

# The Millennium Trilogy

The Millennium Trilogy consists of three contemporary-fiction books written by Stieg Larsson. They are "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo", "The Girl Who Played with Fire" & "The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest".

Make no mistake. This is one of the most important series of our era. It tackles head-on the social dilemmas facing us today. Stieg Larsson populates his narrative with iconic characters which will be dissected and disclosed in this review.

In the narrative "Millennium" refers to a small monthly magazine of investigative journalism that specializes in publishing scandalous misbehaviors. "Millennium" may also signify when the narrative takes place—the first decade of the 21st-century or at the dawn of the 2nd-millennium.

Mikael Blomkvist is the publisher and ace reporter of Millennium. He works closely with Erica Berger, the editor in chief of the magazine. Unsurprisingly, the author employs a straightforward journalistic style for his narrative. He doesn't embellish, pull punches or shower readers with moral platitudes. Blomkvist comes off as a very attractive hunk for women, not because he's superwealthy or superhandsome, but because he doesn't attempt to dominate his sex partners. It's a recurrent theme throughout the narrative: giving women their due. Some would call it feminism.

Berger is married to a famous painter, but she often finds herself in Blomkvist's bed. She does so with the blessing of her husband. It's a matter of informal trust and friendship as opposed to the expected normal.

The lead character and crown jewel of "Millennium" is Lisbeth Salander. Lisbeth has Asperger Syndrome, a form of autism that can boost intelligence and impart a photographic memory. But it makes the recipient somewhat introverted and socially inept. Lisbeth's condition is aggravated, for she has grown up in a dysfunctional family where her

absentee father hangs around only occasionally. When he does, he abuses Lisbeth's mother. His criminal behavior is never reported to the police or social agencies. When Lisbeth is 12-years-old, she fights back to protect her mother. For this drastic action, the authorities lock Lisbeth inside a mental institution.

She's thin-boned, less than five-feet tall. Though in her mid-twenties, she's often mistaken for a prepubescent teenager. What's more, Lisbeth has never completed elementary school. Her official file describes a troubled young woman who refuses to speak to social workers, police officers and especially psychiatrists. To top it off, Lisbeth has few social skills. She dresses like a Goth gypsy with plenty of piercings and tattoos. It's easy to see why most folks take her for a retarded nincompoop unable to hold a skilled job.

After her release from the loony bin, the courts give her a Guardian since Lisbeth has been judged incapable of living on her own. Here, she lucks out and draws an old-school advocate by the name of Palmgren. He has the wisdom to leave Lisbeth more or less alone. Later, he contacts an old friend, Armansky, the CEO of Milton Security. Armansky agrees to hire Lisbeth on a trial basis. She's supposed to run errands from the copy machine and coffee machine. But Armansky discovers she can do the best and most thorough background checks. He doesn't have a clue how she manages such impeccable research.

In truth, Lisbeth is a world-class hacker with incredible digital skills.

Please note: A majority of the narrative takes place in Sweden, which is one of the finest social democracies in the world. The author presents Lisbeth as someone who has fallen through pinholes in the social-safety net, who has been misjudged and miscast by a supposedly fair-minded bureaucracy.

The author uses Lisbeth as the symbolic antithesis to our so-called civilized society. She's ignored by everyone who matters, so Lisbeth moves in a cloud of anonymity. She enjoys sex with men and/or women but shows little interest in child bearing. She's a mid-21st-century urbanite dropped on the status quo like an alien from outer space.

Having gotten a raw deal by the do-gooders, she's forced to rely on her own resources.

Blomkvist has already satirized financial reporters who lavish too much praise on greedy corporations. As the first book opens, he goes after Wennerström, a huge and nebulous multinational corporation. Blomkvist collects enough info to catch the corporation at illegal activities. But he has been suckered into publishing libelous allegations. He knows Wennerström is engaged in dirty tricks, but he can't prove it, so he loses the court case. He must pay a fine and do a month of jail time. Worse, the "crusading" reputation of Millennium has lost its credibility.

Blomkvist is forced to take a sabbatical to save the magazine. An aging industrialist hires him to reinvestigate an unsolved murder.

Meanwhile Palmgren has a stroke, is hospitalized and lies in a coma. Lisbeth is assigned a new Guardian who's a rapist and sadistic pig. Lisbeth deals with him in her singular way and regains nominal control of her life.

During the course of the murder investigation, Blomkvist realizes he needs outside help. He asks Armansky if he can borrow his best researcher. Armansky lends him Lisbeth. Together they uncover a serial killer. Along the way, Lisbeth saves Blomkvist's life.

So far, I've summarized 25% of the narrative. I dare not say more for fear of spoiling the plot, which is just starting to heat up. Stieg Larsson holds no punches when he satirizes corporate finances and men who belittle women. He even manages to throw light on the way that developed nations savage refugees. Larsson dramatizes the dilemmas we face in the 2nd-decade of 21st-century. The drawback is that he misses the importance of Climate Change. But readers should forgive him, for his experience has occurred in Sweden, one of the most environmentally friendly nations on earth.

Read or reread the "Millennium" trilogy. You'll find it worthwhile.