

Pre-print papers

of

**THE 18TH INTERNATIONAL
SAGA CONFERENCE**

**SAGAS
AND THE CIRCUM-BALTIC
ARENA**

Helsinki and Tallinn, 7th–14th August 2022

Edited by

Frog, Joonas Ahola, Jesse Barber and Karolina Kouvola

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Preface

The International Saga Conference was founded in 1971 through an event in Edinburgh organized by Hermann Pálsson. The second event was organized two years later in Reykjavík, following which it was organized every third year in cities around the world: Oslo 1976, Munich 1979, Toulon 1982, Helsingør 1985, Spoleto 1988, Göteborg 1991, Akureyri 1994, Trondheim 1997, Sydney 2000, Bonn 2003, Durham & York 2006, Uppsala 2009, Aarhus 2012, Zürich & Basel 2015 and Reykjavík & Reykholt 2018. The 18th International Saga Conference: Sagas and the Circum-Baltic Arena was originally planned to be held in Helsinki and Tallinn in 2021, with full conference days on Monday and Tuesday in Finland and on Thursday and Friday in Estonia, moving participants by ferry surrounding excursions in both countries on Wednesday. The venues in two countries simultaneously highlighted the international nature of the conference and trans-Baltic mobility implicit in the theme of the event. When the global pandemic intervened, the possibility of holding the entire event online was considered. However, the symbolic significance of moving the entire conference physically across national borders was considered to great to forego if at all possible: this is the first Saga Conference that is “international” not only in terms of participants, but also venues. The event was therefore postponed until 2022. With each new wave of the pandemic came a resurgence of fear that the event might nevertheless need to transition to become a completely virtual environment. In early in 2022, it once again seemed that the pandemic would subside, and Russia invaded Ukraine, starting a war. This became a globally polarizing event over which nations around the world took sides. On this backdrop, the open international dialogue of the Saga Conference is more important than ever.

The 18th International Saga Conference is the first event in this series to be organized as completely hybrid. Organizing the event in this way was motivated by the uncertainty of the global situation. The overwhelming majority of participants are attending live, but the hybrid option has remained crucial for more than 10% to attend, for reasons ranging from health risks to the geopolitical situation. The longstanding and tedious pandemic fell into the shadow of Russia’s horrifying war on Ukraine, creating an atmosphere that it had largely passed. As a consequence, precautions waned and the large, live events in the early summer of 2022 became centers of infection, leaving many participants in quarantine in hotel rooms or carrying the virus home to their families. We have therefore returned to promoting participants to wear masks.

The first conference produced a volume of conference proceedings, published two years after the event, but the publication practice transitioned to the production of pre-print volumes, which enabled the circulation of papers before the event. The growth of the conference increased the size of the pre-print volumes, to the point that the last pre-print volumes included well over 1,000 pages of papers. Across the same period, institutions’ bibliometric evaluations devalued publications without peer-review. Many participants present papers that are on a track for a publication venue elsewhere, to which the pre-print seemed redundant. Conversely, Saga Conference pre-prints include many significant papers that have otherwise remained unpublished, and the pre-print has been the venue of many Old Norse scholars’ first publications, and thus important for their CVs. The pre-print publications were made open-access beginning from 2000, and now earlier volumes are all made available at Sagaconference.org, which means global accessibility. The Saga Conference in 2012 transitioned from the pre-prints to long abstracts. The present volume returns to the pre-print on a hybrid principle: submission of a full paper has been optional rather than required. The present volume thus includes full papers, extended summaries and short abstracts. This framework allows participants to have their work circulated in advance for discussion at the conference, while also allowing flexibility for those who do not have time to invest in writing up their paper well in advance or who prefer to reserve the paper’s text for a peer-reviewed publication.

This volume contains a rich and diverse variety of works and perspectives and we are pleased to make it available.

The vernacular scribe in medieval Iceland: On the transmission of texts in a living language vs. “relic texts”

Haraldur Bernharðsson, University of Iceland

Practically all surviving medieval Icelandic manuscripts are copies of still earlier manuscripts. This inevitably complicates their use as sources of linguistic evidence, as for any given manuscript text, the question is bound to arise to what extent it contains the language of the scribe and what can be attributed to an earlier exemplar. Whose language is transmitted in these manuscripts?

An examination of the manuscript transmission of texts such as *Njáls saga* through time suggests the vernacular scribe was an active participant in the textual transmission, reading and processing the text before recreating it by writing it down. The principal purpose of copying a text was to produce a text suitable for reading out loud to an audience or, in a sense, fit for “performing.” The medieval vernacular scribe was conscious of this; he participated in the performance by applying his “communicative competence,” essentially his active (or productive) linguistic skills, in adapting the text to the needs of the intended audience.

In a community where oral language held primacy over written language, the scribe was responsible for transmitting a “functional text” fit for reading out loud. Reproducing linguistic features that were not compatible with the language of the intended audience because they were obsolete or unfamiliar for some reason defeated the purpose and could perhaps be regarded as neglect of the scribe’s duty.

Passing a text on from one generation to the next through textual copying thus required the agency of the scribe, and linguistic deviation from an (old) exemplar was probably the norm. In this process, the scribe’s active (or productive) linguistic skills took precedence over his passive (or receptive) language skills, and only rarely did he reproduce linguistic features that were not consistent with his own language and that of the intended audience.

A different view emerged later, in Iceland probably not until the seventeenth century, where the text was regarded as an object or a relic of historical value rather than part of a living language. Under this view, the role of the scribe was quite different: the aim was more to produce an accurate copy of the exemplar.

This paper will address some of these issues relating to the linguistic aspect of the textual transmission of the sagas through time drawing on data from the manuscripts of *Njáls saga*.

Revisiting ‘Folkminnesforskning och filologi’

Stephen A. Mitchell, Harvard University

In the 1970s, with the Old Norse materials very much in mind, Dag Strömbäck lamented the reorientation of the study of folklore as he understood it, as a field, as he writes, with intellectual roots in philology, archaeology, the history of religion, and the study of literature, and ‘firmly moored to the Scandinavian philological discipline and the critical-historical method’, toward a more anthropological and culturally-contextualized discipline. My comments reconsider this question (and related antecedent debates, such as those in the 1920s between Finnur Jónsson and Carl von Sydow) in the light of the past 50 years or so of thinking within folkloristics, especially the emerging strategies and methodologies it has embraced (e.g., performance studies, memory studies) and their relevance to the study of the sagas.

Viewing the Vikings: An interdisciplinary challenge

Neil Price, University of Uppsala

Strictly speaking, the International Saga Conference is not, or not quite, a gathering of Viking specialists. However, all the disciplines listed in the meeting's subtitle of 'developing dialogues' nonetheless need to negotiate relationships with the diverse peoples of what is now Scandinavia, in the equally diverse period from approximately 750 to 1050 CE. Interdisciplinary collaboration is a goal that few scholars would openly question, but one which I think rather fewer constructively pursue; it also demands a clear-eyed understanding of the differences and points of connection between those academic paths. From the perspective of material culture studies, this keynote for the conference archaeology section will offer some relativistic meditations on where we are now in this context, addressing issues of research objectives, the questions we separately choose to ask, and how we choose to answer them. The tone and tenor of debate, and the consequences for us all (especially early career researchers), will also be discussed, set against the several senses in which the talk's title can be taken. How *do* we, or you, or I, view the Vikings?

Into the unknown: Contextualizing the *Finnar* of the sagas

Sirpa Aalto, University of Oulu / Hanken School of Economics, & Anna Wessman, University of Bergen

The title of our paper draws deliberately on the Disney movie *Frozen II* in which the song *Into the unknown* is presented. The movie, in spite of being presented in a fantasy world, makes use of Sámi culture and presents people, who live in the margins of the society in a far-off part of the land. In a similar vein the Old-Norse Icelandic sagas concentrate on the Norse (or Scandinavian, if you prefer) societies, and from time-to-time present characters from the margins, often called *Finnar*. We plunge into the unknown with the topic of our paper.

The *Finnar* of the sagas have been examined in various contexts: their ethnic background has been subject of research as well as their role in the saga literature. Mostly, the *Finnar* are associated with use of magic in the sagas. This paper sums up the latest archaeological information on the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages and problematizes written sources such as sagas mentioning the *Finnar* and *Finnland*. Even though the *Finnar* in the sagas mainly refer to Sámi people, some passages could refer to Finns. Could the contextualization of written sources and latest archaeological results bring new insights into this question?

***Finnar* in the saga passages**

The sagas which mention the *Finnar* – no matter to which saga genre category they belong – are from the 13th and 14th centuries. It is obvious that they should be interpreted first and foremost as products of their own time meaning that they reflect on the society in which they were written down, where the manuscripts were circulated, read and presented. The written sources, stemming from the Christian period, are of course biased. However, it should not be ruled out that these passages could bear traces of earlier, pre-medieval contacts between Scandinavians and *Finnar*. After all, these peoples had been living as neighbours for centuries. This can be proved, for instance, by some mentions in the Swedish runestones (Zilmer 2005: 139-140) and archaeological evidence. The question is: is it possible that some of the saga passages convey a picture of the *Finnar* that stems from real contacts that took place before writing down the sagas?

To begin with, the basic question has been who the *Finnar* in the sagas are. First of all, the question involves obviously the linguistic side: where the word derives from and what does it mean. Considering the limitations of this presentation, this research history will not be repeated, but it is sufficient to say that the word is an ethnonym given by Scandinavians to their neighbours, and that it could probably stem from a Germanic **fenna* meaning ‘a man’ (Kallio 1998: 617; Koivulehto 1995: 82–83; 1993: 400). This explanation is very plausible because in many cases the ethnonyms stem from words which mean ‘man’ or ‘people’.

As has been pointed out already in the earlier research (Aalto 2010), the *Finnar* in the sagas seem to refer usually to the Sámi people. This can be deduced, for instance, from saga passages that locate the stories to the area of Norway. Also, medieval Norwegian provincial laws which refer to the *Finnar*, must be interpreted to be Sámi people because it would not make sense that the Norwegians would have had Finns as their closest neighbours and who would have lived among them. Because the Old Norse-Icelandic sagas heavily rely on tradition that stems from Norway and the geographical view to the Scandinavian mainland comes from “the Atlantic side”, it means that lands beyond the Keel mountains are already rather distant. Knowledge concerning the lands east of them are vaguer which is apparent in saga literature.

However, in some cases there may raise a question whether the saga passages actually refer with the term *Finnar* to people living in the area of present-day Finland. This is, of course, interesting because the written evidence of people living in Finland in the early Middle Ages – not to mention the period before that – is scarce. This possibility, again, raises following questions:

- If the *Finnar* in some saga passages refer to the *Finnar* in Finland, who are they? As the archaeological and toponymical evidence show, present-day area of Finland was inhabited by people who spoke Finnish and Sámi languages. Traces of Sámi languages can be found all the way to the south of Finland. It is assumed that the speakers of Sámi in the south of Finland gradually assimilated to the speakers of Finnish.
- If the word *Finnar* is used both for Finns and Sámi people in the sagas, can we deduce that the speakers of Old Norse could not make a difference between them?

To explore this question further and to compare the written evidence with the archaeological, the selected, relevant saga passages should be mentioned. In addition to group name *Finnar*, we can find the place name *Finnland* on few occasions. Passages from *Heimskringla* (*Ynglinga saga*, *Óláfs saga helga*) in addition to *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggdist* will be examined here. The latter two are to be found in *Flateyjarbók* dating from the end of the 14th century, and *Heimskringla*, which was written by Snorri Sturluson, dates around 1235.

The fact that Scandinavians (or Norwegians at least) made a distinction between place names *Finnland* and *Finnmörk* itself is indicative that these places and possibly people living in them were acknowledged to differ from each other. However, we do not know whether this was known only by some authors or whether it was common knowledge. *Ynglinga saga*, which is the opening saga of *Heimskringla*, deals with the Kings of the Svear. *Finnland* in the context of this saga appears used in relation to the activities (battles, raiding) of kings centred in Uppsala. *Finnland* in this saga is not simply located relative to the kingdom of the Svear on the Baltic Sea, but indeed appears to be across the sea.

Ynglinga saga has two interesting passages concerning the *Finnar*. In the first one, Vanlandi, king of the Svear, is invited by Snær ['Snow'], apparently leader of the *Finnar*, to spend the winter in *Finnland* (*Heimskringla* I: 28–29). Vanlandi married Snær's daughter Drífa ['Snowdrift'], but he did not take her with him back to Uppsala and did not come back for her even if he had promised to do so. Drífa sent a witch called Huld and her son to Uppsala. Huld's task was to bring Vanlandi back to *Finnland* by magic or else to kill him. The result is that the spell cast by Huld makes Vanlandi eager to go to *Finnland*, but he is forbidden by his friends. In the end a *mara* (some kind of spirit and apparently part of Huld's spell, cf. Eng. nightmare) kills Vanlandi.

Another king of the Svear, King Agni, suffers a similar fate. He was mentioned as harrying in Finland, and where he forced Skjálf ['Shiver'], the daughter of another leader of the *Finnar*, Frosti, to come with him and marry him. Skjálf hatched a plot against Agni asking him to give a memorial celebration for her deceased father. During the party Agni became heavily intoxicated and he went to his tent. While he was sleeping, Skjálf came with a thick rope, tied it around Agni's necklace, and men loyal to Skjálf then hung Agni on a tree. After that Skjálf and her men escaped with a ship, presumably returning to *Finnland* across the sea. (*Heimskringla* I: 37–39.)

The account of *Ynglinga saga* as such does not provide proof that the *Finnar* of *Finnland* refer to Finnic linguistic-cultural groups. The *Finnar* of *Ynglinga saga* and elsewhere in saga literature are very similar to the *Finnar* in *Finnmörk*. They are described in the same ways. The Svear who were in contact both with the Finns and the Sámi doubtless perceived a difference between the groups but this information is not conceivable in the sagas written by Norse authors. However, even if the Svear could have made a difference between the speakers of Finnish and Sámi languages already before the Middle Ages, we do not have direct written evidence on this, but we are relying on later, medieval sources.

In *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla* we are told that, in his youth, the king was on a plundering expedition in the Baltic Sea. He plundered Eysýsla (Ösel) and after that it is said that he came to *Finnland*. The *Finnar* retreated into the woods, and they shot at Norwegians with arrows causing deaths to many of Ólaf's men. During the night they also conjured up a storm but nevertheless Ólaf and his crew were able to flee (*Heimskringla* II: 10–11)

The Heimskringla passage mentions two place names, Herdalar and Bálagarðssíða in a poem, which also refers to the inhabitants as *Finnlendingar*, not *Finnar*. Scholars have tried to identify these saga names with real place names but the task is impossible. The place names given in this case are very general, and it is a typical feature in saga literature that distant places are given names which are not necessarily geographically accurate (Schalin 2014). The toponym Bálagarðssíða is also mentioned in *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, but in that context the place name is mentioned to be located “á Sjólandi” (*Helgisaga*: 215). If we consider that the saga was of West Norse tradition, it is highly unlikely that the tradition would contain detailed information about a remote place in the distant east.

Fundinn Nóregr, also used as an opening section in *Orkneyinga saga* which is included in Flateyjarbók, gives an account that mentions that Porri was king of Kvenland and Finnland. The same text describes a sailing route including the reference to the ‘Sea of Åland’ which however is not inaccurate. *Hversu Nóregr byggðisk* is a redaction of the same text that mentions that Porri was king of “Gottlandi” as well as “Konlandi ok Finnlandi” but it lacks much of the topographic information of *Fundinn Nóregr* (Flateyjarbók I: 21). The passages in Flateyjarbók do not refer to the inhabitants of Kvenland/Könland and Finnland, but as such they convey understanding of the geographical knowledge of the lands beyond Norway.

The difference between Finns and the Sámi in the pre-medieval period can actually be traced to toponyms *Finnland* and *Finnmörk*. The components -land and -mark which have different meanings: land refers to an inhabited area whereas mark denotes wilderness, forest area or frontier area (Hansen & Olsen 2004: 80). It is possible that *Finnmörk* was a term for any area without fixed settlements where the Sámi lived or used resources (Mundal 1996: 102), and this area is adjacent to areas settled by Norwegians. The word could have originally been applied to any area beyond domains of settlements as wildernesses inhabited by the ‘other’ rather than referring to a single specific geographical location. Again, if “land” denoted an inhabited area, we could speculate that *Finnland* referred to south-western part of Finland as it did in the Middle Ages. It was inhabited by sedentary agriculturalists by the Viking Age. This would suggest that the “land” was perceived as settled by the *Finnar*. This remains, however, speculation without decisive proof, and is problematized by the fact that mobility between today’s Sweden and Finland across the Baltic Sea had been ongoing more or less continuously since the Stone Age: there is no reason to assume that the toponym *Finnland* is a term that first emerges in the Middle Ages.

To conclude: despite the marginal role that the *Finnar* have in the sagas, it is interesting that there are several names for (supposedly) Finno-Ugrian peoples given by Scandinavians in medieval sources (*Lappir*, *Semsveinar*, *Finnar*, *Finnlendingar*, *Kvænir*, *Kirjálar*, *Bjarmar*). These terms are indicative of a need to differentiate between these groups. It is safest to conclude that these ethnonyms reflect several cultures connected to the eastern trade route (Hansen 2020: 39-69; Korpela 2004: 56–60). The source value of medieval sagas and other written sources for the period before the Middle Ages is of course limited because the texts are clearly biased by Christianity. However, the need to differentiate different ethnic groups probably came up prior to the opening of the eastern trade route during the Viking Age, but as we lack written sources for this period, this cannot be demonstrated.

The *Finnar* as a group name bears connotations such as ‘other’ and ‘use(r) of magic’ which obviously during the Christian time was associated with heathenism and therefore it was something negative as such. Originally differences related to religious practices became meaningful for Scandinavians only after they themselves had converted to Christianity. Therefore, the saga passages written by Christian authors emphasise the religious difference of these people. They do not emphatically speak of their societies and imply only vaguely to day-to-day contacts such as trade with them.

Archaeology as a source of information

Archaeology is the study of both the ancient and recent human past through material remains. When it comes to the Finnish Iron Age it means a time without written sources. Therefore, the archaeologists have to rely only on the material remains. What do the material remains tell about the people who inhabited the areas of present time Finland? Although we need to be critical and not fall into oversimplifying interpretations, it's evident from the material culture during e.g. the Late Iron Age that it tells about long-distance contacts to many areas. Some geographical areas bear more evidence of this than others and when it comes to contacts with Scandinavia (and perhaps the Mälars area especially), Western Finland (Finland Proper, Satakunta, Tavastia and southern Ostrobothnia) show strong indications of this. Based on the archaeological find material, these areas were probably inhabited by communities who got their livelihood mainly from permanent agriculture and animal husbandry, although fishing and hunting furs must have been a vital part of the outcome as well.

However, some of the permanently settled areas, such as northern Satakunta, southern Ostrobothnia and northern Tavastia, were probably situated on the border region between the northern boreal forest and the agrarian regions in the south. But who lived on the other side of this area, often called the wilderness area (Taavitsainen 1999; 2004) and what kind of contacts did these groups have with each other? Previously these areas have been called *erämark*, which is a historical definition to an economy based on fur trade. But recent studies have been able to show that these outland areas, especially in the north, were indeed settled by people, thus contradicting previous interpretations of occasional archaeological traces in these areas deriving solely from hunting expeditions by populations living outside this area. This archaeological material contains not only datable stray finds (of copper-alloy) which have risen in numbers due to avocational metal-detecting, but also of excavated burials and of settlement sites (Kuusela 2014; Hakamäki 2018).

Although there have occurred both ethnic, social, and linguistic changes in Lapland already during the 4th-8th centuries AD (Aikio 2012), the Sámi have often been separated from the rest of the archaeological research. They are mentioned in the archaeological literature when it comes to cosmological and religious activities and when interpreting atypical burials (Amundsen 2017) but they are seldom included as an active population who would have interacted closely with the Norse communities during the Viking Age (e.g. Hansen & Olsen 2014: 2–4; Ojala 2014: 175). Moreover, naming ethnic identities and even discussing Sámi ethnicity in the past seems to be sensitive for many archaeologists (Kuusela 2014: 221; Spangen 2015). Yet, we know that the Sámi (or the mobile groups of the north, if we want to exclude ethnic terms) were a vital and integrated part of the Viking economic system through animal trapping (furs) and hunting of marine animals (e.g. walrus ivory, blubber), not forgetting fishing (Hennius et al. 2018; Gjerde & Bergstøl 2020).

Trading sites, networks and gift-exchange during the Viking Age

Looking from the archaeological evidence the communities living in the agrarian areas of southern and western Finland were clearly integrated in the long-distance contact networks of the Viking Age. Imports of European high-quality swords, Scandinavian, Baltic and Eastern copper alloy objects, glass beads and Arabic silver coins were brought to Finland through both trade and gift-exchange, which could be either political alliances and/or based on social relations. We know that regional variations were big during the Late Iron Age but there were areas where local small-scale middlemen could get their hands on luxurious products from both the east and the west (Raninen & Wessman 2014; Raninen & Wessman 2015).

This can be seen also outside the traditional agrarian settlements and the number of finds in the outland areas starts to rise during the Viking Age, which means that the contacts between the farmers and the mobile (Sámi) groups probably intensified (Kuusela et al. 2011; Kuusela 2014; Hakamäki 2018; see also Hennius 2021).

These imports indicate strong contacts between Western Finland on one hand, and the kingdoms in the Mälars area and Gotland on the other (Schauman-Lönnqvist 1999: 69-70; Callmer 2017: 137) but it also suggests that there were groups on the Finnish mainland who had access to high quantities of furs which could then be traded to the Scandinavian market. Yet, Viking Age marketplaces are rare in Finland. Kyrksundet on the isle of Hiittinen (Swe. Hitis) in the south-western archipelago is an example of a seasonally used marketplace. Amongst the excavated objects are western and eastern silver coins, Scandinavian dress ornaments and jewellery (Edgren 2005; Asplund 2008: 129–133). While Kyrksundet is situated in the archipelago there is another, probably an outland trading post, excavated quite recently in Pirkkala, close to Tampere. From here decorated antler and bone spoons and arrowheads have been found. There are also faunal refuse from fur-bearing animals, imported glass beads and a 10th century dirham, all suggesting long distance trade. Tursiannotko is therefore an important site for future studies in this area of research (Raninen 2017).

The influences this long-distance trade brought can be seen in the elements of the Finnish male dress which became similar to the Swedish and Baltic dress during the Viking Age. This goes for both the brooch types and the weapons (Thunmark-Nylén 2006; Raninen & Wessman 2014). The female dress ornaments, on the other hand, stayed regionally distinct. In Finland and on the island of Gotland, for example, the dress ornaments were unique for just that area (Gustin & Wessman 2021). Yet, the networks between Central Sweden and the Finnish areas of southern Ostrobothnia, Satakunta and Finland Proper were active already before the Viking Age (Callmer 2017: 137). Finnish-Baltic pottery and Finnish types of dress ornaments have been found in the famous Birka burials but also in the rest of the Mälaren region and vice versa Scandinavian objects found on the Åland Islands and in burials on the Western Finnish coast (Gustin 2015; Gustin 2016).

But there were far reaching trade networks also to the boreal forests in the east. Those roles, presumably connected to the lively fur trade, are reflected in prestigious imported Permian pendants, so called silver Glazov rings, and copper-alloy belt mounts in the material record (Roslund 2017: 170). Similar activities have been documented also from the Scandinavian inland regions during the Middle Iron Age, where raw materials and other resources were sought also beyond the agrarian regions (Hennius 2021). This has led to assumptions that at least some people from Finland acted as middlemen between the fur hunters and the Svear, which also made them attractive partners in the evolving trade networks (e.g. Schauman-Lönnqvist 1999: 69; Callmer 2017; Gustin & Wessman 2021).

Such areas could for example be Tursiannotko as already mentioned but also two famous burials come to mind. The boat burials of Pukkila in Isokyrö and Kaavontönkkä in Vähäkyrö, both in southern Ostrobothnia, are excellent examples of the far-reaching trade networks between the east and the west. Boat burials as such are often associated with a Scandinavian elite. Famous examples in Central Sweden are Vendel and Valsgärde (Hackman 1938). There are similarities both in the burial custom and in the grave goods which consists of high-rank weapons and other imported items, bear claws from pelts, northern types of arrowheads, Permian mounts etc. The location of these burials, often along important communicative routes (such as e.g. the Kyrö River) could indicate a wish to demonstrate power in a specific area and perhaps even a means to control important land or water routes (Wessman et al. in prep.). This has been demonstrated also elsewhere in Finland (Kuusela et al. 2016) and in Sweden (Hennius 2021), especially in these border zones between the core settlements and the outlands.

Another distinctive development in the southern Ostrobothnian region during this time period is the emergence of a unique type of water burials in both Levänluhta in Isokyrö and Kälämäki in Vörå. Both sites are situated peripheral to the settlement areas. Levänluhta, which is contemporary with the Pukkila burial, however, reflects a different burial ritual although within the same geographical area and time period. Moreover, Levänluhta (AD 350-800) has been suggested to be a non-normative burial for only certain types of deceased members of the

community (Wessman 2009; Wessman et al 2018). It might mean that the people buried in Levänluhta and Pukkila were neighbouring communities, perhaps of a different ethnic descent, which is suggested by the aDNA studies performed on some of the Levänluhta individuals and with a result resembling those of modern Sámi descent. (Wessman et al. 2018; Sikora et al. 2019; Wessman et al. in prep.) Also, the stable isotopic analysis from the site shows a broad distribution in the deceased's dietary habits indicating that different groups were indeed living in the area, all with distinct and versatile livelihoods (Oinonen et al. 2020).

Combining the information

How to combine the information from the medieval saga sources concerning the *Finnar* and archaeological data from Finland? It must be stated first that none of the saga passages gives us definite reference to the present-day area of Finland and its people, although in some cases – such as the passage in *Ólafs saga helga* – gives us fairly convincing grounds to believe that this is the case. Generally, the saga passages act as evidence that the contacts between the *Finnar* and the Scandinavians existed, and that they were perceivable still to Icelanders/Norwegians who wrote down the sagas after the Viking Age. The sagas bear traces of old stories (*topoi*) connected to the *Finnar* which makes it relevant to examine also the possibility to look at the saga evidence against the archaeological finds from Finland. Obviously, the contacts between the Scandinavians and the *Finnar* were not confined exclusively to the northern parts of Fennoscandia.

The contacts described in the sagas tend to focus on marriages between Scandinavian men and *Finnkonur*, trade with the *Finnar* and their heathenism, i.e., their religious deviation from Christianity and many times reluctance to convert. Interestingly, the *topos* of trade between Scandinavians and *Finnar*, resonates with the archaeological finds. Men living in the western part of Finland were using dresses, brooches and weapons of Scandinavian style. Finnish-Baltic pottery has been found in the Mälär region which has raised questions whether they were perhaps made by women who had moved from these areas across the sea as part of inter-regional marriages. Regarding this, the other saga *topos* – that of a marriage between a Scandinavian king and a *finnkona* – could reflect some real-life practises even if the saga passages themselves hardly describe any historical event in this case.

As has been pointed out, the sagas do not differentiate between the “Sámi” and the “Finns” who could have been regarded as one group at least for those Scandinavians who were not in close contact with them. When examining the Viking Age Finnish settlements, this is not surprising. The aDNA analyses from Levänluhta water burials show that the forefathers of the Sámi people were living in Southern Ostrobothnia around the time when the Viking Age began. They were living in close connection to the people who culturally resembled Scandinavians. This could be seen to reflect that the people and cultures in Finland were not as homogenous as has been presented: different local communities lived side by side and we can expect that the boundaries between the groups were diffuse. As it seems, some people acted as middlemen between the fur hunters and the Svear who bought the furs. Ethnic labels are in this context impossible to use, and not even necessary because the ethnicity was probably secondary to these people.

Concluding remarks

Looking back to the past with no written sources is a dive into the unknown. Finding the connection between medieval saga literature and archaeological evidence dated to the Viking Age or even prior to it, is a challenge. The point in this short presentation has been that if we want to investigate whether the sagas ever refer to people living in the area of present-day Finland, we have to look at the archaeological data. Especially the latest and upcoming aDNA analyses increase our knowledge about the populations in Viking Age Finland and their heterogeneity. It could partly explain why the *Finnar* in the sagas are an undifferentiated population in the eyes of their Scandinavian neighbours because the boundaries between these

two groups were diffuse. Obviously, the biggest reason for the descriptions could be the geographical and temporal distance between the saga authors and the depicted events. However, the seed of truth could be found in some of the *topoi* confirming what we already know with the help of archaeological finds: the contacts between the *Finnar* and their Scandinavian neighbours were lively in the vast area of Fennoscandia and that *Finnar* were an integral part of the Viking Age trade network.

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Religious lives away from home in the Viking Age: Animal sacrifice

Lesley Abrams, University of Oxford / University of Cambridge

Animal sacrifice is well attested as an aspect of religious practice in Viking-Age Scandinavia. According to later copies of his observations, when the Arab traveller Ibn Jaqub Al Tartushi visited the Danish town of Hedeby in the 960s, he saw preparations for a religious festival, where animals were killed and their body-parts hung from poles as sacrificial offerings; people then ate and drank “to honour their gods” (Lunde & Stone 2012: 163). At Frösö in Jämtland, central Sweden, excavations under the church floor uncovered the severed heads of bears, elk, deer, cattle, goats/sheep, and pigs around the stem of a large birch tree, along with complete carcasses of bears, reindeer and squirrel bones, and horses’ and dogs’ teeth (Price 2002: 61). At Hofstaðir, Iceland, a large assemblage of bulls’ skulls indicated an annual rite of ‘bloody slaughter’ involving decapitation and the display of heads (Lucas & McGovern 2007). Sagas describe many animal sacrifices, chapter 14 of *Hákonar saga góða* (The Saga of Hákon the Good) being one of the most vivid accounts: at a feast in the Trondelag region of Norway, “all kinds of domestic animals were slaughtered there, including horses”; their blood was collected in bowls and sprinkled over the buildings and participants, and the meat was boiled and consumed, along with quantities of alcohol (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941-1951, I: 167-168; Finlay & Faulkes 2011, I: 98-99). Similar practices are attested across the Scandinavian diaspora. In Normandy in the early tenth century, the archbishop of Rouen complained that vikings on the River Seine were eating food sacrificed to their gods (Guillot 1981: 110). On an island at the mouth of the Volga a group of Rus traders sacrificed chickens and cast lots to decide whether to eat them (Moravcsik & Jenkins 1967: 61).

My research focuses on vikings and other Scandinavians who made careers for themselves or settled overseas, away from the homelands. There is no consensus on the question of their religious identity: they were committed pagans, as the archetype of the Óðin-worshipping warrior would have it; they were independent-minded sceptics, for which there are also many literary models; or they were from the outset well on the way to being Christian. More often than not, we choose an option on this spectrum of opinion that most suits our world view of the Viking Age, and we leave it at that. But I would like to argue that the subject can be addressed more productively, especially when you zoom in on the detail. Written sources offering evidence on this subject are admittedly scarce, but occasionally historical records do provide glimpses of religious practice, and, unlike sagas, they can offer a contemporary view. The subjects of religious identity and religious practice are complicated by the vast geographical and chronological range of activity of Viking-Age Scandinavians overseas: if you extrapolate from a detail about one group at one time (or in one place) and apply it elsewhere, you risk creating a picture that misrepresents. Material evidence, on the other hand, has the advantage of being literally situated in a physically and chronologically specific context – and it is more plentiful. As part of a wider project that I am pursuing (see, for example, Abrams, forthcoming), my paper at the Saga Conference will present some of this material evidence, zeroing in on one period, the ninth century, and one region, Britain and Ireland.

Britain and Ireland came to be settled by a fair number of Norse-speaking migrants, but before then, in the ninth century, annalists recorded something different: predatory and fast-moving viking groups (generally referred to for convenience as ‘armies’) that appeared to have no intention of settling and moved from place to place in campaigns that lasted many years. A steady increase in evidence from metal-detecting and more focussed investigations at several sites of temporary camps has recently thrown light on these previously almost invisible groups, adding information and nuance and contributing to a better understanding of viking life on the road (Russell & Hurley 2014; Williams 2020; Hadley & Richards 2021; Jarman 2021). My paper for the conference will begin by raising some general questions about this nomadic existence: how practicable was it to take your religious practice with you on the road? How could religious

behaviour be adapted in the absence of the ancient landscape of cult sites and burials that sustained its practice at home? I will then focus on a single aspect, animal sacrifice, and present evidence from ninth-century Britain and Ireland. Within a framework of theoretical perspectives drawn from different contexts that help to probe purpose and meaning, I will discuss the evidence for butchery, species selection, and deposition practices (whole or jointed body parts; uncooked, cooked, or burnt) to argue that the ritual killing of animals played a role in the religious lives of Viking-Age armies on the move.

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Otherness and similarity of *Glæsivellir*: Rhetorical and intertextual implications

Virginie Adam, Sorbonne Université

Fornaldasögur and *riddarasögur* often deal with their heroes' travels throughout the world and mention many area, the exact localisation of which remains vague. When it comes to the *austvegr*, which refers to the Baltic area and Russia beyond, readers expect to hear about countries at the edge of the known world, such as *Finnmark*, *Bjarmaland* and so on. One of these territories is called *Glæsivellir* and is famous for its long-lived king, Guðmundr, and the many wonders that can be seen there. Ten extant manuscripts from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries contain narratives which set the heroes' adventures in this place. The sagas are *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, *Nornagests þáttur*, *Helga þáttur Þórissonar*, *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagn*, *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* and *Samsons saga fagra*.

In this presentation, I will focus on the rhetorical and narrative status of this place. As a magical country, this realm can be thought of as one of these marginal spaces challenging the social order and swarming with paranormal activity. However, it shares many features with Scandinavian realms, such as geopolitical concerns and so on. Narratively speaking, these features have an impact on the main story line of the sagas. Contrary to other spaces which are merely explored and raided, all the sagas will present *Glæsivellir* as a place to interact with, where inhabitants from both sides can go through the border. In this paper, I will discuss the liminal status of this strange realm and focus on the three elements which are crossing its borders according to the narratives: protagonists, women raised in *Glæsivellir* and magical items. I will also study intertextual effects entailed by this specific position within Scandinavian imagined geography.

Writing classical antiquity in mediæval Iceland: The interpolations of *Trójumanna saga*

Malo Adeux, Université de Bretagne Occidentale (UBO)

Trójumanna saga is the Norse-Icelandic translation of Dares the Phrygian's *De Excidio Troiae*. This text, presenting itself as a testimony of the Trojan war but allegedly written between the 6th and the 8th century AD, met a great success across north-western Europe, being immensely copied and translated in many languages. It was also associated with other historiographical texts, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Bretons* (*De Gestis Britonum* or *Historia regum Britannie*), and seemed to be considered part of a larger textual ensemble. In Iceland, *Trójumanna saga* has two redactions, a proof of the success of Dares in this area: the first, "alpha", is a closer rendering of the Latin text, while the latter, "beta", contains more modifications and interpolations. All texts from both redactions are found in manuscripts together with *Breta sögur*, the translation of Monmouth's text.

In this paper, I will focus on interpolations in the "beta" redaction, which is represented by three manuscripts, Ormsbók (only conserved in post-mediæval copies), AM 573 4to and AM 544 4to (Hauksbók). The different manuscripts of this version have already been studied, mostly by Stefanie Würth-Gropper, but she focused rather on their meaning and aim, distinguishing between the texts that were meant to entertain and those that were meant to educate. The role she gave to the interpolations, mostly found in the two first mentioned manuscripts, is mainly used for her demonstration, which strengthens her argument. I will focus specifically on the most important of these interpolations, transcribed in pages 108 to 175 of the edition of Jonna-Louis Jensen (1963). This interpolation, narrating mainly the fate of Hector's descendants, has nothing to do with the text of Dares. I will focus here on the possible sources of this interpolation and on the way it appears in the different manuscripts, thus attempting to give a more precise picture of how the Trojan war and other events from Antiquity were perceived in Iceland at that time. I will take this opportunity to offer comparisons with other vernacular translations of Dares, like the Welsh *Ystoria Daret* and the French "Troie" section from the *Estoires Rogier*.

From Circum-Baltic brothers to Atlantic antagonists: Orcadian and Norwegian agendas in the *Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum* origin tradition

Ben Allport, University of Bergen

The texts *Fundinn Noregr* (FN) and *Hversu Noregr byggðist* (HNB) relate a tradition for Norwegian and Orcadian origins (the *Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum* tradition) which sees the brothers Nórr and Górr depart their homeland north of the Gulf of Bothnia and travel to north-western Scandinavia. Nórr travels overland and Górr by sea, a journey which, in *Fundinn Noregr* at least, takes him through the Baltic and the Skagerrak and Kattegat straits. Nórr conquers the Norwegian mainland and names it after himself, whereas Górr claims the islands and disseminates the line of the jarls of Orkney.

FN and HNB are witnesses to a tradition with a complex history adapted over time to serve multiple purposes and agendas. It has long been recognised that FN, the preface to *Orkneyinga saga*, has been tailored towards an Orcadian perspective. It is less frequently commented upon that aspects of the tradition — particularly in HNB but also in FN — also clearly support Norwegian political interests by exploring the origins of the Norwegian political landscape and the dynasty that (purportedly) shaped it.

This paper begins with a summary of the arguments for the latter contention. It then discusses how the Baltic origins of the brothers Nórr and Górr suited the agendas of both the Orcadians, in their struggle for autonomy from the Norwegian realm, and of factional interests within the Norwegian realm itself, depicting an opposition between northern and eastern, coast and interior, land and sea, which defined the conception of Norway in the medieval period and for which analogues can be found throughout West Norse literature. The paper then considers, from both the Orcadian and Norwegian perspective, the relationship between the model of origins presented in the *Frá Fornjóti* tradition and the more conventional model of Trojan origins. It concludes with some speculation about the circumstances which may have motivated the creation of the legend in the first place.

***Skáld*, *vates*, נָבִיא (poet, seer, prophet): A cross-cultural study of separate charismatic traditions**

David Ashurst, Durham University

Skáld (pl.) frequently referred to the mead of poetry and hence to themselves as recipients of a divine gift of utterance. But how should we understand this? Did the divine gift imply a calling, or perhaps even an office? To what extent did it inform the behaviour and roles of the heathen *skáld*, or the functions of their art, in their societies and in Christian literature?

The objective of this paper is to throw these issues into relief by investigating three figures in three largely unrelated cultures – the heathen *skáld*, the classical Latin *vates* (‘seer’, ‘soothsayer’, but also ‘poet’), and the ancient Hebrew נָבִיא (*nāvî*, ‘prophet’, ‘one who calls out’, some of whose utterances are preserved in poetic form in the prophetic books of the Bible). In this it differs from the approach of Tolley’s recent study of poetic inspiration, *Hard it is to stir my tongue* (2019).

The paper begins by examining the etymologies and semantic developments of the three terms and of related words in the three languages, highlighting parallels and differences. It is shown that the concept of foretelling, which is not particularly characteristic of the *skáld*, is also not central to either of the other two – and particularly is not central to the *nāvî* despite typical modern and medieval perceptions. The last point is developed to show that parallels between the *nāvî* and the *skáld*, as depicted in Old Norse texts of the Christian period, can be accounted for by similarities of social context and the alleged fact of the divine gift, whilst any direct biblical influence is inessential. It is noted that the behaviour of all three supernaturally gifted figures is decidedly odd, and that the parallels are again strongest between the *skáld* and *nāvî*. In particular, the recorded utterances of these two figures are likely to be offensive in the extreme, it is suggested, not only because the divine gift partially licensed this but also because the role of both figures was fundamentally antisocial in prioritising the ethics of the divine giver.

Kolskeggur hinn fróði og landnám: Bera formúlukenndar landnámsfrásagnir merki um upphaflegt mót?

Auður Ingvarsdóttir, Reykjavíkúakademían

Skrá, listi, ágríp, sundurlaus drög eru allt lýsingar sem sjá má í skrifum fræðimanna þegar vísað er til hinnar elstu gerðar Landnámabókar. Sú hugmynd hefur nefnilega verið áberandi í fræðunum að telja tvær gerðir Landnámu mikið breyttar. Þar sem gert er ráð fyrir svona veigamiklum breytingum og innskotum varð hugmyndin um hina stuttu og markvissu Frumandnámu föst í sessi. Formúlukennd upptalning á landnámsmönnum og landnámu þeirra er þannig jafnan talin bera upphaflegt mót. Þar sem vikið er frá því lagi er gert ráð fyrir „innskotum“ og „viðaukum“ sérstaklega Sturlu og Hauks. Þá hefur þá verið bent á kafla sem sjá má á allnokkrum stöðum en eru sérstaklega áberandi í Austfirðingafjórðungi eftir að forsögn Kolskeggs hins fróða hefst. Ef litið er á innihald Landnámu í heild (þ.e. varðveittra gerða) er ekki hægt að sjá hana sem þessa formúlukenndu skrá. Það sem einkennir ritið er fremur tengsl landnámsmanna. Þeir eru bræður, synir, mágar, leysingjar, fylgdarmenn, fóstbræður, þeir kaupa land af öðrum landnámsmanni, berjast við hann og svo framvegis. Þannig virðist ritið fremur hafa mótast af sögnum af landnámsmönnum og ættartengslum fremur en formúlukenndri upptalningu. Það má líka velta fyrir sér hvort slík formúlukennd skráning hefði haft eitthvað gildi á upphafskeiði ritunar.

Þeir kaflar í Austfirðingafjórðungi sem fengið hafa vægi sem fornlegir eru sumir það stuttir að engin tengsl við aðra landnámsmenn koma fram. Það er þó ekki algilt og þó stuttlega sé sagt frá allmörgum landnámsmönnum og í þessum hefðbundna „Kolskeggsstíl“ má sjá að þeir tengjast öðrum landnámsmönnum. Stundum bara á stuttlegan hátt, sem fóstbræður (S 290), eða með því að hafa verið samferða til landsins (S 290) eða með landakaupum (S 311). Þannig einkenni er líka samkenni í öllum fjórðungum og í öllum gerðum. Þar er vísað fram og til baka til annarra landnámsmanna sérstaklega þegar um er að ræða hóp hinna göfugu og stærstu. Hér er átt við þann hóp landnámsmanna sem koma fyrir á fjórðungslistum sem birtast í Sturlubók og Hauksbók. Melabók er hér engin undantekning þó víða hafi greinilega verið dregið úr slíkum tengslum.

What Snorri saw but never told: Material and textual sources to the early medieval history of Tønsberg

Bjørn Bandlien, University of South-Eastern Norway

In 2021, the Norwegian town Tønsberg will celebrate its 1150 year anniversary. The foundation date of 871 is based on a note in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, and has not been confirmed by material sources. Snorri knew Tønsberg well, after spending a winter there in 1218/1219, but historians have dismissed much of his information of the early history of Tønsberg as a failed construction. In this paper, the more recent archaeological evidence, as well as textual sources, on Tønsberg will be discussed. There are several major sites in Tønsberg and its vicinity that Snorri seems to have neglected or chose not to mention in his sagas. This paper will see this apparently negligence in relation to memory studies on the one hand, and on the other in light of new perspectives on political culture in Iceland and Norway.

Encircling serpents: Cosmological timelines and the example of the world serpent

Jesse Barber, University of Helsinki

In the study of pre-Christian Scandinavian religions, there have been many comparisons between the medieval myths and later folk legends. However, this has usually been on a one-to-one basis, comparing a single motif at a time, without exploring the grander context in which the motif appears and what it communicates about the worldview in which it exists.

In this paper, I discuss the motif of a small serpent growing to great proportions and encircling an object with its tail in its mouth. I aim to show how this motif relates to other myths and folk legends, as well as the effect it has on the two worldviews conveyed by the medieval sources for Scandinavian mythology and the later sources for Scandinavian folklore respectively. I present a framework for understanding the structure of these differing worldviews through what I call *cosmological timelines*, i.e. the periodization of mythological events that organize the story of the universe from its creation to its destruction.

1. Cosmological timelines

1.1. Clunies Ross's and Lindow's temporal divisions

The idea of cosmological timelines is built upon the research of other scholars. Margaret Clunies Ross divides Old Norse mythology into five periods “[1] that which takes place in the beginning, [2] the past of active creativity, [3] the mythic present, [4] Ragnarøk, and [5] the distant future or post-Ragnarøk” (1994: 234–241). She builds this sequence on information conveyed by the eddic poems that give a temporal view of mythic events, namely *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, parts of *Fáfnismál* and *Hyndluljóð* (1994: 234). These four poems convey the mythological information in a catechetical form, where a wise being imparts information about the past, present, and future to an interlocutor. Although this catechetical form is non-narrative, it implies that the wise being giving the information understands the temporal and causal relationships that provide meaning to the sequence of events. The catechetical form also implies that the imparter of knowledge possesses a continuous overview of the mythological events (Clunies Ross 1994: 235).

John Lindow builds upon Clunies Ross's divisions and creates his own terms for the five periods on the mythological timeline of Old Norse mythology. He also further divides the mythic present into three sub-periods and demonstrates the symmetry of the timeline as a whole. Lindow's divisions are as follows:

1. The *distant past* is characterized by *Ginnungagap* and the emergence of primordial beings such as Ymir, Auðumbla, and Bur.
2. The *near past* is constituted by the creation of the world, the ordering of the cosmos, the Æsir's creation of tools and temples, as well as dwarfs and humans.
3. The *mythological present* is when most myths happen, the culture hero myths of Óðinn, the binding of monsters, and Pórr's battles with *jǫtnar*.
 - a. The *early mythological present* contains myths where something is acquired or constructed, which is used later, e.g. Óðinn's theft of the mead of poetry.
 - b. The *undifferentiated mythological present* consists of myths with no clear temporal fixture, e.g. Pórr's battle with Hrungnir.
 - c. The *late mythological present* holds the myths that seem to follow many of the other myths in the mythological present, e.g. the death of Baldr.
4. The *near future* is embodied by the events of Ragnarøk.
5. The *distant future* is comprised by the new world that emerges from the sea after the destruction of the world (Lindow 2001: 39–43).

Because Lindow's terms expand upon Clunies Ross's divisions, I will be referring mostly to Lindow's periods throughout this paper.

1.2. Frog's temporal periods and fractal recursivity

Frog outlines different temporal periods, which are characterized by various ontologies that can be approached through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *chronotope* (1981: 84–159; Frog 2022: 580–582). Frog's temporal periods are as follows:

- *Pre-Creation Time: the era of the cosmogonic being Ymir*. This is the time of Ymir, a being literally of cosmological scope, from whose body the world is eventually created; events of this era are surreal in the extreme (corresponds to Lindow's period 1 above)
- *Cosmogonic Time: the era of the gods before human actors*. The gods perform acts affecting the created world on a cosmological scope (setting stars, giving birth to monsters, etc.), as they do not do in later eras before eschatological time; many feats involve transformations (~ periods 2–3 above).
- *Mytho-Heroic Time: the era of ancient human kings and heroes*. Human agents are in focus, operating within the world organized by the gods, although geography is often vague; supernatural encounters and magic are relatively commonplace, including encounters with especially Óðinn, although gods do not generally take other-than-human forms; gods shape human fates and establish lineages but the gods' fates are unaffected, except insofar as dead human beings will eventually participate in the battle of *ragna røk*.
- *Historical Time: the era beginning from roughly the settlement of Iceland*. Human agents are in focus and magic is common but supernatural encounters are predominantly with the dead, land spirits, trolls, and *blámenn*, devils, or Christians' encounters with pagan gods/devils; topography tends to be more specific and encounters with more fantastic agents tend to be geographically remote from Iceland; Þórr and perhaps other gods may affect things in the world remotely.
- *Eschatological Time: the era of ragna røk and the rebirth of the world*. Gods are in focus as in cosmogonic time, but the period is characterized by a breakdown of ordering principles and the world is destroyed and reborn (~ periods 4–5 above).

These temporal periods are characterized by events of differing levels of scope that *fractal recursivity* occurs within (Frog 2022: 579–580). Frog defines fractal recursivity as “the fractal-like projection of a pattern and associated evaluative framework on different orders of scope” (2022: 572). Because Frog's terms deal with medieval Icelandic sources, I would like to propose a new term to describe the level of scope for later Scandinavian folklore.

- *Legendary Time: the era of post-medieval folklore*. Human agents are in focus, operating on a local scale in a world created by the Christian God. They sometimes encounter old gods (mostly Óðinn); however, the old gods do not carry the same potency or authority as their earlier mythological representations. Encounters with the devil are fairly common, as well as encounters with trolls, elves, etc. Magic is widely used, and is sometimes supported with Christian power (e.g. a priest using Christian magic).

1.3. My cosmological timeline periods

In a forthcoming article, I set out terms that combine the chronological considerations of Clunies Ross and Lindow's terms with the chronotopic principles and levels of scope of Frog's terms. My terms outline the periods of a cosmological timeline, which can be applied to not only Old Norse mythology, but to other worldviews as well, such as those expressed in later Scandinavian folklore. By combining temporal and ontological considerations, it becomes possible to identify the function of a narrative in relation to other narratives conveyed on a timeline. Above all my terms are a framework for comparing, not just singular myths and legends, but entire systems of myths and legends to illustrate the similar and potentially contrasting structures of differing worldviews. Each period operates as a frame of reference for where a narrative belongs in the grand scheme of the worldview, within which all such narratives are contextualized.

- *Primordial Creation*- The beginning, when all the raw materials for the world as we know it are there but in a chaotic and surreal state. Creation myths take place during this time, however these creation myths tend to be of the ‘something out of nothing’ variety, where characters and natural objects appear with no clear source or at least an unconventional source.
- *The Ordering of Creation*- A period when the world is arranged into the natural state, which will characterize the mythic present. The creation myths of this period tend to be more concrete and explain (in some rudimentary way or another) how things are made and/or out of what material.
- *The Mythic Present*- Myths during this period may not have a clear-cut tense to them. They may be represented as having happened in the past with consequences that affect the present ontology and/or relate to the eschatology of the future.
- *The Eschatological Future*- The end of the world when all of natural order collapses into violent chaos. This period is usually characterized by bloody battles that result in the destruction of the world of the mythic present and leads to a new world or environment.

In the forthcoming article, I apply these terms not only to Old Norse mythology, but to the Christian worldview, Saxo’s and Snorri’s euhemerized mythology, and later Scandinavian folklore (Barber *forthcoming*). These periods can be applied to many of the mythologies that Michael Witzel calls *Laurasian*. Laurasian mythology refers to mythological narratives that not only share similar motifs but are organized in the same way with a common narrational scheme (Witzel 2013: 1–4). However, I do not completely agree with the duality Witzel constructs between Laurasian and Gondwana mythologies, nor do I agree that all the mythologies he includes within his Laurasian label have coherent timelines. Although my cosmological timelines theory is based on Witzel’s idea of comparison between entire narrational schemes as opposed to singular narratives, I place the narratives within broad fluid periods, while Witzel’s comparisons are built on collections of motifs (Witzel 2013: 105–183).

2. The Miðgarðsormr cycle

In the following sections, I will use the motif of a serpent growing to great proportions and encircling an object to illustrate how a motif can appear within different cosmological timelines, at various levels of scope, and how a motif can link different cosmological periods. The first cosmological timeline I will discuss is that of Old Norse mythology. When my terms are applied to this timeline, the grouping of myths within the cosmological periods looks roughly something like this:

- *Primordial Creation*- Myths about *Ginnungagap*, Ymir, and the first gods.
- *The Ordering of Creation*- The gods create Miðgarðr from Ymir’s corpse, assign paths to the celestial bodies, the master builder myth, and the war between the Æsir and Vanir.
- *The Mythic Present*- Contains culture hero myths, the binding of monsters until Ragnarøk, stories of heroic feats by the gods as well as humans.
- *The Eschatological Future*- The world is destroyed through Ragnarøk and resurfaces anew.

As pointed out above, my cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology is very similar to the chronological divisions of Clunies Ross and Lindow. Throughout this comparison of world serpent motifs, I will also show how the various levels of scope correspond to Frog’s temporal periods as well, because when discussing the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology Frog’s terms are complimentary to my own.

2.1. Óðinn casts the Miðgarðsormr into the sea

Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* states that Loki had three children with the *jötunn* Angrboða, namely the wolf Fenrir, Hel, and the Miðgarðsormr. The gods deciphered prophecies that these children

would cause great harm. Óðinn sent the gods to bring the children to him. He threw the serpent into the sea, where it grew large enough that it encircles all lands and bites its own tail (Snorri 2005: 26–27).

Lindow states that one of the last mythic events to happen in the near past is the incorporation of the Vanir and Loki into the pantheon of the Æsir. He then places the binding of Loki's three children into the early mythological present (Lindow 2001: 40–42). I agree that the binding of the Miðgarðsormr would have to take place early in the mythic present. On the one hand, it seems to function like a myth from the period of the ordering of creation, because it forms the landscape of the mythic present by making the serpent the border of all lands. However, it is important to note that these temporal periods and distinctions are fluid. They are simply artificial dividers on the complex tapestry of mythology, placed there to serve as reference points. Besides it is inherent that each period bleeds into the next, primordial creation myths give the raw materials, which are then used in the ordering of creation period. The ordering of creation sets the stage for the drama of the mythic present. This drama leads to the unraveling of social and cosmic order in the eschatological future as the world is destroyed and then reborn in a briefly described new world. With this fluidity in mind, it seems natural that a myth from the early mythic present would have characteristics of the ordering of creation.

2.2. Þórr fishes for the Miðgarðsormr

This next myth however, lands squarely in the period of the mythic present on the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology. The two main textual sources for Þórr's fishing expedition are Snorri's *Edda* and the eddic poem of *Hymiskviða* (Snorri 2005: 43-45; Þórður 2014: 399-407). In both versions, Þórr rows far out to sea with the *jǫtunn* Hymir and fishes up the Miðgarðsormr in an attempt to kill it with his hammer. This is the point in the myth that differs between various versions. *Ragnarsdrapa*, a skaldic poem attributed to Bragi Boddason in the ninth century and who used a picture of the myth on a shield as inspiration, holds that the serpent got away. However, Úlf Uggason, in the late tenth century, describes a pictorial panel in an Icelandic house depicting Þórr decapitating the Miðgarðsormr at sea. This critical moment in the text of *Hymiskviða* is defective (Turville-Petre 1964: 75-76). However, Snorri explains that some people believe that Þórr killed the serpent then and there, but he believes that the serpent got away (Snorri 2005: 45).

2.3. Þórr's final battle with the Miðgarðsormr at Ragnarøk

Both the myth about Óðinn casting the Miðgarðsormr into the sea and the myth about Þórr fishing for the serpent happen in Frog's temporal period of cosmogonic time, which takes place on a cosmological scope. The next myth I will discuss concerning Þórr's final battle with the Miðgarðsormr at Ragnarøk happens in what Frog calls eschatological time, which is still on a cosmological scope but the ontology changes to allow for the world to be dissolved and then arise again (Frog 2022: 582). Both Frog's eschatological time and Lindow's near future correspond to my category of the eschatological future specifically within the context of Old Norse mythology.

At Ragnarøk, Þórr is destined to fight the Miðgarðsormr to their mutual deaths. The details of their battle are found in *Vǫluspá* and Snorri's *Edda*. Both texts say that Þórr will slay the serpent but will then take nine steps before succumbing to the poison that the Miðgarðsormr spat on him (Þórður 2014: 305; Snorri 2005: 50).

2.4. Concluding remarks on the Miðgarðsormr cycle

The mythological cycle of the Miðgarðsormr spans from its origins in the early mythic present through the rest of the mythic present and ends in the eschatological future. In this way, it seems to tether the periods together and illustrates the nature of the cause and effect structure operating on the cosmological timeline. It marks key points on the cosmological timeline and its cycle testifies to the conception of the mythology as a unified epic.

Whether or not Þórr kills the serpent during his fishing adventure is a plain example of variation within pre-Christian Scandinavian religions. The two various outcomes would have important consequences for the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology. It would mean that some people probably believed in a cosmological timeline where the Miðgarðsormr does not fight with Þórr at Ragnarøk, and perhaps by extension that Þórr does not appear at Ragnarøk, or perhaps they did not believe in Ragnarøk at all. Because the concept of cosmological timelines is so heavily tethered to worldview, in reality any given cosmological timeline would vary in relation to the individual. Although we have references to the variant of Þórr slaying the serpent before Ragnarøk, we do not have the flushed out consequences of exactly how this variant would affect the rest of the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology. However, it is important to recognize that the cosmological timeline we have for Old Norse mythology was in reality far from the only one. Nevertheless, the people who believed in the serpent's mythic cycle (the version we have at least) most likely conceived of the mythological story of the world as a more or less coherent cosmological timeline.

3. Ragnarr slays the dragon

The three myths discussed above take place in Frog's periods of cosmogonic time and eschatological time. However, *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* takes place within Frog's mytho-heroic time, which occurs on a level of human scope in the era of ancient kings and heroes. Regarding my terms, this saga takes place within the mythic present on the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology, because it takes place in a world created by the Old Norse gods and not by the Christian God. Within this worldview, this world is situated on the same cosmological timeline that looks forward to Ragnarøk in the eschatological future.

The motif of a serpent growing to great proportions and encircling something with its tail in its mouth appears in one episode of *Ragnars saga*.¹ In the saga, the princess Þóra lays a serpent on a bed of gold in a chest. Soon the serpent, and the gold, grows so large that it encircles Þóra's bower with its head touching its tail. Þóra's father, Herruðr, promises his daughter and the gold to any man that can kill the serpent. Ragnarr answers the call and slays the beast with his spear. A stream of blood shoots from the serpent's corpse and hits Ragnarr, but he escapes unscathed due to his hairy clothing, which he covered in pitch and sand (*Ragnars saga loðbrókar* 1943: 99–101).

Ragnarr's battle with the dragon is a fractal recurrence of Þórr's battle with the Miðgarðsormr at Ragnarøk (Frog 2022: 589). Þórr's fishing adventure takes place on the level of cosmological scope in cosmogonic time in the mythological world, while his final battle with the serpent is also on the level of cosmological scope in eschatological time. Ragnarr's battle takes place on the scope of mytho-heroic time and the events as well as their consequences are limited to the human world. However, the outcomes of the two stories differ. Þórr is killed by poison, while Ragnarr survives. This difference illustrates how the two tales function differently. The myth about Þórr describes the death of a god, while Ragnarr's story describes the origins of a young hero, whose dragon-slaying shows him to be Þórr-like in his greatness, as well as winning the young hero fame and fortune. Furthermore, the episode of the serpent in *Ragnars saga* is a condensed version of the mythic cycle of the Miðgarðsormr. Ragnarr's serpent exists in a specific point in time, whereas the Miðgarðsormr's life spans across cosmic time, from the origins of the world to its destruction.

4. The folklore cosmological timeline and Kettil Runske

This idea of an encircling serpent's life bridging cosmological time periods is not only present in Old Norse mythology but appears in later Scandinavian folk legends as well. So far, I have discussed events that take place on the cosmological timeline of Old Norse mythology. However,

¹ However, the serpent does not encircle the bower in every version of the narrative and may have been added to the written saga (McTurk 1991: 74-77; Frog 2022: 589).

in this section I will discuss a folk legend that takes place on a Christian cosmological timeline, i.e. the cosmological timeline of Scandinavian folklore.

4.1. The cosmological timeline of Scandinavian folklore

On this cosmological timeline of later Scandinavian folklore many motifs appear in the same periods as they do in the Old Norse mythology cosmological timeline. A brief skeletal outline of the folklore cosmological timeline is given below with some examples of motifs within the various periods.

- *Primordial Creation*- God creates the world within seven days as stated in the book of Genesis.
- *The Ordering of Creation*- Master builder legends about trolls building the local church, in exchange for the sun and the moon, and being killed just before they can put the last stone into place (Mauland 1931: 39–40; Klintberg 2010: 156).
- *The Mythic Present*- Monsters are bound, some earlier and some later, and become part of the landscape. Some of them break free at the end of the world (Enqvist 1938: 168; Klintberg 2010: 73, 315, 338).
- *The Eschatological Future*- Local legends about sybils prophesying a final bloody battle (Klintberg 2010: 30), as well as legends about flooding and wildfires (Ollrik 1902: 177–178), which will all take place on a local scale but at the same time as the Christian conception of Armageddon, which takes place on a global scale.

On this cosmological timeline, the period of primordial creation corresponds to the Biblical story of God creating the earth in seven days. Master builder legends, e.g. about a troll building the local church (Mauland 1931: 39–40; Klintberg 2010: 156), are some of the legends that characterize the period of the ordering of creation, because they define the Christian landscape in which other legends take place. The mythic present is when most legends occur, one common legend type in the mythic present is legends about binding monsters (Enqvist 1938: 168; Klintberg 2010: 73, 315, 338). The eschatological future is characterized by the Christian apocalypse, however there are many local legends about sybils prophesying a local final bloody battle (Klintberg 2010: 30), as well as flooding and wildfires that will take place on a local scale (Ollrik 1902: 177–178).

Because Frog's terms only deal with the medieval Icelandic sources, I will employ my new term *legendary time*, as defined above, to describe the level of scope and ontology of these later folk legends. My term *legendary time* defines how the world of later Scandinavian folklore operates, e.g. what kind of magic is used, what kind of creatures/entities are encountered, who are usually the protagonists of these stories, and on what scale do these legends take place. This term is used to communicate the ontology of this cosmological timeline, while the cosmological timeline terms are used to outline the periods of this worldview.

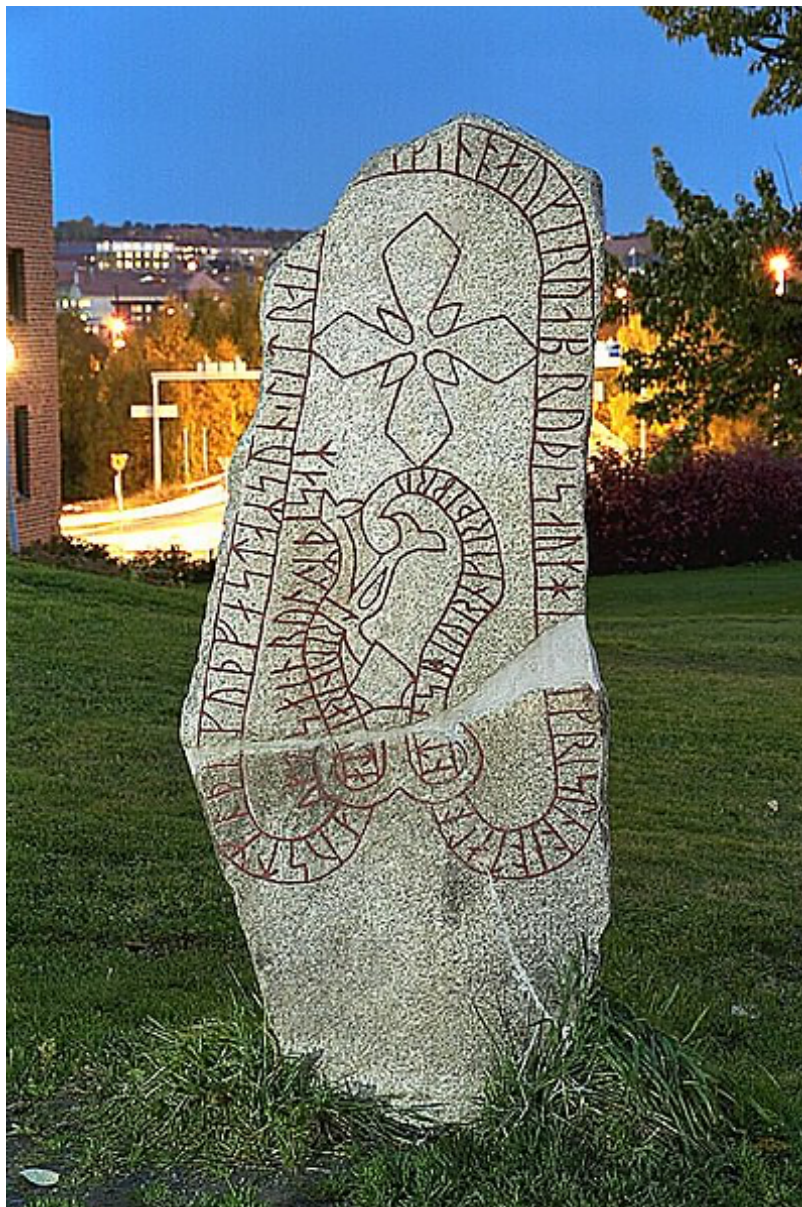
4.2. Kettil Runskel binds the sea serpent

The specific legend I will discuss here is about Kettil Runskel binding a sea serpent. This legend displays many parallels with the mythological cycle of the *Miðgarðsormr*. Similar to the mythological cycle, this legend takes place within the early mythic present, however, within the context of the Scandinavian folklore cosmological timeline.

Kettil Runskel is a *trollkarl* (warlock) or *runokarl* (rune man), his nickname Runskel emphasizes his use and knowledge of the runes. He is surrounded by a cycle of legends, most of which depict him saving the common people and fighting sorcerers, trolls, and giant serpents by binding them with his rune-staves and his rune craft. In one legend about the origins of his powers, Kettil steals these rune-staves from Oden (Enqvist 1938: 160–162), which in some ways designates Kettil as the Christian successor to the old god as the wielder of the runes. These legends come mostly from southern Sweden but can also be found in the North. Most of his legends were collected around the seventeenth century (Enqvist 1938: 157). The earliest known mention of Kettil comes from Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* written in

1555, where he is simply mentioned as the one who bound the sorcerer Gilbert in a cave on Visingsö (Olaus 1555: 124).

One episode from Kettil's legendary cycle depicts him binding a sea serpent to the bottom of lake Storsjön in Jämtland, Sweden. The story was collected in 1635 by Morten Pedersen Herdal in Jämtland. The legend tells of a sea serpent, that was harming the local people. The people lacked the means to destroy it, so they sent for the help of the renowned Kettil Runske. Kettil came and erected a great stone on the island Frösö and carved runes upon it, which bound the serpent to the bottom of the lake. The legend reports that there the serpent will stay, so long as the runes remain, and Herdal notes that the stone is still there today and is called Frösöstenen (Enqvist 1938: 168). Other variants of the legend say that once the sea serpent grows large enough to encircle the island, and bite its own tail, the world will end (Klintberg 2010: 315). The runestone mentioned in the legend is an actual runestone from the archaeological record of Frösö, and it does in fact still exist today. The runes upon the stone say nothing of a local sea serpent, but it does depict a serpent biting its tail.



Frösö Runestone (Photo: Bengt A Lundberg / Riksantikvarieämbetet, CC BY 2.5 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5>>, via Wikimedia Commons).

Like the Miðgarðsormr cycle, this legend connects the early mythic present to the eschatological future. Illustrating that the people who believed in these legends most likely conceived of legendary events as linked in a relationship of cause and effect, i.e. a cosmological timeline.

This legend is a fractal recurrence of the Miðgarðsormr cycle, which is now taking place on the scope of legendary time. The serpent is no longer being bound by a god, but by the human sorcerer Kettil. Instead of the serpent encircling all lands, it now encircles the local island of Frösö. It is also important to remember that when these legends were documented they were most likely isolated from published versions of Snorri's *Edda* and eddic poetry. Traditions of the Miðgarðsormr were most likely forgotten by the sixteenth century in Sweden. However, it is possible that these legends have their roots in older traditions about the Miðgarðsormr. This is especially enticing when considering that Kettil stole his runestaves from Oden, linking him to the Old Norse Óðinn, who bound the Miðgarðsormr just as Kettil does with the sea serpent.

The localization of cosmic events, not only reducing their scope but also binding them to the local landscape is how some of these pre-Christian motifs were able to survive and evolve within the larger framework of Christianity. Although the Bible says God created the world in the beginning, it says nothing about how the local church was built, or where the sea serpent in the local lake came from. The Bible also outlines how the world will end in the book of Revelation, but it does not describe what will happen in the local regions of Scandinavia during the apocalypse. These local legends do not contradict Christianity, rather they expand upon it.

5. Conclusion

This paper is meant to be a brief explanation of how my cosmological timelines theory works. It shows how it is built upon Clunies Ross and Lindow's temporal divisions of Old Norse mythology and complimented by Frog's temporal terms of varying levels of scope. Frog's theory of fractal recursivity is especially important in displaying how the same motif can appear in different cosmological timelines, or multiply on the same cosmological timeline on different levels of scope.

I have also demonstrated how my cosmological timeline terms can be applied to more than just Old Norse mythology, by using them to exhibit the structure of the Scandinavian folklore cosmological timeline. Each period acts as a reference point displaying where a motif belongs on a given cosmological timeline. However, a motif can also appear on different parts of the same cosmological timeline within different levels of scope, e.g. Ragnarr's battle with the dragon as a fractal recurrence of the Miðgarðsormr cycle. When the same motifs appear in the same periods on two different cosmological timelines, it displays how the two worldviews are structured in a similar way. For example the master builder motif, binding monsters motif, and final battle motif all appear within their same respective periods on both the cosmological timeline of Old Norse Mythology and Scandinavian folklore cosmological timeline. In this way, my terms can be used as a framework for understanding the structure of various mythologies and collections of folklore.

Although this paper is concerned mainly with the example of the world serpent motif, there are many other motifs that can illustrate the causal relationship between events on a cosmological timeline, and I have mentioned some of these in passing, e.g. the master builder motif. However, the world serpent motif is a prime example of how a single theme can string together multiple periods on a cosmological timeline, demonstrating the unified nature of these various events.

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Norse notions of labour

Santiago Barreiro, CONICET – Universidad of Buenos Aires

The Icelandic lawcode *Jónsbók* has an interesting provision concerning the production of hay in the fourth chapter of its section on tenancy:

Sa maðr er iqrð leigir aa grasnautn alla a iqrðu þeirre. ok allt at vinnna aa henní þat sem hann vill. Þat er þarf til husa umbóta eða garða. ok at bua um andvirkí sítt. Þar er hvarki spille akri ne eíng.

The man who leases the land has the right to use all the grass on the land and he may undertake any work he wants, whether he needs to keep buildings or walls in repair or to prepare hay stores, as long as he does not damage either arable or meadowland. (*Jónsbók, Landleigubálkr* 4)¹

This suggests that hay was seen as a product created by labour (less clearly, it also suggests the same about buildings and walls). While this seems obvious to most modern readers (except for a perplexing number of economists), medieval views on the origin of wealth could be rather different. For example, an English treatise on farm management composed during the thirteenth century, begins saying:

Les bens ke deu vos preste sagement les gardet e despendet

The goods that God lends you (or provides you with), keep them and spend them wisely (*Walter of Henley's Husbandry* 1)

In a similar manner, the poem *Arinbjarnkarviða*, preserved *Egils saga* (also from the thirteenth century, even if the poem itself might be much older), praises the generosity of Arinbjörn using these words:

Þat allsheri / at undri gefsk, / hvé hann urpjóð / auði gnægir / en grjót-björn / of gæddan hefr / Freyr ok Njörðr / at féar [fjár] afli.

Everyone marvelled how he provides the people with riches, but Freyr and Njörðr have given the boulder-bear with the strength of wealth (*Egils saga* 78, *Arinbjarnarkviða* 17)

In both *Arinbjarnarkvið* and *Le Dite Hosebondrie*, the notion is that wealth is a loan or gift of divine origin, rather than the effect of spending human effort through time to create a certain good or provide a given service. Indeed, ideas about the origin of wealth as a supernatural or divine gift are rather common in precapitalist societies (see Godelier 1999).

By contrast, the Norse corpus provides a good number of examples of a more labour-based idea on the origins of wealth that resemble the one hinted by the provision mentioned from *Jónsbók*. Probably the best known example is from the Eddic poem *Hávamál*:

*Ár skal rísa, sá er á yrkjendr fá,
ok ganga síns verka á vit;
margt um dvelr, þann er un morgin sefr;
hálfir er auðr und hvötum*

Early must rise, he who has few labourers, and go mindfully to his work; much does delay he who sleeps in the morning; half the wealth is in diligence (*Hávamál* 59)

Egils saga provides a similar example, in a short poem, uttered by Skalla-Grímr (*Egils saga* 30, lausavísa 3). There, using the convoluted language of skaldic poetry, it says that the blacksmith must wake up early to create wealth by forge-labour. Egill's father is as close as a soviet stakhanovite or an entrepreneurial self-made man as one can find in the saga corpus, but he is by no means exceptional except by the degree of his dedication to work. In many sagas,

¹ Source text slightly adapted. All Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

labour creates wealth, and thus hard-working people (often men) are seen as prosperous and well-off.

My aim in this talk is not to assess in detail the different ideas concerning labour in the sagas and other textual sources from medieval Iceland, but instead provide a hypothesis on which ideological role is played by it in describing the social world of the sagas. To do so, I will use the notions of *paradigmatic* and *emblematic* labour, coined by the late American anthropologist David Graeber in his analysis of the Merina kingdom of nineteenth-century Madagascar. The closest to a short definition of both terms I have found is this one:

“If paradigmatic labor is what you imagine to be the model for work in general, or a whole broad category of work, emblematic labor is work seen as typical of a certain group of people, a kind of work that defines what sort of people they are seen ultimately to be” (Graeber 2016: 273).

Paradigmatic and emblematic labour in medieval Iceland

If one reads many *Íslendingasögur*, it is not difficult to identify farm labour as the paradigmatic type, even if rural tasks can be split along the social pyramid: the farm tasks of a slave and those of a rich *bóndi* are often (but not always) distinct. Similar distinctions could indeed be made also on matters of gender or age, but in any case almost every Icelander you meet in the sagas participates in farm labour of some sort, and this suggests that labour in general was associated primarily with farm labour. The sagas of course do not provide the only possible model. For example, the Eddaic poem *Rígsþula* provides an alternative (and clearly hierarchical) model of different tasks associated paradigmatically with class. And such models are also well-known to anybody studying medieval societies, as exemplified by the well-known theory of society as divided in the three orders of *laboratores*, *bellatores* and *oratores*.

However, finding the types *emblematic* labour seems a more elusive task than finding the paradigmatic type. In Graeber’s ethnography of the Merina kingdom of Madagascar, the distinction was between the aristocracy (*andriana*), which served the king or queen by doing creative work (in particular crafting), while commoners (*hova*) serve them by carrying stuff around (slaves did not serve the king, but their masters). As most people in saga Iceland, all of them also did some productive labour (of the paradigmatic type), by working on the rice fields (for Iceland, animal husbandry would be the equivalent task), and also by producing or acquiring all the basic necessities of life. The anthropologist reminds us that “it’s important to bear in mind that in terms of how they earned their livelihoods (...) nearly all of these groups were almost exactly the same (Graeber, 2016: 278)”, which also seems similar to the situation in the Iceland imagined in the *Íslendingasögur*.

What I find particularly useful about the notion of emblematic labour is that it does not mark a job that just needs to be done, but highlights a stance on a job people want to be identified with, in no small part for reasons of prestige and identity. In many historical European eras, labour (in particular rural work, but also crafting or commerce) was seen as demeaning, and true dignity (with the corresponding display of status) was some form of glorified laziness, such as the Roman *otium* (André 1966).² As studied by Hugo Lis and Katharina Soly (2012), the medieval attitude to productive labour was far more ambiguous: working was a punishment for the original sin, but also one of the keys of a pious life, epitomised by the monks. Similarly, peasants were made fun of or even compared to Cain and his breed of monsters (Freedman 1999: 86-104),³ but also were at the same time recognised as the pillar of society and often mentioned (even in such basic theological works as *Elucidarius*) as the class that will have the easiest access to heaven.

² One could see a continuity of this attitude to our current elites, depicted in media while lazying in their yachts or mansions, which shows off not only the wealth, but the leisure.

³ Interestingly, Torfi Tulinius (2014: 277-279) has shown there are some echoes of Cain in Egill Skalla-Grímsson, who comes from a family closely associated with rural work, as discussed above.

By contrast, it seems to me that the attitude in the vernacular literatures of the central Middle Ages, in particular in those genres which coexisted (and influenced) with the sagas the image of rural labourers is generally negative, or they are simply erased from the world of the narrative. For example, we can read much Arthurian literature without ever finding a peasant. Even if one appears, it will most likely not be described in flattering terms. This of course largely has to do with the fact that this was a literature of the elite, about the elite, and for the elite. But most of us will agree that the same is true about sagas.

That creates a curious paradox: the elite which produced the family sagas talked a lot about rural labour, and rural workers, often in far from derogatory terms (except for most slaves). For example, I find difficult to describe Gísli Súrsson as something else than a peasant hero, as he is a rather modest, and hard-working farmer. I have already mentioned Skalla-Grímr, as the epitome of hard, physical work, even if he comes from a highborn family. Moreover, both the hero and the antagonist of *Bjarnar saga* are mid-rank farmers, and Björn is often depicted doing basic farm tasks. I could give further examples, but the core question remains on the unusually high presence of labour-related matters in many sagas. I would suggest that this has to do with its emblematic role, which sets (some) sagas apart from other vernacular literary genres. For this, I will argue that we need to identify the emblematic labours associated to every social group, beginning a well-known and highly streamlined example.

Labour in *Rígsþula*, in particular that of slaves

The famous poem serves a guide to representations of labours typically attributed to different social strata. While the social world of the poem is noticeably more hierarchical than that of the saga Iceland, as it has a clearly-defined aristocracy and kings, this was still part of a broad cultural milieu. Indeed, sagas will often talk about a world of farmers, aristocrats, kings and slaves in the scenes set in Norway, and only the kings and full aristocrats will be missing in local scenes (even if the wealthier chieftains often play a near-aristocratic role). *Rígsþula* describes the jobs of male slaves:

*Lögðu garða,
akra tǫddu, unnu at svínum,
geita gættu, grófu torf.*

Made stone fences, added manure to fields, fed swine, herded goats, cut peat. (*Rígsþula* 12)

Moreover, the life of the slaves is described as one of “days of oppression or hard labour” (*þrungin dægr*, *Rígsþula* 11). What marks and demeans a slave is not labour itself, but some types of it, as is demonstrated by the tasks associated with male free farmers:

*Øxn nam at temja, arðr at gørva,
hús at timbra ok hlǫður smiða,
karta at gørva ok keyra plóg*

Oxen took to tame, made an ard, timbered houses, built barns, made cars and drove the plough. (*Rígsþula* 20)

There is little leisure there; in fact, leisurely pursuits (the Roman *otium*) are a mark of aristocratic rank in *Rígsþula* (and are mentioned as part of the warlike life of the sons of the highborn *Jarl*, in *Rígsþula* 39). This is not the case in many sagas, where prominent men are busy, either in public service or private business (to paraphrase the Latin *officium* and *negotium*). The attitude in the sagas seems closer to the ideology exposed in early Roman text such as Cato The Elder’s *De Agri Cultura*, and mirrored in wisdom literature misattributed to him, such as *Disticha Catonis*, which was also translated into Icelandic (as *Hugsvinnsmál*). There, it is expected that wealthy, highborn people also work rather than enjoy life, even if their labours are distinct from the labours of lowborn people. What matters is not the opposition between labour and leisure, but the types of labour, which are thus emblematic.

However, it seems that some Norse words suggest an intimate relationship between working and being a slave, as discussed by Brink (2001: 128): *önnungr* and *verkmaðr* (both meaning “worker”) stand out. But here the lawcode *Grágás* is illuminating, as it states that “the work that someone does by order of the household er is called *önnungsverk*,” a word which could be translated as “the work of an (enslaved) worker”. The rule suggests that obeying a manager, rather working itself, is what was considered demeaning.⁴ It is also interesting to notice that in Scandinavian sources both from the viking and medieval eras, a high-ranking slave is often named as a *bryti*, “farm-manager”. Brink (2021: 154) comments “there is nothing here to prove that we are dealing with an unfree person; instead, we encounter a sort of servant/steward/manager (free or unfree)”

Such ideas reinforce the notion that what was more meaningful for social identification was not the legal situation, but the position in the productive structure, at least when discussing thralls. Brink also mentions many jobs typical of the different ranks of slaves, from the back-breaking hard labour of the lowliest trades to the more prestigious work done by valuable slaves, such as the already mentioned *brytar* or unfree blacksmiths. Several early slave types are named by their services, be them bakers, grinders or herders.⁵ This suggests that some tasks were not only paradigmatic but emblematic, as servants came to be identified (and ranked) by their jobs.

Emblematic labour in the sagas and the role of farm management

I think this same logic can be also applied to free people represented in the Icelandic sagas, even if their identity clearly involves traits which were denied to slaves: ancestry and kinship ties, religion and even personal traits. But often characters in the sagas are both found doing their paradigmatic jobs and then ranked according to what and how well they performed certain labours, even if this is more subtle than for the slaves, as expected with people given full agency and social personhood.

I would suggest that the emblematic labour of many leading characters in the *Íslendingasögur* is to manage farmsteads. This is a major theme in *Egils saga*, which details how the transfer of management⁶ is crucial for the success of the settlement of the *Mýramenn* and other leading characters, with again Skalla-Grímr being the epitome of the successful farm manager.⁷ Good farm management is the reason of the popularity and wealth of Blund-Ketill in *Hænsa-Póris saga*, and his tenants expect his son Hersteinn to be like his father (*Hænsa-Póris saga* 1 and 15). In *Eyrbyggja saga*, Snorri *goði*’s uncle Már brings his cattle to his nephew’s farm at Helgafell allowing for the farm to be run lavishly, and thus setting the stage for the rise to power of Snorri (*Eyrbyggja saga* 15). Even in the adventure-heavy *Svarfdæla saga*, two brothers refuse the offer of their father to become the managers of the family estate as they still find themselves unworthy of the task as they have not completed enough brave deeds (*Svarfdæla saga* 4).

