

**GEEK ANTHROPOLOGY
OF LOKI'S ARMY**

by Pepi Valderrama

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This is an independent book about Loki's Army, Loki and Tom Hiddleston. Neither Marvel, Tom Hiddleston nor their representatives have been involved in the creation of this book and do not necessarily endorse its contents.

This book contains some spoilers to *Thor*, *the Avengers* and *Thor the Dark World*. Before proceeding to read its contents, please be advised: watch the movies beforehand. If possible, do watch the deleted scenes and extras that can be found in the DVDs or Blue-rays.

This is not a work of fanfiction. It does, however, contain explanations about what fanfiction is, what ships can be found around Loki, and why Lokinions and Hiddlestoners might be writing fanfiction.

TO MISCHIEF

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INTRODUCTION

Loki, that's me. Loki, the Light-Bringer, the misunderstood, the elusive, the handsome and modest hero of this particular tissue of lies. Take it with a pinch of salt, but it's at least as true as the official version and, dare I say it, more entertaining. So far, history, such as it is, has cast me in a rather unflattering role. Now it's my turn to take the stage.

Let
 there
 be
 light.

The Gospel of Loki, Joanne M. Harris.

This book is not a work of fan fiction, nor a book of spells. There are no runes for casting nor Thorki weddings to attend. However, you will find *light* towards who Loki is in it, how fans see Tom, and which fannish activities fans like to enroll in. This book is for explorers, for people who want to discover what's behind the character, the celebrity and the fandom. This book is also for researchers of fandom and fans who wish to take a look at one of the most compelling Marvel characters who has fascinated thousands across the globe. If you are into discovering hidden messages, which types of fans are out there, or

how fans make their closures of Loki and Tom, you are very welcomed here.

I must warn you, though: if you have not seen the movies yet, know that this book is plenty of spoilers. If you are not so eager to be spoiled in that way, I highly recommend you to watch *Thor*, *the Avengers* and *Thor the Dark World* (all the Loki Marvel related movies out there at the moment of writing of this book) before starting to read beyond these lines. If, however, you have already seen them, please proceed gleefully to get amazed and learn a lot about Loki's Army.

However, before we start, I want you to be aware of some key points that you need for successfully navigating this book. The research has been made entirely through screens. Since the moment I began analyzing the fandom all my contacts with other fans were made online. I engaged in observing and taking part in discussions and comments in several pages on Facebook, including the one I created more than a year ago. I have also been exploring the turbulent waters of Tumblr while taking some walks on forums, fan sites, and Twitter. In short, my research towards the fans has been made online, focussing primarily on the parasocial relationships fans have with their fannish object.

Because technology connects us all, the lines between what is real and what is virtual are blurred. Thus, the perceptions towards the fannish objects and other fans like

me, not only feel real, but they also seem very close. Thus, the studied community and its fannish objects are a globalized public fandom. In short, despite all of us communicating in English, not all fans are located in the same geographical spot, nor have they necessarily met in person. However, it does not mean that there is a unique online subculture around Loki and Tom. Instead, there is a network of them, the members of which interact online on a daily basis on different online fields.

Because the research was made online, it also means that I've been looking mostly at user generated content, which, in essence, is what makes Loki's Army thrive. Apart from researching the fannish objects, in this case, Loki and Tom Hiddleston, I've been taking a closer look at all fannish activities that I could. Though I must admit that I lingered more on some, and less onto others.

I also want make you aware of my status of fan academic. When I started the research, I was already a fan. Thus, the book you are about to read can be thought as an attempt to legitimate and represent Loki's Army. However, this also makes me, for the scholar community, an *amateur*, and thus this book can be subjected to harsh criticism, from the contents and the wording used in it. Despite being objective some of my choices might be seen as a personal closure from part of some fans, thus it might also be subjected to some *wank*. Into the fannish world, *wank* refers to a heated public online argument, a debate in which no side will change their minds despite

the efforts of each team in trying to *brainwash* the other side. The first part of the book, the one that explains who Loki is, can be subjected more to *wank* due to two primary closures existing around Loki's psychology. On one side, we have fans blaming the bad parenting of Odin, traumas and bullying for Loki's villainous behavior. On the other hand, we have fans stating that Loki is just a sociopathic devilish character from the very start. Since Loki is a polysemic character with many layers, taking just a sociopathic perspective would have meant to simplify him and make him void of his layered personality. Even if we argue that his behavior in the films is due to his traumas, bullying and the result of an appalling parenting, that does not exclude that he might, indeed, have villainous traits within himself.

This means that this work might be trapped between the world of writing proper academics and the fannish world where some fans might see me as a type of double agent who has opened the door and has let go all the devils away. Despite the gray line onto which the book is situated, its purpose is noble: to take a serious look onto Loki, Tom Hiddleston, and Loki's Army. In essence, it presents and explains fannish objects, celebrity, and fandom in a pleasant way: without being too academic, nor being too plain.

You have to take in mind yet another key point when reading this book. Yours Truly is not a native English speaker, nor an American citizen. Despite the great efforts

in correcting all grammar and style issues in this book (through grammarly.com), it might be possible that something has been overlooked. In that case, my deepest apologies. However, take in mind that this is the first version of the book that I intend to revise once *Thor Ragnarök* has seen the light. As soon as my pocket is ready, I plan to order a native check on this work. Moreover, despite the fact of being Spanish, you have to take into account both my nationality and Yours Truly living during eight years in Tokyo. This fact is important in scholar terms as to have an idea of who wrote the book, and which might be her background. You see, since I am also a fan, how I do make closures is necessary for the reader to understand the author's intentions and background as well.

