilising the notion of a homogenous Norwegian culture that is bound to a single territorial space. *Under en annen himmel*, in James Clifford's parlance, looks for "routes", stressing the changing and hybrid character of culture; in contrast, *Frivillig tvang*, returns to "roots" (1997).

## Frivillig tvang

*Frivillig tvang* is a documentary filmed mostly in Norway, but also in the Punjab state. It is based on interviews with predominantly younger people (teenagers to people in their thirties). Pakistani migrations to Norway started around 1970, and mostly consisted of working-class labourers from rural Punjab (Kristin and Åse 2014, p. 490). While beginning as mostly male labour migration, it expanded to encompass family chain migration (Walseth and Strandbu 2014, p. 490). This resulted in the current well-established community of Norwegian-Pakistanis, which what some sources say amounts to more than 30,000 people, spanning several generations (Erdal and Oeppen 2013; Døving, 2009).

The Pakistani community is commonly regarded as a tight-knit social network, with its own cultural and religious organisations (Walle 2011, p. 18). Only 7 percent of young Norwegian Pakistanis marry a person who is neither born in Pakistan, nor born to Pakistani parents outside Pakistan (Daugstad 2009, in Walle 2011, p. 490). At the same time, a sign of upward mobility is that young Norwegian-Pakistanis aged 19 to 24 are more likely to pursue higher education than the population in general. Norwegian-Pakistani females are more likely to enter into higher education than the general female population (Langset 2010, in Walseth and Strandbu 2014). Most Norwegian-Pakistanis live in the greater Oslo region, which is home to more than half the immigrant minority population (Eriksen 2013).

The film gives a voice to young Norwegian-Pakistanis, but as we suggest, does so in a way that upholds an ideal or fantasy of a culturally homogeneous Norway, where citizenship is conditional upon adopting Norwegian values, and where those who do not are imagined as outside the nation. We argue that an emphasis on the intimate and familial in the film frames Norwegian-Pakistanis as members of a marginalised minority who are incapable or unwilling to adopt Norwegian values and are thus distinct from the 'good citizens' who embody cultural norms of liberal individuality.

From the outset, the film's title—*Willingly coerced*—interpellates Norwegian-Pakistanis as a coerced community, as subjects lacking in agency. This implicitly evokes questions around family dynamics, and places integration within the sphere of the personal. At the same time, both the beginning and the end of the film features two Norwegian-Pakistanis who are literally placed outside the framework of the film's main part, as well as being symbolically framed as outside the territory of coercion, as model middle-class assimilated citizens. While initially promising to give an insider's view of the community, narrator Ulrik Imtiaz Rolfsen effectively takes on a majoritarian position. Although not racialised as white, Rolfsen "embrace(s) important aspects of whiteness" (Garner 2014, p. 409). His role can be interpreted as constructing (most) Norwegian-Pakistanis as coerced and tracing the "origin" or the roots of that coercion to Pakistan. The film's postscript features Tina Shagufta Kornmo as the other ideal immigrant. Kornmo is light-skinned, fluent in Norwegian, and has considerable social capital (she is a consultant doctor). The interview begins with direct references to notions of freedom: "You got married and chose your spouse yourself in 1989. How much freedom do Norwegian-Pakistani girls have today?". Kornmo is associated with views which are implicitly against arranged marriage, and as such, is framed as espousing recognisable "Norwegian" values. She is invited to comment on the "typicality" of the film's main interviewees, thus representing an authoritative position. In doing so, she expressed a progress narrative whereby Norwegian-Pakistanis will ideally become more and more integrated through time. Kornmo's understanding of integration converges with that of the narrator, as implicitly conditional on assimilation, and on the rejection of "Pakistani" values.