Let us delve in the analytical possibilities of using the concept of emblematic labour by a more in depth analysis of a specific text. If emblematic labour identifies where someone belongs in society, misunderstanding it should create the troubles associated with those who do not know where they stand in society. This can be seen in a curious scene from *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa*. There, Björn, then a guest working on someone else’s farm, feeds his dog in the same table where other farm workers eat. Moreover, he tricks them to feed his horses. The subsequent anger of the workers is directed at Björn’s habits, and it gets worse when rationing the food does not make him change his habits. The workers solve it by ruining the hay used to feed the horses, so the farmer has to move them away (*Bjarnar saga* 13).⁸

⁴ Þat er v avnongs verk. ef maðr vþr hvern dag þar er bvande vil. (“It is the work of an enslaved worker if a man does such work daily as the householder wants”. *Grágás*, *Kristinna laga þáttir* 17)

⁵ These themes are echoed in medieval texts, such as the enslaved blacksmith in *Völundarkviða*, or the enslaved grinders in *Grottasöngur*.

⁶ Typically called *fjárforráð* or *fjárvarðveizla*, but occasionally named precisely as *búsvarðveizla*.

⁷ I discussed this in detail elsewhere (Barreiro 2015).

⁸ Unfortunately, the saga does not tell what happened to the dog.

This is some little vignette of (medieval) class struggle, and Björn is somewhat comedic in his relationship with farm labour along the saga, but what angers the workers seems to be that Björn does not respect some expected behaviour, given his real position in the division of labour. Björn was a from a farmer family, and then became a retainer at the Norwegian court. Even after being reduced to a guest worker at an Icelandic farm, he still behaves in many ways as someone above his status.

Björn still lives according to what he deems emblematic for someone like him: he does not oppose doing farm labour (as is the paradigmatic job of most Icelanders, but does things that befit a wealthy farmer or royal servant rather than a farmhand under the command of a *bóndi*. Misunderstanding proper class etiquette is used in other sagas, such as *Qlkofra þáttur* or *Bandamanna saga*. But what draws my attention is precisely that Björn is not an upstart parvenu (like for example, Hen-Þórir), but a dynamic and active man. He remains paradigmatically a farmer, but some specific actions of his are found unacceptable by those living with him, because they are emblematic to a status that others are not willing to grant him.

Conclusions: Why labour? On the Baining and Medieval Icelanders

I have argued that the *Íslendingasögur* show a form of paradigmatic labour associated to most Icelanders, in the diverse tasks associated with farm work, and that there are subtypes which are emblematic, as they contribute significantly to determine which tasks defined different social strata, such as back-breaking, dirty work for slaves *versus* farm-management for the wealthy *bændr*. Other emblematic forms could indeed be posited, like textile labour for women (see for example Damsholt 1984, Helgi Þorláksson 1991. *Rígsþula* 16 associates it with female farmers).

But, then, why does labour matter so much in these sagas? I want to finish this presentation by suggesting a hypothetical explanation, again by referring to the work of Graeber. In his book on anthropological theories of value, he argued that some societies focused on value in aesthetical/cultural terms, while others tend to see value in productive/economic terms, exemplified by the Amazonian Kayapo, and the Papuan Baining respectively (Graeber 2001: 69-75). These are two extreme examples: Kayapo social life is highly structured around rituals centred on notions of beauty and domination (or best said: of a beauty that allows/masks domination), while the Baining are remarkably lacking in meaningful ritual and also lack most forms of domination. It is not surprising that for the Baining, labour is a crucially important element of their worldview. They associate value, and the social order, with working in their gardens (they are horticulturalists).

Ten years ago in this conference, Helgi Þorláksson (2012) suggested that comparing Iceland and societies of similar social structure could help revitalize the “anthropological school” in saga studies. I thus will try to apply it through a reading of the core ethnography on the Baining (Fajans 1997). Their similarities with medieval Iceland are remarkable. To list just a few: people lived in individual, mostly isolated farms (prior to missionary efforts to turn them into villages, at least). These often had dependant sheds in useful land built to make production easier (akin to the Icelandic *sel*), family and locality ties where bilateral and subject to much flexibility and negotiation, but also constituted the main network of contacts when asking for help or trying to solve problems. Surprisingly for the Papuan context, ritual life was not very important before the Christianisation; mortuary ritual seems to have been one significant exception, and it took the shape of a feast (cf. Icelandic *erfi*), but there was no “religion”. Child adoption is widespread, even if Baining practices far exceed Icelandic fosterage, as they prefer adopted to natural children. Moreover, Fajans reports that before they were subject to pacifying colonialism, they often engaged in raiding and feuds among themselves (Fajans 1997: 28), and threw large feasts which had both the goal of helping settle disputes, but were also highly agonistic and could be used aggressively.

The Baining present an extreme case of a culture obsessed with work, which expectably also has significant differences with medieval Iceland.⁹ But both appear to me as good examples of societies with a surprisingly “secular” bent, and extremely distant to the highly-ritualised, beauty-driven Kayapos that constitute the other extreme on a social imaginary of value. Importantly, the Icelanders were both less anti-ritualistic than the Baining and also more hierarchical. The different attitudes to marriage might be understood along this light: while it had almost zero ritual from the Baining, weddings of important people are often a major theme in sagas, but this suits neatly with the well-known anthropological idea that control of reproduction is a core element of social control in many agrarian societies, if not the main element of control (as in Levi-Straussian stances).

Yet, I find a comparison between the stories told by the Baining and the medieval Icelanders illuminating on the importance of labour for them both. Baining narratives focus on mundane matters: they are fact-driven stories of gardening and of family matters (for example, Fajans 1997: 83-84).¹⁰ These are familiar themes for saga readers, and one rather distinctive feature of some saga subgenres, in particular when seen in the context of medieval literatures.

So, to finish, I will suggest that labour, both paradigmatic and emblematic, was a central element in the medieval Icelandic worldview, from top to bottom of society. It then became important for the Icelandic imagination, contributing to the noticeably materialistic tone of many sagas, be them largely mundane dramas like *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, satire like *Bandamanna saga*, or genealogies of successful families like *Egils saga*.¹¹ Simply put, early Icelanders saw a world of people ranked according to the work they did, and they thought and wrote about that (directly or indirectly), to an extent other Western European peoples of the Middle Ages seem to not have done.

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⁹ Three appear to me especially significant: first, they had some close, aggressive neighbours, the Tolai, which had a tendency to enslave or eat them in pre-colonial times (in modern times, the Japanese occupation of Papua in WW2 was also an era of tragedies), and this might explain the insularism promoted by their culture (as opposed to the attitude of medieval Icelanders, which promoted seeing the wider world). Second, they are strongly egalitarian, which probably helps to explain why it is impossible to find emblematic labours amongst them: for all baining, to work means to grow food and raise kids, in a way that would please the theoretical stance of a Neomarxist anthropologist, which argues that social analysis must begin with the analysis of the production and reproduction of material life through work (Meillassoux 1972).

¹⁰ Expectably, Kayapo narratives are considerably more imaginative and marvelous. See for example Banner (1957: 40-41), where food is a gift by a pretty heavenly girl who found the original earthly food (rotting palm bran, caterpillars and white-rot fungi) disgusting, so she brought nice ones (bananas, yams, manioc, potatoes), and taught the Kayapos on how to arrange the manioc into a nice star-shape to be pleasing.

¹¹ But the focus on material concerns and the products of labour even appears in some weird, imaginary tales (*Dalafífla þáttr*) or in epic-mythical tales (such as in the tale of Fáfnir in the cycle of the *Völsungar*).

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The Old Icelandic uses of the WEAVING and SPINNING of FATE metaphor and their provenance

Grzegorz Bartusik, University of Silesia, Katowice

Departing from the theoretical perspective of historical cognitive linguistics which emphasises understanding of metaphor as a matter of thought rather than speech, subject to cultural transfer and prone to transformations in culture-specific contexts, this paper offers analysis of the Old Icelandic uses of the WEAVING and SPINNING of FATE metaphor. It has been argued that the Old Icelandic uses of this metaphor are either culture-specific for Old Icelandic or for Greek and Latin and as such must have been transferred to Old Icelandic directly from Latin, or indirectly through either Old English or Old and Middle Irish (Weber, Bek-Pedersen), or they stem from common Proto-Indo-European ideology as one of its motifs (Giannakis, Onians, Enright, Winterbourne), or that it is indeed a more universal notion. This paper aims primarily at reviewing the uses of this metaphor in the Old Icelandic literature that were most likely transferred from Latin. In the discussed occurrences of probable Latin provenance, extracted mainly from the Icelandic sagas about classical antiquity translated from Latin, the chivalric sagas and the late medieval Icelandic romances, I will examine the probability of the transfer of this conceptual metaphor through the acquisition and reception of ancient Roman literature in medieval Iceland in the form of original Latin texts and their vernacular translations. In these cases, the Latin provenance can be verified by tracing the hypertextual relations of the examples identified as citations from Latin literature. From among these texts, *Adonias saga*, *Kirjalax saga*, *Rémundar saga keisarasonar*, and *Skáld-Helga rímur*, are undoubtedly intertextually related, as the related passages come close to a citation or an extended verbal allusion, in which their definite source-texts are *Rómverja saga* and *Alexanders saga* (and through them, also *Bellum civile* by Lucanus and *Alexandreis* by Walter of Châtillon), from which, among other reused hypotexts, they were bricolaged. Secondly, I would like to point out the Old Norse notion of *herfjöturr* as battle fatigue (combat stress reaction), physical exhaustion that makes a warrior unable to fight, as a feeling of being put in fetters – battle bonds (*herfjöturr*) fixed by supernatural beings (valkyries), which might have been projected onto the Old Norse concept of fate from universal embodied cognition.

Sickness and emotion in Old Norse prose: Exploring somatic experience

Caroline Batten, University of Oxford

Depictions of physical and mental illness in the sagas are ideologically and symbolically fraught, and frequently related to depictions of strong emotion: Þórhallr's boil that makes his leg swell up *sem konulær* [like a woman's thigh], and which must be excised in an expression of masculine rage, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*; the onset of eye disease as an act of revenge for sexual rejection in *Fóstbræðra saga*; the vivid delusions and accompanying mood swings of Sigurðr Jónsalafari in the *konungasögur*. Though Kirsi Kanerva has examined eye pain in the *Íslendingasögur* and Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir has discussed the relationship between humoral theory and emotion in some Old Norse texts, portrayals of illness in the sagas have gone largely unexamined in previous scholarship, and the correlation between sickness and somatic expressions of emotion largely unremarked upon. This paper will provide close readings of several selected saga episodes to examine the interplay between sickness and emotion. Comparing these selections with excerpts from Old Norse medical texts, it will argue that both somatic emotional responses and disease are treated as threats to the maintenance of the body as an inviolate whole. I will further argue that illness itself serves as an expression of emotional discontent in these saga episodes, suggesting in turn that body and *hugr* are, in some respects, too intertwined to be meaningfully distinguished in the medieval Icelandic imaginary.

A digital conversation: Applying data analysis to Viking Age symbols in archaeology and mythological literature

Katherine Beard, University of Oxford

Symbols of power, such as hammers, thrones, and spears, permeate the mythological literature of medieval Iceland and the archaeological record of Viking age Scandinavia. These symbols help to illuminate the lives and beliefs of pre-Christian peoples, especially when archaeology and literature are brought into conversation with one another.

Although new artifacts are regularly unearthed and manuscripts newly transcribed, by and large the data we rely on to understand the Viking age is relatively static. To advance our understanding we must turn to new techniques, and the digital humanities present a treasure trove of opportunities to do so. The digital humanities are a relatively new interdisciplinary approach that seeks to marry traditional scholarship with advances in data collection, analysis, and machine learning. This paper will present a methodology for compiling and analyzing symbols identified in archaeological finds and literary texts.

For archaeological finds, the first step is to normalize symbolic artifacts from disparate collections in museums and libraries across Northern Europe. Following this, powerful analytical tools, such as a map, timeline, histogram, and filters, are deployed to generate new insights.

The general approach to Medieval mythological literature is similar – collect and normalize references to symbols in the literary corpus and apply analysis tools to that data. Literature, however, differs from archaeological material in several key ways. First, context must be reframed as words found in the same phrase, sentence, or paragraph, rather than finds in the same grave. Second, a manuscript's provenance tells a very different story than the time and place of an object's burial. Other differences and how to resolve them will also be addressed.

Finally, this paper will present case studies using the Eitri platform to show how applying analytics can shed light on the meaning of Viking age symbols over time, place, and medium.

Towards a reoriented global North Atlantic: Race and captivity in the stories of Geirmundr Heljarskinn

Jacob Bell, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

In recent years, Geraldine Heng, Nahir I. Otaño Gracia, and Leila K. Norako, pioneering critical race theory in the study of the Middle Ages, have argued that the best way to understand the invention of race in the European Middle Ages, especially in the North Atlantic, is to examine how interactions between Scandinavians and “others” are treated in the surviving written record. Building on their scholarship, this paper analyzes three iterations of the life of Geirmundr Heljarskinn (the Dark-skinned), depicted as an early settler of Iceland who the sagas claim was the son of an abducted Central Asian woman and a Norwegian king. Supposedly exchanged with a white slave baby at birth because his skin was so dark, Geirmundr’s story provides a fascinating lens into how early Icelanders grappled with and preserved their historical memory, as well as suggesting an awareness, and even engagement with, a contemporary racial theory grounded in corporeal characteristics which was shared among the thirteenth and fourteenth-century composers and immediate audiences of the Icelandic sagas and settlement books. Using retellings of Gerimundr’s life as an example, I argue that considering the possibility of complex racial discourse among medieval Scandinavians holds unique potential for public-facing scholars of Old Norse and the Middle Ages as a whole. Further, I contend that by interrogating the ways in which this discourse featured in larger patterns of slavery and captivity, which functioned as agents of globalism themselves, we can build a more complex perspective of movement in the medieval North Atlantic.

Mun aldri fyrnask í þýðverskri tungu ok á Norðrlöndum: Centering Denmark and erasing the Baltic through supernatural geographies in *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*

Adam Bierstedt, Simmons University

Medieval Scandinavia occupied a strange space within the geography of later medieval Latin Christendom. Despite broad continental awareness of Scandinavia and the Baltic through the Northern Crusades and the rapidly expanding importance of the Hansa League (Bøgh 1997: 2), contemporary world maps like the Hereford *mappamundi* place Scandinavia on an extreme periphery, populated with monstrous figures like cynocephali, dog-headed men. Within Scandinavia, a translation project led by Hákon IV of Norway appears to have been at least partially motivated by a desire to bring Scandinavia into Continental discourses, making it less peripheral within the world of Latin Europe (Sif Rikhardsdóttir 2008; see also Grove 2008 discussing the case of Greenland specifically). The literary production of this period reflects the tensions between Scandinavia and the rest of Latin Christendom, between the Scandinavian countries, and between Scandinavia and the Baltic region, inviting analysis and contextualization in those contexts.

Völsunga saga and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, preserved one after the other in the manuscript NKS 1824 b 4to, are two of the best-known *fornaldarsögur*, and may have been compiled as a pair. Much research into the contexts of the sagas have focused on their likely composition in the later 13th century, potentially as a response to the translation projects of e.g. *Piðreks saga af Bern*. However, following Hans Jacob Orning's (2017) study of the *Hrafnistumannasögur*, there is evidently value in considering each specific manuscript attestation. This paper seeks to do so with particular focus on the geographic landscape of the sagas. It outlines the geography portrayed in each of the two sagas, then seeks to interpret that geography in terms of the political geography around when the manuscript was produced. In so doing, it demonstrates the centering of Denmark in these sagas, an important ideological parallel to the formation of the Kalmar Union contemporary to the creation of the saga manuscript.

Underpinning this analysis is the spectrum between center and periphery. Outlined by Kirsten Hastrup (1985) and refined by Margaret Clunies Ross (1994), this framework describes central places as ones relative safety, security, and 'civilization', in contrast to the rich but dangerous periphery. Gods and humans alike must travel out of the central spaces, having a negotiated, not-quite-reciprocal relationship with the peripheral entities. The negotiation is highly ideological, often displaying a bias towards to central entity as it seeks to expand its borders. Ideology can be demonstrated in human untrustworthiness or through monstrous preternatural entities, enacted on any scale between the hyper-local and the cosmological. This is clearly evidenced particularly in *Ragnars saga*, which will be described in more detail below.

Geography in *Völsunga saga*

Carolynne Larrington has described the geography in *Völsunga saga* as a tale of two halves. The first half of the saga has a much more concrete geography than the second half, which has an almost complete dearth of place names (Larrington 2012: 11). This is not to suggest that the first half has anything resembling a concrete geography – most place names are either unidentifiable or broad, but even so, it is much more spatially-oriented than the courtly second half of the saga. The two halves also display notably different approaches to constructing a secure, and therefore ideologically central, places.

The first portion of the saga (i.e. Sigmundur's life and the killing of the dragon Fáfnir) use monstrosity as the primary marker of peripherality. The clearest example of this is Siggeir's kingdom in Gautland, and its wealth of werewolves. While Völsungr's Húnalund is not free from the preternatural, in Siggeir's kingdom, all semblance of social order breaks down. While Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir notes a consistent association between the Völsungar and wolves

(2007: 285-286), this is conflated with a beast-like nature that enables violence and the violation of social norms throughout the saga. In Gautland, shapeshifting from Siggeir's mother, Sigmundr, Signy, and Sinfjötli lead to a cavalcade of kinslaying, incest, and other heinous deeds. It is only upon the return from Gautland to Húnaþland, where Sigmundr succeeds Völsungr, that morality is re-established and affects Sinfjötli's reputation. Up until Sigurðr's travels down the Rhine, the saga establishes a very narrow band of "centrality" in the kingdoms of Húnaþland and Denmark. Outside of these two small lands, either renown or monstrosity is to be found, in either case being established as more peripheral and less moral than southernmost Scandinavia.

If we map the geography of the back half of the saga, unlike the first the resulting map has little resemblance to any real-world geography. A vague forest covers the Holy Roman Empire, with kingdoms scattered about in only vague relationship to each other. As a result, the "courtly" (that is to say, Continental) part of the saga is left distorted and barely recognizable. This is not plausible to interpret as a lack of knowledge about the geography of mainland Europe, even in the 5th century. Instead, it can and must be read as an inversion of the usual distortion of a *mappamundi* (Chekin 1993). Scandinavia is portrayed relatively favorably and precisely, and the farther away one travels from that periphery, the less resemblance it bears to the physical world. While the northern reaches of the world are not represented (no space farther north than Geatland appears), it is reasonable to assume, given contemporary Norse attitudes to the Sámi people,¹ that if the map was projected farther, it would also delve rapidly into distortion.

Völsunga saga offers only the first portion of the saga duology, and focuses strongly on the southern reaches of the world. However, the geography is so vague that it is difficult to reach any firm conclusions. The relative precision of the geography of southern Scandinavia supports Larryngton's argument of a northern interest in the saga (2012: 61), but Gautland is carefully excised from this central position through the use of the supernatural, leaving Denmark as the most important location in the saga.

Geography in *Ragnars saga*

In contrast to *Völsunga saga*, *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* demonstrates a much more precise understanding of the geography of Europe, and makes the centrality of Denmark even more explicit. The geography can be split into several rough rings across Europe: in the center is Denmark, where even the ultraviolent sons of Ragnar behave in a more courtly manner and restrain the impulses they otherwise indulge in. Just outside of that are the kingdoms of Gautland and Norway, which can feature supernatural entities like the dragon that traps Þóra, but are also closely tied to Denmark via marriage with Þóra and Áslaug. Beyond that lies the true periphery, where demons, ghosts, and treachery lie. These are the kingdom of Sweden, with Eysteinn and his demonic Cow Sibilja, the Holy Roman Empire with the ghost, according to *Norna-Gests þáttur*, that protects Rome, and England with the betrayals of Ælla of Northumbria. These peripheral rings have a distinctly moral component – with the sole exception of Rome, which is made beyond the world of the saga, travel into and conquest of the periphery occupies the main interest of the saga text.

Unlike in the cosmological spectrum of center and periphery, where the existence of the periphery is eternal and preserved via negotiation, the world of *Ragnars saga* extends only as far as the center expands. Each ring is overcome by Denmark and incorporated into Ragnarr's kingdom, and eventually divided amongst his sons. By the end of the saga, everywhere that is visited is "central," turning raiding into a civilizing force. The dragons and spooks of Sweden are eliminated, and Ívarr earns the loyalty of the men of Northumbria, protecting the land until William the Conqueror finally overcomes his unrotted corpse. Any pan-Scandinavian identity, and indeed a collective North Sea identity, is pinned on the unifying power of Ragnarr and his sons, and their fame is handed down to the kingdom of Denmark.

¹ See Orning, 2017 for analysis of the Sámi in *Ketils saga hængs* as one example.

Explaining the absence of the Baltic

There are no shortage of voyages and trips into the sea in *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*. Helgi Hundingsbani and Sinfjötli raid the lands of Hundingr and Hoddbroddr, Sigurðr sails to the lands of King Lyngvi to avenge Sigmundr's death, Guðrún throws herself into the sea and washes up at Jónakr's kingdom, Ragnarr sails to Gautland and Norway in his youth, the Ragnarssons sail to Gnifafjörðr where Rögnvald dies, they sail to Svíþjóð to fight Eysteinn, and Ragnarr sails to England where he dies. In all of this, there are incredibly few mentions of the Baltic. The only identifiable mention of a place farther east than the island of Gotland is at the very end of *Ragnars saga*, when telling the fates of the Ragnarssons. The saga reads:

En Hvítserkr, sonr hennar, hafði herjat eithvert sinn í Austrveg, ok kom svá mikit ofrefli í mót honum, at hann mátti eigi rönd við reisa, ok varð hann handtekinn. En hann kaus sér þann dauðdaga, at bál skyldi gera af mannahöfðum; þar skyldi hann brenna, ok svá lét hann líf sitt. (*Ragnars saga*: 18)

But Hvítserkr, her son, had raided on his own in the Baltic, and such a great force came to oppose him, that he could not withstand their force, and he was captured. And he chose for himself that execution, that a pyre should be made from the heads of men; there should he burn, and so give up his life.

Not only is this one of very few exceptions to the centralizing geography outlined earlier, it is the only mention of peoples east of Sweden at all! The absence of the Baltic is palpable in these sagas, especially given the prominence ships and sailing have in the latter text. The many kingdoms mentioned all cluster to the west, occupying what was by the composition of the sagas, much less their recording, Latin Christendom. The sagas seem completely unconcerned with the deep and long-lasting links between Scandinavia, the Baltic, and the Rus'. However, this is actually a *greater* mention of the Baltic than the other main attestation of the tale of the Ragnarssons. The *Páttir af Ragnarssonum*, preserved in *Hauksbók*, eliminates this mention of Hvítserkr's death, saying only that he rules over "Reiðgotaland ok Vindland" (*Páttir af Ragnarssonum*: 3).

It therefore ought to be seen as significant that the only time the Baltic appears in connection with this narrative, it is in the context of *ofrefli*, that is to say overwhelming force. The Northern Crusades, led by Magnus Eriksson of Sweden and Valdemar IV of Denmark, were incredibly important in the 14th century political climate, and crusading culture continued under Margethe I of the Kalmar Union (Jensen 2007). This crusading culture manifested in anxieties about the vulnerability of Scandinavia to "heathen" attacks from the Baltic, even after the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1386. It is therefore plausible to read Hvítserkr's death as a reflection of that anxiety – even the greatest warriors of Scandinavia were vulnerable to capture against the might and fury of the Baltic peoples.

This lens also offers insight into the rest of the saga duology. The Kalmar Union, founded due in part to the Danish royal family's feuding with nobles of the Hanseatic League, was not an inevitability formed out of pan-Scandinavian elite identity (Bøgh 1997). It instead required immediate expansion and self-justification. It is therefore significant that Denmark is consistently portrayed as a bastion of Scandinavian security and identity in the sagas, and the Ragnarssons' wars of conquest are seen as expanding the central place and eliminating the monstrous elements from the landscape. The "Re-Scandinavization" of *Völsunga saga* must also be read as a "Danishization" of it. While this does not mean that the sagas were composed with such a goal in mind, their inclusion in NKS 1824 b 4to at the end of the fourteenth century indicates a possible resonance between the contemporary political situation in the Scandinavian world and these ancient stories.

Further Research

Much remains to be done to explore the connection NKS 1824 b 4to has to the formation of the Kalmar Union and the significance of the Baltic within this milieu. While this paper raised the

possibility of a link, two options present themselves as future research options. The first is a more complete study of the manuscript and its contents, to see if the pattern of Danish centrality established in *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* is preserved throughout. Additionally, more detailed comparison of the two medieval manuscripts of *Ragnars saga* is required to see if the geography between the two varies in a way suggestive of changing contemporary concerns that the fictional narratives respond to. Such a project would be fruitful and continue to develop our understanding of the *fornaldarsögur* as themselves ideologically meaningful reflections of the medieval Scandinavian worldview.

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Hallgerðr's hair and breeches: The original meaning of Hallgerðr Hǫskuldsdóttir's nicknames

Bjarni Gunnar Ásgeirsson, University of Iceland

In *Njáls saga*, the following description of Hallgerðr langbrók Hǫskuldsdóttir, and explanation of her nickname, is given: “Hallgerðr [...] er kvenna fríðust sýnum ok mikil vexti, ok því var hon langbrók kǫlluð” (ÍF 12: 29). Even though this explanation is included in every edition of the saga, the manuscript evidence suggests that it is not original to the saga, but a later scribal addition. Hallgerðr and her nickname appear in other sources, for example in *Landnámabók*, where her namesake Hallgerðr Tungu-Oddsdóttir, is said to have been “kvenna best hærð [...] á Íslandi með Hallgerði langbrók” (ÍF 1: 192). However, in another version of *Landnámabók*, as well as in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Hallgerðr Hǫskuldsdóttir's nickname is not langbrók but snúinbrók. Outside of *Njáls saga*, no clarification accompanies these nicknames.

The explanation of the nickname langbrók as given in some manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, i.e. that it refers to her height, has usually been accepted, while attempts to explain snúinbrók have been more varied and less successful; Finnur Jónsson suggested that it has something to do with twisted cloth while Karl Rygh simply stated that it is derogatory without clarifying why. Although Hallgerðr is said to be “mikil vexti”, her stature does not play a significant role in *Njáls saga*. The same cannot be said about her most defining feature: her hair. In the saga, Hallgerðr's physical appearance is described four times, and each time her hair is mentioned. The great emphasis on Hallgerðr's hair can be interpreted as foreshadowing, as her hair plays an important role when her husband Gunnarr is killed.

Some critics have found *Njáls saga*'s explanation of Hallgerðr's nickname langbrók unsatisfactory and have pointed out that perhaps the second component of it should not be read brók, but brok, a word that usually refers to cotton grass but has been recorded (in later Icelandic) as referring to hair. In this paper, I will argue on textual and linguistic grounds that langbrók and snúinbrók have nothing to do with breeches but rather refer to Hallgerðr's hair.

Resonant motion in the poems of Eyvindr Skáldaspillir Finnsson

Isobel Boles, University of California, Berkeley

This paper explores the poetry of Eyvindr Finnsson and his place within the corpus of Old Norse skaldic poetry. Eyvindr, a tenth-century Norwegian skald to three rulers of Norway, is often discussed in terms of his relation to other poets; his *kenninafn* (nickname), *skáldaspillir* (spoiler of skalds), has sometimes been translated as “the plagiarist,” due to the striking similarities of two of his extant poems to older works. The name has also been interpreted as praise of Eyvindr’s poetic skill, and as proof that his medieval audience valued his innovations in mastering his art. This paper discusses one of the distinctive features of Eyvindr’s extant poems, *Hákonarmál*, *Háleygjatal*, and his *lausavísur*, the creation of “resonant motion” by the use of verbs, verbal forms, or certain nouns that indicate repetitive or ongoing actions within the scene presented in a stanza or in the stanza’s metaphorical imagery. This results in the audience’s experience of time and motion as slow and unending during scenes of battle or at memorial sites. The paper also explores whether this feature is unique or widespread within the skaldic corpus. While resonant motion is central and highlighted in Eyvindr’s works, it is also associated with battle scenes in other contexts within the older poems of the skaldic corpus.

The othered woman: Language changes in the translation of the supernatural in *Rómverja saga*

Natasha A J Bradley, University of Oxford

Rómverja saga, an Old Norse account of the history of the Roman Republic, has often escaped critical attention despite its clear interest for literary study. Containing accounts of battles, fraught relationships, and supernatural occurrences, the saga is filled with exciting scenes adapted from its Latin sources (Sallust and Lucan). My research, attempting to fill part of the gap in criticism on *Rómverja saga*, examines the literary depictions of the human supernatural figures within the saga. Using Venuti's theory of domestication and foreignisation, a gendered difference is found within the treatment of the supernatural figures: the female supernatural figures are domesticated noticeably more than the male.

This paper takes two case studies within the saga to evidence this trend: Arruns the haruspex and the witch Erictho. The translator-redactors of *Rómverja saga* maintain Arruns' classical methods of prophecy and use a variety of rare Old Norse words with links to Latinity to depict the figure. The witch Erictho, however, is treated with some creative freedom, both in the language used to describe her and in the drawing which accompanies her story in the manuscript AM 595 a-b 4to. Instead of a classical witch performing classical magic to prophesy, the Erictho of *Rómverja saga* has the characteristics of *tröll* and *völur* from the Old Norse literary tradition. This trend, the repeated domestication of the female supernatural figures in contrast to the foreignisation of the male, is reflected across the other supernatural figures within *Rómverja saga*.

After evidencing this gendered difference through close literary analysis of the language chosen to represent the supernatural figures, this paper then explores the potential reasons behind this trend. The translator-redactors of *Rómverja saga* had ample examples of both male and female supernatural figures within the Old Norse literary tradition, and yet still chose to make extensive domesticating changes exclusively with the female supernatural figures. This paper attempts to find a reason for this, drawing conclusions relating to gender, power, and the literary ability to control.

Disruption in *Hárbarðsljóð*

Manu Braithwaite-Westoby, University of Sydney

Modern scholarship divides the eddic poem *Hárbarðsljóð* (c. 1220) into three parts: a *senna* or flyting (1-14), a *mannjafnaðr* ‘comparison of men’ (15-46) and an ‘aftermath’ (47-60). It takes place at an unnamed fjord, which separates the opponents, the Old Norse gods Þórr and Óðinn (the latter is disguised as a ferryman). The poem reports that Þórr was returning from an excursion into Giantland when he encounters Óðinn, who refuses to let him cross, despite his awareness of Þórr’s identity and thus their consanguinity. For Þórr this is a major disruption: he tries every trick in the book to make it to the other side of the fjord, including both flattery and threats, but in the end is forced to go the long way around where he risks running into evil beings. Even though many of the indictments made against him are demonstrably untrue, it is an intensely embarrassing situation for Þórr as his ability to perform the role of *miðgarðz véor* (‘Protector of Miðgarðr’) relies heavily on unrestricted access to different spatial realms. In this paper I will examine in greater depth the ways in which Þórr is ‘disrupted’ on his journey and how this is an unusual portrayal of him compared to other Norse texts.

Hybridity and selfhood in Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli*

Daniel Brielmaier, University of Toronto

This paper examines the rhetorical strategies of selfhood employed by the poet Einarr Skúlason in his pivotal Christian skaldic poem *Geisli*.

Einarr Skúlason was born in the last decade of the eleventh-century, after a transformative period that saw the North converted to Christianity and the subsequent emergence of a strong Christian, Latin textual culture which eventually grew to embrace and support native vernacular traditions. Educated as a priest and skald, his primary occupation seems to have been as a professional skald to several rulers. Einarr's reputation among scholars rests on the traditionally-crafted stanzas collected together under the name *Øxarflokkr*, and on the technically superior praise-poem – composed in honour of St. Óláfr Haraldsson, the unofficial but widely recognized patron saint of the North – *Geisli*. This *drápa* is most significant for its successful fusion of Christian imagery together with the pagan and heroic elements integral to skaldic tradition, making it the most influential Christian *drápa* – and perhaps the first significant poetic Christian composition in the vernacular – for several centuries.

The hybrid qualities of his compositional style have commanded most of the limited scholarly attention given to *Geisli*, but of equal interest must be the hybrid nature of the poet himself and how he positions himself within the poem. In this paper, I will show how Einarr expands on the traditional assertiveness of the skald to claim for himself also the authority of a priest, eventually insinuating himself into the central metaphor of the poem itself, the *geisli* or “light-beam,” which simultaneously signifies the intercessional powers of Christ and Óláfr Haraldsson, and ultimately of Einarr himself.

Women, trolls, and manuscripts: Female aspects of saga production, character drawing and transmission of the *fornaldarsögur*

Valerie Broustin, University of Bonn, & Rudolf Simek, University of Bonn, em.

Not only the various artistic, literary and even scholarly representations of the 19th and earlier 20th century show an utterly anachronistic picture of the life of women in the Viking Age: Either (as favoured by the Neo-Raffaelites) as Victims of Viking raids, or else (as favoured by William Morris and other translators of ON Sagas) as proud heroines and – at the most – faithful and devoted wives.

Times have changed, and the picture of Viking Age Women has certainly changed with them: books published in the last 30 years, which you all know, have identified a whole range of literary functions of women in the sagas. However, one thing has not changed very much – with the exception of some PhD-theses – namely that both the genre used and the types of literary figures identified are centered on the *Íslendinga sögur*, and other genres only receive a sideways glance: proud princesses getting humiliated in the *Riddarasögur*, and the currently oh-so-fashionable war-like heroines in two or three of the *Fornaldarsögur* (FAS).

Yet, there is already a substantial list of female rôles identified in the past, namely

- The goader
- The beautiful bride
- The noble ancestor
- The „dark“ ancestor
- The wise housewife
- The peace-maker
- The poetess: *skáldmaer*, *skáldkona*
- *The Valkyries / Skjáldmær/ meykonungr*

This list can be extended substantially by looking at the *Fornaldarsögur* and related texts standing close to the sagas selected by Rafn and the subsequent editors.

The roles in these sagas comprise not only of the frequently highlighted Maiden king and /or valkyrie, but also of

- The evil stepmother
- The female helper
- The trollish seductress
- The helpful & smart bride
- The wise /prescient/magically gifted foster-mother (trollish or otherwise)
- The healer (*Gríms s. loðinkinna*, *Sturlaugs s. starfsama*, *Hrómundar s. G.*)
- The self-confident widow

To get a clearer picture of the whole range of possibilities, we have extended the corpus somewhat, and the reason for this is easily explained: although some of the sagas additionally chosen do have vestiges of the romantic fables, acted out in Southern Europe and beyond, several also show the same predilection for Northern and Eastern Europe, for battles and sea journeys, and the mythological cast of the more traditional FAS: trolls, giants, berserks and the like, not to mention dragons and other fabulous beasts. The most important argument, however, is direct references to other *Fornaldarsögur* and/or a claim to genealogical connections between saga heroes. Such cross-references can be found in *Gull-Þóris saga* (> *Halfdanar sag Eysteinnssonar*), *Samsons saga fagra* (> *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*), *Vilmundar saga viðútan* (> *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*), *Ála flekks saga* (> *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*), *Þjalar-Jóns saga* (> *Völsunga saga*).

Using these criteria, we could extend the list of Fornaldarsögur as published by Rafn and (some) subsequent editors¹ by several texts, beyond the ones already listed, e.g. *Dámusta saga*, *Kirialax saga*, *Sigurðar saga þögla* and *Vilhjálm's saga sjóðs*.

In that extended corpus, we find a wide variety of often very positively drawn women who appear in various roles like queens, princesses, widows, foster- or stepmothers and seem to be very helpful for the saga heroes and the success of their quests.

Among those texts, we can read about some truly remarkable women, as in *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, *Vilhjálm's saga sjóðs*, *Dámusta saga*, *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* and *Áns saga bogsveigis*. We could just remind you of the stunning speech in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, whereby Ingibjörg chooses her husband with an extended parable of two apple trees.

On the other hand, there are a few examples where the panegyric of a princess turns out to be a false lead, as the heroine in question turns out to be all but a paradigm of medieval womanhood: she is vain, proud and cruel to suitors to the point of utter sadism. Of course, she is in due course humiliated herself by the story's protagonist, but in sum these girls seem to serve more as bad examples than anything else. One might interpret it as girls' educational literature by bad examples, but we shall not talk about these girls today.

So let's turn to another interesting detail in these sagas – genealogies. Here we find a very interesting connection in the *Hrafnistumannasögur* saga-cycle:

- Ketils saga hængs
- Gríms saga loðinkinna
- Örvar-Odds saga
- Áns saga bogsveigis

In these texts the saga protagonists are descendants of a halftroll named Hallbjörn who is the father of Ketil hængr. His son is Grímr loðinkinni (who also has a trollish mother), the father of Örvar-Oddr and of course there is Ánn bogsveigir, the grandson of Ketil hængs daughter Hrafnhildr. If you follow the family line further you find out that the Hrafnistumenn are the ancestors of many members of the Icelandic elite, e.g. bishops Ísleifr Gizurarson (1006–1080) and his son Gizurr Ísleifsson (1042–1118), Styrmir Kárason (†1245) and Haukr Erlendsson (†1334) who both compiled versions of *Landnámabók* (the now lost *Styrmisbók* and the *Hauksbók*). In the fifteenth century you find descendants like the skald Loptr ríki Guttormsson (†1432).

Of course, genealogies don't solve all the problems we face when trying to interpret these sagas, or even the role of women in them: there are some enigmatic details and motifs which need further clarification, e.g. why there occasionally seems to be some sort of bedside talk between the hero and the girl's foster-mother; and why does he sometimes even have to share the bed with the foster-mother? And from which tradition stems the fact that the girl seems to have a detailed pedigree, but her foster-mother seems to have no ancestry at all: is this a reflection of the otherworldly foster-mothers of Arthurian and other Celtic romance, plus a blind motive? Here is work for literary scholars as well as folklorists!

So let's turn back to the fifteenth century and the skald Loptr ríki Guttormsson who is a descendant of the saga hero Ánn bogsveigir. His son Þorvarðr married Margrét Vigfúsdóttir (†1486) who became the head of the farm Möðruvellir fram in Northern Iceland. Nine manuscripts were written there in her time, some of them including texts of the so-called fantastic saga genres *Fornaldar*- and *Riddarasögur* like AM 343a 4to (1450-1475). And we also have the manuscripts GKS 1002-1003 fol. (1667-1670) which are as well connected to Loptr and, in this case, his daughter Ólöf ríka Loptsdóttir. Her descendant, bishop of Hólar Björn Þorleifsson (†1710), who lived at Oddi before he became bishop, presented these two manuscripts written by Páll Sveinsson in the seventeenth century. Looking at these facts we have

¹ Some later editions have already included one or the other further texts, like *Bardar saga Snæfellsáss*, but mainly from the genre of legendary romances (Iceland *Riddarasögur*).

connections between these women, the Icelandic clerical and literary elite and the heroes of the *Fornaldarsögur* who are their ancestors.

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Iceland, Baltic, Turkmenistan: The archaeological connections of the Mosfell excavations

Jesse Byock, University of Iceland / University of California, Los Angeles

The Mosfell excavations in Southwest Iceland have unearthed artifacts connecting Iceland with trade passing through the Baltic and originating in Central Asia, along what has become known as the “silk route”. My paper discusses such long-distance connections in light of the Hrísrú longhouse in the Mosfell Valley (Mosfellsdalur) and the Leiruvogur Harbor excavations. The archaeological farmstead and harbor remains unearthed by the Mosfell Archaeological Project are known from the sagas, and the Mosfell excavations are a successful example of the methodology of integrating sagas and archaeology. The Mosfell region (Mosfellssveit) is culturally and economically representative of high-status farmsteads in Viking Age Iceland. In some ways, the Hrísrú longhouse and its surrounding valley system was a self-contained social and economic unit. In other ways, it was connected to the rest of Iceland through a network of horse paths, including a direct east-west route to the nearby meeting of the yearly Althing. At the same time, with its coastal port at Leiruvogur, which is one of the most frequently mentioned ship landing sites in the sagas, the region was in commercial and cultural contact with the Scandinavian mainland and more distant foreign worlds to the east, west, and south.

‘Eg hørde på dæn hundegaul i míne langsomme dagar’: the otherworldly dogs of Medieval Europe

Ashley Castelino, University of Oxford

Medieval literary otherworlds and underworlds are full of dogs. This paper explores how otherworldly dogs are represented in the literature of medieval Iceland and Scandinavia, tracing influences and connections with the wider circum-Baltic arena and beyond. Two roles of dogs are focussed on: as infernal tormenters, and as guards between worlds.

The former begins with the *Vision of Tnugdalus* tradition, exploring how demonic dogs and other animals are translated differently in the Old Norse *Duggals leizla* and other languages across Europe, considering also its influence on *Páls leizla* and the later *Draumkvedet* ballad tradition. From Cerberus to the Old Norse Garmr to the hounds of the *Kalevala*, the latter considers how the infernal guard dog evolved in medieval literature and was interpreted by post-medieval writers. Finally, this paper will apply the discussed tropes to the archaeological context of dogs found buried in graves all around the Baltic Sea.

Ok þá kvað hann vísu: Sagas and the ongoing history of skaldic reception

Ben Chennells, University College London

One of the distinguishing features of skaldic poetry is its attribution to named poets. In fact, despite the long-standing debate on the differences between skaldic and eddic poetry, the anonymity of the latter's composers is, as McKinnell (2022: 111–13) argues, potentially the only consistent distinction between the two. Where we have relatively abundant access to records of skaldic poets, however, information about their audiences is rarely so forthcoming. Writing about situational verses in *Heimskringla* (1941–1951), for example, Diana Whaley (1993: 262) notes how they are frequently represented as being “spoken as though into a vacuum”, eliciting no response from their recipients. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that exploration of skaldic poetry and its representation in sagas has mostly taken place from a performer-centric perspective (e.g., Millward 2014). Exceptions to this tendency are represented, for example, by Emily Osborne's (2012) work on how skalds address absent and future audiences, and by Bergsveinn Birgisson's (2008: 167–68) theory of skaldic poetry's aesthetics of “contrast-tension”, which, he suggests, functions to make it more memorable for audiences by producing bizarre, striking images. Equally, however, these studies tend to focus on the influence performers exerted over audiences. This is, again, understandable; performance artforms are in many ways defined by the co-presence of actors and spectators and neither group can be wholly isolated in analysis (cf. McAuley 1999: 3). Examination of skaldic audiences in their own right, however, remains an under-developed area of study. Much as these groups may take up the periphery in sagas and scholarship their presence is incontrovertible, as secure as the fact that poetry and performance are designed to be received.

In this paper, I will make a case for the importance of reception when analysing the presence and performance of skaldic poetry in sagas. Given that much of the poetry originally existed only in oral tradition, many of the audiences of skaldic poetry are inaccessible to us, and this emphasises the need for consideration of saga narratives as participants within the corpus's long reception history. The medieval manuscripts containing skaldic poetry are almost exclusively prosimetric, that is, they involve a mixture of poetry and prose. In saga prosimetrum, skaldic verses are commonly conceived as being deployed in one of two ways, either as ‘authenticating’ verses, which act to corroborate events described in the prose, or as ‘situational’ verses, which are furnished with reimagined performance contexts within the world of the narrative (see further Whaley 1993). Verses of the latter type, as Whaley's comment acknowledges, often fail to elicit responses from their audiences, and exceptions to this tendency are, therefore, more notable. Rather than attempting to speak to the breadth of the issue of skaldic audiences in this paper, I will focus, instead, on two instances of notable audience response in *Gíffarðs þáttir* and *Einars þáttir Skúlasonar* (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 51–56, 221–225).¹ These are two of *Morkinskinna*'s many *þættir*, the function of which have been variously interpreted. The prevailing view has been to consider the *Morkinskinna* *þættir* as illustrating the characters of the kings about whom the surrounding saga narrative is composed (Rowe 2017: 155), and to highlight the experience of Icelanders within their courts (Ármann Jakobsson 2014: 287–92). Thomas Morcom (2020, 94) has also recently considered the *þættir* within a framework of ‘narrative insurrection’, as part of which they temporarily centre ‘a socially marginal and disruptive figure alongside the presiding king within the Norwegian *hirð*’. Aspects of all these arguments can be found in *Gíffarðs þáttir* and *Einars þáttir Skúlasonar*, both of which, as I will demonstrate here, take an unusual degree of interest in the role and make-up of skaldic audiences. By focusing on this aspect of these episodes, I will demonstrate the ways in which they represent and interrogate broader cultural values of skaldic verse, such as its association with historical authenticity and royal power.

¹ Note that I use *Gíffarðs þáttir* and *Einars þáttir Skúlasonar* to refer to these episodes only for convenience. The titles are modern inventions, and neither episode is demarcated in any way from the surrounding prose in *Morkinskinna*.

Giffarðs þáttur

Giffarðs þáttur is set during the reign of King Magnús berfœttr Ólafsson (r. 1093–1103). It is anomalous in the broader context of *Morkinskinna's þættir* since its protagonist is neither Icelandic nor Norwegian. Giffarðr is, rather, a knight from Normandy, who seeks to join Magnús's retinue. The narrative can be summarised as follows: Giffarðr initially joins Magnús berfœttr on a campaign into Sweden. When Magnús battles against King Ingi Steinkelsson at Fuxerna, however, Giffarðr is absent and only arrives after the conflict. Magnús and one of his soldiers exchange verses accusing Giffarðr of cowardice and Giffarðr leaves the company to travel to England. Giffarðr proves to be an equally unreliable seaman, however, and is mocked in verse by an Icelandic called Eldjárn during the journey. Giffarðr seeks to prosecute Eldjárn in England, but the Icelandic deceives the official appointed to judge the case by reciting a verse that ironically praises Giffarðr's deeds at Fuxerna.

The story is tripartite in structure, involving three separate performances of skaldic poetry: 1) the verse exchange between Magnús and his retainer; 2) Eldjárn's mockery of Giffarðr on the way to England; 3) Eldjárn's adapted verse at the legal hearing in England. These verses are all about Giffarðr, who is the focal point for the episode, and yet he has no control over their composition or performance. In other words, in *Giffarðs þáttur* we have a story about a recurring, and completely unwilling, skaldic audience. I will now examine each performance scene consecutively before proposing how, as a cohesive unit, they represent an interrogation by the *Morkinskinna* author of the historicity of skaldic poetry.

The first performance occurs before the battle at Fuxerna, beginning with a couplet from King Magnús, who notices Giffarðr's absence and asks: *Vill hann eigi flokk várn fylla? | Falsk riddari enn valski?* "Does he not want to join our troop? Is the French knight hiding?" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 53). An anonymous retainer answers immediately with a full *dróttkvætt* stanza:

Spurði gramr hvat gerði
Giffarðr þars lið barðisk;
vér ruðum vópni í dreyra,
vasat hann kominn þannig.
Framreiðar vas fnauði
fulltrauðr af jó rauðum;
vill hann eigi flokk várn,
fylla riddari enn valski.
(*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 53)

The ruler asked what Giffarðr did where the troop fought. We reddened weapons in blood; he had not come there. The coward was very reluctant to ride forth on a red horse. He does not wish to join our troop; the French knight hides himself.

The simple syntax of these verses is immediately striking. An audience familiar with the skaldic form presumably would not find these to be as cryptic as some other *dróttkvætt* verses. This relatively easy form of communication is in keeping with the narrative function of the exchange, which illustrates a social bond based on cultural ties. Magnús's couplet is a call to which his follower wholeheartedly responds. Unnamed, this soldier appears to vocalise the feeling of the whole group towards Giffarðr. His appropriation of Magnús's lines is not a cynical act, but one that confirms his perspective as being completely aligned with that of his king. Taken together, the two verses come close to presenting skaldic performance as "the exclusive domain of the Nordic comitatus", to quote John Lindow's (1975: 321) well-known argument. Although the exchange does not embody the initiatory function that Lindow envisions, it certainly affirms and maintains the discrete membership of Magnús's troops, to which Giffarðr is pointedly excluded. The emphasis on group identity is further indicated in the interchange of roles within this performance arena; Magnús and the anonymous retainer both take up the roles of performer and audience alternately, and this illustrates a kind of equality one would not always associate with

interactions between kings and poets. Giffarðr's absence, then, is not simply presented as being from the conflict at Fuxerna, but also from the community at its core.

The second performance in the *páttir* takes place on board a ship destined for England. Having failed to prove himself with Magnús, Giffarðr now proves to be an equally unreliable sailor, unable to bail out the ship when they encounter stormy weather. Eldjárn, the episode's Icelandic antagonist, sees this and extemporises a verse, which is placed in the following context:

Ok eitt sinn er Eldjárn gengr til austrar ok sér hvar Giffarðr liggr þá kveðr hann vísu:

Hví samir hitt at dúsa
hirðmanni geðstirðum?
Verðr nú, þótt kjöl kosti,
knár riddari enn hári.
Þats satt at ek býð byttu,
breiðhúfum, reiða,
austrs til hór of hesti
hvaljarðar, Giffarði.

Ok síðan taka þeir England. (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 54–55)

And one time, when Eldjárn goes to bail and sees where Giffarðr lies, he speaks a verse:

Why does it befit the wit-stiff retainer to sit around? Be hardy now, hoary knight, though the keel is strained. It is true that I command Giffarðr to carry a bucket; the bilge-water is too high in the broad-hulled horse of the whale-land [> SHIP].

And then they reached England.

Where Giffarðr was physical absent during the first performance, here his inability to engage in a highly masculine environment is more explicit. Accused of elderliness and inertia by Eldjárn, Giffarðr fails to exhibit the vigour and virility expected of a sailor or, indeed, a warrior. Just as among Magnús's troops, he is an exception in this community. There is also a recurring sense that Giffarðr does little to help himself in these situations. From the prose immediately following the verse, we are left to assume that the knight has no initial response for Eldjárn. Instead, Giffarðr waits until they arrive in England, where he claims he has been *níddan í kveðskap* "slandered in poetry" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 55). This seems to be a bit of an over-reaction, albeit a delayed one. Eldjárn's verse contains a couple of biting remarks, certainly, but nothing damning, or potentially even untrue. Eldjárn is criticising Giffarðr's passivity precisely because he wants the knight to be active. In the desperation of a sea storm, Eldjárn needs his companions to be working as hard as possible, and his verse serves as a poetic slap in the face to this effect. The provocative nature of Eldjárn's verse draws it into comparison with Magnús's couplet; both are calls that invite an audience response. Giffarðr, however, unlike Magnús's retainer, appears not to offer any immediate rebuttal, despite his understanding that he has been severely insulted.

As noted above, it is not uncommon for silence to follow a situational verse in saga literature. Such silences, however, frequently merit interpretation in themselves, a fact all the more evident in this case, given the importance of audience interaction in the previous exchange of verses. In his theory of the reception of literary texts, Wolfgang Iser (2006) highlights the importance of "blanks", areas in a text where information seems to be withheld or missing, and which readers must negotiate to flesh out meaning. Iser (2006: 64) points out that blanks can be structured, functioning "as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves, because they stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text". In the form of the verse exchange between Magnús and his retainer, the author of *Morkinskinna* has provided terms through which the blank in Giffarðr's response can be interpreted. Where the first skaldic performance demonstrated cohesion within a social group, this second demonstrates more of a breakdown in communication. As a Frenchman, Giffarðr may simply have been unable to understand Eldjárn's verse, although this is contravened to some extent by the fact that

he knows it constitutes slander. If, then, it's Giffarðr's choice to keep quiet, then his silence is one that speaks volumes regarding his character. It emasculates him, and excludes him from both homosocial and linguistic forms of cultural exchange.

In the *páttir*'s third performance, Giffarðr's humiliation is compounded. In England, Giffarðr secures the services of a *greifi* (denoting some kind of "count") and summons Eldjárn to trial. Eldjárn denies slandering Giffarðr and offers to recite the incriminating verse, which he revises as follows:

Frák at flótta rókuð
– falsk annat lið manna,
þar vas harðr, es ek heyrða,
hernaðr – á Foxerni.
Varð hjalmþrimu herðis
hór, þars staddir vóru,
gangr, þars gauzka drengi
Giffarðr í hel barði.
(*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 55)

I heard that you pursued the fleeing ones at Fuxerna – the other host of men hid themselves – it was hard harrying there, I've heard. The course of the increaser of the helmet-clash was glorious, where you were stopped, where Giffarðr beat into Hel warriors from Götaland.

Naturally, the count concludes that the verse is praising rather than shaming but Giffarðr, knowing Eldjárn's statements to be hyperbolic lies, understands the content to be *háð en eigi lof* "mockery and not praise" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 55). Although nothing of these events features in *Heimskringla*, Sigurðr Nordal (1973: 136) has highlighted the close correspondence between this phrase and the statement in *Heimskringla*'s prologue that skalds would not over-exaggerate praise when presenting it, for *þat væri þá háð, en eigi lof* "that would then be mockery, and not praise" (*Heimskringla* 1941–1951, I: 5). If the connection is legitimate, and Kari Ellen Gade (2000) has argued convincingly that this story would have been available to Snorri, then the argument would seem to be rather ill-founded. In her paper at the International Saga Conference in 2018, for example, Erin Michelle Goeres (2018) suggested that "the episode makes a mockery not only of Giffarðr but of the very idea of the 'authenticating' verse as it shows how easy it is to substitute one verbal utterance for another". Goeres highlighted several ways in which Eldjárn's praise is ironic, including an allusion back to Magnús's original ditty in the second line, and a pun on Eldjárn's earlier use of the word *hárr* "hoary", which is here substituted for *hár* "high". To these examples, I would add the use of the verb *steðja* in the sixth line, which can mean both "to make firm" and "to stop". The polysemy of the word is, again, deliciously ironic, allowing for comparison between the fiction of Eldjárn's praise, in which Giffarðr is a steadfast warrior, and the reality of Giffarðr's actions at Fuxerna, in which he "stopped" well before reaching the battle. Such discrepancies, which engage the saga audience's (and Giffarðr's) knowledge about what really happened at Fuxerna, are the thinking behind the "mockery and not praise" adage. As Shami Ghosh (2011: 51) has argued, however, Giffarðr's unwillingness to highlight these discrepancies (and, by doing so, to emasculate himself) provides a perfect example of why over-exaggerated praise may well have been acceptable to the recipients of skaldic poetry.

As Goeres and Ghosh's comments highlight, receptions of skaldic poetry seem to be of great interest to the author of *Giffarðs páttir*. Based on his derisive abilities, it is easy to view Eldjárn as a kind of puppet master, the subcentre of this scene. Simultaneously deceiving the count and insulting Giffarðr, he is a light-hearted version of the skald-type described by Roberta Frank (1978: 27) as "a dangerous, uncontrollable being, a prober of unknown powers, a manipulator of the deep structure of language". The portrayal of Eldjárn also fits the broader tendency in *Morkinskinna* to associate Icelandic poets with a high degree of agency in the face of authority (cf. Ármann Jakobsson 2000). But he is not the crucial figure within this story, and the structure of the narrative demonstrates this. The three performance events represent the kernels of each

section but, significantly, it is Giffarðr, the unwilling skaldic audience, and his path through this poetic journey that the narrative follows. Eldjárn might manipulate the narrative, but the *Morkinskinna* author seems most interested in those figures at the periphery of the performance arena. This is striking in the broader context of *Morkinskinna*, in which, again, it is usually the peripheral status of Icelanders that lends them subversive social power.

It is difficult to pin down exactly how unfamiliar Giffarðr and the count are with skaldic poetry and its cultural values. We have seen how, with both of Eldjárn's verses, Giffarðr understands their animosity, but remains unresponsive to them. The count, on the other hand, qualifies his judgement by saying *lítt em ek skældinn* "I'm not well versed in poetry" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 55), and yet recognises that the verse is praising, not shaming. It is in this ill-defined space of reception, where semi-comprehension and silence dominate, that the *Morkinskinna* author deconstructs and reconsiders skaldic performance. In this *páttr*, neither the king nor the Icelandic audience is the primary subject. They are, instead, catalysts for an exploration of skaldic poetry from the perspective of an audience ambiguous in its relationship with Scandinavian culture. As part of this exploration, the author's concerns are with the precarity of skaldic narrative at the stage of reception and, concordantly, the vulnerability of skaldic audiences. As represented in Ghosh and Goeres's comments, *Giffarðs páttr* demonstrates that skaldic poetry cannot easily be associated with historical authenticity. The respective interpretations of the verses by Giffarðr and the count show not that skaldic poetry is anti-communicative, but rather that its meaning is contingent upon the mind of the recipient. This point is a familiar one for skaldic scholars, who have demonstrated how the poetry's defamiliarising effects prompt audiences to construct their own meaning from it (e.g., Bergsveinn Birgisson 2008). In this story, however, the stability of the narratives within the verses is relatively unimportant, functioning to generate humour rather than to record history authentically. Eldjárn's last verse, in fact, purposefully produces alternate histories, to which his audience is helplessly vulnerable. Through the perspectives of his anomalous skaldic audience, the author of *Giffarðs páttr* is able to provide an important insight: if there is a centre of meaning in skaldic poetry, it cannot hold in reception.

Einars páttr Skúlasonar

Einars páttr Skúlasonar is set around half a century after *Giffarðs páttr*, during the joint reign of the sons of Haraldr gilli Magnússon: Eysteinn (r. 1142–57), Sigurðr munnr (r. 1136–55), and Ingi (r. 1136–61). The story begins by describing the eponymous Einarr Skúlason's performance of *Geisli* in Niðaróss, which is accounted for as follows:

Eysteinn konungr bað hann til at yrkja Óláfsdrápu, ok hann orti ok færði norðr í Þrándheimi, í Kristskirkju sjálfri, ok varð þat með miklum jarteinum, ok kom dýrligr ilmr í kirkjuna. Ok þat segja menn at þær áminningar urðu af konunginum sjálfum at honum virðisk vel kveðit. (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 222)

King Eysteinn asked him to compose a drápa about King Óláfr [inn helgi Haraldsson], and he composed and presented it north in Niðaróss, in Kristskirkja itself, and there were great miracles, and a glorious sweet scent arose in the church. And people say that those intimations came from the king himself, showing that he esteemed the poem highly.

When a saga author wants to evaluate a skaldic performance, they are most likely to describe the quality of the poet's delivery using words like *hárr* "loud", *skqruliga* "authoritatively", or the all-encompassing *vel* "well" (cf. Gade 1994: 138). It is notable, in this case, that there is no authorial comment on Einarr's performance. Indeed, as Stefanie Würth (2007: 266) highlights, even though the passage "is usually considered to be the main description of skaldic performance in the sense of 'performance on stage'", it conveys little information about the subject. Instead, the saga author's focus is on descriptions of in-text audiences, and these provide the primary insight into Einarr's performance. Einarr's immediate auditors, according to the *Morkinskinna* author, were treated to a multi-sensual experience, involving olfactory, as well as the more

common aural and visual, effects. What they thought of *Geisli*, however, is not recorded. Instead, as indicated by the phrase *þat segja menn* “people say that”, *Geisli* is framed as having impact far beyond the walls of Kristskirkja. So impressive was Einarr’s performance, the saga author implies, that it generated its own storytelling tradition, presumably based on the reports of the original listeners and which remains alive at the time of *Morkinskinna*’s composition. As well as temporal boundaries, moreover, Einarr’s performance is framed as overcoming the borderline between the physical and spiritual realms, as indicated in the miracles produced by St Óláfr. In this short passage, then, the *þátrr* author acknowledges the multi-dimensional significance of skaldic reception, involving audiences from the past, present, and future.

The author of *Einars þátrr* maintains an interest in performer-audience relationships throughout the story, although the remaining episodes are undergirded by a more light-hearted temperament. Where the author’s depiction of the *Geisli* performance stresses the potential of skaldic poetry to maintain longevity across generations, the proceeding narrative is more focused on the immediate impact of skaldic performance. Like *Giffarðs þátrr*’s tripartite structure, the author explores this theme across three short episodes, each involving the performance of a single *lausavísur* by Einarr in fulfilment of challenges set by either King Eysteinn or King Sigurðr. These are snapshots of quick-witted courtly entertainment, as Heinrich Gimmmler (1976: 63) recognised when he titled the tale “Einarr Skúlason displays his poetic skills”. The particular poetic skill that Einarr displays is his ability to compose at speed, for each *lausavísur* is composed under a different kind of time pressure. I will, again, examine each of these performance scenes in turn, demonstrating the ways in which they interrogate the role of rulers as skaldic audiences.

Einarr’s first performance is occasioned when he arrives late at King Eysteinn’s table. Eysteinn decrees that the two will not be reconciled unless Einarr can compose a verse before the king finishes his drink. Einarr succeeds, reciting a verse that describes his visit to a nunnery in Niðaróss, where he was not given any food. The *þátrr* author offers only the following remark on Eysteinn’s response: *nú líkar konungi allvel* “this completely pleased the king” (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 222). Evidently, Einarr passes Eysteinn’s test, although it is open to interpretation whether the king is pleased simply with the fact of the verse, or potentially also with its self-effacing humour. Either way, the scene serves primarily to affirm Eysteinn’s power within his court, evinced most obliquely in his ability to doll out penalties to his courtiers, but also in the resources available to him. His willingness to drain a goblet simply for the sake of entertainment hints at his court’s plentiful provisions, and this contrasts with Einarr’s comments on the absence of food at the nunnery. Indeed, despite the *þátrr* author’s comments that *Eysteinn konungr virði Einar mikils* “King Eysteinn honoured Einarr greatly” and, correspondingly, that *Eysteinn konungr hafði þá gørt hann stallara sinn* “King Eysteinn had, by then, made him [Einarr] his marshal” (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 222), Einarr lacks agency within this scene. His penalty for arriving late is light-hearted, but it also serves as a reminder of his subordination to the king, and that he should be constantly available to him. In this way, Eysteinn’s challenge matches Einarr’s offence, for both represent time as being another of the resources under the king’s control. A marshal and quick-witted poet Einarr may be, then, but the *þátrr* author demonstrates that he is also another of Eysteinn’s resources, albeit a very valuable one.

The power-balance between poet and royal audience is, however, readjusted in the next episode, in which a minstrel called Jarlmaðr is sentenced to a beating for eating a kid goat on a Friday. Einarr, however, intercedes with King Sigurðr, who stipulates that Jarlmaðr will only be beaten for as long as it takes Einarr to compose a verse. Five strokes are delivered to Jarlmaðr before Einarr recites the following verse, which concludes the episode:

Austr tók illa kristinn
Jarlmaðr frá búkarli
— gróðr vas kjöts á kauða —
kiðling, hinns slær fiðlu.

Vöndr hrökk, vámr lá bundinn
velmáll, á skip þíslar;
söng leikara lengi
lími harðan príma.
(*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 223)

The bad Christian, Jarlmaðr, who strikes the fiddle, took a kid from the farmer in the east; greed for meat was upon the churl. The wand [= WHIP] coiled; the loathsome man lay bound on the ship of the cart-pole [> CART]; the well-spoken lash sang a hard service to the jester for a long time.

The author does not record any response from Sigurðr to Einarr's verse. As this indicates, attention seems to have shifted from Einarr's status in relation to the kings, to his status in relation to the other courtiers that comprise his audience. In this instance, and despite Einarr's comment that Jarlmaðr is his *félagi* "fellow" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 223), their mutual trade as performers is also what distinguishes them in the social hierarchy. Where Einarr is a *skáld*, a recipient of the kings' patronage and an ambassador of the most respected aristocratic artform, Jarlmaðr is a *leikari* "player", therein concerned with crude entertainments like fiddle-playing, as Einarr points out. This discrepancy manifests in Einarr's intercession with Sigurðr, which, on the one hand, demonstrates his influence within the courtly community, but, on the other, also forces him to align with the quasi-judicial group that decides on and delivers Jarlmaðr's punishment. In this light, the parallel between Einarr's composition and the whip-strokes delivered to Jarlmaðr suggest that the *páttr* author is playing with perceptions of the physical potency of skaldic poetry (cf. Grant 2019). This is most evident in Einarr's personification of the whip as singing (presumably a metaphor for the whistling sound of each stroke) liturgy, which represents a striking amalgam of the roles of performer, preacher, and punisher. The first two of these roles could be attributed to Einarr, whose name appears both in *Skáldatal* (Snorri Sturluson 2012: 100–02, 106, 114, 116) and in a list of priests in western Iceland from 1143 (*Diplomatarium Islandicum* 1857, I: 186), whilst the third would be in keeping with his comments that Jarlmaðr is *illr kristinn* "a bad Christian" and *vámr* "a loathsome person". Despite the implication, then, that Einarr composes as fast as possible for Jarlmaðr's reprieve, their relationship could not comfortably be described as companionable. Instead, the *páttr* author suggests, Sigurðr's challenge provides Einarr with an opportunity as much to assert his social status as to save a fellow performer.²

Rulers, however, are not always presented as being immune to the designs of skaldic performers, as indicated in the final part of *Einarr's páttr*. In this episode, King Eysteinn watches a noblewoman called Ragnhildr prepare her longship to depart Bergen, and challenges Einarr to compose about the scene before the ship passes Hólm. This time, however, Einarr stipulates the conditions of his reward before composing: *þú skalt skyldr til ok hirðmenn þínir sjau út í frá at sitt orð muni hverr yðar í vísunni, ok ef þat brestr gefið mér jafn marga aska hunangs sem þér munið eigi orðin* "from now on, you [i.e. Eysteinn] and seven of your retainers will pledge that each of you will remember his line in the verse and, if you fail, give me a measure of honey for every line you do not remember" (*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 224). Eysteinn's retainers all fail the challenge, but the king remembers the first and last line of Einarr's verse, which is as follows:

Hola böru rístr hlýrum
hreystisprund at sundi,
blæss élreki of ási,
Útsteins, vefi þrútna.
Varla heldr und vildra
víkmarr á jarðríki

² A comparable episode involving a skald, *leikarar*, and the hierarchy between the two within a courtly environment, can be found in *Mána páttr skálds*, in *Sverris saga* (2007: 130).

– breiðr viðr brimsgang súðum
barmr – lyptingar farmi.
(*Morkinskinna* 2011, II: 224)

The daring woman carves the hollow of the wave with the bows toward the strait of Útsteinn. The storm-driver [> WIND] blows the swollen sails over the wooden beam [= ship's SPRIT]. There is but hardly a bay-steed [> SHIP] on earth under a more desirable cargo of the afterdeck [> WOMAN, i.e. Ragnhildr]; the broad rim [> ship's UPPER STRAKES] gains surf-energy for the hull-planks.

This episode has been cited primarily for its representation of the memorability, or lack thereof, of skaldic poetry (Mitchell 2013: 287), and critics have speculated on the factors behind Eysteinn's failure to remember the whole verse (e.g., Andersson and Gade 2000: 464). Although this thinking possibly misinterprets Eysteinn's role within the challenge, in which he only seems obliged to remember one line, a power-shift toward Einarr is undoubtedly implied. In the sagas, it is not uncommon for skalds to stipulate how a ruler should reward them, but rarely are the corresponding performances depicted as exposing rulers' cognitive inferiority in the way that Eysteinn's is here. The lines that Eysteinn remembers (*Hola bóru rístr hlýrum* and *barmr lyptingar farmi*) are, as Morcom (2020: 274) notes, grammatically incomplete, implying a failure to glean anything meaningful from the verse. What he does glean, however, might be implied by the lines' nautical imagery, suggesting that he is more familiar with the convention of verses describing the seafaring of men, rather than with the equivalent journey of the *hreystisprund* "daring woman", a word that is unique to this stanza. As in *Giffarðs þáttr*, then, the importance of audience (mis)interpretation is stressed here, affirming, again, the vulnerability of the audience relative to the performer. Einarr's victory represents a triumph for the literary over the regal, and this might even be envisioned as extending to the context of the *þáttr*'s reception, in which the author, as the latest reciter of Einarr's verse, is able to better King Eysteinn by remembering it in its entirety. This metatextual humour raises another comparison to *Giffarðs þáttr*, in which the saga audience's knowledge of Giffarðr's actions at Fuxerna allows for the full irony of Eldjárn's second *lausavísur* to come across. The focus on the agency of the skald is, however, greater in *Einars þáttr*, and, over the course of its three performances, the author demonstrates a significant power-shift towards Einarr, who initially lacks agency with Eysteinn, but is depicted as humbling the king at the narrative's conclusion.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how the authors of *Giffarðs þáttr* and *Einars þáttr* take uncommon interest in the recipients of skaldic poetry. Both episodes are in keeping with the *Morkinskinna* author's concern to advance the agency of Icelanders within the history of the Norwegian monarchy, and the depiction of skaldic audiences frequently complements this aim. Although this aspect is local to *Morkinskinna* and, to some extent, the *konungasögur* as a genre, the overall analysis nonetheless demonstrates the wider value for consideration of saga accounts of skaldic audiences. Both *þættir*, for example, interrogate the historicity of skaldic poetry by demonstrating the importance of, and potential variance within, audience interpretations, even at a verse's originating moment. They highlight that an absence of audience response, or a misinterpretation, can enhance, rather than limit, analysis of situational verses in saga prosimetrum. Undergirding both issues is the balance of power in the relationship between skaldic performer and audience, and *Giffarðs þáttr* and *Einars þáttr* highlight ways in which either party might achieve primacy within the exchange. Overall, then, reception cannot be discounted as a significant aspect in how the sagas are perceived as both preserving and mediating skaldic poetry. Since skaldic poetry represents a corpus that now exists only to be received, it is only appropriate that we consider its audiences with as much attention as we do its performers.

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Narratological functions of geography in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*

Kathrin Chlench-Priber, University of Bonn

There are three prominent passages in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* where the narrator discusses the significance of his story. These are the prologue, an intrusion at the end of chapter 25 of the saga and the epilogue. In these passages, which can be characterised as *apologiae*,¹ (O'Connor 2005: 125–128) the lore varies strongly already in the medieval manuscripts² (O'Connor 2005: 125–127; 2009: 367–369; Lavender 2018: 80–84; 92–93). The prologue is only preserved in the 15th century manuscript AM 589 f 4to, which probably provides the “best text” of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*,³ and fragmentary in the oldest Manuscript AM 567 4to XI β, which dates from the second half of the 14th century. However, the prologue does not seem to have been written specifically for the saga, but presumably taken from the *Sigurðar saga þögla* and adapted for *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (Lavender 2018: 84–93; 106; formerly different: O'Connor 2005: 127; 2009: 367). The intrusion in chapter 25 (Rafn 1830: 309–310) is much more extensive in AM 589 f 4to and was probably significantly shortened in Hrafn's Leithandschrift AM 152 fol. (O'Connor 2009: 370–371). The situation is the other way around for the epilogue. The shorter version comprises only a few words and can be found in AM 589 f 4to (Rafn 1830: 363), the longer version in AM 152 fol. contains arguments, most of which can also be found in the prologue, as well as further reflections by the narrator on the character and purpose of his saga (O'Connor 2005: 141–156; 2009: 367–374).⁴

Yet despite all the variance, the basic attitude of the narrator, who appears in the three passages mentioned as the guise of the author, is the same in both manuscripts under consideration (AM 589 f 4to and AM 152 fol.): he defends his saga against accusations of untrustworthiness. With this defensive stance the narrator deprives the audience of a possible basis for criticism. Within the framework of audience instruction, which is in the foreground, the debate about questions of fiction, *historia*, truth and probability, which is often conducted in prologues, is also addressed (O'Connor 2009: 374). Research in literary studies, which has dealt intensively with questions of fictionality,⁵ has been able to conclude that the modern opposition of fictionality and factuality cannot be applied frictionless to the Middle Ages (Glauch 2014: 96). Rather, it is not the opposition of factuality and fictionality that is to be applied to narratives, but of true *historia* and lie (O'Connor 2009: 374). As Jan-Dirk Müller has recently pointed out, it applies to every medieval narrative, “daß fiktionale Texte im Mittelalter auf wenigstens minimale Verankerungen in einer als ‘wirklich’ aufgefaßten Vergangenheit nicht verzichten können und daß sie nie ‘freie’ Erfindungen möglicher Welten sind” (that fictional texts in the Middle Ages cannot do without at least minimal anchors in a past understood as ‘real’ and that they are never ‘free’ inventions of possible worlds) (Müller 2004: 292). These anchors can also refer to literary sources and traditions (Glauch 2014: 105, 122–123), to which the narrator of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* also refers in the prologue or comments. Embellishing a narrative with so-called *functional fiction*⁶ elements is quite common and permissible. However, in this way a tension arises between what a narrative represents and its historical truth. The degree to which a text that is essentially factual can tolerate *functional fiction* without becoming untrue is not fixed

¹ Cf. the detailed account of the history of research in O'Connor 2005: 103–104, 125–128; 2009: 363.

² *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* has been handed down in numerous manuscripts, five of them are medieval: AM 152 fol., 98r–116r (1500–1525), AM 567 4to XI α, Fragment (1350–1399), AM 567 4to XI β, Fragment (15th century), AM 589 f 4to, 13r–36v (15th century) and GKS 2845 4to, 39v–54v (1440–1460).

³ With this assessment I refer to Lavender's comment on the research of Jonna Louis-Jensen and Gillian Fellows-Jensen. Cf. Lavender 2018: 80.

⁴ In this respect, not only the *mouvance* of the text can be observed on the basis of the prologue, intrusion and epilogue, but also a pluralistic concept of distributed authorship (Ranković 2007; Ranković & Ranković 2012; cf. Rösli, Gropper 2021: 13–14; Glauser 2021: 20; Gropper 2021: 77–78).

⁵ A comprehensive research overview is provided by O'Connor 2005, Mundal 2012 and Glauch 2014.

⁶ On the history of the term *functional fiction*, see Glauch 2014: 101–104.

and thus becomes – as in the prologue, intrusion and epilogue of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* – the subject of the negotiation staged in the text between the narrator in the role of the author and the audience.⁷ Narrative designs were seen as the more distant from actual history, the smaller their overlaps with knowledge about this world, and as the more serious, the more they were authenticated by knowledge (Glauch 2014: 123).

The narrator of the prologue of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* gives his answer as to how this relationship is to be balanced: he focuses on the continuation of literary traditions and thus on literariness, and in this way protects himself against the reproaches of his audience by “playing with the borderline between the believable and the unbelievable” (Mundal 2012: 185). In addition, he emphasises the benefit of a narrative surplus (cf. Guðni & Bjarni 1944: 357). The narrator of the intrusion states that there are certainly unbelievable things in literary sources, possibly also due to the transmission. Ultimately, however, believing in something is not a precondition for enjoying it (cf. Hrafn 1830: 309–310). And the narrator of the epilogue also gives a similar answer. He too places himself in the tradition of literary sources and emphasises the entertainment value of a narrative, even if it is profane and especially if it is likely and eloquent. If critics do not have the ability to do better themselves, they are not entitled to criticise. And – with this thought the text concludes – people who do not want to be delighted by a story deserve unhappiness. (cf. Hrafn 1830: 363–364). The vehemence of the apologiae characterises *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* as an exemplary *fornaldasaga*, since it has the genre-specific task of primarily representing a *historia*, but also of fulfilling the competing claim of a surplus of *functional fiction* (O’Connor 2005: 168; Mundal 2012: 168–169).⁸

In the debate about the right degree of functional fiction for entertainment on the one hand and source fidelity in relation to *historia* on the other, the numerous geographical names in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* have a significance worth examining (Jackson 2019: 49–50, 56, 71, 76, 102). In a first step, the paper asks how the geographical indications construct the literary narrative world. In a second step, what function the geographical indications have for the question of the significance of the narrative. In particular, the encyclopedic passages about England, Denmark and Russia at the end of the saga (Jackson 2012; Lavender 2018: 93–99) will be considered, which stand out from the diegesis like veritable foreign elements and redefine the relationship between the intra- and extradiegetic world.

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⁸ Differently Viðar Hreinsson 1990: 139, who stresses first and foremost the entertainment value of the saga.

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Knowledge is power: The limits of acceptable magic use in medieval chivalric *rímur*

Lee Colwill, University of Cambridge

From our earliest extant Norse texts, magic is presented as a form of knowledge, exemplified in terms like *fjölknunugur* and *margknunugur* ('knowing a lot'). In late-medieval texts such as the *riddarasögur* and *rímur*, the idea of magic as knowledge becomes intertwined with the encyclopaedic tradition, such that knowledge of the powers of stones and plants becomes a key part of many magic-users' arsenal. At the same time, traditions e.g. of shapeshifting, present in the older Norse material, continue into the late-medieval texts. The acceptability of accessing these various categories of magic is presented as contingent on factors of identity, especially class, race and gender.

This paper explores the portrayal of magic and magic-users in medieval chivalric *rímur*, a corpus of twenty-three texts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It focuses on the ways in which the use of magic interacts with gender and other aspects of identity, arguing that, even beyond the efforts of the sagas on which these poems are based, *rímur* poets use magic and the supernatural as sources of fear and disruption in their narratives. In many *rímur*, magic is the preserve of those who cannot access socially-sanctioned (most often military) power, whether because of their gender, race, or because the narrative categorises them as non-human (e.g. dwarves and trolls).

Alternative models of community formation in *Jómsvíkinga saga*

Jonathan F. Correa-Reyes, The Pennsylvania State University

Time and again literature has been described as a mirror of the society that produced it. This appreciation focuses on the ability of literary texts to *represent* reality. However, it should not be forgotten that, although literary texts indeed offer us a great deal of insight into the communities that produced them, these texts are active in their rhetorical functions and the cultural work that they perform. The sagas, for instance, often served to justify and reinforce governing systems and structures of power. Nevertheless, this cultural medium also served as a platform from which to criticize, question, and even challenge traditions, power structures, identity-formation processes, and value systems. In this paper I will demonstrate how *Jómsvíkinga saga* imagines alternatives to ruling models of being and of coexisting via the literary articulation of the *alternative community* of Jómsborg. Building upon Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," I approach the creation of Jómsborg in this text as an alternative, and thus far understudied, model of community-formation. This alternative model focuses on the power of imagination as a catalyst for meaningful socio-cultural change. In imagining a community not defined by either kingship or kinship, one modelled not after tradition or history, but rather the needs of a specific group of people, *Jómsvíkinga saga* advances a paradigm of community formation that should inform scholarly understandings of how medieval audiences received and appreciated literary texts as potential drivers of meaningful socio-cultural change. After making explicit how the community of Jómsborg is articulated, I will in turn demonstrate how the community-building process that underwrites *Jómsvíkinga saga* can help us piece together new interpretive approaches to this text as well as other sagas. Furthermore, this model of alternative communities that I will be discussing can, in turn, help us produce innovative critical approaches that may aid us in rehabilitating medieval texts within and beyond the Old Norse/Icelandic literary corpus.

Garðarshólmr: Exploring the social networks of eastern Scandinavians in Landnámabók

Cassidy Croci, University of Nottingham

There has been a focus on examining group identities within the multi-lateral nature of the Viking diaspora in *Landnámabók studies*; however, the emphasis is still largely on how regional Norwegian identities and western settlers from the British Isles and Ireland influenced the settlement of Iceland. Yet one of the original discoverers of Iceland, Garðarr Svávarsson, is explicitly mentioned as being ‘of Swedish stock’ (*sænskr at ætt*). This is not an isolated reference as there are other individuals and groups with connections to eastern and north-eastern Scandinavia and areas even further east in the text, but what are the implications of these ‘eastern’ references for understanding the settlement of Iceland and medieval Icelandic identity?

This paper is an exploratory study assessing to what extent the settlement of Iceland included people from further east than Norway and how they fit into better-represented, and more expected networks. Individuals and groups with ‘eastern’ ties are identified through place-names, ethnonyms, personal names and by-names which suggest eastern Scandinavian origins or links, and anecdotes that demonstrate connections to eastern or north-eastern Scandinavia or further afield including the Baltic Sea region. These individuals and groups are then quantified and visualised using Social Network Analysis and Visual Analytics to assess how they fit into the overarching social network of the *Sturlubók* redaction of *Landnámabók* comprised of approximately 3,500 individuals. The social, familial, and geographic networks of these individuals and groups will be compared to those of more well-known identity groups in the text such as Norwegian, Irish and British settlers to see to what extent eastern Scandinavians impacted on the construction of the Icelandic identity.

This network-theoretical approach reduces some of the implicit Norwegian and western bias of *Landnámabók* to focus on settlers and individuals of more diverse, multi-cultural backgrounds. Thus new questions regarding Icelandic settlement can emerge, such as how many individuals with Eastern Scandinavian connections were there, where did individuals from locations further away than Norway settle in Iceland, do terms such as *austmaðr* actually mean ‘Norwegian’ in *Landnámabók*, and who did these individuals and groups connect with on the island and abroad?