So lastly, the minutiae. I would also like you to bear in mind that when I use the words *Asgardian* I am referring to the Aesir and the Vanir (the pantheons of Gods in Norse Mythology). Though we can find the word Aesir in Marvel comics, most fans refer to the MCU inhabitants of Asgard as *Asgardians* (or even *Asguardians*, *Assgardians* to joke, and where the only *Sassgardian* is Loki.) To avoid misunderstandings, I refer to the inhabitants of Asgard as *Asgardians* in the book. You will also notice that I use lots of Hiddleswords and the fan written form of many words, like fanfiction instead of fan fiction, throughout the book. I chose to use fanspeech more in some instances while also using academic wording. You have a list of them and their meanings at the end of the book, along with another list of

some academic words. Please refer to them when in doubt.

I also recommend you to check out the footnotes. In them you will find the links to images that I am describing in the text, as well as scenes from the movies, documentaries, and other media and comments that will help you in expanding my explanations. Surf the footnotes always.

So, now that we've made some key points clear let's explore the book!

Geek Anthropology of Loki's Army is divided into three big sections: Loki of Asgard, Tom Hiddleston, and celebrity, and Loki's Army (the fans.) The target is to give a global vision onto the fannish objects (Loki and Tom), celebrity culture and Loki's Army. In having an idea of the whole environment, fannish objects and the fans themselves, we can then have a better picture of them.

In the first part, we will explore extensively about Loki: his background, psychology and the stereotypes that might be attached to them. We will explore modern mythology, in special how Loki is presented as a geek and Thor as a Jock. While discovering Loki's family issues, we will examine the patriarchal Asgardian society and the status of women within it. Though it might seem not related to Loki, the reality is that the situation of women in Asgard has an impact on the character in ways that might seem

unexpected. We will also decipher what hidden, and not-so-hidden messages might be encapsulated in *Thor*, *the Avengers*, and *Thor the Dark World*. Because Loki is a polysemic character, we will then take a closer look at how this polysemy makes him so appealing to a broad range of fans, and how this makes many identify with him. In this section, we will also take a look at *memetics* and how this theory can serve us to explain the success of Loki and also Tom.

In the second part of the book, we will explore celebrity culture and Tom. We will examine the status of celebrities nowadays and how they can be superheroes for their audiences. We will also try to define what a celebrity and a fan are. Then, we will meet Tom and take a look at his status as meme while exploring some traits that made him bound to success: from his gestures to his voice.

In the third part, we will meet the fandom: Loki's Army. We will explore how fans become fans, what types of fans are out there, how Lokinions and Hiddlestoners might see themselves. We will also take a look at their focal vocabulary, their fanspeech, and we will learn how to create *Hiddleswords* and *Loki words*. Then, we will examine which stereotypes are attached to different types of fans. While we get inside the participatory culture, we will first take a look at what the fannish gift economy is and which copyright issues it can provoke. Then, we will shortly have a view on gender and sexuality. Also, finally

we will take a tour into magical places to visit that have importance for Lokinions and Hiddlestoners.

As an extra we will adopt a brief look at how I decided to do my research. We will also read some interviews to the Admins of Loki's Army (lokisarmy.org), Loki cosplayers like FahrLight, and also members of Loki's Army. These interviews are enlightening because they let us explore different types of fans and how they see their favorite fannish objects. Thus, I highly recommend reading them as well.

I warmly invite you to have an open mind when reading this book, whether you are a Lokinion, a Hiddlestoner or an academic. Read the book with a will for exploring beyond what media presents us, take notes if you need to and be open to see fandom and fans in a more interesting light. Before boiling in rage when reading my work and label parts of it as wank, consider doing a research of your own. Explore the fandom, read books about it, talk to fans who are not in your comfort zone, test your theories and then, write about them.

When do we start?

It wasn't just that I was racially different, or physically less imposing, or radical in my opinions, or unfamiliar with their ways. It was simply (and I say this in all modesty) that I was a whole lot cleverer than the rest of the folk in Asgard. Clever folk aren't popular, by and large. They arouse suspicion. They don't fit in. They can be useful, as I proved on a number of occasions, but among the general population there's always a sense of vague mistrust, as if the very qualities that make them indispensable also make them dangerous.

The Gospel of Loki, Joanne M. Harris.

WHO IS LOKI?

LOKI'S BACKGROUND

Loki is a multidimensional character with a long history in Marvel Comics. His recent appearance in the movies portrayed by Tom Hiddleston has made of him one of the most appreciated and loved anti-heroes in all times. Loki is a tiny Frost Giant, left to die by his father the King Laufey, and adopted by Odin¹. He was instructed in the magic science by his mother, Queen Frigga and instructed along with his brother Thor by his father. He is let to believe that he is a blood son of Odin and Frigga, thus the true brother of Thor, and a true member of Asgardian society. Since Odin picked him up, his subconscious turn him from a blue Jotun to pinkish Asgardian to appeal the one who took him: Odin.

Despite what would seem an idyllic story for the kid, his childhood and adolescence did not appear to be a bed of roses. Asgardian society values strength, bravery in battle and spontaneity. Things that Loki does not possess. He looks different from others (especially from members of his own family), both in looks and in tastes. He is paler than the rest, thinner and looks somewhat weak; he studies or dedicates his time to what Asgardian society pays not so much attention: magic. All this causes a

¹ In the comics, however, King Laufey kept his son hidden due to his tiny size.

significant focus on Thor and a great neglect on Loki by all his environment. We can presume from the films that his mother took a great care of him and that Asgardians disregarded him because of cultural values, stereotypes, and cues. It is not a surprise, then, that Loki became resentful and growingly desperate to fit in. Being unable to match the physical stereotypes of Asgardian society, he had no other choice but to try fitting in using his intellect and what he was best suited for: magic.

