

Märtha and Durek Cash In on Their Wedding

By Bruce Bawer

A couple of years ago I [wrote](#) here about a couple whom I described as Norway's answer to Britain's Harry and Meghan, although it now occurs to me that the royal half of the couple in question might also be compared to the late Princess Margaret.



Princess Märtha Louise of Norway & Shaman Durek on the Tamron Hall Show (Tamron Hall Show/Youtube)

Margaret, it will be remembered, was Queen Elizabeth's younger sister, the

Goofus to her Gallant, the Naughty Girl to her Goody Two-Shoes. While Liz was devoutly devoted to her duties as sovereign, virtually never getting a step wrong, Margaret was a notorious playgirl.

Years after she was prevented by an eighteenth-century law from marrying the divorced man with whom she'd fallen in love, RAF Captain Peter Townsend, she wed a celebrity photographer, Antony Armstrong-Jones, whom she later divorced.

Before, during, and after that marriage, she kept up, shall we

say, a busy social life; her many liaisons, not a few of them with international celebrities, were eagerly reported by the tabloids and gossip rags.

Norway's answer to Margaret isn't promiscuous, so far as I know, but her private life has also been the subject of hysterical tabloid and gossip-rag headlines in her native country.

As I noted in my earlier article, Märtha Louise, the 52-year-old daughter of King Harald V and lone sibling of Crown Prince Haakon, was married for fifteen years to Ari Behn, a famously unimpressive novelist and archetypal beta-male man-about-town who consorted regularly with C-level Norwegian celebrities and, sadly, ended up killing himself on Christmas Day 2019, two years after divorcing Märtha Louise. (READ MORE from Bruce Bawer: [Remembering the Enchanting Alain Delon](#))

Soon afterwards, it began to be reported that Märtha Louise had a new *amour* who, like Behn, was a shameless fame whore but who was otherwise, in many ways, his exact opposite: Durek Verrett, a big, bald, black shaman from Los Angeles who has admitted to being bisexual and who is looked up to as something of a guru to a number of ditzy Hollywood stars, among them Gwyneth Paltrow.

Now 49, Durek is also the author of a self-help book, *Spirit Hacking: Shamanic Keys to Reclaim Your Personal Power, Transform Yourself, and Light Up the World*, in which he explains that at age fourteen he was visited by a wizard who "flew right through him and burned a hole in his body," whereupon "an army of angels" appeared. And that's just the beginning of his most remarkable life journey.

Later in his teens, in connection with a home break-in and subsequent fire, he spent a year in prison, another year in a youth detention center, and some time in solitary confinement. If you read Verrett's book, you'll learn that cancer is caused

by the patient's wish to die, but that it can be cured by – who else? – none other than Verrett himself. Hear that, Sloan Kettering? Time to close your doors.

Two years ago, Märtha Louise and Verrett got engaged. For a while they shacked up together in L.A.; now they're apparently living in Norway with her three daughters by Ari Behn. ("Living in Norway has unlocked a new level of bliss, darlings!," [gushed](#) the ever-effervescent Durek online.)

How could the princess fall for such an obvious shakedown artist, such a transparent fourflusher, such a classic example of a southern California con man, whose *modus operandi* is preying brazenly on the rich, famous, and stupid?

Because, as it happens, Märtha Louise herself has long been operating very similar pseudo-spiritual scams.

From 2007 to 2018, for example, she ran an "alternative therapy center," known in the Norwegian press as the "angel school," her claim being that she could communicate with angels and with the dead, no less. Obviously, then, these two were made for each other. In fact they [profess](#) to have known each other in previous lives in ancient Egypt, which is nice.

On the occasion of their engagement, Verrett wrote on Instagram: "I'm overjoyed with tears that I get to spend the rest of my life with the most pure hearted, angelic, wise, powerhouse woman who represents all levels of a goddess in my eyes. Together as a soulful spiritual couple, we will use our power to support the people to create a world based in love and acceptance."