Of *vinðr* and *vargar* – Exploring a motif in medieval literary tradition

Carina Damm, Leipzig University / GWZO Leipzig

Both Old Norse and medieval Latin sources show striking similarities when exploring the literary depiction of Slavophone populations inhabiting the Southern Baltic coast. One particularly prominent *topos* is the equation of pagan *Vinðr/Sclavi* as ferocious dogs or dangerous wolves, indicating an evident authorial defamation and marginalisation of groups as well as individuals. In this sense, Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon* (lib. III, cap. 7, 119) refers to plundering Slavs who ravaged Brandenburg in 983 and desecrated the corpse of the former bishop Dodilo as *avari canes* ('greedy dogs'). Intriguingly, this designation was not confined to Slavic individuals since Thietmar uses the same expression for Danish raiders in his description of the Viking attacks on the town of Stade in 994 (lib. IV, cap. 25, 160). More than two centuries later, Snorri provides in his *Heimskringla* a vivid account on the pillaging of the emporium Konungahella by Baltic *Vinðr* around 1135. Their wild and animal howling resembled *hundar eða vargar* (*Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 11) which inevitably reminds of the monstrous Fenrisúlfr as ominous sign for the destruction of the world in the *Ragnarøk* (Aalto 2010: 112). Situated in a comparative framework, this paper aims to demonstrate how medieval authors related Slavic people and generally "others" with unbridled behaviour as well as vicious and hence diabolical characteristics (Morawiec 2018). Eventually, I suggest that this adscription was based on the protagonists' threatening actions that stood in diametric religious and political opposition to the Christian authorities of their time.

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Maritime cultural geographies in *Örvar-Odds saga* and the alliterative *Morte Darthure*

Rebecca Drake, The University of York

This paper will compare the presentation of cultural geographies of the North Atlantic in the Old Norse-Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* and Middle English romance. Both of these late-medieval genres have been studied in terms of wonder, the fantastic, and the monstrous. I will explore their connections through the lens of the eco-critical, and specifically through the framework of the Blue Humanities, which seeks to decentre land-based readings of texts. I will ask how the *fornaldarsögur* and Middle English romance can be read as literary responses to navigating and living off oceanic environments, with a focus on how the human encounters the animal. As such, I posit that these medieval texts might be understood as not entirely anthropocentric, and that they might be thought of as windows onto the natural world.

In terms of Blue Cultural Studies, in which “watery transformation deterritorializes” (Mentz, 2020), thinking from a watery perspective deconstructs land-based boundaries, such as those which separate the human from the animal. Thinking from the ocean forces us to observe the human away from the land, situating it in a natural environment alongside marine animals. Both the *fornaldarsögur* and Middle English romance explore human relationships with oceanic environments, which range from the practicalities of navigating these environments, to relying on them as resources, as well as adapting ways of living to suit maritime needs. These texts have never been compared in a maritime context; furthermore, their maritime cultural, blue ecological, as well as their narrative similarities regarding the use of sea journeys demand comparison through an oceanic lens.

With a particular focus on modes of navigation in *Örvar-Odds saga* and in the Alliterative *Morte Darthure*, I will consider how these texts imagine the maritime world and the human’s place within it. I will ask to what extent the human in these narratives might be compared to the animal through an analysis of how humans, whales and seabirds orient themselves in trans-oceanic journeys. By doing so I will compare the ways in which these heroic narratives create maritime cultural geographies that interact with the marine topographies of the North Atlantic and its islands.

Heroes, trolls, and ‘fan fiction’: Saga characters in the landscape of folklore

Matthias Egeler, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

It has long been recognised that Icelandic storytelling – both the medieval sagas and modern folk narratives – is closely connected to the landscape. This connection that both medieval and modern storytelling have with the landscape means that the land is one point where the two strands of storytelling intersect, with each presenting its own take on how the spatiality of real-world Iceland is integrated into the different narratives.

Taking its starting point from recent fieldwork in and archival documents about the Strandir district of the Icelandic Westfjords, the paper will present a case study of marked differences in this intersection, where saga narratives do one thing and modern folk storytelling does something strikingly different. Rather than foregrounding questions of continuity, the paper will focus on narrative innovation where modern storytelling connects saga places with saga heroes but foregoes saga plots, or in other words: where modern storytelling features saga characters and is connected with places already prominent in the sagas that feature these characters, but instead of retelling saga stories connects these places and characters through stories which appear to be entirely new. Discussing some ‘saga sites’ in Árneshreppur in northern Strandir, where a saga hero is connected with a saga farm through a non-saga troll, the paper will pursue how this kind of storytelling seems to be based more on aspects of land use and the natural environment than on medieval plotlines, and will raise the question whether such storytelling can be usefully approached through the lens of ‘fan fiction’.

Kinsmen, friends or mercenaries? Problematising the existence of ‘international’ forces in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scandinavia

Beñat Elortza Larrea, Nord University

The majority of military campaigns in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe involved large numbers of mercenaries, who often originated from elsewhere in the continent, and whose main motivation to fight was the promise of payment, rather than an existing obligation towards the established authority. Scandinavians themselves were no strangers to mercenary work: from the Byzantine imperial guard to the *Nortmanni* who settled along the Norman coasts, selling their martial prowess was a widespread career choice for many Scandinavian magnates. As the Nordic kingdoms became well-established, however, the presence of foreign stipendiary troops does not become widespread in the sources until the closing decades of the thirteenth century.

The main aim of this presentation is to identify those instances in the written sources where non-native troops are mentioned, and to discern their origins, as well as their motivation. Did these forces come from other Scandinavian kingdoms, or from elsewhere in Europe? Why did they participate in foreign campaigns – did they have meaningful kinship or friendship ties with the local elites, or was there a purely monetary motivation present? By examining these instances in the narrative corpus, I intend to analyse how the phenomenon of non-native forces from a wider, regional perspective. Was the presence of mercenaries limited to the ‘core’ of the Scandinavian kingdoms, or were they used in the Swedish and Danish campaigns of the eastern Baltic too? Was Scandinavia, after all, an attractive market for mercenaries during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? And if so, why?

To this end, I will make use of a broad array of written material. These sources include Icelandic kings’ sagas, such as *Sverris saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, or *Knýtlinga saga*, as well as other literary texts written in the vernacular, for instance, *Erikskrönikan*. In addition, a number of Latin chronicles will likewise be used, such as Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* and *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniæ*. Finally, I will also employ charters and diplomas from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries written in both Latin and vernacular, which can be found in each Nordic country’s national *diplomataria*.

Man's best friend? Re-evaluating canine-human relationships in Viking-Age multispecies communities

Harriet Evans Tang, Durham University

Svaða þáttir ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs says of a man that he “was buried by his men with his dog and his horse according to ancient custom” (translated from Unger 1860: 436). In this fourteenth-century representation of a pre-Christian burial, the dog is placed with the man before the horse, and in a much earlier context, Ibn Fadlān likewise describes a possible Rus funeral on the Volga in which the dog is placed into the burial ship before the other animals (Lunde and Stone 2012: 51). Dogs are often found in both inhumation and cremation burials, in various numbers and conditions, across the Viking world, and clearly held a variety of important roles in these funerary rites, with scholarship considering these animals as companions, grave goods and status markers, guardians of the dead and inhabitants of the border between life and death (for example, Gräslund 2004; Jennbert 2011; Nichols 2018). But interpretations that consider the dog as companion are often complicated by facts of violent deaths or dismemberment for the purposes of inclusion in human burials.

This paper brings together textual and archaeological evidence to re-consider the multifaceted aspects of ‘companionship’ that may have applied between dogs and humans in the Viking world, how dogs and humans may have lived together (or apart), and how these relationships may have affected their preservation in cultural events such as funerary rites and textual narratives. Alongside discussion of the burial evidence, the paper will consider evidence of canine-human relationships in life, such as dog-gnawed bones in middens, medieval legal regulation of canine behaviour, and the use of dogs in sayings, and descriptions and nicknames of men. Touching on the dog gift-companions Karlsnautr and Selsnautr in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar*, the paper will propose a re-evaluation of how we conceive of gifts, companions, canine personhood and the ultimate result of such animal-human relationships as seen in the burial evidence.

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Three sons in the third generation: A cosmogonic genealogy echoing through history

Frog, University of Helsinki

Germanic traditions exhibit a mythic pattern, here described as a (diagrammatic) schema, of three founding sons born in the third generation. The schema, described through various terms, was brought into focus already by Karl Müllenhoff (1818–1884), who observed: “Es ist der ordnung solcher genealogien durchaus gemäss, dass im dritten gliede die dreiheit eintitt” (1920: 115) (“It is quite appropriate in the organization of such genealogies that a trinity enters in the third generation”). Müllenhoff (1920: 115) seems to have established the three-fold comparison of: (a) the founders of the Ingaevones, Istaevones and Herminones as the three sons of Mannus, son of the god Tuisto (Tacitus, *Germania* 2); (b) Óðinn and his brothers as the three sons of Burr, son of Búri, who create the world through the slaying of Ymir (*Völuspá* 4;¹ Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning* 6–7); and (c) the founding genealogy in *Guta saga*’s account of the establishment of Gotlandic society (*Guta saga* 1). Gudmund Schütte, in his doctoral dissertation, examined founding genealogies; he looked across the patterns of three sons and of three generations, which also appear independently (1907: esp. 124–136). Axel Olrik’s (1907) analytical response to Schütte’s work is devoted to the schema identified by Müllenhoff. After Olriks’ contribution, the schema seems to be only briefly addressed in the context of other discussions and without references, as though the authors have observed it independently, or, more likely, viewed it as collective knowledge in the field (e.g. Gutenbrunner 1936: 160–161; Buchholz 1993: 326–327). Müllenhoff extended comparison to classical traditions, citing Zeus, Neptune and Hades as three sons of Kronos, son of Uranos, among whom the world was divided (1920: 115), but this drops from later discussion, where the work of Schütte and Olrik also passed unnoticed.²

The present paper brings this widely found schema and its variations into focus. The aim is to make it recognizable and shed light on how it is used so that other scholars are better equipped to analyze its manifestations. The schema is approached in terms of mythic discourse – i.e. mythology as it is transmitted, used and manipulated by people in society. The paper briefly outlines a methodological framework for approaching ‘echoes’ of cosmological actors, acts or events manifesting in the human world. The relationship between the genealogy linked to the cosmogony and those linked to human societies is considered through this framework. The examples from Tacitus and Óðinn’s genealogy are addressed first, followed by the case from *Guta saga*, that in *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggðist*, and finally that in *Повесть временныхъ лѣтъ* (*PVL*) or *Primary chronicle*. The closing discussion reviews how the schema works and varies, what makes it unusual, and its implications for understandings of time.

1. The approach

The *Three sons in the third generation* schema is here approached through mythic discourse analysis within a framework that I have developed across most of a decade (see especially Frog 2021a; 2022). Focusing attention on mythic discourse reveals that most mythology is engaged and manipulated through units smaller than full ‘stories’ (on problems of imagining myths as ‘stories’: see Frog 2018: 8–18). Mythology is here approached more broadly in terms of socially accessible signs. These signs are distinguished according to different formal types – formal types, which are linked to the principles for their combination. Although individual mythic signs may be quite complex, they retain a recognizability and unitary quality, and their structures and operation are rule-governed. Types of mythic sign relevant to the following discussion are (small capitals represent mythic signs; descriptive labels of more complex signs are in *italic*):

- *Image* – a static unit corresponding to the grammatical category of a noun (ODIN)

¹ Eddic poems are cited according to Neckel & Kuhn 1963.

² Peele (1999: xxi) cites Schütte for *Guta saga*’s mythic progenitor without mentioning the complex schema.

- *Motif* – a dynamic unit incorporating the category of a verb, involving change or placing two or more images in a relation (X RAISES EARTH FROM:SEA)
- *Diagrammatic schema* – a static relation of images that is distinctively meaningful

Within this approach, the *Three sons in the third generation* is a diagrammatic schema that is manifested with different images, such as Tacitus's TUISTO and MANNUS and their three sons; the cosmogonic genealogy BÚRI, BURR, ODIN, VILI and VÉ, and so on. This schema can also be linked to motifs, like BURR'S.SONS RAISE EARTH FROM:SEA (on the detailed markup of syntagms, see Frog 2021a). Distinguishing formal types of integer enables the analysis of their interaction.

In addition to the formal distinction of types of signs, the analysis of the *Three gods in the third generation* schema and its uses requires the concept of *fractal recursivity*, which was developed for the analysis of semiotic ideologies (Irvine & Gal 2000; Gal & Irvine 2019). Although the term *fractal recursivity* is a mouthful, it describes the phenomenon whereby signs, sign relations and/or ideologies linked to these are reproduced on a different order of scope. The concept provides a way to approach the relationship of images, motifs and narrative patterns identified with gods and their adversaries acting on a level of cosmological scope when these appear in contexts of human agents whose acts do not reach beyond the human sphere or may be very localized, such as when a human hero enacts a motif transparently identifiable with one of Þórr's feats of cosmological proportions, like battling the Miðgarðsormr. Once the phenomenon is recognized in Old Norse sources, fractal recursivity of cosmological acts and events is usually transparent owing to a clear contrast in scope, as between Óðinn's spear-cast in the world's first war and corresponding spear-casts in sagas or funerary rituals (Frog 2022: 583–585).

The analysis of fractal recursivity in Old Norse sources requires an approach to vernacular temporal periodization. It is widely recognized that Old Norse traditions and especially Icelandic sources exhibit a structuring of time into periods, and that the principles governing the universe and what is possible or probable in it vary between periods. The difference in principles have been described in various ways, such as narrative modalities (Clunies Ross 1998: 51). Since the principles governing different periods operate across genres and languages, I approach them as discourses that link or ascribe things to different temporalities. To address these, I adapt Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *chronotope* (1981: 84–159), originally used to describe the conception of space and time characteristic of a genre of literature. Chronotope is here broadly conceived as a dominant model for the world as it operates for a particular type of place in a particular period, whether bound to a particular category of discourse like a genre or operating across discourses (cf. Phelpstead 2009). Viewing chronotopes as characteristic of a temporality and as potentially operating unconsciously does not exclude them from also being reflexively recognizable, and thus being resources authors may manipulate in meaning-making. The dominant chronotope of *fornaldarsögur*, for example, is also used in representations of later temporalities' geographically remote places (Lindow 2001: 26), where it affects an othering of place (Frog 2020) – i.e. by characterizing the remote place through a chronotope characteristic of an earlier period.

The Old Norse temporal ideology exhibits a structure of both earlier periods and the eschatology as operating on a greater scope than periods closer to the medieval present. This structure is linked to a principle for interpreting fractal recursivity: mythic signs at a narrower scope refer to those of greater scope as an exemplar in meaning-making – i.e. the agents, acts and experiences of human agents limited to the human sphere are regularly interpreted as echoes of those of gods in the cosmological sphere, never the reverse (Frog 2022: 48–49, 57–59).

2. Three sons of Mannus

Tacitus presents the earliest example of the Germanic *Three sons in the third generation* schema:

Celebrant carminibus antiquis [...] Tuistonem deum terra editum et filium Mannum, originem gentis conditoremque. Manno tris filios assignant, e quorum nominibus proximi Oceano Ingaevones, medii Herminones, ceteri Istaevones vocentur. quidam [...] pluris deo ortos plurisque gentis appellations [...] affirmant (Tacitus, *Germania* 2, late first century)

They celebrate in ancient poems [...] an earth-born god, Tuisto, and his son Mannus as the origin of their race and as their founder. To Mannus they ascribe three sons, from whose names are called the Ingaevones, near Oceanus, the Herminones, in the interior, the Istaevones, the rest. Some [...] affirm that the god had multiple descendants and the people multiple names [...]

Comparative research identifies the names *Tuisto* (“Twin”) and *Mannus* (“Man, Human”) with Indo-European cosmogonic agents.³ Two points are relevant here. First, Tacitus’s account links contemporary tribes to a genealogy of decent from cosmogonic events. Analogous genealogies are found widely among Germanic peoples (e.g. Hedeager 1998: 384–385). Old Norse traditions exhibit a temporal ideology that maximized the gap between the cosmogonic time of the gods and the time of human actors. Although the same structural principle cannot be assumed for the mythologies of all early Germanic peoples, it was fundamental to the operation of fractal recursivity connecting human and divine actors, and fractal recursivity collapses in cultures where the gap is absent (for an example, see Frog 2022: 592–593). Accounts of descent from cosmological actors remain separate from acts of cosmological scope. If Tacitus’s account follows this model, the genealogy he describes would be focused on the human world, distinct from an origin of human beings in cosmogonic time. Second, Tacitus presents the *Three sons in the third generation* schema as the central model alongside alternatives or variations (*pace* Olrik 1907), which enable additional tribes to connect themselves or be connected to the genealogy.

3. Three sons of Burr

The genealogy of Óðinn is central to discussions of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema. The sources for this genealogy are extremely limited, mostly fragmentary and in several cases euhemerized – i.e. reimagining events and relations in cosmogonic time as human history. The schema is only fully expressed in *Gylfaginning*, which is not unsurprising since kinship relations are a concern of the work, whereas they are treated as assumed knowledge and merely referenced in most other contexts. Óðinn’s paternal grandfather *Búri* (“Inhabiter”) is only named in *Edda*, which tells of his miraculous origin, being licked from rime by the primal cow. Óðinn’s father *Burr* (“Son”) is named in *Völuspá* 4 and *Hyndluljóð* 30 as well as in *Edda*, where he is called *Borr* (“Drill”). That *Búri*’s name is not preserved in poetry is likely accidental, much as the name of Óðinn’s maternal grandfather, named as *Bölþorn* in *Edda*, is found only once in poetry (*Bölþorr*, in *Hávamál* 140).⁴ Semantically, the name *Burr* meaning “Son” implicitly refers to a preceding generation. *Burr* may also be compared to the semantic principle of names meaning “Twin” and “Man” in Tacitus’s genealogy, though here referring to serial generations rather than what sound like brothers. Óðinn’s brothers *Vili/Víli* and *Vé/Véi* are centrally known from *Edda* and *Ynglinga saga*. The latter (ch. 2) tells that, following a long absence of Óðinn, *Víli* and *Vé* divided his inheritance and shared his wife *Frigg*, and then Óðinn came back and retook her. These events are referenced naming both brothers in *Lokasenna* 26,⁵ and kennings of kinship with Óðinn are formed with the name *Víli* in skaldic poems. In several contexts, Óðinn also appears with *Hœnir* and *Loki/Loðurr* as one of three gods that wander the world together, while in contexts of veneration he appears in several contexts as one of three gods alongside *Pórr* and *Freyr*. This recurrent pattern can be described as a *Three gods* schema, which reinforces the probability that *Burr*’s sons were also a group of three, as does comparative evidence for the schema itself. Without the genealogy of *Edda*, the *Three sons in the third generation* schema could be reconstructed through the semantics of *Burr*.

³ *Tuisto* is semantically equivalent to names considered cognate with Old Norse *Ymir* (Lincoln 1975).

⁴ In *Hávamál*, the claim *nam ok af [...] syni // Bölþors Bestlu fǫður*, can be interpreted as “I took from [...] the son // of Bölþorr, Bestla’s [i.e. Óðinn’s mother’s] father”, in which case Bölþorr appears as Bestla’s grandfather (also possible is “father of Bölþorr’s Bestla”). However, the syntax is unusual, separating *Bölþors* from *syni* by a metrical boundary, while the appositional formula agrees with *syni* rather than with the preceding name. The inflection of *Bölþorr* could vary without impacting the meter, so it could have varied in oral circulation. Also, a short word was written between *Bestlu* and *fǫður* and corrected, so something may have gone awry in the copying process.

⁵ *Lokasenna* exhibits indications of influence from Snorri’s *Edda* (Frog 2011: 12–23), so caution is needed here.

Óðinn's position in this schema is likely very longstanding. Óðinn is at the nexus of male kin whose names are connected by *v*-alliteration, including his brothers and also his sons Viðarr and Váli. This connection was presumably established prior to the phonological change, whereby the initial **w*- before a rounded vowel in **Wōdinaz* was lost (latest 6th century AD: Schulte 2018: 64). *B*-alliteration unites names of members of the preceding generations, including those mentioned above, Óðinn's son *Baldr*, who dies and remains outside the current world order, and also *Bous*, Baldr's avenger in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* (III.4.14–15). Alliteration is prominent in Old Germanic naming practices, but alliteration does not usually connect more than two names in a divine genealogy outside of Óðinn's kin (*v*-alliteration x 4; *b*-alliteration x 5, or x 6, including *Bous*). Frigg and Fulla appear as sisters in the Second Merseburg Charm, but as master and servant in Old Norse material, which implies that alliteration did not strongly suggest or help maintain genealogical relations in Old Norse mythology. Arguments that Óðinn's position in the mythology changed during the Migration Period (e.g. Gunnell 2013 and works there cited) present the possibility that he also usurped the genealogy of a *v*-named god in that process. However, names like *Viðrir* seem more likely produced amid the myriad of Óðinn heiti able to meet different alliterations and rhymes than having been names of earlier and otherwise unattested cosmogonic actors. Alliteration appears more widely linked to the *Three sons in the third generation* schema; Óðinn's connection to *v*-alliteration is likely an equally archaic feature.

In this part of the world, the cosmogonic motif X RAISES EARTH FROM:SEA is most often orchestrated by the sky god and accomplished by his counter-role (Napolskikh 2012). *Völuspá* 4 ascribes this motif to Óðinn and his brothers (*Burs synir*). They are in the counter-role of the sky-god, consistent with Óðinn's background as a god of death, mantic knowledge and probably chaos. From a comparative perspective, the orchestrator of the celestial sphere is conspicuously absent, but presumably linked to the advance of Óðinn to a dominant god. The Finno-Karelian cosmogony was restructured under Scandinavian influence during the iron age, similarly deleting the sky god from the *Earth-diver* motif (Frog 2012; 2013). Óðinn's earlier role reconstructs as more comparable to the Lithuanian chthonic god Velnias and Slavic Veles (Gimbutas 1974). His connection to the *Earth-diver* motif and probably is presumably rooted in that earlier role. His connection to the *Three sons in the third generation* schema must be viewed on that background, along with Óðinn's position as a founder of genealogies, comparable to the sons of Mannus.

Variation of names and gods within the schema doubtless occurred over time. The marginal/limited roles of Vílir and Vé in the mythology would open their names to renewal (cf. Váli/Bous). The schema maintained a naming principle based on alliteration that seems to have waned outside of it, so the *Three gods* schema with Hœnir and Loki/Loðurr is probably an innovation with more current agents (at the respective time), yet Óðinn's centrality in the mythology and the connections of that centrality to the schema would have stabilized his connection with the schema (see also Schjødt 2013: 12–13; Frog 2021a: 173–175). Óðinn's prominent connection to *v*-alliterating names belongs to this network of enduring connections.

The evidence points to the *Three sons in the third generation* schema as connected to the cosmogony already from the time when Tacitus was writing. The mythology behind Tacitus's account must have differed considerably from Old Norse traditions in many respects, yet **Wōdinaz*/**Wōdanaz* may have already been associated with the schema. This raises the question of whether Tacitus's names of the sons were interpreted as gods' bynames (cf. Old Norse *Gautr*).

4. The founding of Gotland

Guta saga is a Gotlandic text dated to the thirteenth century (Peele 1999: lii). Gotland appears in the archaeological record as a distinct cultural area already well before the Viking Age and it is situated roughly at the opposite end of the Norse cultural area relative to Iceland. Owing to limitations of space, only a translation of the relevant passage is provided here:

Gotland was first discovered by a man named Pieluar. At that time the island was so bewitched that it sank by day and rose up at night. That man, however, was the first that brought fire to the

island, and afterwards it never sank again. This same Pieluar had a son named Hafþi, and Hafþi's wife was called Huitastierna. These two were the first to settle in Gotland. The first night that they slept together, she dreamed a dream. [...] She related this dream to Hafþi, her husband, and he interpreted it as follows:

'Alt ir baugum bundit.	'Everything in rings is bound.
Boland al þitta varpa,	Inhabited this land shall be;
ok faum þria syni aiga.'	we shall beget sons three.'

He gave them each a name, while they were still unborn:

'Guti al Gutland aiga,	'Guti shall Gotland claim,
Graipr al annar haita,	Graipr the second by name
ok Gunfiaun þripi.'	and Gunfiaun the third.'

They later divided Gotland into thirds, in such a way that Graipr the eldest inherited the northern third, Gutí the middle third and Gunfiaun the youngest inherited the southernmost. Subsequently, from these three men, the population of Gotland increased so much over a long period of time [...]. (Peele 1999: 3–4)

The *Three sons in the third generation* schema here appears on the localized scope of the island of Gotland. Fractal recursivity is also evident in the opening situation of the island. The motif cycle ISLAND RISES FROM:SEA AT:DAY'S END → ISLAND SINKS INTO:SEA AT:DAY'S.BEGINNING echoes the cosmogonic model of EARTH RISES FROM:SEA AT:WORLD'S.BEGINNING → EARTH SINKS INTO:SEA AT:WORLD'S.END (cf. *Völuspá* 3–4, 57). The echo involves inversion: the island is submerged during the period of active life (day) and emerges for the inert period (night). Rather than an X RAISES EARTH FROM:SEA motif, Pielvar interrupts the cycle with fire, which seems connected to land-claiming rituals of circling with fire known from Iceland (Peele 1999: xx). Events do not directly follow the cosmogony: fractal recursivity makes this sequence of events a cosmogony for the microcosm of the island, accomplished through the introduction of culture and establishment of order (cf. *Völuspá* 5–7).

The distinctive features of Gotlandic mythology are unknown beyond picture-stones' iconography, but parallels with mythology documented in Iceland suggest rooting in a collective tradition. *Pielvar* ("Pieluar") is cognate with *Þjálfí*, which is a weak inflectional form of the same name, of which it should be considered a Gotlandic form. The god's prominence in the Circum-Baltic is supported by a medieval Baltic borrowed theonym *Телявель/Teljavel'* (Toporov 1970; cf. de Vries 1956–1957, II: 129). *Guta saga*'s account might seem to describe a human agent, but Scandinavian theonyms were not used as names or bynames of humans. *Pielvar* can be assumed to have been transparently recognizable as theonym to a contemporary audience. However, comparison with Fulla appearing as the servant rather than sister of Frigg above presents the possibility that Pielvar's relationship to Þórr was different in Gotland.

In *Guta saga*, the *Three sons in the third generation* schema is headed by a god, the names of the second generation are characterized by one pattern of alliteration and the three sons' by another. As in Tacitus's account, the genealogy is linked to geography. This aspect is absent from accounts of Burr's sons, but is paralleled in the classical counterpart of the tripartite division of the universe among Zeus, Neptune and Hades, mentioned by Müllenhoff (1920: 115). Tripartite divisions are prominent in Indo-European mythologies (cf. e.g. Dumézil 1988 [1948]), but could also evolve, as highlighted by the multiple manifestations of the *Three gods* schema in Old Norse, where three different forms have distinct associations. In principle, it is possible that the geographical distribution in the *Three sons in the third generation* was historically lost from what became the genealogy of Burr's sons, but maintained in its fractal reproductions.

5. The founding of Norway

Fundinn Noregr and *Hversu Noregr byggðist* present a genealogy exhibiting variations of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema. The genealogies of the two texts and their relationships to other sources have recently received detailed analysis by Benjamin Allport

(2021b; see also Allport 2021a). *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggðist* are related through a written textual tradition. Olrik (1907) considered the mythic schema as characteristic of the oral tradition and variations of it as a product of literary influence, but his idea of orality was overly idealized and inappropriately opposed to literacy (cf. Tacitus's mention of alternative genealogies). Here, the examples of *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggðist* are discussed as illustrative of several features of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema's use.

The genealogy begins with Fornjótr and three sons follow immediately in the second generation. The sons are not identified with geographical regions; their names are instead transparently identifiable with natural elements, which *Hversu Noregr byggðist* claims they ruled: *Hlér* (poetic "Sea"), *Logi* ("Fire") and *Kári* (poetic "Wind"). Their names and relationship to Fornjótr are built into the skaldic idiom (Clunies Ross 1983). The names' semantics suggest that this is, at least potentially, a cosmogonic genealogy, but Fornjótr is identified as a king of Finnland and Kvenland, so it looks euhemerized. The earlier text, *Fundinn Noregr*, from perhaps the third decade of the 13th century, exhibits exceptional geographical knowledge of the area around both the Gulf of Bothnia and Gulf of Finland. It includes the only attestations of *Helsingjabotn* ("Gulf of the *Helsingjar*")⁶ and "Allannzhaf" ("Sea of Åland") (Schalin with Frog 2014: 277–278) in Old Norse literature. It is also the only Old Norse text that uses *Lappr* rather than *Finnr* for mobile groups of the region (ONP, s.v. 'Lappr'). The former word later emerges as that used in Sweden with cognates in Old Russian and Finnic languages, suggesting that the knowledge or its narration stems from there. The implied cosmogonic model of *Hlér*, *Logi* and *Kári*, linking three 'elements' to or as three brothers, has no clear relation to other attested mythology (*Hlér* should not be uncritically identified with the being *Ægir*), which makes possible a regional tradition divorced from the main cosmogonic actors of Germanic religion.

Fractal recursivity may operate as an instrument of adaptation for competing cosmogonies. Cosmogonies function as knowledge of the universe's origins, which makes alternative models mutually exclusive. Such exclusive models may still be maintained when they are non-competing, because one is considered "not true" (e.g. the slaying of Ymir told as entertainment or as a "pagan belief" relevant for interpreting poetry), or because they account for different things (e.g. the gods' first war as an event of human history or raising the world's first earth as the origin of an island). Constituents of a competing cosmogony can found compelling and interesting in different ways, leading them to be maintained through shifts in significance and interpretation. Altering their scope, limiting them to certain genres or otherwise reinventing them can make them sustainable. The genealogy of Fornjótr may be rooted in a cosmogony, but that cosmogony may have been genre-specific or perhaps even adapted from a non-Germanic culture.

Kári's line is told to produce four children in the fourth generation (one not identifiable in any other source, according to Allport 2021b). His great grandson *Porri* has three children: *Nórr*, founder of Norway, *Górr*, said to settle an island named for him in Denmark (only in *Fundinn Noregr*), and who later divides geographical regions of control with *Nórr*, and their sister *Góí*, whose disappearance motivates their departure as a search for her. *Fundinn Noregr* states that *Nórr*'s sons then divided Norway between them, and the principle of such divisions by descendants resulted in the diminishing power of kings. On this topics, *Hversu Noregr byggðist* goes into genealogical detail, but relevant here is that *Nórr* is attributed with three sons among whom his kingdom is divided and their names are identified with local territories.

In this genealogy, the reproduction of the schema exhibits several variations: (a) three sons immediately follow the progenitor; (b) division is found among natural elements rather than only geography; (c) four descendants in the fourth generation appears; (d) female descendants may be counted rather than only sons; and (e) geographical division may be limited to the male descendants of three siblings. If one or some of these variations only appeared isolated in the text, they might not be recognized as variations at all; they become interpretable as variations

⁶ I would like to thank Tatjana Jackson for her consultation on this place name.

here owing to their co-occurrence with more salient examples that bring the mythic schema into focus. The example highlights that fractal recursivity is not limited to the cosmogonic paradigm in a human context: Fornjótr's sons' names identify them with a division of elements in the world, albeit as sons of a human king. Fractal recursivity is also stratified: Nórr and Górr then divide territories (without their third female sibling), and the three-fold division is subsequently reproduced within Nórr's kingdom by his descendants – i.e. on the next smaller order of scope.

6. The founding of the Rus'

Some narratives in the Russian *Primary chronicle* exhibit striking parallels in Old Norse sources, such as “the virtually identical accounts” of the deaths of *Qrvar-Oddr* and Prince Oleg (Chadwick 1946: 26) or the account of a shamanic deep-trance ritual following the same narrative pattern as that in the *Historia Norwegie* (Frog 2021b). The founding of the Rus' has not been considered in the light of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema, but the impact of a Scandinavian tradition on the foundation narrative would be unsurprising.

In summary, the various groups inhabiting what would become Novgorod were in ongoing conflict with one another and “said to themselves, ‘Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the Law.’” They then went to Scandinavia and “selected three brothers” from among those called the Rus', who immigrated with their people. “The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk.” Then, in the third year thereafter, “Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority.” (*PVL*, year 6368–6370 [860–862].)

The call for “a prince who may rule over us” anticipates a single ruler, as probably would collective martial conquest. Instead, the kingdom is given to three brothers, each receiving one of the realm's three regions, consistent with inheritance and examples linking the *Three sons in the third generation* schema to a division of territories. Both younger brothers are only mentioned together, and only when receiving territory to rule and when dying in the same year, without note on their feats, rulership or manner of death. The oldest brother, Rurik, receives Novgorod, for which collective kingdom is named, and he assumes authority over the other territories of his brothers at their deaths. Thus, it is unclear why the territories would be divided into three parts among three brothers and it is surprising that two of the three both die in the third year. The events described transpired more than three centuries before being written down, which implies traditionalization. In contrast to divisions in the preceding example, the three-fold division of territories advances immediately to the consolidation of power in Rurik.

Traditionalization suggests that the distribution of territories among three brothers was weighted with meaningfulness rather than simply being historical; otherwise, the transient brothers would presumably have been forgotten in the streamlining of the past. The foundation of a society through a threefold division of its territory among three brothers suggests a connection to the Germanic cosmogonic schema. The *Primary chronicle* does not assign the brothers predecessors, but this does not decrease the probability that the account is rooted in a fractal recurrence of the mythic genealogy, particularly in the light of (a) the chronicle's laconic tendency, (b) the variability of the schema, and (c) that the tradition was presumably transmitted in a mainly Slavic milieu. If a connection to the schema is correct, it raises the question of whether its use in the centralization of power refers to additional mythic events. Rurik's brothers, like Óðinn's, are treated collectively. The transfer of their power to Rurik can be compared to Óðinn's authority, possessions and wife being taken by his brothers during his absence and subsequently transferred back to him. These events linked to Óðinn and his brothers are obscure and their form in Sweden may have been quite different from that in Iceland. Nevertheless, it warrants considering that the use of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema in an account about the consolidation of power in one of the three brothers could be a fractal recurrence of events in which Óðinn's brothers transferred power to him. Such a fractal recurrence would characterize Rurik as an Odinic hero.

7. Overview

The examples surveyed above illustrate the diversity of forms that fractal recurrences of the *Three sons in the third generation* schema may take. The schema is most saliently recognizable when presented in its fullest and most regular form, with a god or other mythic agent as the founder of the lineage. The schema is associated with a motif of creating or founding a land or society, or of a division, often of territory, among the three sons. When a variation of the schema is recognizable, as in the case of Fornjótr and his three sons, it provides a frame of reference for recognizing additional variations within an extended genealogy. Variations lacking some features may be made recognizable through associated motifs or juggling elements. Once recognized, variations may be interpreted. However, fewer elements may leave it unclear whether the schema is in the background at all (cf. Gutenbrunner 1936: 161–162). The number and variety of examples, of which only a few have been reviewed here, indicate that the schema was an established unit of tradition. It was probably often reproduced unconsciously, but it could also be consciously engaged and manipulated. When considering potential examples, it is useful to distinguish those that are probable from those that are only possible or may be accidental. Collectively the various examples support the limited evidence that Óðinn's genealogy was a cosmogonic example of the schema and, according to the principles in §1, an exemplar to which other examples referred.

Fractal recursivity of a mythic sign linked to one temporality manifesting in another cause what I have elsewhere described as *chronotope interference* – i.e. it can have a warping effect on reality so that things too fantastic for the dominant chronotope may occur (Frog 2022: 53–55, 59–60), like attributing Fornjótr's sons power over particular natural elements. The *Three sons in the third generation* schema is exceptional because the genealogy may be founded by a cosmological actor. Old Norse temporal ideologies identify divine acts in the absence of human agents as in the chronotope of cosmogonic time (Frog 2022: 57–58). Pielvar's feats are thus framed in the chronotope of cosmogonic time as the Gotlandic Þjálfi. Pielvar's descendants tie these events to mytho-heroic time and human actors. With few exceptions,⁷ it is characteristic of cosmogonic and human temporalities that the gap between them is absolute. The genealogies of this schema link gods to human actors in a chain of descent that bridges temporalities.

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⁷ E.g. the slaying of Otr by Loki's slaying of Otr is situated in cosmogonic time according to the actors, whereas Reginn, Fáfnir and the ring of Otr's ransom bridge temporalities in the Sigurðr-Cycle (*Reginsmál* etc.).

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The backgrounds and early careers of Swedish bishops in the late Middle Ages

Michael Frost, University of Gothenburg

Over the past year, I have been engaged on a research project investigating the prior careers of the bishops in the Swedish church province during the period of the Kalmar Union and up to the Reformation. In this project I have taken a prosopographical approach to studying these prelates, looking not so much at the biographical details of individual bishops, but rather at the episcopate as a group, in order to assess firstly how the characteristics of a typical bishop varied across the different dioceses that constituted the province, and secondly how the 'profile' of a typical bishop evolved over time. To this end I have explored the bishops' family backgrounds, education, their connections to monastic orders, and the networks of ecclesiastical and secular patronage from which they benefitted, as well as a range of other attributes.

The period of the Kalmar Union is particularly interesting to study in this way, given the involvement of so many different interest groups in the appointment of bishops during this era, including the local cathedral chapters, the Archbishops of Uppsala, the papacy, the conciliar movement, the Union monarchs, and those monarchs' Swedish rivals such as Karl Knutsson and the Sture regents.

Although several similar studies have been made of the episcopate in other parts of Europe, nothing of this kind has previously been attempted for bishops in Sweden over this particular timeframe, so this project is able to offer new insights into the way power relations developed within the Swedish church during this crucial period. Moreover, in my previous research project I applied similar methods to study the episcopate of the Norwegian church province during the same period, so as this latest project has developed I have been able to draw some interesting comparisons between the situations in the Norwegian and Swedish provinces. In this paper, I will discuss how my project on the Swedish episcopate has progressed and present some of my initial findings and conclusions.

Sagas in the digital age: Comments on the digital interpretation of saga literature

Gregory Gaines, University of Maine

This paper seeks to examine problems and opportunities posed by the use of digital tools in Saga scholarship. The ability of researchers to perform complex analyses on large corpora in a short span of time has drastically changed the ways in which those researchers experience the text. Building upon Jan van Nahl's chapter in the *Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, the theoretical frameworks in which Saga researchers operate must be assessed to understand the ways in which the growing use of digital techniques affects interpretation of the Sagas. Drawing upon post-structuralist theory, this paper engages with a series of examples of theoretical and methodological steps taken by digital humanities researchers studying the Sagas. These theories and practices are interrogated and deconstructed through a series of epistemological lenses.

One example of the effect of digital tools on Saga interpretation is provided by an ongoing project focused on digitally interacting with Saga literature as part of the Old Norse-Icelandic Python Project. A database comprising of nearly one hundred *Íslendingasögur* with specific character and place names has been compiled. This database serves as a case-study for the theoretical interpretation of Saga literature using digital techniques. Hence, this paper poses the question, among others, 'is the compilation of information into a database an interpretive act?' The very methods used by Saga scholars to generate data can have a profound impact on their interactions with that data. This is no different, and perhaps is multiplied, when digital techniques that can process hundreds of Sagas swiftly and efficiently are utilized. The final results of the interrogations presented in this paper are left to the audience, but one thing is clear: In order to effectively use digital tools, researchers must be aware of the impact of those tools on their interpretations of the literature.

Representations of poetical performances in the *skáldsögur*: A review from a pragmatical approach

Inés García López, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the representation of the ‘occasion’ of composition and performance of skaldic poetry, especially on those verses included in sagas that are linked to a particular occasion represented in the story. I will focus on the so-called *skáldsögur* in order to observe those situations where skaldic poets appear improvising or performing stanzas. In relation to the communicative setting represented in the sagas, we can identify a type of situations where the occasion of the composition and the performance are given simultaneously, as in Skalla-Grímr’s *lausavísa* in the *Egils saga*. This is an example of ‘occasions of performance’.

But in the sagas, we can also find communicative situations where the composition and the performance are not given simultaneously. The act of composition is described, but when the act of creation is being narrated, we do not have the text, as in Egill’s head-ransom poem. In this case, composition and performance are separated in the text of the saga. This is an example of ‘occasions of composition’.

Following Gregory’s Nagy’s work on archaic Greek poetry and applying it to skaldic poetry, my goal is to establish the difference between the occasions of performance and of composition in order to introduce a pragmatical approach to the study of skaldic poetry in the sagas. This approach will bring us to discuss the relationship between genre and occasion and the question of the audience(s).

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On wings of death: Ibn Faḍlān's "angel of death" as a *valkyrja* and/or *völva*

Gerður Halldóra Sigurðardóttir, University of Iceland

Ibn Faḍlān's account of a Rus funeral by the Volga is, despite its brevity and laconic style, remarkably rich and comprehensive. This is perhaps especially true of the figure of the woman called the "Angel of Death", to whom more than a tenth of the account is devoted. This figure has long fascinated scholars, not least Ibn Faḍlān's use of the term "Angel of Death" (*Ar. malak al-mawt*). Some scholars, such as Hilda Ellis Davidson, Jaqueline Simpson, Hamilton M. Smyser and Neil Price, have pointed out that the use of this term may mean that this figure might, in some way, have had a connection to *valkyrjur*. Other elements in Ibn Faḍlān's description open up the possibility of comparing the "Angel of Death" to a *völva*, such as Þorbjörg lítilvölva in *Eiríks saga rauða*. Many of these observations have been somewhat sporadic and brief, leaving their implications largely unexplored, and some of these studies are now also somewhat dated, bearing in mind more recent information of various kinds that has come to light.

This presentation will re-examine the possible connections between the "Angel of Death" and the *valkyrjur* and *völvur*, with the help of recent scholarship in folklore and ethnology, as well as more recent archaeological data. The conceptual imagery of this figure will also be considered from the comparative-cultural perspective of other supra-normative female figures associated with both death and flight that are found not only in Old Nordic world, but in other sources from both Europe and Asia. Among other things, I will explore the material and embodied expressions connected to such figures, including dress, paraphernalia, gesture, and other aspects of enactment and performances. Contextualizing the literary sources in the light of the material evidence, I will postulate that in the case of Ibn Faḍlān's account, such connections were probably complex, multi-layered and possibly contradictory, and that they may not necessarily have been readily or easily perceivable to the uninitiated.

“I travel around in the West”-fjords: *Fóstbræðra saga* as a mapping device

Gísli Sigurðsson, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

The sagas combined draw up a mental map of the Viking world, from Vínland in the west to Garðaríki and beyond in the east — as it was remembered and told and retold in Iceland until the time of writing; possibly reflecting a practical role of storytelling for sea- and riverfarers for mediating information about faraway places, how they could be reached and what to expect there. Back home in Iceland, the local sagas may also be read as a mapping device of the immediate surroundings, that is with a similar practical function embedded in the narrative art. As an example of this function I shall read *Fóstbræðra saga* and analyse how it locates centers for power and commerce, natural resources and seasonal travel routes both in a detailed manner in and around Ísafjarðardjúp and Jökulfirðir, and more generally in the western part of the country. This function can be interpreted in light of the encyclopedic function of oral tradition and the role of landscape for memory and storytelling.

The mode of retelling: *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* in *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi*

Daria Glebova

The 14th c. expanded version of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf* in the codex known as *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi* (AM 73 b fol.) survived in whole only in its later paper copies (AM 71 fol., AM 73 a fol., AM 76 a fol.). These manuscripts contain an abridged redaction of *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* while the longer version can be found in AM 551 d α 4to and its copies: the *Bæjarbók* version corresponds to ch. 5,5-10 of the Íslenzk fornrit edition (*Bjarnar saga*) where 551 was used as a base text. The *Bæjarbók* version has been seen as a reworking of *Bjarnar saga* to the needs of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf*: as an adaptation (Simon 1966, I: 26) or even as a summary (Finlay 2000: xlvii). A close comparison of the versions, as well as considering the structure of the *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi* codex, allows one to re-evaluate these assessments, specify the narrative strategy of the *Bæjarbók* scribe and discuss their copying *modus operandi*.

1. The retelling mode

The parallel fragments between the versions have a similar length: the *Bæjarbók* version is around **3050** words (3050 in 71, 3064 in 73 a), the 551 version is around **2955** (2955 in 551, 2923 in AM 488 4to, used to check the readings in 551).¹ The length correspondence excludes the idea of a summary for the whole parallel fragment; this evaluation is just, however, for the first chapter where the compiler explicitly states that they are cutting the early history of the main characters' relationship and everything that happened in Iceland after Björn's return (*Bjarnar saga* 112). There are two factors that contribute to the similarity in length. First, both versions have unique additions – for example, 551 often has more details about the people travelling with Þórðr or Björn, while *Bæjarbók*'s additions are often connected to the main characters characteristics, eg. there are several appraisals of Björn and specifications of his relationship with king Óláfr. Second, most of the verbal variation between the versions can be described as paraphrasis – the lexico-grammatical and syntactic synonyms situated within the parallel clauses prevail over the factual changes (see the example in Table 1).

Table 1. Paraphrastic variation: 1,2 – anaphoric synonyms, 3,4 – lexical synonyms, 5 – narrative synonyms (direct vs. indirect speech)²

Bæjarbók (71, 69r)	551, 3v
Eptir 1fund þ(eira) Biarnar og Þorðar , atti Biörn stefnu við 2lið sitt , og 3sagðeft vilía 4fin(n)a Oláf k(onung), og 5koma af ser Reiðe han(n)s fyrer fiär upptóku þessa	Eptir 1þetta ätti Biörn stefnu við 2Auðun fielaga sinn . Og 3kuaðft vilía 4fara til fundar við Olaff k(onung), og 5vil eg e(igi) Reyði hanns yffer mier fyrer kaup man(n)a Rän

In many cases, like the one given in Table 1, the source of variation cannot be traced to one ideological or stylistic strategy used by the scribe either of *Bæjarbók* or 551. However, some of the variation found in the *Bæjarbók* version is more concerned with undermining the image of the main antagonist of the saga, Þórðr Kolbeinsson – for example, if in 551 both Þórðr and Björn are able to approach king Óláfr without any mediation, in *Bæjarbók* this ability is left only to Björn while Þórðr approaches Óláfr only with help from his friend and relative, Þorkell Eyjólfsson (Table 2) (see the discussion in Glebova 2021: 168-172 and Glebova forthcoming). The example in Table 2 is the episode when Þórðr seeks Óláfr's help in his business of getting

¹ The first section summarises the findings I have been writing about elsewhere (Glebova 2021, Glebova forthcoming). The most extensive overview of *Bjarnar saga* manuscripts and their relationship to each other can be found in Simon 1966 I.

² Here and in other examples the additions are marked in *italics*, inversion is underlined by one line, the entirely different information is underlined by two lines, and synonymous wording is in **bold**. The expanded abbreviations are marked by '()'; the ends of the line are marked by 'l'.

inheritance from his deceased uncle in Denmark (*Bjarnar saga* 126). One can see that the sequence of events is different in 551 and in *Bæjarbók*. In 551 after Þórðr's arrival, I) he tells the king about his matter; II-III) Þorkell Eyjólfsson persuades the king to help Þórðr; IV) the king agrees to help and issues a letter to his friends in Denmark. In *Bæjarbók* the sequence changes as Þórðr is well received **because** II) Þorkell Eyjólfsson has already introduced Þórðr's matter to the king; I) they talk **together** about the matter again; IV-III) they ask the king to issue a letter to his friends in Denmark. Therefore, in *Bæjarbók* Þórðr completely depends upon Þorkell Eyjólfsson, while in 551 he is allowed to present his case on his own. One should notice that the 'ideological' change in the narrative strategy is also accompanied by the synonymic variation inserted in the parallel clauses – even when they are placed in a different order.

Table 2. 1, 5, 9, 10 – lexical synonyms, 8 – contextual synonyms, 3, 7 – morphological change (preterite/present; article), 3, 4, 6 – factual change

Bæjarbók (71, 67v)	551, 2r
var h(onum) þar ¹ allvel fagnat, (II) þvíat þ(ar) var þá fyrir Þorkell Eyjólfsson, og túlkaðe vel ² mál Þórðar, (I) ³ fögðu ⁴ þ(eir) k(onun)ge ⁵ málavöxtu á, um ferð ⁶ hanns, og beidde at (IV) ⁷ k(onu)ngrin(n) ⁸ flkyllde flkrifa með h(onum) til vina sinna í Danmörk, (III) at hann ⁹ næðe ¹⁰ arfinum. Konungrinn gærir svá.	Honum var þar ¹ vel fagnad. (I) ³ segir ⁴ han(n) ko(nu)ngi ⁵ vauxtú á um ferð ⁶ sýna. (II) Þorkell var þá þar og túlkaði vel ² málið við konung, (III) að han(n) ⁹ fengi ¹⁰ fié sitt. (IV) ⁷ K(onungr) ⁸ liet giora honum Brieff til vina sinna í Danmörk ok setti fyrir sitt insigli.

A similar narrative strategy aimed at demeaning Þórðr can be detected not only in the changes introduced in *Bæjarbók* but also in the fragments it leaves almost intact. There are only three fragments when the number of words participating in the variation is less than 25%.³ Two of them also portray Þórðr in a dim light — as a coward (exchange with Kálfr (*Bjarnar saga* 128)) and as a pitiful weak man (scene when Björn sends Þórðr to the Orkney islands (*Bjarnar saga* 130)). The last one is the final dialogue between Þórðr and Oddný, when Oddný accuses Þórðr of being full of lies and deceit (Table 3). Oddný's accusation contributes to Þórðr's infamous portrayal, so one could argue that the *Bæjarbók* compiler did not want to change anything in this fragment as it was harmonious with their narrative aim.

Table 3. The final dialogue between Þórðr and Oddný. Unlike many previous fragments, here the amount of variation is quite low; it mostly contains morphological changes (6-7) or additions of individual words, except for one change in syntax (1-3).

Bæjarbók (71, 70v-71r)	551, 5r
Nær getr þú þúi, fl(egir). hon. ¹ fregit /71r/ hefer ek ² þau tíðinði ³ at flkip er komit i Hrutafíorð, og er þar á Biörn sá er þú sagðer andaðan, Þorður mællti, vera má at þ(ér) þýke(sic!) þat tíðinði, víft eru þat tíðinde ⁴ lagðe hon og veit eg nú en giörr hverfú eg em gefinn. Eg hógða þig vera ⁵ Rólkan(n) dreng, en þú ert fullúr af lýge og laúfúng, þat er mællt ⁶ lagðe Þorður at yferbætur see til alls lagðar. mig grúnar þat s(egir): hon at fealfúr mune han(n) hafa ⁷ flkipat ser laú nin(n) og	Nær gietúr þú seigir hún. ¹ friett hefi eg ² það er mier þykia(sic!) tyðinði, mi er er sogð ³ flskipkoma í hrúta fyrði, og er þar á Biörn sá er þú sagðer ándadan. Þorður mællti. Það má vera seiger h(an)n að þier þýki(sic!) það tyðindi, Vyft eru það Tyðinði ⁴ seigir hún Og en(n) gior veýt eg nú seigir hún(sic!) húorfú eg er giefin(n), Eg hógða þig vera ⁵ goðan dreing, en(n) þú ert fullúr aff Lygi o(g) Laúfúng. Það er mællt ⁶ seigir Þ(ór)ður, að yferbætur sie til allz. Mig grúnar, seigir hún,

³ To illustrate the switch between the fragments with dense variation and the ones copied closely, the parallel text has been divided into chunks from 60 to 100 words, according to the content and as closely to the periodic structure as possible. There is also one fragment which has less than 60 words but also presents a separate unit of content – it is a bit narrating the whereabouts of Björn's body and the relics in Iceland in the anecdote about how Björn received St. Óláfr's garters (*Bjarnar saga* 133-134). While the other parts of the story have a lot of variation, this fragment is copied almost word-for-word – which would be consistent, first, with the pious nature of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf* and, second, with the Icelandic provenance of *Bæjarbók* as a codex. The whole parallel fragment with marked variation can be found in Glebova 2021: 284-304.

bœtúrnar, Þorður mællte haf þat fyrrer satt sem þer sýnift,	ad sialfúr múni hann hafa flkapaðar sier Bœtúrnar, haff þú það fyrrer satt sem þier synest seigir han(n).
19 / 101 (20%)	21 / 106 (21%)

2. The narrative strategy and the mode of copying

The reason for the narrative strategy focused on demeaning Þórðr could lie in the *Bæjarbók* compiler's goal to create a darker background for Björn as the main protagonist. This would be consistent with Sean Grønlie's view, who interprets the *Bjarnar saga* fragment in *Bæjarbók* as a story of the right relationship of sinner (Björn) to saint (Óláfr) (Grønlie 2017: 244). The figure of Björn seems to be even more pious when it is juxtaposed with other *þættir* included in *Bæjarbók*. While most of them follow the canonical list of *þættir* usually included in the *Separate saga of St. Olaf*, there are two texts that are included in *Bæjarbók* only. One of them is *Bjarnar saga* with the whole story about the conflict with Þórðr, another is a fragment from *Laxdæla saga*, narrating the story of how Þorkell Eyjólfsen met with Óláfr and how he tried to build a church in Iceland of the same height as the one built by Óláfr. Unlike Björn, who listens to Óláfr and changes his ways of life (mainly stops pillaging and raiding), Þorkell does not follow the king's advice, persists in his plans, and dies in the storm losing all the timber for the church.

There are some details pointing in the direction that Þórðr had more value for the *Bæjarbók*'s compiler than just a background character as he is even more connected to Þorkell Eyjólfsen, the hero of the next *Íslendingasaga þáttr* in *Bæjarbók*, than Björn who is linked with him by contrast. First, the *þáttr* starts with figure of Þorkell Eyjólfsen (everything happens when he was welcome in Norway) and then proceeds to Þórðr. Those two characters are associated together – it is known from *Bjarnar saga* that they are friends and kin (Þorkell as *vinr* (*Bjarnar saga* 126), as *frændi* (*Bjarnar saga* 209)). Moreover, they share the same characteristic – both are described in their sagas as very conscious of their reputation: Þórðr – “*Hann var skáld mikit ok helt sér mjök fram til virðingar*” (“He was a considerable poet, and did much to maintain his own reputation”)⁴ (*Bjarnar saga* 111); Þorkell, although this description exists only in the long saga and not in the *þáttr* in *Bæjarbók* – “*Þorkell Eyjólfsen gerðisk höfðingi mikill. Helt hann sér mjök til vinsælda ok virðingar*” (*Laxdæla saga* 255).

According to ONP, the characteristic *halda sér til virðingar* is rarely used – much more often characters care for someone else's reputation and not their own (cf. this kind of description in *Laxdæla saga*: “*Faðir hans hélt honum mjök til virðingar*” (*Laxdæla saga* 85-86)). The cases of *halda sér til virðingar* are not so widespread and they also have one thing in common as the character who is described this way is either not able to hold his reputation as he wants it or even perishes: Þórðr's secret comes out and destroys his relationship with Óðdný, Þorkell Eyjólfsen destroys his relationship with Óláfr and then dies in the storm. Another character with this description, Björn Sæmundarson in *Sturlunga saga* (“*Biorn [Sæmundar] son bio þa i Gunnars-hollte, hann hellt ser mest til mannvirðingar þeira bræðra*” (*Sturlunga saga* I 426)), steps forward to handle the lawsuit against Sturla Þórðarson and not only fails but does not even show up when the case is being discussed. The similarity of contexts allows one to see *halda sér til virðingar* as a formula (as described in Sävborg 2018).

Considering the semantic aura of *halda sér til virðingar* and the beginning of *Bjarnar saga þáttr* with Þorkell Eyjólfsen and Þórðr, one could argue that the *þættir* made from *Bjarnar saga* and *Laxdæla saga* could be brought together as stories about two powerful men who worry too much about their reputation, which becomes their undoing as Þórðr loses his wife's respect and Þorkell loses not only Óláfr's good faith but even his life. This interpretation explains the interest of *Bæjarbók*'s compiler in the last dialogue between Þórðr and Óðdný and their reluctance to

⁴ Trans. by Alison Finlay (Finlay 2000: 1).

change or cut it (Table 3) even though it is not connected to the story of Björn and Óláfr – it becomes the moral of Þórðr's story anticipated from his very first description.

The close study of variation between the versions of *Bjarnar saga* allows one to see the switches between the two modes of copying – one is characterised by dense variation and another by its opposite. These modes seem to manifest different writing and language practices that were available for a compiler or a scribe. The fragments where variation is sparse can help see the compiler's narrative strategy more clearly as here the main aim of the compiler/scribe is to save the text as it is. In contrast, dense variation marks fragments that should be changed or simply do not have to be preserved. In these cases the copying process allows more freedom, which is restrained, however, by the limits of synonymy.

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The travels of Haraldr Sigurðarson: *Gamanvísur* and other stories

Erin Goeres, University College London

Forced to flee the Battle of Stiklarstaðir at the age of fifteen, the young prince Haraldr Sigurðarson sought refuge in Russia before travelling further afield to Byzantium and, ultimately, to Jerusalem. Haraldr's travels in the east are recorded in multiple sagas of the kings, where they offer an intriguing set of episodes that showcase the variety of intercultural encounters possible in the eleventh century. This paper will examine the way Haraldr's eastern travels are presented in the different saga narratives, focusing in particular on the sequence known as *Gamanvísur* (Jesting Verses). *Gamanvísur* is the poetic climax of the first half of Haraldr's life story. Spoken, according to the saga narratives, by Haraldr himself to his soon-to-be wife, Ellisif of Novgorod, the sequence boastfully summarises the prince's adventures abroad and sets the stage for his triumphant return to Norway. The recitation of such a sequence at a pivotal moment in Haraldr's story encapsulates the heteroglossic nature of the saga narrative, in which prose and verse, folktale and saint's life, gossip and rumour all combine to form a complex, multi-vocal account of Haraldr's journey. It will be argued that the marked heteroglossia of this chapter of Haraldr's life mirrors both the diversity of his experiences abroad and the multifaceted character of the man who would soon become king.

Born of snow: The development of Snær *inn gamli* and his family in Scandinavian sources

Tom Grant, Utrecht University

Snær *inn gamli*, or “Snow the Old”, is a figure who evades easy categorisation. This aged king of the Arctic North cuts across many traditional saga genres, surfacing in the *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *konungasögur*. He also appears with a different face in Danish historiographical tradition. Snær’s appearances in the literary record are always brief, but their frequency indicates a sustained interest in this figure that runs through centuries of Scandinavian tradition. Perhaps as a consequence of his scattered attestation, relevant scholarship to date treats Snær in an incidental fashion and he has not been the subject of a dedicated study.¹

The present paper addresses the need for a more thorough consideration of Snær *inn gamli*. His appearances across Scandinavian sources are considered, first in Danish records and then in the Icelandic saga corpus. Reflections can then be offered on the possible origins of “King Snow” and the relationship between these two traditions. This paper closes by considering the growth of Snær and his family in light of a progressively increasing interest in the *Finnar* and their territory on the part of Icelandic authors.

The Danish tradition

The earliest references in Scandinavian sources to a “King Snow” are found in Danish records. A certain Snyo, whose name is probably a Latinisation of *Snjór*, appears as the fifth king in the *Catalogus Regum Danie* (Gertz 1917: 159), and Sven Aggesen gives a Snio as the son of Kanutus and father of Clacharaldus in his *Brevis Historia Regum Dacie* (Gertz 1917, 107–8; see also Christiansen 1992: 116, n. 59). The first full description of a figure by this name is found in the *Chronicon Lethrense*, a late twelfth-century Danish chronicle.² The fifth and sixth chapters of the *Chronicon* present a narrative concerning a King Snyo. This figure is first met as a shepherd of a *gygas* (“giant”) named Læ, who inhabits an island called Leshø:

Erat autem gygas quidam, nomine Læ, in insula, que uocatur Leshø, pastorem quendam habens, nomine Snyo. (Gertz 1917: 48–9).

There was a certain giant by the name of Læ, on an island called Leshø. He had a certain shepherd named Snyo.³

Læ corresponds to the *jötunn* Hlér, or Ægir, of Icelandic sources, who lives on Hlésey (modern-day Læsø).⁴ Snyo is sent by Læ to King Athisl of Sweden. He is told to procure the kingship of Denmark following the death of the former king, Raka, and does so. Snyo’s rule is characterised by tyranny. A man named Røth visits Læ on Læsø and asks for a prophecy concerning Snyo’s death. Læ consents provided that Røth tell him three truths, which he does. After this Røth is

¹ John McKinnell (2005: 70–1; 2021: 421–3) discusses Snær *inn gamli* and his family in the context of the “Summer King” narrative pattern. Most references to Snær relate to his association with Fornjótr (Clunies Ross 1983: 55; Lindow 2001: 119; Hermann Pálsson 1999: 51–2; Motz 1996: 78, 85; Allport forthcoming 2022b). The Danish reflexes of this figure are usually mentioned in the context of Danish historiography (Blode 2017; Hybel 2018: 95–6; though cf. Ciklamini 1965: 132–3; McKinnell 2021: 421–2).

² The most widely accepted date for the *Chronicon* is c. 1170, following Gertz 1917: 35–6, though for an earlier dating, see Lindow 2016. A useful summary of the arguments to date is provided in Andersen 2012. The *Chronicon Lethrense* has long been of interest to the study of Danish legendary history and related fields, such as *Beowulf* studies (see, e.g., Fulk, Björk and Niles 2008, 301–2; Garmonsway and Simpson 1968, *passim*; Niles 2007), but has less often been used in the study of Icelandic literature.

³ Translations in this paper are my own.

⁴ The island of Hlésey is mentioned in Old Icelandic mythological sources. It is the site of one of Þórr’s feats in stanza 37 of the eddic poem *Hárbarðsljóð*, and also constitutes the opening scene of Snorri Sturluson’s *Skáldskaparmál*. Its inhabitant and namesake Hlér/Ægir is a sea god and husband of Rán who plays an important function as the host of the gods in *Hymiskviða* and *Lokasenna*. On Ægir in mythological sources see Clunies Ross 1983: 47 and Allport forthcoming 2022b.

informed that Snýo will be bitten to death by lice. As soon as Snýo is told of this, it comes to pass. He is succeeded by the Skjöldungr king, Hrólfr *kraki*.

The next source to mention this figure is Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, completed around the end of the twelfth century. Saxo's Snýo is, like his counterpart in the *Chronicon Lethrense*, a king who presides over a ruinous period in Danish history, but he differs in all other respects. Læ is absent from this account, and the king's death is not described. Snýo is also not inserted into Skjöldungr history, as in the *Chronicon*. It is unclear why the *Gesta Danorum* should preserve such a different portrait of this figure—if indeed it is assumed that they are one and the same—especially considering that Saxo may have drawn upon the *Chronicon*.⁵ It is possible that Saxo borrowed the name for his King Snýo from Sven Aggesen's *Historia* and fleshed out his character portrait. This contention might be supported by the spelling of the name, "Snýo", which is consistent across both works.

Snýo later appears in the *Annales Ryenses*, a collection of Danish annals from the end of the thirteenth century. Although the early section of the *Annales* constitutes a paraphrase of Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, the narrative concerning Snýo pertains to the same tradition preserved in the *Chronicon Lethrense* (Blode 2017: 163–4). In the *Annales* he is again a shepherd, is eaten by lice, and is succeeded by Hrólfr *kraki*. Læ is absent from this narrative, but this may be because the text presents only a brief synopsis of Snýo's career when compared with the *Chronicon*. A version of the story containing both Snýo and Læ reappears in the Old Danish *Gesta Danorum*—not to be confused with Saxo's work—likely written only a decade or two after the *Annales* (Blode 2017: 164–5; Niles and Newlands 2007: 311). Snýo continues to appear in Swedish historiographical sources in connection with Læ and Læsø throughout the later Middle Ages.⁶

The Danish tradition concerning "King Snow", then, consists of two branches. The first, represented earliest by the late-twelfth century *Chronicon Lethrense* and continued in later Danish and Swedish works, connects Snýo with Læ, has him eaten by lice and succeeded by Hrólfr *kraki*. The second, in which Snýo is a more conventional Danish king, is only preserved at any length in the *Gesta Danorum*. It cannot be ascertained whether this Snýo is the same figure as the one listed in the *Catalogus* or in Sven Aggesen's *Historia*. It is also unclear what the nature of the connection is between Saxo's king and the more widespread tradition concerning Snýo from Læsø, if such a connection existed at all.

The Icelandic tradition

Icelandic sources present a very different figure than that contained in Danish historiographical evidence. The earliest appearance of a "King Snow" in Icelandic material is in *Fundinn Nógr* (hereafter *FN*). This is a genealogical preface to *Orkneyinga saga*, an early *konungasaga* which has been dated to the late twelfth century (Finnbogi Guðmundsson 1965: x–xi; Allport 2021: 46). *FN* may have been composed later than *Orkneyinga saga* itself—perhaps by Snorri Sturluson—but recent scholarship favours the view that the material it contains was in circulation at an earlier date (Allport forthcoming 2022b and the references there). *FN* traces the ancestors of Fornjótr, a euhemerised king of Finnland and Kvenland:

Fornjótr átti þrjá syni. Hét einn Hlér, er vér köllum Ægi, annarr Logi, þriði Kári. Hann var faðir Frosta, föður Snæs ins gamla. Hans sonr hét Porri. (Guðni Jónsson 1950, II: 88).

Fornjótr had three sons. The first was called Hlér, whom we call Ægir, the second Logi, and the third Kári. He was the father of Frosti, the father of Snær the Old. His son was called Porri.

⁵ Saxo's use of the motif of the three true facts perhaps indicates that he drew this from the Snýo episode itself in the *Chronicon* (Davidson and Fisher 1996: 146). See also Friis-Jensen 2015: xxxiv and Andersen 2012 under "Transmission".

⁶ Relevant texts include the late-fifteenth century *Prosaíska Krönikan*, *Lilla Rimkrönikan* and the *Chronica* of Ericus Olai, as well as the sixteenth-century chronicles of Olaus Petri and Laurentius Petri; see Blode 2017: 165–8 and Colbert 1992: 30–1.

Fornjótr appears elsewhere as a mythological *jötunn* whose sons are personifications of elemental forces. Stanza 21 of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's ninth-century *Ynglingatal* gives “glóðfjalgr sonr Fornjóts” (Marold 2012: 46; “ember-hot son of Fornjótr”) as a kenning for fire. Fornjótr's sons Logi and Kári are not otherwise attested in earlier sources. However, the association between Fornjótr and Ægir/Hlér is at least as old as the fragmentary poem *Norðrsetudrápa*, which juxtaposes these figures as progenitors of stormy weather (Clunies Ross 1983: 48; Allport forthcoming 2022b). This poem is conventionally dated to the eleventh century (Clunies Ross 2017: 397).

Snær *inn gamli* appears shortly after Fornjótr and his three sons. *FN* presents details which are repeated in many subsequent Icelandic sources containing Snær. He is already characterised as old in this early material and is the only dynast in the first section of *FN* with an epithet. The names of his immediate family members also relate to ice and cold: his father is Frosti (“frosty”), and his son is Þorri, a back-formation from the midwinter month of the same name.⁷ *FN* locates Snær in the Finnic-speaking areas to the north and east of the Scandinavian peninsula. This broad region constituted a frequent setting in the Icelandic corpus. In saga literature it is a source of material wealth, dynastic marriages and adventure (Hermann Pálsson 1999; Mundal 1996), but its inhabitants, the *Finnar* or Sámi, are demonised for their apparent “lack of civilization, oppositional intent, and magical ability” (DeAngelo 2010: 258). As a consequence, the far north and east are also regarded as alien and dangerous. This has implications for the many of the appearances of Snær in subsequent sources.

Snær is next mentioned in *Ynglinga saga*, one of a collection of *konungasögur* preserved in Snorri Sturluson's early-thirteenth century *Heimskringla*. In this text he bears the name Snjór, a regular variant of the simple noun *snær*.⁸ The Ynglingr king Vanlandi remains with Snjór in Finnland over the winter, and receives his daughter Drífa (“snow-drift”) in marriage. After Vanlandi breaks his promise to return to Drífa, she pays a sorceress, Hulð, to draw him to Finnland, or, failing that, to bring about his death. Vanlandi is struck with a desire to travel north, but he is advised against it. He is accordingly killed violently in his sleep. The narrative outline of this episode was likely conceived by Snorri to contextualise the more ancient account preserved in stanza 3 of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's poem *Ynglingatal* which has Vanlandi die at the hands of a supernatural *mara*.⁹ It is impossible to ascertain whether Snjór or Drífa appeared in an earlier version of this narrative, but their absence in older poetry makes this unlikely.

The next extant source which mentions Snær *inn gamli* is *Hversu Noregr byggðist* (hereafter *HNB*). This text is first attested in the late fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók* but existed in some form as early as the late thirteenth century (Allport forthcoming 2022a). It offers an expanded version of the genealogy present in *FN*. The most significant elaboration applies to the descendants of Snær's grandson Nórr (Allport 2021: 47), but his immediate family is also expanded. Hlér—here given without his byname Ægir—is still Snær's great uncle, but Snær's father is given as Jökull (“glacier”) rather than Frosti. Snær retains his son Þorri, but also accrues three daughters, all named for snow: Fönn (“snow”), Mjöll (“powder snow”) and Drífa, who appeared as Vanlandi's bride in *Ynglinga saga*. Further down the genealogy *HNB* also suggests that Snær is reputed to have had a supernaturally long lifespan of three hundred years, which makes it the only text to qualify his epithet.

It is after Snær's appearance in *HNB* that he and his family begin to move away from historical and genealogical sources. These figures next surface in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, an

⁷ *FN* explains that Þorri, a great *blótmaðr*, initiated the Þorrablót, a pre-Christian sacrifice that took place at midwinter. This event is doubtless named for the month of Þorri, however, which itself is perhaps derived from the same root as *þurr* “dry” (De Vries 2000: 618).

⁸ The original nominative singular form is *snjór* < **snæur*, with a genitive singular in *snævar*. The form *snær* may have arisen through analogy with forms in *snæ-* or through syncope of the *u* in *snæur* (on this sound change see Gordon 1927: 255). A further alternative nominative singular form was *snjár*.

⁹ On this figure see Batten 2021: 370–3.

Íslendingasaga conventionally dated to the fourteenth century (Þorhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991: v–vii; lxix–lxxiv). This saga centres around Bárðr Dumbsson, who migrates to Iceland from his ancestral home at the northern extreme of the Scandinavian peninsula. *Bárðar saga* opens with an account of the marriage between the protagonist’s father, Dumbr, and Mjöll, the beautiful daughter of Snær: “Hann nam í burtu af Kvænlandi Mjöll, dóttur Snæs ins gamla, ok gekk at eiga hana” (Þorhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991: 102; “He took Mjöll, the daughter of Snær the Old, from Kvænland, and married her”). The genealogical introduction of *Bárðar saga* is consistent with the historical bent of the work (Ármann Jakobsson 1998), even if the dynasty begun by Dumbr and Mjöll proves to be populated by supernatural characters—a natural consequence of a union between a *risi* and a Sámi bride.¹⁰

The final text to feature Snær and his family in any detail is the *fornaldarsaga* known as *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, which dates from the fourteenth century (Zitzelsberger 1969: 6; 1993). In chapter 22 of this text, the hero Sturlaugr dispatches a man named Frosti to deliver an inscribed stick to Mjöll, the daughter of Snær *inn gamli*. He travels to Snær in Finnmörk and remains with him through the winter. After many attempts he manages to meet with Mjöll, and, as in *Bárðar saga*, she is characterised by otherworldly beauty. He delivers the message to her, and with much delight she agrees to become Sturlaugr’s mistress. Mjöll travels with superhuman speed back to Sweden with Frosti. The plan turns out to be a ruse, however: Sturlaugr wished only to discover the origin of a magical wild ox horn which he had been seeking for much of the saga narrative. Once Mjöll delivers this information, Sturlaugr has her and Frosti burned to death, as she is suspected to be a dangerous sorceress. The characterisation of Mjöll in this account displays certain similarities with the depiction of Snær’s daughter Drífa in *Ynglinga saga*. Both are the objects of bridal quests which are not fulfilled, and both are associated with subversive magic.

Snær is mentioned once more in the medieval Icelandic corpus. He makes a brief appearance in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, a *fornaldarsaga* dating from the fourteenth century (Lagerholm 1927: xli–xlii; Simek 1993). In chapter 13 of this narrative, the giantess Arinnejfa describes her quest into the underworld to procure a magical horn:¹¹

Nú fór ek í undirheima, ok fann ek Snjá konung, ok gaf ek honum sex tigi hafra ok pund gulls ok keypta ek svá hornit, en drottningu hans var búinn eitrdrykk í tólf tunna bikar, ok drakk ek þat fyrir hennar skyld, ok hefi ek síðan haft nokkurn lítinn brjóstsviða. (Guðni Jónsson, 1950, III: 351).

I went into the underworld and found King Snjár. I gave him sixty goats and a pound of gold and in this way bought the horn. A poisonous drink had been prepared for his queen in a goblet with the capacity of twelve kegs. I drank that for her sake and have since always had a little heartburn.

In this farcical account, Snjár—another variant form of *snær*—lacks the consistent characteristics exhibited in other Icelandic accounts, such as the epithet *inn gamli* and relatives with icy names. Arinnejfa’s adventures are reminiscent of Christian vision literature and include demonised versions of mythological figures such as Óðinn and Þórr. If it was the author’s intention to create a hellish account populated by well-known characters from the ancient pre-Christian past, then this Snjár *konungr* can hardly be other than the Snær *inn gamli* who surfaces in a range of other Icelandic sources. In such a case, *Egils saga ok Ásmundar* would be the only text to give Snær a queen, and would constitute a uniquely negative representation of this figure

¹⁰ On human-*risi* marriage, see Grant 2019: 94–5.

¹¹ This horn is presumably unrelated to the one which Snær’s daughter Mjöll speaks of in *Sturlaugs saga*.

in the vernacular tradition. It is unclear whether this Snjár is related to the character of the same name who appears in post-medieval Icelandic sources.¹²

The evolution of King Snow

The evidence adduced above raises two related questions: how did the separate Danish and Icelandic traditions concerning “King Snow” develop, and were these traditions related? The Snýo preserved in the *Chronicon Lethrense* is a shepherd and unlikely king who dies an ignoble death, and he appears in this basic form in all subsequent East Scandinavian sources apart from Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum*. In the Icelandic tradition Snær is an aged descendant of Fornjótr and a progenitor in his own right who, with the exception of *Egils saga ok Ásmundar*, always resides around the Gulf of Bothnia. There is little in the character portraits of these figures which would suggest any link between them.

The one salient connection between the Danish and Icelandic traditions is that the earliest witnesses to both associate Snýo/Snær with the mythological giant Hlér and his island, Hlésey. This link is clearest in the *Chronicon*, where the future king lives on Læsø and is in Læ’s employ. Læ and Læsø are also revisited during the narrative of Snýo’s reign. In *FN*, Snær’s connection with Hlér is less direct, but is still discernible. In this text Hlér is Snær’s great-uncle, being the son of Fornjótr and the brother of his grandfather Kári. Both appear at the head of the genealogy before the narrative of *FN* begins proper and are named in adjoining sentences. Specific reference is also made to Hlésey in the narrative immediately following the opening genealogy in *FN*. Snær’s grandson Górr travels among the islands of Denmark and locates the descendants of Hlér: “Hann fann þar frændr sína, þá er komnir váru af Hlé inum gamla ór Hlésey” (Guðni Jónsson 1950, II: 89; “he found his kinsmen there, who were descended from Hlér the Old from Hlésey”).

It is difficult to account for the association between Snýo/Snær and Læ/Hlér across the *Chronicon* and *FN*, but three possibilities present themselves. First, the author of *FN* could have lifted Snær and Hlér together from Danish historiographical tradition, either from the *Chronicon Lethrense* or a related source. Second, the connections drawn between Snýo/Snær and Læ/Hlér could have a shared basis in earlier mythological or legendary tradition. Third, the link could have arisen by coincidence. The first possibility—of a direct relationship between the Danish and Icelandic traditions—is difficult to reconcile with the divergent inventory of characters across the *Chronicon* and *FN*. The links identified between the two texts to date (Allport forthcoming 2022b) would seem to indicate that the *Chronicon* and *FN* drew on common models and traditions, but were not directly related. This picture is consistent with the second explanation offered here. The independent derivation of Snýo/Snær and Læ/Hlér from earlier tradition is also compatible with their divergent character portraits across the *Chronicon* and *FN*.

If there existed an earlier legendary or mythological tradition in which Snýo/Snær was connected with Læ/Hlér and his island, it is impossible to say more about it. However, this association may have lent itself to the specific purposes of the authors of the *Chronicon* and *FN*. It has long been acknowledged that *Chronicon*’s characterisation of Snýo is not original, but is lifted from the earlier *Chronicon Roskildense*.¹³ The author of the *Chronicon* may similarly have relied on a mythological link between a certain Snjór and the *jötunn* Hlér to furnish the name and associations of his king.¹⁴ Such reworkings of Scandinavian mythological tradition in medieval

¹² A Snjár kóngur appears as a king of Hálogaland in the *sagnakvæði* known as *Snjáskvæði*, attested in manuscripts from the seventeenth century but composed at an earlier date (Colwill 2018: 25–8). This figure reappears in Steinunn Finnisdóttir’s seventeenth-century *Snækóngrs rímur* (Hughes 2014). These depictions seem to have little in common with the earlier Icelandic tradition of Snær inn gamli.

¹³ Snýo’s characteristics are drawn from those of Erik Emune (Olrik 1900–1: 4, n. 2; Gertz 1917, 36–7; Lindow 2016: 26).

¹⁴ Olrik (1900–1: 16–17, n. 4) supposes that Snýo was originally a *frostjätte* (“frost giant”) and adduces Snær’s descent from Fornjótr in Icelandic sources in support. This is a tempting possibility but is impossible to substantiate.

Danish historiography were not uncommon.¹⁵ The unusual fact of this putative myth's location in Denmark itself may have made it a particularly attractive candidate for its insertion into the legendary history of the *Chronicon*.

An early mythological association between Hlér and Snær may also have motivated their inclusion together at the beginning of the genealogy in *FN*. Hlér's presence at this point of the genealogy is not surprising. References to Fornjótr as a progenitor of elemental beings have a long pedigree in the Old Norse corpus, and Ægir/Hlér was already associated with Fornjótr when *Norðrsetudrápa* was composed. If the genealogist behind *FN* knew of a tradition linking the sea god Hlér with a figure named for snow, then the inclusion of the latter among the elemental descendants of Fornjótr would be quite natural. The switch of Hlér and Snær from Denmark to the Arctic northeast was effected in Icelandic tradition through the association of these figures with Fornjótr, who in *FN* is made king of Finnland and Kvenland.¹⁶

A further question arises from the foregoing discussion: how might one account for the evolution of Snær in Icelandic tradition from an elemental descendant of Fornjótr to a father of Sámi brides? The narrative pattern of Finnic kings giving their daughters away to Norse rulers was not without precedent in the Icelandic corpus. A model already existed in the marriage between Haraldr *hárfagri* and Snæfríðr, the daughter of Svási *Finnkonungr*. This account, first narrated in the late-twelfth century synoptic history *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, constitutes the earliest appearance in Icelandic sources of what might be termed the "Sámi bride" type. A more ancient reflex of this pattern may also be found in the marriage between Njörðr and the ski-goddess Skaði, which is the subject of a fragmentary eddic poem preserved in Snorri's *Gylfaginning*.¹⁷ The "Sámi bride" figure came to be widespread in the Icelandic sagas. Later examples include Hvít, the daughter of the king of the *Finnar*, who is the bride of Hringr in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and Grímhildr, the daughter of a certain Jösurr from Finnland who appears in *Gríms saga loðinkinna*.¹⁸ Across all these texts, the "Sámi bride" type is generally consistent: she is taken from among the *Finnar*, either by force or with the permission of her father, and is often supernaturally beautiful. The bride almost always exhibits malign characteristics, such as an association with sorcery—a fact closely tied with the prejudicial view of the far north in Icelandic literature.¹⁹

Snær's role as the father of Sámi brides *par excellence* is first witnessed in *Ynglinga saga*, where his daughter Drífa is married off to Vanlandi. As a figure already established in *konungasaga* tradition as an ancient king of the Finnic northeast, and with a family bearing icy names, it is not surprising that Snorri made Snær the father of Drífa.²⁰ His function in this text appears to have provided a model to other Icelandic authors who employed the "Sámi bride" type in their narratives. That Snær assumes the role of the archetypal Finnic father-in-law in the Icelandic corpus, and his daughters become the archetypal Sámi brides, is indicated by the fact that saga writers inserted them into a wide variety of different texts and contexts. As discussed above, Snær and his daughters provided a means by which Snorri could account for the death of Vanlandi in *Ynglinga saga*. They were used by the author of *Bárðar saga* to construct an otherworldly origin story for the eponymous hero. They were also used as a way of accessing the physical space and esoteric knowledge of the maligned north in *Sturlaugs saga*. Snær's

¹⁵ Consider the adaptation of the myth of Þórr's visit to Geirrðr in the eighth book of Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (Grant and Hui 2020: 73–4, 87–9).

¹⁶ It is possible that the association of Fornjótr and Ægir/Hlér with the icy north had already been encouraged by *Norðrsetudrápa*, which links these figures with the harsh climate of Greenland.

¹⁷ It has been suggested that the marriage of Snæfríðr and Haraldr *hárfagri* also had mythological roots; see Steinsland 2011: 46–7 and the references there.