In *Thor*, the first movie, we encounter a young Loki already touched by resentment and his failed attempts to fit in. There are many scenes in which we can see that the main target of attention is always Thor while he is made fun of or simply ignored by his peers. Despite having Thor at his side most of the times, his brother constantly reminds Loki to know his position, indirectly telling him to remain in the shadows. This is not directly a consequence of Thor's character, but the education he received and the society he lives in: Asgard. These issues provoke in Loki what seems a double personality: one that demands of him to fit in, be noticed and acknowledged for, and the other resentful asking for vengeance. By the time he discovers he is a Jotun in the battle of Jotunheim, his hatred has clouded the innocent personality who only wanted to fit in, expanding the feelings of neglect and resentment to extremes. So, when he confronts his father, all the doubts, pain, hatred and resentment pops out with great power, creating both extreme pain and unpredictable chaos.

“Am I cursed?” Loki asks a father who is unable to transmit emotion or to convey anything comforting to him. Asgardian society sees Jotuns as monsters, “the monster parents tell their children about at night².” Moreover, with this idea Odin leaves him while slipping away into Odinsleep, without any further explanations. Loki is broken into small pieces: he loathes himself because he is never going to fit in, he is the monster. Desperate, totally clouded by his feelings of despair, resentment, and impotence, he has no other choice but to use his intelligence again to prove his father wrong: he is not a monster, he is worthy.

In *Thor*, we see Loki acting with desperation more than pure intelligence or logic. He is so broken that he tries to fit in attempting to prove to his father that *he is worthy*. However, in order to do so, he takes the worse path possible: destroying the other monsters so that he proves he is not one of them, and demonstrating that his brother is not suited at all for the Crown. What he does is to throw an Asgardian tantrum of gigantic proportions. Remember that Asgardians have a lifespan of 5000 years. We are told that Loki might be around 1047 years old when we see him in *Thor*. This means that he might be around 17 years old, making his behavior that of a broken teenager. Being Asgardian (a Jotun), his tantrums can be deadly. At the end, this proves to be so: he almost destroys the Jotun

² *Thor*, the script. <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Thor.html>

civilization because he has been taught they are monsters, in hopes of having his father approve of him. When, at the end of the movie, Odin disapproves, in an act of vengeance on him, he lets his hand go from his brother's hammer and lets himself fall into the abyss.

After this drama, at the end of the credits we can see a tortured Loki reflected on a mirror speaking into the head of Dr. Selvig. This scene gives the cue for his return in the *Avengers*, a film in which we can see him more secure of himself. However, he is still trapped and abused by the real villains of the movie: *the Chitauri*³. He appears feverish, half regretting what he did, half delusional of what he could achieve in Midgard, and fearing within himself what he is doing. However, beyond all these mixed feelings, he enjoys being the center of the action: at last he is being noticed, even if it is for the wrong reasons.

Despite what seems to be like his efforts to take the Earth under control, he orchestrates a plan which appears to put all the *Avengers* together to fight a common thread: the alien army who is going to invade the planet. We can see, more than ever, a broken Loki with several personalities popping up at incredible speed, and overlapping one another. He hates his brother, and yet he loves him, never putting him in "serious" danger, for an Asgardian. In fact, all the tricks played on Thor are tasks he can overcome. He asks for help with his looks, and yet

³ Alien army whose chief is Thanos.

he acts against himself. He thinks he is better than others, and yet he makes it possible for him to fail and return to Asgard. Despite all this, Loki's complex personality seems there to stay: he is psychopathic, chaotic, spooky, delusional, sarcastic; and yet, intelligent, elegant, broken, sentimental, and even funny.

In *Thor the Dark World* we can see him more sure of himself, empowered, enjoying his status, and yet, he is still broken. Despite this, he has discovered something crucial: he is unique, there is no other like him, and he likes being himself. In fact, he enjoys it to the bone. He does not have the responsibility Asgardian society demands of Thor, nor he needs to maintain or do what Asgardian society dictates. Moreover, he enjoys being the center of attention, even if it is for ill reasons. Despite all this empowerment, the death of his mother breaks him further still. He feels, of course, responsible for that, being he the one who pointed out where to go to the dark elf spy causing, with this action, his own mother's death. We must wonder what will become of him once the only pillar who made him reason with the heart is gone, and never to come back again. We can also see him not wanting to *fit in* nor wanting the approval of his father anymore. When he fakes his death in front of Thor, he states that he did not do it for his father, implying that he did it for someone else: his brother Thor, or alternatively, his mother.

Despite this, his mischievous nature is there to stay. He tricks his brother and takes the throne of Asgard setting in motion something else, bigger than what he had set in motion before that.

THE SHADOW THAT MAKES THE GREATEST HEROES

Loki is a complex, multilayered character that allows heroes to achieve their greatest potential. Without these characteristics, Thor would have remained a plain hero, and maybe the movies would not have had the impact they have achieved. Good stories stick because of the relationship between their heroes and their villains. Villains who are complex, multidimensional and have a human side, tend to be a great nemesis for a hero. Alternatively, said in other words: a good hero only will shine if his nemesis is complicated, deep and a highly evolved character. Heroes that have had extraordinary nemesis have a place of honor in our memory. One of the great examples of this complex, and yet extraordinary dance is the one that have Sherlock Holmes with his nemesis Professor Moriarty. Their dance is exquisite, and because both are capable of greatness, both in good and evil, both need to die together, for both are sides of the same coin. You believe in the hero because you believe in the villain.