Given that the film places integration in the sphere of the familial, the main themes of the film are eldercare and marriage practices. The film's negative portrayal of arranged marriage and its sensationalising of forced marriage mimics tendencies which are also evident in Scandinavian policies—to generalise using individual cases to represent the marriage practices of entire minority groups (Bredal 2013). In *Frivillig tvang*, three of the main interviewees discuss their experiences or understandings of marriage, whether related to "forced marriage" (Fatima), parental coercion (Abu), or expectations of the traditional male breadwinner model of marriage (Hassan). As becomes evident, the sustained focus on the theme of coercion in these interviews reinforces what Bredal (2013, p. 347), drawing on Narayan (2001, p. 418), argues is a common

tendency to conflate very different attitudes and practices: "Those who resist or fight their parent's plans are placed in the same category as those who uncritically accept tradition, and those who have thought it through and decide to accept arranged marriage".

## Marriage practices

The space the film accords to forced marriage normalises the idea of Norwegian-Pakistanis as victims of extreme familial violence. Fatima is presented as fearful, compliant, and as being forced to operate outside the social sphere of her Norwegian classmates, outside the confines of institutional and social norms:

FATIMA: At the meeting with the teacher, mum and dad said that "she can't sit with boys". Always sit with girls. Sometimes I had to sit by myself. The teacher had to rearrange the whole class because of me.
ULRIK: The school let your parents decide where you should sit?
FATIMA: My teacher didn't think she had a choice. Dad was very firm. I said I wanted what my parents said. I was very scared of the consequences at home. When I tried to resist, lots of things happened. I was left without food, had to sit in the basement a couple of hours until my mother told me I could come up. I was smacked in the face, he took off his shoe and beat me with it. I was very bruised. I ended up at the emergency ward.

Fatima describes being duped into travelling to Pakistan and being forced into a marriage, where she is mistreated by her mother-in-law and raped by her husband. Rolfsen quizzes her on the intimate details of her marriage, which Fatima describes in terms of a "living death":

ULRIK: How was the wedding night?
FATIMA: I didn't know where I was. I … didn't feel alive. I felt like I was dead. I didn't want to remember either. I just know that I was crying and screaming, but no one came.
ULRIK: So you were raped?
FATIMA: It happened numerous times. And … something happened to me. I simply felt like I was dead.

Yuval-Davis notes that gendered bodies and sexuality play critical roles in the "territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations", and in the contours of the boundaries of inclusion and exclusions that these construct (1997, p. 39). In the Scandinavian context, the marriage practices of racialised minorities have been framed in terms of "integration problems, 'cultural differences' and dilemmas about gender equality" (Keskinen 2009, p. 259). Fatima's story interpellates media discussions and debates around the case of

Fadime Sahindal, who was killed in 2002 in Sweden by her father. The case divided opinion—some interpreted her case as an example of universal patriarchal violence, and others viewed it as completely divorced from domestic violence experienced by Swedish women (Keskinen 2009). As we will see, *Frivillig tvang* goes on to locate the roots of violence in Pakistan. Here, as in the case of Fadime Sahindal, violence against women is implicitly represented as being "imported" from outside Norway, and as originating in a 'traditional' culture where violence against women is normalised (Keskinen 2009).

In the context of debates around Norwegian policies that relate to forced marriage, Bredal notes that their articulation has similarly rested on questions of "voluntariness" or "free will" (2006a). As Keskinen (2009, p. 261), following Bredal (2006b) elaborates, notions of agency were central to arguments on both sides of the debate, whether based on the right of minorities to choose their partners, or on the assertion that arranged marriages are also often freely entered into. Such debates illustrate that gender relations are crucial in understanding and analysing the phenomena of nations and nationalism (Keskinen 2009, p. 261). Freedom becomes imbricated in ideas of race, ethnicity, and nation, occupying the dividing line between the unfettered 'Norwegian way of life' on one hand, and the lifestyles of minority populations who are perceived as lacking in freedom and are anchored to traditions on the other (Keskinen 2009, p. 261).

In the film, Abu stands for the figure of the Norwegian-Pakistani who is not so free, who is conflicted about his own arranged marriage. He expresses regret at being coerced into marriage, explaining the fear of loss that underpinned his decision:

> ABU: I say so much negative stuff about my family that I don't feel manipulated. But I think they used my conscience. I don't think I was manipulated. They never forced me. They didn't say, "You have to do it". But they said, "You should marry a Pakistani girl, ideally". Ideally, I would have fallen in love before getting married. Then it would have been up to us to make the marriage work. Now we can blame our parents […] I sacrificed a small part of my life for my family. To keep us together. I thought, I don't want to lose my family. You've got friends and all, but family is important. My family is very close.