¹⁸ On these figures see Hermann Pálsson 1999: 38–40.

¹⁹ See DeAngelo 2010: 259 and the references there.

²⁰ As a Sámi bride named for snow, Drífa may have been modelled on Snæfríðr ("snow-fair"). There are other traces in *Ynglinga saga* of Snorri's possible use of *FN*. He also makes Agni's Sámi bride, Skjölf, the daughter of a certain chief of the *Finnar* named Frosti. This is also the name of Snær's father in *FN*.

reputation was such that he was even employed as a representative of the pre-Christian past alongside Þórr and Óðinn in *Egils saga ok Ásmundar*.

Why did the ancient Snær *konungr* and his descendants lend themselves to this role more than other highborn *Finnar*? This may be because he and his family came to be regarded as personifications of Scandinavia's geographical extremes. This much would seem to be implied by *Bárðar saga*, where Snær's daughter Mjöll lends her name to the snow itself:

...hon var svá fögr ok hvít á skinnslit, at sá snjór tók þar nafn af henni, er hvítastr er ok í logni fellr ok mjöll er kallaðr (Þorhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991: 102).

She was so fair and white in complexion that the snow called *mjöll*, which is whitest and falls in calm weather, took its name from her.

The link between Snær's descendants and the elements is a common thread which runs from *FN*, where he is a descendant of Fornjótr, to *Bárðar saga* and beyond, where his children name the very snow. Meeting Snær and marrying his icy children was perhaps tantamount to contact and union with the Scandinavian periphery itself—a dangerous prospect in the Icelandic corpus, but one which was evidently a rich source of narrative possibility.

Conclusion

The development of King Snow in Scandinavian sources is complex and can only be traced speculatively. This figure's putative prehistory in Scandinavian myth is all but lost in extant sources, but may have inspired both the shepherd from Læsø familiar from Danish records and the icy king of Icelandic saga material.

With the exception of Saxo's account, Snær's character in East Scandinavian sources remains roughly consistent with his portrait in the *Chronicon Lethrense*. In Icelandic sources, by contrast, Snær's character was subject to continuous development. Between his appearances in *FN* and *Egils saga ok Ásmundar* Snær's inventory of territories, descendants and sons-in-law grew with each new source. His evolution from an aged mythological dynast linked with Hlér into a consistent father of the "Sámi bride" type can be understood as an expression of the increasing interest in the Finnic northeast as a narrative arena in the Icelandic sagas, and as an indication of the increasing need to access this space. As a perennial king of the icy north with a slew of eligible daughters, Snær developed into the ideal intermediary between Scandinavian kings and heroes and the world beyond.

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Adam of Bremen's *Descriptio*: Is it just an ethnic-geographic portrayal of Scandinavia?

Lukas Gabriel Grzybowski, State University of Londrina

Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis* is probably the best-known account of Scandinavian history and culture written in the first half of the European Middle Ages. The *Gesta*'s fourth book, named *Descriptio Insularum Aquilonis*, is very much responsible for its success among researchers interested in various aspects of 11th-century Scandinavian culture. However, the *Descriptio* has also given rise to much doubt about the value of the information it presents, what function it fulfills at the end of Adam's historical account, and even its correct placement in both the original manuscripts and modern editions. In this paper, I intend to discuss some hypotheses regarding the *Descriptio* by approaching it as an integral part of the overarching historical narrative Adam intends to present in the *Gesta*, as he states in its prologue; accordingly, the fourth book is going to be regarded as a historical narrative, rather than a geographic or ethnographic one. I thus suggest that the *Descriptio* can be understood as an exercise in future history, that is, in eschatology, and the geographic and ethnographic portrayal of Scandinavia may function as the transition point between present and future developments in the narrative. Adam of Bremen's use of Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos* as a major source – both material and inspirational – at the beginning of his *Gesta* points to this direction. Therefore, a comparison between both historians might prove fruitful. Methodologically, I approach this issue considering two perspectives: the anthropologically-oriented German *Vorstellungsgeschichte* and the structuralist history of mentalities, in accordance with Le Goff's proposal in *Faire de l'histoire*. By moving toward an eschatological interpretation of the *Descriptio*, I believe many issues regarding the narrative can be better understood. If this hypothesis is correct, Adam's general position in medieval historiography might shift from local significance to a broader one.

High seat pillars and settlement: Fact, fake news or folklore

Terry Gunnell, University of Iceland

In this paper, I will be returning to the question of whether there was any truth behind the legends contained in the Book of Settlements and Icelandic family sagas of Icelandic settlers throwing their high seat pillars (or even their grandparents) into the sea when approaching Iceland to help them decide where to they should set up their farms. In recent years, with some logic, historians have questioned this practice. To the best of my knowledge, however, hardly anyone has considered the widespread parallels that can be found in folk legends across northern Norway and Sweden (also on the Baltic) which talk of very similar practices known in later times related to deciding sites for medieval churches. These suggest that the practice (like that of letting animals decide where people should live) actually seems to have had deep roots in the Nordic countries. Noting the arguments about this practice made by earlier scholars, the lecture will discuss these legends (along with their distribution), and then proceed to link them to other potentially associated beliefs and practices that were evidently widespread in pre-Christian times (such as those relating to lot-casting), and foundation myths such as that of Ask and Embla.

Some comments on the construction of *Guta saga*

Viktória Gyönki, Eötvös Loránd University / Klauzál Cultural House, Budapest

Guta saga has been analysed from many angles in the last decades. The proposed presentation for the conference was mostly inspired by Stephen Mitchell's analysis 'On the composition and function of *Guta saga*', and Christine Peel's introduction for the English translation. *Guta saga* has been composed to serve as an account that contains the mythical origin and the early history of the Gotlanders. When it comes to defining the genre, it has been argued that *Guta saga* should not be counted as a saga nor a historical account. The text contains multiple elements that are familiar from different other sources, some of Icelandic origin for example, indicating a wide range of knowledge from the authors' side. *Guta saga* itself can be divided clearly into subchapters with various topics, ranging from legendary elements to historical events. Taking into consideration, that a strong oral tradition also shaped *Guta saga*, in my presentation I would like to break down the saga into elements to present connecting points and similarities. Firstly, to the *Íslendingasögur*, and secondly, to other European sources, not limited to the medieval ages. As focus points, I would like to analyse the question of mythical ancestors and the origin of the Gotlanders, as well as the relationship with different kings.

On the origins of things: Finnic *syntyloitsut* and cultural constructions of the material world

Alaric Hall, University of Leeds

Abstract

The corpus of traditional Finnic poetry includes a large and distinctive body of poems, known as *synnyt* (“origins, births, aetiologies”, singular *synty*) or *syntyloitsut* (“origin-charms”), which describe the origins of a wide range of phenomena, including materials (e.g. iron), animals (e.g. the snake), illnesses (e.g. rickets), processes (e.g. fire) and even the world itself. First attested in the seventeenth century, this genre includes some of our earliest surviving Finnic literature and provides important perspectives on traditional world-views. Yet while the social use of *syntyloitsut* has been studied in some detail, the cultural content of the texts themselves has received little attention. My paper argues that we can put the neglected corpus of *syntyloitsut* into dialogue with recent ecocritical theory and use it to develop insights into the cultural construction of the material world in traditional Finnic-speaking society. The paper will focus on plants, perhaps particularly flax (*Linum usitatissimum*). Thus this paper will illuminate the human relationship with the rest of the material world in traditional Finnic-speaking societies, responding to a dearth of ecocritical work on plants, with implications (which I may or may not get to the point of articulating) for how we think about Germanic-speaking north-west European societies in earlier periods.

1. Introduction

Don’t get excited! The text you are reading offers no conclusions. That’s because, at the time of writing, I am frantically beginning the Actual Research for my paper. But this text *is* a prolegomenon to my oral paper, describing the genre I’m going to talk about and why I think you should be interested in it. This paper partly draws material from one that I drafted in 2016 for one of those books that await publication for a Long Time, which focuses on *syntyloitsut* about iron. As part of researching these papers, I have also made quite a lot of contributions to the Anglophone Wikipedia (primarily the article entitled *Synty*), so don’t be surprised if bits of prose in this paper overlap with Wikipedia entries too.

Ecocritical approaches to Old Norse literature have taken off recently, as we face up to the collapse of the Holocene ecosystems from which both Old Norse texts and our own societies arose (Phelpstead 2014 was an early example; Abram 2019 is probably the seminal work). Ecocriticism in Old Norse has broadly followed the trajectory of ecocriticism in other fields by focusing first on non-human animals (e.g. Bourns 2018; Evans Tang 2022). Interest in other assemblages of matter such as plants and minerals is following more slowly (examples are Bintley 2016; Hall and Meghani 2021; Hall 2021). But, *as far as I have noticed at the time of writing*, even fewer people have contemplated traditional Finnic poetry, mostly attested from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, from an ecocritical perspective, despite its fabulously vibrant constructions both of the material world and of the relationship between the material and the metaphysical world.

Talking about Finnic verse at a saga-conference might seem a bit cheeky, not least because it long post-dates the medieval *floreast* of the Icelandic saga. My main excuse for this is merely to ask “if you can’t talk about Finnic texts in Helsinki and Tallin, where can you?” But it is also clear that the cultural connections between Norse- and Finnic-speaking cultures run deep (e.g. Schrijver 2014: 158–96) and that Finnic texts at times do show influence from, and cast light on, early Germanic-speaking culture (e.g. Frog 2013 and lots of his other work besides). The particular traditional Finnic poetry that this paper examines is a genre concerned with the *synty* (‘birth, origin, aetiology’, pl. *synnyt*) of things, generally known as *syntyloitsut* (‘origin-charms, aetiological incantations’). Scholars have hinted from time to time that these may cast useful light on medieval Germanic-language material (e.g. Grendon 1909: 111–12, 117, 214; Hall

2009; Roper 2009). Although this paper does not focus on trying to trace Finnic-Germanic connections as such, the more we talk about these cultures in the same conferences, the more we will be able to work out precisely how they do or do not relate.

The particular intersection of *syntyloitsut* and ecocriticism that I will attend to concerns plants. Matthew Hall (no relation), a pioneering student of how human cultures construct plants, has claimed that “some of the most complete and interesting European accounts of plant personhood occur in the Finnish epic poem the *Kalevala*” (2011: 129; cf. the anthologised *Kalevala* passages in Hall 2019); what is true of the *Kalevala* is also true of the traditional sources on which it is based. Moreover, Frog has opined that the *synty* “appears exceptional in Eurasia” for its interest in aetiologies (2013: 62). On the latter point, I think that Old English riddles constitute an interesting competitor (Hall [2016]), but it is clear that the *syntyloitsut* are exceptionally rich in possibilities for ecocritical study. As far as I can tell, they have enjoyed little fame outside Finland, and little literary analysis anywhere. The key investigations of the genre remain those by Krohn (1924 [1917]), focusing on surveying regional variation, and Haavio (1967), using *synnyt* as evidence for mythological narratives and systems, though it is worth adding that Tuukka Karlsson has recently used origin-of-fire (*tulen synty*) incantations as the case-study for his doctoral thesis on register (2022 and articles cited there), while Vesa Matteo Piludu has taken a refreshing new look at texts on the origin of the bear (*karhun synty*, 2019: 111–53; 2022). Still, they deserve more attention.

2. What are *syntyloitsut*?

Synty transparently shares its root with the verb *syntyä* “come into existence, be born” and means “birth”, “origin”, “aetiology”, and so forth (*Nykysuomen sanakirja*: s.v.; Erkki Itkonen et al.: s.v.). In *Kalevala*ic poetry, the word has a number of further uses: it can refer to the numinous inner power of the traditional wise people known as *tietäjät* (literally “knowers”, with *synty* denoting their “fundamental essence”). Usually in collocation with the adjective *suuri* (“great”), it can mean “god, creator, prime mover” (with a sense along the lines of “Great Origin”). However, it is also used, as in this paper, as a kind of genre label for poems describing the origins of things (Siikala 2002: 250–57; Stepanova 2012). These poems are best known today because Elias Lönnrot adapted some into the *Kalevala* (e.g. the origin of oak and arrows into *runo* II, flax into *runo* IV, and iron into *runo* IX).

It seems that the main use of *synnyt* was to cure harm caused by the agents whose origins they describe—prototypically, in Anna-Leena Siikala’s analysis, “in the healing of concrete injuries and wounds, in which the illness-agent is not an entity to be communicated with” (such as a demon or witch; 2002: 84–90, quoting 89). The vast body of Finnic poems recorded, mostly, through the efforts of nineteenth-century folklorists, has been published as *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*, which categorises *synnyt* into around one hundred and thirty-one (admittedly occasionally overlapping) subjects, in a total of around 6900 individual records. The ten most popular subjects among the *synnyt* categorised in the *SKVR* as incantations (*loitsut*) are, in declining order, *rauta* (‘iron’, 862 examples), *käärme* (‘snake’, 714), *tuli* (‘fire’, 690), *niukahdus* (‘sprain’, 539), *käärmeen purema* (‘snakebite’, 290), *pistos* (‘stabbing pain’, 260), *puu* (‘tree’, 219), *koi* (‘cancer’, 180), *voide* (‘ointment’, 175), *ähky* (‘colic’, 137), *riisi* (‘rickets’, 135), *läävämato* (literally ‘cowshed-snake’, 125), and *löyly* (‘sauna steam’, 108). Of the other categories of *synnyt*, the most important are those classified as epic texts, pre-eminently the *maailma* (‘world’, 455) and *kantele* (371). These overall patterns of popularity are consistent with the earliest attested *synnyt*, recorded in trial-records from Ostrobothnia in the 1650s (where the *synty* tradition had been lost by the nineteenth century): these are all on topics which were later in the top ten (cancer, stabbing pain, fire, and iron).¹

The healers who performed *synnyt* have been studied quite intensively in recent years, and provide a window onto a culture which sustained multiple ritual institutions—prominently, male

¹ *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*, vol. 11, nos 826, 992, 1570, 1586, 1587, 1797, 1801.

Christian priests, male wise-men known (at least in scholars' terminology) as *tietäjät*, and female lamenters. Each of these groups maintained its own corpus of mythic texts which overlapped only in part with the others', while society at large accepted the parallel existence of these different traditions (Siikala 2002; Stark 2006; Frog 2009; Laitila 2011; Frog 2013; and lots of more recent work that I should read). Laura Stark has emphasised that "the source texts in the FLS [Finnish Literature Society] Folklore Archives can contribute to discussions far beyond those of traditional folklore studies, but that in order to do so, they need to be examined as more than mere text-objects" (2006: 11). Many readers of this paper, indeed, would contemplate sacrificing body-parts on an Odinic scale to be able to access anthropological contexts for Old Norse mythic texts like the ones we have for Finnic material (limited and problematic though that anthropological information often is). Yet this paper, composed far from the archives (and in the belletristic philological culture of Anglophonia), takes a literary approach to the *syntyloitsut*. Sorry, Laura. Still, there is something to be said for this approach: the literary character of *syntyloitsut* has enjoyed little attention, and whatever they may have been doing in their traditional social context, they are also cool poems.

3. Editions

The definitive edition of the poems with which I am concerned here is the magisterial, thirty-four volume *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*. This is freely available and searchable in digital form, which is a game-changer for research on traditional Finnic verse. Still, this material would be easier for people who aren't great at Finnish if the 1880 edition of *synnyt* by Elias Lönnrot more closely represented poems actually collected from oral tradition. Lönnrot's anthology certainly gives a well informed overview of the tradition; it handily renders the material into standard literary Finnish spelling; and it is made more accessible again by the English translation by John Abercromby (1898). Whereas Lönnrot's sources for the *Kalevala* have been explored meticulously, I am not aware of any such investigation of his edition of *synnyt*, and at least a small component of my paper will probably involve calibrating how far Lönnrot exercised his considerable creative powers in creating his 1880 edition. Although he did present variant readings for each of the *synnyt* he presented, overall he silently harmonised diverse sources derived from fieldwork, and perhaps made yet more creative interventions (1880):

Nämät näin useammalta haaralta kootut runo-aineet ovat tähän taikarunostoon käytetyt sillä tavoin, että useampia, välistä parikymmentäki sama-aineista runoa on yhteen sovitettu täyttämään toinen toisensa vaillinaisuuksia, sillä yhdeltä kertojalta ei runoa koskaan saa niin täydellisenä, ettei siihen jäisi lomapaikkoja, useinki muistamattomuudesta, usein myös siitä syystä, että pelkää runon hänen omissa tarpeissansa voimattomaksi tulevan, jos sen kokonansa toiselle antaisi.

These poetic materials, assembled from numerous branches, have been deployed for this anthology of magical verse in such a way that as many as a score of poems on the same topic have been adapted, each to fill in the other's omissions, because one never gets a poem complete from a single teller, without him leaving gaps in it (often from forgetting, but often for that reason that he fears his poem may become useless for his own purposes if he gives it up in its entirety).

Lönnrot's renderings of the *syntyloitsut*, like the *Kalevala*, deserve literary analysis in their own right; but for the purpose of accessing oral tradition, we are clearly better off going back to the *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*. Lönnrot also tended to crystallise blurry distinctions between genres, making the *synnyt* seem more distinct from other magical verse genres than they should, and he has not been unusual in this (cf. Karlsson 2021: 43–45). More interestingly, he broke at least some *syntyloitsut* up into smaller, disconnected components. With particular relevance for the present paper, Lönnrot included three poems on the origin of the net, and three on the origin of flax; but in the poems edited in *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*, the origin of flax is, predictably, almost always recounted as part of the origin of the net, and both (perhaps more surprisingly) are

only recounted in conjunction with the origin of fire. (Incidentally, as an extra layer of complication, at least a few *synnyt* recorded from oral tradition reflect the literary influence of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* itself: Dubois 1985: 184–201.)

4. Plants in the *syntyloitsut*

This is the part of this paper where you would hope that I would move on from these introductory notes to say some intelligent things about traditional Finnic-speaking culture... but I am still working my way through the *Suomen kansan vanhat runot*. As someone who is interested in plants, it is tempting for me to focus on trees: there are boatloads of *syntyloitsut* about the origin of trees. Moreover, whereas Matthew Hall's cursory examination of talking trees in the *Kalevala* led him, as I mentioned above, to suspect that Finnish tradition gives an exceptional degree of agency to plants, the *syntyloitsut* about trees actually tend to emphasise human (or human-like) agents in the origin of trees, doing jobs like sowing and ploughing. So the *syntyloitsut* may encode a more agriculturally-orientated conceptualisation of trees than Hall's work would lead us to expect. At the same time, though, the poems on the origins of trees do have some cool passages figuring weather like wind, rain, and frost as nurturing trees in the way that human parents would nurture babies, and lots of other cool details besides. So I might end up talking quite a lot about trees.

And yet, as Allor and Swenson have noted, where ecocriticism *has* focused on plants, it has tended to focus on trees (2018). So I will certainly make an effort to say interesting things about what the *syntyloitsut* do with non-tree plants, pre-eminently flax, and possibly also grains. Recent, ecocritical research on Old English riddles has emphasised the degree to which those texts work to map the complex networks of interacting organisms, materials, and agents that constitute manufactured objects (e.g. Price 2013; Dale 2017). The *syntyloitsut* involving flax and grains offer similar opportunities.

I hope and trust that this has helped you decide whether you want to come to my paper or someone else's!

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King Redbad of the Frisians: A posthumous Viking

Simon Halink, Fryske Akademy

Of the Frisian king or chieftain Redbad (d. 719) little more is known than what hostile Frankish chronicles relate about this heathen adversary of Charles Martel. The sources portray him as an enemy not just of the triumphant Franks, but of Christendom itself: a stubborn pagan who, with his defense of the heathen faith, obstructed the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. Even with one foot in the baptismal fond – or so the legend goes – he allegedly changed his mind at the very last minute, because he would rather join his pagan ancestors in hell than spend eternity in heaven in the company of a 'bunch of paupers' (*cum parvo pauperum numero*). The Frankish propaganda served its purpose well. Even centuries later, the medieval – and Christian – Frisians were still so ashamed of this heathen blemish in their historiography, that they portrayed him as a Danish oppressor: not one of their own, but rather a foreign tyrant from the land of the Vikings, eventually subdued by the liberator Charlemagne. In this paper, I will demonstrate how this posthumous "nordification" of Redbad has determined his later reception history, especially in the context of modern Frisian and Dutch nationalism. In the course of the nineteenth century, the collective memory of iconic but demonized figures like Redbad underwent a profound transformation. Under the influence of the secular ideals of Romantic nationalism, traditional religious narratives lost their authority and pagan rebels could be rehabilitated as freedom-loving national heroes. Especially in the twentieth century, Frisian nationalists have cultivated the cultural "northernness" of their nation to emphasize the contrast with the more "southern" Hollanders. In this antagonistic discourse, Redbad's refusal to receive baptism is refashioned as an act of heroic defiance against southern imperialism, and a declaration of northern independence. In many respects, the modern reception history of the Frisian king echoes romantic notions of freedom-loving Norsemen, and Redbad's supposedly Nordic character – first invented to discredit him as a foreign tyrant – is now widely cultivated in popular media such as Dutch and Frisian metal music, and even on the big screen, in a costly Braveheart-styled box-office flop.

“A bag of words” – Stylometry and authorship attribution for Old Norse texts

Haukur Þorgeirsson, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

Did the same author write a given set of preserved texts? This is an evergreen philological question which has been revitalized by the arrival of computer-assisted stylometry, based on analyzing word-frequency patterns in different texts. These methods have allowed for convincing solutions to some old problems and the posing of new ones.

This paper will explore the promises and pitfalls of stylometric research on Old Norse texts. Specific attention will be given to the problems surrounding the Sturlungar authors, Snorri and his nephews. Scholars have long been struck by the many similarities in word choice between *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*. Peter Hallberg painstakingly demonstrated that these texts share many rare words, such as ‘finnferð’. It is now easy to demonstrate that the similarity also extends to the frequency of common words. This close correspondence can be reasonably taken to indicate common authorship. But for students of Snorri’s corpus, it is surprising how modest the resemblance is between the Edda and the other two works.

Peter Hallberg argued that Óláfr Þórðarson was the author of *Knýtlinga saga* and *Laxdæla saga*, a hypothesis which will be revisited here. Sturla Þórðarson is conventionally regarded as the author of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* and *Íslendinga saga* but recent research by Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir provides strong arguments for adding *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Þorskfirðinga saga* to his oeuvre. This is another case where stylometric research on frequent words backs up results based on rare words and turns of phrase.

For stylometry to yield meaningful results, it is generally necessary for each text under study to be longer than 3000 words. The only Old Icelandic poetic genre which regularly has texts of such length is *rímur*. The paper will present a stylometric study of 60 medieval *rímur* cycles and evaluate hypotheses advanced by earlier scholars, including Finnur Jónsson and Björn Karel Þórólfsson, on which *rímur* have the same author.

Polaris and the world pillar in Northern tradition – and the god Heimdallr

Eldar Heide, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Many northern peoples have imagined that an invisible pillar goes from earth up to the Pole Star, where it is fixed, and that this pillar keeps the firmament from collapsing. Because of this, the North Star is often referred to as ‘the world’s pillar’, ‘the world’s nail’ and the like, and because this star is the point around which the firmament revolves, it is also often called ‘the sky’s hub’, ‘the northern peg’, ‘the sky’s hinge’, etc. This is well documented from Sami and Finnic tradition, but it is disputed whether such ideas existed among the Germanic peoples of Scandinavia. Many have argued, in comparisons with Sami religion, that *reginnaglar*, which, according to *Eyrbyggja saga* are driven into some kind of sacred posts, belong to this complex. This view is the one generally accepted among historians of religion, but is today rarely mentioned by scholars with a philological background. It has also been argued, first by Hugo Pipping, that the Old Norse god Heimdallr was closely associated with and even derived from the world pillar. In this paper I will summarize the research history on these topics before drawing in some aspects that have hitherto been overlooked in research. This includes an early Icelandic name for Polaris and its cognates among the Anglo-Saxons and Romans, the Sami god Raedie’s (Raden’s) overlap with Heimdallr, some meanings of dall- in Scandinavian dialects, the relationship between Polaris and Sirius / *Lokabrenna* in light of the antagonism between Heimdallr and Loki that is stressed in the sources, and certain aspects of *Rígsþula* and *Hyndluljóð*. I believe that Pipping was essentially right about Heimdallr and the world pillar, even though many of his arguments were pure fantasy. I will argue that *reginnaglar* belongs to the Polaris complex and attempt to demonstrate that most of the information we have about Heimdallr, including his name, makes sense in light of this complex. The paper will conclude with some considerations about sources and approaches.

Nú er at segja frá: Narratorial comments in Jónsvíkinga saga

Anna Katharina Heiniger, University of Tübingen

In this paper I present some findings from my postdoc project on the aesthetic implications of narratorial comments such as *nú er at segja frá*, *ef svo skal kalla*, *sumir segja* that can be found in most of the Old Norse saga genres. Regardless of how inconspicuous these phrases appear at first sight they can be read as reflections on narratorial and stylistic intentions in the sagas. I thus argue that these interspersed comments reflect narrative techniques of saga writing and can be interpreted as stylistic and possibly generic signposts regarding contemporary notions of narrative aesthetics.

In view of the Baltic context of the conference, *Jónsvíkinga saga* will serve as an exemplary text for demonstrating how the narrative comments can serve as a starting point for exploring the literary aesthetics of this/a saga. In this regard, this saga is particularly interesting because it has famously been considered a generic hybrid and thus also calls for both a text-immanent and a comparative analysis.

The analysis and interpretation of *Jónsvíkinga saga* entail a threefold approach: first, the comments are collected and categorised according to the aspects in the narrative they refer to (e.g. extradiegetic references, intratextual references, narratorial view); second, a software-based quantitative analysis of these categories is conducted. In this context a comparison with previously collected data on several *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* will show, whether and how *Jónsvíkinga saga* shares (stylistic) common ground with the other saga groups to the extent that it can be grasped within the quantitative analysis. The third step circles back to a qualitative analysis of the findings and will ask whether and or how the narratorial comments in *Jónsvíkinga saga* relate to its attested generic hybridity; whether the saga features particular tendencies of stylistic vicinity to other saga genres; and how the narratorial comments contribute to and mirror the literary aesthetics of the saga. Hence, this multifaceted and comparative approach will show whether and how *Jónsvíkinga saga* develops an individual sense of literary aesthetics and to what extent a stylistic contextualisation and comparison agree with current opinions on the saga's hybridity as regards content.

‘Least moved out of place’ (*sízt ór stað færð*): Writing down the skalds

Kate Heslop, University of California, Berkeley

The Prologue to *Heimskringla* exhibits some anxiety about skaldic poetry as source material. Returning to this issue in its final sentence, the text notes that

kvæðin þykkja mér sízt ór stað færð, ef þau eru rétt kveðin ok skynsamliga upp tekin. (Finnur Jónsson, ed., I, 8)

As to the poems, I consider them to be least corrupted if they are correctly composed [or: recited?] and meaningfully interpreted. (Finlay and Faulkes, *Heimskringla* I, 5, slightly modified)

Rhapsodic re-performance of skaldic encomium must have been ubiquitous for the poetry to have survived at all, but it is rarely mentioned in the sagas. The sources’ elision of this reproductive fact opens a gap between the reader of the written stanza and the performing skaldic author. Any ‘sound of intention’ or ‘liveness’ will only be faintly transmitted, if at all, over this gap to our listening ears. What the 21st-century reader can perhaps pick up is the ‘noise’ of poetry, in Michel Serres’ sense: the result of the interferences of multiple instances, from the performing skald, through rhapsodic oral performance, and on into *vocalité*.

The contributors to the new skaldic edition work hard to take us back to the scene of the poem’s first live performance. Another of the edition’s many virtues is that by reproducing the manuscript variants in the same normalized form as the main text, it allows the reader (with a little effort) to reconstruct the texts’ *mouvance*. This is a topic that the *Heimskringla* prologue attempts to foreclose, and perhaps for that reason it has attracted few (albeit very interesting) scholarly contributions. If the preserved mass of skaldic poetry from the Middle Ages is viewed as a kind of writing, it is larger and later than we usually think: it consists of around 15,000 stanzas, with an average date of c. 1380. In this talk I will discuss some ways that the *mouvance* of skaldic writing can be analyzed, using models from neighboring text traditions and computer-aided approaches, and—more importantly—some ways we could go about interpreting it.

[Dixit] non se carere posse consortio praedecessorum suorum, ‘He said he was unable to be without his predecessors’: Attitudes towards the damnation of heathen ancestors in Old Norse-Icelandic literature

Thomas Andrew Hughes, Durham University

The *Vita Wulframni*, an eighth century Frankish hagiography, depicts the Frisian King Radbod refusing to go ahead with his baptism upon realising his predecessors will be separated from him in hell. Hesitating at the font, he asks the Archbishop Wulfram of Sens *ubi maior esset numerus regum et principum seu nobilium gentis Fresionum*, “where the greater part of the kings, princes, and nobles of the Frisian people were” (Meens 2015: 578-9), and is told in no uncertain terms: *Noli errare, inclite princeps, apud Deum certus est suorum numerus electorum. Nam praedecessores tui principes gentis Fresionum, qui sine baptismi sacramento recesserunt, certum est damnationis suscepisse sententiam*, “Don’t be mistaken, glorious prince, there is a certain amount of the elect with God. For it is certain that your predecessors as princes of the people of the Frisians, who have departed without the sacrament of baptism, have received a sentence of damnation” (Meens 2015: 578-9). Radbod’s response is horrified: *pedem a fonte retraxit, dicens, non se carere posse consortio praedecessorum suorum principum Fresionum [...] in illo caelesti regno*, “[he] withdrew his foot from the font declaring that he could not go without the company of his predecessors, the princes of the Frisians [...] in that celestial kingdom” (Meens 2015: 579). Although the story of Radbod is “unique in hagiographical literature”, the concern it dramatises was not obscure, reflecting a contemporary “issue of dispute between [Saint] Boniface and the Irish Bishop Clemens” (Meens 2015: 586) as to whether heathens could be posthumously saved. Ultimately, Pope Gregory III ruled as follows:

Sancta sic tenet ecclesia, ut quisque pro suis mortuis vere christianis offerat oblationes atque presbiter eorum faciat memoriam. Et quamvis omnes peccatis subiaceamus, congruit, ut sacerdos pro mortuis catholicis memoriam faciat et intercedat. Non tamen pro impiis, quamvis christiani fuerint, tale quid agere licebit (Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus, 50-1)

The teaching of the Church is this - that every man should make offerings for those who died as true Christians and that the priest should make a commemoration of them [at Mass]. And although all are liable to fall into sin, it is fitting that the priest should make a commemoration and intercede for them. But he is not allowed to do so for those who die in a state of sin even if they were Christians (Letter 16, 86).

That it was necessary for the Pope to intervene in this way, however, is indicative of the concern early generations of Christian converts must have had for the fate of their heathen ancestors, and what is striking from the perspective of an Old Norse-Icelandic scholar, is that in neither the *Íslendingasögur*, the *konungasögur* nor the Icelandic histories (*Landnámabók*, *Kristni saga*, *Íslendingabók*) is there any clear reckoning with this stark moral and theological problem. On the contrary, it appears to be deliberately obfuscated and avoided.

The episode of Radbod’s failed baptism might be contrasted with the conversion of Óláfr Tryggvason in Oddr Snorrason’s *Óláfs saga* and in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, in which Óláfr’s desire to avert the damnation of still-living heathens is instrumental. Both these sagas contain a near-identical dream sequence which appears, at first glance, to be one of the vanishingly rare instances in which the posthumous fate of significant saga characters is revealed. Óláfr Tryggvason *sá [...] ógurliga kvöl fyrirbúna Valdimar konungi ok Arlogiae drottningu* in hell (*Flateyjarbók*, 127), Queen Arlogia and King Valdimarr of Garðaríki being his beloved heathen foster parents. But any firm conclusions which might be drawn from this vision as to the state of the heathen dead are undercut by the fact that it is only a premonition of what might happen, rather than an actual glimpse into hell. Spurred by his vision, within a few lines Óláfr has persuaded the king and queen to accept baptism and Christianise Garðaríki. This is highly atypical, in that most medieval hell visions represent actual journeys into the otherworld

itself, whether in body or spirit, a pattern usually observed in Old Norse-Icelandic hell vision literature as well. *Duggals Leiðsla*, for example, a thirteenth-century translation of the twelfth-century *Visio Tnugdali*, begins with its protagonist slipping into a coma, while his disembodied soul is subjected to many of hell's torments. *Guðmundar saga biskups* preserves a late twelfth century account of hell by an Icelandic woman named Rannveig, which similarly emphasises the physical nature of her experience, for "when she woke up she could show burns on her body which she claimed to have received from the fires of hell" (Nedkvitne 2009: 72).

Another near-ubiquitous *topos* of hell vision literature omitted in Óláfr's dream is that of the visionary "meeting near contemporaries in the otherworld" (Gardiner 2019: 179). In contexts where the damned are wicked Christians, Old Norse-Icelandic accounts also follow this convention. In *Guðmundar saga biskups*, Rannveig identifies the damned in her vision as people who were known to her personally (Nedkvitne 2009: 72), and *Duggals Leiðsla* singles out with great specificity the failings and torments of monks who *uigslr sínar suiuirða með leikmannz harskurdi og klædabunadi*, [and] *illir hofdingjar heimsins er illa neyta uallz sins er þeir eru til skipader* (*Duggals Leiðsla*, 125-31). In contrast the only persons Óláfr sees in his vision who may actually be dead are vaguely described and nameless *höfðingja[r] ok vini[r]* (*Flateyjarbók*, 127). These could be mere vassal chieftains, of the kind routinely condemned and punished in the sagas for their refusal to adopt Christianity, but this terminology could equally denote Óláfr's own royal ancestors. To add to the ambiguity, the specific wording of the text that Óláfr only *þottiz hann kenna* (*Flateyjarbók*, 127) these chieftains arguably suggests they are also an illusion or premonition of some kind, in a similar vein to the appearance of Arlogia and Valdimarr.

Þorsteins þáttr skelks contains an even more atypical kind of hell vision, and while it represents a rare instance in which named heathen characters — in this case the legendary heroes Starkaðr and Sigurðr Fáfnisbani — are explicitly said to be damned, it is telling that the *þáttr* relates this information in a manner that is even more epistemologically uncertain than Óláfr Tryggvason's dream. In this episode, an Icelander named Þorsteinn at the court of King Óláfr enters the privy in the middle of the night and is surprised by a devil sitting in a latrine. Þorsteinn plans to wake the king, who will come to his rescue, by asking the devil to imitate the cries of whoever suffers most terribly in hell. If Óláfr sees only an illusion of hell, rather than the real place itself, then Þorsteinn never sees hell or the damned at all, only listens to a devil's secondhand impression of their torment. Óláfr's dream is at least divine in origin, and can be taken as a reliable indicator that Arlogia and Valdimarr would be damned by God if not for Óláfr's intervention, but Þorsteinn himself repeatedly questions the validity of the devil's impersonation, asking *Æpir hann þetta ópit mest svá?* (*Þorsteins þáttr skelks*, 475). This morbid exchange is clearly farcical, of course, modelled on pre-Christian "folk-tales in which the hero is threatened by a supernatural being, typically a troll, and must keep it talking until rescue comes, by sunrise" (Larrington 2006: 149). Yet dark humour is often used to "safely broach a taboo subject" (Farb 1981: 767), and the unique forthrightness with which this *þáttr* approaches heathen damnation arguably betrays an underlying discomfort with the subject matter, a "tragicomic tone deriving from a tension between paganism and Christianity [...] the psychological pressure for medieval Icelanders of contemplating hell" (Lindow 1986: 265). In this sense, *Þorsteins þáttr skelks* serves as an exception that proves the rule.

An explanation for this pattern of obfuscation may lie in the fact that the Icelanders were late converts, the institutionalisation of the church in their country concurrent with so-called "papal-historical turn", the process by which, from the middle of the 11th century onwards, the papacy solidified its central authority over Western Christendom (Haraldur 2021: 39). As such, by the time of the saga writers, the heterodoxies which enabled early generations of Icelandic converts to have hope for their ancestors had become unacceptable, and their presence in traditional narratives had to be obfuscated when the sagas were written down. It is in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* that this tendency is most apparent. Dying unbaptised, the titular skald is buried in a heathen mound, only to be exhumed by his Christian daughter Þórdís and reburied under the

altar of a newly erected church. According to the “ancient Christian custom of burial *ad sanctos*”, one’s physical resting place serves an important role in expediting the progress of the soul through the afterlife — and though, as the name suggests, burial next to holy relics of the saints is most efficacious, “proximity to the holiest place in the church, the high altar”, is the best alternative (Haki 2019: 16). Egill, who dies as a heathen, therefore occupies the most coveted site in the church. There is archaeological evidence which suggests such literary accounts reflect historical practice among early Scandinavian converts: King Haraldr blátǫnn Gormsson, whose conversion is recounted in the *Gesta Danorum*, appears “to have moved the remains of his parents in order to bury them in a specially made chamber under the floor of the church” which he built at Jelling (Uspenskij 2009: 11). Other medieval literatures evince similar practices among earlier generations of European converts. The *Collectanea*, a hagiography of Saint Patrick written by the seventh-century Irish Bishop Tírechán, depicts the saint resurrecting a heathen from his grave, who thanks him that *suscitasti me etiam una hora a doloribus multis* (*Collectanea*, 40), “you raised me even for one hour from many pains” (*Tírechán's Text in English*, 40). The saint is then able to baptise the dead man and put him back to rest: *Et baptizatus est et confessionem Dei fecit et restituit et positus est iterum in sepulcro suo* (*Collectanea*, 40), “And he was baptized, and confessed God, and fell silent, and was laid again in his grave” (*Tírechán's Text in English*, 40). When Patrick declines to baptise an unrepentant heathen who similarly calls out from his grave, one of his followers asks *cur appellasti gentilem non baptizatum uirum? Quia ingemisco uirum sine bapismo. Melior erat apud Deum illum benedicere uice bapismatis et effundere aquam bapismi super sepulcrum mortui* (*Collectanea*, 41), “why did you (merely) talk to the unbaptized man? For I pity a man without baptism. It would have been better in the eyes of God to bless him as in baptism and pour the water of baptism over the dead man’s grave” (*Tírechán's Text in English*, 41), implying that this was an accepted, or even an expected burial rite for the unbaptised. *Egils saga* makes no explicit condemnation of heathen reburial, but an awareness of its mistakenness is implicit in the way Egill’s remains are treated when they are rediscovered generations later, by a priest, and *vitr maðr*, who presumably knows better. Identifying the remains after the church is dug up and relocated, he sees to it that *bein Egils váru lögð niðr í útanverðum kirkjugarði at Mosfelli* (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 299).

There are reasons to doubt this version of events however, which so conveniently absolves intervening generations of any responsibility. The priest of the church where Egill is buried is Skafti Þórarinnsson, his direct descendant, and it strains credulity that the resting place of so celebrated an ancestor could have been forgotten when his family evidently still lives in the area and controls the church where he is buried. It appears even more unlikely when one takes into account “the well-developed tradition of remembering burials” in the sagas (Byock 1993: 30). The burial sites of Egill’s grandnephew, Björn Hitdælakappi, his grandson, Kjartan Ólafsson, and his granddaughter, Helga Þorsteinsdóttir, are all described by their respective sagas: *Bjarnar saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga*. A more probable sequence of events is that the Icelanders grew uncomfortable with the presence of heathens in their churchyards as their orthodoxy increased over generations, and it was Egill’s presence that prompted the church to be relocated, rather than the other way around. Of course, churches were usually attached to particular farmsteads, which could be moved for entirely pragmatic reasons, such as volcanic activity or soil erosion. However, it was generally “in the earliest phase of the settlement, [that] settlers experimented with the locations of their farms, so [that] many farms were moved or were abandoned completely”, whereas “over the course of ‘the twelfth century [...] a settlement pattern which has dominated the Icelandic landscape to modern times was established” (Jón 2008: 852). Sure enough, Egill’s supposed rediscovery can be dated to the twelfth century, as *Scafti þorannins son* is listed in the *Prestatal*, a contemporary church record (*Nafnaskrá íslenzkra presta*, 186). This theory is further corroborated by the removal of the remains of Þórdís, the heathen mother of Snorri goði, from a churchyard at the end of *Eyrbyggja saga*. Though this

episode is far less developed, mentioned only in passing, it can also be dated to the twelfth century, for the mother of Snorri Sturluson, Guðný Bǫðvarðsdóttir, is mentioned as a witness to the exhumation. That Þórdís's resting place would be forgotten is questionable, as in Egill's case, given that her son was a prominent chieftain and church-builder, and an ancestor of the powerful Sturlungar. Perhaps most damning for these sagas' construction of events, however, is that the issue of heathen remains being discovered on consecrated ground had been confronted for centuries at the time of the Icelandic conversion. The Northumbrian *Iudicia Theodori*, an eighth-century handbook of judgements attributed to Theodore of Tarsus, the Archbishop of Canterbury, warns of exactly this possibility, ruling that *in ecclesia in qua mortuorum cadauera infidelium sepeliuntur sanctificare altare non licet* [and if] *consecratum prius fuit, missas in eo caelebrare licet si relegiosi ibi sepulti sunt. Si vero paganus sit, mundare et iactare foras melius est* (*Paenitentiale Umbrense*, 19), "in a church in which the bodies of dead unbelievers are buried, an altar may not be sanctified [and if] "it was previously consecrated, masses may be celebrated in it if religious men are buried there; but if there is a pagan, it is better to cleanse it and cast out [the body]" (*The Penitential of Theodore*, 199). It therefore stands to reason that an awareness of illegitimate burials would eventually enter the Icelandic consciousness.

While this interpretation of Egill's reburial is speculative, what is undeniable is the tacit acknowledgement of a continuing concern, even among later generations of more orthodox Icelanders, for the state of heathen ancestors' souls. Egill's bones are relocated to the edge of the new churchyard, a liminal boundary zone traditionally "used for children who had not been fully baptised" (Grønlie 2012: 18). It is perhaps to justify this theologically dubious measure that the saga includes the curious episode concerning his skull: *Þa vildi Skapti forvitnask um þykkleik haussins; tók hann þá handþöxi vel mikla ok reide annari hendi sem harðast ok laust hamrinum á hausinn ok vildi brjóta, en þar sen á kom, hvitnaði hann, en ekki dalaði né sprakk* (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 299). This has been variously taken to indicate that the historical Egill suffered from Paget's disease, which causes deformation and thickening of the bones, or that Egill had supernatural ancestry of some kind, as suggested by the fact that his father and grandfather are said to be *hamrammr*. But the indestructibility of Egill's remains could also be interpreted as a quasi-hagiographic motif, reminiscent of the miraculous preservation of saints. Of course, a true saint's remains should not decay at all, and the supernatural strain in Egill's family provides sufficient explanation if the text is taken at face value. But it should be noted that the *Íslendingasögur* often blend Christian and heathen frames of reference for artistic effect, using pre-Christian *topoi* in much the same deracinated, purely literary sense as other European literatures draw on classical paganism. The fanciful conceit of monstrous ancestry may serve to render the episode's religious intimations a plausibly deniable subtext, allowing the saga writer to ambiguate the state of Egill's soul without overstepping and expressing explicit heterodoxy.

This delicate approach efforts stand in stark contrast, however, to the treatment of another set of heathen remains, in *Laxdæla saga*. As in *Egils saga*, bones are discovered to rest beneath a church towards the saga's end. Unlike in *Egils saga*, however, they do not belong to a major character but to a nameless woman, and there is no such ambiguity as to her fate. The discovery is made by Herdís Bolladóttir, who accompanies her grandmother Guðrún to the church each night to pray. On one such night a woman appears to Herdís in a dream, and says *seg þú þat qmmu þinni, at mér hugnar illa við hana, því at hon brǫltir allar nætr á mér ok fellir á mik dropa svá heita, at ek brenn af qll* (*Laxdæla saga*, 224). After Herdís reports this dream, *lét Guðrún taka upp fjalar ór kirkjugólfinu, þar sem hon var vön at falla á knébeð; hon lét grafa þar niðr í jörð. Þar fundusk undir bein; þau váru blá ok illilig; þar fannsk ok kinga ok seiðrstafr mikill. Þóttusk menn þá vita, at þar mundi verit hafa vǫluleiði nokkut* (*Laxdæla saga*, 224). As with the heathen calling out from his grave in the *Collectanea*, hell's torment seems to have been localised to the burial place. In this case, then, the saga writer seems to have no qualms in asserting that the dead woman is damned, and rather than being carefully reburied in a more appropriate location in the interest of her soul, her remains are scattered in the wilderness

without ceremony: *Váru þau bein færð langt í brott, þar sem sízt var manna vegr* (*Laxdæla saga*, 224). These sagas therefore demonstrate a socially selective orthodoxy. An important man such as Egill is given the benefit of the doubt where his soul is concerned, whereas an anonymous prophetess is not. This contrast is made even starker by the consideration that the bones of Þórdís in *Eyrbyggja saga*, who is also a sorceress of a kind, are said to be *svá svqrt, sem sviðin væri* (*Eyrbyggja saga*, 184) — a description that is arguably more evocative of hellfire than that of the prophetess's remains, which are merely *blá ok illilig* (*Laxdæla saga*, 224) — and yet there is no comparable dream vision which explicitly confirms Þórdís's damnation, and the matter of her reburial is dealt with in a single offhand remark: *váru þau bein qll grafin niðr þar, sem nú stendr kirkjan* (*Eyrbyggja saga*, 184). It is not even certain whether her remains are buried on the outskirts of the new churchyard, as are Egill's, and it is perhaps this problematic ambiguity which causes the saga writer pass over the incident with little detail compared to other reburial episodes.

The damnation of the nameless prophetess and its ramifications are further ambiguated by the fact that her humanity is called into question, a pattern observable in various episodes, and which allows the saga writers to condemn marginal figures without generalising about the fate of other, more noble heathens. The manner in which the sorceress appears in a dream, complaining of being burnt by the tears of a holy woman, is virtually identical to the behaviour of nonhuman spirits in other sources. In both *Þorvalds þáttur víðförla* and *Kristni saga*, for example, an Icelandic farmer called Koðrán enjoys a partnership with a rock dwelling spirit called a *spámaðr*, or *ármaðr*, a being clearly modelled on the pre-Christian *bergbúar* and *landvættir*, and yet conceived of as a demon, able to be exorcised by a bishop who sprinkles the stone in which it lives with holy water. Thereafter it comes to Koðrán in his dreams and complains, much like the prophetess of *Laxdæla saga*, that *þeir steyptu vellanda vatni yfir mitt herbergi, svá at börn min þola eigi litla kvöl af þeim brennandi dropum, er inn renna um þekjuna; enn þó at slikt skaði eigi sjálfan mik mjök* (*Þorvalds þáttur víðförla*, 447). The similarity of their reactions perhaps suggests that the prophetess is a demon as well. There are cases, in the sagas, of demons that take superficially human form, most notably Eyvindr kinnrifa, a character who appears in various versions of Óláfr Tryggvason's saga, and is described as *einn andi, kviknaðr í mannslíkam með fjólkynngi Finna* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, 323). Despite Óláfr's attempts to convert him, Eyvindr's demonic nature precludes salvation. He tells the king his parents swore that their child *þjóni Þór ok Óðni til dauðadags*, so that, by Eyvindr's own admission, *ek má enga skírn fá, þó at ek vilda* (*Flateyjarbók*, 428). If the prophetess of *Laxdæla saga* is a similar kind of being, and possesses no free will, then her heathenism is stripped of its moral valence, and of any ramifications for the fate of other saga characters who die unbaptised.

The same tendency is observable in *Þorsteins þáttur skelks*. The devil encountered by Þorsteinn in the privy is explicitly described as an inhuman *púki*, *dolgr*, *draugr* and one of the *drýsildjöflanna* (*Þorsteins þáttur skelks*, 474-5). Yet despite this strange blend of traditional heathen terminology and idiosyncratic terms for Christian devils, which seems, again, to obfuscate rather than clarify its nature, the being identifies itself as a man named Þorkell who fought against King Haraldr hilditönn, seemingly the same *Thorkillus Thelemarchie* (*Gesta Danorum*, 546) described by Saxo Grammaticus as one of the warriors who fought in the battle of Brávellir. Perhaps the only way to reconcile Þorkell's professed identity with the terminology the narrative describes him with, is to conclude that he is a being similar to Eyvindr kinnrifa. Tellingly, Starkaðr, the damned soul who Þorkell claims suffers worst in hell, is another of the legendary heroes who fought at Brávellir — and whose human identity is similarly questionable. The prologue to one version of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* claims Starkaðr is a monstrous, eight-armed troll (Lindow 1988: 121). Saxo Grammaticus regards this as a *Fabulosa autem et uulgaris opinio*, “preposterous common conjecture” (*Gesta Danorum*, 378-9), but nonetheless relates that *tradunt enim quidam, quod a gigantibus editus monstruosi generis habitum inusitata manuum numerositate prodiderit*, “some folk tell how he was born of giants and revealed his

monster kind by an extraordinary number of hands” (*Gesta Danorum*, 378-9), the anecdote’s seemingly reluctant inclusion suggesting it was too widely known to be omitted. If the damned in Óláfr’s hell vision, discussed above, are deliberately vague and non-specific, then the choice of damned souls in *Porsteins þáttr skelks* seems pointedly specific and inoffensive. Though named, they are still marginalised, inhuman others, much like the prophetess in *Laxdæla saga*, whose damnation can be treated so blithely because she does not matter to the saga’s audience.

The heroic and unambiguously human Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, who Porkell claims is also damned, would appear to be an exception. The most common interpretation of Sigurðr’s presence in the *þáttr*, however, is that he contrasts favourably with the other damned. Porsteinn asks Porkell, *Hverir þola bezt þísir í helvíti?* and is told *Engi betr [...] en Sigurðr Fáfnisbani* (*Porsteins þáttr skelks*, 474) — “the ‘good’ pagan hero Sigurðr endures his sufferings well, while the ‘bad’ hero Starkaðr shrieks and bellows in pain” (Rowe 1998: 12). It is not necessarily the case then that heathens’ “heroic endurance avails them nothing” in the Christian imagination (Larrington 2006: 153), and Sigurðr’s stoicism may even suggest a novel means of accommodating the ancestors’ damnation, not with false, heterodox conviction that they are spared torment, but rather a hope that they endure just and proportionate punishment with dignity. This interpretation of Sigurðr’s presence is lent credence by the fact that it makes no narrative sense for Porsteinn to ask who endures hell best. His rescue plan is to have the demon imitate the cries of whoever suffers worst so as to wake King Óláfr and ring the church bell — the illogic of this exchange indicates that the *þáttr* writer has an ulterior motive for its inclusion.

Ultimately, the inherent untrustworthiness of the devil — and the often blurred lines between the human, demonic and folkloric — preclude any attempt to derive firm conclusions from these episodes, and there are many further avenues of enquiry that an in-depth study must take into account to refine this paper’s argument. The distinction between the physical torment and mental anguish of the damned, tentatively raised by *Porsteins þáttr skelks*, is a promising lead, and should be discussed in a more sustained analysis of *Páls leizla*, *Duggals Leiðsla* and the *Old Norse Elucidarius*. The claim made in *Alexanders saga* “that some who have lived virtuous lives, suffer from the flames of Hell no more than a healthy man suffers from the heat of the sun in summer” (Ashurst 2009: 236), may corroborate this argument in suggesting that the saga writers conceived of degrees of suffering in hell. What is certain, however, is their profound ambivalence towards damnation. Medieval Christians are often imagined to have had a very alien morality to be able to tolerate “the gratuitous horror” of hell (Wicksteed 1971: 201), but in fact it is common in the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus for its justness to be questioned. Horrified by hell, Duggal asks his angelic guide *huat er þat er hygner menn sogdu os at heimrin er fullr af guds miskun huer er miskunn og mikileikur?* (*Duggals Leiðsla*, 53), and the disciple in the dialogue of *Elucidarius* similarly wonders *harma seigi rettlat er þeir sia þa kveliast?* (*The Old Norse Elucidarius*, 82). These are mostly rhetorical questions that serve to edify the reader, invariably met with the response that God disposes of each person as they deserve, but the very fact of this persistent questioning betrays the discomfort, evident throughout the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus, at the axiomatic damnation of heathen ancestors.

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Redemption in the Rus': The motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring in three medieval Icelandic romances

Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Nanyang Technological University

Many of the prose romances composed in late medieval Iceland – whether Scandinavia-based *fornaldarsögur* or non-Scandinavia-based *riddarasögur*¹ – feature the Kyivan Rus' amongst their settings. Locations such as Garðaríki (Kyivan Rus'), Rússía[land], Hólmgarðr/Hólmgarðaríki (Novgorod), Aldeigjuborg (Ladoga) and Álaborg form major spheres of action in stories that were not only popular as medieval sagas, but also continued to be copied in manuscripts and treated in prose and verse after the Reformation.² Amongst these narrative traditions are *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga víðutan* and *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, which share a number of key themes and structural features in addition to their common interest in the Kyivan Rus'. One of these features, a folkloric motif, forms the subject of this paper: all three sagas feature a narrative pattern in which a hand and a ring once encountered by the protagonist are later shown to him by a woman as proof of their earlier encounter. This paper explores the nuances in the manifestation of the lost-and-found hand and ring in the three sagas, in the context of its role in the sagas' exploration of the broader theme of redemption.

Social advancement in the Rus'

The theme of redemption finds strong resonances in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga* and *Egils saga einhenda* for two reasons. First, all three sagas feature the Rus' as a prominent setting – and in the case of *Vilmundar saga* it is even the protagonist's homeland. Sverrir Jakobsson has observed that by virtue of its location on the *Austrvegr* ("Eastern Way"), Garðaríki was often portrayed in far-traveller sagas as a civilised "gateway to the East" for protagonists (Sverrir Jakobsson 2006: 938), particularly to the Christian lands of the Eastern Roman Empire, chiefly Miklagarðr (Constantinople). In narratives such as *Yngvars saga víðförla* and *Örvar-Odds saga*, Sverrir argued, "[t]he 'Eastern Road' was not only a progress towards a geographical goal, it also led to social and spiritual advancement" (Sverrir Jakobsson 2006: 942). Often this took the form of "[entering] the service of a great Christian monarch, be it the lord of Constantinople, Kiev, Novgorod or any of the main city-states of Russia" (Sverrir Jakobsson 2006: 941), with the Christian monarch's dual role as political and religious figurehead allowing for social and spiritual advancement to be inherently combined through the protagonist's acts of service towards him. Not all literary works from medieval Iceland which feature the Rus' deal explicitly with Christianity, though, and most of the romances do not. However, it should not be surprising that even in literary works which are not explicitly interested in spirituality and do not deal with Constantinople, reflexes of the theme of social advancement should nonetheless be found in connection with Garðaríki or other Rus' locales. As the very concept of redemption requires a journey of ascent (albeit following a descent), the thematic association of the Rus' with individual advancement made it a suitable setting for narratives of redemption.

The significance of redemption in the three romances is also codified on structural grounds. Northrop Frye's seminal study of romance identified descent and ascent as the foundational dynamics of literature, with "[t]he general theme of descent" being "that of a growing confusion of identity and of restrictions on action", and the themes of ascent being "those of escape, remembrance, or discovery of one's real identity, growing freedom, and the breaking of enchantment" (Frye 2006: 84). The evolution that romance protagonists undergo, Frye observes, means that "the quest romance takes on a spiral form, an open circle where the end is the beginning transformed and renewed by the heroic quest" (Frye 2006: 114). The fundamental

¹ On the arbitrary construction of the *fornaldarsögur* as a category, see Quinn et al. 2006 and Lavender 2015.

² For a comprehensive survey of named Rus' locales in earlier Norse sources, including but not limited to historiographically minded sagas, see Jackson 2019.

trajectory of descent followed by ascent is almost universal in the extant corpus of Icelandic romance;³ thus these romances always have at the heart of their plots a difficulty (or series of difficulties) that place the protagonists and their identity in personal peril, and such narratives almost invariably end in the comic mode, with a positive resolution consisting of protagonistic marriages and sometimes progeniture. This basic structure of romance is shared by *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga* and *Egils saga einhenda*. What is not so universal to Icelandic romances – though still not uncommon – is the fact that Hálfðan Eysteinnsson, Vilmundr *viðutan* and Egill *einhendir*’s journeys of descent take them specifically into positions of social exile. Their journeys towards renewed self-recognition and the reaffirmation of their heroic identity therefore require them to achieve social redemption, and it is in this context that the folkloric motif of interest to this paper is deployed.

The lost-and-found hand and ring in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga* and *Egils saga einhenda*

In both *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* and *Vilmundar saga*, the lost-and-found hand and ring are inextricably associated with versions of the lost-and-found garment, which is listed in Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index* under H36, “Recognition by exact fitting of clothes” (Thompson 1956, III: 374) and most widely known as part of the “Cinderella” folktale (tale number 510 under the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index; Uther 2004, 1: 293–295).⁴ In *Vilmundar saga* – as in the best-known “Cinderella” variants – this garment is in fact a shoe, belonging to Princess Sóley of Garðaríki. Early in the saga, Sóley switches appearances with the kitchen servant Öskubuska to escape the marital proposition of Úlfr illt-eitt (“Only-Evil”).⁵ After incurring the wrath of the king by being impregnated by a fellow servant, Kolr, “Sóley” (Öskubuska) flees into exile with Kolr. The real Sóley, who is disguised as Öskubuska and takes up her kitchen work, though she occasionally visits her foster-mother’s secret house far away from the city to report on the latest happenings. On one such occasion, she loses her shoe by a spring. The saga protagonist, Vilmundr *viðutan* (“the Outsider”) – so nicknamed because of his isolated upbringing and consequent social naivety – discovers and collects the shoe one day, overhearing too Sóley’s pledge to marry the man who finds the shoe. All this happens prior even to Vilmundr’s full departure from home; the bulk of the saga then focusses on his physical and social entry into Garðaríki, where his exceptional athletic prowess and successful defence of the kingdom against invasion allow him to prove his worth to the king and prince in spite of his characteristic insensitivity towards courtly etiquette. During his time at the royal court, Vilmundr is attacked in the kitchen by the real Sóley – disguised as the belligerent Öskubuska – and during their brief fight we are told that “grípur hann um hennar hönd og kreistir svo fast, að blóð stökk undan hverjum nagli” (Hui 2021: 22; “he grips her hand and crushes it so tightly that blood spurts from under each nail”). This is his only face-to-face encounter with Sóley until near the end of the saga. Vilmundr later achieves his most significant and perilous feat – the killing of the real Öskubuska (still disguised as Sóley), who boasts monstrous strength, perhaps through Kolr’s sorcery – but upon returning to the king he incurs his wrath by throwing her severed head on the royal table, a callous act for which he is exiled. After some time, Vilmundr returns to Sóley’s foster-mother’s hideout, where Sóley’s hand and ring are revealed to him as proof that they have met before, and he, in turn, returns her shoe and thereby claims her hand in marriage. They return to the royal court, where reconciliation and marriages conclude the saga.

³ The chivalric *Máðilar rímur* is a striking exception, ending with the heroine’s death on the battlefield – although later redactions alter this ending.

⁴ On the affinity that both sagas have with the “Cinderella” folktale, see Hui 2018, later reproduced in Hui 2021: xxxviii–xlix.

⁵ The text in my edition of *Vilmundar saga* employs fifteenth-century orthography, including the svarabhakhti vowel in “Úlfr”, “Kolr” and “Vilmundur”, but in this paper, for the sake of consistency, I adopt the same normalisation standard as Guðni Jónsson, whose editions of *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* and *Egils saga einhenda* are used.

The princess-substitution plotline of *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* is initially very close to that of *Vilmundar saga*:⁶ Princess Ingigerðr of Aldeigjuborg switches identities with her serving-girl of the same name, in order to avoid an unwelcome marital arrangement. In this saga, however, that marital proposition comes about as the result of a successful invasion – and the killing of Ingigerðr’s father – by the forces of Þrándheimr, whose forces include the protagonist, Hálfðan, and his father, King Eysteinn. Eysteinn is later visited by the real Ingigerðr and her foster-father, both disguised as mysterious men called “Grímr”, and that night Hálfðan notices her gloveless hand as she lies asleep in the hall: “[e]nga mannshönd þóttist hann slíka sét hafa fyrir feigrðar sakir” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 258; “he thought he had never seen such a beautiful hand on anyone”). He also notices her beautiful ring and places it into her glove, before falling asleep. He awakes to this “Grímr” reclaiming the glove and ring and fleeing with the following curse: “Eftir þessari hendi, gulli ok glófa skaltu leita ok þreyja ok aldri náðir fá, fyrr en sá leggr jafnviljugr aftr í þinn lófa, sem nú tók á burtu” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 258; “On account of this hand, gold ring and glove, you will seek and yearn and never find peace until the person who now takes them away returns them just as readily into your grasp”). He also discovers that his father had been killed that night by the strangers, and he promptly sets off in pursuit of them. During that time, his kingdom is usurped by a former subordinate, and he is badly wounded and saved by mysterious strangers. Following his recovery, he undergoes a series of solo adventures in search of his rescuers and his father’s killers (without realising that they are the same duo), before Ingigerðr resurfaces and seeks his help to defend her foster-father’s realm, Kirjálabotnar (Karelia), against Hálfðan’s usurper. She shows him her ring and glove and gives him the latter “í festarpeninginn” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 275; “as a pledge of betrothal”) in exchange for his help – thus the garment of recognition serves a bridal function although it is a glove here rather than a shoe. After Hálfðan’s success, she gives him the ring and they marry; Hálfðan then redistributes the lands that his father had ruled.

Unlike the other two sagas, *Egils saga einhenda* does not involve a garment of recognition, but it does contain the motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring. In this case, they belong to one of the saga heroes, Egill *einhendi*, who enters the narrative as a one-handed raider harrying the kingdom of Rússía,⁷ which had already entered a state of panic following the abduction of the king’s two daughters. After entering blood-brotherhood with the Norwegian nobleman Ásmundr, Egill and Ásmundr enter Jötunheimar in search of the Russian princesses. There they encounter the *flagðkona* Arinnefja, and the three of them share their personal histories. Egill reveals his past as a nobleman from Smálönd (Småland) who had got himself detained far from home in his youth. In his story he recounts having lost his hand and ring in a fight against an aggressive *jötunn*, against whom he had been defending a *flagðkona*. By astonishing coincidence, Arinnefja’s story reveals that she was that *flagðkona*, and that she had kept and preserved Egill’s ring and hand, which she reattaches. After helping Arinnefja claim sovereignty over Jötunheimar, the blood-brothers free the Russian princesses, bring them back to Rússía and marry them, following which Egill finally returns home.

The manifestation of the motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring in the three sagas can thus be outlined in Table 1 below,⁸ and the rest of this paper will explore some of the interesting nuances that lie at the heart of those depictions.

⁶ Finnur Jónsson called *Vilmundar saga* “en ubetydelig saga og en stærk efterligning af Hálfðan Eysteinnssöns saga” (Finnur Jónsson 1920–1924, III: 118; “an insignificant saga and a strong imitation of *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*”). For a discussion outlining the narrative parallels between the two sagas, see Hui 2021: xxi–xxiii.

⁷ The opening of *Egils saga einhenda* introduces Rússía as a kingdom bordering Garðaríki, but in other texts it is another name for the same kingdom.

⁸ Revised from Hui 2021: xxv–xxvi, which erroneously names ‘Skinnefja’ for Arinnefja.

Table 1. The hero's rehabilitation in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga* and *Egils saga ok Ásmundar*.

Event	<i>Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar</i>	<i>Vilmundar saga viðutan</i>	<i>Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserksjabana</i>
1. Loss of ring	Hálfðan removes the disguised Ingigerðr's glove and ring and notices her beautiful hand. She takes them back and flees (ch. 8).	Vilmundr and the disguised Sóley grapple, and he leaves a mark on her hand (ch. 11).	Egill's hand, with his ring, is said to have been chopped off while he was helping a <i>flagðkona</i> resist a <i>jötunn</i> (ch. 11).
2. Exile	Hálfðan has a series of solo adventures in a forest (chs 16–18).	Vilmundr is exiled by the king (ch. 18).	Egill becomes a raider (ch. 3; he does not return home until ch. 17).
3. Return of the ring	Hálfðan arrives in Kirjálabotnar (Karelia) in the east. To win his help against imminent invasion, Ingigerðr shows Hálfðan her glove, hand and ring, as proof that they have met before (ch. 19).	Vilmundr arrives at Silven's house-in-a-stone. Silven shows Vilmundr Sóley's marked hand, with her (previously unmentioned) ring, as proof that they have met before (ch. 23).	Egill is in Jötunheimar in the north. The <i>flagðkona</i> Arinneyja had found and preserved Egill's hand and ring, and shows them to him as proof that they have met before. She reattaches his hand (ch. 14).
4. Resolution	Hálfðan helps Ingigerðr defeat his evil ex-ally Úlfkell. He is reconciled with Ingigerðr and marries her (chs 20–21).	Vilmundr brings the real Sóley back to her father, is reconciled with him and marries Sóley (chs 23–24).	Allied with Arinneyja, Egill and Ásmundr rescue the two Russian princesses from the <i>jötnar</i> and eventually marry them (chs 16–17).

The nature of redemption

Of the three sagas' protagonists, Vilmundr's exile and redemption are brought about with the least direct involvement from other characters. His exile is caused entirely by his egregious violation of social etiquette in the form of the callously insensitive treatment of "Sóley's" head, which so enrages the king that he declares:

[...] því að þó að ég villda mína dóttur dauða fyrir sín illbrigði, þá má ég ei þá skamm þola, að hennar blóð renni yfir mín borð, svo sem það kalli á mig til hefndar eptir sig. Því skal Vilmundur eigi fyrir mín augu koma að svo búnu mínu lyndi. (Hui 2021: 38).

[...] for although I wanted my daughter dead because of her misdeeds, I cannot endure the shame of her blood running over my tables, as if it urges me to avenge it. Because of this disgrace, Vilmundr must never again come into my sight.

The circumstance of exile draws Vilmundr dangerously close to following in Kolr's villainous footsteps and becoming a similar force of social disruption. He takes over "kastala þann, sem Kolur hafði átt" (Hui 2021: 40; "the stronghold that Kolr had owned"), and the Garðaríki prince Hjarrandi warns his father that "hann [Vilmundur] mundi verða sárbeitur í sektinni, ef hann vill öðru til sín slá en góðu" (Hui 2021: 40; "he [Vilmundur] would become destructive in his outlawry if he wished to do anything other than good"), a description that mirrors Kolr's earlier descent into villainy. Though Vilmundr does not end up falling into villainy, the logical finality of the king's emotional proclamation leaves no room for forgiveness and social reintegration except through the surely impossible redressing of the specific offence committed: the public, tangible declaration of Princess Sóley's death. In other words, the only way for Vilmundr to gain the king's forgiveness would be somehow to undo Sóley's death. That this is possible at all is because of Sóley's earlier switch of identity with Öskubuska; that Vilmundr can claim the credit

for Sóley's eventual return is due to his unique status as the man who had earlier both discovered her shoe and encountered her hand and ring while she was in disguise.

The primary driving force behind Vilmundr's (and Sóley's) redemption is individual luck. Indeed, his very departure from home, and entry into Garðaríki society, is motivated by his search for his family's symbolically named goat, Gæfa, "Fortune" (Hui 2021: 16), which is a soon-forgotten MacGuffin in the narrative, but a thematically appropriate objective in metaphoric terms. Accordingly, the shoe that Vilmundr serendipitously discovers before he has even properly left home proves to be the key that ultimately enables him to claim Sóley's hand in marriage; he overhears her marriage pledge at the time but does not claim it until his fourth and final visit to Sóley's hideout, having simply eavesdropped from without the previous three times. His encounter with the disguised Sóley in the royal kitchen – the episode in which he first encounters the hand and ring that he will later recognise – also comes about entirely by chance, and it is she who initiates the encounter by attacking him (Hui 2021: 22). The significance of this episode lies in the fact that he is later able to recognise her hand partly by "þann fingrastað, sem holldið hafði hlaupið undan hans fingrum, og var nú þó hvítnað holdið um" (Hui 2021: 52; "the imprints of his fingers where the flesh had been pressed and had now turned white"), thus allowing him to equate the kitchen servant with the princess in the hideout. Neither of these crucial events – Vilmundr's discovery of Sóley's shoe, and his encounter with her in the kitchen – is of Vilmundr's making; they merely happen to him, being in the right place at the right time, and he is subsequently proven to be fortunate for their having done so.

The overriding significance of luck in Vilmundr's heroic journey means that, although his callousness was solely responsible for his exile, it is not a trait he must redress in order to achieve redemption. While his exile was caused entirely by his own uncompromising bluntness, he does not acknowledge or compromise on this even in the moment of resolution:

Vilmundur gekk fyrir kong. Hann mælti: 'Hygg að, kongur, hvort hér er komin Sóley dóttir þín eður hefir hún legið úti hjá Kol kryppu, sem þú hugðir, að vera mundi mágur þinn, en þá var þér viðurlíkur mágur makligur, og geym nú vel dóttur þína, en ég mun gjöra þér önga skapraun í hérvist minni fyrst að sinni. En svo finnuzt við næst, að þú verður var við, hvern þú hefir sekan gjört.' Snýr Vilmundur þá í burt mjög reiður. (Hui 2021: 54).

Vilmundr walked before the king. He said: 'Take a look, my king, at whether your daughter Sóley has arrived here, or whether she lay outside beside Kolr kryppa, whom you believed had become your son-in-law. He was then a fitting son-in-law for you. Now look after your daughter. I'll no longer cause you annoyance with my presence right now, but when we next meet, you'll know just who you've had outlawed.' Then Vilmundr turns away with great rage.

Vilmundr's inability to recognise his culpability for his exile, and the fact that the tensions are ultimately resolved through the king's acquiescence rather than any apology on Vilmundr's part (Hui 2021: xviii–xix), emphasise the pre-eminence of luck as the primary agent within the saga's overarching ethical framework. The insolence shown by Vilmundr during his return with Sóley is irrelevant, as the mere return of Sóley is sufficient for his redemption, along with the final step of his social advancement: marriage with Sóley and authority over a third of Garðaríki. It is worth noting that Sóley herself is also simultaneously redeemed through the same actions that guaranteed Vilmundr's redemption, principally his discovery of her shoe: her return with Vilmundr allows her to reassume the royal status and original identity that she had forsaken even prior to his introduction in the saga. Thus, Vilmundr's pursuit of Gæfa, "Fortune",

Unlike *Vilmundar saga*, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* conflates the discovery of the bridal garment with the act of violation that causes the protagonist's exile. It is not luck but an act of violation that initially exposes Hálfðan to the garment, hand and ring. Rather than stumbling across the lost garment, Hálfðan takes it in full knowledge that its owner is sleeping beside it. Like Sóley's shoe, Ingigerðr's glove and ring carry obvious symbolic connotations of marriage – Ingigerðr herself later treats them as such when betrothing herself to him. Understood in this light, Hálfðan helping himself to them in the royal hall, without the sleeping Ingigerðr's consent,

might be read as an act containing symbolic echoes of forced marriage – the very situation that the princess had initially switched identities to try to avoid. It is further possible to read into Hálfðan's action the implication of sexual violation. In his well-known psychoanalytic study of fairytales, Bruno Bettelheim argued that the famous slipper of the (modern) “Cinderella” tale, in which the heroine's foot fits perfectly, might be read as a symbolic representation of the vagina, and that the placing of her foot into the slipper could signify her acceptance of a marital and sexual relationship with the prince (Bettelheim 1976: 270–271). Ingigerðr's glove fulfils the same thematic function and structural role as Sóley's shoe – which is an obvious example of the famous “Cinderella” shoe (Hui 2018: 356) – and Hálfðan's seizure of an object that carries symbolic connotations of virginity as well as betrothal might therefore be read as an act even more intrusive than forced marriage. Thus, although both Vilmundr and Hálfðan commit an offence against a royal figure that creates the need for redemption and leads directly into their exile, the agency of the narrative is configured differently in the two sagas, resulting in differing requirements for the heroes' subsequent achievement of that redemption.

Hálfðan's act of violation against Ingigerðr triggers the sequence of events leading to Hálfðan's exile from his own kingdom, as he is usurped while travelling abroad to find his father's killers. Ingigerðr's curse determines the structural trajectory of Hálfðan's solo adventures, a trajectory that squares with Frye's identification of journeys towards self-recognition as a common feature of romance. Who is Prince Hálfðan without his sovereign father and royal status? How will he negotiate the conflicting demands placed upon him by the fact that his saviours are also the murderers of his father? The ethical foundation underpinning Hálfðan's attempts to negotiate these questions of identity lies in Ingigerðr's agency. Because of her curse on Hálfðan and her possession of the glove and ring, she holds the power over his “náðir” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 258; “peace”) until such time as she herself chooses to give him those items – and, by figurative extension, her hand in marriage. Twice on his solo adventures, we are told that he calls to mind “[sú] fagra hönd ok þat [væna] gull” (“[the] fair hand and the [beautiful] gold ring”) that he had “missti” (“lost”) (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 260, 266). It is she who resurfaces in the narrative to show him the glove and ring and thereby give him the opportunity to make amends for his act of violation (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 274–275).⁹ Therefore, in contrast to Vilmundr's unyielding unrepentance, Hálfðan's redemption must come through an act of expiation for his violation against Ingigerðr.

Hálfðan's act of redemption is his defence of Kirjálabotnar on behalf of Ingigerðr and her foster-father. Here there is the convenient plot device of a common enemy: Úlfkell, Hálfðan's usurper and the would-be invader of Kirjálabotnar. Structurally this differs to *Vilmundar saga*, in which Vilmundr had already defeated the common enemy (Kolr and Öskubuska) before his exile and subsequent redemption. Unlike in *Vilmundar saga*, this adds a political dimension to the redemption in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnsonar*. Whereas in *Vilmundar saga* the political stability and integrity of Garðaríki is never placed under serious threat, in *Hálfðanar saga* the kings of Þrándheimr and Aldeigjuborg are both killed as a result of the former's invasion of the latter. The killing of Ingigerðr's father motivates her to murder King Eysteinn for revenge, forming a personal grievance between her and Hálfðan (who in turn sets out for revenge) that constitutes an extension of the political opposition between their realms. The treacherous seizure of Eysteinn's lands by Úlfkell – of whom Eysteinn had “helt mikit” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: “thought highly”) – and Úlfkell's alliance with stock villains in the form of Finnic sorcerers and the shape-shifting king of Bjarmaland, foreground the structural need for Hálfðan's heroic journey of ascent to include the reclamation of his rightful inheritance. Yet it is notable that once Hálfðan has regained control over his father's kingdom at the conclusion of the saga, he returns to Ingigerðr's mother her rightful lands: “þat ríki, sem hún á hér í Garðaríki” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, IV: 281; “the realm that she owned here in Garðaríki”, i.e. Aldeigjuborg). Hálfðan thus restores

⁹ The glove and ring serve as logical proof of their previous encounter because Hálfðan had only previously seen Ingigerðr in her male disguise.

political stability in the saga's locales through the restoration of both Þrándheimr and Aldeigjuborg to their original ruling families, who are similarly restored to their earlier standing. In his moment of triumph and his rightful return to power, he effectively undoes his father's initial invasion of Aldeigjuborg.

The motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring in *Egils saga einhenda* is differently configured to the other two sagas not only because of its lack of a bridal garment, but also because the hand and ring belong to a male protagonist, Egill, rather than a princess. These objects do not carry overt marital connotations, and the female character who keeps them after the amputation and later reattaches them – Arinnefja – is not exactly a romantic interest for Egill. Furthermore, unlike the cases of Vilmundr and Hálfðan described above, Egill and Arinnefja never come into direct conflict with each other, meaning that both exile and redemption are treated slightly differently. Egill is already a socially problematic figure in exile as soon as he enters the saga. He is introduced as a disruptive force posing a threat to the stability of Rússía, the saga's primary setting; the very first description of him in the saga characterises him, in the words of one of the Russian defenders, as “illr viðreignar” (Guðni Jónsson 1956, III: 327; “hard to deal with”). Most – though not all – raiders in Icelandic romances are villains to be overcome, but Egill's swearing of blood-brotherhood with Ásmundr brings him into the fold of Russian society, and he also demonstrates his noble character in his first encounter with Arinnefja. He describes this encounter, which chronologically takes place before the events of the saga, as an unprompted intervention on behalf of an unknown *flagðkona* – who turns out to be Arinnefja – against an attack by a stronger *jötunn* (Guðni Jónsson 1956, III: 347). Because no ulterior motive is described, the reader is invited to understand Egill's action as unequivocally chivalrous,¹⁰ and although the intervention costs him his hand, Arinnefja recovers it and later reattaches it. Thus, Egill's chivalrous act of assistance leads directly to the restoration of his original physical integrity, a restoration of a part of his self-identity that had been lost, which might be regarded as a sort of corporeal redemption.¹¹ Interestingly, although Egill's hand is not fully correspondent to Ingigerðr's glove and Sóley's shoe, all three objects share an implicit ‘perfect-fit’ function. Ingigerðr and Sóley's garments serve as unimpeachable markers of the identity of the princesses who own them (Hui 2021: xli), and Sóley's shoe in particular is implied to have the sort of unique association with its owner that is characteristic of “Cinderella” garments: her foster-mother remarks, following the loss of the shoe, that “hún skyldi öngva skó aðra bera mega, og verður hún nú að ganga berfætt öðrum fæti” (Hui 2021: 14; “she will never be able to wear another shoe, and she will now have to go with one foot bare”). Ingigerðr's glove and Sóley's shoe also ultimately prove to be the key to the princesses' own social advancement, in that their symbolic value as bridal garments leads to their marriages to their respective saga protagonists. Egill's hand may also be read as an object of ‘perfect-fit’ recognition. In addition to the obvious biological affinity between arm and hand, the condition of the hand is also notably suitable for reattachment; the narrator remarks that “[s]ýndist honum höndin heit, ok rauk af, ok þöfta æðarnar” (Guðni Jónsson 1954, III: 354; “it seemed to him [Egill] as if the hand were warm and steaming, and the veins throbbing”). The restoration of his corporeal integrity through the undecayed hand – which may also bear shades of the Catholic concept of incorruptibility – allows Egill to reassume his physical condition prior to his life as a raider, and it returns him symbolically to his former state of nobility, as the son of the earl of Smálönd. After the successful adventure in Jötunheimar, he does return home to his father for the first time since leaving home (Guðni Jónsson 1956, III: 361–362), by which point he is already betrothed to

¹⁰ We might recall, for instance, the clear instruction always to assist ladies in need, given to Perceval by his mother in Chrétien de Troyes' romance, *Le conte du Graal*.

¹¹ This corporeal aspect is not found in Vilmundr's case, though it is arguably a factor for Hálfðan Eysteinnsson, whose rescue by his father's murderers forms the basis for the re-evaluation of his place within the saga's social fabric, in that he is thenceforth no longer driven purely by vengeance and the interests of his own kingdom.

Princess Bekkhildr of Rússía. Having arrived in Rússía as an invader, he ends up rescuing and marrying a Russian princess.

The act of restoring Egill's corporeal integrity might also be read as an act of atonement on Arinnefja's part. Certainly, it might be read partly as an act of repayment for Egill's help, as his intervention was the reason that he lost his hand. However, as part of her story, she also recounts that she had previously developed an uncontrollable lust for Egill's father, King Hringr of Smálönd, just prior to his marriage to Ingibjörg of Gautland, and consequently made several unsuccessful attempts to thwart their marriage, including an attack on Ingibjörg – a “clearly sexualised attack”, in Carolyne Larrington's words (Larrington 2015: 66) – in which the *flagðkona* transformed into a fly to sting the bride-to-be in her stomach and groin (Guðni Jónsson 1956, III: 350–351). Although she is caught and serves her punishment by retrieving three magic items from the underworld, the sheer coincidence of later being in a position to assist Hringr's son is of narrative interest. As with Vilmundr and Sóley's shoe, and as with Ingigerðr and her glove, Arinnefja had kept Egill's hand ever since their first encounter, returning it to him at a crucial moment when it would be of mutual benefit to both of them. The outcome of her alliance with Egill and Ásmundr is also important for her own profit, as their combined efforts lead to the successful overthrowing her brothers and her installation as the queen of Jötunheimar, marking the culmination of the social ascent of a character whose nadir had taken her to the depths of the underworld.