In *Thor*, we can see a very spoiled Thor at the beginning of the film. Loki, however, seems sweet and

highly obedient when confronted with his father. Thor is arrogant, proud and spoiled. His speed transformation from spoiled brat to a responsible adult is credible because his nemesis, Loki, undergoes a speed and complicated transformation of his own. The drama of Loki, his depth, gives credibility to the simple character of Thor. We can believe the story because both sides of the coin are more or less balanced. Thus, Loki is magnifying Thor. His magnification power is so vast that he pushes the hero beyond what he thought he was, thus allowing the hero to find out who he truly is.

Loki can be thought as the anti-hero, the nemesis, the mischievous one, but he cannot be thought as a real *evil* one. All his actions were acts of desperation for being noticed and being acknowledged. It is true that he commits horrible crimes, and that he is quite psychopathic in *the Avengers*, but not as horrible as other plain evil figures in other movies. He tries to destroy his people, the Jotuns because they are monsters, or at least this is what Asgardians think of them. No one seems to mourn the Jotuns from the first movie: they are too alien to us as to empathize with them. Besides, they are portrayed as truly evil. Thus, as an audience, it is hard for us to think of him as really *evil* when he was freeing Asgard from true evil once and for all. We can, however, empathize greatly with the 80 casualties he caused in *the Avengers*. Few, if we take into account that an evil alien army was attacking the city. In fact, he is on the verge of being evil, but never actually becoming so. He is mischievous and broken, and

these two characteristics makes him fall away from being true evil. However, many speculations have been expressed as to what happened with Odin in *Thor the Dark World*: killed by Loki, or victim of another Odin-sleep? What the script writers will decide on this topic will be crucial for Loki to become just a normal *true villain*, or to remain the mischievous and complicated figure thousands adore.

Both in *Thor* and *the Avengers*, Loki becomes the key in the shadows within the narrative. Thanks to his actions, heroes can achieve their true nature, their true potential. Without his schemes, we would not have such shiny heroes on the screen. In *Thor*, it is Loki's mischievous schemes the ones to proof his brother unworthy of becoming King, thus getting him to be the worthy one. These schemes make Thor's character to change, to improve, to become a true hero, to stop being a bully, to redeem himself, to sacrifice and, ultimately, to become the finest stereotype of what a brave Asgardian should be. In *the Avengers*, it is Loki's mischievous actions that put the Avengers together. Despite being a secondary figure in *Thor the Dark World*, the narrative suggests to us that he will be an actor of the events to come in a future movie. He will create both expectation for him to go out from the shadows once and for all.

This characteristics of being the one in the shade, or the one whose schemes make heroes' character shine, makes him a key element in two of the movies, and a

potential true actor in a future one: Ragnarök. Without him, there would be no Thor, not at least as the one we know from the end of *Thor*. Without him, there would be no team in *the Avengers*. Thus, he is presented to us as the necessary evil that makes things work. He is the *chaos* needed to make the world whole again.

The dance between hero and nemesis goes beyond than a mere dance in which one dancer amplifies the greatness of the other, makes him shine, or is a key for a proper narrative. The dance between the two and their relationships with other characters can also be used as metaphors for expressing ideas, as mirrors of reality or as means for expressing changes in culture and power that might be happening in the society that saw their birth. The dance between Loki and Thor and their relationship with the rest of the characters can be seen, from different layers, as mirrors. It can also be seen as a critique of certain roles, stereotypes or ideas that are currently living in the American popular culture. We can see Loki as a geek and Thor as a jock. We can see their dual relationship with his father as the results of bad parenting and a great lack of communication within the family. We can see their family as the dying traditional stereotype of what a family ought to be, but which is falling into pieces due to the drama within it. Moreover, we can also see their relationship with friends as a mirror of what happens in schools when kids are bullied, or some other kids get all the attention while others are cast out in the shadows.

INTO LOKI'S HEAD

After the battle with the Frost Giants, Odin finds baby Loki crying and alone awaiting death. The baby reacted to Odin changing his color, from the frosty Jotun blue to Odin's healthy Asgardian pink, in an instinctive way to appeal the man who had picked him up. This was an instinctive attempt of survival which was successful. This appeal is inherent to all babies. They cry out loud in distress, or they do certain things that make adults fall in love with them. Babies are totally dependent on adults; thus, nature has provided them with weapons of *appealing*. Their ability to appeal is key for their survival. When growing up, kids incorporate, naturally, pleasing systems to make sure that adults are keen to keep on their survival. Odin, moved by baby Loki's appeal, and also maybe by pity, brought him back to Asgard and decided to raise him as his son. Loki's appeal was a subconscious reaction for survival, a desperate last call to make it. Odin's purpose was beyond just raising him as one of his own: he wanted to put a new King on the Jotun Throne to bring peace between the two races. Alternatively, at least, this is what we can deduce from the narrative of the first movie. Thus, baby Loki appeals Odin in several layers: as an adult staring at a defenseless baby in distress, and later on as a tool to achieve peace between two races. Kid Loki started to please his father to continue surviving, at a subconscious level. Pleasing adults would assure his survival, thus allowing him to become an adult.