While Abu's statements point to a complex set of negotiations that involve respect for his parents, and the wish not to hurt them, the film's sustained and intense focus on *degrees of coercion* produces Abu as a victim whose coercion is implicitly relative to Fatima's. While Abu is framed as envious of the presumed "free choice" of other autonomous Norwegian subjects, Hassan, a conservative teenage boy also interviewed, takes a firm stand against 'Norwegian' values of gender equality, as he explains his expectations of marriage.

HASSAN: It doesn't matter who she is, as long as she is Muslim and Pakistani. And knows what is right and wrong in Islam. When men were in charge, the world was a good place. Now that women are with us, I don't like it. Because now that women have got rights, they talk against men.

Following Sernhede (2001, p. 214 in Bredström 2003, p. 85), Hassan's position can be understood as a type of "counter identity". Sernhede contends that counter identities originate from a sense of alienation, of not belonging to society. Counter identities can express themselves as a form of macho-oriented masculinity, which can be understood as an oppositional reaction to the conflation of gender equality and white Norwegianness (Sernhede 2001, p. 214). For Staunæs, this type of "hyper-masculinity" can also be regarded as a symptom of a troubled subject position, a mechanism by which intensified masculinity "compensates for a feeling of weak ethnicity" in contexts where young minority youth are treated with suspicion or hostility (2003, p. 108). As such, ethnic identities and national boundaries need to be understood as being produced, sustained, and subverted in relation to each other, and the role of racism in this process needs to be recognised (Bredström 2003, p. 85). While *Frivillig tvang* makes fleeting reference to Hassan's feelings of isolation when playing in a Norwegian football team, there is no explicit recognition, or discussion around structural racism—the problem of integration, as we will see, is rather intrinsically associated with Pakistani society.

## Roots and racism

*Frivillig tvang* remains silent on discrimination and racism in Norway. Although the interviewees were born in Norway or had been living there most of their lives, the film constantly refers to their roots or national origin. Rolfsen travels to the Punjab where he "locates the roots of violence", and then travels back to Norway, which is explicitly presented as a bastion of gender equality. Positioning Pakistan in opposition to Norway as the locus of gender inequalities allows violence in Norway to be regarded as "an anomaly", while enabling violence to be considered as a "Pakistani import" (Keskinen 2009, p. 259).

Viewers are transported to the rural villages of Pakistan, where the tight-knit clan systems operates around—as the narrator puts it—"welfare, childcare and eldercare". They are introduced to various aspects of Pakistani family structure, including the honour system, and gender segregation. We are then shown images of and interviews with rural young women who are presented as homebound, uneducated cleaners and carers—victims of patriarchy—followed by interviews with their "oppressors". Both the young teenagers and older men discuss honour killings in a normalised, and even casual way.

> If she goes out alone and we hear rumours, then we would put an end to her there and then. You have to have a reason to kill. But you don't

> necessarily have to kill. If it's possible to talk it through, then one should do that.

The film then contrasts the most conservative communities of urban Pakistan with the most egalitarian and sexually liberal dimensions of Norwegian media and society. Norway is presented as an ideal welfare state in line with the "Scandinavian 'success story'" portrayed in normative political theory, as being achieved by the "early modernisation of gender relations through gender-equality reforms" (Melby et al. 2009):

> Norway is one of the world's most equal and peaceful countries. The introduction of women's right to vote in 1913 made everyone equal. The feminist battle continued and was crowned with the right to self-determined abortion in 1978. Norway has the longest parental leave for mothers, and affordable access to kindergarten for all. This means that Norway is the country where most women work [outside the home]. Liberal sexual morals and the right to abortion and contraception has meant that strict sexual mores have been wiped away. Sex and nudity is common in TV, newspapers, and advertisements. Norwegian alcohol consumption is high. The result is that rates of rape and unwanted sex are still a problem. When such different cultures meet, there are substantial challenges.