This paper has sought to demonstrate the nuances in the ways in which the motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring was deployed in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Vilmundar saga viðutan* and *Egils saga einhenda*. It is clear that the folkloric motif had naturally strong resonances with the themes of recognition and redemption, with compelling narrative parallels arising as a result, but that the exploration of these themes was framed within the individual ethical frameworks and circumstances of each saga. The motif held an important structural role too, in that the delayed re-encounter with the hand and ring in each case allowed for the development of character depth in conjunction with the overarching romance requirements of journeys of descent and ascent. By way of a concluding footnote, it is interesting to point out that the theme of redemption in *Vilmundar saga* would go on to have an unexpected afterlife, one which would grant it a special place amongst the Icelandic *riddarasögur*. To my knowledge, *Vilmundar saga* is, remarkably, the Icelandic *riddarasaga* with the earliest adaptation into modern fiction, having been rendered in 1924 into a story-in-a-story existing within a short work of historical fiction by Sigrid Undset, the Norwegian Nobel laureate in Literature (1928). The short story, titled ‘Saga om Vilmund Vidutan og fællerne hans’ (Saga of Vilmund Vidutan and his Companions), details the adventures of three young boys in mid-thirteenth-century Norway, who are (anachronistically) inspired by the adventures of Vilmundr and the two supporting protagonists from the Icelandic saga. The story would be revised and published in English in 1943 as *Sigurd and his Brave Companions* – with the plot of the embedded “Saga of Vilmund Vidutan” significantly altered – while Undset was in exile in the United States following the German occupation of Norway. The first study of the subject is forthcoming, but here it suffices to conclude by noting that although the novel does not contain the motif of the lost-and-found hand and ring, and although the 1943 version, *Sigurd*, does not set its “Saga of Vilmund Vidutan” in the Rus', the novel still uses its adaptation of the Vilmundr *viðutan* story as an entry point for the exploration of themes of maturation, the finding of one's place in society and the world, innocence, culpability, repentance and redemption. Such themes, it seems, may have lent themselves to being moulded around specific and highly useful folkloric motifs, but their resonances could thrive within the time-honoured structure of romance even without those motifs.

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Loki the blood-sibling of Óðinn in Japanese interpretations: A lean and lithe, philosophical and mutable, father-mother figure of monsters

Tsukusu Jinn Itó, Shinshu University

Three modern representations of Loki in Harris, Azumi and Kinoshita

Loki, today, is one of the most popular mythical figures in Scandinavian Mythology. Joanne M. Harris' two novels, *The Gospel of Loki* (2014; henceforth *Gospel*) and *The Testament of Loki* (2018; henceforth *Testament*), shows her interpretation of the mythological episodes from Loki's point of view, and her narrative of the former is, literally, disguising the mythological truth in the 'Canon' of the Eddaic literature, like *Völuspá*.¹ In the latter, however, the story is set in the 21st century UK, in which the conscious minds of the Northern Deities are mysteriously grafted to human teenagers, including Loki's. It is in a sense a modern version of *Lokasenna*, or might well be called *Lokaginning*, or 'Delusion of Loki'; the delusion takes place in front of the readers' imaginative view of the mythic world by Loki's *ginna*.

In various works of manga reception of Scandinavian mythology in Japan, on the other hand, Loki also seems, again literally, to be versatile in both nature and appearance. He can be a boy or an adult, a man or a woman, a god or a *völva*, and a destroyer of the earth or a mad scientist. His images are drawn by various Japanese manga artists (ten in number), but interestingly, when he is featured as a main character in the narrative, his relationship with Óðinn is conspicuously focused as the core of the mythological doom of the day, i.e. Ragnarök. His children, namely, Miðgarðsormr, Fenrir and Hel, as well as both not-so-well-known Váli and Narfi, are also popular among the Japanese manga readers, of which fact the manga artists will usually make the best use as a narrative device.

1. Loki as a handsome and intelligent figure

While his fellowship with Þórr is naturally taken as an attribute of Loki, as we have seen in *Marvel* films, he is described in a more complexed way in relation with Óðinn.² his paper deals with two manga works, *The Scarlet Swords* (1986-93) and *The Mythical Detective Loki* series (1999-2015), both drawn by female manga creators, Azumi Ryō and Kinoshita Sakura respectively, in which Loki is featured as so significant a character that one can tell how the Japanese people look at him in their reception of Scand Kinoshita Sakurainavian mythology.

Loki is, according to Snorri's *Gylfaginning*, "fríðr ok fagr sýnum. Illr í skaplyndi, mjök fjölbreytinn at háttum. Hann hafði þá speki um fram aðra menn er slægð heitir, ok vælar til allra hluta. hann kom Ásum jafnan í fullt vandræði ok opt leysti hann þá með vælræðum" [beautiful and fair in appearance, vile in character, very much versatile in demeanor; He had the wisdom superior to that in others which is called cunning and was wile towards everything: he took Æsir into grave difficulty and often relieved them from it with cunning advice].³ (Faulkes 1988, 26–27). Both Azumi and Kinoshita apparently draw Loki's appearance with a handsome visage, as well as his wise council, which frequently bring up troublesome issues but also will bring about satisfactory solution in some ways or other. Although Harris's works have no illustrations of Loki, in its publication, yet the readers are supposed to presume some kind of cunning intelligence in him; Harris, in fact, adds the characteristics of Loki in its sequel: "Handsome, charismatic and brilliant hero of this troubled tale" (Harris 2018, v).

2. The common features and the differences

The common elements in the stories of those three authors are: (1) Loki is the main character of the narrative, though not necessarily as the protagonist in Azumi's *Scarlet Sword*; (2) All the

¹ Harris had written a "Norse-myth-based" children's book, *Runemarks* (London, 2007) and its sequel, *Runelight* (London, 2011), setting a world 500 years after "Ragnarök" (Harris 2011, iii).

² As for the relationships of Loki with Óðinn and with Þórr, see Ström 1956, Chap 2, specifically concerning Óðinn, 79-94; de Vries 1970, II, §§428, 501 on Þórr, II, §§503, 506 on Óðinn.

³ All the Modern English translations from Old Icelandic and Japanese are the author's.

works deal with Ragnarök, where all the northern deities perish in the end. The most striking difference found in Harris's *Gospel* is that the narrative is confined within the world of Gods, while in its sequel, *Testament*, Loki is to experience the modern world. Similarly, the two manga works by Azumi and Kinoshita are of different settings: Azumi's *Scarlet Swords* is a story around CE 1000, with episodes in another dimensional space in the face of the Twilight of Gods, while Kinoshita's *Mythical Detective Loki* has Loki himself living with Japanese high-teens. Therefore, each of Harris's works corresponds to each of Japanese mangas with regard to the narrative stage-settings.

2.1. Loki in Harris's *The Gospel of Loki*

Loki in *Gospel* lives in the world of northern deities. Harris's interpretations of the *Elder Edda* and *Snorra Edda* fill the whole narratives, solely told by Loki himself. Loki in both *Gospel* and *Testament* frequently calls himself "Yours Truly" or "Your Humble Narrator", appropriate expressions of Loki's cynically guileful attitude towards his audience. Throughout the narratives, the readers are recurrently reminded that the Authorized Oracle, which appears to mean *Vqluspá* for the knowledgeable audience, should not be trusted. This peculiar narrative device of the author easily invokes their curiosity and interests raised in mind, even allowing some to try looking up into "the original" mythological tales to confirm.

Loki in *Gospel* is interpreted as a Chaotic being with an Aspect of flame in origin, in the dimension of the world of Surtr (Harris 2015, 16–19; as to the names of Loki's parents, see "Fárbauti" and "Laufey" in Simek 1993, 2018) where he had seen the creation of the world done by "the sons of Bór" (Harris 2015, 6–10) and the war between the Æsir and Vanir (Harris 2015, 10–14), and hence, the whole mythological time flows are observed and commented by Loki. Even though these observations of each episode and the treatments of each mythical element from both *Elder Edda* and *Snorra Edda* are of profound interest, the process of Ragnarök with Loki's involvement is worth while comparing with those works of manga.

2.2. Loki in Azumi's *Scarlet Swords*

Azumi Ryō's *Scarlet Swords* has Loki as a parent-figure of a heroic protagonist in the first stage of the story. He also has an intimacy with Óðinn, whose relationships are intricately woven in the narrative. Loki's adoration to Óðinn is expressed firstly in the third volume, where Loki considers Óðinn as the "silvery Áss" (Azumi 1988, 28) and he retrospects how he was fascinated with the Áss when Loki was a mere giant lad: "once upon a time, for a giant lad who first saw the king of Æsir galloping in the sky, the scene was the mightiest and the brightest of all, yearning for the silvery war-god" (Azumi 1988, 31–32).

2.3. Loki in Kinoshita's *The Mythical Detective Loki*

Kinoshita's Loki has also complex feelings towards Óðinn. He feels banished by Óðinn when he finds himself living in Japan with a small figure of young boy. His recovery and return to Valhöll is only possible through his accomplishments of exorcising demonic spirits from humans. In his life in this world, Loki lives with Miðgarðsormr in human-shape, Þórr as a high-school student in poverty, who has to work part-time jobs, bringing about detective cases. Loki is also targetted by both Heimdall and Freyr, while Freyja and Anglboða are made friends with him. Such comic strips of cartoon narrative furnished with more serious and decisive resistance of Óðinn against Ragnarök.

3. Provisional conclusive remarks

In conclusion, Loki in the Japanese manga works is a representative of the author's modern liberal interpretation of medieval Scandinavian world view, as well as an anachronistic divine figure who experience cultural gaps with easy acclimatisation on the basis of Loki's naturel curiosity and natural versatility we can see in the medieval Scandinavian literature. He can be of an adult of intelligent detective skills with infantile appearance, or a blood brother of Óðinn who can toast horns of mead together, sedately watching the end of Ragnarök at a terrace of Valhöll.

In the oral presentation, the illustrations of both manga works are presented with more detailed examples cited from those three works of interpretation of Scandinavian mythology.

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The archaeology of text: Digging into *Orkneyinga saga*

Judith Jesch, University of Nottingham

Over the last couple of centuries, the Icelandic sagas of the high Middle Ages have fluctuated in their perceived value as sources for the Viking Age, however defined, depending on their evaluation as historical documents, literary monuments, or something in between. At the moment, their currency is relatively high: a wide range of scholarship in different disciplines seems to find it useful to consider sagas together with other, especially material, evidence for the period in which many of them are set, despite the chronological gap of 2-300+ years. But other than putting the different types of evidence side by side and looking for similarities and differences, or finding parallels and patterns, there does not seem to be any explicit or fully worked-out methodology that will adequately explain the nature of the relationship between sagas and their historical settings, and thereby elucidate the source-value of sagas.

The paper will present possible approaches to such a methodology, using examples from *Orkneyinga saga*. This saga is a useful case in which to explore the possibilities of such methods, for a number of reasons, including its broad chronological and geographical range, its non-Icelandic settings (despite probable Icelandic authorship), its extensive citation of skaldic poetry and its complex history of transmission. While the saga provides plenty of evidence for 'relationships between written sources and the material record' as the conference theme has it, the paper will focus not on this but rather on the saga as a textual artefact which can be subject to pseudo-archaeological analysis. Just as in archaeology '...stratigraphy and context reveal the interpenetration of past and present...' (John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* 2001, p. 41), so too can the sagas be interpreted through the textual equivalents of such methods. Taking its departure in, but going beyond, broader frameworks such as diaspora and cultural memory, the paper will explore the usefulness of concepts such as chronology, stratigraphy, provenance and context in developing a methodology which could find the right place for sagas and related texts in the historical study of Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia.

Norse depictions of the Sámi: Stereotypes and implications

Brent Johnson

With such proximity as the Norse and the Sámi inhabited, each linguistically and culturally distinct from the other, reliable depictions and stereotypes were bound to emerge between the two peoples. In significant ways, their views of the cosmos and the ambitions of the gods that governed them were divergent. The corresponding Indo-European and Uralic languages they spoke had divorced so long prior as to have virtually nothing in common, making a free diffusion of words and ideas difficult; in so many ways language serves as a primary identifier of a people, and all else falls in line with the boundaries it sets. This is certainly the case with the Norse sagas, which are recorded snapshots of the Norse language, and how it exhibited the collective mindframe of the people consolidated under that particular tongue and circumstance. Through a number of Sámi depictions in the sagas we can begin to extrapolate how the Sámi fit into the Norse worldview, and identify some of the running stereotypes which comprised that worldview. While it is possible that some stereotypes may have had neutral effect, others likely had consequential implications, either to the relative benefit or detriment of each culture.

How did the sagas depict the Sámi? We see that several names emerge to identify the people of the Sápmi-homeland: the East Norse referred to the *lappir*, while the West Norse (including the majority of the saga references) more commonly tagged the same people as *finnar*. More aligned with the Sámi self-identification was the specific saga term *semsveinar*, transliterating to “Sami-men”. Did the Norse people generally respect the Sámi, fear them, devalue them, disregard them? Were there perceived skills and attributes among the Sámi that the Norse either coveted or scorned? How would these views have affected the Sámi, to the extent that the two cultures intersected? Where power is represented in natural resources, martial strength, and less tangible currents as fate and magic, the subjective appraisal of the balance of power becomes more complicated. These ideas will be examined through a survey of the sagas.

Harðar svefnfarar? Medieval Icelandic conceptions of unpleasant nocturnal experiences

Kirsi Kanerva, University of Helsinki

In this paper, I will concentrate on various unpleasant nocturnal experiences in thirteenth to fourteenth-century saga literature, such as *mara*, bad dreams and encounters with dream figures that inflict harm on the sleeper. I will examine how contemporary people understood and conceptualized these experiences, including, what was according to their understanding the origin, nature and essence of their unpleasant experiences, and what means there were, if any, to prevent and counteract them. Here I will concentrate especially on the material aspects of such prevention and healing instead of the spiritual ones. To attain a broader perspective of these “nightmarish” experiences in medieval Icelandic culture, I will examine various saga genres, including *Íslendingasögur*, *konungasögur*, *samtíðarsögur* and *biskupasögur*.

***bera Botta tilldi*: A Gaelic phrase in Holm papp 4 4^{ox}?**

Merrill Kaplan, The Ohio State University

The H text of *Jóns saga byskups ens helga* mentions an entertainment of some kind (*leikr*) known as *bera Botta tilldi*. Mixed groups of men and women engaged it in, the text tells us, and it involved the exchange of scurrilous verses (*klækilegar vijsur og oheyrilegar*). The bishop had it banned (Foote 2003: 125). Its purported name has resisted satisfactory interpretation. This paper argues that the words *Botta tilldi* render a Gaelic phrase, either *bot(t)a tillte* or *bochta tillte*, from *bot* (tail or penis) or *bochta* (the poor) and *tillid* (return, repulse) (eDIL s.v. 1 *bot*, s.v. *bocht*, s.v. *tillid*). Together with Old Icelandic *bera*, the name would have been either “pass around the tail/penis” or “pass around the poor.” This reading strongly suggests a pastime comparable to the Faroese game of passing the *drunnur* (*senda drunn*), in which the dried tail of a sheep or cow is passed hand to hand, each recipient obligated to extemporize a verse—preferably a poetic jab at the next person—before passing it on. Scholarship on the fourteenth-century *Völga þáttr* (*Flb* 2: 331–36), which describes a household reciting verses while passing around a preserved horse penis, has long speculated that something like passing the *drunnur* had been known in medieval Iceland, beginning with (Olsen 1909). Corroborating evidence has been scarce, however, and passing the *drunnur* is attested only in sources since 1800 (Landt 1800: 549–50). If this reading of *bera Botta tilldi* is correct, this is our best support yet for such a game having existed already in Bishop Jón’s day, a trace of early Gaelic cultural influence that reached from the British Isles to the Faroes to Iceland itself.

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Flesh, feathers, bones: Birds in the Viking Age funerary rituals

Klaudia Karpińska, Museum of Cultural History University of Oslo

The Old Norse written sources described various species of birds. They appear in the Eddic poems as occupants of the otherworld (e.g. swans), messengers (e.g. ravens) and harbingers of the inevitable fate (e.g. chickens) of humans. Furthermore, these animals are also mentioned in the Icelandic and legendary sagas (e.g. *Egils saga*; *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*). They are depicted there as precious gifts (e.g. hawks), symbols of virtues (e.g. falcons) and transformations of gods and supernatural beings (e.g. eagles). However, in the two legendary sagas, they are also important parts of the complex cremation or inhumation funerary rituals. In chapter 7 of *Egils saga einheda og Asmundar saga berserkjabana*, it mentions the funeral of young Aran. He is buried within a mound with his horse, hound, hawk, and precious objects. In chapter 33 of *Völsunga saga*, Guðrún asks Gunnarr to be burnt together with Sigurðr on a funeral pyre. She would also like to be cremated with King of Huns, four men, and two hawks. Hawks are not only mentioned as gifts and offerings during funerals in the sagas but their remains are also found in various Viking Age graves in Scandinavia. What is interesting, they are not the only species which appeared in the funerary contexts. In the cremation and inhumation graves of women, men and children (as well double and massive graves) the unearthed burnt and unburnt bones of the wild (e.g. black grouse [*Lyrurus tetrix*]), domesticated (e.g. domestic goose [*Anser anser domesticus*]) and tamed species of birds (e.g. gyrfalcon [*Falco rusticolus*]). Furthermore, in several cremation and inhumation graves the remains of eggs and feathers were found.

The main aim of this paper is to present new analyses of the meaning of birds in Old Norse written sources with particular attention to the legendary and Icelandic sagas. Different descriptions of these animals and their relations with humans, gods and supernatural beings will be juxtaposed with Viking Age graves with bird remains discovered in Norway and Sweden.

Place-making in the codex – The geographies of *Vatnshyrna and Pseudo-Vatnshyrna

Nora Kauffeldt, University of Basel

In my talk, I will examine the narrated geography and landscape knowledge that is preserved in two compilations – one that is known in the scholarship as Pseudo-Vatnshyrna, which is dated to 1390-1400, and the 17th-century paper copies that are thought to derive from a burned codex that is known as *Vatnshyrna. My reading of this corpus shows that the landscape described in these two compilations is a lived-in landscape. It is not mere scenery nor a container in which the events take place. By analyzing the different levels of detail in which landscape descriptions are used to navigate, locate, and initiate certain events, I conclude that not only the familiarity of these areas to the compiler or the intended audience can be deduced, but also the need to memorize this special landscape knowledge of a newly-established home country and how this knowledge was used and mediated within Icelandic society.

I argue that reading the sagas assembled in these two codices as a meaningful compilation rather than a random accumulation of loose texts is crucial to the understanding of both the context of tradition and the character of the sagas themselves.

I will not go into details about the problematic transmission history in my talk, but it is important to note that the names for these codices are misleading: They hint at a work – “Vatnshyrna” – that was quoted by Arngrímur Jónsson in his *Crymogæa* (1609) and that contained information that is today associated with three different sagas – *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and *Pórðar saga hreðu*. For this reason, scholars thought until now that the codex *Vatnshyrna must have contained at least these three sagas, but the way Arngrímur quotes the text that he calls “Vatnshyrna” resembles the way he quotes *Laxdæla saga* or *Eyrbyggja saga*. He treats it like a single text. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that Arngrímur’s source is connected to the farm Vatnshorn in Línakradalur in the North of Iceland rather than to Vatnshorn in Haukadalur, where the codex that Árni Magnússon borrowed from Peder Resens in the 1680s came from. He called it “Vatnshornsbók” because of its known provenance, but the scholarship so far thought it to be Arngrímur’s “Vatshyrna”. My examination shows that there is most likely no connection between Arngrímur’s “Vatnshyrna” and Árni Magnússon’s “Vatnshornsbók”. Furthermore the relation between “Vatnshornsbók” and the codex that has been identified as another codex with related content and that John McKinnell called “Pseudo-Vatnshyrna” cannot be assumed on the basis of Arngrímur’s quoted texts.¹ I will therefore not use the former names in my paper but proceed by calling the medieval fragmentary manuscript – which McKinnell called “Pseudo-Vatnshyrna” – “Melabók” since that manuscript contains the Landnáma-redaction called Melabók. I will moreover treat the 17th-century paper manuscripts that Árni Magnússon commissioned as copies of the “Vatnshornsbók” as *associated* with “Vatnshornsbók”.²

Although these two groups of manuscripts have been treated together in the past for the wrong reasons, they nevertheless share the overall concept of compiling sagas and þættir in which the action is set in the West- and North West of Iceland, and all the texts therein deal more or less with regional matters. Most importantly, they both seem to have a special interest in Icelandic landscape knowledge. An exception within the corpus regarding the location and the focus of the storytelling is *Flóamanna saga*. In my analysis, I take the manuscript context into account and argue that the exceptionalism of the saga within the compilation can be explained by the position it has within the two codices. *Flóamanna saga* was most likely located at the

¹ A part of this codex (AM 564a 4to) was believed to be a part of the burned Vatnshornsbók until Stefán Karlsson and John McKinnell examined it in 1970. See Karlsson 1970 and McKinnell 1970.

² Már Jónsson has convincingly shown that not all the Vatnshornsbók-related copies derive directly from the parchment manuscript itself but are rather combined from copies of another manuscript by Ketill Jörundarson, and the corrections and additions that Árni Magnússon has added into these copies. See: Jónsson 1997.

beginning of both compilations and serves, I claim, as an introduction to the constructed space of the following sagas. This particular saga outlines the borders of the Nordic world and mentions all the smaller Icelandic regions covered by the other sagas that are compiled here together. The order of the sagas within the compilations zooms from a broader space into actual places and thus constructs an image of a coherent geographical area.

The sagas in the manuscripts considered here all focus on events in certain areas and thus all take part in the project of place-making and the construction of a cultural landscape. Furthermore, by establishing the first settlers and their descendants as focal points, they tell us about the development of sea and land routes, the naming of places as strategies of orientation, and the existential importance of knowing the landscape.

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Presenting *Jómsvíkinga saga* (and *Stýrbjarnar þáttir Svíakappa*) to an English-speaking audience

John Kennedy, Charles Sturt University, Australia

After briefly considering the three complete published English language translations of *Jómsvíkinga saga* (by Lee M. Hollander in 1955, N. F. Blake in 1962, and Alison Finlay and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir in 2018 and 2019) this paper will focus on much earlier reworkings of the saga by significant but somewhat controversial figures in saga studies and the wider society. It will consider what they probably set out to achieve and what they deemed necessary to make their work appealing to a non-specialist general readership.

In 1875 the pioneering British saga scholar George Webbe Dasent's *The Vikings of the Baltic* recreated *Jómsvíkinga saga* as a novel in then standard Victorian three volume format, presenting it as proclaimed escape from "humdrum" nineteenth century existence. Dasent (1817–1896) preserved the original violence but exercised some mild sexual censorship, introduced an element of romantic love, and drew on incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* and elsewhere to extend the narrative to over 900 pages. Twenty-one years later the relentlessly energetic Norwegian-American scholar and public figure Rasmus Björn Anderson (1846-1936) published "The story of the Jomsvikings from the Danish of Fr. Winkel Horn". It appeared in a somewhat improbable venue, published spread over three issues of a Chicago based journal, *The International*, devoted primarily to providing English translations of then contemporary or recently deceased foreign language writers, including Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola. The editor of the journal suggested that the appeal of Anderson's work, largely a literal translation with some paraphrasing, was that it showcased the work of a "celebrated" Danish writer, and he acknowledged a mixed but ultimately positive response from the readership. Some thirty years later, in 1926, the Englishman Eric Rücker Eddison (1882-1945) published his *Styrbiorn the strong*, a novel length reworking and elaboration of the brief *þáttir* from Flateyjarbók, *Stýrbjarnar þáttir Svíakappa*, of which Ben Waggoner provides the only published English translation. Eddison, though a keen amateur Norse scholar whose controversial translation of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímsonar* appeared from Cambridge University Press, is mainly remembered today as a pioneer in the field of "high fantasy" of which J. R. R. Tolkien is probably the most famous exponent. The reputation still enjoyed by Eddison's *The worm Ouroboros* doubtless helps explain the appearance in 2011 of a mass market paperback edition of his *Styrbiorn* with a new "Afterword", though the often archaic diction and stylistic features redolent of Old Icelandic syntax might deter readers.

Dasent, Anderson, and Eddison were quite different men writing in different circumstances, but they were united by a fervent admiration for the "Old North", and by misgivings stemming from the contrast they perceived between it and the times in which they found themselves. Their responses to the perceived challenge this provided were, however, markedly different. In his novel at least Dasent shows his Victorian readers that there was much to admire in Viking Jomsburg, along with some flaws and limitations, but he is also focused on providing a good-humoured and entertaining escapist tale. Anderson, crusading energetically against what he saw as the immorality and indecency of much of the most admired Scandinavian literature of his day, probably saw the placing of a wholesome translation in such an unlikely context as a blow struck in his campaign. Eddison, while declaring as a major aim the achievement of a stylistic objectively similar to that of the Icelandic sagas, shows his admiration for an aristocratic individual's determination not to let obstacles stand in the way of achieving what such an individual rightfully deserves.

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Magic and magic-handlers: Categories of knowledge between past and present

Gwendolyne Knight, Stockholm University

The association between the Sámi and 'magic' in Saga literature is well-established, and this literary-historical association has also influenced archaeological interpretations of material remains from Sámi communities. However, recent reconsiderations of 'magic' as an analytical category (within anthropology and archaeology, as well as history) as well as approaches centering indigenous knowledge systems require us to revisit what we think we know about magic, particularly in the meetings of cultures with different worldviews and body-images. This paper thus combines three of the conference's strands of Sagas and Archaeology, Language, and Folklore. It is an initial foray into this topic, laying out the specific sources that require reconsideration (and why), the theoretical and methodological approaches guiding the reconsideration, potential problems, and preliminary data.

The sea(s) in Old Icelandic sagas and Circum-Baltic folklore: The case of Rán/rán and the rá

Jonas Koesling, University of Iceland

This paper places the Baltic literally in the centre of attention. It focuses on the Baltic Sea in an attempt to grasp the more-than-human significance of the sea for the people of the Old Nordic / pre-modern Scandinavian and Circum-Baltic world and considers the sea as something else than just a body of water, a source of food, a transport route, or an arena for circum-Baltic politics. Instead, it is argued that the sea is conceptualized in manifold, fascinating ways in the mediæval literature of Iceland, both in traditional mythological poetry and the artistic diction of the later court-poetry, as well as in the famous sagas. Going beyond these, the paper also creates a connection to sea-related lore from post-mediæval Scandinavia and the Circum-Baltic area.

Discussion

The initial idea for this paper sprung from a particular Vendel-period bronze mount from Solberga (Askeby, Östergötland), which was used as a logo in the first circular of the conference. Although it serves no longer in this role, this object still provides a helpful entry to the topic to my paper, as it is in fact one of the very few iconographic depictions of the sea itself or, at least, a unique rendering of a surface of water by means of ornament. Starting off with this interesting object, the paper reflects on human–sea entanglements and how perceptions and experiences of the sea were expressed through cultural representations. In general, this includes visual and verbal modes of representing, yet the focus will be on the latter.

Depicting the sea

What is peculiar about the Solberga mount is how it has vividly attracted various interpretations, among other things, being thought to represent Rán or other supernatural sea-beings found in pre-Christian Nordic and Finno-Karelian beliefs and myths. Thus, it serves well to illustrate various aspects of Circum-Baltic as well as Scandinavian culture and traditions.

In the paper, no preference is given to any of these admittedly often quite speculative interpretations, relying mostly on mediæval and much later literary sources and traditions. Instead, it is used to briefly address critically some problematic issues concerning the interpretation of mythological figures or entities—in this case supposed sea-deities.

Deifying the sea? The Rán/rán of myths

More importantly, the paper uses the image from Solberga as an opening to revisit the evidence about this mythological figure or alleged goddess Rán. For this reason, the paper discusses the available evidence regarding the name Rán in Old Icelandic or, perhaps, rather *rán* as a noun (to an earlier Old West Nordic form *rōn*). The relevant but scant mentions in the mediæval literature require some further contextualization and show some interesting dynamics between different sources and genres.

While Rán remains a shallow figure in the mythological poetry, the deity or concept figures more prominently in the complex skaldic imagery found in the saga-literature of late- and post-mediæval Iceland. Here, Rán may certainly appear as a personification of the sea as she does, for instance, in *Eyrbyggja saga*, which has strong folkloristic undertones. Attested very rarely in the earliest skaldic poetry, it nevertheless appears that the noun goes through a development within the poetical corpus, but also across other literary works. Although it is, of course, impossible to draw a precise timeline, the paper argues that a shift in the understanding of *rōn*/Rán occurred in mediæval Iceland. This claim is potentially supported by the word's etymology which is briefly addressed here. Primarily, however, recent etymological research may confirm that Old Icelandic Rán/rán, from an earlier Old West Nordic *rōn*, connects to the *rá* in modern Scandinavian languages.

Demonizing the sea? The *rǫ* of folklore

The final part of the discussions goes beyond the mediæval Icelandic sagas and poetry. Here, I carry out a comparison with the *rǫ* (and *rǫdande* etc.) that appear in folklore around the Baltic Sea or, particularly, in Denmark, Sweden, and (coastal) Finland. In contrast to the mediæval Icelandic transmission of Rán/*rán*, which seems to have discontinued after the Middle Ages, the presence of the *rǫ* is well attested in early to late modern Circum-Baltic folklore, both at sea and on land.

A potential relationship between both *rǫ* and Rán has been suggested in earlier scholarship, and both figures have been receiving some renewed attention in recent years, but each on their own. This paper returns to the evidence for a potential link between Rán/*rán* and the *rǫ*, but on somewhat different grounds. Especially, this section draws attention to their eco-mythical dimension(s).

Conclusion

This paper thus shows that the sea not only played an important role in the more-than-human world during the past but also in the human experience or understanding of the world. This study of the Old Icelandic Rán or *rán* and its possible relation to the Circum-Baltic *rǫ* furthermore indicates that sea-centred folk-belief and worldview(s) are a much-underrated aspect when it comes to the study of Old Nordic myth and the mediæval Icelandic sagas.

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Jómsvíkinga saga: Constructing a memory of the past

Lucie Korecká, Charles University

The mixed modality of *Jómsvíkinga saga*

Jómsvíkinga saga has received little scholarly attention, and it has been acknowledged that the main reason for this neglect is that the saga does not conform to the generally accepted generic classification of medieval Icelandic literature (Finlay 2018: 30). It has been pointed out that *Jómsvíkinga saga* combines some elements of kings' sagas and legendary sagas, and to some extent even bears similarities to the sagas of Icelanders (Ólafur Halldórsson 1969: 51; Tulinius 2002: 191–216; Aalto 2014: 38–53; Finlay 2014: 77; Bjarni Einarsson 1975: 105–148; Berman 1985: 125–126). In the debate on the genre of this saga, it has been concluded that the saga “defies genre classification” (Finlay 2014: 77).

This coexistence and intertwining of different narrative modes within one text and the resulting confusion about the generic definition of the saga seems to be connected to the early date of its composition. *Jómsvíkinga saga* has been regarded as one of the earliest Old Norse sagas that existed in written form, as it was probably originally composed already around the year 1200 (Finlay 2018: 1).¹ What it shares with other texts probably composed around this time, is exactly its generic fluidity; that implies that the generic categories were not yet fully developed at the time (Finlay 2018: 43–44). A useful term for describing these early texts is “mixed modality” (Aalto 2014: 38). Acknowledging mixed modality as a typical feature of early texts can help us free the discussion from generic preconceptions that limit our understanding of the relationships between different texts. It allows us to study the texts across the traditionally defined genre boundaries and to reveal similarities between modally mixed texts and various saga genres in terms of themes, narrative strategies, and possible social roles at the time of writing. That may reveal interesting ideas about how the individual saga genres developed as a response to the need to construct specific types of memory of the past.

This approach has indeed shaped the scholarly discussion of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. In research, it has been grouped together with *Færeyinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga*, with which it shares an early date of composition, mixed modality, and certain themes (Berman 1985; Jesch 1993; Aalto 2014). For the same reasons, it has also been compared to *Yngvars saga víðfjrla* (Aalto 2014). Besides, it has also been studied alongside the legendary sagas in context of the origin of fiction in Old Norse literature (Tulinius 2002). However, while it has been established that *Jómsvíkinga saga* has a strong generic affinity with the kings' sagas (Finlay 2014), its themes and narrative strategies have been little studied in context of the kings' sagas. That is the objective of the present study. A detailed comparison with any specific kings' saga is beyond the scope of this short paper, but I will attempt to outline the main themes that *Jómsvíkinga saga* shares with the kings' sagas as a group, and I will focus on the narrative techniques employed in its conceptualization of these themes.

The central themes of *Jómsvíkinga saga*

A. The social roles of kings and the character of royal power

While the heroic adventures of *Jómsvíkinga saga*'s protagonists understandably draw most attention on the level of plot, we can say that the main theme on the level of narrative is the relationship between kings and local magnates. In this context, some scholars have suggested that *Jómsvíkinga saga* “reflects anti-royal tendencies” (Aalto 2014: 43), or even that it “dismisses kings as corrupt, vicious, and unjust” (Berman 1985: 114). Such interpretations have,

¹ This original version is not preserved, but the saga is extant in somewhat different versions in four medieval manuscripts. The present study follows the version preserved in AM 291 4to, which is the oldest of the extant manuscripts, written around or before 1300 (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965: 14–15), and may be a copy of an exemplar written around 1220–1230 (Foote 1959: 28–29). The other extant versions are Holm. perg. 7 4to, probably written in the first decades of the fourteenth century; Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.) from the late fourteenth century; and AM 510 4to, written around the middle of the sixteenth century (Finlay 2018: 25–26).

however, been challenged, and it has been recognized that the saga shows interest in ideas about the significance and nature of royal power (Tulinius 2002: 200–207; Finlay 2018: 10–11). That is the case especially in the episode about King Sveinn's arbitration in the dispute between Jarl Strút-Haraldr and the influential landowner Véseti (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 16–19), and here I will attempt to analyse the narrative techniques employed in this section of the text.

The episode begins with description and narration. All the persons involved are introduced by means of direct characterization, and it is reported in the narrator's voice how the dispute broke out when the sons of Jarl Haraldr raided Véseti's farm to get provisions for their journey to Jónsborg. Afterwards the text briefly digresses to their arrival at Jónsborg, but it soon returns to the conflict in Denmark, in which Véseti complains to the king about the harm he has suffered. The king attempts to mediate by persuading Jarl Haraldr to pay compensation, but the jarl refuses to do so. Both sides then continue to attack each other until they turn to the king again and convince him to mediate, so he summons them to an assembly to arbitrate between them.

When the king gets directly involved, the text turns to staging the dialogue. Significantly, it is mainly the king's words that are presented as direct speech, whereas the other men's speech is only reported or quoted very briefly. Thus the text draws attention to the king's authority and underlines the idea that the king's speech, unlike the speech of others, has a strong performative aspect. There are two exceptions, however, when longer utterances by non-royal men are quoted as direct speech, and they are clearly not randomly chosen. The first is a speech by Véseti, in which he emphasizes the threat posed to peace and order in the kingdom by internal conflicts:

„Pat muntu spurt hafa, herra,“ segir hann, „at þungt hefir á lagizk með okkr Strút-Haraldi jarli of hríð, ok varir mik at ófriðr myni af gerask sjálfra landsmanna í milli ef þér eigið ǵangan hlut í með oss, ok kann vera at verra sé síðarr en nú, svá komit sem er, því at yðrir menn eru hváirtveggju, herra.“ (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 76)

“You will have heard, my lord,” he says, “that there have been heavy dealings between me and Jarl Haraldr lately, and I expect that strife will set in among the people of the country themselves if you do not intervene between us, and it may be that it will be worse later than it is now, as things stand, for we are both your men, my lord.” (*The saga of the Jomsvikings*: 116)

Here the king is reminded by his own subject of his duty to maintain order in the land. It is underlined that while the dispute is still taking place only between the two individual families, such internal conflict may destabilize the whole society, so that “strife will set in among the people of the country themselves”. The formulation “we are both your men” further emphasizes the importance of unity, which is beneficial both for the king and the people. The presentation of these ideas in direct speech draws more attention to them than if they were written in the form of narratorial comment. Furthermore, it reflects the idea that royal rule should not exist in the form of monologue – the king issuing commands and prohibitions that benefit him personally, but rather in the form of dialogue – the king responding to the needs of the people and guiding their behaviour in a way that benefits the whole kingdom.

The other quoted speech is an instigation to fight, uttered by Véseti's son Búi. It sharply contrasts with the previous speech by his father, who strives for peace and urges the king to advocate a non-violent solution. It also contrasts with the following description of the king's decision to disregard this speech and prevent the violent clash:

„Hitt er nú ráð, jarl,“ segir hann, „ef þú berr nokkur kennsl á gripi þessa er nú muntu sjá á oss skína, attú soek nú til óragliga ef þú þorir ok sé nokkur dáð í þér, fyrir því at lengi hefir þú stórt berkt við oss frændr. Em ek nú ok alþúinn at berjask við þik, ef nokkurt er mannsmót í þér.“ Sveinn konungr heyrir orð Búa ok þykkisk þat sjá at hann fær eigi haldit sinni tígn ef hann lætr þá berjask þar á þinginu ok gingi eigi á milli þeira, er hann hafði svá mikit af tekit at þeir skyldu þar sættask á þinginu, ok tekr konungrinn nú þat ráð at hann gengr á milli þeira ok lætr þá eigi ná at berjask, ok kemr þar nú því máli loks við atgöngu konungsins ok afla at nú verða hváirtveggju því at játa at konungrinn skipi einn á millum þeira, eftir því sem hann vill. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 77)

“I advise you, Jarl,” he says, “if you recognize at all these treasures you can see shining on me now, to attack without cowardice if you dare, and if there is any courage in you, for you have long browbeaten our family. I am now very ready to fight you, if you have any stomach for battle.” King Sveinn hears Búi’s words, and realizes that he will not be able to maintain his dignity if he allows them to fight there at the assembly without intervening between them, since he had placed such weight on their being reconciled there at the assembly, and now the king decides to go between them and not let them come to blows, and now in the end it comes about there through the help and authority of the king that they are both obliged to agree that the king alone should decide between them as he likes. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 117)

In this context, Búi’s speech clearly represents the voice of the belligerent troublemakers, who exist in every society and threaten its order. Again, presenting it as direct speech increases its urgency in the eyes of an audience who were probably familiar with similar utterances in their own time. The following narration then points out that the king’s dignity is at stake if he does not intervene, which again highlights the ruler’s duty to maintain peace among his subjects. In this context, the two contrasting speeches imply that kings need to listen to voices that encourage them to promote peace, but disregard voices that incite violence. By introducing these multiple voices, the saga shows that royal power is never detached from the rest of the society, but should always be based on interaction with the people and on a healthy balance between listening to the people’s needs and being firm and decisive in rejecting harmful suggestions.

When the text employs direct speech as its dominant narrative device for conveying this message, it creates a connection between its form and its conceptualization of the character of royal power. The dialogue in the episode not only directly expresses some of the important ideas about royal power, but also mirrors the dialogic form of royal rule that is propagated in the text. This double function of direct speech in the multi-voiced narrative allows it to express its message on a deeper level than would be possible in a single-voiced narrative. That draws increased attention to the ideas about royal power presented in the text, which transcend the storyline of the saga and are applicable to the society in which the text was composed. That way, the saga connects a story about the distant past with social commentary concerning its own present.

B. The conditions and limits of loyalty

This theme is prominent in the section dealing with the Jómsviking brotherhood and its relationships with the rulers. This part of the saga is most distant from the narrative mode typical for the kings’ sagas and most similar to that of the legendary sagas, but that does not hinder it in presenting ideas that were significant for the society that produced the text. Concerning loyalty, the question that can be directly or indirectly posed in sagas dealing with royal power is how the conditions and limits of loyalty are defined in the relationships between monarchs and other powerful men. In this respect, *Jómsvíkinga saga* shows that the relationships between influential men and the ruler are always mutual and depend on their personal dealings, so they are not constant, but can change in various situations. Hans Jacob Orning calls this conceptualization “contextual loyalty”, as opposed to “absolute loyalty”, which means that every inhabitant of the kingdom is obliged to be unconditionally loyal to the rightful monarch under any circumstances (Orning 2008: 5–10). He also points out that although some medieval Norse texts propagate a royal ideology based around the concept of absolute loyalty, the kings’ sagas show that contextual loyalty was regarded as the norm in practice (Orning 2008: 111–118; 155–256). In this context, expecting the power relations in an early text like *Jómsvíkinga saga* to be governed by the ideology of absolute loyalty would be anachronistic.

In the saga, the brotherhood of the Jómsvikings is established after Pálnatóki’s forced escape from Denmark, which is a result of his conflict with the kings (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 12). In the given situation, loyalty to both King Haraldr and his son Sveinn is not an option for Pálnatóki because of the implacable enmity between the two, so he has to choose a side. He chooses Sveinn, who is capable and promising and unjustly rejected by his father, and this choice

inevitably leads him to opposing and eventually killing Haraldr. Despite the political rivalry between the father and son, Sveinn feels that he must avenge his father because it is his royal duty and a matter of honour. However, his friendship with Pálnatóki continues while he does not know that it was him who killed his father. Their friendship is disrupted during the funeral feast, when it is revealed that Pálnatóki was King Haraldr's slayer. It is certainly not arbitrary that this decisive change in the relationship takes place at a feast, which is a public event where the transformation from friendship to enmity is witnessed by the broader community. This aspect is directly emphasized in the text:

Pálma-Tóki svarar: „Oft hefi ek þér eftirlátr verit, fóstri, ok ef þér þykkir þat þinn vegr meiri at ek segja þér þat í allmiklu fjölmenni heldr en svá at færi sé hjá, þá skal þat veita þér. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 64)

Pálnatóki answers: “I have often been obedient to you, foster-son, and if you think it does you more honor that I tell you in the presence of a large crowd rather than with few present, then I must grant you that. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 109)

This type of public interaction is an important element of relationships based on contextual loyalty. Such relationships are always defined by some form of contract, which is not unchangeable, but can be altered if the circumstances require it. The presence of witnesses in a public space validates the change and legitimizes the ensuing enmity. Instead of presenting either of the characters as a traitor, this section of the saga illustrates the complexity of power relationships in a society where loyalty is contextual and multiple power factions exist. In such a situation, it is impossible to be loyal to more than one ruler or royal pretender at once, so one must choose a side, which inevitably leads to enmity with the opposing side. The circumstances may later cause a dispute even between the original allies, so the ties of loyalty are broken, because they are never absolute or unconditional.

Due to the social significance of feasts as public events, the motif of a feast also serves as a structuring element in the narrative, creating a contrast between the scene discussed here and a scene in the following chapter, which has the same structure, but the opposite outcome. After his escape from Denmark, Pálnatóki undertakes a Viking raid in Vindland, the area around the southwestern coast of the Baltic, which is described as a kingdom ruled by King Búrizláfr (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 13). The initial relationship between Pálnatóki and the king is one of enmity, but in order to prevent the raid, the king invites Pálnatóki to a feast and offers him an alliance:

[...] þá sendir konungr menn sína á fund hans ok býðr Pálma-Tóka til sín ok lézk vildu eiga við hann frið ok vinfengi. Þat lét hann ok fylgja þessu heimboði at hann bauð at gefa honum eitt fylki eða ríki af landi sínu, þar er heitir at Jómi, til þess at hann skyldi þar staðfestask, ok mundi hann þetta ríki gefa honum einkum til þess at hann skyldi þá vera skyldbundinn til at verja land ok ríki með konunginum. Ok þetta þiggr Pálma-Tóki ok allir hans menn, at því er sagt er. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 67)

[...] the king sends his men to meet him and invites Pálnatóki to meet him and said he wanted to keep peace and friendship with him; he also made it go along with this invitation that he offered to give him a district or domain of his land, the place called Jóm so that he could establish himself there, and he would give him that domain especially so that he should be obliged to defend the land and kingdom for the king. And Pálnatóki accepts this, and all his men, according to what is told. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 110)

This is a parallel of the previous episode, but the change of the relationship goes in the opposite direction, from enmity to alliance. The public nature of the invitation and the precise formulation of the agreement again underline the idea that the alliance between the king and the chieftain takes the form of a contract. The king does not ask the Viking leader to swear him oaths of eternal loyalty, he only offers him land in return for military defence, but the chieftain chooses to be loyal to him because he respects him and can benefit from the alliance. As a comment on real power relations at the time of the saga's composition, this may be applied more broadly and refer

not just to this particular type of exchange, but to the contractual nature of power relations in general: both sides provide something and gain something in return, and their loyalty to each other is based on their willingness to further each other's interests.

The mutuality of the relationship between Pálnatóki and King Búrizláfr is again highlighted in the scene depicting Pálnatóki's death (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 24). On his deathbed, he discusses the future of the brotherhood with the king and advises him to choose Sigvaldi as the next leader of the Jómsvikings, although he does not believe that anyone will be a better leader than himself. The king's reply shows his appreciation of Pálnatóki:

Konungr svarar þá: „Oft hafa oss þín ráð vel gefizk,“ segir hann, „ok skal þetta enn hafa er þú hefir til lagt, ok mun oss þat öllum bezt gegna, en þat er ugganda at nú myni eigi lengi þín við njóta eða þinna ráða, ok er oss at skyldara at hafa it síðarsta. Ok skulu standa öll in fornu lög, þau er Pálna-Tóki hefir sett við hygginna manna ráð hér í Jómsborg.“ Svá er sagt at Sigvaldi var þess ekki einkar traudr, ok gengr hann undir þetta er á hendr honum var lagt með ráði Búrizláfs konungs ok Pálna-Tóka. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 88)

The king answers then: “Often your counsels have turned out well for us,” he says, “and we will go on keeping to what you have proposed, and that will suit us all best, but it is to be feared that you and your counsels will no longer serve us, and we are all the more obliged to heed the last of them. And all the old laws that Pálnatóki established in consultation with intelligent men here in Jómsborg are to remain in force.” It is said that Sigvaldi was not especially unwilling for this, and he takes over what was assigned to him by the agreement of King Búrizláfr and Pálnatóki. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 124–125)

This scene emphasizes the importance of mutual respect and trust between the monarch and the chieftain. Their relationship is presented as one in which an awareness of hierarchy is present, but not in the sense that the chieftain would be obliged to passively obey the monarch's commands. Pálnatóki presents his advice to the king with an honest intention to serve the king's interests as best he can. The king accepts his advice because Pálnatóki's counsels have often turned out well for him, so he feels obliged to heed them – that means that the king respects the chieftain because of his wisdom and accomplishment. They are both loyal to each other because they genuinely believe that the other is worthy of loyalty and that their relationship is mutually beneficial. That is an essential element of contextual loyalty. The idea of mutuality is further underlined by the formulation that Sigvaldi “takes over what was assigned to him by the agreement of King Búrizláfr and Pálnatóki” – his appointment is clearly presented as a decision taken by the king and the chieftain together.

Pálnatóki's successor Sigvaldi is more daring in his relationship with King Búrizláfr, but he can hardly be regarded as disloyal. He asks for the king's daughter Ástríðr in marriage, which is a bold claim, but he presents it directly and honestly (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 26). Again, the saga highlights the contractual nature of the agreement they finally reach in this matter, that Sigvaldi will receive the bride if he manages to rid Búrizláfr of the duty to pay tribute to the Danish king:

[...] ok binda þau þetta síðan fastmælum með sér, ok skal fram komit vera fyrir in þriðju jól. En ef Sigvaldi kemr eigi þessu fram sem nú var skilit með þeim þá skulu mál þeira öll vera laus. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 90)

[...] and then they make a firm agreement between them, and it has to be achieved before the third Yule. And if Sigvaldi does not achieve what has just been stipulated among them then all their agreements will be cancelled. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 126)

Sigvaldi fulfils the condition by tricking King Sveinn into marrying Búrizláfr's other daughter and giving up the tribute in return, making him believe that the other princess is a finer bride than Ástríðr, which is not true. King Sveinn soon realizes that Sigvaldi has tricked him, but decides to keep his resentment hidden while he is in Vindland in the presence of his father-in-law (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 26).

The relationship between King Sveinn and Sigvaldi remains seemingly friendly, and the king offers Sigvaldi to help him arrange a funeral feast when his father dies. The parallel scenes in the saga already lead the audience to an expectation of a shift in the relationship at the feast, which is further foreshadowed in the text by a reference to public opinion:

Petta sýndisk flestum mönnum órálligt, at þeir fœri þangat, ok grunuðu at vinátta þeira Sveins konungs ok Sigvalda mundi vera heldr grunn ok þeira allra saman, Jómsvíkinga, þannig sem farit hafði fyrr með þeim viðskiptin, þótt þeir léti þá hvártveggju skyldiliga við aðra. En Sigvaldi ok Þorkell hávi vilja ekki annat en fara sem þeir höfðu heitit. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 96)

It seemed to most people unwise for them to go there, and they suspected that the friendship of King Sveinn towards Sigvaldi was rather weak, and towards all the Jómsvikings altogether, considering what had happened in their previous dealings, though each behaved dutifully towards the other; but Sigvaldi and Þorkell hávi would have nothing other than to go as they had promised. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 130)

This comment draws attention to the contradiction between pretended politeness and concealed enmity. It implies that the king refuses to take revenge in secret and waits for an opportunity to do so in the public space of the feast. During the feast, King Sveinn gets Sigvaldi drunk and makes him swear a heroic oath that he “shall have driven Jarl Hákon out of the land, or else killed him”, and the other Jómsvikings swear not to leave Sigvaldi or each other in the battle (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 27). This is a nearly impossible task, which is likely to lead to Sigvaldi’s defeat. Again, the public nature of the oaths makes them binding, but at the same time, the saga shows that Sigvaldi soon realizes he has been tricked by King Sveinn. That means that the interaction at the feast marks a transformation in the relationship between the king and Sigvaldi, and genuine loyalty cannot be expected to develop between them.

The Jómsvikings attack Norway and encounter the fleets of Jarl Hákon and his sons at Hjörungavágr (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 28–35). In the battle, “the bravery and deeds of neither side can be questioned. And it is said that it was an equal fight between Sigvaldi and the jarls, so that neither side let their ships draw back”. The heathen Jarl Hákon then sacrifices one of his younger sons to his demonic patron, Þorgerðr Höfðatroll, so that she interferes in the battle, and the Jómsvikings stand no chance against her demonic power. Sigvaldi decides to leave the battle because he believes that under the given circumstances it will not be a breach of his oath:

Enda er þat til kostar, at eigi flýju vér fyrir mönnunum, þótt vér haldim undan. Ekki strengðu vér þess heit at berjask við troll. (*Jómsvíkinga saga*: 122)

Indeed, we have the excuse that we are not fleeing from men if we take our leave. We swore no oath to fight against monsters. (*The saga of the Jómsvikings*: 147)

Most of the Jómsvikings flee from the battle, because their oath has been to never leave Sigvaldi, so they believe that they are not breaking any oath. Only the extremely heroic Vagn Ákason with some companions continue to fight until they are defeated and captured. Some of them are beheaded, but the jarl’s son is so impressed by their bravery that he gives mercy to Vagn and his remaining men and sets them free, and they return to Denmark.

This final section of the saga is full of exaggerations in the style of the legendary sagas, and the presentation of the events is of course simplified, as the legendary motif of heroic oaths is used instead of socio-political explanations of the circumstances that led to the Jómsvikings’ attack on Norway. This motif is an element of a highly fictionalizing narrative mode, but in this case it not only does not prevent efficient expression of social commentary, but even contributes to it. The episode shows that the oath, which is also a type of contract, does not fulfil its purpose because it is not based on genuine respect and faithfulness between the two parties. That way, the episode presents an indirect comment on the limits of contextual loyalty.

The dominant narrative technique employed in expressing these ideas is a combination of parallel and contrast. First, there is the relationship between Pálnatóki and the kings Haraldr and Sveinn, which ends in failure because it is disrupted by a combination of political rivalry and

family bonds between the two kings. This sharply contrasts with the successful alliance between the Jómssvikings and King Búrizláf, which benefits both parties and is based on genuine mutual respect. That is again contrasted with the oaths sworn by Sigvaldi to King Sveinn, which are a result of trickery and do not establish genuine loyalty because they are only formal and are not accompanied by a true intention to support each other. In the narrative, the contrasts are emphasized by the structural similarity of the episodes. The decisive scenes show how the initial relationship between two characters turns into its exact opposite during a feast, a socially significant event due to its public nature. This public declaration officially turns real or pretended friendship into enmity or vice versa. Such structural parallels draw attention to the opposite outcomes of the transformation in the individual episodes.

These contrasts are not likely to mean that the saga criticizes Danish kings and praises the Baltic ones specifically – that would make little sense in context of the positive depiction of King Sveinn discussed in the preceding section, and the story contains too much legendary exaggeration to be interpreted so literally. Instead, the text can be regarded as expressing a general conceptualization of contextual loyalty in an attempt at capturing various nuances of a complex social phenomenon. The saga shows the advantages of power relations based on contextual loyalty, highlighting the importance of mutually beneficial relationships between monarchs and chieftains. At the same time, however, it also illustrates the limitations of contextual loyalty by showing that purely contractual obligations do not always serve their purpose and often fail to establish functional power relationships unless they are based on a deeper foundation of mutual respect and genuine willingness to cooperate. Furthermore, the saga emphasizes the inevitability of unstable political loyalty in a society split by rivalry between several royal factions, contrasting it to the peace and order in a kingdom ruled by one strong monarch. All these ideas were probably applicable to the social situation in the North at the time of the saga's composition.

Conclusion: The memory of the past as a mirror of the present

It has been shown here that *Jómssvíkinga saga* deals with two central themes: the character of royal rule and the concept of “contextual loyalty”. Assuming that the saga was originally composed at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it was created during a time of long-term conflicts among multiple royal pretenders and their factions in Norway (see Bagge 2010: 40–66), and a time of intense power concentration and increasing violence in Iceland (see Sverrir Jakobsson 2016: 83–212). It is likely that the social dynamics of power and the limits of loyalty were important concerns in the North at the time, so the saga serves as a commentary on various aspects of the tumultuous political situation around the time of its composition.

In conceptualizing these themes, *Jómssvíkinga saga* employs two essential narrative techniques: the use of dialogue and direct speech on the one hand, and of contrast on the other hand, as structuring elements. These narrative techniques enable the double function of the saga as an entertaining story and as social commentary. The present analysis of their function in this early saga shows that their purpose is not purely literary – to make the story more lively –, but that they also significantly contribute to expressing ideas about political relationships. They participate in constructing a specific memory of the distant past and in connecting this memory of the past to issues that were significant to the society in which the text was composed.

In context of the development of saga literature, it is of interest that *Jómssvíkinga saga* shares its central themes as well as its dominant narrative techniques with the “classical” kings' sagas. That is not to suggest that the saga belongs within the genre of kings' sagas, as it is too modally mixed to belong within any single genre. It is, however, likely that *Jómssvíkinga saga* represents an early stage in the development that later led to the formation of the genre of kings' sagas. It may have been an important early attempt at composing a written text that combines material from oral tradition with literary techniques to create a specific memory of the past that also serves as social commentary on the present.

Acknowledgements

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Fettered by feathers: The bird transformations of Völundr and Óðinn

Jan Kozák, Charles University in Prague

The Story of *Völundarkviða* and Óðinn's theft of the Mead of Poetry share many features: both contain first an attempt at reaching the goal through hard work, followed by resorting to trickery. Both heroes undergo snake metamorphosis when they enter the hall of their antagonist – Óðinn literally, Völundr symbolically (as his hamstrings are cut he “loses his feet”). Both heroes seduce a woman and immediately after the seduction scene they don wings and fly away.

The bird transformation has many analogues in geographically close cultures, especially in narratives from western Siberia, but also from classical Antiquity (the Daedalus myth), and these analogues can shed light on the symbolic potential of the transformatory motif. However we must read the two analogous myths primarily in the context of the Old Norse mythological symbolic system. Within the system they could be characterized as a initiatory scenario.

In my paper I am going to present a series of motifs that connect both myths with cosmological and cosmogonic images and shed light on the symbolic connotations of the sequence of episodes of the two initiatory narratives. I will show that the common elements of the two myths make up a oppositional structure of rejection-acceptance, hard work-trickery and snake-bird that makes the progression imbued with values and meanings for the audience sharing the eddaic cosmology.

The death year of Óláfr Eiríksson and its influence on the dating of Yngvarr's expedition

Annett Krakow, Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach

In three Icelandic annals, the death of a certain Yngvarr víðförli is mentioned in the entry for 1041. Most likely, this information is based on *Yngvars saga víðförla* (Ysv). Although the saga's oldest manuscripts date from the 15th c., it seems possible that the saga was composed before 1200 (Hofmann 1981). It is generally assumed that the saga's title protagonist is modelled on a historically verifiable person, who is mentioned in c.21-26 runic inscriptions (Fuglesang 1998; Larsson 1999). The year of Yngvarr's death in the annals has been adopted by a number of historians and runologists to approximately date the expedition and the runic inscriptions commemorating the men who travelled with Yngvarr. However, the runestones' relatively plain ornamentation seems to suggest that they must be older (Wessén 1960), but few are willing to fully reject a dating to c.1040 (Fuglesang 1998).

In my paper, I would like to consider the impact that the different traditions concerning the death year of Óláfr Eiríksson exert on the dating of Yngvarr's expedition. According to Ysv, Óláfr was still alive when Yngvarr left the realm of the Svear. My starting point is an observation by Brocman and Olson that the saga's chronological framework is obviously based on Adam of Bremen's dating of the king's death (in 1039, following Schmeidler's calculation). In contrast to Adam, *Heimskringla* and Icelandic annals date Óláfr's death to the early 1020s. Taking into account this other tradition, a reconsideration of the chronological framework of Ysv would suggest that the expedition and Yngvarr's death should be dated to the years around 1020. I will also address objections raised against a dating of the 'Yngvarr stones' to the 1010s/1020s.

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Språk- og kulturmøter i østerled

Gunhild Kværness, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN University)

Den 17. mai 2021 ble utstillingen “Norway and Estonia through times” åpnet av Norges ambassadør i Estland, Else Berit Eikeland, og Estlands president, Kersti Kaljulaid. Denne utstillingen utgjorde en del av 100-årsjubileet for diplomatisk samarbeid mellom Estland og Norge, og i den forbindelse ble det lagt vekt på gode og sterke relasjoner mellom de to landene gjennom mange hundre år. I en kunngjøring fra Norges ambassade i Estland heter det: “Norway might be the only country with a king who knew how to speak Estonian. Olav Tryggvason must have learned Estonian at a young age” (Norges ambassade i Estland, 2021).

Alle som interesserer seg for nordisk middelalder og kongesagaene, erindrer Snorre Sturlasons korte beskrivelse av Olav Tryggvasons oppvekst i Estland (*Heimskringla*, 1900: 137). Snorre forteller også mangt og mye om andre norske kongers tilknytning til og opphold i Gardarike.

Det må ha vært en overveldende opplevelse, ikke minst språklig og kulturelt, for de norske kongene å komme til f.eks. Holmgard (nåværende Novgorod) for første gang. Ifølge middelalderhistorikeren Pavel Lukin hadde Holmgard for tusen år siden omlag 20.000 innbyggere – og var på størrelse med Roma, byen var større enn Paris og dobbelt så stor som London. Religionsviteren Øystein Morten beskriver også Aldeigjuborg (dagens Staraja Ladoga) som en kulturell smeltedigel: “Det er et yrende liv i havna. Av språk høres gammelrussisk og norrønt, men også finske dialekter og arabisk” (Morten, 2014: 175–176). Sosiolingvisten Gro Renée Rambo skriver at man gjerne har oppfattet språkkontakt og mobilitet som mer omfattende nå enn i middelalderen. Men i den forbindelse hevder hun at “den store handelen som pågikk fra tidlig tid i Østersjøområdet og Nordsjøområdet, har gjort at mange hadde en eller annen form for kompetanse i flere språk” (Rambø, 2010: 5).

Mitt foredrag vil være en gjennomgang av Snorre Sturlasons beskrivelser av norske kongers opphold i middelalderens Gardarike – med hovedvekt på møter mellom ulike språk og kulturer. Jeg vil også trekke inn nyere norsk forskning som stiller spørsmålstegn ved sannhetsgehalten i Snorres framstillinger (f.eks. Myrvoll, 2014). Kanskje var Olav Tryggvason aldri noen gang i verken Estland eller Russland?

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Hurtful words: Verbal and physical dimensions of wounding in Old Norse laws and sagas

Sean Lawing, Bryn Athyn College

The maintenance of honor and the avoidance of shame are defining aspects of the culture depicted in Old Icelandic sagas. Medieval Nordic lawbooks confirm this image though they are predominantly preoccupied with honor's inverse. Disgrace, or more precisely termed, the proscribing of actions committed *til háðungar*, to disgrace another, makes up a significant portion of them. Physical affronts range from the seemingly trivial, for example, tipping food on a person, to more grievous acts such as mutilation, wrongful forms of homicide, and corpse desecration. Verbal affronts are just as varied though the most potent form of contumely, plain-spoken or versified, makes use of unseemly epithets and allegations of salacious conduct. At the conceptual level, laws make little distinction between verbal and physical affronts and regard them with equal severity, providing outlawry as a remedy or the right to retaliate with violence and even kill. As William Ian Miller observes: "Verbal affronts and physical affronts were collapsed into a single general category of impingements on one's self and one's honor" (Miller 1993, 83). This paper delves into the phenomenon and explores the shared mechanics of insult and injury through the careful consideration of legal terminology and the analysis of contextualizing saga episodes. In contests of honor, one's social image could be damaged equally through verbal or physical violence. Wounds, in other words, could demonstrably act as insults just as insults could function and be felt as tangibly as wounds.

Birgitta: Study of her political and religious influence in the Baltic world in the 14th and 15th centuries

Ella Le Peltier-Foschia, Sorbonne University

In the *Revelations* French edition published in Belles Lettres, Régis Boyer (Boyer 2006) presents Birgitta with humility through her feminine characteristics as a woman of the world, spouse and mother. He highlights the authentic nature of this woman assuming her words and her roles, in the 14th century Swedish nobility. But especially, he insists on the fact that she “would have cumulate in her person all attributes of this Great Goddess or North Mother Goddess to who you always have to be referring, systematically, when you hear talk about great women of Scandinavia” (Boyer 2006: 9). In fact, Birgitta bears several attributes, which as a lot of works testified about it, makes her the 14th European century mystic that we know, characterized by the resurgence of different religious movement face with the social, political and daily conjuncture which affect medieval people, and which knew its high-top activity during the first plague wave between 1346 and 1351 (Southern 1997).

However, another aspect, just as essential in order to understand the figure that this mystic and her influence incarnated during her life at the end of the medieval era don't has to be omit; it is her attitude marked by a heritage (conscient or inconscient) of master women which animated Icelandic sagas, which always must be evocated when you want to study North women. Birgitta, who has always fascinated, became the object of different studies of quality essentially centered on the Saint character and the mystic through the historiographical renewal concerning gender studies and feminine power figures. We can quote Bridget Morris (Morris 1999, 2000 and 2015), Claire Sahlin (Sahlin 2002) and Päivi Salmesvuori's (Salmesvuori 2014) works on her power figure influence and about the *Revelations* diffusion. In 2018, Oslo doctoral school pursues this works perspective with enlarging question about Birgitta's influence with Italian humanist women. In the same way, symposiums organized about her saint character are common for twenty years now, the last one dated in November 2021, contributing to the renewal of the study with searchers with different topics specialty.

We could of course oppose the rich occidental writing sources about the mysticism to the weak sources, which highlight the Baltic world situation, but it would be forgetting that some of our testimonies (mostly composed in Latin language) are written by autochthones acculturated to occidental world, or still shared between their ancestral heritage and political, economic and military opportunities that roman faith presents. After Birgitta's *Revelations* study, we could think about *Erikskrönika* (Péneau 2005) and Olaus (Magnus 2004) and Johannes Magnus (Magnus 1617) writings, which brig precious information about political, religious and cultural situation in north European kingdoms. It needs consider too Johannes Budde (Dahlgren 1875) and Magnus Tavast (Juusten & Heinonen 1988) writings, who are the most noteworthy ecclesiastical personalities during in the Turku's 14th and 15th centuries, in the different Holy Saint Savor monasteries archives. We already have writings, in Latin and Germanic vernacular languages about Livonia and diverse Baltic world military-religious order missionary's enterprises like Henry of Livonia's *Chronical* or Hermann Wartberge's chronical. These sources, rather incomplete, are reused by author to offset their writings gap. They essentially concerned 12th to the beginning of the 14th century, but less concerned the period that we study, apart the Hermann Helewegh's *Scriptores Livonicarum*. In order to offset this gap, we must consult diverse *Libellii*, *missale* and prior books conserved by churches and communities around the Baltic Sea.

Our religious activities appreciations on the East Road are however confused and still complex due to the opposition that historians from nationalist historiography raised up against occidental Scandinavian Christians and east pagan converted by missionaries and military difficult enterprise. So, it seems necessary to be replace in a global historical perspective considering emanation and reception of Birgitta's words and influence around the Baltic Sea.

Several questions happened yet: the chronology of the Birgitta's influence diffusion to east in the Baltic world, a long time opposed against the roman faith, the one of the reasons about why her words and her order were accepted or rejected, and the one too about the conversion and the crusade (Runciman, Canal & Villeneuve 2013) which constitutes one of the political and religious central prize at the end of the middle age.

1. Birgitta: A medieval mystic of the North with a great influence during her life and after her death

As we can see on the "*Database of Networks and Texts in Renaissance Italy*" from the Oslo's University website, and the "*Digital Birgitta*"'s website, developed by Bergen's University researchers, there are a lot of work on Birgitta as a mystic and a female during the 14th European century. While she received many revelations during her life, her travel back from her pilgrim and her husband's death marked a huge step in her life: at this time, she received a lot of revelations and began to trust her vocation and her role in the time and the society of the 14th century. That's why she came back to the Swedish court in 1345 in order to bring the Lord's Word loudly with a threatening and affectioning intonation. Despite Turku's bishop Hemming support, she didn't succeed to overcome Magnus' inertia, courtiers' hypocrisies and church men's bad behaviors. Tired, she decided to leave Sweden and decide to create the Order of the Holy Savior in Vadstena as consolation prize (1347). She went to Avignon, where she discussed with the pope Clement VI, who refused to recognize her monastical institution. While she was bowing in front of this decision, she is moving in Roma where she died in 1373. She preached from 1350 to her death in Roma, Naples, Nicosia, Famagouste and even in the Holy Land in Jerusalem. Her body went back to Sweden on July 4th 1374 on her child's Catherine and Birger wishes.

In her figure, Birgitta represented the power of the Mother, the Virgin whose substituted to the Father's power, but also the wife's power too because she defends for an inside and outside mirror effect in her Christlike *Revelations* (Boyer 2006), which permit her to advocate the feminine condition in virginity and widowhood. As K. E. Børresen (Børresen 2000) wrote, Birgitta asked the Christian's masculinism in certain limits when she called into question the Christian's male archetype: so, why God and particularly the Christ, chose to talk to her whether she wasn't at the same time a mother and a wife faced with the virtue, the malevolent and the death during her life? That's also one of the reasons why her judgement on the women's behavior is inseparable from her obsessive paradigm, which always egg her to measure the gap between the referential preservation and the criticize profanation. She considered that the Virgin's virginity is good while the "Eve's girls" (Boyer 2006: 22) as she named them, who are excluded from a respectable filiation due to an ordinary birth, wear a sin weight and are put aside in the dementia's side, which she compares to mares. For Birgitta, all women have to be in control of themselves. She has a mother behavior, which decrees this life discipline, which is for her the guarantee of a great education, as the saga's women had to assure the good process of the domain when their husbands were absents. However, it's important to highlight something topical from her time, because she considered education as an important aspect in her life and for her children.

In her *Revelations* (Boyer 2006), we can see her wish to forward the knowledge in what she says because anything can bring the knowledge for other aspects (Searby 2006: I,1):

Therefore it has pleased God, by his great mercy and by the requests of his friends, to call you by the Holy Spirit, in order to see, to hear and to hear spiritually, and to reveal to others what you would have heard in the spirit, according to the will of God.

This is referring to the woman archetype in the eddic and skaldic poetry, which play an important role as a clairvoyant (*völva* in the *Völuspá* (Wessén 1969)), warrior in the cycle of the heroic's poems and, particularly, a fated creature or norn. While these women could be seer or visionary, Birgitta is a mystic who tell with method a large scale of manifestation, as an

alchemical and theosophical perspective. She is the feminine tracing of the tutelary figure imposed by the Scripture's veterotestimonial model (Wessén 1969: 19). She venerates the Fathers of the Church and knows their books. She takes in the patristics' texts, particularly Ambrose's texts, her instinct's validation. She received visions since she was a child, that's why she manifested the need to confirm them with her confessor because she was scared that malign took possession of her; and at her husband's death in order to support her Words with an authority to fight evil. For this, she uses analogy in order to get up to speed with the human malignity. She gives signs and symbols (Boutet 1993) with by pure messianism, following Saint Augustin's *Poétique* in the signs' codification (Seuil 1975).

Nevertheless, this influence is her entourage's support result too, which trusted her *Revelations* and were available to consign them. Peter Olofsson, Alvastra's abbey prior, whom she knew during her travel back from her Saint Jack of Compostela's pilgrimage, was the first who consign her revelations and translate them in Latin, which she learned around 1353 while she lived in Roma in order to be better understood. This was followed by Skeminge's hospital chaplain. Finally, since 1348, Alphonso of Vadaterra, erstwhile Jaen's bishop in Andalousia, finished the *Revelations* (Boyer 2006: 19) translation and their shaping in the version we have today yet. There is no intellectual process in her work, it's an eight books work composed by orisons, liturgical lessons, Saint Augustin's Rule for the nun's behavior in the Order of the Holy Savior and a book of extravagant revelations wrote after her death on her confessor's souvenir. A major part of her work constituted a singular and spiritual heritage outcast, of which its discover shake the indifference of whom read it carefully. It's on these arguments that her disciples reached to convince the pope Boniface IX to canonize her on October 7th 1391, whose glorified her fighting in this monumental corpus of revelations which defends her Christian fervor magnificently.

Despite her growing and durable influence, and partisans too, Birgitta knew opponents and detractors too. This is not surprising, given that she didn't hesitate to condemn and excoriate the greats of her time, and the monasteries clerics as the papal curia. She prophecies against her time abuses in the book of the *Extravagant Revelations* (Searby 2015: VIII, 8). She even advises the pope to how take control of the Rome's reconstruction by the papacy, the Saint Peter States' seat and the Christianity's capital. She criticizes the *Vrbs* abandon by the popes and press Urban V, as a lot of people of her time, to return to the apostolical seat of the Eternal City. She does it with a fervor and a force worthy as saga's women, who can hold some magical powers. She is a motherhood sovereign who proclaims the feminine primacy, as just as the sagas' women by the woman power unveiling, which is expressing in front of pain and death. From the beginning of her work, and in sources which mentioned her, like in the Icelandic's sagas, she is presenting by her ascendancy from the Swedish royal family by her mother. This ascendancy allows her to be familiar with the greats of her time, as popes and sovereigns. Educated as a Nordic noble woman of her time, Birgitta can read, write and has a knowledge about the political and religious questions of her time. She affords to be able to hold the male sex and give her advice with conviction and force (Boyer 2008). It could be possible that Clement VI refused to recognize her order for these reasons (Chélini 1968). However, apart rare exceptions, politic is a men business and women conserved a different position as man position, as Birgitta respects it when she is respecting the wedding dogma. Woman is a good collaborator for her husband, the complementarity of their functions is an evidence. That's why too she submits Clement VI's decision to not recognize her order, without renunciate to her own mission. As just as the woman in the realistic sagas' texts, she is exalting for her wisdom. Despite her several petitions and the testimonies of Birgitta's influence during her life, she achieves her objective several decades after, while she is knowing other oppositions. In her own kingdom, several nobles whose she excoriated mores, saw her as a hysterical woman, familiar with grime, incense and sex maniac, especially after her husband death. Some people didn't accept this woman emancipation, such as the curial members, whose she call to order to their vicar duties.

2. The Baltic world is a central area for the roman faith since several centuries

Commercial road, the Baltic sea's harbors always were a central place in the economical exchanges between West and East (Balard 2016). German shopkeepers always played an essential role near the Baltic's missionaries during High Middle Age and the 12th and 13th centuries. A Germanic cities network in the Hanseatic trade is structured since the 10th century. This region, and especially the north-oriental part is very interesting for the Scandinavian powers because the Finnish territory is well away from the principal road to Russia. After many evangelization campaigns during those two centuries, Sweden imposes its domination on the Finnish territory since 1249. Finnish territory become a Swedish province which is linked with the occidental world by the roman faith's adoption, the social, economic, cultural and administrative development which permit to it to progressively reach a cultural level equal to occidental countries level. However, it's stayed a buffer state between Swedish and Russian powers. Incursions happened in the country by the two powers, causing several disasters until the Pähkinäsaari peace accord signature in 1323 – impulse by the Hanseatic league – which conduct to the peninsula's sharing. After that, Finland had a peace period which reinforced Christianity in population stayed pagan until mid-14th century, adopting progressively the Swedish way of life. As the 20th century historiography said under Winter and Kuhn impulsions, evangelization and creation of a monastical institution network constitutes a support to the territorial enterprise. As Krötzl (Krötzl 2003: 19-22) said, religious orders played a trans-European role in the institutional powers development, within the first place, the Cistercian order is seen by James France as the holders of the major wave of the roman faith. They played a role in the Swedish and Danish expansions, and in the German expansion in the Baltic countries. So, Tamm's works (Tamm 2016: 365-389) and Strenga's works (Strenga 2020: 212-231) about Livonia shew that the study of this orders networks periphery is actual. In fact, during this same time, Livonia is dominated by a struggle between the Teutonic order, who had for seat Marienbourg (Chaunu 1995) since 1308, and a Lithuanian power born in reaction to the Teutonic's progression.

Birgitta's influence is include in the penetration of the Writing power reached by the Church power in the Swedish kingdom. As it, the *Epistola solitarii ad reges* written by Alfonso circulates in the North. In Scandinavia, the sovereign alliance with bishops was permanent during the 14th and 15th centuries. Contrary to the centuries before, there are no violent struggles with the papal power because bishoprics are led by nobles protected by the king, or religious men imposed by the papal curia. In fact, Baltic's regions, and especially Finland, joined the cultural writing era late, between the 10th and the 13th centuries with the Christianity expansion. The roman faith circulates between the 11th and the 14th centuries. The writing culture has a great ideological power because it allows to determinate the community's interpretation of the reality; and the holders are Christianity and Church. During the 14th century, national monarchies being reinforced. Scandinavian and Baltic regions states are dominated by nobles, while real power is taken by a magnates oligarchy structured in rival clans. Kings have few ways, they exploited their land and regalian laws where feinting and mines are primordial. Even magnates and papacy, kings tried to control rich national churches They give advantages to the little nobles in order to balance magnates power. They tried to keep together crowns and territories in order to multiply economical resources against nobles who pretend to defend national crowns interests. The real power was led by the little nobility locally, where the Church ideological, administrative and political functioning is a model for these kingdoms. Church expertise and its occidental domination, especially in economical business, permit to it to get inspiration in order to collect taxes. As papacy, Swedish and Danish kings began to gradually increase and significative way, their property, and by the seizure and expropriation resources. It's the beginning of a systematical installation of Swedish colonies on Ostrobothnian and Finland gulf coasts, which contributed to modify traditions and increase economically the country. Cities appeared like Porvoo, which received its "communal chart" in 1347. In order to reinforce its influence and assures an effective province's defense, Swedish constructed different fortresses,

which episcopal Kuusisto's castle is a great example. House of influent catholic lord Turku's bishops (Le Calloc'h 2018), this castle shows the Swedish desire to prevent invasions from Russia by the Karelian isthmus. Many bishops are Finnish, participated to the traditions transformation in Swedish political, social and linguistic traditions. Swedish language become the second language after Latin and before Finnish in the country. Swedish circulates in population from the high cultivate levels of the society, who take Scandinavian names and stop to speak Finnish. Birgitta's *Revelations*, originally presented in Swedish when she told them to the Scandinavian nobility in the kingdom curia or through letters, an essential element of writing culture, permit to diffuse her influence at the same time as the Swedish language: "Now let them behave in this according to the advice of the wisest, for it is not a sin to retract wisely what has been begun and attempted indiscreetly" (Searby 2015: VIII, 11). It's the same thing for her confessions, reported by her confessor after her death. As Latin is the first language in the Baltic sphere, a lot of people received her words.

3. A spiritual war needs a Christ's athlete

The 14th century was marked by the wish to purify the roman faith from its disorders and heresies. In this context, Clement VI wished to actualize the crusade, but the war between the French and the English crowns took away any possibility for a military enterprise. The pope stayed in Avignon, worked towards the reconciliation between the French and English crowns as a clever diplomatic man and a preacher as he was. His successor, Innocent VI pursued Jean XXII's work with important funding moneys for the Roma's reconstruction where disorders remain. During her visit in Avignon, Birgitta stressed Clement VI for his return on Saint Peter's throne without any effect. Established in Roma since 1350, where she founded the Holy Saint Savor Order, she was conscious about the City's conditions/state and the papal condition, which were weakened and in part dependent on the French kingdom power peripeties in which it was. Several 14th writers and mystics testimonies revived this idea of an absence of the *caput mundi* in Roma.

The religious conversion history of Sweden, Finland and Estonia could be perceived as the history of the victory of a new reality's interpretation as it was presented in the medieval legitimacy's speech. Birgitta presents it in the *Revelations* when she asks herself on good and evil and advocates the heretics conversion. In fact, at the end of the 14th century, based on the occidental powers model, social levels were constructed with less differences than elsewhere. While noble level was constituting, bourgeoisie is emerging. But, the ideology's acculturation is really diverse: while in the Baltic's north, this integration is really strong, Estonia and Livonia (Lehtonen, 2007 : 11-19), both dominated by a military power, know a slow and incomplete integration. In this context, Uppsala and Copenhagen universities were respectively founded in 1477 and 1478 in order to contribute to accentuate their Churches originality, singularized by their customs. Turku/Åbo, founded by the Swedish power is then subordinate to Uppsala, while Danish began Christian missions with mitigated results in order to Christianized step by step the north-east of the Baltic world. During this catholic time, bishops are the most popular people, as the famous Magnus Tavast (died in 1452), which made the city as a great cultural center.

Then, when she founded the Holy Saint Savor Order, Birgitta advocated the acceptancy of everyone in her Order, in order they enter in the roman faith and fight heresy. This opening permitted by Saint Augustin's Rule, constitutes a transmission symbol tainted by political messianism. The Baltic World, split between different powers, rejected more this one, preferring its ancestral traditions in the middle of struggles (Genet, 2004). Saint Augustin's Rule reflected Birgitta's desire to bring knowledge, to not reject any potential Order's believer (especially Eve's daughters) in order to create unity. As Saint Augustin authorized his Order's believers to eat meat because Bible doesn't forbid it, Birgitta bring men and women to ask themselves on good and evil in order to adopt a life rule which looks right. From this point, there is not astonishing that Sweden had three monasteries (Dujsholm, Falun and Vadstena) just after Birgitta's death, Denmark had two (Maribo in the Sjælland in 1416 and Mariager in Midtjylland in 1446), while Finland, under Swedish domination had Naantali near Turku since 1443, Estonia

had Pirita's monastery nearby Tallinn since 1407, which was and is still the larger in Europe. The Master Word of her *Revelations* and her conversion's mode uses "mediation". The different monasteries foundations around the Baltic sea results from an acculturation, but especially a crusade desire manifests implicitly.

There is an outrageousness novelistic in her work, which gives a consent to the retirement. As a mother do, she sacrifices her strong forces to a creation of an extra-matrix bubble in her *Revelations* and in the foundation of her Order. There is a wish to render whatever the cost to the God infinity, beyond the life, mundanities extent and illusions, which was lend to her in order that she restitutes it by her weakness as a canal and a surpassing herself which conduct to heroism. This could be a trail in the comprehension of her influence in the 14th and 15th European centuries, and especially in the Baltic world. There is important to notice that this time is marked by conflicts which engaged great powers, universal plague, glacier little time, which reached every person to be placing in a solitary and solidary position with the other people of their time through eschatological fears which animated it. The 14th century religious movements were a attempt to channel, guide and express some popular religion elements which based their sources from some daily constraints while escape to the state power control. These movements, common at all Europe, Birgitta saw them and participated with preaching during her trips. Very quickly, her order which contain a double monastery appealed male and female believers. It's possible to ask the reasons with egg her order to appeal people not really interested in the roman faith. The fact that her Order's Rule is Saint Augustin Rule could be a good hypothesis to lead because this rule had caused several debates in French, Italian and English universities the century before. In fact, in a milieu like Sweden and the Baltic world, where the roman faith faced with difficulties to be establishing, it's possible to think that a freer rule than several religious order – even Mendicant orders – could appeal believers. The Swedish kingdom was converted to the roman faith for several centuries, essentially for political and economic reasons, but Catholicism still faced with difficulties to be definitely established due to the Scandinavian cultural heritage still really present (Le Calloc'h 2018).

Birgitta has always support the papal crusade desire, as when she supplied Magnus Eriksson to intervene in the Anglo-French conflict in order to permit to the papacy to obtain financial support to reconquest Latin territories; or to egg everyone to fight evil and heresy through her preaches and the foundation of her Order : "It is said that no one should be forced against his will to enter Heaven [...]. That is why those who go to the countries of the Infidels must first offer them peace, faith and freedom [...]" (*Revelations*, VIII: 40, 2 and 3).