Baby Loki was neglected, left out to die with no *imprimers*. The one who picked him up, and decided to rescue him, Odin, was the one to become his *imprimer*. Kids that have been neglected or have needed time to choose an *imprimer* might end up with fear and distress issues, and feel compelled to find an *imprimer* as soon as possible. The more neglected or traumatic the experience of lacking an *imprimer* or environment is, the more powerful the need for pleasing the *imprimer* will be. A child's survival will depend on becoming attached to persons concerned with his welfare (Minsky, 2006). A child gets its *imprimer* quite quickly: "the quickness with which the person responds and the intensity of that interaction" (Minsky, 2006) is what makes someone an *imprimer*. It means that Loki's *imprimer* is no other than Odin. Because of his trauma of being neglected, and the circumstances surrounding it, he feels a deep obligation to please his *imprimer*, Odin. The natural pleasing that kids use towards adults gets extremely amplified. Thus, becoming like Odin is a must. Hence, he finds himself in an eternal competition with Thor. A doomed contest, since he does not meet the Asgardian stereotype that would make him successful within Asgardian society.

Fitting into the Asgardian society was not an easy task for Loki. Asgardians are muscular and strong and do have very healthy looks. Plus, the royal family are all blond. In contrast, Loki is thinner, paler and has dark hair. Loki was seen as a weak, handicapped boy who was more of a bookworm than an athlete.

From the comics, Sif's words in *Thor*, and *the Avengers* we know that Loki became resentful with Thor because of the different treatment they both were subjected to while being kids. While Asgardian society favored Thor clearly because of, not only his looks but also his bravery and athletics; Loki was left aside because of not matching the Asgardian mainstream culture and its stereotypes. Loki was a geek, too smart, too weak and too gloomy for Asgardian standards. Moreover, this made of him the nerd, the handicapped a society obsessed with the jock image would not promote nor favor. Add this to his subconscious mind and you get the necessary ingredients for a complicated and sensitive personality.

Frigga, Loki's adoptive mother, taught Loki magic. Being a fast learner and a survivor, magic was the perfect tool for his future survival. Loki is very intelligent and promotes his attributes as much as he can, transforming his *handicap* into an advantage. However, he finds this a hard task at the beginning. We see an ignored Loki in *Thor*, the first movie. Even though he tries to express his personality, he fails to do so because those around him think of him as a weak one. In this way, Loki will never be able to please his imprinter; thus his feelings of being ignored and cast aside are further amplified.

Being exposed to such stress can take its toll on your personality: anger and resentment can easily make its way into your heart. In fact, much of the funny behavior some

Asgardians had with him, as the jokes Volstagg makes on him, can be seen as a type of bullying. Repeated over time, and adding to it the act of ignoring you or casting you aside depending on the situation, can create a very resentful individual. Also, this is what we see happening to Loki. The day of the coronation of Thor as a King, he lets Frost Giants into Asgard, or so the movie leads us to believe. What could be argued to be just envy is, in fact, something more complex than that feeling. Having no other way to present himself as the Asgardian stereotype, he has no other choice but to debunk his brother's appeal. Proving Thor incapable to reign would make Odin's eyes approve of him, thus making the imprinter proud.

Problems start to get worse when the imprinter, Odin, proves to be flawed. Not only family communication is scarce or non-existent, Odin's actions are but promoting the drama between his two sons. He is, for the most part, a closed book: someone to fear not someone to count with. He is a proud, fearful figure who rules Asgard as he pleases. No one, not even his wife, can persuade him. Taking this as an example, Loki sets in motion a plan for his imprinter to approve of him. However, he mistakes the ways, as Odin mistakes the cries for help of his son Loki. The imprinter is not only a mirror in which you can copy behaviors, but it is also someone you need to please. The problem comes when the projected image of the imprinter is one which can be misunderstood easily, especially when there is no communication within the family. When Loki discovers the true nature of the imprinter, when he

discovers there is no way for him to please him, Loki turns his love for his father into hate. He has been used, abused and cheated. The imprinter has lied to him and neglected him. So, the trauma he lived as a baby repeats itself and gets magnified.

When Loki discovers he is a Jotun, he is thrown into a nightmarish crisis. He is not the real son of Odin and had no chance of becoming a king despite all the efforts he made to please his imprinter. He was neglected, and he was also a tool to be used. He would have had forgiven his father if he had not neglected him at the end of the movie. In neglecting Loki for a second time, in repeating the trauma he lived as a baby, Odin is breaking him further still, creating psychological wounds hard to heal in an easy way.

Loki is obviously broken and obviously messed up because of his relationship with his father. Neglected twice -unable to acquire the desired approval from his imprinter, unable to really have a family conversation because within the family there has been no real communication, and feeling, for the most part, like a shadow,- makes of him the mischievous broken figure we know now. He develops a dual personality, lovely one and loathing one towards both his family and himself. The education that he was given lights his feelings of self-loathing in transforming him into a monster. We only need to take a look to Thor, eager to fight against the evil Jotuns, to have a picture of what Loki might be feeling within

himself. His broken heart and his complex personality-system make of him both a key for helping his family and bullying all family members. He helps them, and at the same time, he tricks them.

His refusal of appearing in his true form, the Jotun one, gives us clues as to the real extent of his self-loathing. Once he has discovered he is a Jotun, he does not need to maintain the looks to fit into Asgardian society. And yet, he does. *Hiding the evil within*, and projecting an illusion, gives us a clue to his complex personality: he will only let you see what he wants you to see. It can be easily seen in *Thor the Dark World*. He has mastered his mischievousness as to confuse people: you do not know when he is telling the truth or when he is not. Furthermore, he hides his pain within as well. It is when it is obvious that he is going to mourn his mother, that he finally shows to Thor, how he feels at the moment: devastated.