The end of this commentary is accompanied by images of half-naked TV contestants, producing Norway as a freewheeling space of unchecked sexual morals, the very antithesis of conservative Pakistan. At the same time, while the narrative in *Frivillig tvang* departs from the dominant story of sexual violence as the sole preserve of the 'other' when discussing rape in the Norwegian context, it nevertheless frames it as a result of substance abuse, rather than as intrinsically present within Norwegian society.

## Eldercare

The Pakistani system of eldercare is framed as incompatible with the Norwegian approach to family, and as counter to the ideals of the dual worker-carer family which precludes familial care, and as such, is antithetical to the ethos of the welfare state. In the course of the film, Hassan is sent by the *Frivillig tvang* producers to a well-appointed care home to 'learn a lesson' about Norwegian values. The older Norwegian people are presented as embodying norms of individuality, and as having freely chosen to spend their retirement years being cared for by the welfare state. The intended aim appears to be to convince Hassan that the Norwegian welfare system of eldercare is both effective, and preferable to the Pakistani system of familial care. However, Hassan resists this lesson, instead choosing to question the residents in the care home about whether they have chosen to live there

themselves, or whether they were coerced by their families. Hassan's first interviewee is a very elderly lady, Marie Nordby, who has a sweet and rather uncertain demeanour. His questions to her are direct and unflinching, cutting to the heart of family, loss, and wellbeing:

HASSAN: What does it feel like to live here?
MARIE: I feel safe here.
HASSAN: Do you miss your children?
MARIE: It's not the same as living at home but I feel like I get the help I need. Medicine when I need it. And good food.
HASSAN: How often do you get visits from your children?
MARIE: I get visits from my children and my grandchildren.
HASSAN: You looked after your children when they were small. Why can they not do that for you now?
MARIE: But it was my own choice. My husband and I got sick round Christmas a year ago. Then I could not manage to be at home any more.
HASSAN: So it was your own choice?
MARIE: Yes, and my husband died here.

Hassan's telling question about how often the lady gets visits goes unanswered, and as each of the interviewed residents assert their "free choice", Hassan's repeated probing about the matter suggests that he is unconvinced. The director leaves this scepticism hanging, and instead follows this lesson about the benefits of welfare state eldercare provision by another on the workings of gender equality. Rolfsen challenges Hassan on how he will work and look after his parents if he is intent on being an estate agent. Hassan replies that he intends to delegate this task to his future wife. The director's question thus implicitly reframes familial care as both unnecessary and unpractical within the egalitarian welfare state framework.

Hassan here (re)establishes a gendered order of care by relating the potential care of his parents to his future wife. While this move may be framed by Rolfsen as running counter to the value of gender equality imbricated in the welfare state, his take on Hassan's position turns a blind eye to the fact that the care of the elderly in Norway is also gendered. In this sense, Hassan's position does not point to a bifurcation between gendered and non-gendered forms of care, but rather between public and informal care. In any case, from Rolfsen's perspective, Hassan's refuses to buy into the values and practices associated with the welfare state, and as such is relegated to a position outside the symbolic borders of the nation, standing for all those who are perceived as unwilling and unable to be "proper" citizens of Norway.

## Conclusion

> Starry Starry night, Portraits hung in empty halls,
> Frameless heads on nameless walls,

> With eyes that watch the world and can't forget […].
> And now I think I know what you tried to say to me,
> How you suffered for your sanity, How you tried to set them free.
> They would not listen, They're not, List'ning still, Perhaps they never will.
> *Vincent*, Don McLean

In this chapter, we have shown that the narratives and meanings located in *Frivillig tvang* and *Under en annen himmel* films provide evidence of the ways in which Norwegian society has and does makes sense of itself and its 'others' in relation to an enduring national fantasy of homogeneity. This fantasy purports to give consistency to the nation and its subjects and preserves it as a safely bounded whole. While assimilation through Norwegianisation policies appears to stand in contrast to contemporary integration policies, the difference between current policies and past assimilation thinking may not be so significant after all (Engen 2014, p. 122).