Urban V, contrary to his predecessor Clement VI, saw the potential of the Holy Saint Savior order, which already knew a great success in Vadstena, to convert this Baltic World, whatever technics used by missionaries. So, her Order's recognition helps the diffusion of the Christianity on the Baltic coasts through the construction of great monuments as Porvoo's cathedral (1414-1418), Uskela's cathedral from where one of monks, Jöns Budde is the older writer knew in Finland, but the Nådendal's bridgettine monastery (Naantali today), Rauma's Franciscan monastery and Olavonlinna's castle near Savonlinna (1475) constructed in order to defend catholic people faced with East attacks. However, this acculturation of the roman faith isn't deprived from military force: while recognize the Holy Saint Savior Order, the pope Urban V recognized in 1366 Birgitta's military order. These knights are Bricians, wear a blue cross with eight points, and a fire tongue in order to signify that they must do charity to the others. Their duties were to bury dead peoples, protect widow and pupils and power state and religion against the barbarians. Birgitta enacted thirty-one rules chapters for this military order. However, her military order ended with her death in 1373 while the monasteries pursued to be establishing and gain influence until the Reformation in 1527, established by Gustav Vasa who re-established his power to Church's cost, which never had broken to it power for two centuries. Great monasteries were wrecked while connections with the pope were broken.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, whatever the quality for which she was considered: woman's world, mystic, hysterical woman, noble, faithful Christian, it's undeniable that Birgitta was a woman who didn't let indifferent her supporters and opponents. Through her mystical and Scandinavian woman character, she bears these heritages. Woman from the North, she bears the Icelandic women saga's strong character because she can go up against and excoriates the Great of her time, whichever their status and conditions of their bad acts. On the other hand, she bears the woman Christian heritage, which glorifying the Virgin, the spouse and the widow in their places and role in the 14th century. However, her influence is establishing where a lot of missionaries failed: the Baltic world. This place, accepts progressively Birgitta's faith with the foundation of the monasteries in the 14th and 15th centuries, that only the Reformation in 1527 modified while following the roman faith assimilation by the liberty supposed in the Holy Saint Savior Order. This order, recognized just before her death, appealed several believers and created a lot of conversion even though it was not yet officially recognized by the papacy, which lead to ask whether this order reached this success because of its Rule and its status. But, as Émilie Jamroziak highlighted in her article in august 2021 (e.g. Jamroziak 2021: 552), the monasticism historiography around the Baltic is currently revising for ten years now, reconsidering the place of the margins in the development of the occidental culture.

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***Fóstbræðra saga* and its author, Ingimundr Einarsson (†1170)**

Yves Lenzin

In the young 21st century, saga research has been characterised by a far-reaching criticism of older methods, an emphasis on the variability of the transmission, and both an interest in the oral roots of the sagas on the one hand and a focus on extant manuscripts on the other. However, when it comes to sagas of Icelanders, few of them have been thoroughly and unbiasedly analysed and re-evaluated with more viable sets of methods during these years. Also, the accentuation of the variability has led to an underestimation of the remarkable stability characterising the Icelandic manuscript transmission. Moreover, as a result of a lack of preoccupation with the motives for the textualisation of sagas, the outstanding role of the author of the first transcript in the process of the transmission of a saga has often been disregarded.

One of two sagas of Icelanders subjected to thorough and systematical analysis in my recent monograph *Isländersagas: Verschriftlichung und Politisierung* is *Fóstbræðra saga* (Lenzin 2021: 235–340), the manuscripts of which serve as good examples for the variability of saga transmission. Nonetheless, manuscripts of all classes – handed down from the 14th century and from the Early Modern Age – share much of the plot as well as certain peculiarities. And while reconstructing a written original remains, of course, impossible, associating these common features with one single source text ends up being the most plausible explanation again and again when assessing specific features and passages. The impression is reinforced by the observation that the unifying characteristics of the text all fit in the same picture when looking at them from a clearly defined historical perspective: In spite of all variation, the common basis of the many different versions of *Fóstbræðra saga* is strong enough for the character of the author of the written original as well as hints at his motives to become evident – even though he chose to tell a story rooted in oral tradition.

The dating of the textualisation of *Fóstbræðra saga* has been the subject of a long-lasting debate: A majority of scholars have tended to assign it to the early 13th century, whereas Jónas Kristjánsson argued for a textualisation after the end of the Icelandic Free State (Jónas Kristjánsson 1972: 144–310). While Jónas' line of argument has been seriously questioned (Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 162; Clunies Ross 2010: 67–69; Andersson 2000: 7, 2006: 69–70, 2012: 172–173, 2013: 72), the alternative hypothesis remains vague. As I demonstrate on the basis of an analysis of *Fóstbræðra saga* in the spirit of historical anthropology – thereby regarding the saga as a self-contained unit, under abstraction of modern ideas of genre – much more coherent explanations for the saga's peculiar features become available, if one allows for the possibility that it was first put into writing around the middle of the 12th century. The picture becomes even more detailed and lively, if the role of the creator of the written saga is assigned to Ingimundr Einarsson (ca. 1090–1170), priest and last exponent of the Reyknesingar clan. While I have to refer to my monograph to make my approach and reasoning comprehensible, I offer a run-through of the most important indicators for my thesis in my paper at the 18th International Saga Conference as well as in this accompanying article, thereby touching on aspects of form, content, and style on the one hand, aspects of mentality and lifeworld on the other.

One of the peculiarities of *Fóstbræðra saga* demanding an explanation is its Christian framing, exemplified by the following passage. Telling of events linked to the first decades after Iceland's formal Christianisation, the text of *Flateyjarbók* (ch. 75), in unison with the respective passages in *Möðruvallabók* and *Membrana Regia Deperdita*, states:

En þó at þá væri kristnir menn kallaðir, þá var þó í þann tíð ung kristni ok mjök vangör, svá at margir gneistar heiðinnar villu váru þá enn í venju margra manna.

After the prohibition of the connection of worldly and spiritual power issued by the archbishop of Nidaros in 1190, the Icelandic elite began losing its ties to the church, and the group of political leaders became purely secular within a generation's time. This group, as a whole facing

the church as their main political opponent, embraced the indigenous narrative tradition out of a desire to reinforce secular Icelandic identities. The elite of the 12th century, by contrast, had been much closer to the church; many political leaders had been priests at the same time. Aware of the church's disdain for the old traditions, they cultivated them with certain reservations. This was also the mindset of *Fóstbræðra saga's* author.

It is to be taken into account, too, that during the age of the Sturlungs, the “saga age” came to be perceived as a finished and bygone epoch. *Fóstbræðra saga's* author, however, turned to an audience that had not experienced historical ruptures separating their own time from the time of the events related in the saga; he thus felt the need to differentiate.

Another feature of *Fóstbræðra saga* that unsurprisingly has sparked much scholarly debate over the course of centuries is its often abrupt excursions into various fields of content not usually associated with sagas of Icelanders. The following passage, taken from *Flateyjarbók* (ch. 167) and present in an extended form in *Membrana Regia Deperdita*, may serve as an example:

Rómaborg létu gera tveir bræðr. Hét annarr Romulus, en annarr Remus. En er borgin var algör, þá urðu þeir missáttir, af hvárs nafni borgin skyldi heiti taka. Því réð Romulus Remo, bróður sínum, fjörrað ok drap hann. Þá var borgin kennd við Romulum, því at hon heitir Róma at bókmáli.

Since no other saga of Icelanders repeatedly ignores the usual textual limits of the genre that brashly, there is only one possible explanation for excursions like the one cited that does not lead to the characterisation of the author of the first transcript of *Fóstbræðra saga* as a complete outsider: It must be assumed that he lived and wrote at a time when saga writing was still a young and open field. Assigning his achievement to the time around the middle of the 12th century means that few books in Old Norse existed and lots of topics had not been touched upon in Old Norse yet when he set out to write; furthermore, the genres of Old Norse literature were yet undefined and he may have had no literary model for his work.

Stylistically, *Fóstbræðra saga* bears many features not associated with the popular Icelandic “saga style”. These have either been described as influenced by the learned style of the 12th century (Sigurður Nordal in the introduction to the saga in *Vestfirðinga sögur* [1943]: lxxvi) or by the courtly style of the second half of the 13th century (Jónas Kristjánsson 1972: 144–310). As these two styles have many similarities and are hard to distinguish, the argument may seem unsolvable at first. However, as Jakob Benediktsson has demonstrated, the stylistic element *cursus* is used heavily in the excursions discussed above (1974: 15–21). Somewhat paradoxically, it's Jónas Kristjánsson who has collected observations allowing for the conclusion that *cursus* only appears in association with the learned style and does not belong to the characteristics of the Icelandic courtly style (1981: 260–292). This means that other stylistic peculiarities belonging to the common basis of *Fóstbræðra saga's* versions also must be classed as features of a 12th century style. The appearance of *cursus* exclusively in the saga's excursions is due to the author only applying this literary device to passages with content derived from books, and not to the large portions derived from oral tradition.

Turning to the research object's form and structure and proceeding from the assumption that the literary genre of sagas of Icelanders developed out of oral traditions, *Fóstbræðra saga* is one of only few sagas that, assigning it to the beginning of the development, can serve to illustrate the hypothesis: The verses attributed to Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld form the backbone of the saga and authenticate all narrative units without exception (in the *Möðruvallahók* and *Membrana Regia Deperdita* texts, whereas *Flateyjarbók* omits some verses). The saga can thus be seen as the record of a commented and embellished recital of skaldic poetry: By memorizing the skaldic verses – which were designed for maximum memorability – the narrator could easily remember the plot of the story and keep the thread during free recitation, with the wording of the prose parts remaining variable. From a practical point of view, there is nothing against the theory that *Fóstbræðra saga* could have been performed orally in the early 12th century, similar in form to

the versions handed down in writing. The same could hardly be claimed for most other sagas of Icelanders which, in their surviving forms, bespeak dependence on literary models.

As Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson has pointed out to me in conversation, the evidence that a considerable part of *Fóstbræðra saga*'s narrative is located in Greenland further strengthens the idea of the saga's rootedness in the 12th century: The interest in, contact with, and knowledge about Greenland was still lively and widespread among Icelanders at that time, drastically diminishing soon after. Notably, of all sagas partly located in Greenland, *Fóstbræðra saga* is the one with the most realistic depiction of the territory. In terms of accuracy of geographic description, it even surpasses *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlendinga saga* (Grove 2009: 32–33, 44).

Finally, it is remarkable that *Fóstbræðra saga* seems not to draw on any other Icelandic saga at all (Andersson 2012: 173, 2013: 72). Some thematic overlap with *Helgisaga Ólafs Haraldssonar* is evident, however. Sigurður Nordal, in prototypical bookprose fashion, suggested the explanation that *Helgisaga* is partly based on *Fóstbræðra saga* via a lost intermediary text (1914: 146–150). Theodore Andersson, in contrast, has demonstrated the weakness of the literary relations and argued for the two sagas to be regarded as independent records of an oral tradition centered around the verses of Þormóður Kolbrúnarskáld (2013: 57–66). Agreeing with Andersson in that it is most unlikely that *Helgisaga* borrows the narrative elements it shares with *Fóstbræðra saga* from a written source, I nonetheless concur with Sigurður Nordal in that *Helgisaga* presents these elements in a corrupt manner. Other explanations for the overlap are conceivable: Was it a re-oralised version of parts out of *Fóstbræðra saga* that had been disclosed to the author of *Helgisaga*? Ultimately, the question cannot be answered. It is, however, noteworthy that no matter how one would like to explain the relation between *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Helgisaga Ólafs Haraldssonar*, one almost inevitably arrives at the conclusion that *Fóstbræðra saga* originates from an early stage in the development of the genre it's associated with; Andersson constitutes no exception (2013: 72).

Having thus reviewed the most important indicators for the 12th century roots of *Fóstbræðra saga* as a written work, let me touch on the signs pointing at the individual behind the first transcript. From my analysis and comparison of *Fóstbræðra saga*'s manuscripts (Lenzin 2021: 248–289), I deduce that the author had an interest in stories about skalds; she or he conceived an affection for the Reyknesingar family; she or he was an active Christian, probably a priest; she or he displayed an understanding of the concerns of the common people; she or he had a great interest in scholarly knowledge of all kinds; she or he was a great entertainer; she or he was given to humour and jokes. This amounts to a nuanced description of a very distinctive character. For comparison, see what *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* (ch. 3) relates about Ingimundr Einarsson:

Ingimundr prestr Einarsson, Arasonar, hann bjó á ættleifð sinni á Reykjahólum. Hann var vinsæll maðr ok þó nokkut févani ok var þó bæði örr af penningum ok it mesta stórmenni í skapi, sem æterni hans var til. Hann var skáld gott ok at mörgu inn mesti mætismaðr. Hann var enn frændi Þorgils Oddasonar, ok hann hafði gefit honum Reyknesingagoðorð, ok var þeira frændsemi allgóð. Ingimundr var fræðimaðr mikill ok fór mjök með sögur ok skemmti vel kvæðum ok orti. Góð kvæði gerði hann sjálf ok þá laun fyrir utanlands. Hann var ok góðr viðtakna, er vinir hans sendu honum vandræðamenn, ok sendi jafnan vel sér af hendi.

In chapter 10, the same saga tells us that *Ingimundr var [...] inn mesti gleðimaðr ok fekk margt til skemmtunar. Hann var inn vitrasti maðr ok helt sér mjök til vinsælda við alþýðu*. And as the chapter continues, we are informed that, at a wedding feast, *Ingimundr prestr sagði sögu Orms Barreyjarskálds ok vísur margar ok flokk góðan við enda sögunnar, er Ingimundr hafði ortan*.

The least one must admit is that Ingimundr Einarsson, if *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* portrays him truthfully, was a person very much like *Fóstbræðra saga*'s author in just about every respect. Of course, the historicity of information from a source like *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* cannot be taken for granted. There is, however, no tangible reason for doubt concerning the passages in question. Proceeding to take additional biographical and genealogical information about Ingimundr

Einarsson into account, a comprehensible motivation for him to have undertaken the effort of writing the saga becomes reconstructable (Lenzin 2021: 319–340). I therefore conclude that Ingimundr Einarsson is the author of *Fóstbræðra saga* in its original written form with great probability.

The consensus that no sagas of Icelanders were written before the turn of the 13th century has not been seriously contested for the period of several scholarly generations; one might therefore be categorically reluctant to accept the thesis of the putting down in writing of *Fóstbræðra saga* around the middle of the 12th century, seemingly out of the blue. However, accepting it can lead to a better understanding of the literary origins of the genre of sagas of Icelanders and of the development of its form and style. Question your potential reluctance by asking: Who would believe that works like *Íslendingabók*, *Fyrsta málfræðiritgerðin*, and *Veraldar saga* were all written during the 12th century, if we didn't know already with greater certainty?

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Esja, the fostermother in *Kjalnesinga saga*

Anne Lind, Oslo Metropolitan University

In several of the sagas of Icelanders there are references to people of gaelic origin and events that take place “fyrir vestan haf” (*Brennu Njáls saga*, *Laxdæla saga*). This points to a certain awareness in the Icelandic public of the thirteenth century of cultural contact between Icelanders and people on the British Isles and Ireland. But only one of the sagas of Icelanders devotes the whole plot to family groups who were “írskir”, namely *Kjalnesinga saga* put in writing around 1310-20 (Vésteinn Ólason 2005).

Another extraordinary feature about *Kjalnesinga saga* is that a fostermother, Esja, is the main character along with her fosterson Búi Andriðarson. In the sagas of Icelanders there are many motifs of fosterers, but they are usually part of a smaller section of the saga as for instance in *Egils saga*. Some of these fostermothers are also pictured as of gaelic origine like Álǫf kjannǫk in *Heiðarvíga saga*. Esja is the only fostermother explicitly Irish with her own household in the entire corpus who takes on the task of fostering a child (Lind 2016). Furthermore she and her fosterson take part in a conflict over religion with the heathen majority, a topic which is also very rarely treated as the main conflict in the sagas of Icelanders.

I see Cultural Memory Theory (Assmann 2006) as useful to understand the shift in public interest when it comes to the features of *Kjalnesinga saga* mentioned above. Assmann writes: Things may recede into the background and fade out of common interest and attention; others maybe recovered from the periphery and move into the center of social interest and esteem. Thanks to this interaction between (...) remembering and forgetting, cultural memory has an inbuilt capacity for ongoing changes, innovations, transformations, and reconfigurations (2006: 221)

On this background I will discuss if political changes like the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson's engagement with Ireland though the winter of 1263 could have sparked the interest in a saga about people coming from these parts of the Atlantic. And most of all why an Irish fostermother would be the obvious protagonist.

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Bones, back-breaking and magical creatures

Maria Cristina Lombardi, University of Naples 'L'Orientale'

Abstract

In the Old Norse literary world, many evil-doers (witches, magicians, monsters, etc.) were killed by breaking their backs. Examples are found in sagas, both in prose and skaldic stanzas: see *Bárðarsaga*, chapters 4 and 9, where respectively Svalr and Kolla are eliminated in this way, or *Friðþjófssaga*, chapter 6, where the two sorceresses Heiði and Hamgláma suffer the same fate. Some passages of the Old Testament writings (the terrible curses that Jeremiah proclaimed were thrown by the Lord against the idolatrous people of Judah concerning their bones (Jeremiah 8: 1,2) would seem to have something to do with the belief that men continued to dwell in their bones. Moreover, saints' bones have been preserved as relics endowed with healing power in churches of nearly all countries. Thus, a magical virtue was supposed to reside in bones in both Christian and in pagan times. This article aims to investigate the motif of 'back-breaking' as a means of destroying evil beings – which also appears to be rooted in Scandinavia – by investigating and comparing texts belonging to different genres and traditions (sagas, skaldic verses, charms, folktales), and trying to find and reconstruct common elements and patterns in order to discover the possible origin of the motif and how it spread in the Nordic literary tradition.

Breaking the backs of evil creatures seems to have been the most effective way to destroy them. The reason might be connected with the manipulation of bones, as can be deduced from archaeological excavations, which show that certain bones (both human and animal) were used as amulets since ancient times: small bones of the carpus and tarsus used to be perforated and worn as amulets.¹ This use has been associated with the belief in bones as the seat of the principle of life, sometimes coinciding with the marrow (as we will see later). The magical power of bones has been assumed to be a survival of primitive human conditions: like the need to predict the severity of the coming winter (such as the wide use of inspecting the breast-bone of a goose killed in a certain period of the year in some American regions)² or the so-called 'bonfire' tradition which seems to have originally been the compound 'bone-fire' which symbolized the animal or man burned in ancient sacrifices.³ In fact, the earliest recorded uses of this term date back to the late 15th century, with the *Catholicum Anglicum* spelling it as *banefyre* and John Mirk's *Book of Festivals* speaking of a communal fire in celebrations on Saint John's Eve, that was *clene bones & no wode & that is callid a bone fyre* "was clean bones and no wood and that is called a bone-fire".⁴

The early Christian Church had spread the belief in the efficacy of the saints' bones, and the idea of miraculous virtues supposed to reside in bones was widely accepted. The most common relics associated with the apostles and local saints renowned for working miracles across Europe were constituted by bones, the trade of which was one of the briskest and most profitable businesses in the Middle Ages. Moreover, the belief in the magical power of bones (to injure an enemy, believing that their magical power could be directed against foe) is also found in several prophecies, spells and curses (*Egils Saga*, chapter 60, when Egill took a horse's skull, fixed it on a pole and pronounced a curse against King Eiríkr and Queen Gunnhildr).

In some cultures (e.g. in the Jewish tradition, Jeremiah 8: 1,2) bones might be addressed by terrible curses like the one which Jeremiah proclaims against the idolatrous people of Judah:

¹ Brinton 1890: 18

² *Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, vol. ix, 146 (quoted by Brinton 1890: 17).

³ *Ibid.*: 109.

⁴ A bonfire was originally a 'bone-fire'. Bonfires are survive from an old tradition whereby large fires were set alight on public feast days. The bones of animals were burned in these fires as part of a purification ritual, warding off evil spirits and ensuring that the land would remain fertile (Merriam/Webster, s.v.).

their bones shall not be gathered or buried, but “shall be as dung upon the face of the earth.”⁵ The secret lying behind this cruel fury was the above-mentioned belief that the soul continued to dwell in the bones, and that their disturbance or destruction was considered a direct attack against individuals or their complete elimination, hindering any possibility of rebirth.

In the Old Norse tradition an interesting example, although only concerning a less significant bone, is provided by Snorri’s *Gylfaginning*, where Þórr’s magic goats are eaten in the night and reborn the day after. Snorri tells a story where Þórr and his companion Loki decided to stop at a farm in Miðgarðr to stay the night. The farmer and his family were very poor, and could not offer any food to Þórr, who had been known on more than one occasion to eat an entire ox. Therefore, Þórr decided to kill his two goats and cook them for dinner. Everyone was allowed to eat, but only on the condition that they did not break any of the bones, and that they threw them all onto the hides of the goats on the ground. Otherwise, the goats could not be reborn.

[...] Qkubórr fór með hafra sína ok reið ok með honum sá Áss er Loki er kallaðr. Koma þeir at kveldi til eins búanda ok fá þar náttstað. En um kveldit tók Þórr hafra sína ok skar báða. Eftir þat váru þeir flegnir ok bornir til ketils. En er soðit var, þá settist Þórr til náttverðar ok þeir lagsmenn. Þórr bauð til matar með sér búandanum ok konu hans ok börnum þeira. Sonr búanda hét Þjálfí, en Röskva dóttir. Þá lagði Þórr hafrstökurnar útar frá eldinum ok mælti, at búandi ok heimamenn hans skyldu kasta á hafrstökurnar beinunum. Þjálfí, sonr búanda, hélt á lærlegg hafrsins ok spretti á knífi sínum ok braut til mergjar.⁶

Qku-Þórr drove forth with his he-goats and chariot, and with him that Ás called Loki; they came at evening to a husbandman’s, and there received a night’s lodging. About evening, Þórr took his he-goats and slaughtered them both; after that they were flayed and borne to the caldron. When the cooking was done, then Þórr and his companion sat down to supper. Þórr invited to eat with him the husbandman and his wife, and their children: the husbandman’s son was called Þjálfí, and the daughter Röskva. Then Þórr laid the goat-hides farther away from the fire, and said that the husbandman and his servants should cast the bones on the goat-hides. Þjálfí, the husbandman’s son, was holding a thigh-bone of the goat, and split it with his knife and broke it for the marrow.⁷

The day after, the goats rose up, but one of them was lame in a hind leg. This proves the belief in the role bones had in preserving the immaterial life of creatures in every limb. Such an assumption has a real foundation in the durability of the osseous skeleton and its permanence, when the other soft parts have disappeared. Even in the Graeco-Latin tradition, we can observe spells enumerating individual organs and various bone structures ending with the marrow, considered the seat of life.⁸ And in the Talmud, not only did the Jewish writers recognize bones as the casket of the soul, but they also identified which bone was the seat of the vital substance. They maintained that such a particular bone was situated at one end of the vertebra, in the ossicle at its lowest extremity, called the coccyges, to which the learned Rabbi Joshua Ben Chanania gave the name “the Resurrection bone”.⁹ Therefore, breaking that very bone would mean

⁵ And they will [carelessly] scatter [the corpses] before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which [the dead] have loved and which they have served and after which they have walked and which they have sought, inquired of, *and* required and which they have worshiped. They shall not be gathered, or be buried; they shall be like dung upon the face of the earth. (Jeremiah, v8: 1, 2:

⁶ Snorri Sturluson (Faulkes, ed.) 2005: 37.

⁷ Snorri Sturluson (transl. Faulkes) 1997: 37-38.

⁸ Mirecki, Paul Allan/ Meyer 2002.

⁹ Hershon 1880: 295: “The Emperor Hadrian (may his bones be ground to powder, and his name stand accursed) once asked the Rabbi Joshua ben Chanania: ‘From what shall the human body be reconstructed when it rises again?’ The Rabbi replied, ‘From the little bone Luz, in the backbone.’ ‘Prove this to me’ demanded the Emperor. Then the Rabbi took the bone Luz and steeped it in the water, but it was not softened; he put it in the fire, but it was not consumed; he placed it in a mill, but it could not be ground; he laid it on an anvil, and smote it with a hammer, but the hammer broke, and the anvil was split in pieces.”

destroying the individual to whom it belonged, hindering his/her resurrection. The repeated attempts to definitively eliminate evil-doers by breaking their backbones found in some Scandinavian texts could suggest the existence of a similar belief in such a bone as the seat of life: a sort of ‘resurrection bone.’

In Old Norse poetry we encounter many examples of ‘back-breaking’ as the best way to get rid of a magical creature. Moreover, metaphors and kennings seem to confirm this idea, by transforming it into poetic tropes. One of the first examples occurs in *Pórsdrápa* (a mythological skaldic poem by Eilif Guðrunarson, 10th century) quoted in *Snorra Edda*, where the god Þórr kills two giantesses this way:¹⁰

Hofstjóri braut hvôru-
hreggs váfreiddar -tveggja
hlátrelliða hellis
hundfornan kjöl sprundi.

The temple-steerer of the hovering chariot of the thunderstorm [= Þórr] broke the age-old keel of the laughter-ship [BREAST > BACK] of both women of the cave [GIANTESSES].¹¹

This kenning is a complex *rekit* indicating the back of the two giantesses and containing a simple kenning referring to the giantesses’ breast (the laughter-ship). Its keel is a metaphorical term for ‘backbone’. Thus, a correspondence is suggested: as the keel runs along the bottom of a ship connecting the stem and the stern (defined as, on “a wooden or older steel ship, the keel extends the whole length of the vessel”),¹² likewise the backbone extends the whole length of the back connecting the neck to the hips. The double kenning expresses a metaphor based on both visual and functional grounds: the column of bones in the back encloses the spinal cord which runs along the chest and protects vital organs.

Worth noting in Cleasby–Vigfússon is the following definition of the compound *hrygg-brotinn*, ‘broken-backed’, examples are given in which an unhappy wooer is said to be *hryggbrotinn*,¹³ which suggests a correspondence between ‘broken-backed’ and ‘broken-hearted’, underlining a further important role of the *hryggr* ‘the back’ – and not only the chest – as a container of feelings and emotions.

The kenning emphasizes the backbone as the body-supporting structure by using the metaphor ‘laughter-ship’ for ‘chest’ and the metonymy *kjöl* ‘keel’ for ‘ship’. The keel is for the ship what the backbone is for an individual. The *rekit* hints also at a personification of the ship, by transforming an object, the keel, into part of an animate being and vice-versa the giantesses’ backbones into keels. Here two domains (animate and inanimate) exchange their qualities: by giving the inanimate object the aesthetic and intrinsic qualities of the living being: (energy, violence, fastness) and giving the animate element the features of the object (imposing build, length, strength, spatial extension).

According to Derheng Feng and Kay L. Halloran¹⁴, in metaphors an entity is superimposed on another entity (or part of it). In our case the superimposed entity (the keel) changes the original image (the backbone) together forming an unconventional whole, a hybrid. The salient features of the superimposed entity are added to the whole. The giantesses are transformed into hybrids (‘giantess-ship beings’): long, strong, and dangerous monsters.¹⁵

¹⁰ Gade / Marold 2017: 68.

¹¹ <https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=text&i=1170> consulted on 17.04.2022.

¹² Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/keel_1, consulted on 31.05.2022.

¹³ Cleasby/ Vigfússon 1957: 288.

¹⁴ Feng / Halloran 2013: 320-335.

¹⁵ Already in the 13th century, Óláfr Þórðarson’s *Third Grammatical Treatise* describes and analyzes kennings and poetic compounds: he explains that a ship can be paraphrased as ‘animal of the sea’ and illustrates how metaphors move from an animate being (bear) to an inanimate object (ship). (See ÓLSEN 1884: 76).

As in the above-mentioned example in *Pórsdrápa*, in Old Norse poetry and prose many evil doers are killed by breaking their backs, usually in the sea or near the sea. (Pórr is often engaged in such duels against trolls and monsters dwelling in the ocean). Transformation is the main skill attributed to magical creatures: therefore, the sea is their ideal environment: it can rapidly transform from a calm surface into a dangerous stormy element, from the ‘house of fish’ into the ‘house of Ran’ (the sea-goddess, who reigns over a kind of hell for the drowned at the bottom of the sea). That is the reason why the lexicon occurring in the scenes of back-breaking presents terms such as ‘ship’ and its parts, or ‘the sea’ and its components and inhabitants.

In *Friðþjófs saga*, chapter 6, two skaldic stanzas show how two troll-women, Heiði and Hamgláma, while transforming into whales, are eliminated by having their backs broken. This time the killer is a ship, Elliði, the protagonist’s magical ship. The two sorceresses, Heiði ok Hamgláma, had been sent against Friðþjófr by the evil kings Helgi and Hálfðan, who are pagan and practice black magic. Friðþjófr is not Christian, but he does not offer sacrifices and does not care about Baldr, as he clearly shows by contravening the prohibition against having sexual intercourse in the sanctuary of the god. In the stanzas Friðþjófr urges his magical ship Elliði to break the two monsters’ backs.

15.
Sé ek trollkonur
tvær á baru;
þær hefir Helgi
hingat sendar.
Þeim skal sníða
sundr í miðju
hrygg Elliði,
áðr af hafi skríði.¹⁶

I see two troll-women on the wave; Helgi has sent them hither. Elliði must slice their spines asunder in the middle, before he glides from the ocean.¹⁷

In the following stanza he urges his ship to break all their bones (jawbones, foreheads, cheeks, teeth).

16.
Heill Elliði!
Hlaupu á báru!
Brjóttu í trollkonum
tennr ok enni,
kinnr ok kjálka
í konu vándri
fót eða báða
í flagði þessu!¹⁸

Síðan skaut hann forkinum at annarri hamhleypunni, en barð Elliða kom á hrygg annarri ok brotnaði hryggrinn í baðum. En hvalrinn tók kaf ok lagðiz á brott ok sá hann ekki síðan.¹⁹

Hail Elliði! Run on the wave, break teeth and foreheads of the troll-women, cheeks and jawbone of the wretched woman, one leg or both of this ogress!²⁰

Then he threw the harpoon at one of the witches who was changing shape, while the pointed prow of Elliði reached the back of the other so that their backs were broken; but the whale sank, fleeing in haste, and he did not see it since.

¹⁶ Clunies Ross 2017: 213.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Clunies Ross 2017, 214.

¹⁹ *Friðþjófs saga* 6.

²⁰ Ibidem.

Friðþjófr helps Elliði to break the witches' backs: he *skaut hann forkinum*, and the ship *brotnaði hrygggrinn í báðum* while one of them is changing shape (*hamhleypa*).

The name *Heiði* reminds of the sorceress mentioned in stanza 22 of *Völuspá*,²¹ *Hamgláma* alludes to shapeshifting, as it starts with *hamr* "skin, shape", present in *hamrammr* (*ham-rammr*, adj. a mythical term, "able to change one's shape". Besides containing the meaning of "glamour, noise", *Gláma* is also the name of a glacier.²² It might hint at the world of giants and giantesses who often bear names associated with winter, ice, snow, mountains, and lifelessness.²³ Besides kennings in which mountains and rocks are called bones, an interesting correspondence is offered by the *Völuspá*, where the mountains are said to be Hymir's (the primordial giant's) bones: thus breaking their bones could mean destroying the primary structure of their world.

In *Bárðarsaga Snæfellsás* 'Saga of Barðr, the Ase of Snæfell' (an *Íslendinga saga* of the 14th century, in many respects similar to a *Fornaldarsaga*) which is very much concerned with magic and shows some folkloristic aspects,²⁴ the evil wizards Svalr and Þúfa are also eliminated in the same way (ch. 3):

Trylldist Svalr þá, svá at Bárði varð aflsfátt, en þó kom svá um síðir, at *Bárði braut hrygg í Sval* ok kasaði hann þar Svalsmöl [...].²⁵

Svalr cast spell against Barðr in order to take away all his strength, but at the end *Bárðr managed to break Svalr's back* and covered him with stones in the place now called Svalsmöl [...].²⁶

Aðra nótt eftir fann hann Þúfu a hvalnum ok *drap hana með sama móti*.²⁷

The following night he [Barðr] found Þúfa on the whale and *he killed her in the same way*.²⁸

In Ch. IX a witch named Kolla suffers the same fate ('back-breaking') according to the prose passage at the beginning of the chapter, and to the following stanza recited by Þórir.

Fann Þórir brátt at hon var it mesta tröll. Var þeira atgangr bæði harðr ok langr, en þó lauk með því, at *hann braut í henni hrygginn* ok gekk svá af hen- ni dauðri [...].²⁹

Þórir realized that she was a powerful troll. Their fight was both hard and long, but at the end *he broke her back* and killed her [...].³⁰

The prose passage is followed by a stanza which reads in its second helmingr:

Hugðak heimsku flagði
hryggspenning dag þenna.

²¹ Heiði hétu,
hvars til húsa kom,
völu velspáa,
vitti hon ganda;
seið, hvars kunni,
seið hug leikinn;
æ vas hon angan
illrar brúðar.

Heiði she was named when houses she visited./A good prophesying seeress skilled in sorcery./Spells she cast and minds she bewitched./And always she was the delight of wicked women (Larrington 2014).

²² Cleasby Vigfússon 1957, 203.

²³ DuBois, 55.

²⁴ The most recent scholarly editions of *Bárðarsaga* are those by Jón Skaptason and Philip Pulsiano (1984), and the Íslensk Fornrit edition by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (1991). In this article I quote from the 2nd edition of Guðni Jónsson 1946 (1968).

²⁵ Guðni Jónsson 1946, 305.

²⁶ My translation.

²⁷ Guðni Jónsson 1946, 305.

²⁸ My translation.

²⁹ Guðni Jónsson 1946, 340.

³⁰ My translation.

Missti tröll et trausta
tír, en ek beygða svíra.³¹

To this stupid witch today I've broken the back. / The troll has lost her usual reputation/ and I
have twisted her neck.³²

In both sagas we have observed shapeshifting skills: in *Friðþjófs saga* it is performed by the troll-women. In *Barðarsaga* we can assume this ability in the two wizards, Svalr and Púfa, relying on the episode where they are killed by Barðr, dominated by a close relationship between the former and the whale. Additionally, the name *Svalr* itself, which rhymes with *hvalr* “whale”, could hint at this identification. Moreover, we can associate ‘back-breaking’ with whaling since backs were considered the most deceiving parts of these animals, according to the well-known descriptions contained in encyclopedic texts translated into vernaculars and spread in Scandinavia in the early Middle Ages, such as *Physiologus*.³³ Whale backs were mistaken for land by sailors: this was considered a voluntary trick devised by the animal in order to deceive and kill men. Seen as a personification of evil, backs represented the highest concentration of wickedness.

Far from being exhaustive, this paper intends to cast light on a topic worth studying and analyzing, also by investigating the tradition of Scandinavian magic texts (charms, spells, etc.), where the breaking of bones occurs as a destructive action frequently attributed to the devil or his personifications.

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³¹ Guðni Jónsson 1946, 343.

³² My translation.

³³ *The Icelandic Physiologus* 1938, IX.

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The first and second life of a trilingual psalter palimpsest: Latin, French and Icelandic in AM 618 4to

Tom Lorenz, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

The psalter Copenhagen, Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 618 4to (Kålund 1894, 2:31–32) is characterised by an unusual material, textual and linguistic composition: The original codex, written in England in the second half of the 12th century, was a luxurious parallel psalter that combined a Latin and a French version of the book of Psalms side by side. In the 16th century, the manuscript was systematically reworked by removing the French text and replacing it with an Icelandic translation of the Psalms. The result of this modification was a new parallel psalter that recombined the Psalms in a 12th century Latin version and a 16th century Icelandic translation. In its contemporary form, AM 618 4to is thus a complex palimpsest in which a French *scriptio inferior* and an Icelandic *scriptio superior* are embraced by the preserved Latin text.

This paper employs methodological approaches from material philology to analyse the complex interdependence between the textual, linguistic and material composition of the AM 618 4to by contrasting the original 12th-century Latin-French psalter with the reworked 16th-century Latin-Icelandic psalter. A closer look at the individual periods in the history of the psalter provides a more comprehensive understanding of the artefact as a whole.

The first life: A Latin-French parallel psalter

In its original form, AM 618 4to was a bilingual psalter that contained both Latin and Anglo-Norman French versions of the Psalms side by side. The Psalms (1r–116r) were followed by canticles (116v–118v), likewise in Latin and French. With the exception of a missing single folio in the middle of the psalter which has been replaced with a paper folio (fol. 71) and a few missing folios at the end of the manuscript, the codex has been completely preserved.

The manuscript is a typical example of a small group of similar bilingual psalters from late 12th century England, which illustrate medieval England as a multilingual society (Agrigoroaei 2018, 31–32; Kwakkel 2018, 319). Five of these psalters are Latin-French parallel psalters, including AM 618 4to as well as the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 768 (see Table 1). Some further psalters combine the Latin and French texts in a different *mine-en-page*, in some cases including an additional English translation as well as alternative redactions of the Latin text. In addition to its practical use, the combination of Latin and vernacular texts seems to have had both a pedagogical and ecstatic value (Agrigoroaei 2018, 31). Placing the vernacular translation next to the authoritative Latin Vulgate text presents both texts as analogous, strengthening the authority of the vernacular text (Rector 2003, 203–204).

The production of AM 618 4to involved two or three people and can roughly be divided into three steps:

1. First, both the Latin text and the French text were written by a single scribe. This scribe was proficient in both Latin and French and wrote in a Protogothic script.
2. Then, a specialist illuminator drew and painted the polychrome major initials. This illuminator had access to a larger set of pigments, including gold, and is probably not identical with the main scribe. This illuminator did not finish their work as many of the initials are not filled out (37v, 48v, 67v, etc.) and one of the initials (116va) was added by a second illuminator in step 3.
3. In the last step, the unichrome major and minor initials as well as the incipits of the Psalms were added by a second illuminator, using alternately red, green, yellow-brown and blue ink. In addition, some of the uncoloured drafts for polychrome initials were partly filled out (17ra, 27va, 27vb, 116vb) and, in the empty space in 116va, a polychrome initial of lower quality was added. This second illuminator had access to a

more restricted repertoire of pigments and less experience than the first illuminator. They may or may not be identical with the main scribe of the text.

The origin and medieval provenance of AM 618 4to is for the most part unknown. No place of origin has yet been proposed for the psalter. The main challenge to identifying its place of origin is that the psalter has not been preserved together with its original calendar. Although AM 618 4to today includes a folio of a late 13th century calendar from Wales or West England as a flyleaf, this folio did not belong to the original manuscript and does not tell us where the psalter was produced (Westergård-Nielsen 1977, 791–792). The other 12th century Latin-French parallel psalters are assumed to be connected to scriptoria in Canterbury and Winchester (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dating and suggested place of origin of the Latin-French parallel psalters.

Manuscript	Dating	Suggested place of origin
Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 618	1166–1200	England
London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero C IV	c. 1160	Winchester
Oxford, St John's College, HB4/4.a.4.21 (I.subt.1.47)	1150–1200	England
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 768	1175–1200	Canterbury
Canterbury		
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 1670	1175–1200	Canterbury

While AM 618 4to is known to have been in Iceland from the 16th century on, it remains unknown when and how it left England and came to Iceland. There is, however, some evidence of use from the Middle Ages which has until now been overlooked: A later hand added further incipits of Psalms in the empty spaces between the original Psalms. This hand writes a Gothic Northern Textualis. A notable feature of the script is the use of the double-crossed form of the tironian note for 'et' (75v) which is particular to England (Derolez 2003, 97). This suggests that the manuscript stayed in the country for a certain period after its production.

The second life: A Latin-Icelandic parallel psalter

At an unknown point of time, AM 618 4to came Iceland where it was systematically reworked in the 16th century. The French text in the right column was removed making the manuscript a palimpsest. This was, however, not always done completely. The original French text remains visible on several folios and two rubricated lines remain completely intact in the bottom of 37rb. In the now empty space, an Icelandic translation of the Psalms was added instead, the final part of which was finished in 1586 (116r). For the canticles in 116v–118v, no new Icelandic text was inserted. With the exception of later additions and marginal notes, the right column remains empty.

In his analysis of AM 618 4to, Christian Westergård-Nielsen (1977, 802) identifies four or five different hands, among them the Lutheran bishop of Skálholt Gísli Jónsson (ca. 1515–1589) who wrote fol. 1rb–4vb. The Icelandic text used in AM 618 4to corresponds to the translation of the book of Psalms attributed to Oddur Gottskálksson. This translation was printed in 1584 as part of *Guðbrandsbiblíá*, the first complete edition of the bible in Icelandic by Guðbrandur Þorláksson, the bishop of Hólar (Magnús Már Lárusson 1951, 154). This prompts Christian Westergård-Nielsen (1977, 804) to the assumption that Gísli Jónsson must have initiated the laborious reworking of AM 618 4to before the Icelandic text was more easily available in form of *Guðbrandsbiblíá*.

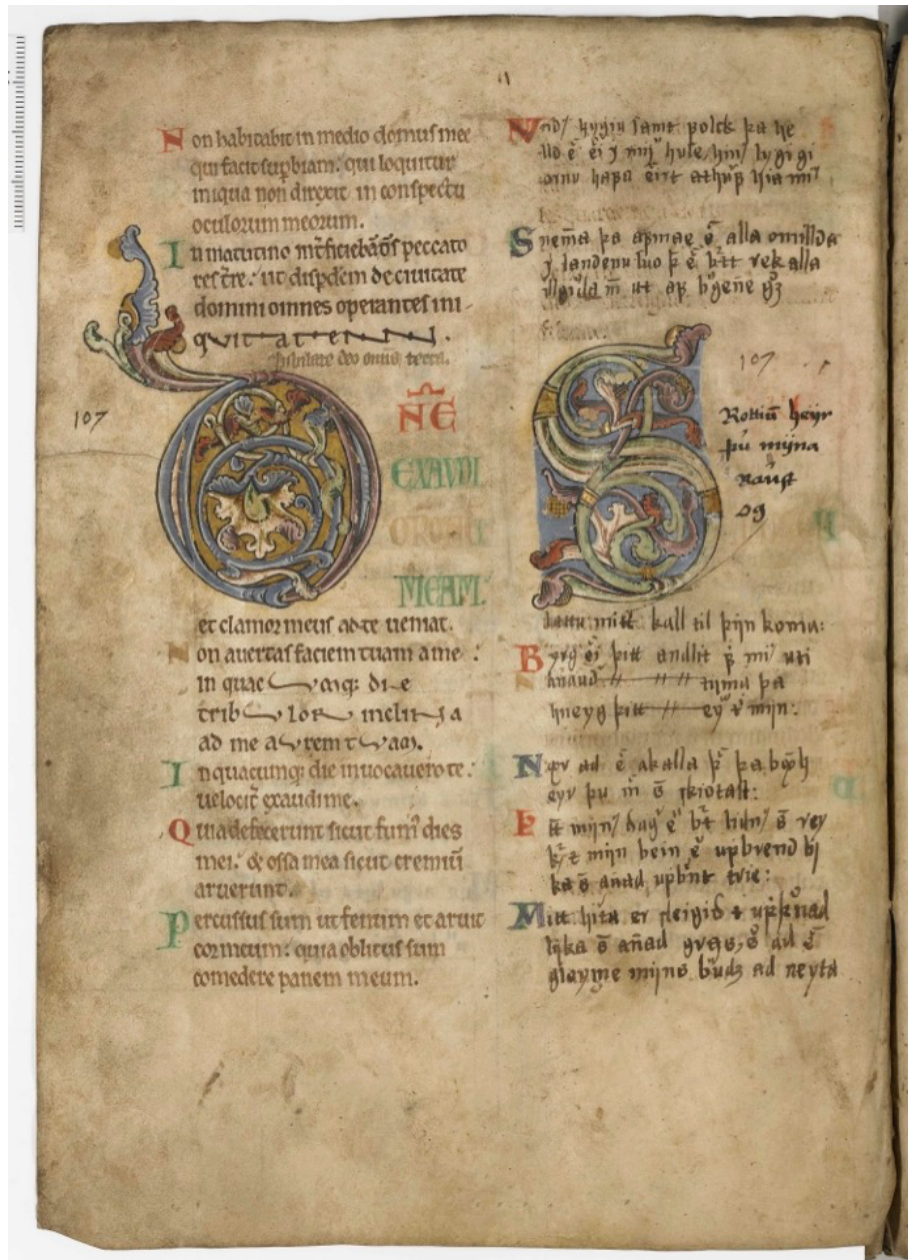


Figure 1. AM 618 4to, 77v, Den Arnarnagnæanske Samling, Copenhagen (image reproduced from Handrit.is).

How complex this reworking actually process was, can best be demonstrated by a look at the treatment of the initials of the French text. The majority of the unichrome initials was more or less carefully removed together with the main body of the text and then overwritten. The polychrome initials and some of the major unichrome initials, however, were treated in various creative ways. In some cases, they were retained and reused for the Icelandic text. For this, they had usually either to be reinterpreted or modified. The polychrome initial 'B' in 1rb, for example, was reinterpreted as a capital 'S' for *Sæll*, while the polychrome initial S in 77vb was reinterpreted as capital 'D' for *Drottinn*. In 93rb, a major initial 'I' was modified by adding a round body to create the letter 'þ' for *það*, whereas, in 93vb, the initial 'R' was adapted to 'þ' for *þakkit*, by removing the final stroke of the original letter and extending its ascender. In other cases, the original French initials were retained but not reused for the Icelandic text. In 61vb, for example, a capital 'H' for *Heyr* was written into the counter of the French initial 'Q' and in 27vb a unichrome capital 'E' for *Eg* was added next to the original polychrome initial 'I'. While these initials were not incorporated into the Icelandic text, they could still be used as reading aid to

identify the beginning of a specific Psalm in the codex. Only one of the largest group of initials was completely erased and replaced with a new one: The initial 'L' in 17rb was never coloured. It could therefore be removed and substituted with a capital 'D' for *DROTTENN* (Figure 1). This shows that the different scribes involved in the reworking of AM 618 4to tried different approaches to make use of the properties of the original Latin-French codex in the bilingual Latin-Icelandic psalter they aimed to create.

If it was the sole intention to own a copy of Oddur's translation of the psalter as suggested by Westergård-Nielsen (1977, 804), it would have been a lot easier to use new writing material, either parchment or paper, instead of painfully palimpsesting an older psalter and trying to incorporate the original initials in the new ly added text. Reworking AM 618 4to indicates an interest in preserving and reusing both the Latin text and the beautiful book-painting of the original manuscript. While the French text would have been essentially useless for a 16th century Icelandic, the Latin one would still have its uses. By replacing the obsolete French text with an Icelandic one, the overall usefulness of the manuscript would have been vastly improved.

In the margins of the manuscript, an unidentifiable number of hands added notes including names of owners, prayers, alphabets, single letters, drawings of faces and other kinds of scribbles. These marginal notes indicate frequent use of the psalter, both before and after the reworking. Furthermore, some of them suggest that the psalter was also used for educational purposes, that is for teaching how to read and write in both Icelandic and Latin (Westergård-Nielsen 1977, 803). Replacing the French text with an Icelandic one may have been primarily intended to make the psalter more useful as an educational tool in an Icelandic context.

In addition, by placing the recent Icelandic translation of the psalter in an old manuscript, the new vernacular translation could share in the authority of the ancient Latin Vulgate text written right next to it. The introduction of the Reformation in Iceland in the 16th century caused most liturgical books, written in Latin and according to Catholic doctrine, to become obsolete (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 161). However, the modification of AM 618 4to constitutes an attempt to make an obsolete codex relevant again. This seems to indicate an appreciation of old manuscripts that goes beyond their practical, textual and aesthetical value.

There can be no doubt that the modification of the manuscript is the main reason why it survives in strongly altered and damaged but largely complete form. In 1712, the manuscript was part of the collection of Thormod Torfæus (1636–1719) before it came into the possession of Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) (Kålund 1894, 32; Westergård-Nielsen 1977, 800). Today, the manuscript is part of the Arnarnagæan Collection, the largest and most important collection of Icelandic manuscripts, and kept in Copenhagen. Although there were several liturgical books among the manuscripts that he gathered, Árni was for the most part not interested in these Latin manuscripts. He would dismember them and only keep those parts that he considered important as a source for Icelandic history such as calendars and the liturgy for the feats of Icelandic saints. In contrast, he used the remaining folios of the liturgical manuscripts as binding material for his other books (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 165–169). It cannot be overstated that, unlike all other Latin psalters that Árni acquired, AM 618 4to was kept as a codex and not dismembered. The main reason why Árni considered the manuscript worth to be preserved is the Icelandic text that it contains.

An analogue modification has been attempted with another of the Latin-French parallel psalters, the codex Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 768, written in Canterbury in the fourth quarter of the 12th century (Agrigoroaei 2018, 31). The French text in the right column was systematically removed in the first half of the codex (fol. 10–58), probably to replace it with a translation in another language similar to the reworking of AM 618 4to. However, this modification attempt was later abandoned as the French text remains in the larger part of the codex, from Psalm 68 onwards, and no new text has been added in the palimpsested area. Instead, the manuscript was then reused in another way: Most of the illuminated initials have been cut out, probably to be inserted into another book (Figure 2).

While the modifications of AM 618 4to and Latin 768 happened independently from each other, they suggest similar ideas about how medieval manuscripts could be adapted to contemporary needs in modern times.

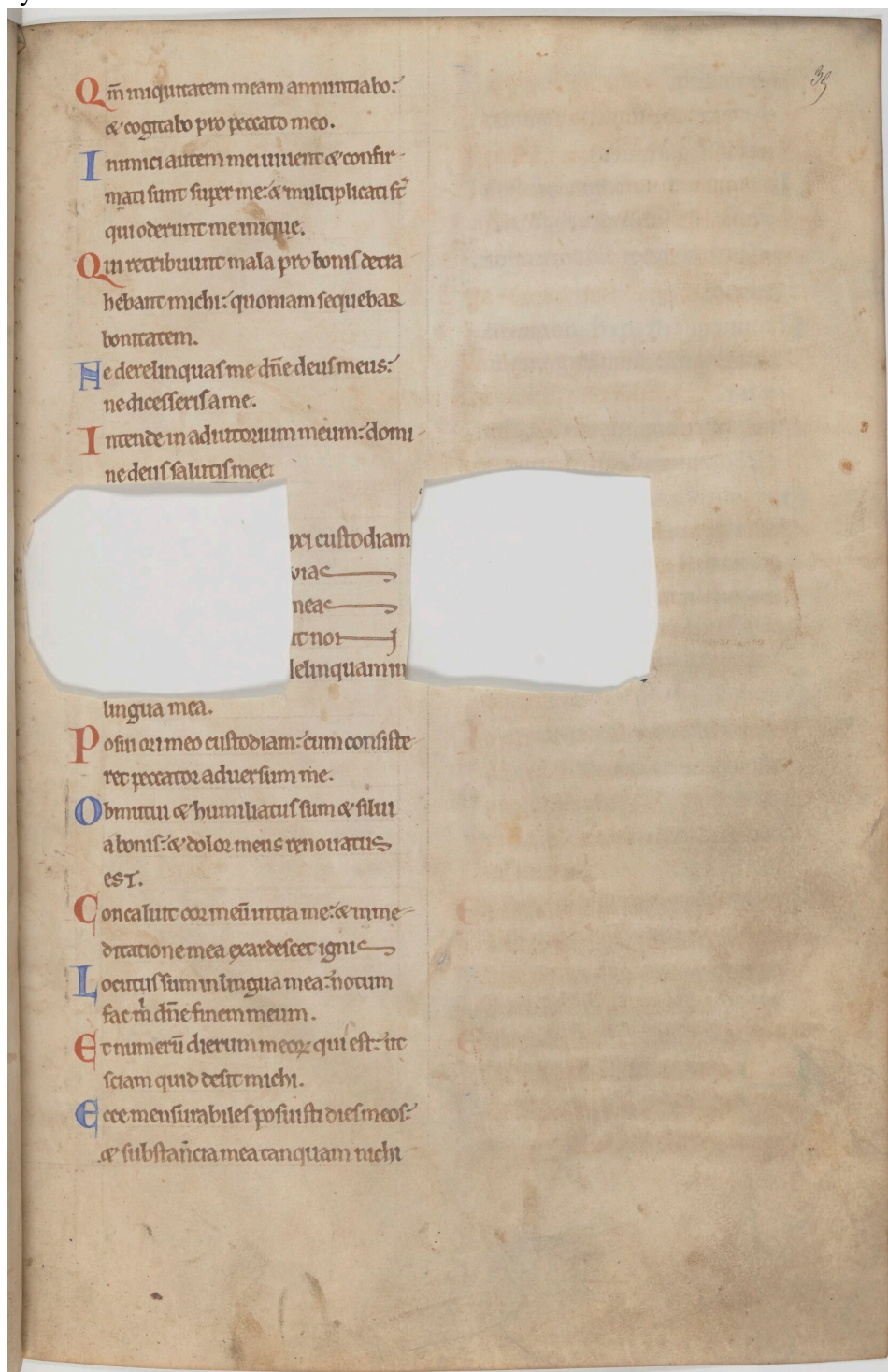


Figure 2. Latin 768, 35r (c), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (image reproduced from Manuscripts-france-angleterre.org).

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Where did Þórólfur go? Multicultural interactions and genre development in *Egils rímur* and the “Younger Egla”

Nikola Macháčková, University of Iceland

In this paper I will discuss the reception of *Egils saga* and genre development in two texts of *Egils saga* based on the characters’ travels to the Baltic Sea region. These texts, known as *Egils rímur* and the “Younger Egla”, sometimes called *Vitlaus Egla*, are two 17th-century adaptations of the medieval *Egils saga*. The aim of this comparative analysis is to reveal possible changes in scenes set in the Baltic Sea region, elucidate the reasons behind the changes and reveal the dynamics behind the development of this *Íslendingasaga* as a genre. In what follows, after a brief introduction of the two texts, I will present some theory about the genre development, some selected sections of the medieval *Egils saga*, *Egils rímur*, and the “Younger Egla” which take place in the Baltic Sea region; and finally, conclusions about the genre development and literary preferences in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Egils rímur and the “Younger Egla”

Egils rímur were composed in 1643 by Jón Guðmundsson from Rauðseyjar, in Dalasýsla, in the west of Iceland. Jón was a well-known poet in the west and he is known to have certainly composed four other *rímur* cycles, namely *Bærings rímur*, *Grettis rímur*, *Nítíða rímur*, and *Remundar rímur* (Finnur Sigmundsson 1966).

Jón composed the *rímur* on behalf of Eggert Björnsson ríki “the rich” (1612-1681), a powerful landowner at Skarð. Eggert was descended from the two biggest dynasties in the west of Iceland, the so-called *Skarðverjar*, the inhabitants of Skarð, and the so-called Svalbarð family, residing in the Westfjords. Eggert Björnsson was an extremely wealthy and influential figure, involved in literary production and clearly interested in poetry.

The *rímur* are preserved in two manuscripts from the end of the 17th century, namely AM 610 a 4to, and a manuscript with the shelfmark IS HSk N00103-A-4, which is currently housed at Héraðsskjalasafn Skagfirðinga (the archive of Skagafjörður region) in Sauðárkrókur. The scribe of AM 610 a 4to is Þórður Jónsson, who was most likely also responsible for copying the Sauðárkrókur manuscript. Þórður was a professional scribe copying manuscripts for rich landowners in the Westfjords, such as the Magnús Jónsson of Vigur and Magnús Magnússon of Eyri. AM 610 a 4to was later owned by Magnús Björnsson, a *lögréttumaður*, and by Gísli Jónsson, son of bishop Jón Vigfússon.

Towards the end of the 17th century a new version of *Egils saga*, partly based on the *rímur*, was composed. This newer saga will be referred to as the “Younger Egla” in this paper from now on. On a slip bound in AM 454 4to, Árni Magnússon gives the information that the saga was composed by Gísli Jónsson of Melrakkadalur, a farmer and a poet, but it has never been proved and remains doubtful. The manuscripts preserving the “Younger Egla” are: AM 163 r fol., which dates from the end of the 17th century and was copied in the southwest of Iceland by Þorleifur Kláusson, a priest at Útskálar at Suðurnes; Holm Papp 15 fol. from the late 17th century, copied by Jón Vigfússon who was working as a professional scribe in Sweden — the manuscript is now stored in the Royal Library in Stockholm; AM 454 4to from the beginning of the 18th century copied by Gísli Guðmundsson from Rauðilækur (its exemplar was copied by lawman Sigurður Jónsson and owned by magistrate Ólafur Einarsson); and Oslo NB 313 fol. from the 18th century, copied in Iceland, owned by magistrate Jón Árnason, sold at an auction in Copenhagen two years after his death, and now stored in the National Library of Norway.

Stefán Karlsson (1995) and Michael Chesnutt (2006) concluded that the composer of *Egils rímur* used the C-branch¹ of *Egils saga* manuscripts as their source and that the composer of the

¹ The medieval *Egils saga* manuscripts traditionally fall into three branches: A-branch (traditionally known as “M-class” with Möðruvallabók being the chief representative of the class), B-branch (traditionally known as “W-class” with Wolfenbüttel Codex being the chief representative) and C-branch (traditionally known as “K-class” first copied

“Younger Egla” based their story partially on the C-branch of *Egils saga* manuscripts and partially on *Egils rímur*. Therefore, my comparative study will be based on Chesnutt’s textual edition of the C-branch manuscripts from 2006. The text of the *rímur* is my own transcription of AM 610 a 4to and the text of the “Younger Egla” my own transcription from AM 163 r fol.²

Theoretical framework

The principles of so-called polysystem theory are employed in this paper to reveal the processes behind the development of the saga. Polysystem theory was developed by Even-Zohar (1990) and its principles were first mainly employed in translation studies, but they have become increasingly used in saga studies to reveal the evolution of texts.³ One of the principles of the polysystem theory is that genres in a literary polysystem are hierarchically organised and in a constant struggle for a central position within the system, which consists of a centre and a periphery. When one genre within the system begins to occupy a central position in the system it functions as a model for other genres occupying peripheral positions. However, this does not mean that typical generic features of the peripheral genres disappear altogether; the more influential genre provides new themes and narrative modes which then meet with old themes and worlds to create new broader narrative and generic hybrids. Generic hybrids are defined by a combination of different chronotopes within the same narrative frame, and a broader narrative palette is thus used (Bampi 2017, 9).⁴ Moreover, it is important to note, that the literary polysystem exists within a world consisting of other systems, social, religious, or political, for example (Bampi 2012, 187). The central position of one genre within the literary polysystem heavily depends on its relevance within other non-literary polysystems; the place of one genre in a central position within the polysystem coincides with the ideology of the social group in power.

Þórólfur Kveldúlfsson collecting taxes

In chapters 9, 12, and 14 of the medieval *Egils saga*, Þórólfur Kveldúlfsson goes to Finnmörk, where he is taxing the Lapps (*Finnar*) on behalf of King Haraldur. Þórólfur goes to Finnmörk three times in the saga, and from there, he turns further east, where he meets diverse groups of people, the Kylfings, Kvens, and Karelians.

The first visit is described quite briefly, as he is said to go up a mountain with ninety men, where he meets the Lapps, takes taxes and trades with them. Then he goes further to the east, meets the Kylfings, with whom he clashes and kills nearly a hundred of them (Chesnutt 2006, 12). The second time Þórólfur goes to Finnmörk, he takes hundred men with him and after trading with the Lapps, he goes further east where the Kven people seek him out and tell him their King Faravið offers him booty if he helps him fight against the Karelians. The following is a detailed description of the political landscape surrounding Finnmörk: “*austur fra Naumudal er Iamta land. þa Kuenland. þa Helsingia land. þa Kiriala land. en Finnmork liggur fyrer ofan þessi laund aull. A Finnmork eru uautn furduliga stor en hafiaull epter endilongu. eru þat kallader Kiler.*” (Chesnutt 2006, 16) (“east of Naumdal is Jamtaland, then Kvenland, then Halsingland, then Karelia, but Finnmark lies beyond all these countries. There are incredibly large lakes in Finnmark, while high mountains [lie] lengthways; they are called Kilir”). After that, Þórólfur meets King Faravið. Together, they have four hundred men and the battle between the Kven people and the Norwegians against the Karelians is described, with the Karelians being

by Ketill Jörundsson, in two identical manuscripts AM 453 4to and 462 4to) (see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015, 176–78).

² Both of the manuscripts are available in digitised form on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0610a/0#mode/2up>; <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM02-0163r/0#mode/2up>

³ See for example volume from 2013 edited by Bampi and Buzzoni (Bampi and Buzzoni 2013).

⁴ The term chronotope stands for temporal and spatial relationship in literature, introduced by Bakhtin (1981). Temporal and spatial settings are one of the most useful features for distinguishing one saga genre from another, see for example Clunies Ross (2010, 72–94).

defeated in the end (Chesnutt 2006, 16–17). Finally, Þórólfur's third journey to Finnmörk occurs after he fell out of favour with King Haraldur and the Hildiríðarsynir take over Þórólfur's farm in Torgar as well as his duty to collect taxes in the north. Their dealings with the Lapps are described as rather unsuccessful. Þórólfur, on the other hand, goes back to the north and arrives to Kvenland and he and King Faravið plunder the Karelian's settlement again, gaining much wealth (Chesnutt 2006, 19).

The two 17th-century adaptations only preserve the first visit. The third fitt of the *rímur* simply states that Þórólfur was collecting taxes for the king, but does not say where he was collecting them or where he went after:

*Pegninn landed varde vel fyrer vondum monnum,
ágangs menn hann alla fellde,
af þeim náde hann Rínar ellde.* (III. 32-34)

The man protected the land well against the vicious men,
He killed all the aggressors,
From them he received fire of Rhine [GOLD].

The first visit is mentioned in chapter 7 of the “Younger Egla” and it explains that Þórólfur is supposed to collect taxes in Elfur and Finnmörk and then he goes raiding further east: “*Tok nü saman skulder köngs og skatta fyrer austann kiöl, [...] og náde fie og Gulle aff þeim, vard hann offur Rýkur af þessu*” (4r) (“Collected the king's debts and taxes east of the mountain [“kjölr”], [...] and gained riches and gold from them, he became very rich from this”). The second and the third visit are omitted completely in both adaptations. In conclusion, Þórólfur does not interact with any groups of people in the east in the two adaptations and the only place name mentioned is “*kjölr*”. The word *kjölr* in a general sense means “keel” or “keel-shaped range of mountains” (Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1874, 341), but as seen from the passage from the medieval saga above, Kilir was also used more specifically as a local name for mountain range in Finnmörk. The lack of specificity as to where this mountain range is in the “Younger Egla” suggests at the very least that such geographical precision is much less important than it was to the medieval saga's audience or possibly even that the place name no longer has any particular place associated with it in the mind of the “Younger Egla's” author.

The question arises why the authors of the adaptation chose to omit these interactions and reduce the geographical description to such an extent? Elenius (2019, 126) analyses the description of the area in the east in the medieval *Egils saga* and he points out that the province of Finnland is mentioned in the medieval saga (Bjarni Einarsson 2003, 18), while not in the earlier sources about the area, for example in *Historia Norwegie*. Based on this, he concludes that the saga presents the contemporary medieval understanding of the landscape, rather than historical landscape of the 10th century that it claims to be describing. Iceland had very strong ties with Norway in the 12th and 13th centuries, when many Icelanders became retainers of the Norwegian king and the relationship strengthened even more when Snorri Sturluson became a *lendur maður* (landed vassal) of the king in 1220 (Sverrir Jakobsson 2020, 734). If Snorri Sturluson composed *Egils saga*,⁵ the description of the political landscape might reflect his own knowledge of the area and mirror the contemporary 13th-century understanding of it, which he undoubtedly was extremely familiar with. And, indeed, the description of the political landscape changes as the saga text develops throughout the centuries. Despite the mention of Finnland in the medieval saga, it is not however mentioned in all its manuscript branches, and in fact it is missing from the C-branch.⁶ In the above-quoted passage with detailed geographical descriptions from the C-branch of the manuscripts, the place name “Finnland” does not occur. This branch represents a younger tradition of the text, with the oldest manuscript fragment dated to the 15th

⁵ This theory is, for example, discussed at length by Torfi H. Tulinius, see Torfi H. Tulinius (2015).

⁶ For Finnland's mention in the text, see Bjarni Einarsson (2003, 18). For the corresponding passage without the name in the C-branch, see Chesnutt (2006, 16).

century (AM 162 A eta fol.). This might therefore reflect the author's decreasing familiarity with the area. This development is even more obvious in the two 17th-century adaptations where the area is barely described at all.

The lack of familiarity of the authors with the political landscape is visible throughout both adaptations. In chapter 78 of the "Younger Eglá", for example, Jarl Arnviður's place of residence is described: "*sat austur a Hordalande nær Elffumm fyrer austann finnmörk*" (38r) ("sat east in Hörðaland near Elfur to the east of Finnmörk"). The county of Hörðaland was located in the south-west of Norway, not in the east. Moreover, the place name Elfur is a rather uncertain and mysterious place in the "Younger Eglá". The place name Elfur in the medieval saga is without doubt the river Gautelfur (Götaälv) in Götaland, on the south-western coast of Sweden. The author of the "Younger Eglá", however, clearly confused the place name in several ways. From its description in the "Younger Eglá", the place must be close to Finnmörk and Hálogaland in the far north of Norway. The name, furthermore, does not refer to a river or specific geographical feature but to an entire county, from which Þórólfur has the authority to collect taxes. The author also confuses the name grammatically, always mentioning it in plural form while it is always in singular in other sources.

Why would the author of the text use this place name, which does not appear in the medieval saga in these passages and include a location of which he was clearly uncertain? The place name Elfur, or Gautelfur, appears only in one other *Íslendingasaga* apart from *Egils saga*, namely *Svarfdæla saga* (see sagamap.hi.is). The name does occur frequently in *konungasögur* and several times in *fornaldarsögur*, however. When we look at the place name's context in these texts, it is very often used in a phrase together with an eastern direction. For example, in *fornaldarsögur* the place is mentioned in *Ketils saga hængs*: "*þá munk austr við Elfi*" (Guðni Jónsson 1954, II:171); and twice in *Örvar-Odds saga*: "*við Elfi austr*" (Ibid.: 236), "*austr í Elfi*" (Ibid.: 350). In *konungasögur*, the place name appears extremely frequently, namely in *Böglunga sögur* (Guðni Jónsson 1957a, III:359); in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* (Guðni Jónsson 1957b, I:100); in *Ólafs saga ins Helga* (Ibid.: 249). The place name also appears in two more *konungasögur*, *Hákonar saga gamla*: "*fór austan frá Elfinni*" (Guðni Jónsson 1957a, III:4) and *Sverris saga*: "*farinn austr undan allt til Elfar*" (Guðni Jónsson 1957c, II:44). Interestingly, these two *konungasögur* appear together with the "Younger Eglá" in the Oslo manuscript NB 313 fol.; the texts therefore might have had a direct influence on this place name in the "Younger Eglá". In all these texts, the river Elfur is located in Sweden, south-east of Norway, but as it so often appears in phrases containing the cardinal direction "east", the author of the "Younger Eglá" might simply have been familiar with the phrase, therefore deciding to place Elfur next to Finnmörk, as characters often travelled to the east from there. However, the author of the "Younger Eglá" situates nearly every place "in the east", as Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir has pointed out (2015, 186).

Finally, the omission of place names in both texts is possibly due not only to the unfamiliarity of the authors with the overseas country, but a general decrease in interest about recording place names. For example, the settlement scene in chapters 20-22 of the medieval saga contains 31 place names, while the *rímur* contain only 9 and the younger saga 6. The settlement scene with the first settlers, hunting and farming opportunities of the area, and new place names are basically omitted in the "Younger Eglá". Interestingly, the place name Esjufjall (11r), which is not mentioned at all in the medieval saga is one of the few mentioned place names in the new saga. The settlement description therefore clearly reflects the contemporary understanding of the landscape. The area around the Gulf of Bothnia was unfamiliar to the 17th-century author and possibly also uninteresting. As the connection between the Icelanders and Norwegians decreased with time, so did the depiction of the geographical area of Norway, its surroundings and the interactions with the people in these areas.

Þórólfur and Egill Skallagrímsson in Austurvegur

As discussed above, Þórólfur Kveldúlfsson's travelled, at least in the medieval saga, to the areas around the Gulf of Bothnia; his nephew Þórólfur Skallagrímsson, on the other hand, went on journeys to Austurvegur. His first journey to Austurvegur takes place in chapter 24 of the medieval saga, where he goes plundering there with Björn Brynjólfsson (Chesnutt 2006, 44). Austurvegur, "the Eastern way", can be any region or land in the east, and in *Íslendingasögur*, it is often the place where the Vikings go plundering in the summer to get valuables and weapons. In the medieval *Egils saga*, "Austurvegur" is mentioned four times and it is not described any further, it simply had the role as a place for plundering. The two adaptations of the saga treat this area slightly differently. Firstly, the 12th fitt of *Egils rímur* mentions the two men going plundering, it does not mention, however, where exactly they went.

The "Younger Egla" provides us with a more concrete destination of their plundering in the summer, namely Bjarmaland and "Rússía": "*vnnu marga výkinga vid Rússía og Bjarmaland, og fejngu otal fiär*" (14v) ("conquered many Vikings/pirates in "Rússia" and Bjarmaland, and received much riches"). Bjarmaland appears throughout Old Norse texts, including the medieval *Egils saga*, where King Eiríkur blóðöx fights a battle by the *Vína* river (the Northern Dvina), and the area of Bjarmaland would cover the land around the White Sea (Bjarni Einarsson 2003, 293). Rússía, on the other hand, does not appear in any other *Íslendingasaga*. According to Lagerholm (1927, 1), the place name Rússía was borrowed from German, and in earliest times was only used in scholarly works and Latin documents; for example, the place name Rússía appears in *Ólafs saga Trygvarsonar* by Oddur Snorrason, which is based on a Latin biography. Later, the place name became common in *fornaldar*- and *riddararsögur* (Lagerholm 1927, 1) and we can spot the place name in the younger version of *Bósa saga ok Herrauds* (Jirízek 1893, 67), *Rémundar saga* (Broberg 1909, 294), *Þiðreks saga* (Guðni Jónsson 1951, I:3), and *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* (Schröder 1917, 102).

Þórólfur travels to Austurvegur for the second time in chapter 29 of the medieval saga. This time he goes together with Egill and they plunder farms in Kúrland. One evening, Egill and his men separate from Þórólfur, they find a farm, take everything valuable from there, but the Kúrland locals capture them and imprison them. In the end, Egill and his men manage to escape and Egill burns the farmer and his men inside his house (Chesnutt 2006, 57–60). The 16th fitt of *Egils rímur* provides us with exactly the same narrative, namely that the brothers go to Kúrland: "*vid kurland sturla kapper líd, komu þeir þar med meinge*." (XVI.17) ("by Kúrland the group of champions disturb, they came there with force.") and after that, the *ríma* depicts the following events in the exact same way as the medieval saga does. The "Younger Egla", on the other hand, changes this episode significantly. Firstly, Þórólfur and Egill go plundering to *austurlönd* "the eastern lands", but seemingly come back to Scandinavia right away: "*Nu hielldu þeir brædur i hernad a því sumre, og heriudu umm austurlönd, komu nu eitt kuolld vid Brenneyjar fyrer austann Smalsarhorn, þar geingu þeir Brædur a land og ræntu miklu fie*" (18r) ("Now the brothers went plundering during this summer, and plundered the eastern lands, they came now one evening to Brenneyjar in the east of Smalsarhorn, there, the brothers went on shore and robbed much riches"). Here, the geography is described in a rather strange way, mentioning Brenneyjar, an archipelago off the western coast of Sweden, and Smalsarhorn, now Hornelen cliff in the western Norway. Again, the directions here are confused, as even though Brenneyjar are east from Smalsarhorn, the two places are far away from each other, and the usage of Smalsarhorn for establishing Brenneyjar's position makes no sense. Smalsarhorn is not used in the medieval saga at all, while the "Younger Egla" mentions the place again when Egill raises the scorn pole there: "*geck Eigill a eitt berg sem Smalsarhorn Heiter, þar ryste hann vpp staung, og sette höfud konungz sonar a hana ofann*" (29v) ("Egill went onto one cliff called Smalsarhorn, there he raised a pole, and sat the king's son's head on top of it").⁷ As the place

⁷ Note that Egill does not place a horse head on top of the pole, rather the head of the king's son (!).

name does not appear in the medieval saga, or the *rímur* at all, the question is how the author of the “Younger Egla” became familiar with the place name. The place name appears in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, where it is said: “*þar er hátt fjall ok mjök torsóttligt. Þat er kallat Smalsarhorn af Norðmönnum*” (“there is a high mountain and much difficult to climb. It is called Smalsarhorn by the Norwegians”). In the medieval saga, Egill simply raises the scorn pole on a “*bjargsnös*” (“rocky projection, jutting rock”).

After killing many men and taking great riches in Sweden, the brothers go back to the east: “*og hiełldu þeir brædur Burt þadann, og komu ad Kurlande austur*” (18r) (“and the brothers continued away from there and arrived to Kúrland in the east”). After plundering there for the whole summer, they return to Norway and Þórólfur’s wedding takes place. The next summer, the brothers go plundering once again “to the East”: “*villdu þeir brædur þad Sumar j austur vjking*” (18r) (“the brothers wanted that summer to plunder in the east”). After the summer, they come to Norway near Elfur, where a certain farmer’s village is. This farmer is called Bárður and he is a friend of King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhildur. Unmistakably, this Bárður in the “Younger Egla” is the same Bárður, who lives on the island Atley in the medieval saga. In the medieval saga, Egill misses his brother’s wedding and goes with Ölvir to Bárður’s farm, where he meets the king and the queen, who tries to poison Egill with Bárður’s help. In the end, Egill kills Bárður and makes the royal couple hostile towards him. This entire episode is skipped in the “Younger Egla” and the episode that takes place in Kúrland in the medieval saga was moved to Norway and instead of being captured by the Courlanders, Egill and his men are captured by Bárður and his men. After that, the “Younger Egla” follows the events of the medieval saga quite closely, resulting in Egill burning Bárður and his men inside his farmhouse. The author of the “Younger Egla” clearly wanted to include the travels to the east in his text as he mentions three times that they went to “the eastern lands” and to Kúrland. Why would he then decide to move the entire episode from Kúrland to Norway? One possibility is that he was not confident in describing the area of Kúrland in greater detail, as he was not very knowledgeable of geographical locations, as we have seen from the episode in Finnmörk and the above examples of various places in Scandinavia. A second possibility might be that he skipped the episode where Egill killed Bárður and later realised that it was an important moment in the narrative, as it was the beginning of the long-lasting conflict between Egill and King Eiríkur. He might have therefore decided that Bárður needed to be killed and it would not make sense for him to live in Kúrland as he was both friend and landed vassal to the king of Norway.

Finally, the Baltic Sea region is mentioned in connection to Egill’s sword Naður, which he according to the medieval saga received in Kúrland: “*og sverd þad er hann kallade Nadr. þad hafde hann feinged ä Kurlande*” (Chesnutt 2006, 74) (“and that swords, which he called Naður. He had received it in Kúrland”). The 19th fitt of the *rímur* gives us the same description of the sword:

*Hans var nefndur hrottinn Nadur,
halurinn atte hann leinge,
á kurlande garpurinn gladur,
giet eg ad þennann feinge.”* (XIX.54)

His sword was called Nadur
the boy had him for long
I can tell that the happy man
got this sword in Kúrland.

The “Younger Egla” describes the scene, in which Þórólfur and Egill are getting ready for the battle in England in a rather similar manner to the medieval saga, also mentioning Egill’s sword from Kúrland. There is, however, one significant change: “*So var og Eigill Brödur hanns med sama hätt bv’enn, hann hafde oll vopn göd, sverd hanns var komed aff kurlande, alldrej var i þann tjma betra sverd borid, næst Dýrumdal hinumm goda*” (23v) (“His brother Egill was

prepared in the same way, his weapons were all good, his sword came from Kúrland, there was no better sword carried at that time, except the great Dýrumdali"). The sword's name is not Naður but Dýrumdali. The sword Dýrumdali appears in a *heilagramannasaga Mikjál's saga*, and two *riddarasögur*, *Karlamagnús saga* and *Mírmants saga*. Dýrumdali is the Icelandic name for the legendary sword Durendal, the sword of Roland, one of Charlemagne's legendary paladins. In *Karlamagnús saga*, the great hero Roland has two possessions of great price, one of them being the sword Dýrumdali; in *Mírmants saga*, the narrator of the story interposes that no better sword was ever known than Roland's Dýrumdali (21:10-11). The sword's name Naður, on the other hand, appears only in *Egils saga*. Otherwise the word "naður" is often used in kennings for swords in general, as it is mentioned in *Skáldskaparmál* as a *heiti* for a "snake" (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 171). The author of the "Younger Egla" expresses an interest in weapons throughout the saga, and especially swords, the significance which he made prominent in his text. This is evident from another of Egill's swords, Dragvendill, which plays a much more significant role in the "Younger Egla" than the medieval *Egils saga*. Dragvendill's power is praised in the saga, it makes Egill undefeatable. Moreover, a scene at the end of the saga is described, in which Egill examines all his grandchildren and finally proclaims Kjartan, Þorgerður's son, as being worthy of his forefathers and chosen to carry Dragvendill for the rest of his life. The author of the "Younger Egla" turned an already exceptional sword into a legendary sword carried from one generation to another. When we consider the change of the name Naður into Dýrumdali in the light of this discussion, it seems likely that by giving Egill a legendary famous sword, known to be better than almost any other sword ever seen, the author made an attempt to introduce yet another legendary powerful sword into the narrative. The author did not need to necessarily have one of the above-mentioned sagas in hand while composing the "Younger Egla", but he might have been familiar with the story and the sword Dýrumdali might have stuck in his memory for its magnificence and therefore he might have deliberately decided to use the sword in his adaptation.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the selected scenes depicting characters travelling to the Gulf of Bothnia and Austurvegur and their interactions with the locals showed that significant changes were introduced to the two adaptations. Influences from three saga genres in particular, namely *fornaldar*-, *riddara*- and *konungasögur*, are noticeable in the adaptations.

Fornaldar- and *riddarasögur* were the most popular saga genre in the 17th and 18th centuries (Clunies Ross 2010, 29), which is also attested in the manuscript distribution (see Driscoll 2009, 7–8). According to the principles of the polysystem theory, these genres therefore had the power to influence other genres at the time. The "Younger Egla" especially contains features pointing towards that direction; the place name Rússía appears in these genres and might have been borrowed from there, just like the name Dýrumdali for Egill's sword. There are many other features clearly borrowed from the two genres, such as creating the legendary sword Dragvendill and introducing a bridal-quest theme at the beginning of the saga. As seen from the examples above, place names were quite often omitted or confused, which, however, does not mean that the element of travel was not important in the two adaptations. Firstly, the *rímur* place an emphasis on sea journeys that could be described in four and more stanzas; secondly, the "Younger Egla" does not skip the travels themselves but mentions fewer and different place names than the medieval saga. The travel element is quite significant in *riddara*- and *fornaldarsögur* and in fact, locations in romances are also rather ill-defined and pictured in unrealistic fashion (see Kedwards (2020, 129); Rouse (2014, 19)).

Secondly, many of the "Younger Egla's" eastern place names—such as Rússía, Elfur, and Smalsarhorn—were clearly influenced by *konungasögur*. Unlike *riddara*- and *fornaldarsögur*, it has been argued that *konungasögur* were never a particularly popular genre (Ármann Jakobsson 2007, 399). Why then was this genre in particular influencing the adaptations of the medieval *Egils saga*, thus not fitting within the tenets of polysystem theory? A paratextual annotation from

some point in the saga's transmission gives us a small window into this process. This annotation, recorded on the first folio of the "Younger Egla" text in Holm Papp.15 fol., explicitly refers to a perceived connection between the "Younger Egla" and the *konungasögur* genre. This is further supported by the fact that the text of *Egils saga* in the Oslo manuscript, NB 313 fol., is surrounded by *Sverris saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, and *Saga af Vémundi kóngi og Víga-Skúta*. The medieval saga itself differs from other *Íslendingasögur*, particularly because Egill spent a significant amount of time at the court of the kings of Norway and England. In this respect, the saga greatly resembles a *konungasaga*. The author of the "Younger Egla" might have therefore treated his adaptation as a *konungasaga* and introduced place names that were known to him from other *konungasögur*. Taken together, these points suggest that it is the nature of the *Egils saga* narrative in particular that lends it a *konungasögur*-association, explaining why certain aspects of the saga come under the influence of a less popular genre.

The changes in society governed the changes in the adaptations, suppressing some features typical for the *Íslendingasögur* genre, and allowing the above-discussed features from other genres to enrich the narrative palette. When Iceland became part of the Norwegian kingdom in the 13th century, Icelanders wanted to remember past centuries and the saga authors were working with material of cultural memory. Chieftains in the 13th century could use their connection to the first settlers in order to retain their position in a changing society. This is one of the reasons the *landnám* episodes in the *Íslendingasögur*—recording the process of naming—are so important. The medieval *Egils saga* preserves one of the longest records of this activity, establishing a direct relationship with the land and affirming the influence of the settlers (Lethbridge 2016, 90). In the 17th century, wealth and power were held by the church, the state and few rich landowners. In Dalasýsla in the west of Iceland, for example, around the year 1700, 84,5% of all land was privately owned (Bragi Guðmundsson 1985, 28). These rich landowners had different kinds of relation to the past than their ancestors did. They did not want to relate themselves to the settlers and to farmers, as this did not have the same relevance it once did; their wealth and power was firmly established. The socio-economic context of the texts and manuscripts indicates that the texts were produced and read by wealthy, influential people. They were well-educated, had attended Latin schools in Iceland or universities abroad, owned old texts and had passions for literature and poetry. Eggert Björnsson, the *rímur*'s commissioner, was one of the richest and most powerful people in Iceland in the 17th century, and the owners of the manuscripts preserving the two adaptations were people from powerful families with good social positions. The texts were simply adapted to serve the needs and express the values and taste of the contemporary 17th-century audience and a society that had changed. The texts were supposed to entertain, shock and amuse their audience, which they keep on succeeding in until today.