Despite all this, we can state that Loki is a true survivor. Not only in his childhood he manages to appeal his future imprimer but also in *the Avengers* he is being capable of plotting an escape. After being tortured by Thanos and the Chitauri, he devises a plan to go back to Asgard. He makes the Chitauri believe that he wants to rule on Earth, when, in fact, the only thing he wants is to return home, and eventually, re-take the throne. He is not only able to physically shapeshift, but he can also mentally do so as well. We all have alter egos, different

identities to connect with various friends, the family or working mates. We do have several identities we switch on and off when situations require it. For example, we have one or several digital identities with a desired image of ourselves, another with our teachers, another with our family, and so on. This is a type of shape-shifting, and Loki has been doing it more than usual, and with greater speed, to be able to fit in. He needed to survive in an environment that clearly cast him out as the different one. The problem here is that his adaptation and his dependence toward the imprinter has proved the origin for him to become “volatile”; hence Loki is living into a constant inner turmoil. His sweet side is fading in favor of another darker side that seems to be more fit for his survival. However, the process of disassociation⁴ that he is suffering is creating multiple personalities that are hard to keep at bay when feelings are overwhelming him.

All these characteristics live in his subconscious mind: the imprinter patterns, the traumas, the feelings of being left to die, the feeling of being neglected (twice), the feelings of being cast aside by others. All these feelings are creating a complex psyche. Loki is lost, he feels lonely, unloved, neglected, misunderstood, and at times he does not know who he is anymore. He might even be unconsciously feeling good and bad at the same time while believing the fantasy he is projecting onto others unknowingly. His only way of overcoming this messy

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissociative_disorder

tsunami is *to project his feelings, fears and fantasies*⁵ onto his parents and brother (Especially onto his imprinter and this protégé, his brother).

Loki is a true survivor, a cunning figure, and an intelligent being who was easily broken by both evil (being left to die), and ignorance (Asgardians are more prone to use the brute force and instincts than use their intellects). If he had had a helping hand instead of a hammer and a lightning war on him, we would have had a sweeter Loki. Seen in this light, we find the real drama of Loki: a lack of real communication within the family and ostracism from Asgardian society because he does not actually match the Asgardian stereotype of what a true Asgardian man should be. As a result, we have a broken God of Mischief doing the impossible to survive using his intelligence and seizing all opportunities offered to him.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projective_identification

IDENTITY ISSUES

Loki is raised up into Asgardian culture believing that Frost Giants are monsters. His heart is broken, and his mind is messed up when he discovers that he is not what he believed to be. He is not an Asgardian prince; he does not belong to the race he believed he did. So, this trauma, along with his complexes and self-esteem issues, tears him apart. Finding of his true origins starts a mental war about identity issues: is he the Asgardian prince or just a monster? His identity is completely erased in a blink of an eye, and suddenly there is no earth under his feet. He is in turmoil, and so is his identity.

Race issues arise with Loki's identity issues. Discovering that he belongs to the "monstrous race" of Frost Giants, makes him want to become the perfect Asgardian. He tries to erase all proof of his ancestry by eliminating the "monsters" believing that he will be free from the "monstrous trace" that he holds hidden within, hidden from Asgardian eyes. Since he did not know he was a frost giant, it came as a shock discovering he was one of them, not one of the kind he thought to be for so long. Denial is the first thing that comes into his mind. Plus, the banishment of his brother Thor to Midgard, and becoming King of Asgard, grant him all powers in the worst timing of all. He is just in the middle of an identity crisis, in the midst of a mental disarray, and denying his true origins. To kill the frost giants is to kill the image of

what he is in reality. Thus, reaffirming, within his mind, that he is a true Asgardian.

Though Loki is half acting on reason and half acting on emotion when his brother returns to Asgard to stop him completing his plans, Loki is shocked and starts only acting based on pure emotions. So that is why he fails. Emotions work in a cascade mode. An emotion tends to activate others and suppress other emotions. According to Minsky, emotions that have been activated will activate others and shut down others in its turn, creating a cascade effect. The further this process spreads, the further your mental state will change. If you add this to the fact that our minds can end up without memory resources, it is easy to see what's going on in Loki's mind. For example, when someone falls in love, that person does not see the defects in the beloved one. This happens because "infatuation" or "love" triggers some emotions into our minds, which will turn on and shut down other emotions all over our brains, creating a cascade effect. In turn, their capabilities of reasoning will be dependent on how many resources available they have to assess certain issues. (Minsky, 2006) Seen in this light, we can see that the emotion of feeling betrayed switched on other emotions like anger and hate while turning off other emotions like love and compassion. As these emotions, in turn, turned on and shut down other emotions, they let Loki with fewer resources to think things clearly.

In this mental state, he arrives at the conclusion that erasing all traces of his true origins will help him be worthy in Odin's eyes. He also thinks that it will make him a true Asgardian, acting in an even truer than real Asgardians act. Becoming more of something to show up you are not what you were is one defense mechanism that we have as human beings. We want to fit in the group, thus when you lack certain characteristics, or when you wish to hide something, you tend to act beyond what it is usually expected by a certain group. Let's think about how immigrants fit in our societies. Imagine a person from Colombia who wants to fit in, say, Barcelona (Spain.) In Barcelona people are bilingual: they speak both Spanish and Catalan. Locals are very proud of their Catalan language and Catalan culture, thus, the Colombian immigrant, to fit in, decides to learn and speak Catalan instead of Spanish. Moreover, he decides to learn all about local customs and tries to blend in, till it goes beyond what a local might do. Psychologically, he wants to fit in the welcoming group, the Catalans and seem less of a foreigner, a Colombian. Even though this can seem like an extreme behavior, it does happen, and it is not an alien thing for people to do. While some will keep in their roots, others will like to blend in as much as they can, even if that means going beyond what's expected.