The wedding between these two spiritually enlightened beings – or, depending on your point of view, outrageously shady entrepreneurs – is scheduled for August 31. Recently, it was reported that the couple had sold the exclusive rights to photograph their wedding to the British celebrity magazine *Hello* and the exclusive TV rights to Netflix, which

has apparently assigned Rebecca Chaiklin, executive producer of such projects as *Tiger King* (2020), to the project. (READ MORE: [Elizabeth the Great](#))

[According](#) to *Hello*, the actual nuptials, which will take place in the village of Geiranger, on the shore of the Geiranger fjord, will be the centerpiece of a three-day “extravaganza” – including a meet-and-greet party in the quaint nearby city of Ålesund, a boat trip, a salsa party, and a wedding breakfast and reception.

The site of the wedding itself is a supremely picturesque location – something right out of a painting from the Norwegian romantic nationalist period (one is reminded of Hans Gude and Adolph Tidemann’s classic 1848 canvas *Bridal Procession on the Hardanger Fjord*) – and couldn’t be more different from L.A. *Hello* also [reports](#) that the couple have asked guests to forego the usual formal attire and instead dress in a “sexy and cool” fashion.

Nor have they been shy about monetizing their marriage. In order to safeguard their big hauls from *Hello* and Netflix, Märtha Louise og Durek’s representatives have [reportedly](#) exchanged unfriendly e-mails with the police in Møre og Romsdal (the county in which Geiranger is located), who have refused their demand that the airspace over the wedding site be closed for three days so that the Norwegian media would be unable to film the wedding using drones.

Iselin Nevstd Øvrelid, the communications director for the county police, has explained that the police have no power to deny the news media the right to film or photograph anything from the air.

The photo and TV rights to their wedding aren’t the only things that Märtha Louise and Durek have sold. They actually marketed their own “wedding gin” – until Vinmonopolet, the government-owned business that holds a monopoly on selling

alcoholic beverages in Norway, stopped sales of the product on the grounds that the couple's energetic promotion of it might violate Norway's law against advertising booze.

The authorities were also troubled by the label on the bottle, which featured the couple's "wedding monogram" and Märtha Louise's royal title. In July, after the label was changed, the wedding gin was [returned](#) to Vinmonopolet's shelves.

Then there's the letter that one of the couple's lawyers sent to Durek's 81-year-old mother, threatening her with a multimillion-dollar defamation lawsuit if she didn't take back certain things she'd said about her son in a TV interview. She's not the first person to have gotten a letter from the same lawyer for speaking out publicly about Märtha Louise and Durek.

What do Norwegians make of all this? Let's just say that most of them, at least those who live outside of the sexier and cooler precincts of downtown Oslo, aren't terribly thrilled. Märtha Louise [blames](#) negative public attitudes on racism and complains of "microaggressions." (Obviously she learned a lot during her time in L.A.)

In any event, by now, Norwegians should be accustomed to royal scandals. A couple of decades ago, many of them were shocked when the rather nerdy Crown Prince Haakon announced his engagement to the stunning, leggy Mette-Marit Tjessem Høiby, who in a bizarre speech to the Norwegian public admitted to having been something of a floozy. (As she put it, she had led a "wild" life prior to her betrothal. Haakon was not asked to make any official statement about his own sexual past.)

Well, as they say in Norway, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Earlier this month, Marius Borg Høiby, the strikingly handsome but otherwise unimpressive son, now 27, whom Mette-Marit had with one of her many premarital bedmates and who's been treated since childhood as a sort of auxiliary

member of the royal family, made [headlines](#) when a woman, identified as his girlfriend, called the cops on him for attacking her physically.

Marius (a former car mechanic who, it emerged this week, carries a diplomatic passport), has admitted guilt and apologized publicly through his lawyers, maintaining that he has “several mental disorders” and longtime problems with “substance abuse.”

Oh well. Every family has problems, right? Still, it seems to me that the only surprise in all of this is that there isn't a sizable movement in Norway to exchange this mediocre mess of a monarchy for a republic. Or something. Anything.

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