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Words of a wizard: The lexical relationship between *Merlínússpá* and *Breta sögur*

Alicia Maddalena, University of York

The turn of the 13th century saw great political strife between church and state in both Britain and Iceland as the rise of powerful religious men challenged secular authority. It is in this climate that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* and *De Gestis Britonum* were translated from their original Latin into the Icelandic *Merlínússpá* and *Breta sögur*, respectively. This paper will examine the relationship between the poem and the saga by focussing on the lexicon of wisdom words in each text, taking into consideration both the Old Norse translation as well as the Latin source material.

Though the specific circumstances of *Breta sögur*'s translation are unknown, it is widely accepted that the translator of *Merlínússpá* was an Icelandic monk called Gunnlaugr Leifsson. Russell Poole suggests that Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* presents "a predominantly grim diorama of the secular leadership down the ages that could be used as a weapon in current controversies about the primacy of ecclesiastical versus secular authority," and that Gunnlaugr, who had connections to and admiration for revolutionary religious men, would have been an ideal candidate for such a translation project. This paper discusses the wisdom words associated with Merlin in Gunnlaugr's *Merlínússpá*, and considers how their use may be found to support Poole's claim that Gunnlaugr tended to elevate Merlin's status in *Merlínússpá* to a higher degree than in *Breta sögur*, using words to describe him that would be more usually associated with men of elevated status within the clergy, and what this might mean in terms of the political context in which the work was translated. Though originally translated as a separate entity from *Breta sögur*, and likely by a different translator, *Merlínússpá* was at some point embedded into the saga. This paper will discuss whether its eventual insertion into the prose serves to complement or subvert the narrative and style of the saga itself by looking at the wisdom words used in the saga, and specifically those associated with Merlin.

Die Interrelationen der Guðmundar sögur mit besonderem Fokus auf Guðmundar saga C

Magnús Hauksson, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel

Stefán Karlsson und Peter Foote haben einen wichtigen Beitrag dazu geleistet, die Verhältnisse zwischen den Guðmundar sögur biskups Arasonar untereinander und zu ihren Quellen zu klären. 1961 gab Peter Foote ein Stück aus dem jetzt als Guðmundar saga C (GC) benannten Text heraus (Foote 1961: 98-114), überliefert in einer Handschrift, die bis dahin nicht von der Forschung berücksichtigt worden war, Sth. Papp 4to nr. 4 (aus der Zeit ca. 1630-40). Stefán Karlsson hat sich vor allem in einem Vortrag auf der Saga Conference 1985 mit diesem Thema beschäftigt (Stefán Karlsson 1985: 983-1005). Er hat zudem die Guðmundar saga A (GA) und Guðmundar saga B (GB) herausgegeben (GA 1983 und GB 2018), und auf Basis seiner Vorarbeiten werden zurzeit die Ausgaben der GC und Guðmundar saga D (GD) erstellt. Alle diese Editionen bilden Grundlagen in Bezug auf die Untersuchung der Handschriftenüberlieferung und Textbeziehungen der Guðmundar sögur. 2017 hat Gunnvör Sigríður Karlsdóttir ihre Dissertation (Ph.D.) über die Sagas vorgelegt (Gunnvör Sigríður Karlsdóttir 2017). Bezüglich der Beziehungen der Guðmundar sögur und ihrer Quellen stimmen ihre Beobachtungen mit den Ergebnissen von Stefán Karlsson überein, doch behandelt sie darüber hinaus auch Form und Stil der einzelnen Sagas. Ich möchte im Folgenden den Stand der Forschung in Bezug auf die Verhältnisse dieser Sagas kurz zusammenfassen und danach die Position der (möglicherweise von Bergur Sökkason verfassten) GC im Besonderen betrachten, vor allem das Verhältnis der GC zur Íslendinga saga Sturla Þórðarsons.

1. Beziehungen der verschiedenen GS-Versionen und ihrer Quellen

Stefán Karlsson hat einerseits bereits dargelegt, dass die Guðmundar saga C (GC) hauptsächlich die GB als Grundlage hat (Stefán Karlsson 1985: 994-995), andererseits hat er in einem Festschriftartikel (Stefán Karlsson 1986: 277-286) stichhaltige Argumente dafür geliefert, dass GC der GD von Arngrímur Brandsson zugrunde liegt – und nicht umgekehrt. GC hat also eine interessante Mittelstellung in der Entwicklung der Guðmundar sögur, die anscheinend alle in der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jh. entstehen. Die Prestssaga Guðmundar góða, die Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar, die Íslendinga saga von Sturla Þórðarson und die Jarteinabók Guðmundar biskups wurden alle von GB verwendet – die drei erstgenannten auch von der GA. Diese drei Sagas sind Bestandteile der Sturlunga saga, und die Reykjarfjarðarbók (AM 122 b fol., die eine von zwei Haupthandschriften der Sturlunga saga) ist eine der Handschriften, die die Mirakelsammlung (Jarteinabók Guðmundar biskups, JG) bzw. Teile davon bewahrt. Es stellt sich die Frage, ob und inwiefern diese Texte bei der Erstellung der GC direkt Verwendung fanden, oder ob (alleine) die GB herangezogen wurde. Über den Stoff aus den genannten Sagas hinaus enthält GC zusätzliche Abschnitte (im Vergleich zu GB), wo andere Quellen als die bereits genannten zugrunde liegen. Hier geht es um Kapitel über den dritten Aufenthalt Guðmundurs in Norwegen 1222-26 und die Reise des Priesters Ketill nach Rom im Auftrag des Bischofs Guðmundur (GC. Kap. 97-104), den Brief des Bischofs von Stavanger an Guðmundur (GC. Kap. 113), die Heilige Elisabeth von Schönau (GC. Kap. 117) und die Umbettung der Gebeine Guðmundurs innerhalb der Domkirche von Hólar in der Amtszeit des Bischofs Jörundur Þorsteinsson (GC. Kap. 128-129). Dies sind die umfangreichsten Zusätze in GC verglichen mit GB. Es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, dass GC GB in den Teilen verwendet, in denen Prestssaga, Hrafns saga und Jarteinabók Guðmundar der GB zugrunde liegen. Die Argumentation betreffend kann auf Stefán Karlssons Ausführungen verwiesen werden (Stefán Karlsson 1985: 994-995). Neben den erwähnten inhaltlichen Zusätzen im Text von GC liegen die Veränderungen im Vergleich zu GB v.a. im stilistischen Bereich: Der Autor von GC neigt generell dazu, sich viel wortreicher auszudrücken als es GB tut. Zudem erlaubt er sich, an vielen Stellen Anmerkungen und auslegende Einschübe hinzuzufügen. Die umfangreichsten Abschnitte dieser Art sind

Tugendbeschreibungen Bischof Guðmundurs an drei Stellen der Saga. Sie stehen in Verbindung mit der Priesterweihe Guðmundurs (GC. Kap. 22), der Rückkehr von seiner Weihe zum Bischof (GC. Kap. 67) und seinem Tod (GC. Kap. 122). Diese Zusätze sind im gelehrten Stil verfasst.

Bezüglich der Entstehung von GA und GB kommt Stefán Karlsson zu dem Schluss, dass jeder der Autoren unabhängig voneinander zum großen Teil die gleichen Quellen verwendet hat. GA zieht zudem u.a. die Arons saga Hjörleifssonar heran, die für GB keine Rolle spielt (Stefán Karlsson 1983: clx-clxvi und Stefán Karlsson 1985: 989-990). Auch dieses spricht dafür, dass GA und GB nicht voneinander abhängen. Späteren Untersuchungen haben diese Ergebnisse von Stefán Karlsson nicht in Frage gestellt.

2. GC und Íslendinga saga

2.1. Allgemeine Erläuterungen

GB folgt dem Text und Stil ihrer Quellen sehr genau, und es ist verhältnismäßig einfach zu bestimmen, wo welche Vorlage verwendet wird. Wie sich die Verbindung von GB zur Íslendinga saga gestaltet, ist allerdings weniger leicht zu durchschauen. Die Íslendinga saga berichtet relativ ausführlich über den Episkopat Guðmundur Arasons. Die entsprechenden Kapitel sind in der GB zu finden. Es ist recht offensichtlich, dass die erhaltene Version der GB nicht der überlieferten Fassung der Íslendinga saga folgt. Stefán Karlsson ging daher in Stemmata und Kommentaren, die er hinterließ, davon aus, dass GB eine verlorene Vorgängerin *GB besitze (in Stemmata mit Z bezeichnet) (Magnús Hauksson 2018: ccxlvii). Als er 2006 verstarb, war er noch nicht zu einem endgültigen Schluss gekommen, ob diese Version ohne Zwischenstufen auf Sturlas ursprünglicherer (nicht erhaltener) Íslendinga saga beruhen mag, oder auf der Fassung der Íslendinga saga, die in der Sturlunga saga zu lesen ist. Als die Edition von GB für den Druck vorbereitet wurde, hielt man diese Frage im Stemma, das in der Einleitung zu sehen ist, offen; dort sind beide Möglichkeiten angegeben. Diese Frage begleitet daher diejenigen, die sich mit den Guðmundar sögur befassen, noch immer.

GC scheint sich in den Kapiteln, die ihren Ursprung in der Íslendinga saga haben, größtenteils auf die Vorgängerin der überlieferten GB zu stützen. Dies lässt sich u.a. daraus schließen, dass die Zusätze, die GB gegenüber der Íslendinga saga enthält, auch in GC vorkommen. Der Autor von GC folgt dem Text seiner Quellen allerdings nicht so genau, wie GB es tut – Wortlaut und Stil werden verändert. Bei einigen Abschnitten, die sich auf die Íslendinga saga zurückführen lassen, kommt allerdings der Verdacht auf, dass GC sie nicht aus der GB übernimmt (im Gegensatz zur oben angeführten Grundregel zum Verhältnis von GB und GC). Es handelt sich hier, wie gesagt, um Erzählungen aus dem Episkopat Guðmundur Arasons. Ins Auge fällt, dass in den betreffenden Abschnitten in GC inhaltliche Ergänzungen zu finden sind, die über das hinausgehen, was in der überlieferten Fassung von GB steht. Der Stoff dieser Zusätze von GC könnte aus Sturlas Íslendinga saga stammen. Die Vermutung liegt nahe, dass der Autor von GC neben GB eventuell auch direkten Zugang zur Íslendinga saga besaß. Dies ist jedoch keineswegs einfach zu durchschauen. Einige Stellen sollen hier betrachtet werden.¹

2.2. Hallur Kleppjárnsson und Kálfur Guttormsson

GC. Kap. 79. (SturlKålI: 295.13-296.13) Im Kapitel wird u.a. über den bewaffneten Konflikt zwischen Hallur Kleppjárnsson und Kálfur Guttormsson und die Tötung des Erstgenannten erzählt – ein Ereignis, das in GB nicht erwähnt wird, in der Sturlunga saga (d.h. in der Íslendinga saga) und GA aber schon. Dass GA die Grundlage hierfür ist, kommt kaum in Frage, da es in GC sonst keine eindeutigen Hinweise auf Stoffe gibt, die GA exklusiv übernimmt (z.B. aus der Arons saga Hjörleifssonar). Es ist daher sehr wahrscheinlich, dass hier die Íslendinga saga,

¹ Bei der Suche nach den relevanten Stellen im Text von GC waren die von Stefán Karlsson angefertigten Anmerkungen und Notizen zu GB und GC eine große Hilfe.

möglicherweise in einer anderen Form als der in den Sturlunga-Manuskripten erhaltenen, die Quelle von GC ist.

2.3. Gründung der Schule in Hólar

GC. Kap. 85. Nachdem von der Rückkehr des Bischofs Guðmundur aus Norwegen 1218 berichtet wurde, heißt es in der GB kurz und prägnant: „Setti hann þá skola at Holvm ok var Þorðr vfi meistarinn. Dreif þá til byskups martt lid ok horfdi til kostnadar.“ (GB, Kap. 103.2-4). Die gleichen Sätze stehen in der Sturlunga saga (SturlKåll: 332.5-7). Das vergleichbare Kapitel in GC (siehe Kap. 3 des Beitrags zum Stil) erzählt inhaltlich um einiges ausführlicher, aber vor allem angereichert mit Kommentaren darüber, wie Guðmundur sich dieser Sache annahm und wie sein Vorhaben aufgenommen wurde. Vermutlich stammen die Zusätze in diesem Teil eher vom Autor selbst als aus der Íslendinga saga. Denkbar ist, dass (mündliche) Erzählungen über den Schulbetrieb unter den Anhängern Bischof Guðmundurs, auf Hólar und in den Klöstern im Norden Islands kursierten.

2.4. Opferzahl nach der Helgastaðir-Schlacht

GC. Kap. 90.72. Gegen Ende des Kapitels finden sich Informationen über die Zahl der Opfer bei den Anhängern Bischof Guðmundurs im Kampf gegen Arnór Tumason und Sighvatur Sturluson bei Helgastaðir im August 1220. Die Frage ist, ob diese Informationen aus einer (verlorenen) Version der Íslendinga saga stammen und in den Sturlunga-Handschriften nicht aufgenommen wurden – die Zahl erscheint nirgendwo außer in GC. Möglich ist allerdings auch, dass sie vom Autor selbst stammen bzw. wieder eine verlorene mündliche/oder schriftliche Quelle verwendet wurde.

2.5. Nachspiel der Grímsey-Schlacht

GC. Kap. 95. Nachspiel der Grímsey-Schlacht im April 1222 und Erzählung von den Reisen Aron Hjörleifssons und dessen Auseinandersetzungen mit den Männern Sturla Sighvatssons in den Jahren 1224-25. GB überliefert diesen Teil nicht. Es stellt sich die Frage, ob die Handschrift von GB, die GC verwendete, diese Erzählung doch enthielt, oder ob hier die Íslendinga saga als Vorlage diente (SturlKåll: 374.11-379.10). Die Einzelheiten in den betreffenden Kapiteln der Sturlunga saga bzw. der Íslendinga saga kommen zum größten Teil auch in der GC vor, und der Wortlaut erscheint äußerst ähnlich – zumindest zeigt sich, dass die Texte nahe verwandt sind. Minimale Abweichungen in der Ausdrucksweise lassen sich in GC allerdings häufig finden, und ebenso gibt es kurze inhaltliche Zusätze und Auslassungen im Vergleich zum überlieferten Text der Íslendinga saga in der Sturlunga saga. Hier wird ein Stück als Beispiel genommen, das von der Tötung Sigmundurs snagi að Eyðihúsum durch Aron erzählt:

Sigmundur snagi bio að Eyðihúsum/ Hann hafði Stulla settann til hofudz Aron/ ef hann kjaemi framm j þeim sueitum/ Enn er aleid jolin talar Aron við Starkað/ að þeir veitti Sigmundi vmmSAT/ er hann setur mier til hofudz/ Olli hann og micklu vmm það er eg drap eigi Sigvat j Grímssey þá er þeir foru að hinum goda Gudmunndi byskupi/ Starkaður bað hann rada/ Var þetta tíjunnda dag jola/ Eru þeir Aron j stackgardi nockrum nærri bænum/ Þaðann var skammt til annars/ wr huorium Sigmundur færði hey og madur með honum og villdi Aron eigi rada til þeirra/ Enn vmm kuolldit er nidmyrkur var mikid foru þeir Aron heim til Eyðihwsa/ Stod Aron vtann dyra við balkan er hláinn var framm af vegnum/ enn Starkaður geck jnn og kuaddi sier greida/ Helga frilla Sigmundar kuad þeim onnguann vannda vera við Starkað og fieck hann þar alls ecki/. Sigmundur var einn kallmadur aa bænum/ Geck hann framm j annddyrid fyrer honum Starkað/ og spurdi hui hann rækist aa monnum vmm nætur/ Starkaður kuadst trautt hitta til wtidyranna/ og gackt þu fyrer bonndi er þier eru gonngin kunnare/ Hann var hamælltur og matti giorla heira huad er hann sagði/ Enn er Sigmundur geck wt j dyrnar/ lagði Aron l til hanns saxinu Tumanaut og mællti/ Hier hittunst við nu Sigmundur enn næst adur j Grímmsey/ hrinnanddi honum daudum j dyrnar/. Sijðann geinngu þeir jnn og raku folk allt j stofu/ Biuggu epter það bui sem þeim líjkadi/ huijlandist þar meðann myrkuast var/ enn leitudu sem fyrst j burt sudur til Raudamels/ veranndi þar vmm hrijd aa laun/ Enn er voradi

for Aron sudur j Odda til Haralldz Sæmunndarsonar/ veranndi þar j skoti vmm tijma/ (GC. Kap. 95.160-188)

In diesem Stück sind einige Varianten gegenüber anderen Texten interessant. Zum Beispiel heisst es in Sturlunga, dass der Gefolgsmann Arons, Starkaður Bjarnarson, das Gehöft auf Eyðihúsum betreten habe „ok það ser greiða“ (SturlKáll: 378.17) – „kuaddi sier greida“ heißt es in GC (95.174) wie in GA. In GC wird von der Reaktion Helgas, der Geliebten Sigmundurs, berichtet: „Helga frilla Sigmundar kuad þeim onnguann vannda vera vid Starkad og fieck hann þar alls ecki/.“ (GC. Kap. 95.174-6) In GA lautet der entsprechende Satz: „Helga frilla Sig(mundar) quaz ecke mundo gefa honum.“ (GA. Kap. 222.13-14) Dieses Detail steht nicht in der Sturlunga saga. Es lässt sich kaum sagen, ob dies ursprünglich in der Íslendinga saga stand und bei einer Abschrift wegfiel, oder erst, als die Sturlunga saga erstellt wurde – oder (ohne Vorlage) in GC und GA eingefügt wurde. Es ist beachtenswert, dass sowohl GA wie GC entsprechende Sätze enthalten. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass deren Quelle erwähnte, wie Helga auf die Bitte Starkaðurs reagierte.

Der Autor von GC hat aber ebenfalls einen Textteil ausgelassen, falls sein Text der Íslendinga saga (an dieser Stelle) dem der heute bewahrten glich. Die Phrase aus der Sturlunga saga/Íslendinga saga, die auf Starkaðurs Worte „bað sér greiða“ folgt, steht bis auf die ersten fünf Worte, die an anderer Stelle erscheinen, nicht in GC: „Sigmundr var einn karla heima oc hafði hattat í dags-ljose, er fria-dagr var. Helga, frilla Sigmundar, quad ekki uatn inni, enn þörn uildo drekka. Sigmundr bad ser faa skiolur ok lez taka mundo vatnn. Starkaðr bauvd at fara með honum; hann iatti þui. Gengo þeir til dura.“ (SturlKáll: 378.17-22) GA erzählt ebenfalls davon, dass Starkaður sich hingelegt hatte, erwähnt aber nicht, dass er hinausgeht, um Wasser zu holen. Dort steht, nachdem Helga die Bitte ablehnt: „Gengu þeir þa til ute duranna, Sigmundr og Starkaðr.“ (GA. Kap. 222.14) Danach wird Sigmundur von Aron getötet, der vor der Tür auf ihn wartet. In allen Texten wird berichtet, dass er Sigmundur mit dem Sax Tumanautur ersticht, den Tumi Sighvatsson besessen hatte.

In GC heißt es weiter: „Hier hittunst vid nu Sigmundur enn næst adur j Grijmmsey/ hrinndanndi honum daudumm j dyrnar/.“ (GC. Kap. 95.183-4) Damit spricht Aron die Rechtfertigung seiner Tat an, da Sturla Sighvatsson Sigmundur nach der Grimsey-Schlacht auf Aron angesetzt hatte. Dies wird weder in GA noch in der Sturlunga saga/Íslendinga saga erwähnt. In GC (und GA) ist die Begründung dafür, dass Sigmundur hinausgeht, gegenüber der Sturlunga saga also verändert. Sigmundur folgt dort Starkaður zur Tür, da ihm seine Bitte verweigert wurde. Sigmundur fragt ihn in GC (nicht in GA) direkt, „hui hann rækist aa monnum vmm nætur“; in der Sturlunga saga holt er Wasser, weil Kinder durstig sind. In der Sturlunga saga (und GA) wird die Wehrlosigkeit Sigmundurs dadurch betont, dass berichtet wird, er habe sich schon schlafen gelegt. Von Bedeutung ist dabei sicherlich auch, dass Freitag ist und der zehnte (GC) bzw. neunte Tag (Sturlunga saga und GA) der Weihnachtszeit.

Der mögliche Verdacht, dass die Reaktion Helgas auf Starkaðurs Bitte durch einen Fehler beim Abschreiben während des Erstellungsprozesses der Sturlunga saga entfallen sein mag, wird durch die Betrachtung der Auslassungen und inhaltlichen Veränderungen von GC gegenüber der Sturlunga saga (insgesamt) abgeschwächt. Es scheint sich hier doch um eine bewusste Abänderung zu handeln. Die gemeinsamen Details in den Texten von GA und GC gegenüber der Sturlunga saga machen die Lage noch schwerer zu durchschauen, könnten aber darauf hindeuten, dass GA und GC auf Versionen der Íslendinga saga beruhen, die ähnlich gewesen sind.

2.6. Sturla Sighvatssons Auslandsreise

GC. Kap. 114. In diesem Kapitel steht der Beginn der Erzählung über die Auslandsreise von Sturla Sighvatsson im Jahr 1233 – allerdings umfasst diese nur wenige Zeilen. Ein entsprechender Abschnitt ist in GB nicht enthalten, dafür aber in der Sturlunga saga (SturlKáll: 450.7-19). Die Erzählung reißt in GC allerdings dort ab, wo erzählt wird, dass Sturla sich bei König Hákon aufhält und Jarl Skúli sich mit dem König versöhnt. Danach ist die dritte Lücke in

der Haupthandschrift von GC. Die wesentlichen Punkte in diesem kurzen Abschnitt werden in GC offensichtlich aus der Íslendinga saga übernommen. Es ist daher wahrscheinlich, dass die GC auch von der Romreise Sturlas und seinem Zwischenstopp in Norwegen bei der Heimreise nach Island berichtete, so wie es die Sturlunga saga macht.

2.7. Flatatungufundur

GC. Kap. 115 (und 116). Die Begegnung in Flatatunga (Flatatungufundur) im Frühjahr 1234. In der dritten Lücke der Haupthandschrift GC wurde vermutlich von der Vorbereitung für die Begegnung in Flatatunga von Sighvatur Sturluson einerseits und Órækja Snorrason und Kolbeinn Arnórsson andererseits erzählt. Im erhaltenen letzten Teil von Kap. 115 in GC wird detaillierter von den Geschehnissen in Flatatunga berichtet als in GB; an der entsprechenden Stelle in GB ist die Erzählung im Vergleich zur Íslendinga saga und GA gekürzt. Es ist schwierig, das Verhältnis der Texte hier exakt zu bestimmen, da es sich nur um ein kurzes Textstück handelt, das keine Möglichkeit zu einem ausführlichen Vergleich bietet. GC könnte hier die Informationen aus der Íslendinga saga verwendet haben, ohne GB als Zwischenschritt zu nutzen. Oder bietet die erhaltene Version der GB im Vergleich zu ihrer verlorenen Vorlage *GB, die ausführlicher war und der Sturlunga saga und der GA stärker ähnelte, eine gekürzte Variante der Erzählung? Die ältere und möglicherweise detailliertere Fassung *GB könnte der Verfasser der GC genutzt haben.

2.8. Reflexionen

Die vorherigen Beispiele berechtigen zu folgenden Überlegungen: Untersucht man die Verbindung zwischen GC und dem Teil der GB, der den Episkopat Guðmundurs beschreibt, d.h. den Zeitraum, für den die Íslendinga saga von Sturla Þórðarson Hauptquelle der GB ist, zeigt sich, dass in GC mehr Stoff enthalten ist als in GB. Natürlich kann dessen Ursprung unterschiedlich sein. Der erhaltene Text von GB, der beim Vergleich mit GC herangezogen wird, ist nicht der Text, der bei der Entstehung von GC als Vorlage gedient hat. Eine Erklärung für manche der Zusätze in GC könnte daher sein, dass ein verlorenen und ausführlicherer GB-Text, also *GB, herangezogen wurde. Ein weiteres Problem ist, dass uns die Íslendinga saga nur in der Version bekannt ist, wie sie in den Handschriften der Sturlunga erhalten ist. Der Autor der GB hatte, aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach, eine selbständige Fassung der Íslendinga saga, die nicht Teil der Sturlunga war, als Vorlage. Diese wird an manchen Stellen anders erzählt haben als der Text in den erhaltenen Handschriften. Der Vergleich der genannten Werke wird dadurch begrenzt, dass mit relativ vielen unsicheren Größen gearbeitet werden muss.

Hinzu kommt, dass, wie zuvor erwähnt, wohl einiges Material vom Verfasser von GC selbst stammen könnte. Eine Aufgabe ist daher, dies vom übrigen Zusatzmaterial in GC zu trennen, das im Vergleich zu GB zu finden ist. Dabei liegt es nahe, das Hauptaugenmerk auf den Stil der besagten Textstücke und deren Inhalt zu richten.

3. Stil

Der Stil und Erzählweise von Sturla Þórðarsons Íslendinga saga wurde sowohl von Þórir Óskarsson (Þorleifur Hauksson & Þórir Óskarsson 1994: 294-307) als auch von Úlfar Bragason (Úlfar Bragason 2010: 141-158) als scheinbar objektiv und neutral beschrieben; der Autor hält sich eher im Hintergrund, trotzdem spielen seine Ansichten sicherlich in Auswahl und Anordnung des Materials eine Rolle und kommen auch in gelegentlichen subjektiven Kommentaren zum Ausdruck. Úlfar Bragason betont, dass Sturla mit der Wahl des Erzählten und der Perspektive durchaus das Verständnis und die Interpretation des Lesers lenkt. In diesem Zusammenhang ist in den Kapiteln über Guðmundur Arason zu berücksichtigen, dass Þórður Sturluson, Sturlas Vater, einer dessen treuesten Unterstützer war und Sturla den Bischof persönlich kannte. Auf der anderen Seite waren nahe Verwandte von Sturla unter den erbittertsten Gegnern des Bischofs. Weitere Stilmerkmale der Íslendinga saga sind z.B., dass die Sprache kaum Merkmale des gelehrten Stils erkennen lässt, auch wenn sich einzelne lateinische Wörter finden; rhetorische Figuren werden ebenfalls nur moderat angewendet. Diese Merkmale

kennzeichnen auch den Stil der Kapitel in GB, die ihre Wurzeln in der Íslendinga saga haben, schließlich handelt es sich hauptsächlich um eine Kopie von Sturlas Text.

Der Stil der Zusätze in GB ist unterschiedlich, je nachdem um welche Art von Ergänzungen es sich handelt. In den redaktionellen Abschnitten finden sich deutlich gelehrte Stilmerkmale. In anderen Erweiterungen ist der Stil nicht auffällig gelehrt, am ehesten noch im Gespräch zwischen Guðmundur Arason und dem Erzbischof in Niðarós (während des zweiten Auslandsaufenthalts des Bischofs).

Der Stil von GC variiert ebenfalls je nach Art des „Texttyps“. In erzählenden Stücken sind die Merkmale des gelehrten Stils gedämpfter als in solchen Abschnitten, in denen der Autor Exkurse macht, den Text auslegt oder erklärt. Diese Stücke stellen in den allermeisten Fällen Zusätze zu den zugrundeliegenden Textteilen in GB dar und befinden sich oft am Ende eines erzählenden Abschnittes. – Die Merkmale des gelehrten Stils kommen also durchaus in beiden Versionen vor, der Unterschied liegt vor allem in ihrer Häufigkeit und Intensität. In GC sind die gelehrten Stilmerkmale viel auffälliger als in GB und sie kommen mehr oder weniger in allen Teilen der Saga vor. (Gunnvör S. Karlsdóttir hat in ihrer Studie den Stil in allen Guðmundar sögur behandelt – speziell zum Stil der GB und GC siehe Gunnvör Sigríður Karlsdóttir 2017: 112-119 und 159-166; siehe auch Stefán Karlsson 1985: 998-999).

Die Geschichte von Grímseyjarför (der Fahrt nach Grímsey) von Sighvatur Sturluson und Sturla Sighvatsson kann als Beispiel für die Erzählung einer Begebenheit genommen werden, in der die Abfolge einzelner Ereignissen in der Íslendinga saga in GB genau beibehalten wird. Auch der Wortlaut ist in GB fast vollständig derselbe wie in der Sturlunga/Íslendinga saga, doch mit Variationen an einigen Stellen. Zwei wichtige Zusätze gibt es allerdings im GB-Text im Vergleich zur Sturlunga saga: Gegen Ende der Geschichte, als es um das Schicksal Guðmundurs und seiner Männer nach dem Kampf geht, wird erzählt, dass Sighvatur und seine Männer Guðmundur so hart behandelten, dass ihm drei Rippen gebrochen wurden (GB. Kap. 108.98-103). Zudem findet sich ein langer Abschnitt über die Reise von der Insel von Bischof Guðmundur, Sturla, Sighvatur und ihrer Mannschaft bei schlechtem Wetter (GB. Kap. 108.105-129). Sighvatur wollte Guðmundur in seinem Boot haben, aber Guðmundur lehnte ab. Sighvatur nahm daraufhin das Gewand des Bischofs mit in sein Boot. Der Bericht von GC basiert auf der GB-Erzählung, alle gemeinsamen Details von GB und Sturlunga saga werden in GC übernommen. Die Zusätze von GB finden sich fast komplett auch in GC. Der Bischof soll schwer geschlagen worden sein, die Rippenbrüche werden aber nicht erwähnt. Der Reiseabschnitt von GB erscheint auch in GC mit dem ganzen Material aus GB, jedoch stark umformuliert. GC ändert sonst den Wortlaut und erweitert nur geringfügig. Hier ein Beispiel – Aron Hjörleifsson und Sturla Sighvatsson geraten an einander:

Sturla stack þar stafni að sem Aron var fyrir/ Hann var j raudum kyrtli yfir bryniu og hafdi drepit vpp blóðunum/. Þeir Stulla hlupu fyrir bord þegar skipin kenndu nidur/ Var þar mol og brwk fyrir ofann/ Stodu menn byskups vppa brwkinu/. Stulla tok til orða/ og þar er Aron fi<an>dinn vppi</> Latum hann eigi vndann komast/ Hliop Stulla vpa brwkid/ og Sigmundur snagi aa adra honnd honum/ Aron hliop moti Stullu og lagdi til hanns/ og bad hann til sækia/ sagdi merkid þar fyrir/ vopn Tuma brodur hanns/ Stulla lagdi spioti til Arons vmm þuerann munnenn/ og wt vmm kinnina/. Aron bleiddist eigi við sarid/ leggiandi annann tíjma til Stullu so hartt að hann fiell vndann aa brukinu/ og bar bryniuna af lærenu/ Lagdi Aron þar til/ Enn Sigmundur kastadi fyrir skildi og kom þar j lagid/. Stulla spratt skiott vp og l bad menn síjna að sækia diarfliga/ Var þa sott að Aroni fast/ Stodu spiotin so þikt aa honum að hann matti trautt falla til jarðar/ Vard hann þa miog saar/ enn þo minnur enn þeir hugdu/ (GC. Kap. 93.38-56)

Das Textstück umfasst insgesamt 181 Worte – der parallele Text in GB 178 Worte, in Sturlunga 182 Worte (SturlKåll: 357.2-18). Einige Varianten gegenüber GB und Sturlunga sind festzustellen, aber der deutlichste Unterschied liegt in den Worten „Aron bleiddist eigi við sarid/ leggiandi annann tíjma til Stullu“ (GC. Kap. 93.48-49), wo in GB „Ar(vn) lagdi jmot til Stvllv“ (GB. Kap. 108.52) steht. Parataktischer Satzbau ist dominierend – es gibt nur wenige Nebensätze

im Textabschnitt, der im Großen und Ganzen die Merkmale der Íslendinga saga zeigt, aus der er ursprünglich entnommen sein dürfte. Der gelehrte Stil kommt nur in einem Punkt zum Vorschein, in der Anwendung des Partizip Präsens „leggjandi“, das eben in einer Umformulierung von GC vorkommt.

Es bietet sich an, diesen erzählenden Abschnitt mit dem Zitat über die Tötung Sigmundurs snagi weiter vorne im Kap. 2.5 zu vergleichen. Der Stil der Íslendinga saga spiegelt sich weitestgehend in der Erzählung, am Ende des Zitats in den letzten drei Zeilen treten jedoch Merkmale des gelehrten Stils auf, vor allen Dingen die Partizip Präsens-Formen („hrindandi“ und „verandi“) und ein Medium-Passiv eines Partizip Präsens („hvílandiz“), aber solche treten recht häufig in GC auf. (Siehe zu diesen Merkmalen Stefán Karlsson 1985: 994-995 und Sverrir Tómasson 1982: 34-35, 169-170.)

Wie bereits erwähnt haben die Stücke, die vermutlich dem Verfasser von GC zuzuschreiben sind, die Form von redaktionellen Abschnitten, oder stellen längere oder kürzere Einschübe dar. Sie nehmen unverhohlenen Partei für die Hauptperson, preisen diese und zeigen deren Tugenden und lobenswerte Lebensweise (recht lange Tugendbeschreibungen des Bischofs Guðmundur finden sich in drei Kapiteln, dem 22., 67. und 120.). Der Stil ist gelehrt und erhaben, unterscheidet sich deutlich vom Stil der Íslendinga saga bzw. dem Teil in GB, der auf dem Werk Sturlas beruht. An mehreren Stellen, besonders am Anfang und noch öfter gegen Ende der Kapitel, findet sich Stoff gleicher Art – kürzere Stücke als die Tugendbeschreibungen – erklärende, interpretierende und leitende Bemerkungen.

Die Tugendbeschreibungen zeigen sicherlich am ehesten den „persönlichen“ Stil des GC-Verfassers, d.h. den Stil, den er verwendet, wenn er keiner bestimmten Quelle folgt und über christlichen Stoff wie eine tugendvolle Lebensweise schreibt. Folgendes Beispiel stammt aus der zweiten Tugendbeschreibung:

Sem hann kemur heim til Hola voru þar fyrir marger hieradzmenn/ frændur hanns og viner/ gioranndi aller sem verdugt var/ samþyckiliga motgonngu sijnum byskupi/. Gladdist nu heilog Holakirkia og hennar kennimenn/ veitanndi sæmiligustu processionem sijnum formanni/ Og miog vidurkuæmiliga fagnadi heilog kirkia j jnnleidslu þessa sijns hofdingia/ þuiad þott hennar iij. hiner næstu formenn/ þad er ad skilia/ Ketill/ Biornn/ og Brannndur/ væri merkiliger menn og fræger hofdingiar fyrir margar greiner/ byrttist þessi agiætur gudz aastvin Gudmunndur byskup huorium framar giæddur gudligumm aastargiofummm/ huad audsijniligt verdur fyrir þau kraptaverk er lesin hafa verid/ og enn munu sijdar lesast j þessare sogu er gudlig milldi virdist ad sijna fyrir l hanns bæn og verdleika/ (GC. Kap. 67.17-32)

Vor allem in dem längsten Satz (77 Worte) fällt hier der hypotaktische Satzbau ins Auge, in den anderen weniger. Ansonsten ist die Anwendung des Partizip Präsens anstatt finiter Verbformen und des Medium-Passivs für Passiv zu beobachten, zudem auch das Vorkommen von „sem“ als temporales Bindewort und „hver“/„hvat“ als Relativpronomen.

Jene Stücke, von denen vermutet werden darf, dass sie direkt aus der Íslendinga saga stammen, stimmen hinsichtlich des Stils mit diesem Stück kaum überein, zumal es sich bei ihnen zumeist um Nacherzählungen von Geschehnissen handelt. Als im Stil abweichend erscheint insbesondere die Textstelle zur Schule in Hólar. Hier handelt es sich wahrscheinlich eher um einen Einschub des GC-Verfassers als um einen verlorenen Text aus der Íslendinga saga. Der Stil ist eher mit dem Stil der Tugendbeschreibungen verwandt.

Og medur þui ad hinum goda Gudmunndi byskupi þotti verda mikid þrot lærdomsinz/ bædi af þui ad marger lærder menn hofdu anndast/ aa hanns burtverutijma/ enn hiner litlu færri/ ad sig hieilldu so osidsama fyrir samneiti vandrædamanna/ og marga ospekt liotz lifnadar/ ad honum sijndist eigi þolannda ad þuiliiker stædi j gudz pionustu/ ef audru mætti vid koma/ Setti hann skola med bestu manna radi heima ad Holumm/ skipanndi þar til meistara vel lærdann mann Þord l vfsa/ Skilldu j þann skola jnn gannga til læringar nær huor sem nema villdi/ huortt sem hann atti meira kosti edur minna/ huar fyrir jnnann lijtils tijma vard miog mannmarrr aa stadnum/ og horfdi til mikils kostnadar/ þuiad þott rijker menn giæfi mikid goss med sonum

sijnum/ voru þeir fleiri ed líttid eda alls ecki hófdu sier til kostar/ nema það er byskup veitti þeim af sinni mildi/ þuiad huggiædi og myskunsemi var hin sama med honum nu sem fyrr er lesid/. Marger stodu vel vnder med frammlogumm vid stadinn/ gefanndi Gudmunndi byskupi godar giafer sem hann kom heim til stolsins/ enn hann gaf það allt j naudsyn þurftugra/ huor hanns giæskuverk aufundadi ovin mannkynnsinns/ eggianndi framm med sinni jllsku hanns fyrri ofsoknara/ ad fyrer hanns aeggian og þeirra grimmd/ mætti þessi hinn godi gudz vin Gudmunndur byskup meirumm meingiordumm/ enn nockurnn tijma fyrr/ af sijnum vndermonnum/ huad þessu næst er nockud greinannda (GC. Kap. 85.34-60)

In diesem Zitat fallen die gleichen Merkmale wie in dem Abschnitt aus der Tugendbeschreibung auf: Der v.a. hypotaktische Satzbau ist teilweise anspruchsvoll. Der längste Satz besteht aus 79 Worten und zahlreichen Nebensätzen. Es finden sich Beispiele für Partizip Präsens, angewendet anstatt finiter Verbformen, „sem“ als temporales Bindewort und „hver“/„hvat“ als Relativpronomen.

Alle genannten Merkmale prägen den gesamten Text der GC zu einem gewissen Grad, aber am deutlichsten treten sie in den Stücken vor Augen, die von den Tugenden des Bischofs Guðmundur Arason erzählen (siehe das Zitat weiter vorne in diesem Kapitel).

4. Fazit

Die Ergebnisse dieser Überlegungen über die Beziehung von GC zur Íslendinga saga sind nicht eindeutig – es ist sehr schwierig festzustellen, ob die überlieferte Version von GC auf der verlorenen Íslendinga saga oder dem verlorenen Stammtext GB (*GB) basiert. Aus den besprochenen Beispielen lässt sich jedoch ableiten, dass GC ein Werk mit anderem Wortlaut und teilweise anderen Informationen verwendete als die erhaltene GB-Version. Es ist unklar, wie sich die verlorenen Versionen *GB, *GC und *Íslendinga saga genau zu den erhaltenen Versionen der gleichen Werke verhalten.

Die Autoren von GB und GC arbeiten unterschiedlich. GB folgt den Quellen genau und ändert Wortlaut und Stil fast nicht. Der GC-Autor erlaubt sich mehr Freiheit im Umgang mit den Quellen. Inhaltlich hält er sich meist eng an sie, weicht aber zeitweise davon ab, insbesondere schreibt er um, erweitert seinen Text im Vergleich mit der Quelle und wendet beinahe durchgängig gelehrten Stil an, der je nach Thema aber unterschiedlich intensiv ist, am stärksten ausgeprägt in tendenziösen Kommentaren und Lob auf die Hauptfigur, weniger stark in den Erzählungen einzelner Ereignissen. Diese Änderungen in GC machen es schwieriger, die Texte zu vergleichen, da es sich meistens nicht um rein inhaltliche Zusätze und einzelne Varianten handelt.

Betrachtet man jedoch die stilistischen Merkmale der betreffenden Textstücke, so lässt sich daraus schließen, dass die meisten von ihnen ursprünglich aus der verlorenen Íslendinga saga stammen könnten.

Das Stück über die Gründung einer Schule in Hólar besitzt eine Parallele in einem wesentlich kürzeren Textstück in der Íslendinga saga und GB, wie sie jetzt erhalten sind, und der Stil des GC-Stückes ist viel gelehrter als in den anderen Stücken. Inhaltlich bietet es Lob auf Bischof Guðmundur und ist somit mit den Tugendbeschreibungen und anderen parteiergreifenden Bemerkungen in der Saga verwandt. Auch der Stil ist ähnlich. Das fragliche Stück stammt daher wahrscheinlich vom Autor von GC.

Übersetzung: Irene R. Kupferschmied, Kira Veit, Henriette Schoeneck und Mathias Kruse.

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***Hávamál*: Date, internal coherence and context of composition**

Mikael Males, University of Oslo

While dating methodology according to formal criteria has advanced in recent decades, the same cannot be said of dating based on content. Three crucial parameters in particular warrant discussion: how to exclude coincidental correspondences between texts, the specificity of criteria used and their diagnostic validity. In addition, the field of Eddic scholarship is in need of an integrated methodology that encompasses both formal and literary criteria without losing a sense of coherence. This paper explores the issues at stake with a focus on *Hávamál*, arguing that a spread of strong formal or literary criteria across stanzas 32, 71, 76–77, 81 and 129 suggests that the whole poem was composed before c. 1000. Some of these criteria have recently been shown to be stronger than scholars have previously thought, and the case for the strength of others will here be made for the first time.

The spread of criteria begs the question of whether the poem was not composed as a single unit, in spite of its apparent segmentation. Here, the case for unitary composition will be made based on poetic analogues. Finally, one question that is often left hanging in Eddic scholarship is in what context the early poems may have been composed. This is not surprising, since the poems are anonymous and difficult to date, but the discussion has been hampered by perceptions of Eddic poetry as the popular, traditional counterpart to elitist and individual skaldic poetry. This paper argues that such notions are poor guides, and that a number of indications point towards similar court settings as those of skaldic poetry.

Shaping courtly identity: The transformation of the werewolf in Old Norse-Icelandic adaptations of Marie de France's *Bisclavret*

Matthew Malone, Durham University

This paper examines the transformation of the werewolf motif in two Old Norse-Icelandic narratives, both of which are adaptations of Marie de France's Anglo-Norman *Bisclavret*. In particular, it explores the interplay between metamorphosis, exile and courtly identity and how this dynamic is redefined within a Norse literary-cultural context. Contained in the larger collection known as *Strengleikar*, the Norwegian *Bisclaretz ljóð* (*Bisclaret*) is a largely faithful translation of its French source. At the same time, however, the alterations and linguistic nuances of the Norse text, most notably the translator's coinage of the term *vargúlfr* (literally meaning 'outlaw-wolf'), reveal a conscious effort to bridge the gap between the French and Norse werewolf traditions. The result is an adaptation which addresses the moral ambiguities surrounding Marie's werewolf in order to emphasise the exemplary qualities of the titular knight and thereby convey the salvific nature of courtly behaviour. The werewolf motif is used to dissimilar effect in *Tíódéls saga*, a later Icelandic adaptation of *Bisclaret*, in which the protagonist is trapped in the form of a *hvítbjörn* (polar bear) rather than a wolf. While maintaining the same narrative pattern, *Tíódéls saga* marks a more radical departure from its predecessors, as the author greatly expands the story and reassigns the roles played by several of its characters. Here, the king cuts a far more antagonistic figure, and so Tíódél instead forms a rapport with a poor knight, a friendship which enables both characters to transcend their marginal positions within the court. In this way, *Tíódéls saga* takes a far more irreverent stance towards a courtly society which proves incapable of distinguishing between outward appearance and inner reality. There remains a dearth of criticism for both *Bisclaret* and *Tíódéls saga*, but a close literary-critical examination of the discrepancies between these texts reveals new ways of understanding how Old Norse-Icelandic adaptations of European romance engaged with and interrogated courtly values.

Hér er bleikr kallaðr hræddr, þvíat bliknan kemr eptir hræzlu—Fearless to fearful: Reconstructing fear in Old Norse literature

Teodoro Manrique Antón, University of Castilla-La Mancha

In my presentation I will explore some aspects of the literal and figurative conceptualization of “fear” in Old Norse texts. In order to analyze the transition from a typically “fearless” Viking society towards a God fearing one based on repentance and fear of divine punishment, I will mainly use Conceptual Metaphor Theory as developed by Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999 and Kövecses 2000, 2002 and 2005. I am also especially interested in the way certain words and expressions were adapted to render the new emotions imported into Iceland with the change in religion and literary fashions. Special attention will be paid to the definition and weighing of Old Norse fear-terms, which I will classify into different groups depending on their degree of literalness. In my reconstruction I will also try to answer briefly the question about whether or not educated writers of the Saga Period were aware of the differences between psychological and physical aspects in the conceptualization of the emotion of fear, and whether somatic and non-somatic fear related expressions were shaped in Old Norse by universal emotions concepts or by local cultural knowledge.

Eitt sinn skal hverr deyja: On the relationship between kinship duties and the cursed treasure in *Völsunga saga*

Mario Matín Páez, Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (Spain) / Complutense University of Madrid

The present lecture will analyze the relationship between kinship structure and destiny that characterizes *Völsunga saga* (c. 1250s-1260s). Comparisons between the saga and its sources will be considered, as their differences may reveal new concerns and ideologies representative of the context in which they were produced. I will examine how the importance of consanguine kinship and natal family is overestimated. This can be appreciated in the marriage agreements, where the daughters obey their parents' will despite their reluctance to enter into marriage with their future husbands. When conflict breaks out between the families, the wife often favors her natal family by exercising violence over her husband and sons. The result is no other than the destruction and obliteration of family relationships. The characteristics of these marriages usually have similar connotations: a lack of willingness of the bride to marry the chosen groom, a strong influence of the parents over the marriage agreement, and a lack of affection or love of the wife towards her husband. This contrasts with positive relationships in which parental influence is absent, the willingness of the couple is manifest, and there are no negative consequences following the marriage. We contend that this emphasis on the positive aspects of the conjugal relationships and bride's consent runs parallel to ideas and rules that the Church tried to establish in Iceland and Norway during the 13th Century.

However, if we take the saga as a unified narrative, a connection between its themes can be established. It will be argued that greediness and the effects of the cursed treasure of Andvari have clear parallels to the effects of undesirable marriages and other duties imposed by kinship structure, as they also obliterate life and family relationships. Besides the fact that the duties that kinship structure imposes on its members are as dangerous as greed and as disastrous as a curse, we will argue that their influence on the actions and the bodies of the individuals are also as inexorable as fate.

Is Valhøll a paradise? Adaptations of Norse myths in modern Japanese fiction

Sayaka Matsumoto, Fukui Prefectural University

Despite the differences in time and place, a substantial amount of fiction based on Norse myths or legends has been produced in Japan. Examining the features of these adaptations can reveal the characteristics of Japanese culture and expand our understanding of Norse culture. By surveying approximately 50 comic (manga) titles, this study revealed that images of Valhøll, where the supreme god Óðinn gathers dead warriors from the human world, were frequently used. Thus, this study selects two outstanding titles and examines how they reuse the myths.

The first case is the *Valkyrie Profile* series, a role-playing video game series. Its notable message is that the gods are undesirable for the human world. In medieval sources such as in *Gesta Danorum*, Christian hostility was the primary reason for the unfavorable descriptions of Norse gods. Compared to this, religion does not play as large a role in the *Valkyrie Profile* series; instead, the focus is on human independence and freedom.

The second case is *Vinland Saga*, a manga by Makoto Yukimura published in 2005. Inspired by medieval Vinland sagas, this historical fiction narrates the growth of an Icelandic boy in eleventh-century Northern Europe. The title demonstrates two contrasting images of Valhøll: one is a heavenly paradise for warriors and the other is a bloody, underground world of the dead. These positive and negative images represent the characters' attitudes toward violence. The protagonist Thorfinn decides to ban himself from using violence and no longer perceive Valhøll as a paradise. *Vinland Saga* depicts the conflict between Christianity and Norse beliefs as a historical background, but it was not Christianity that made Thorfinn opt for nonviolence.

The results indicate that one of the characteristics of Japanese fiction is to maintain a distance from Christianity or from religion itself. This distance from religion is also supported by the research of the reception of Arthurian legends in *Dragon Quest XI*, which highlights that the religious aspects are removed in the depiction of chivalry (Komiya, 2019). Furthermore, many Japanese fiction works tend to use myths from Norse, Greek, Celtic, or Indian religions all together when they create their fictional world, as manga works such as *Saint Young Men* (Hikaru Nakamura, 2006–present), *Area 51* (Masato Hira, 2011–2017), and *Record of Ragnarok* (Shinya Umemura, Takumi Fukui and Ajichika, 2017–present) demonstrate. This distance from a specific religion may not only reflect the reality of the Japanese society, but also follow the tradition of manga creation from 1960s.

“Maðr þóttumk ek mennskr til þessa”: Rethinking “female” (?) warrior figures in medieval Norse sources: Material engagement, composite personhoods, and the value of archaeological theory for literary studies

Miriam Mayburd, University of Iceland

Few Old Norse literary figures have become as thoroughly stereotyped in both popular and scholarly imaginations as those of *skjaldmeyjar*. Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in these figures from the perspectives of both archaeology and gender studies (Gardeña 2013; 2018; 2021; Mayburd 2014; Simms 2019), yet when it comes to saga scholarship there is still a notable tendency to assume the post-feminism critical position as point of departure, which regards gender identities as social groups in a structural hierarchy. While these perspectives are valuable, they highlight the problematic and anachronistic nature of the concept of gender itself, which has attained so many layers of signification and polarization that applying it to pre-modern cultures may inevitably carry over some contemporary bias. It is becoming apparent that the theoretical concept of gender, whose introduction to critical discourse over the latter half of twentieth century has originally never been intended to resolve or to settle but rather to problematize established paradigms and open them up to further scrutiny (Butler 1990; Herdt 1993; Wallach Scott 1999), has become a polarizing and divisive issue, with proponents of each particular position entrenching themselves in their respective critical stances. The broad swings of gender discourse run the risk of overshadowing individual identity configurations and the idiosyncrasies of human condition not easily quantifiable (Mayburd 2014; 2020). Gender discourse remains, furthermore, largely mired in pathological language it inherited from sexology, conflating gender with biological sex and resulting in readings trapped in discursive tautologies.

The present paper, whose brief methodological overview is presented on these pages, repositions the discourse on *skjaldmeyjar* by shifting critical focus away from social roles and onto these figures' individual modes of personhood. Instead of seeking to gender, this inquiry aims to emphatically *ungender*: not to impose or coin any new labels, but rather do away with labels altogether. What will happen if all the familiar stereotypes are discarded? Consistent throughout literary depictions of *skjaldmeyjar* in medieval sources are these figures' apparent difficulties in social integration. Having exited the socio-normative gender demarcations, these figures step into the proverbial terra incognita of identity mapping, beyond the male/female binary gender dichotomy. The semantic space they occupy calls for a different mode of personhood which cannot be relegated under the normative discursive umbrella. A focus on anachronistic concepts of gender and identity categories may well prove a red herring amid the nuanced subtleties with which medieval sources present these figures.

1. Method and cases

The Cartesian model of personhood and the self has become the de-facto personhood standard in the West, which abstractalizes mind as contained “inside” the body and isolates individual self as autonomous, closed off, and external vis a vis the “outside” world. However, a growing number of anthropological and cultural-historical studies of pre-modern societies have been moving away from Cartesian paradigms, putting literary sources in dialogue with their respective cultures' material ontologies and demonstrating pre-modern conceptions of personhood to be far more fluid and malleable than heretofore thought (Back Danielson 2009; Stig Sørensen 2009; Fahlander et al. 2010; Moen 2011; Price 2019). Chris Fowler, in his influential *Archaeology of Personhood*, proposes several terms as working tools for approaching cultural identities unfamiliar with Cartesian mind-body dualism. In contrast to the individual self as the autonomous agent/author of one's own experience – the default mode of personhood still overwhelmingly taken for granted in social sciences and literary studies of premodern texts – Fowler introduces the construct of *dividuality*: “a state of being in which a person is recognized

as composite and multiply-authored” (Fowler 2004: 8). Dividual personhood may manifest as “partibility,” a state of being wherein the person is “reconfigured so that one part can be extracted and given to another,” or “permeability,” a state of being wherein the person is permeated by qualities or entities shaping one’s composition (ibid: 9). This startling de-anthropomorphization of personhood turns the focus away from human actants and onto dynamic processes, confluences, and networks all participating in perpetually negotiating and redefining individual identity configurations. Personhood emerges not as a static state but a fluid process of being, continuously shaped and reconfigured by its contextual affordances.

To articulate and map the dynamics behind these multimodal personhood networks has been the ongoing aim of Material Engagement Theory (henceforth MET): a paradigm shift in archaeology of mind and a radical reconceptualization of cognition and material culture (Renfrew 2004; Malafouris 2004, 2008, 2013; Malafouris and Renfrew ed. 2010; Iliopoulos 2019). Departing from the Cartesian model of mind as abstract and locked “inside” the brain, MET seeks instead “to illuminate the emergence of human ways of thinking through the practical effects of the material world” (Iliopoulos 2019: 39). It must be noted that MET is not a single theory but a collective theoretical current encompassing such hypotheses as “extended mind” (Clark & Chalmers 1998), “embodied mind” (Gallagher 2006), and “extended self” (Malafouris & Renfrew ed. 2010; Malafouris 2013), each differing in their respective points of emphases but all concerned with the various ways in which the material world of objects contributes to personal self-experience, and all seeking to de-anthropomorphize and de-hierarchize relational networks between objects and their users. The underlining principle behind these theoretical currents is vividly illustrated by a thought experiment which has been posited in phenomenological discourse for over half a century. “Think of a blind man with a stick,” invites Lambros Malafouris. “Where does the blind man’s self end and the rest of the world begin? Where do we draw ... a delimiting line across the extended cognitive system which determines the blind man’s locomotion?” (2008b: 403). The point of such a stick “has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch” (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 143). With time and practice, a physical object becomes incorporated into its user’s body schema – the perceptual map around a person of which the body is aware. Thus, as “the body schema extends to incorporate the [object],” the mind “treats the [object] as if it were part of the body” (Ihde & Malafouris 2018: 11). Human cognition is not locked inside the brain but extends beyond the body proper as it comes in physical contact with the surrounding world, shaped by and through these tactile experiences. In this transgression of boundaries between brains, bodies, and things, “material objects ... should be seen as continuous, integral parts of the human mind (ibid, 12; Malafouris 2008). According to MET, “the world is not an external realm that transmits information to an internal processor, but an emergent product of the organism’s coupling with the environment” (Iliopoulos 2019: 40). Spilling over from cognitive science, MET and its currents have exercised immense impact on archaeological theory given their implications for engaging material culture and cognitive structures of past societies. These methodological strands have been recently taken up in Old Norse literary studies, using archaeological data to shed light on narrative nuances (Ward 2012; Mayburd 2014a; Mayburd 2020a) and paying close attention to the material objects in literary depictions, insofar as these objects’ imagined impact on their users, to gain insights on how medieval bodies were represented and understood (Einarson 2015; Mayburd 2018; Mayburd 2020b).

The above phenomenological approach to literary sources bears fruitful implications for my reassessment of *skjaldmeyjar*. As may be readily observed, the shield is an indelible part of the *skjaldmeyjar* identity; indeed the very word is included in their collective name. Following Malafouris, a new question may be asked: where does the shield end and the *skjaldmey* begin? Given the visceral physicality of shield usage in combat as it was imagined in medieval Icelandic texts, the shield becomes a veritable extension of the fighter, allowing the body to move and act in ways not otherwise attainable. The shield is not only a bodily extension, but a cognitive

extension as well, enabling the mental acuity in applying diverse techniques at close quarters, as well as the mental discipline in large-scale battles in maintaining organized formation famously featuring shields: the *skjaldborg* ('shield-fortress,' more popularly known as a shield-wall). Beyond the shield itself, the *skjaldmeyjar*'s other battle accoutrements have been no less ingrained in medieval audience imagination. In particular, it is the byrnie (mail shirt) and the helmet with which *skjaldmeyjar* are thoroughly associated in literary sources, and both of these items deserve closer scrutiny. On first glance, it may come as no surprise for legendary narratives to deck their warrior figures in fully-fledged battle gear. However, closer readings of such literary appearances reveal these implements of war are no mere passive props but play active roles in shaping and redefining the body-self personal parameters of their wielders and wearers.

Consider the scene in *Völsunga saga* when Sigurðr discovers the sleeping armor-clad Brynhildr – inside a fortress of shields, no less. As he approaches to awaken her, the saga maintains the immersion from his limited perspective by using the word *maðr* and masculine pronouns in referencing her;¹ it is only when her helmet is removed that the pronouns switch back:

Sigurðr] sá at þar svaf maðr, ok lá með öllum hervopnum; hann tók fyrst hjálminn af höfði honum, ok sá a þat var kona; hún var í brynju, ok var svá föst, sem hún væri holdgróin [...]
(Rafn ed. 1829: 165)

[Sigurðr] saw that a man slept there and lay there with all the weapons of war; first he took the helmet off his head, and saw that it was a woman; she was in a mail shirt, and it was so tight as if it were in-grown [...]²

This scene has been enshrined in public imagination and romanticized by Wagner, yet its seeming familiarity is deceptive. Kathleen Self draws attention to the very particular word used by the saga to describe Brynhildr's body contact with her chainmail shirt: *holdgróin*, a rare participle whose literal meaning is 'flesh-grown' – "a growing together of a thing into the flesh" (2014: 152). Brynhildr's armor is no mere body cover: it becomes part of the body itself, two entities fused into one. Strikingly, this seemingly tight-fitting mail shirt did not at all prevent Sigurðr from assuming the figure of its recumbent wearer is male. A depiction like this goes entirely against the grain of "gendered" and sexualized images of valkyrie bodies in modern pop culture. It is an altered figure that Sigurðr sees, but it is not feminized - belonging rather to some other, de-familiarized embodiment. The narrative rendering of the recumbent body as male from Sigurðr's vantage point, juxtaposed with the saga audience's awareness of Brynhildr as female, cancels out both perceptions by inverting them and giving rise to an altered, ungendered entity. The mail shirt becomes an actant unto itself, merging with its wearer and reconfiguring the wearer's body parameters. Out of this "growing-in" of the self into its war gear, a new composite organism emerges. To this end, the notable tendency to assign *valkyrjur* and *skjaldmeyjar* names based on their weapons and/or armor (not least *Brynhildr*, a composite of *bryn*, 'mail shirt' + *hildr*, 'battle') may indicate the extent to which said implements govern and shape their very identity configurations.³ Given *Völsunga saga*'s visceral portrayal of bodily alterity enabled by armor, any passing literary mention of *skjaldmeyjar* in chainmail invokes similar associations. *Skjaldmeyjar*'s brief appearances in Eddic heroic poetry – such as Sigrún and her band in *Helgakvíða Hundingsbana 1* who are all depicted as helmed and clad in blood-soaked mail shirts

¹ Although frequently translated into English as „man“, the word *maðr* had a broader usage of denoting „person“ in gender-neutral terms (see Venås 1989).

² Translation here and henceforth mine.

³ An extensive list of *valkyrjur* names has been compiled by Neil Price (2019: 281-3). Their common semantic denominator is their association with chaos of war – not only the martial connotations of weapons and armor but also the confusion of the senses on a battlefield.

(Neckel ed. 1983, st. 15) – are all the more eerie from remembering this armor is not merely worn, but *absorbed*.

The helm may have served more functions than mere protection. The list of *pulur* included in the thirteenth-century *Skáldskaparmál* of *Snorra Edda* mentions a poetic synonym for helmet: *gríma* (‘mask’), indicating that face covering or obscuring of facial features was a commonly imagined characteristic of such helms (whether or not medieval Icelandic audiences were familiar with viking-age spectacled helms, from which this *heiti* doubtlessly stems). A helm acting as a mask transforms its wearer as a mask would: once put on, its wearer is no longer the same person but rather becomes some other, different being – performative dynamics which have been noted and attested in Old Norse cultural contexts (Back Danielsson 2007; Price & Mortimer 2014).⁴ A vivid illustration of these performative (and transformative) dynamics occurs in *Hervarar saga* when the eponymous heroine (the elder Hervör, to differentiate her from her namesake granddaughter in *Hlöðskviða*) arms herself in full battle gear and departs for the barrow island of Sámsey to face an undead cadaver of her father whom she herself summons up from the underworld to reclaim the famous sword Tyrfinn buried with him. Hervör’s armor is much more than mere disguise. It re-aligns the personhood of its wielder into a new configuration (and a new name, Hervarðr, to go with the new male pronouns the saga begins using). Casting all socionormative constructs of gender aside, this gear of war transforms its wearer into a liminal wielder of power capable of awakening the dead (Mayburd 2014). As they verbally confront each other in a battle of wills, the woken cadaver remarks on the visual appearance of his summoner:

Kveðkat ek þik, mæð ung,
mönnun líka,
er þú um hauga
hvarfar á nóttum
gröfnum geiri
ok með Gota málmi,
hjálmi ok með brynju
fyrir hallar dyrr.
(Jón Helgason ed. 1924: 28)

I do not declare you, young maiden
human-like,
as you ‘round the mounds
walk about in the night
with engraved spear
and with Goths’ metal gear,
with helm and with mail
before the door of the halls.

Even the otherworldly undead being, bereft of his own humanity, wonders at the degree of alterity which visibly marks the figure presently standing before him. The person of Hervör/Hervarðr seemingly ceases to be human altogether, emerging instead as a composite assemblage of these iron blades and discrete armored parts. This figure’s retort to the above remark contains a subtle admission of its accuracy:

maðr þóttumk ek
mennskr til þessa,
áðr ek sali yðra
sækja réðak [...]
(Jón Helgason ed. 1924: 28)

human enough I
seemed until this,
ere your halls
I decided to seek [...]

The singling out of *til þessa* (‘until this’) points to the present moment, which may in equal measure be construed as an acknowledgment of this armored transformation from ordinary human personhood into an augmented composite entity of terrible potency.

Close readings of scenes such as above radically reconfigure audience perceptions of *skjaldmeyjar*, entirely upending the familiarized and stereotyped tropes surrounding these warrior figures commonly known as “shieldmaidens.” The translated English term for them is highly problematic in itself, as it prediscursively posits an image of antiquated, romanticized femininity inherent in the now somewhat archaic word “maiden.” Together with their no less

⁴ See also Price 2019: 317-9, on warriors in late Iron Age Scandinavia portraying themselves as predators; many helm visors on the Vendel and Valsgärde designs resemble beaks of birds of prey.

antiquated armor accessories, there is a trap of romanticizing *skjaldmeyjar* (as both readers and critics have done) as modern audience readily associates byrnies, helmets, and swords with distant fantasy divorced from the immediacy of everyday. Contrastingly, the very term *skjaldmeyjar* may be illustrating the incongruity of applying colloquial feminine vocabulary to these figures who are, essentially, militarized professional killers. With this in mind, perception shifts and leaves no trace of romantic ideation. The term for these beings is still grammatically female, yet it may be said that these figures belong to a different “gender of being” (genre of being?) than their grammatic declension would suggest; a category of being for which we lack clearly definable terminology. Indeed, the term *skjaldmeyjar* may have itself designated this elusive category of being – no mere vocation or occupation, but a particular mode of personhood itself. They are multimodal assemblages where boundaries between bodies and objects are transgressed. The resulting composite organisms are augmented by their implements of war which act as these beings’ psychosomatic extensions.

2. Implications

What is presented on these pages is by no means complete. This study pays particularly close attention to medieval Icelandic texts which have been overwhelmingly left out of previous scholarship on *skjaldmeyjar* (esp. *Sögubrot*, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and *Úlfhams saga*) – not least due to featuring characters who do not neatly fit within the romance formulas favored by saga critics. Close readings of *skjaldmeyjar* reveal the material objects with which they are semantically linked (shields, weapons, armor) are no mere passive props but play active roles in shaping and redefining the body-self parameters of their wielders and wearers, broadening and expanding these figures’ interpretative affordances. These observations are brought in dialogue with recently posited reassessments of mind and materiality in archaeological theory to illuminate the ways in which material objects actively contribute to identity formations and personhood configurations. Personhood is thus no static state of being, but an active embodied process. An extended immersion into the violence of war, therefore, does not come without personal cost. This opens the door to exploring psychosomatic dimensions in literary portrayals of *skjaldmeyjar*, such as trauma and combat stress. From these observations, an apparatus will be constructed to illustrate the dynamics of these psychosomatic effects.

I contend these methodological currents are fruitfully applicable to studies of medieval Norse literary sources, the scholarship on which has heretofore been dominated by corporeal reductionism – whereby physical objects mentioned in texts are dematerialized by reading them as mere symbols or metaphors. No matter how fictional, literary portrayals of users’ interactions with objects shed light on how medieval bodies’ interrelations with material spaces were imagined and understood by contemporary audiences. To attempt such a paradigm shift is to shed all previous assumptions, essentially beginning from scratch. In reopening the seams of discursive closures surrounding *skjaldmeyjar* in Old Norse literary scholarship, my aim is to show the research on them is only getting started.

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Women's wisdom as prophetic ability in *Ívens saga* and *Hærra Ivan*

Holly McArthur, University of Wisconsin, Madison

The figure of Lunete from the twelfth-century romance *Yvain*, or *Le chevalier au lion* by Chrétien de Troyes has fascinated scholars for years, and she has been the subject of many studies over the years new research. Her portrayal as Lúneta in both the Old Norse *Ívens saga*, the thirteenth-century prose translation project surviving in primarily fifteenth-century and later manuscripts, and in the Old Swedish metrical romance *Hærra Ivan*, is surprisingly consistent with her characterization in the French material. To explain this phenomenon, I have turned to some of the surviving writings about Nordic pre-Christian beliefs, and the mythical-heroic saga, *Volsunga saga*, to explore the possible link between female wisdom and prophecy and magic.

The figure of the wise woman is common among the mythic-heroic sagas and *fornaldarsögur*, and the narratives rely on the tension created as the saga heroes knowingly ignore sound advice. Women in these narratives are also frequently gifted with prophetic abilities, but should these two facets of women's characterization truly be considered as separate traits? This paper explores the differentiation—or lack thereof—between positive female advice and the social heirloom of female prophecy in the *fornaldarsögur*, in order to discuss the implications of that trope for female wisdom as it appears in the *riddarasögur*.

Lúneta, based on the Old French Lunete, is depicted in both the Norse-Icelandic *Ívens saga* and the Swedish *Hærra Ivan* as the text's main voice of reason. She is responsible for preserving the hero's life and ensuring the socially-stabilizing reconciliation between Íven and his lady at the narrative's conclusion. Her adaptation from French is marked by a remarkable preservation of action and speech, especially when compared to the highly abridged and altered character of the lady whom Lúneta serves. Does Lúneta—a pioneering figure as a counsellor-maiden in Chrétien de Troyes's eleventh-century Old French verse—gain prophetic abilities as she travels north and east? I propose, rather, that women's prophecy-based counsel in the *fornaldarsögur* rendered Nordic audiences more amenable to the concept of a female counsellor in the romances, as demonstrated in Lúneta's emphasized, even expanded, role as counsellor in the northern retellings.

‘Oldtids tunge’: Nineteenth-century antiquarian research into the sagas and the politics of language

Ciaran McDonough, University of Iceland

This paper examines mid-nineteenth-century publications of saga material by both Icelandic and Danish antiquarians to assess if the language they were published in (either Danish or standardised Old Norse/Modern Icelandic) reflected any political statement by the editor/translator or the publishers. In order to investigate this fully, the saga material will be compared with other publications of medieval Icelandic literature, for example, law texts, to determine whether or not the choice of target language was politicised. Preliminary research has thus far demonstrated that other literature was more likely to be translated into Danish by Icelandic scholars, whereas the sagas were usually published in standardised Old Norse or Icelandic; there are also occurrences of Danish scholars producing editions of the sagas rather than translations. This may have been to produce material to benefit philological research, but it can also be read in other ways; that the sagas were a part of the *dönsk tunga Sprachraum* and were thus open to be studied by all; or that it reinforced Icelandic ownership of much of the material by demonstrating the closeness of Modern Icelandic and Old Norse. Close attention will be paid to those antiquarians, such as Jón Sigurðsson who were also closely aligned with the Icelandic independence movement.

Motif as a form of the representation of the past in the legendary sagas

Elena Melnikova

Old Icelandic Kings' and Family, but primarily sagas telling about Viking exploits in the 9th and 10th centuries base many of their stories about Scandinavians in Eastern Europe and in Rus' on narrative motifs, i.e. stereotyped tales about the deeds of the hero. Most of the heroes of the 'Viking sagas' find themselves in Gardariki (in this case only the north-western part of Eastern Europe) where they fight local rulers or enter their service, marry the widow/daughter of the local ruler and eventually become 'konungs of Gardariki' themselves. Though these are common narrative motifs, their consistent localization in Eastern Europe seems to suggest that their emergence and reiteration in the Old Norse narrative tradition reflect the most typical activities of Scandinavians in the Ladoga region in the 8th and 9th centuries, the time of the consolidation and functioning of the Ladoga-II'men' polity under the rule of Scandinavians. The distant past which found practically no reflection in other types of the sagas is thus represented in the form of narrative motifs based on recurrent events.

Troll culture: Alterity and the shifting spatiality of the paranormal in the ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*

Rebecca Merkelbach, University of Tübingen

One of the main concerns for the field of cultural geography is the exploration of cultural ‘signifying practices of self, groups, the creation of “others” and of worlds of experience’ as they are encoded in space, place, and environment (Paterson 2010: 1). Spatial constructions of ‘Others’ are nothing new: the monstrous races of late-antique learned discourse are located in far-away places just as much as those groups of humans that were deemed too alien to find a place in Western paradigms of race and civilisation. But these ‘signifying practices’ have, above all, deepened the perceived socio-cultural alterity of these groups, as the spatiality of the ‘Other’ not only reveals a culture’s biases, but also enacts them (Staszak 2008).

This can be said about medieval Icelandic literature too, in which we expect certain ‘Others’ — trolls, particularly, but also some marginal(ised) human groups like Sámi or Skrælingjar — outside of areas inhabited by human, Norse, settlers. Indeed, scholarship has long claimed that there is binary division between *innangarðs* and *utangarðs*, between who belongs to a group and who does not. While recent scholarship (Rösli 2017, Merkelbach 2020) has challenged this paradigm, more work needs to be done to show that spatial and cultural constructions of alterity are more complex than such dichotomies suggest. Thus, this paper aims to follow this investigation, adding complexity and nuance to apparently simple binaries.

Drawing on the ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*, whose conceptualisation of the paranormal has been argued to have been influenced by *fornaldarsögur*, I will show that, instead of finding paranormal ‘Others’ in one place and outside of human culture, in this group of sagas their location is neither stable nor marginal but fluid and constantly shifting. Different paradigms seem to be at play depending on the saga, in which the paranormal can either be located on the margins, or move closer to the centre of society. Coinciding with a protagonist who moves closer to those margins, this brings the individual and the paranormal into contact. Ultimately this reveals the shifting conceptualisation of society and culture itself, as alterity became increasingly internalised in saga literature.

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What it takes to make a knight: Modes of representation and narrative function of the Baltic regions in *Sigurðar saga þögla*

Michael Micci, University of Iceland

In *Sigurðar saga þögla* – one of the most critically relevant *riddarasögur*, whose earliest extant manuscript dates back to the latter half of the fourteenth century – the eastern regions of Europe are the settings of two key moments. Both the initial events related to the hero's brothers, and the travels of Sigurðr himself are somehow defined by their interfacing with places and figures of the eastern borders of the North Germanic world. The southern coast of Finland is the main stop of Hálfðan's and Vilhjálmr's journey on the *austrvegr*, while Sigurðr and Randver make their first trip as foster-brothers to an unspecified island in the eastern part of Jämtland, a Swedish region with an established Southern Sami presence tracing back to prehistorical times. Various scholars, including Sverrir Jakobsson, showed how the *austrvegr* had both a social and imaginative value in Old Norse texts and that saga literature is a precious source of information about the Icelanders' perception of their eastern neighbours. In both instances, *Sigurðar saga þögla*'s representation of the Finno-Ugric 'other world' is loaded with supernatural elements that encourage a reflection on both the Icelandic image of the Baltic world as a place of alterity and the importance of the interaction with this otherness for the hero's journey.

This contribution investigates the specific modes of constructing fictional space adopted by the saga with regard to the Baltic area and places them in the wider context of the Old Norse literary representation of the Finno-Ugric culture. With the support of previous research on medieval spatial semantics, this paper aims to demonstrate that *Sigurðar saga*'s depiction of the eastern lands is not only a valuable addition to the field, but it also carries specific functions in terms of plot development and characters' relations. Conclusive remarks will show that Sigurðr can reach emancipation from his family and acquire knightly reputation only by abandoning the oppressive environment of his father's court, that is, through a physical and psychological projection into the outside and the unfamiliar.

***Knýtlinga saga* as source for political and military encounters in the Danish/German/Slavonic borderland**

Jakub Morawiec, University of Silesia

Knýtlinga saga provides its audience with an extensive bulk of information on political and military encounters in the Danish/German/Slavonic borderland. It refers mainly to the territory known as Polabie, (Vinland) inhabited by numerous Slavonic tribes (Obodrites, Vileptians and many others), due to its strategic location, confronted with a threat from neighbouring powers, that is Denmark, Germany and Poland.

Although stretching back to the times of Haraldr Gormsson in his account, the author of the saga focuses on the period that followed the martyrdom of St. Knútr, when first and serious military confrontations with the Slavs are noted. Wars with pagans and plundering of Vinland, intertwined by relations with the Roman emperors, Saxon nobles and Polish/Pomeranian rulers, constitute important background for the rise of Danish power and dominance in the region in the times of Valdimarr I and his son Knútr VI and as such play an important role in the construction of historical message of the saga.

The account is traditionally dated to the mid-13th century and can be defined as a reflection of the way not only its Icelandic author (supposedly Óláfr hvítaskáld Þórðarson) but also the Danish court wanted and did memorize the events in question. It seems both interesting and helpful to confront the saga with other sources, both within Scandinavia and beyond, that depict the policies in Polabie in the 12th century, when the whole region met its political fate. By such a comparison, the aim of my talk is to investigate historical accuracy of the saga and to trace the main elements that constituted historical memoria of the Danish court.

My talk will also refer to the scholarly interest in *Knýtlinga saga*, defining the text both as a historical account and a literary piece. I shall try to focus at presumably the most important aspects of this dichotomy and how it affects potential reading(s) and understanding(s) of the saga, particularly in the case of the history of Polabie in the late 11th and 12th centuries.

Relationship and exchange between the northern elites in the Viking and medieval Baltic area: The case for the Baltic psalteries' origins

Andris Mucenieks

Baltic psalteries are simple plucked musical instruments characterized by an asymmetrical trapezoidal shape. They are traditionally carved in a single piece of wood to which is attached a soundboard, or resonator. The strings are fastened to a rod in the narrowest end and held by wooden tuning pegs placed on the wider extremity without resting in a bridge over the soundboard. That makes the instrument acoustically inefficient but increases the harmonic resonances and the timbre richness.

They vary significantly in shape, size, ornamentation, devices to hold the string rod, tunings, and the number of strings. Ethnographic instruments usually range from 5 to 12 strings. (Muktupavels, 2013: 11)



Figure 1. Ethnographic kokle from Alsunga, Kurzeme (Western Latvia). National History Museum of Latvia.

The Baltic psalteries have strong symbolic importance to the Baltic peoples. The kanteles are national symbols to the Finnish people, the same manner as the kokles, kannels, and kankles are to the Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians. The spreading of the instruments surpasses the Baltic States and Finland, with the guslis being played in Northwest Russia, whilst the archaeological evidence may suggest its spread may have reached current Poland during the Middle Ages.

Many have been said as it comes to the origins of the instruments, and the different opinions on several occasions have been influenced by nationalistic bias and subjectivity, especially given the shared history of Finns and Balts during the 19th century under the rule of the Russian Empire and the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States after Second World War.

Recent trends in academy, cultural studies and society during the post-soviet times have emphasized the connections between the two margins of the Baltic and the shared historical heritage of the Baltic and Finnic Peoples with Western Civilisation.

These trends may have affected, to some degree, musicological studies as well. It is not surprising that scholars have prospected the possibility of connections between the Baltic psalteries and instruments from Northern Europe, particularly the Lyre.

This paper will present briefly some of these trends in organology, give context to the archaeological evidence, and explain it in light of the Scandinavian elite's actuation in the Novgorodian Rus.

1. The available material evidence on the Baltic psalteries

There are plenty of ethnographic remains from the Baltic psalteries in the Baltic states, Finland, and Russia. With very few exceptions, the surviving material is dated from the 19th and 20th

centuries. During the Early Modern Ages and Modern ages, several written references may be found to the musical instruments (Muktupāvels, 2002: 23ff).

Rich immaterial heritage connected to the Baltic psalteries, such as repertoire, poetry, ancient symbolism and narratives preserved through oral tradition (including the Latvian *dainas*, epics like the *Kalevala* and the *Kalevipoeg*) were registered and collected mostly from the 19th century onwards in the current Baltic Countries, Finland, Karelia, and North-western Russia.

There are some iconographic depictions of musicians and musical instruments in Medieval Europe and the Kievan Rus, including two bracelets from the cities of Kyiv (12th century) and Old Ryazan (13th century) displaying musicians playing instruments in the shape of Baltic psalteries.

As in the case of other musical instruments in the world, the Baltic psalteries are made of wood, which only in exceptional conditions is preserved over the centuries in the archaeological evidence. The oldest surviving fragments of the instruments were excavated in the region of the Medieval Novgorod, then located in the kingdom of Rus'. Remains of a similar instrument were found in the city of Gdańsk, nowadays northern Poland and fragments of possibly related instruments were discovered in Opole, southwest Poland. In addition, a burnt birch fragment possibly belonging to a *kokle* dating from the 13th century was excavated at Tērvete, Latvia, but the evidence is inconclusive. (Priedīte, 2003: 138)

These places were marked by interculturality; in the area of Novgorod oldest inhabitants of Finno-Ugric and even Baltic origins were replaced by Eastern Slavs and Scandinavians, while the medieval Gdańsk, one of the most important trading ports in the Medieval Baltic area, was inhabited from the 10th to the 14th centuries mostly by Western Slavs, but frequented by Germans, Scandinavians, the Baltic Old Prussians, other Baltic Peoples and even traders from the Arabic world during the Viking and Middle Ages. (Śliwiński & Możejko, 2017: 17f)

1.1 The Novgorod guslis

The Medieval Novgorod preservation and recovery benefitted from specific local circumstances. The medieval settlement was built in compact clay strata, which avoided infiltration and drainage of water from rain or flooding. The soil above the clay strata remained saturated with moisture. This circumstance preserved most of the organic material and prevented future inhabitants from digging deep foundations that would alter the subterranean content. Instead, the soil was paved with wood planks, decade after decade, as the city grew and previous human activity was deposited. (Yanin, 1990: 85)

Thus, unique geological conditions allowed the preservation of wooden artefacts such as musical instruments in the excavations of the town and region. In addition, the abundance of wooden buildings and artefacts made it possible to date precisely the several excavation layers after Kolchin adapted the dendrochronological method to the local species.

Fragments from ca. 10 guslis dating from the 11th to the 14th century were discovered in different excavations sites in the region of Novgorod over the decades, including (for images, see Kolchin, 1978: 362):

1. A nine-stringed gusli from the Nerevsky Site, ca. 1250. Except for the window for the hand, this gusli resembles the ethnographic Baltic psalteries without a wing with a round tip from Western Latvia, Estonia and Karelia. It was excavated in 1957 on the site of Nerevsky, in a property which belonged to the boyar Misha. Despite its Slavic owner, Hass (2001: 2019) emphasized the carved waterbird motif, found on an ethnographic Izhor kannel and typical to the Finno-Ugric imaginary and creation myths.
2. The "Slovisha" gusli. ca. 1050 - excavated in 1975 at the Troitsky II site, is one of the most significant instruments excavated due to a number of features. The five-stringed instrument has the top side asymmetrical as a Baltic psaltery but an opening window beneath the strings as a lyre. Oddly, its soundboard was made of oak, while the body was from yew. The Slavic word "Slovisha" was carved on its side.

3, 4 & 6. Small gusli without an opening window, 14th century.

5. 6-stringed small gusli from Tikhvin with two windows, which possibly belonged to a child, 12th century.

Medieval Russian Heroic poetry – the *byliny* – often mention the gusli in connection to their heroes. Some of the songs, including “The Absence of Dobrynya” (Chadwick, 1964: 86), “Nightingale Budimirovich” (Chadwick, 1964: 118, 121), and “Stavr from Chernigov” (Chadwick, 1964: 131f), mention specifically guslis made of maple.