We argue that the story of the great grandmother in *Under en annen himmel* functions as a reminder of the personal, familial, and communal costs of assimilation policies. The story is also a reminder of the moral bankruptcy of fantasies of wholeness that underpin these policies. At the same time, the journey across time and space—which the story of the starry sky sets in motion—undermines the cultural essentialism this fantasy peddles by showing how culture is hybrid, moving, and ever-changing through time and space.

The great grandmother's starry night in turn interpellates Don McLean's lyrical tribute to Van Gogh's "sanity", which points to the world's lack of recognition of the artist's starry starry night, saluting "the eyes that watch the world and don't forget". McLean warns of a world that does not and may well never listen. This recalls the watchful eyes of the Kven narrator who is drawn to the starry night, as well as to the symbolic deafness of Norwegian policy-makers when faced with lessons from history, who instead allow paternalist fantasies of sameness to live on in their current manifestation. The consistently negative ways in which stories and practices of marriage and eldercare in Norwegian-Pakistani communities are framed in *Frivillig tvang* provides evidence of the ways in which acceptance into imagined communities is still perceived in mainstream culture as conditional on sameness (Gullestad 1992), and the exclusionary effects this thinking has. Norwegian-Pakistanis are collapsed into a community of more or less coerced individuals whose familial practices are perceived as inherently antithetical to those embraced by "free and good" Norwegians, as essentially incompatible with the values and norms of gender equality, and as fundamentally counter to the model of the dual carer-worker aligned with welfare strategies and thinking (Gullikstad et al. 2016).

Since *Frivillig tvang* represents Pakistani culture as the problem of integration, it cannot by default acknowledge the structural dimensions of racism within (Norwegian) home territory. On the other hand, the choice to avoid direct engagement with the structural dimensions of the Norwegianisation policy in *Under en annen himmel*, may relate to Mikkelsen not wanting to

showcase Kvens as victims. Not pitting Kvenness and Norwegianess against each other is also a way of making a positive Kven identity more accessible to Norwegians with Kven backgrounds, something a "bitter" rehearsing of past wrongs may not have achieved. In doing this, *Under en annen himmel* expands the possibility of a more inclusive hybrid understanding of citizenship, extending a promise to Norway's new marginalised minorities. But while the Kven film stakes out this position in a context where Kvens are demobilised and de-politicised, Norwegian-Pakistanis still bear the brunt of symbolic ejection. At the same time, research on the everyday lives of Norwegian-Pakistanis points to their engagement with negotiations around identity as being much more in tune with the complex understandings of culture that the starry sky invokes, and which Rolfsen chooses to ignore (Östberg 2000).

Finally, *Under en annen himmel* contains a warning about the loss of language. Research suggests that the languages of new ethnic minorities are already disappearing within two or three generations in Norway (Berg 2003; Boyd et al. 1994). While mother tongue instruction is available in minority languages, it is offered only to those who have insufficient Norwegian language skills. Mother tongue instruction is thus not valued in itself, but is offered in the service of bettering Norwegian learning—in other words, for better assimilation (Vilbli.no 2018). We can wonder, along with Mikkelsen, not only what will happen to Børselv in 300 years, but what will happen to the Norwegian-Pakistani community, if the political pollution of exclusion continues to obscure the lights of the starry sky, and the multiple routes it illuminates.

## Notes

1 Some people prefer the term Norwegian-Finnish over the term Kven. For the purpose of this article, we use the term Kven. For a discussion of the term, see for example, E. Niemi, *Kven—et omdiskutert begrep*, Varanger Årbok 1991, pp. 119–137.
2 The borders between the northern part of Norway and Sweden were drawn in 1751, between Russia and Norway in 1862, and between the northern part of Sweden and Finland in the Torne valley in 1809.
3 We use the term Norwegian-Pakistani for practical purposes—some may identify as Norwegian, as Pakistani, or as Norwegian-Pakistani or Pakistani-Norwegian.
4 The kantele has a very specific role in Finnish national mythology, and plays a key role in Finland's national epic, *Kalevala*.

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