This identity war within Loki explains, in part, his reactions and actions when confronting his family: at times he loves them, at times he hates them. This love-hate relationship towards his family is just the result of his

inner troubles and identity issues. He externalizes his inner war, his inner pain, to the outside world. Thus, engulfing his family in his inner war.

All these identity issues are what Thanos took advantage of when torturing Loki to crack him up into tiny little pieces and be sure to make a puppet of him. However, Loki is a very resourceful character and ended up tricking Thanos and the Chitauri. Alternatively, so it seems from what we've seen in *the Avengers*. We will need to wait till *Thor Ragnarök* to see if the trickster was able to lie and then took advantage of the situation in *Thor the Dark World* and seized the throne. Or if indeed he was broken and an alliance was made between the mad Titan and Loki.

LOKI IN THE COMICS

Loki's personality has not been always exactly the same. He has changed along with times since his first appearance in the comics in 1949. He has been tricky, treacherous, disloyal, dirty, delusional, highly psychopathic, and pretty evil. However, this old Loki, which is hard to kill, has left some room to the new Loki, one shaped in the looks of Tom Hiddleston, more mischievous and sexier than ever before. After being reborn, and have some adventures as a good kid, a new young self takes possession of Kid Loki's body, killing the sweet young personality. However, the new Loki, who is

presented later on as a young man, is regretting this actions and willing to *clean* his bad résumé.

The Old Loki of the comics is volatile, mischievous and a true villain. He has even stolen the body of Sif and even travels back in time to make sure Bor, father of Odin and first king of Asgard, died in battle against the Frost Giants. He goes lengths to make his plans work, using people as he pleases. Moreover, his looks reflect his evil nature all over, being able to appreciate his villainous status both on the depiction of his face and the gestures and postures he is given on the paper. However, in *Loki: Agent of Asgard* we can see a young man who looks very much like Tom Hiddleston. He is a sweet sexy man, who has a long past through the Old Loki, but who does not relate to it completely, giving him the opportunity to start anew. We are offered sexy glimpses of the character in the shower in the first comic, along with some winks to the geek community. He appears to play video games when talking with the All-Mothers of Asgardia, the character who sets him into different quests to erase all his previous crimes. Innocence and openness can be seen in the face, behavior and gestures of this Young Loki. He is a portrayal of Loki in *Thor*, the first movie with the short hair, almost innocent face, troubled and yet sexy and tricky.

As *Loki Agent of Asgard* advances, we can see the Old Loki and the Young Loki fighting for a future that Old Loki wants to happen. However, instead of being able to make Young Loki's personality fade away, this Young Loki

transforms himself into the God of Stories, trying to survive and not becoming like the old version of himself. Again, we can see a war of personalities unfolding in the comics, where an old and new struggle to make their future the one happening.

Old Loki's appearance and personality were less appealing for a feminine audience. He was more a true villain than the figure the movies portray. Despite his complicated nature, the old Loki had not appealing enough as to enchant thousands. However, this Young Loki has the potential to attract part of the non-comics readers who love Loki in the movies but have not had any contact with Loki in the comics. This is a good move from Marvel to enlarge their feminine audience, which is what seems to be happening. When I posted some pictures about the new Loki in *lokisarmy.org* page in Facebook⁶, lots of female followers confessed that they were reading the comics for the first time. It was just because the Young Loki from *Loki Agent of Asgard* resembled Tom Hiddleston. They had entered the comic fandom as well because the Young Loki seemed appealing enough to start a new hobby: reading comics.

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/lokisarmyorg>

THE TRICKSTER FROM MYTHOLOGY

Loki in Norse Mythology is an ambiguous figure. Sometimes he is depicted as a promiscuous trickster who violates all social restrictions and smashes all taboos. In few instances, however, he is depicted as a hero. In mythology, a trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox. (Hyde, 1998⁷ in patheos.com) As such, Loki embodies ambiguity in his actions and in his persona. He belongs into the middle lines of existence. He is not entirely a Jotun Giant nor a God from Asgard. He accesses to his status as a God thanks to a blood contract with Odin.

From ambiguity and challenging society rules, comes creativity, and from here it comes cultural advances. Loki brings uncertainty, and with it the possibility to escape cultural conventions. He does not bring any calm to the world, but chaos, and with it, creativity and endless possibilities.

In Norse Mythology Loki is a gender fluid being who is highly promiscuous and who challenges all taboos within Norse society. He takes the shape of a mare to mate a stallion and gives birth to Sleipnir, an eight-legged horse who will become the horse of Odin. He did not do this

⁷ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/pantheon/2010/the-demonization-of-loki-part-ii/>

because of love, however, but because the Aesir needed to trick the giant who was building the walls of Asgard. In making the animal mate Loki, the giant was unable to fulfill the contract with the Gods, and thus, they did not need to pay what they agreed⁸. So, here, society needs the trickster to crash the boundaries of taboo to accomplish something.

But Loki did not only take the shape of a mare, he also took the shape of an old woman (after the death of Baldr), a milkmaid and also bore children (Lokasenna), and even a fish. In Norse culture, when men used women's clothes or did the work of women they were regarded as feminine and even cowards, since that was the stereotype applied to them⁹. When Loki took female shape, he was socially unmanly. This fact also made him a limits-breaker. Not only he smashed taboos, but he also pushed the limits of what was considered normal within society. In other words, he changed it.

As a figure of ambiguity, he lived in the middle of life and death. Though he is not a God of death per se, he does have children related to it: Hela is the mistress of Hel. Not only that, he is also the one who brings Ragnarök onto Asgard, and with it destruction. Because of being in between worlds he is always an outsider,

⁸ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/pantheon/2010/the-demonization-of-loki-part-ii/>

⁹ *ibid* footnote 8

someone who is not afraid of stating the truth in front of the Gods, even if that will bring him directly to punishment. As an outsider, Loki becomes the perfect archetype for all those members in society who are ostracized for many reasons. These see in Loki the open door to endless possibilities and creativity that might give them a new status within a new society.

Loki also translates himself and the circumstances to others. Translating means changing something into something else, changing the view or the thing, thus creating something new. Since translation also is something that can be regarded as ambiguous and in the middle, it helps expand boundaries as well¹⁰.

Thus, we can easily see that the Loki from Norse Mythology is more than a simple trickster, an outsider, or a promiscuous figure. He sparks creativity and change in a world that can easily become stagnant with silly rules and mindless tradition.

¹⁰ *ibid* footnote 8

A MODERN MYTH: THE GEEK & THE JOCK

WHAT IS A MYTH?

Societies in different ages have expressed their beliefs, cultural values and fears through myths and legends. A myth is a statement that a society makes about itself, the place its men and women take in the Universe, and how they interpret and think about it. In this light, myths are sacred stories that express fundamental cultural values for that society in particular. Myths might offer a window for hope in gruesome times or might warn us about the evils hidden within certain behaviors. Myths can be funny, dramatic, plenty of adventures, or just a mirror to give us some lessons¹¹.

Myths can take various forms: poetry, narrative, and most recently they have appeared in the shape of comics and movies. Comics and movies are art expressions that reflect all kind of emotions from the society that creates them. Art is nothing but the expressive culture of society, and within it, we can find myths and legends, fears and hopes, and of course, stereotypes. Through art and myth,

¹¹ Middleton, J. Introduction. In *Myth and Cosmos: Readings in Mythology and Symbolism*, ed. John Middleton,. Garden City, NY: Natural History Press 1967, (pp. ix–xi.) In Phillip Kottak, Conrad. *Antropología Cultural. Espejo para la Humanidad*. (Ed. en Español), Mc.Graw Hill 2007, (p. 240).

society explains which are the models of beauty, behavior, sex roles, good and evil.

Myths are deeply rooted in beliefs, and this in turn, are also rooted in religion. Societies will express their views on religion through myths as well. People tend to behave in a certain special way when confronted or in front of what they consider part of the myth, and this, in turn, will provoke a certain set of feelings onto them. In this light, myths are also the bearers or the origins of certain rites.

However, there is a greater role of myths within society: they are the messengers who bring culture to members of society, and the agents that keep or change tradition. In this sense, the power of myth, whether its roots are totally metaphorical or based on reality, is greater than one might think at first sight.

In our present day, popular culture is plenty of myths, especially in the shape of comics and other media. Disguised as simple stories, or fairy tales for kids and adults to escape for a while the routine in their daily lives, they hide more than flashy colors and heavily stereotyped characters. Media designs pop culture “myths” for mass

consumption, and this means that will normally express the tastes of the vast majority of the public¹².

According to Nye, we can trace the origins of popular culture in the Western World to the industrial-democratic revolution of the eighteenth century. (Nye in Silverblatt, 2008) However, in countries like Japan, we can trace back popular culture to the Edo Period. At that time, we can find the Kabuki fans and its fan clubs, both in Tokyo and Osaka, where there were booming entertaining areas and industries. Like blooming Kabuki in the seventeenth century, popular culture nowadays is loved and despised at the same time. With the emergence of the middle class in the Western world, a new market for popular art was created, and with it, its heroes and villains. The elite and folk tales could not accommodate what the mass audience was craving for: their own mythology.

Myths are *cultural myths*, and as such they express a society belief system. However, these beliefs do not need to be true. They can be just what we want to be true. What's more, the audience will only buy the cultural myths that are most connected with it. So, as culture changes, so its myths, and in turn, media will reflect those

¹² Russel, B. Nye, "Notes on a Rationale for Popular Culture", A Popular Culture Reader. Edited by Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weiser, and John L. Wright. Bowling Green University Popular Press 1978. In Silverblatt, Art, Media Literacy. Keys to Interpreting Media Messages, 3rd Edition. Praeger, 2008.

changes and present to the audience the changes within a culture, society and the myths themselves.

Media also reflects cultural attitudes toward certain groups through stories and myths. But not only that: media can also change cultural attitudes, beliefs, and myths; or can also reinforce them while promoting the dominant set of views of the culture: ideology. This fact also provokes a tendency for heavy *stereotyping*. Stereotypes are extremely simple depictions of people, groups of people or events. (Silverblatt, 2008) Stereotypes are useful tools of associating ideas, and easing the process of sharing them. However, they can lead easily to prejudice. In exaggerating the traits to make them identifiable so that we can share the information in an easy way, we are also creating the basis for the appearance of adverse effects. When prejudices prevail, we create marginalized separated groups we later blame things on, which usually have nothing to do with them.

WHAT ARE A GEEK, A NERD, AND A JOCK?

The words geek; nerd and jock define different types of people. They are usually presented by American media having certain characteristics, which have, of course, changed through time. These three categories are interconnected, and two of them, geek and nerd, can be thought as synonyms -but they are obviously not. Though the notions of geek and nerd have been exported with more or less success around the world, what you (...)



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