2. Main theories of origin

Stephen Reynolds organised the Baltic psalteries’ theories of origin into three main hypotheses in two articles published in 1973 and 1984. These three hypotheses, popularised by prominent scholars such as the Finnish-American Carl Rahkonen (1989), came to be known as the a) Slavic Theory - the Baltic psalteries originated from the Slavic People and were adopted by Balts and Finns; b) the Finnic theory - the Baltic psaltery was an invention from the Finnic people inhabiting North-Eastern Europe and c) the instruments had an Oriental or Asiatic provenance.

Baltic scholars proposed some ideas on the topic as well. Not surprisingly, Lithuanian scholars like Žilevičius and Slaviūnas (then known as Slavinskas) proposed in 1937 a Baltic, perhaps Lithuanian origin, to the instruments. Contemporary scholars, including the Lithuanian Romualdas Apanavičius, the Latvian Valdis Mukupāvels and the Estonian Igor Tõnurist (1947-2021), have adopted variations or mixed forms of the Finno-Ugric and Baltic hypothesis. Apanavičius (1986: 18f) proposed the Baltic psalteries originated in the neolithic Narva Culture (ca. 6500-4600 B.P.), while Mukupāvels (2009; 2002: 45-8) published several articles stressing the mythical and symbolic aspects related to the kokles tradition.

Mukupāvels (2013: 12) defends the linguistic and etymologic analysis of the Finnish Nieminen from 1963. Nieminen argued that the original name of the Baltic and Finno-Ugric instruments had a Proto-baltic origin - **kantlīs/*kantlēs*, which may, in turn, indicate a date of origin from millennia before the Middle Ages (Nieminen, 1963: 01-43). The etymology was recognised as valid by other contemporary scholars, even by some who disagreed with some of its implications, such as Timo Leisiö (2020: 190).

3. The northern lyres

A different hypothesis of origin was proposed in the last decades - the Baltic psalteries originated from Lyres. The idea was elaborated differently by Povetkin, Ain Haas, Ilya Tëmkin and Timo Leisiö. While Povetkin in 1989 and Haas in 2001 offered nuanced propositions, Tëmkin in 2004 and particularly Leisiö, as recently as 2020, proposed very strict ideas, defending that the Baltic psalteries were developed in the Baltic area under the influence of the northern lyres only during the 11th century.

Plucked lyres were the staple stringed instruments in Eurasia and Africa for millennia, being gradually replaced in Europe during and after the Medieval Ages by other stringed instruments. Besides the huge Near Eastern instruments from Sumerian and Egypt antiquity and the lyres from the Greco-Roman and Mediterranean antiquity, there was a kind of lyre associated mainly with Germanic-speaking Europe from Late Antiquity and Middle Ages. These instruments were made from a wooden-excavated soundbox, with long and slender bodies and the strings fastened in a knob or protuberance at the rounded bottom (see Figure 2).

In the last century, this last kind of Lyre, which will be referred to as northern lyre from now on but is referred to also as “Round lyre” due to its rounded bottom, was almost rediscovered in Europe after long centuries lying in obscurity. Archaeological discoveries in Great Britain, Continental Europe and Scandinavia, summed to iconographic representations from Antiquity to the Middle ages from Scythia to Western Europe, revealed the existence of an instrument widespread from the western fringes of Europe to Central Asia.

The oldest evidence from a lyre in Central Europe is a depiction in a burial urn from the Hallstatt Culture. The 7th or 6th BC depiction was interpreted as an indication of the spreading of the Lyre from the Mediterranean cultures as Etruscans and Thracians to the Celts of Central Europe and further to the Germanic-Speaking populations. (Hagel, 2018: 58)

A Scythian depiction from around the 4th BCE attested to the knowledge of the lyre centuries before the Late Antiquity in the eastern extreme of Europe, associated with the Greek merchants and artisans around the Black Sea. Finally, remains of a round lyre from the 4th century unearthed in 1973 in Kazakhstan were reinterpreted in 2018 and 2022, reinforcing how widespread the instrument was in Eurasia since at least the Antiquity. (Kolltveit, 2022)

Before Kolltveit, Curt Sachs (2019 [1940]: 267) referred to what he called “vestigial instruments” among Siberian populations as the Ostyaks and Voguls in the River Ob, considering the Alemmanic and the Siberian lyres as co-related in some manner.

Currently, more than 30 fragments from northern lyres or related to were discovered in Europe in Continental Europe, the British Isles and Scandinavia, associated with Germanic-speaking populations. So far, the majority of the lyre findings (14) were discovered in graves from the 5th to the 9th century in England, Germany, current France and Sweden, leading to a general opinion associating the instrument mostly with the aristocracy and the upper, warrior class. (Lawson, 2019: 226)

However, besides the fragments from ancient graves, several artefacts were unearthed from cultural layers, originating from different social strata and even connected to the common people. These remains, such as amber, antler, wooden, and bronze bridges, were not always dated precisely. In spite of the number of lyre-artefacts associated with the upper classes, the archaeological data also supports that the lyres had their place among the general population, especially in Medieval Scandinavia. (Lawson, 2019: 232)

All the lyres discovered in graves were made of maple, several containing oak in different combinations, including body and soundboard made of maple, body made of maple with an oaken soundboard, and an oaken body accompanied by a maple soundboard. Many remainings from cultural layers, however, were made of yew. The choice of the woods has not been thoroughly evaluated yet. Hillberg considers the woods not necessarily chosen due to their acoustic properties but fashion, given the Early Modern and Modern preferences for softwood soundboards. (Hillberg, 2015: 15-17; 25) However, the author of this paper is of the opinion that the choice of woods was intentional and not only due to fashion reasons.

Although oak is not regarded as a species of wood with good resonating properties, the acoustic advantages of maple are well recognised among modern luthiers, who use it as the wood of choice for resonators in stringed instruments for the family of violins, violas, cellos and basses, but also in acoustic guitars.

Other issues should be factored in regard to the woods. Oak and maple are hardwoods known for their resistance and durability, which may have been taken into consideration by the builders. Perhaps the preservation of the discovered lyres was given to this factor, while a great number of instruments made of coniferous wood may not have survived to this day. The Kravik lyre (14th century) from Norway, for instance, was completely built from coniferous wood.



Figure 2. Modern reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo Lyre. British Museum, reference SHR.9. Picture from the author.

Also, it may have been possible that instruments built from oak and maple were more commonly found among the high social strata, able to reward skilled artisans able to work properly in such woods, while lyres of lesser quality were built in more workable but less durable woods, which have not survived. These factors may interfere considerably with the preserved sample.

Finally, a question that may be considered in the future is the symbolic meaning of the chosen woods. Specific trees have been surrounded by imaginary throughout Europe, from pre-historic times to the Modern Ages. In the Scandinavian, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic traditions, oak was prized symbolically and religiously. The descriptions of the Germanic and Baltic Peoples offering cults for the gods in oak forests are well-known, from Tacitus' *Germania* to Grunau's *Romuva*, as are the connections of oak to the northern thunder gods.

4. Scandinavians, the lyres and the Baltic

The lyre was well-known to the Scandinavians from the Migration Period through the Medieval Ages, and besides the archaeological remains, a great number of iconographic depictions, carvings and written sources mention it. In spite of the broader possibilities offered by the archaeological remains, in the medieval written sources, the instrument was associated mostly with the aristocrats and high social strata individuals. In comparison to Continental Europe and the British Isles, the Scandinavian lyres lasted longer – until at least the 14th century. (Kolltveit, 2000: 19)

During the Vendel, Viking and Medieval ages, there was plenty of contact between Scandinavians from the mainland and Gotland (Gunarsson, 2013: 15ff), Baltic, Finnic and Slavic peoples (Mägi, 2002). These contacts were registered in written primary sources, runic inscriptions (Melnikova, 2001) and preserved in abundant archaeological remains in the Baltics, Finland, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Most part of what was preserved consisted, however, of metal and non-perishable materials, with few exceptions as in the unique case of Novgorod with its favourable geological conditions.

A considerable influence was exercised from Scandinavians in the development of the local elites in Eastern Baltic and the Kingdom of Rus', and the first dynastic house from the Rus' was composed of Scandinavians. Local elites and the aristocracy of Rus' had intimate contacts with Scandinavian aristocracy and noblemen, and emulated part of their behaviour and Material Culture, as attested in the written sources and archaeological findings. (Noonan, 1998: 339)

The Slovisha gusli unearthed in Novgorod, which presented remarkable similarity to the northern lyres in shape, was dated from ca. 1050. Its oaken soundboard, not found in other Baltic psalteries and unjustified in terms of sonority, may have been an emulation of the material utilised in some northern lyre's soundboards. Haas considered the material might have been chosen due to its strength in order to hold the strings properly¹. Later instruments, however, use yew for that purpose, and maple, often quoted in the Russian epics, would be a better alternative - resounding but strong.

The instrument is the oldest archaeological sample and coincides with the rule of Yaroslav, the wise (ca. 978-1054). Yaroslav was the son of Wladimir, the great, being co-regent in Novgorod until the death of his father in 1015. He was the prince of Novgorod from 1010 to 1019 and Great-prince of Kyiv after the fratricide wars retold in a humoristic way in the *Eymundar þáttir hrings*. The prince died in 1054 but kept a residence in Novgorod.

His official mother was Rogneda of Polotsk – the slavified form of Ragnheiðr. She was the daughter of the Varangian Ragnvald, who ruled Polotsk. Yaroslav's wife, the Swedish Ingegerd Olofsdotter, bore him several sons and daughters, including Ellisif, queen consort of the Norwegian Haraldr harðráði (ca.1015-1066). Haraldr was exiled to Novgorod and not only fought in Yaroslav's army but became a commander in the Byzantine Varangian guard. (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* 2-17)

¹ Personal communication.

Yaroslav's connections with Scandinavia go further. During his life occurred the expedition of Yngvarr víðförli (ca. 1040), immortalised in more than 20 runestones, and during his reign St. Olaf (*Óláfs saga Helga* 187) and Magnus the Good (*Óláfs saga Helga* 187ff, 251; *Magnúss saga ins góða* 1) sought refuge and help in Novgorod as well.

There was an evident influence from the northern lyres over chordophones in the region of Novgorod, easily understood given the intense relationship between Scandinavian and Novgorodian elites during the 9th century. The same level of emulation of Scandinavian material culture is found in other remains in Novgorod. However, did the northern lyres give rise to the Baltic psalteries and the Novgorodian instruments or, instead, influenced temporarily instruments already existent?

The last option seems more plausible, as stringed instruments among the Slavs are attested to since the Late Antiquity in the written sources. (Povetkin, 1982: 302) Equally, other musical instruments excavated in Novgorod display cultural traces from the former Finnic inhabitants of the area, as indicated by Finno-Ugric symbolism related to waterbirds found in at least one gusli. (Haas, 2001: 219)

5. Crucial issues

There is unequivocal archaeological and pictorial evidence from medieval times to the instruments around the Baltic area, but not in the Baltics and Finland. On a simple archaeological basis, it is impossible to affirm or deny the pre-existence of ancient instruments in these areas due to the limitations characteristic of the archaeology - in most cases, the remains simply perished over the centuries. While the discovery of artefacts indicates the object's existence, the absence of significant discoveries may be explained by many factors.

However, the Baltic psalteries do not necessarily descend in a single line from the northern lyres, and the similarities between the lyres and the Novgorodian instruments should be explained otherwise.

5.1 Insufficient theory

This issue is pretty common in organology and not a privilege to the Baltic Studies. Much of the theoretical models involving archaeology applied to musicology do not consider recent theoretical developments in archaeology.

The main theoretical frame used to explain the existence of a particular musical instrument in a given culture is the Culture-historical archaeology from the late 19th century to the inter-war period. As such, migration associated with a close ethnicity or more "advanced" culture is the major explanation for the rising of technology in an "inferior" culture – such as Byzantines, Slavs, or Scandinavians bringing the advanced chordophones to the Baltic and Finnic peoples.

Often some material culture manifestation is closely associated with an ethnic group, as in the case of the Baltic psalteries being associated with the Narva and Kunda cultures – the central scope of the Finnic theory.

Only very recently, with the development of the ICTM Study Group on Music Archaeology, especially after Casja Lund's works, new archaeological perspectives have been taken into consideration. Still, there is a need for precise theoretical formulation, clear questions, and awareness of processual, post-processual, and modern archaeological frameworks.

5.2 Narrow temporality and geography and lack of continuity to the ethnographic data

The influence from the Northern Lyres to the Novgorodian guslis occurred primarily due to the intensive contact between Scandinavian and Rus' elites during the Viking and Middle Ages. The lyres might have been perceived as part of the Scandinavian aristocratic Material Culture, which was vastly influential on the aristocracy of the Rus'. However, such influence gradually faded away in the following centuries. Such cultural impact is well attested in the written sources and the material culture. The Novgorod guslis should be considered part of this context, differing considerably from the later ethnographic instruments.

5.3 Arguments of absence

The archaeological evidence attests to the knowledge of the lyre – therefore, an elaborate chordophone - centuries before the Late Antiquity in the extremes of Europe to Siberia. The Baltic peoples sustained contact with Central and South Europe during Pre-historic times, mostly due to the trading of amber and other materials. Ideas and technology spread via commercial interaction. Amber was a material used in parts of musical stringed instruments discovered in different parts of Europe in the Late Antiquity and the Mediterranean.

That may imply the Baltic peoples have knowledgeable populations who owned complex stringed musical instruments and the concept of stringed musical instruments at some point in their pre-history (Haas, 2001: 216; 231). There is no strong reason or even logic to assume that complex chordophones were known before the Roman times throughout all of Europe and to the Siberian populations, but not to the Baltic and Finnic peoples.

5.4 Immaterial traditions among Balts and Finns

There is, however, immaterial, though inconclusive and non-datable evidence of a long duration musical tradition connected to the stringed instruments among Baltic and Finnic peoples, attested by etymological studies (Nieminen, 1963: 01-43) and the rich amount of songs, epics, oral tradition, mythologic and religious symbolism among the Balto-Finnic peoples. (Oinas, 1996: 181ff).

Baltic-Finnic epics collected during Romanticism as the Kalevala offer at least two traditions related to the creation of the Kantele - an instrument made of birchwood, oaken pegs and human hair and another, older, made from animal or fish parts as a fishbone (Kalevala 40: 274; 44: 297). Besides connections of the instrument with ancient religious and shamanic practices, including usage of parts of the human body (Oinas, 1996: 182f), these traditions may preserve idealised memories of events from many centuries before, regarding the building of instruments from readily available materials in nature, as in the case of the Greek myths related to the first lyre built from a dead tortoise.

6. Conclusion and a proposition

The Baltic psalteries' origin only can be explained in terms of *multiculturality*. They were and are part of the material culture of several different groups, interacting and coexisting in complex social environments and vast geographies. The instruments as known in Modern ages are, therefore, descendants of stringed musical instruments that:

1. may have been developed locally in the very first Baltic pre-history, from primitive materials and building techniques such as fishbones and animal parts,
2. may have accompanied immigrating groups to inhabit the Baltic margins,
3. may have been developed after contacts and interactions with other populations in Europe since prehistoric times. That possibility includes derivation from several kinds of lyres.

Most probably the Baltic psalteries were developed through a conjunction of these possibilities. Over the centuries, different features have been added to the first stringed instruments as local inventions and influences from other cultures, like the wing. Innovations such as the window from the northern lyres were abandoned, even though the lyres evolved into a different class of instruments - the bowed lyres in Western Finland and Estonia.

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Origins and impact of the first printed collections of sagas

Ermenegilda Müller, University of Iceland

Ágætar fornmannasögur and *Nokkrir margfróðir sögupættir* were the first collections of sagas to be printed in Iceland. The two books contain only sagas of the Icelanders. They initially encountered a hostile reception among the learned class, which saw their contents as dangerous for the spiritual and intellectual development of the common people. Moreover, they were the only collections of sagas to be printed in Iceland until 1890, while the manuscript transmission of the sagas continued. These facts raise important questions regarding Icelandic book culture: Why did texts that circulated widely in Iceland in manuscript form suddenly become controversial as soon as they were printed? Why were there only sagas of the Icelanders in these books, whereas the genres of Icelandic literature had yet to be defined? Why was print not an adequate medium for Icelandic literature until the end of the 19th century, whereas it quickly became the main medium for literature in Europe? This paper, which summarizes the current state of the author's doctoral thesis, addresses the production, dissemination and reception of these books and use recent methods in book, literacy and cultural studies to answer these questions. It aims to further our understanding of the interaction between print and manuscripts, the material transmission of literature, and the construction of literary genres in Iceland.

Representations of the witch: The ongoing narrative of Scandinavian nation building

Clare Mulley, University of Oxford

When Peter Christian Asbjørnsen compiled and retold the Norwegian folk tales that appeared in *Norske huldre-eventyr og folkesagn*, certain motifs were to reveal an ongoing collective consciousness that was, in many ways, very similar to that of Medieval Iceland as represented in saga form, despite the hundreds of years in between and the obviously stronger Christian overtones in the later tales. One particular motif which stands out in both sets of narratives is that of witchcraft and older women's power as witnessed by men, which is represented subjectively as benign or suspect, depending on the benefits or ills it brings, and is highly illustrative of the social boundaries which were drawn to form a definition of community in both eras and societies.

In the following paper, I will highlight some crucial parallels between the ways in which certain saga excerpts (in particular from *Eyrbyggja saga*) and tales from Asbjørnsen's collection represent women who practise magic, exploring the continued theme of difference between women who are revered for their knowledge of magic and those who are vilified for it, whilst also drawing attention to certain types of magic which are presented as inherently female. My selected examples will include that of Katla and Geirríður from *Eyrbyggja saga*, and the figures of Mother Skau and Gubjør in Asbjørnsen's tales. I also intend to touch upon male receptions of women's knowledge of the supernatural, which, unlike revelations or foresight from men, is often mistrusted or ridiculed in both the folklore and saga genres. Thus, I hope to demonstrate the surprising consistency of Scandinavian narratives on women's powers, and how such continuity is linked to the all-important task of nation-building.

Theodoric on the Rök stone

Klaus Johan Myrvoll, University of Stavanger

In 2007, Bo Ralph presented a new interpretation of the *fornyrðislag* stanza in the Rök stone inscription in which the Germanic hero king Theodoric (454–526) had disappeared and an unidentifiable *rikR in þurmuþi* ‘the bold warrior’ had taken his place. Recently, a team of four Swedish scholars (Holmberg et al., 2018–19) have taken Ralph’s interpretation to a new level, suggesting that the Rök inscription expresses a kind of ninth-century “climate anxiety”. A precondition of this radical re-interpretation seems to be Ralph’s initial detachment of the inscription from the heroic context so important to the traditional interpretations, from Bugge (1878), via Wessén (1958) to Grønvik (2003).

Ralph’s interpretation of the Rök stanza does, however, encounter serious problems, both linguistic and metrical. First, it implies an unnatural syntax, unparalleled in Old Norse poetry: In the opening sentence, *raiþ iau rikR in þurmuþi* ‘the bold warrior rode the horse’, the object comes before the subject (in a VOS-structure). In independent sentences like this, the normal syntax would be VSO, cf. verses such as *Réð Q’leifr l...l víðri grund l of Vestmari* (*Ynglingatal*, st. 35). Secondly, the verse division implied by Ralph’s interpretation produces a very short first verse and an uneven verse length within the first couplet, the first being made up of only two syllables (*raiþ iau*) but the second of as many as five (*rikR in þurmuþi*). It is unlikely that such short verses ever existed in *fornyrðislag* poetry, which is the metre found on the Rök stone, even if exceptional instances may be found in *ljóðahátt*, such as the famous *Deyr fé, l deyrja fríendr*-verses (*Hávamq’l*, sts 76–77).

In this paper, the traditional interpretation of the Rök stanza, assuming a reference to Theodoric, will be re-assessed and further substantiated. Leaning on evidence from other runic inscriptions, Old Norse poetry and the linguistic form of rune-names in early continental sources, the understanding of the stanza’s structure and its placement in language history will be refined and improved. Most important, the relationship between the verb *raiþ*, which has been interpreted as both ‘rode’ and ‘ruled’, and its object *strantu hraiþmaraR* ‘the shore of the Hræið-sea’ will be explored, and a new interpretation will be presented.

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Severed heads as sacred objects

Timothy Nancarrow, University of Newcastle, Australia

Dismemberment and decapitation feature numerously across the landscapes of Norse mythic structure and sagas, and inspire a great deal of curiosity for the different thematic and cultural implications they present. Against the broader backdrop of my PhD exploring the virtues of ritual sacrifice in Germanic pagan mythic structures and societies, the notion of prestigious and pejorative associations with decapitation and severed heads has surfaced as an early avenue of intriguing exploration.

Taking cues from Mimir's re-animated head in *Völuspá*, Ymir's skull in *Grímnismál*, the decapitation of Niðuðr's sons by Völundr in *Völundarkvida*, and powerful poetic metaphors and recurrent literary motifs alluding to beheading such as Brynhildr's *hróðit sigli* and parallels found in *Vafþrúðnismál* and Egill Skallagrímsson's *Höfuðlausn*, my presentation will explore a selection of examples drawn from the corpus of *Konungasögur*, *Íslendingasögur*, and *Fornaldarsögur*. These examples of decapitation in ritualistic, mythic, poetic, and para-social contexts can be seen to delineate ways in which severed heads may be seen to possess a certain potency or value as magical or "sacred objects" in the pre-Christian religions of Northern Europe.

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Morphology of the saga: André Jolles on the *Sage* as a “simple form”

David Nee, Harvard University

Recent years have seen stirrings of renewed interest in the critic and theorist André Jolles (1874–1946), thanks to the long-overdue first English translation of *Simple Forms* (1929), his best-known work. Regarded as a classic contribution to genre theory, *Simple Forms* analyzes nine literary and folkloric forms—legend, saga, saying, riddle, myth, case, *memorable*, joke, and fairy tale—which for Jolles make up an intermediate stage between everyday language and literary genres.

Jolles’s study includes an analysis of the Old Norse-Icelandic saga, which Jolles treats as the paradigmatic instantiation of a specific “simple form,” the *Sage* (the German term, usually translated as “legend,” which Jolles here employs in a special sense). For Jolles, the *Sage* is a form that emerges from a special “mental disposition” tied to the concepts of family and inheritance. Jolles detects this form in literary works spanning many languages and periods, from ancient Greek legend and the Hebrew Bible to modern novels such as Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga* and Zola’s *Rougon-Macquart* cycle.

Jolles’s analysis of the *Sage* received some attention, during the 1980s and 90s, from scholars of Old Norse-Icelandic literature interested in genre theory and structuralism. However, modern scholarship has on the whole had little to say about Jolles’s attempt to theorize the saga as a special instance of a transhistorical form. In this paper, I present some intellectual-historical context that could inform renewed engagement with Jolles’s work on the saga. I focus on Jolles’s prominent citation of Andreas Heusler’s early work, seeking to better understand the relationship between early twentieth-century saga scholarship and the school of “cultural morphology” of which Jolles was a significant representative. In addition, I draw on Jolles’s earliest published work on the saga, as well as a dissertation by one of Jolles’s doctoral students at Leipzig University, in order to cast light on both the origins of Jolles’s interest in the saga and the further applications he envisioned for a morphological approach to the *Sage* as a simple form.

Involuntary physical manifestations of emotions: implications for concept of the body and saga style

Marie Novotná, Charles University, Prague

Examples of physical displays of emotion in Old Norse literature show that emotions are depicted as physical changes taking place in connection with an emotional state. The argument that feelings in Old Norse literature are expressed through actions, mediated by speech and physical manifestations—that this is the only possible stylistic means for expressing an inner life—has repeatedly been shown to be a simplification. Laconic reactions in the sagas are thus not caused by a lack of literary methods to express emotion and an interconnection between body and soul might be understood as one of the factors resulting in the “objective” style of Old Norse literature.

Physical manifestations of emotions are in many places used without comments, explanations or exaggerations implicating that psycho-physical connections were obvious for readers or listeners of those works. The protagonists swell up, change colour and lie down in bed, even die, but the literature is often not interested in the internal mechanism of emotional, cognitive or physiological processes; idioms and stories do not indicate an unambiguous mechanical concept for what is happening deep in the human body during these experiences. The emotion is not perceived as a pre-existing object that can be manipulated and its physical displays can be, in some cases, a way to mediate it without involving any attempt to suppress, mask, or transform it. The expression of emotions through the body was used in the given emotive script without further explanation, and therefore the body-mind connection, also formulated as outside-inside connection, must have been evident to the reader. If the psycho-physical reactions are understood as a logical consequence of the holistic concept of man, it might be also seen on the level of style. The so-called objectivity that seems to us as describing the immaterial through its material manifestations can reflect the interconnection between body and soul in which a physical expression is at same time expression of a mental state and to describe in our view a mental condition as a sickness is an evident possibility. As this is not due to the mere absence of other means of expression, this style should be understood as result of a way of thinking and it is relevant to ask why it has evolved.

Transpersonal identities: Old Norse childbirth in literature and life

Katherine Olley, University of Oxford

Grethe Jacobsen (1984: 91) has long since pointed out ‘the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach’ when studying childbirth in the medieval north. Research into childbirth in Old Norse society, however, remains rare, and interdisciplinary studies even more so.

The paper will compare the representation of childbirth in the sagas with material evidence from the archaeological record. Rebecca Gowland and Siân Halcrow’s recent work (2020) testifies to the growing awareness that, with the right analytical techniques and approaches, much more than previously thought can be learnt about pregnancy and motherhood from maternal and infant skeletal remains and infant burial customs. Taking into account new trends in bioarchaeology, which are integrating sociocultural conceptions of kinship into a field previously dominated by biological notions of relatedness (Johnson and Paul, 2016), the paper will examine how archaeological evidence can supplement the often sparse accounts of pregnancy and birth found in the sagas, from the re-enacted births in *Ála flekks saga* (ch. 2) and *Finnboga saga* (ch. 3) and the magical elvish birth in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (ch. 15) to the outdoor birth scene in *Vatnsdæla saga* (ch. 15) and the emotional aftermath of childbirth depicted in *Harðar saga* (ch. 8).

Following Gowland and Halcrow (2020: 3), I approach mother and child as ‘an entangled “unit” rather than two completely discrete entities’. Accordingly, the paper will focus on the transpersonal character of the mother-infant relationship and discuss the consequences of its dissolution of the physical and theoretical boundaries between individuals for both archaeological and literary analyses of pregnancy and birth in Old Norse society.

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First-person feuds: A digital humanities approach to the use of medieval Icelandic literature in video games

Luca Panaro, University of Iceland

Over the past decade and a half, there has been a significant rise in the popularity of Old Norse-Icelandic literary culture (and vikings) as the subjects for films, television, and video games. Video games are a powerful new medium used for storytelling and entertainment marketed to global, transnational audiences in a multi-billion-dollar industry. Despite the existence of a subset of the field of game studies focused on games' usage of the Middle Ages, video games have largely been ignored in studies of the modern reception of medieval Icelandic literature and have not been given their own dedicated studies beyond two doctoral dissertations and a handful of MA theses. Likewise, the field of game studies has yet to see work from trained scholars in Old Norse studies, so there is a vacuum in both fields which I am seeking to partially fill with my current PhD project.

This paper presents preliminary findings from an ongoing doctoral project of cataloguing Old Norse-Icelandic literary allusions, motifs, tropes, and archetypes found in medieval fantasy themed video games, especially those set in or strongly influenced by the medieval north and/or the Viking Age, and presenting them in an open access online database. This website database will thus act as a channel for the dissemination of academic knowledge in game studies and medieval studies out into the public (especially players of video games), a phenomenon which is stunted by the inaccessibility of scholarly journals and dense academic writing itself. The database privileges rhizomatic exploration through polymorphic tagging to allow users to navigate freely and discover the historical literary origins of their favorite medieval high fantasy video games.

With their powerful immersive qualities and their popularity, video games disseminate new ways of engaging with Old Norse culture and impact public perceptions far more than academia. It is therefore necessary both to address this chapter of Old Norse reception in scholarship and, crucially, to disseminate academic knowledge to the public, in this case video game players, through accessible avenues and tools for tangential learning, such as the database.

Extremes of the *Austrvegr*: Cultural diversity between the Circum-Baltic and Byzantium

Agni Agathi C. Papamichael, University of Birmingham

This paper aims to compare the linguistic and thematic representation of the Circum-Baltic and the Byzantine Empire as two extremes of the *Austrvegr* (Eastern Route), aiming to define its diverse cultural character in its sagaic and runic depictions. Both the Circum-Baltic and the Byzantine Empire were seen as parts of the East in sagas and runic inscriptions. However, a focused study of the vocabulary used to describe voyages, people, landscapes and cityscapes in the Circum-Baltic and Byzantium in sagas of different genres indicates the Scandinavian authors and audience's varying degree of familiarity with each region. Familiarity fades with distance from the Northern lands, with the geographical vocabulary changing visibly, and the Circum-Baltic and Byzantium becoming arenas for significantly different interactions, activities and narratives. This can further be supported by the study of eleventh- and twelfth-century Scandinavian runic inscriptions, a statistical analysis of which will suggest consistent differences in the identities and activities of travellers who journeyed to each region, as well as in the runestone commissioners' perception of each area. By analysing and comparing the textual representations of the Circum-Baltic and Byzantium in sagas and runic inscriptions, this paper hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavian perceptions of the two regions, highlighting the cultural diversity of the *Austrvegr* and its role as a point of cultural conflict, as well as co-existence.

The stylistic function of the *vreiðr/vega* collocation in the *Poetic Edda*

James Parkhouse, University of Oxford

The corpus of eddic poetry features seven instances in which inflections of the adjective (*v*)*reiðr* ‘angry’ are collocated with inflections of the verb *vega* ‘to fight’, ‘to strike’ (*Lokasenna* 15/4-5, 18/6, 27/6; *Fáfnismál* 7/3, 17/3, 30/3; *Sigrdrífumál* 28/3). Whilst this recurrence has been frequently noted, little has been said concerning the function of the collocation in the artistic designs of the poets who employed it. The use of the collocation by multiple poets, in addition to its retention of the archaic initial *v*- in *vreiðr*, demonstrates its status as a traditional poetic expression. This paper will consider the different levels of rhetorical signification achieved through the use of the collocation, in terms of both internal patterns of repetition and the concept of ‘traditional referentiality’ developed by John Miles Foley (*Immanent Art* [1991]). On one level, the collocation is used as a structural device within individual poems, in which it serves to draw thematic connections between different sections. In addition to this, in each of its occurrences in the corpus it evokes a consistent set of traditional resonances which would have been readily perceived by the primary audiences of the poems, and which contribute to the shaping of audience responses to particular kinds of character interactions. Specifically, the collocation appears to connote hostile addresses and accusations of cowardice. As well as contributing to our critical appraisal of individual poems in the corpus, this conclusion has important implications for the evaluation of purported text-loans between eddic poems. If the traditional resonances of a given expression make it particularly suited to certain narrative scenarios, its appearance in similar contexts in multiple poems cannot be taken as evidence for a stemmatic relationship between them.

Murder in the *baðstofa*

Katelin Parsons, University of Iceland / Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

A passage on the healing and harmful effects of the *baðstofa* survives in a medical handbook attributed to Henrik Harpestreng (d. 1244), a canon in Roskilde. According to the scientific wisdom of Harpestreng's day, restorative bathing was a means of restoring balance to the body. Hot baths were not universally wholesome: a trip to the bathing chamber could prove fatal to an overheated heart.

The *baðstofa* had its other dangers. When examining the *baðstofa* in medieval Icelandic literary sources, an unexpected pattern emerges. *Baðstofa* scenes are often intense encounters with enemies, and the *baðstofa* nearly always makes its appearance in connection with either a farm invasion or other deadly attack. The best-known *baðstofa* in Icelandic literature is likely the one found in *Eyrbyggja saga*, which is used to trap and murder two berserkers, but there are numerous instances in which men carry out arsons or other violent acts while their victims are in the *baðstofa*. Not all such literary encounters involved male violence: the ballad *Kvæði af Tófu og Suffaralín*, preserved in the seventeenth-century songbook of Gissur Sveinsson (AM 147 8vo, ff. 4r–7r) but probably of late medieval origin, depicts a king's jealous bride, Suffaralín, disposing of her fiancé's low-born mistress by suffocating her in a *baðstofa*. The wicked Suffaralín's claim that the king's lover is absent because she is *baðstofumóð* ('out of breath from the *baðstofa*') darkly evokes the imagery of *Eyrbyggja saga*'s doomed berserkers.

The focus of the present paper is on the relationship between literary depictions of the *baðstofa* in medieval Icelandic sources and a folk legend from the late seventeenth century. As recorded by Jón Eggertsson (1643–1689), Þorkell Guðbjartsson is a sympathetic and popular sorcerer-priest who has long been unfairly persecuted by his bishop. When Þorkell learns that the bishop and a large party of armed men are riding to his farm, he heads to his *baðstofa* to await his guests. What happens next, I argue, is a playful inversion of the sinister sauna of older saga literature.

How formulaic is a skaldic formula?

Bianca Patria, University of Oslo

Skaldic poetry – a poetic genre dating back, in its early phase, to the pre-literate period – challenges most of the notions associated with the concept of ‘oral poetry’, such as those of ephemeral, non-fixed texts, for which claims of authorship and originality are made impossible by the dynamics of incessant re-shaping in performance. The skaldic canon, by contrast, is formed by attributed, fixed texts, with unique and distinctive contents secured by a heavily regulated verse. For a substantial part of the corpus, the linguistic form dates back to a time in which writing in Scandinavia was limited to runic epigraphy. One of the fundamental notions associated to orality is that of composition in performance by means of formulas. As a matter of fact, recurring lines or portions of lines are rare in skaldic poetry, but not completely absent. The talk will focus on cases in which a *dróttkvætt* line recurs repeatedly with slight variations in early poetry, presenting a formula-like behavior. What does the occurrence of these ‘formulas’ tell us regarding the dynamics of skaldic versification? This paper argues that the few apparent exceptions are not indicative of oral-formulaic behavior *tout court*. Rather, we must look to the dynamics of skaldic diction at large in order attribute a plausible function to these features. Aural imprinting and inertial echoing appear to have been at the core of the process by which skalds generated new lines. Even when the difference surfaces in one syllable only, it is likely to affect the whole *helmingr*, requiring a substantial and conscious effort of lexical, syntactical, and semantic recasting. The concept of ‘formulariness’ thus loses most of its explanatory force with regards to *dróttkvætt* versification, whereas authorial dynamics, such as imitation and allusion, may prove more apt to shed light on the occurrence of the formula-like lines.

Death and burial in the *Biskupasögur*: The cases of Oddr and Solveig

Ryder Patzuk-Russell, University of Iceland

The core Christian practices surrounding death – preparations for dying, funeral rites, burial, and commemoration – are among the most fundamental and important nexuses of social and cultural life, yet they have been little studied for medieval Iceland. The necessity and difficulty of properly caring for the dead is indisputable: the Christian Law section of the twelfth-century legal code *Grágás* is full of detailed instructions for the transportation of bodies; in this early time soon after Christianization and before a formal parish system, the focus is the shared responsibility of the Christian community to get bodies into any sort of consecrated ground.¹ Actual disputes over burial are less well known, and this paper will analyse some particularly interesting examples from the later medieval period: the reburial of the bones of Oddr Þórarinnsson in *Árna saga biskups*, and the dispute over the burial location of Solveig Loftsdóttir in *Lárentíus saga biskups*. Together these accounts show the range of complex ways in which burial can be a source of dispute, the variable lines over which dispute can be drawn, and the close involvement of bishops and even archbishops in regulating acceptable practices.

The reburial of Oddr Þórarinnsson

In a not unfamiliar story, Oddur Þórarinnsson was an important Icelander who died violently and young in the middle of the thirteenth century. A member of the Svínfellingar, the dominant family in eastern Iceland, Oddr and his more well-known and successful brother Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson would become involved in the major conflicts in Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður between Gizurr Þorvaldsson and Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson; the brothers may have been seeking power in the more populated and wealthy northern territories.² According to *Sturlunga saga*, on October 22nd, 1253, Gizurr's great estate at Flugumýri in Skagafjörður was attacked and burned, and Gizurr himself barely escaped alive. Oddr allied himself to Gizurr shortly after, and assisted him in the subsequent feuding. He was present with Gizurr when Eyjólfur and fourteen others of those present at the burning at Flugumýri were outlawed. Then, though only 24 years old, he took responsibility for Gizurr's property in Iceland when the chieftain departed for Norway in the summer of 1254.³

Oddr, laden with new responsibility, got into even more trouble than one might expect in light of the continuing conflict. Claiming it was the property of an outlaw, Oddr confiscated some livestock from a man named Þorsteinn. Heinrekr, the Norwegian bishop of Hólar, who had been on friendly terms with the burners of Flugumýri, excommunicated Oddr over what the bishop called a theft. When Heinrekr and Oddr then met, Oddr is presented in the saga as sincerely seeking a reconciliation, while the bishop remains stubbornly inflexible, and in the end Oddr took the bishop captive. This, of course, enraged many people, including the Norwegians present in Iceland; as a result Oddr quickly released the bishop and fled to Valþjófsstaðir, in his family's home territory in the east.⁴

But soon Oddr returned, and was attacked by Eyjólfur and others at Geldingaholt in Skagafjörður.⁵ The saga presents his death as heroic, the solitary last stand of the finest young fighter living in Iceland in the time. It describes his appearance and character, and notes that his wife, Randalín, and two children survived him and stayed in Valþjófsstaðir. His body was taken to a nearby churchyard at Seyla and buried, despite the fact that, we are told, burial was not permitted there. While the saga does not remind us of his excommunication at this point, it does note that he was buried *undir kirkjugarðinum*, an ambiguous phrase that suggests being buried somewhere near the boundary wall of the cemetery, subsequently stating that it was *svá langt inn*

¹ *Grágás*, 7-12.

² Jón Viðar Sigursson 1999, 74, 81.

³ *Sturlunga saga III*, 84-117.

⁴ *Sturlunga saga III*, 117-20.

⁵ *Sturlunga saga III*, 125-35.

undir kirkjugarðinn. It is unclear, but the image this suggests is that the funeral party started digging the grave right outside the wall of the churchyard, as would be expected for an excommunicated but honored and popular man. Then they essentially tunneled in under the wall, trying to get Oddr's body as close into the consecrated ground as possible.⁶

The unfortunate fate of Oddr Þórarinnsson comes to the fore again in 1277, twenty-two years after his death, in *Árna saga*. In the intervening years, it appears that Oddr's family was petitioning for him, because the episode begins with a letter arriving in Skálholt from Jón, archbishop of Niðarós, instructing Bishop Árni to release Oddr from his excommunication, by papal command; it seems Oddr had himself been seeking his own release from excommunication before he died, but no other information is given as to why the Archbishop would care to help Oddr. The full range of reasons for Oddr's excommunication are given: the theft of livestock mentioned in *Sturlunga saga*, various thefts of church property, including a whale, and finally the abduction of Bishop Heinrekr.⁷

The first difficulty was with Jörundr, bishop of Hólar. While Bishop Árni was eager to hurry along the process of releasing poor Oddr's soul, Jörundr wished to delay it. In usual saga style, it is not clear why; we are likely to assume that Jörundr's sense of honor was still stinging over the imprisonment of his predecessor, Heinrekr. Finally, the issue came down to money: Oddr had been excommunicated in Hólar diocese by a Hólar bishop, so Jörundr was due to be paid his debts, to a total of 70 hundreds.⁸

Árni was tasked with gathering up donations: some from Oddr's son, Guðmundr *gríss*, but a larger portion from Hrafn Oddsson, who had been part of the assault on Oddr at Geldingaholt. Oddr's widow, Randalín Filippusdóttir, however, wanted more than the removal of his excommunication: she told Árni that she wanted Oddr's bones buried at Skálholt, and that she would offer an additional treasure for the burial place, for the honor of the bishop and the cathedral, and for Oddr's soul. Jörundr's stubbornness remained, and eventually Árni started digging up Oddr's bones at Seyla without Jörundr's consent; the two bishops met at the gravesite, and Árni cited canon law, a passage from the Decretals of Innocent III, according to the saga, and this finally persuaded Jörundr. Oddr was absolved, and the party went to Hólar where Jörundr was paid the 70 hundreds, which he in turn distributed among the monasteries of his diocese.⁹

From this point, the only difficulty left in the affair seems to have been caused by Oddr himself. Abbot Runólfur of Þykkvabær was tasked with transporting the bones from the north down to Skálholt, and he travelled with two of his fellow Augustinian canons, Árni and Sighvatr, another man named Auðun *kolli*, and a troublesome priest's son named Þórarinn *bausti*. Oddr's coffin and bones were being carried on a packhorse, but the ropes broke and the bones were thrown about. The abbot blamed Þórarinn for his excessive cursing, and sent the two laymen ahead while the abbot and his brothers rode beside the packhorse and Oddr's remains – Þórarinn proceeded to insult the monks and their actions.¹⁰ But the three monks sang *sálutíðir* (Office of the Dead) together over the bones, and there was no more trouble from Oddr.

Finally, the party reached Skálholt, and bishop Árni sang the funeral liturgy himself, the day before the Translation of St. Þorlákr; the timing may not be coincidental, reburying Oddr right before a day celebrating doing the same activities for an Icelandic saint. During the *sálumessa* (Requiem Mass) the widow Randalín fulfilled her promise and donated all of the gold she had to Árni and Skálholt. Thus, while the costs of releasing Oddr from excommunication all went to Hólar, she ensured that his burial church benefitted properly.¹¹

⁶ *Sturlunga saga III*, 134-35.

⁷ *Biskupa sögur III*, 66-67.

⁸ *Biskupa sögur III*, 67-69.

⁹ *Biskupa sögur III*, 71-74.

¹⁰ "Eigi mun at ykkrum skauðum gagn" (*Biskupa sögur III*, 75).

¹¹ *Biskupa sögur III*, 74-75.

The monastic burial of Solveig Loftsdóttir

This issue of burial fees is more central to the second case. Moving from the thirteenth to the early fourteenth century, this case is less about dramatic conflicts and killings, and more about smaller-scale social issues. But it does have other connections to Oddr's death. In 1307 in Hörgárdalur, the granddaughter of the very Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson who was involved in the murder of Oddr, Solveig Loftsdóttir, was travelling between her home and the church of Bægisá for liturgical services, along with an unnamed woman. Something went awry, and both of them drowned in the Bægisá river.

When Solveig's body was found, issues arose. Her widower, Þorvaldr Geirsson, took her body down to Munkaþverá to be buried at the monastery, and gave a great *offr* (offering) to the monks; he is additionally said to have given the monks a great quantity of goods as a *sálugjöf* (soul-gift/gift for the dead) in Solveig's name; these were likely the same donation. In any case, the saga makes it clear that Solveig had had a burial place set aside for her at her parish church at Bægisá, but Þorvaldr paid only 12 els of wool in *legkaup* (burial fee) to the church.

The reason for Þorvaldr's decision, according to the saga author, was not only pious dedication to Benedictine order and belief in the power of monastic prayer, though that may still have been a factor. Þorvaldr and Solveig had not been getting along well before her death, and the priest at Bægisá, Hildibrandr Grímsson, had been "comforting her with wholesome advice."¹² Leaving aside exactly what sort of forms this clerical comfort might have taken, it is no stretch to infer that the saga is presenting Þorvaldr as disdainful, perhaps even jealous of Hildibrandr.

At this time the saga's hero, Lárentíus Kálfsson, was still only a priest, not yet a bishop, but had come to Iceland with the authority as a *visitor* to act on behalf of the archbishop. He was staying at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, and during the following spring, in 1308, after failing to get anywhere with Bishop Jörundr, Hildibrandr went and complained to Lárentíus that Solveig should have been buried at his church, and he should have received her *offr* and *yfirsöngur* (funeral service), presumably indicating the donations that went along with such a service. He stated specifically that because she did not have a will that stated an intended burial elsewhere, she was obliged to be buried at her parish church. Lárentíus agreed, and sent a letter to Þorvaldr to return Solveig's body to Bægisá, or make another arrangement with the priest Hildibrandr.¹³

Unsurprisingly, Þorvaldr ignored the command, and the dispute escalated. Lárentíus wrote a letter and read it aloud in the choir at Munkaþverá: he forbid Mass from taking place at the monastery church until Solveig's body had been removed from the churchyard. Bishop Jörundr and Lárentíus's fellow *visitor*, the Dominican Björn, did not support him, and the bishop granted the monks permission to have Mass at their church while waiting to make his decision on the case after Easter. While gathered later at the Munkaþverá church, Abbot Þórir grabbed Lárentíus's letter and tore it apart, a physical brawl ensued, and Lárentíus was carried out of the church.¹⁴

When the bishop's decision came, Lárentíus was not invited to the meeting, and the case was ruled in favor of Munkaþverá: Solveig remained buried there, and the priest Hildibrandr was left with very little. The saga is quite critical of both Jörundr and Björn at this point: the bishop is said to have always ruled in favor of the major property owners in his diocese – in this case, presumably the monastery is being regarded as such – and his popularity, cleverness, and generosity are presented as more or less negative, worldly qualities. And Björn, despite being formally a representative of the archbishop, is said to have followed Jörundr.¹⁵

Lárentíus and Hildibrandr were left defeated, mere priests without enough authority to contend with their opponents. The fate of Solveig's nameless drowned companion remained unknown; the saga does not even state whether her body was ever found. For Solveig herself,

¹² "var prestr jafnan henni til hugganar með heilum tillögum" (*Biskupa sögur III*, 277).

¹³ *Biskupa sögur III*, 277-78.

¹⁴ *Biskupa sögur III*, 278-81.

¹⁵ *Biskupa sögur*, 282-83.

however, while we cannot be certain of her desires for a final resting place, there is at least some room for speculation. Above all, we must consider how much Solveig and her husband may have been influenced not only by her grandfather Eyjólfur's burial, but the whole culture of monastic burial in northern Iceland at the time when Eyjólfur and Oddr were killed.

Munkaþverá, Sighvatr Sturlason, and the society of graveyards

There is no doubt that Icelandic monasteries were significant burial sites, and not only for monks. Medieval monasteries were highly valued for the benefit they could provide the dead, both through burial and commemoration: lay patrons wanted to be in close proximity to the frequent and powerful prayers of the monks. This could include joining a monastery late in life or even near death, to seek monastic help in one's final preparations.¹⁶ While later documentary sources show non-monastic Icelanders retiring and being buried at a number of monasteries, particularly at Pingeyrar and Helgafell, no other monastery is as prominent for burials in narrative sources during the late twelfth and thirteenth century as Munkaþverá. When Solveig joined the graveyard at the beginning of the fourteenth century, she was joining an extensive community of prominent Icelanders, powerful leaders of the Eyjafjörðr region, including her own relatives. While this particular community of the dead may not have been the foremost reason for Þorvaldr to have buried Solveig there, it must have been a factor in the decision.

The monastery was founded in 1155, and less than two decades later *Sturlunga saga* begins to mention retirement and burial there. Þorgeirr Hallason, the grandfather of Bishop Guðmundr 'the Good' Arason, moved to Munkaþverá in 1168 and died with the title *munkr* in 1171.¹⁷ Þórðr, one of Þorgeirr's sons, and thus an uncle of Guðmundr the Good, is said in a genealogy of the family to have died at Munkaþverá, without any children, though we do not know when.¹⁸ From essentially the beginning of the monastery's history, Munkaþverá's graveyard embodied family connections that would continue to influence the relationship of the living with the monastery.

The early relationship of another important family with Munkaþverá would intersect with Bishop Guðmundr's. Björn Gilsson, the third bishop of Hólar (1146-1162), both founded the monastery and upon his death made a major donation to it; in addition, he appointed his brother, also named Björn Gilsson, as abbot – and on this same trip, the bishop would himself give confirmation to the one-year-old Guðmundr. Bishop Björn's nephew Ormr would also eventually become abbot. Eventually, in 1203, Bishop Guðmundr would ask Sigurðr, the son of Abbot Ormr, to travel to Munkaþverá and restore the run-down monastic estate. Sigurðr is specifically said to have loved the place because his father was buried there.¹⁹ This is one of very few instances where the emotional relationship to such a burial, binding the living to the community of the dead in the particular experience of an individual, is made explicit. And while it is not made clear in the saga, Guðmundr himself likely had some similar motivations to look after the monastic estate and the graves of his uncle and grandfather.

Both of these early groups had clear ecclesiastical connections to the monastery, and were related to members of the monastic community there. But the society of the graveyard seems to have expanded and diversified in the mid-thirteenth century, when members of the Sturlungar clan and Solveig's own family established themselves among Munkaþverá's dead. In 1215 Sighvatr Sturluson and his sons settled at Grund, a farm just south of Munkaþverá. During this time, they must have established some kind of relationship with the monastery, though we do not know the exact nature of it.²⁰ When Sighvatr and his sons – Markús, Sturla, Þórðr, and Kolbeinn – died at the Battle of Örlygsstaðir in 1238, all of them but Kolbeinn were brought all the way

¹⁶ Stöber 2007, 112-46. On retirement, see Lawrence 2001, 123.

¹⁷ *Sturlunga saga I*, 151-52.

¹⁸ *Sturlunga saga I*, 142.

¹⁹ *Sturlunga saga I*, 148-49; *Sturlunga saga II*, 46.

²⁰ *Sturlunga saga II*, 98

from Skagafjörður to Eyjafjörður to be buried at the monastery; Kolbeinn was taken even further, to his farm at Grenjaðarstaðr.²¹

This was clearly a very deliberate decision: not only were they not buried somewhere close by in Skagafjörður, but they were also not buried at Grund itself. There was something special about Munkaþverá to Sighvatr and his sons, possibly something more than power of monastic prayer, though that was certainly a factor. The family continued to live at Grund, and made donations to the church there: Þórðr *kakali*, the son of Sighvatr, who survived the Battle of Örlygsstaðir by being in Norway, returned to Grund in the summer of 1245, and seems to have reestablished the family connection there, because the 1318 *máldagi* (church charter) for the church of Grund shows donations made there by Þórðr's sons Jón and Þórðr, as well as Loftr Hálfðánarson, the son of Sighvatr's daughter Steinvör.²² Our records are incomplete, and the descendants of Sighvatr may have been buried at the Grund churchyard, but they may well have also chosen a monastic burial.

In any case, Sighvatr and his sons became part the draw of the Munkaþverá graveyard: when Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson died in 1255, he was buried next to Sturla Sighvatsson. The battle where Eyjólfr fell took place at Þverá hin litla, a short distance to the north of the monastery, so it was not a long distance to transport the body. The saga states explicitly that he was *grafinn hjá Sturlu*, i.e. buried beside his Sturla, his ally, the father of his wife, and the husband of his sister.²³ Sturla's brothers and father were of course there as well. Eyjólfr thereby became a part of a physical space associated with the Sturlungar and their memory.

A final member of the Sturlungar was to die violently and be buried at Munkaþverá, in 1258: Þorgils *skarða* Böðvarsson, the grandson of Sighvatr's brother Þórðr Sturlason. The complexity of the social situation at the Munkaþverá graveyard is exemplified by Þorgils' entry: while he did not deliver the killing blow himself, Þorgils was among those who attacked and killed Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson. Þorgils himself was killed at Hrafnagil – another farm in close proximity to Munkaþverá – by Þorvaðr Þórarinnsson, the brother of Oddr. Þorgil's last days and death in *Sturlunga saga* are detailed and full of pious praise: he had the saga of St. Thomas Becket read to him shortly before his death, and the abbot of Munkaþverá gave him an honorable funeral, attended by great numbers of mourners.²⁴

While Oddr Þórarinnsson's reburial at Skálholt is more explicitly a resolution of conflict, it is hard not to think of Þorgils' burial at Munkaþverá in at least somewhat related terms: in 1258, only a few years before the end of the civil war period in Iceland, the monastic cemetery had filled with the honorable dead from multiple sides of the conflict. These are mostly members of the Sturlungar family itself, but Eyjólfr's burial alongside both his ally Sturla and his enemy Þorgils is a reminder that the connections of the graveyard were broader and more diverse than kin relations alone. As abbots and monks were themselves so often involved in mediating and attempt to settle conflicts during the Sturlungaöld, it is reasonable to suggest the monastic cemetery of Munkaþverá could have served a similar purpose, at least for later generations.

All of this history behind the community of the dead at Munkaþverá is context for Solveig's rather mysterious burial there. *Lárentíus saga* draws the reader's focus to a jealous husband, acting pettily against a parish priest he dislikes. But of course, the saga author is on Lárentíus' side, and Lárentíus was opposed to the monastic burial, so the author has no reason to speculate about or suggest reasons why Solveig may have wanted to rest at Munkaþverá. Not only was her grandfather buried at Munkaþverá, but her brother, Þórlákur Loftsson, would become abbot of Þykkvabær a few years after her death, and she may have shared monastic interests.²⁵ Through

²¹ *Sturlunga saga II*, 346.

²² *Sturlunga saga II*, 487. *DI II*, 452-53.

²³ *Sturlunga saga III*, 217.

²⁴ *Sturlunga saga III*, 210-14.

²⁵ *Biskupa sögur III*, 462. Þórlákur is known to have become abbot of Þykkvabær in 1314 from other sources, but *Lárentíus saga* calls him abbot already in 1309 (*Biskupa sögur III*, 309).

Eyjólfr, she may have felt connections to the Sturlungar and their burials; she may have simply viewed a monastic burial as more honorable, as the Sturlungar themselves likely did.

So, while *Lárentíus saga* gives no indication of this, Solveig may have intended to be buried with her grandfather, and possibly other family, at Munkaþverá, and might have written this into a will if she had had the chance. It is important to keep in mind that the concept of a written *testamentum* was fairly new to Iceland at the beginning of the fourteenth century. There is no mention of such documents in Icelandic law until Bishop Árni Þorláksson's New Christian Law in 1275; no actual wills survive earlier than 1362. Both the earliest wills – Einar Þorláksson in 1362 and Benedikt Kolbeinsson in 1363 – involve monastic burial,²⁶ and it may be that disputes like Solveig's helped instigate wealthy Icelanders to clarify when they were choosing a burial outside their parish. Lárentíus may have been fighting a doomed battle in trying to move Solveig's body not just because he was up against powerful men, but also because he was defending a law and concept that was still fairly novel.

It is hard to say how distinctive Munkaþverá was. We know a lot about the important Icelanders laid to rest at the monastery at least in part because of the power politics of the Eyjafjörðr region that play such a central role in the story of *Sturlunga saga*. Other monasteries likely also had notable burials from an early date, graves that Icelanders of Solveig's day knew about and factored into their own preparations for death. Yet it is difficult not to suspect that the graveyard of Munkaþverá was still unusually active during its first century of existence, and that this activity continued to echo for generations after.

Burial fees and the economy of death

While their relationships to the burials of some of the most important men of Eyjafjörðr do provide an interesting link between Oddr and Solveig, the more significant and fundamental connection is the disputes over the burials themselves. The context for either dispute is quite distinct: Oddr was excommunicated and his family is calling for absolution and a prestigious reburial – something in line with or even greater than how powerful men like Sturla and Eyjólfr at Munkaþverá might have been buried – while the fate of Solveig's soul is more secure, and the issue is the rights of church and monastery to her body. However, both cases involve the idea of moving bodies between gravesites, for reasons that are arguably both religious and political. And both cases turn on the fees and donations associated with burial.

The larger payment in Oddr's case was for removing his excommunication – a payment of debt to the bishop of Hólar, understood to help appease the stubborn Bishop Jörundr. Yet Bishop Jörundr did not keep this money for himself or the cathedral estate, but distributed it among the monasteries of his diocese. Through this payment, despite not receiving a monastic burial, Oddr's restoration to the community of Christian dead is immediately tied to monasteries, in their role of expressing the prayers and faith of Icelandic society as a whole – or at least as Bishop Jörundr perceived it. It cannot be unrelated, then, that it was an abbot and his brothers who sung the Office of the Dead over the bones of Oddr as they were transported to Skálholt. In *Árna saga*, monks are clearly a part of how episcopal power negotiates with death and the dead.

The donation made by the widow Randalín to Skálholt and Bishop Árni also stands out in the story. This was the payment not to absolve Oddr, but for the burial at Skálholt, and Randalín was very specific that her donation would not only help Oddr's soul, but also bring honor to the cathedral estate.²⁷ And in an economy where financial exchanges so often turn around livestock, land, or even fish and meat, it can be no accident that she promised a precious object for the donation. The wording of the funeral itself makes the performative nature of her action exceptionally clear: “Þá offraði Randalín í sálumessu því öllu sem hon átti í gulli” (then, during

²⁶ *DI* VI 14-15; *DI* III, 184-86.

²⁷ “staðnum til sæmdar en bónda sínum til syndalausnar” (*Biskupa sögur* III, 71) (for the honour of the estate and for relieving the farmer of his sins).

the Requiem Mass, Randalín made an offering of all the gold that she had).²⁸ She handed over gold, possibly a rare sight for many of the Icelanders present, as a physical part of the liturgical ritual; the two methods of helping Oddr's soul were displayed in a single moment of reconciliation between the Church and the man who had kidnapped a bishop. Her action during the Requiem Mass at the cathedral may even have been intended to harken back to the monastic Office of the Dead over Oddr's bones, as the saga emphasizes the multifaceted ways that death liturgies can help both soul and body along their journey.

For Solveig, too, the issue is not so much the formal burial fee, but rather the larger donation given to benefit the soul of the deceased and the church of their burial. Solveig's husband Þorvaldr, from the beginning, gave a nominal *legkaup* (burial price) to the church of Bægisá, but what Munkaþverá received is called a *mikið offr* (great offering) and a *sálugjöf*.²⁹ Her parish church thus arguably got the essential payment that was due to it. But as the offering given for Oddr is said to benefit both his soul and the *sæmð* (honor) of Skálholt, so the honor and reputation of Bægisá were diminished by the *sálugjöf* made to Munkaþverá. The relationship between Randalín and Þorvaldr's action are not only the use of the noun *offr* and verb *offra* to describe the donation, but also the implication that such a donation would be made as part of the funeral itself: as noted above, Hildibrandr did not just complain about being denied the *offr*, but also the *yfirsöngur*, the funeral liturgy itself, and it seems very likely that Þorvaldr's great donation to Munkaþverá was a part of Solveig's funeral – though it may not have had the same impressive gleam and impact as Randalín's gold.

Solveig's experience is both the earliest and the best evidence we have for the competition between parish churches and monasteries for burials in Iceland; there were likely many more examples than our sources preserve, though it is possible that it was not as significant a type of dispute as in some other places in medieval Europe. But there is at least one later dispute over a *sálugjöf* made for a monastic burial and commemoration that is worth mentioning, to provide some broader historical context: the late fifteenth-century case of Skúli Loftsson and his extravagant commemoration at Viðey.

Skúli – the son of Loftr Guttormsson, an extremely wealthy man who held the highest secular offices in later medieval Iceland, *sylumaðr* and *hirðstjóri* – established a deal with the monastery of Viðey on August 21st, 1478. In exchange for the property of Heiðarhús, it was stipulated that if he died in the south of Iceland, he would be buried at the monastery. If he died in the north, while he would not receive burial, the monastery would still receive the land, and still provide a rather distinct commemoration: a Requiem Mass in Skúli's name every day for one full year.³⁰ We do not know where Skúli died or ended up buried, but we do know that a dispute arose over this agreement, and Skúli's son Guðmundr, a priest, was charged in the summer of 1481 with not holding to the promises of his father's *testamentum*.³¹ Here again, it was no simple fee for a burial place that caused the dispute, but an agreement made for a special monastic burial and, more prominently, an extremely prestigious commemoration, of a sort unique in Icelandic record. And it was once again the actions of family members that determined the outcome: Randalín's decades-long fight to save Oddr's soul, Þorvaldr's insistence on Solveig's monastic burial, and Guðmundr Skúlason's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with his father's debts.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the necessities and desires of Icelanders regarding death were a potential point of dispute, but as Oddr's funeral at Skálholt may suggest, burial and commemoration could also help bring resolution and a healing of the scars of conflict and violence. Monks and monasteries were a key part of this aspect of religious culture, whether

²⁸ *Biskupa sögur III*, 75.

²⁹ *Biskupa sögur III*, 277-78.

³⁰ *DI VI*, 152-53.

³¹ *DI VI*, 375-76, 388-89.

through the prestige of their graveyards or prayers, or through their involvement with episcopal power and activity. Ecclesiastical institutions were eager for and sometimes even competitive over the potentially large donations that could accompany prestigious burial and requests for commemoration. This financial incentive does not preclude religious or emotional dimensions to burial; we should not think of medieval churches, monasteries, or cathedrals as materialistic institutions entirely motivated by financial gain. But that was among their concerns, and one that comes across particularly clearly in the types of sources that survive.

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From the Baltic Sea to the farthest North: *Finnar*, magic and imagined geographies in Old Norse literature

Gaïa Perreaut, Sorbonne Université

In *Heimskringla*, the infamous queen Gunnhildr is said to come from Hálogaland, the northernmost kingdom of Norway, and learns magic from two *Finnar* in Finnmark. In Old Norse imaginary, *Finnar* live in the farthest North and are almost invariably associated with magic; reciprocally, magic is described as a pagan custom, learnt from *Finnar* and practiced in septentrional regions of Scandinavia. On several occasions, *Finnar* also appeared to be mythological beings, such as giants, elves or dwarves. More than an actual geographic territory, the farthest North is a mythological place, as gods and heroes go north to *Jötunheimar* to visit or confront wicked beings.

These literary representations raise several questions: Why are *Finnar* associated with farthest north of Norway in Old Norse narratives, whereas Sámi people have inhabited a large territory along the Baltic coast in Fennoscandian peninsula? What is the connection between geographic and mythological North? The existence of a North necessarily implies that of a South: What, or rather, who is the South in these narratives?

The purpose of this proposal is to address literary production of a farthest North where *Finnar* act as medium for reception of pre-Christian magic in Old Norse literature. In early medieval Christian imaginary, Scandinavia was regarded as uncivilized pagan territory, and in some cases, as *terra incognita*. Throughout its Christianisation, it became part of civilized world; part of South's culture and imaginary. Old Norse literature has in turn projected these Christian representations farthest north, *id est* onto Sámi territories in North Scandinavia through images of *Finnar*. In the literary material, *Finnar* are thus depicted on edge of worlds: on the edge of geographical world, but above all on the edge of Christian Scandinavian (and thus, human) world. With the use of imagined geographies, I will discuss how the farthest North works as a moral compass, a projected space produced by Christian South, associated with paganism, magic, and otherness.

What is Knýtlinga saga and why does it matter?

Alexandra Petrulevich, Uppsala University

What is Knýtlinga saga? The answer to the question is not necessarily as straightforward as one may think. Traditionally, Knýtlinga saga is characterised as a kings' saga, but the relative agreement about the saga and its (textual) history ends there. There have been different opinions about the dating of the saga (1253–1259 or 1260–1270), its authorship and its sources, most notably its connections to Heimskringla and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. Even a simple question of how many manuscripts of the saga exist result in different answers in the secondary literature (e.g. af Petersens & Olson 1919–1925; Albeck 1963; Malmros 1993). Knýtlinga saga is currently scarcely researched (Mortensen 2012 and Cem Gülen 2018 being on the list of few exceptions); however, the saga has been a subject to a lively debate in the 1940s, 1960s and 1970s (Albeck 1946; Hallberg 1963; 1978–1979; Heller 1967; Weibull 1976). The debates tend to start where this paper finishes, with a “complete” version of the saga as rendered in the critical edition by af Petersens & Olson. For instance, neither Weibull (1915; 1976) nor Albeck (1946), the two most prominent combatants on the Saxo vs. Knýtlinga battlefield, ever ask a question if the textual tradition of the saga can provide any new evidence of relevance to their heated discussion. It is significant that Albeck (1963) when presenting his inventory of the Knýtlinga-manuscripts labels all the witnesses of the saga's so-called *B*-redaction as “fragments”. However, the “fragments” contain significant variation that has merely been touched upon in the context of the aforementioned debates.

In the paper, I will give a survey of the textual witnesses of Knýtlinga saga to showcase the complexity of the manuscript evidence and its relevance to the research into the saga's authorship and sources. I will present several variants of the *B*-redaction, for instance, the description of the battle at Fotevik between Niels of Denmark and Erik Emune, that have significance for the discussion of the saga compiler's mode of work. The research presented in the paper was conducted as a part of my thesis on place-name variation in Knýtlinga saga (Petrulevich 2016) but have not been presented or published before.

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Disenchanting the world: Euhemerism and the Old Norse cosmology

Jules Piet, University of Strasbourg / University of Iceland

Medieval Scandinavian mythographers, such as Snorri Sturluson or Saxo Grammaticus, are well known to have applied the euhemeristic theory to the gods of the Old Norse mythology. They theorized that the Old Norse gods were mere mortal men who tricked people into worshipping them. In this paper I argue that the euhemeristic treatment of Old Norse gods is merely one aspect of a greater reinterpretation of the Old Norse cosmology.

The Old Norse mythological narratives take place in a specific geographical framework. Various sources such as *Völuspá* and Snorri's *Edda*, tell us about the "nine worlds", the world tree, Miðgarðr, Ásgarðr, and so on. According to some interpretations this cosmos spanned into three dimensions, vertically, from the roots of Yggdrasil to its foliage, and horizontally within the width of Miðgarðr. This organization seems irreconcilable with the medieval concept of the ecumene, according to which the inhabited world is a single continent surrounded by ocean.

To overcome the incompatibilities between the two systems the medieval authors adopted various strategies. For instance, both Snorri and Saxo located the home of the gods in Asia Minor, supposedly close to the center of the ecumene. The similarities, however, stop there, Snorri attempted to transpose several mythological locations within his own medieval representation of the world. On the other hand, Saxo was less interested by the world's geography than he was by the spiritual journey of his characters. Some of his heroes travel far from their home, where familiar geographical landmarks gradually give place to more symbolical representations which Saxo borrowed from mythology and used to build conversion narratives.

It is remarkable that some of the Old Norse mythical places and landmarks, such as Ásgarðr or Miðgarðr, are frequently used by the Christian authors in their geographies, while some others, such as Bifrost or Yggdrasil, are rarely used outside the mythological or poetic context. As I want to argue, this can be explained by the aim of the authors who reshaped the pre-Christian mythology in order to turn it into a world where the pagan gods could not exist as transcendent beings.

‘A sorrowful stone of the shore of thought’: Exploring concepts of heart, mind and emotion in skaldic diction

Edel Porter, University of Castilla-La Mancha

In his twelfth-century treatise *Skaldskaparmál*, Snorri Sturluson illustrates how kennings for the breast envisage it as the ‘land’, or part of the landscape, of the ‘mind’ (*hugr*, *geð*, *sefi*, *munr* and so on), or alternatively, as a ‘hall’, ‘fortress’, or other enclosed structure in which the mind is housed. Other chest-kennings call it the *hjarta salr* (‘heart’s hall’) and *hneggverqld* (‘heart-world’), although, somewhat confusingly, the ‘land of the mind’ can also refer to the heart. More often, however, the heart is called the ‘stone’, ‘acorn’, ‘apple’ (or other round, hard object) of the chest, which is often associated with emotion, as in the phrase *glaðr geðsteinn* (‘cheerful mind-stone’) or the example cited in the title of this paper. However, although as Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir has conclusively established, the conceptualization of the chest as the embodied location of emotional and cognitive activity is ‘deeply ingrained [...] in the tradition of Old Norse skaldic poetry from all five ages of its composition’ (2019: 48), it is important to note that kennings which reflect the ‘pectoral model’ of emotion are not evenly distributed throughout the corpus, but mostly concentrated in twelfth- and thirteenth-century poems such as *Línarbraut*, *Pétursdrápa*, and *Háttalykill inn forni*. Indeed, in these later works, chest-kennings are far more likely to be mentioned in the context of an emotionally charged activity than in earlier poetry, where the chest is primarily referenced in the context of poetic composition, or simply as part of the physical anatomy. Likewise, the concept of the heart as the locus for emotions appears to have a more limited scope in poetry of an early date. Furthermore, while the conservative nature of kennings may well mean that they offer an insight into vernacular folk beliefs, as Geeraerts and Gevaert have pointed out in their analysis of ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ in the Old English corpus, ‘an exclusive focus on metaphorical conceptualizations (a fortiori, on embodied metaphorical conceptualizations) is likely to distort the picture of the actual cultural models at work’ (2008: 343). This paper, therefore, aims to analyse both metaphorical and literal expressions for heart and chest, as well as their associated emotions, throughout the genre of skaldic poetry, with a view to evaluating the extent to which the cultural models of these concepts vary across time, and to suggest reasons for this variation.

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The prophecies of Drauma-Finni: Queer indigenous relationality in *Finnboga saga ramma*

Basil Arnould Price, University of York

Tarren Andrews, introducing her special issue for *English Language Notes* (2020), observes that, as a result of efforts to decolonize the discipline and move towards a more global Middle Ages, medieval studies is experiencing an Indigenous ‘turn’. Despite the perceived recency of the ‘Indigenous turn’, medieval Scandinavian studies has a longer - if not deeper - history with indigeneity. Medieval textual sources attest to extensive interactions between the Norse and the Sámi: an indigenous population given the exonym *finnar* (Finns) in Old Norse-Icelandic sources. Since at least the Scandinavian Viking Age, the Sámi have constituted a distinct ethnic and cultural group, who retain traditional lands in Sápmi, a region spanning Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Most scholars of medieval Scandinavia focus on how Norse sources ‘other’ the Sámi, with their perceived ‘otherness’ deriving from, as Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough (2018) and others have noted, their actual or imagined “geographic marginality, magical talents, and paganism” (Barraclough 2018: 28; See also: DeAngelo 2010; Aalto and Lehtola 2017). Because this scholarship centers on imaginings of Sámi as shamans or supernatural beings, the significance of Sámi as indigenous has often been neglected. According to Sámi archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen (2016), an underlying assumption that the Sámi are ‘not indigenous enough’ has engendered a discipline suspicious of approaching Norse-Sámi interactions within the frameworks advanced by indigenous studies.

This essay grapples with the uneasy intimacy between medieval and indigenous studies through a reconsideration of Norse-Sámi relations in *Finnboga saga ramma* (c. 1300-1350), an understudied *Íslendingasaga* (Icelandic family saga). Despite frequent appearances of Sámi in thirteenth-century *Íslendingasögur*, *Finnboga saga* is the only fourteenth-century text in this genre that includes a figure stated to be *finnskr* (Sámi): a dream-interpreter named Drauma-Finni. Drauma-Finni also appears in two earlier Old Norse-Icelandic texts: *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements). Yet neither of these sources specify his indigeneity. Some critics (Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999, Perabo 2016) explain this discrepancy by contending that *Finnboga saga* encodes a particularly fourteenth-century cultural expectation of soothsayers as Sámi. This essay departs from studies that read indigeneity as incidental to *Finnboga saga* and instead foregrounds how Drauma-Finni - as Sámi - potentiates ways of being and loving that are unthinkable within hegemonic Norse masculinity (See: Evans 2019). These possibilities arise from how the saga intersects the ‘queer’ with the ‘indigenous’ - in what Chickasaw theorist Jodi Byrd (2017, 2020) calls a ‘queer indigenous relationality’. Theorising this relationality through a close reading of ‘Aye and Gomorrah’ (1967), a short story by African American science-fiction author Samuel Delany, Byrd argues that the presence of an explicitly indigenous figure, “precisely because of Indianness, [...] embodies the logics of desire that the story constellates” (2017: 219). From this narrative, Byrd speculates that, within settler discourses, the presence of indigeneity “queers [...] desire, and in doing so, relocates the queer at the intersection of the self-same and its abjective refusal” (Byrd 2017: 219). Otherwise said, what ‘Aye and Gomorrah’ demonstrates is that, for settlers, indigenous figures triangulate and potentiate queer desire, even if their indigeneity always forecloses them from these relations.

Working in dialogue with Byrd, *Finnboga saga*, and Delaney, this essay explores how the saga appropriates Drauma-Finni, as indigenous, to triangulate queer connection. Yet even as *Finnboga saga* gestures to what could or would constitute a queer, indigenous relationality, this essay furthermore contends that, as a settler discourse, the saga has a “transitive relationality with indigeneity [...] [requiring] the Indian as a mode of refraction to perceive the self” (Byrd 2017: 221). This reading problematizes underlying assumptions that attestations of indigeneity are inconsequential in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, and furthermore offers medieval

Scandinavian studies as a site for exploring the possibilities and limitations of a critical turn that is both indigenous and queer.

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Scandinavians and muslims in the mediterranean: A case study of *Orkneyinga saga*

Eduardo Ramos, Penn State University

Much like the Baltic, the Mediterranean Sea connected a multicultural world during the Middle Ages. Not only did it link Latin and Greek Christendom with the Muslim World, it also allowed pagan and Christian Scandinavians to make contact with cultures far beyond their immediate vicinity. Such encounters are recorded in *Orkneyinga saga*, where the Orcadian jarl Rognvaldr, leading a crew of pilgrims to Jerusalem, both raids Muslim merchants at sea, and trades with Muslims on the coast of Africa. The episode is peculiar, not least of all because of the saga's mention that the jarl's crew disagreed about what exactly happened during the sea encounter. Rather than present the Muslims as villains, as might be expected under the influence of the *chanson de geste* or some romances, the saga depicts the Muslims as holding the moral high ground over the jarl and his crew. They even show mercy to the Scandinavians when holding power over them despite the Christians hardly doing the same for the Muslims. Jarl Rognvaldr, in contrast, is depicted as an equal opportunist willing to raid or trade with Christians and Muslims alike. A case study of encounters between Muslims and Scandinavians in *Orkneyinga saga* illustrates a very different position regarding Muslims than that found in contemporaneous vernacular texts in French and English. Rather than depicting Muslims as religious adversaries, the saga and its characters consider Muslims from an economic standpoint where they can be raiding targets and trading partners, qualities that Muslims share with the Christians encountered by jarl Rognvaldr and his pilgrims. The nuanced opportunistic depiction of the encounter between the jarl's men and the Muslims suggests continuity in the relations between Scandinavians and Muslims in the Mediterranean through the Christianization of the former and the start of the Crusades.

How good is king Magnús? The picture of the King in *Knýtlinga saga* and *Heimskringla*

Marta Rey-Radlińska, Jagiellonian University

King Magnús the Good (Magnús góði, 1024-1047), son of Óláfr Haraldsson, fostered by at the court of Ingigerðr and Jarizleifr of Novgorod, was elected king 1035, when eleven years old and five years after his father's death. 1042 he claimed his rights to the Danish throne, after the death of King Hørðaknútr Knútsson of Denmark, and ruled the two kingdoms since that time. The period of his reign was distinguished by numerous clashes with Sveinn Úlfsson and his supporters, who also laid claim to the throne. For one year – 1046-47 – he and his uncle Haraldr harðráði ruled jointly. He died in 1047 in Denmark, on his ship, under unclear circumstances, and only 23 years old.

The history of King Magnús has been recorded in various sources. Among others, Snorri Sturluson, Adam from Bremen and other chroniclers wrote about him. The King Magnús' saga appears in compilations of *konungasögur*. His image seems to be relatively coherent, although there are some differences in perspective between individual sources.

This paper aims to examine the image of King Magnús the Good, based primarily on the *Knýtlinga saga* and *Heimskringla*. The child king, brought by the magnates to the country from the home of his guardian, making his way to the homeland at the head of the troops banded by his stepmother Astrid, he took power in Norway almost without resistance, and the enemies fled at the very sound of his name, as he was said to be supported by his deceased father, blessed King Óláfr. He had the fame of a warrior and a good man whom both friends and enemies appreciated and respected.

He is a fascinating figure who did not live long enough to leave a more permanent trace and perhaps as a result not so inspiring for historians and biographers. In my research, I focus on the literary image of this ruler, the way he was presented by later historians and writers, and the means of poetic expression that skilfully direct the perception of this character.

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The archaeological eye: Antiquarianism and medievalism in Icelandic paper manuscripts of the *Prose Edda*

Friederike Richter, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin / Universität Zürich

The value of post-medieval paper manuscripts is increasingly recognised today, both as supplements in medieval literature when older manuscripts have been lost and as fascinating artefacts in their own right within their contemporary cultural-historical context. One of the central questions is whether these manuscripts should be considered within the *longue durée* of continued rewriting practises of medieval literature or rather as artefacts of reception in the way they present medieval literature as literature from the past. Sometimes the answer might be that they indeed can be regarded as both.

When *Prose Edda* is presented as an already 550-year-old compilation in early modern paper manuscripts, the text is approached with what perhaps can be called an archaeological eye distinguishing two stacked layers of the past: Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Here the manuscripts reveal their own conception of the past by establishing a complex construction, distinguishing between the ancient times of myths and poetry and medieval times of when *Prose Edda* was compiled. These different layers are mainly addressed in the paratextual features of the manuscripts, such as title pages, illuminations, additional prefaces and script. These features also may have been used because *Prose Edda* required further explanation to be understood by contemporary readers. They also highlight the relevance of *Prose Edda* for the present by establishing continuities and discontinuities in the different layers of the past and connecting it with the present.

In my paper I will excavate the complex layers of Antiquarianism and Medievalism in four early modern *Prose Edda* manuscripts and examine how they are functionalised in regard to an upcoming proto-nationalism, illustrating the invaluable contribution of these colourful paper manuscripts to Icelandic book culture.

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Útlegð – Outlaw(ry): A comparison between early Iceland and Norway

Anne Irene Riisøy, University of South-Eastern Norway

There are different terms for outlawry to be found across the Nordic region, and terms which appear in more than one country sometimes take on different shade of meaning from one country to the next. Several of these terms were transferred from western Norway to Iceland, including the presumably oldest of these; *skógr*, *vargr*, and *sekr*. The originally Norwegian word *útlegð* probably related to a concept of law, as a set of rules or customs, as well as a geographical area in which these rules applied. The meaning of this term was rather wide; often context or additional terms show whether *útlegð* designated an irredeemable crime, included loss of real estate, expulsion, or moral condemnation. This term is absent from Swedish and Danish law, but it is evidenced in the Icelandic law-book *Grágás* where it denotes fined or under penalty as well as outlawry. *Útlegð* in the sense of outlaw(ry) is not often used in the sagas, but it does occur. Andreas Heusler (*Das Strafrecht der Isländersagas*, 1911) noted twenty examples from the family sagas, and additional examples are to be found, not only in the family sagas but also in the *Sturlunga saga*. In Iceland, the compound term *ffjórðungsútlegð* was also coined, presumably sometime after c. 960 when the country was divided into quarters. In this study I will trace *útlegð* in the sense of outlaw(ry) in the laws, *Grágás* and the secular sections in the old laws of the Gulathing and the Frostathing which applied to the western coastal areas of Norway, and the sagas. I will explore the meanings of the term and discuss the differences between the various kinds of sources, and, above all, the differences between the Icelandic and the Norwegian context. When, for example, *útlegð* denoted outlaw(ry) in the family sagas, was it possible that saga authors knew that different countries preferred different terms, so that a Norwegian term was deliberately chosen whenever narrative action took place in Norway? Alternatively, did contemporary Norwegian practice influence *Sturlunga saga* and those family sagas which were written after c. 1270? In other words, is it also possible to trace a development over time?

“En þat pickir mer askorta er ek se þik eigi”: Emotions, gender, and the body in the Old Norse translation of *Partonopeu de Blois*

Meritxell Risco de la Torre, University of Iceland

This paper introduces the study of the body in translations of medieval romance into Old Norse-Icelandic, focusing on the Old Norse version of *Partonopeu de Blois* (ca. 1170), *Partalopa saga*. Through the study of embodiment and emotion, this paper explores the connection between emotive representation, gender, and the body in the Old French and Old Norse versions of the romance and seeks to illuminate the cultural differences that inform each version with regard to these topics. The romance of *Partonopeu de Blois* was widely popular during the Middle Ages and beyond, yielding a total of nine known translations in two different recensions. The story, presented to us through the lens of a reversed Cupid and Psyche narrative, tells us about the empress of Byzantium, Mélior, who, upon the death of her father becomes sole heiress to the throne. Mélior is subsequently urged to find a husband and instead decides to capture Partonopeu, a young noble squire, to keep him as a lover. As the empress imposes a taboo upon Partonopeu, her body becomes invisible to the young man, and is only discovered through touch and language. Although faithful to the general outcome of the story, the Old Norse version presents gendered and embodied behaviours vastly differently: from the assertion of power to the representation of gender, *Partalopa saga* eliminates and illuminates the presence/absence of the body as a central matter to its narrative and portrays emotive display through a distinct set of emotive scripts. Changes and abridgments of this sort illuminate the culture-dependent processes compilers and authors of medieval Scandinavia underwent when decoding (and re-coding) the emotive scripts of European romances into their native cultural context.

By placing the focus on *Partonopeu de Blois* and its translation(s), this paper gives an insight into how self, body, and emotion were potentially conceptualised in the two linguistic and cultural traditions at hand. The translated *riddarasögur* are an ideal gateway for the study of cultural differences and cultural exchange between continental traditions and the North during the Middle Ages. The ultimate goal of the paper is to ascertain the unexplored potentiality of Old Norse romances as informative of gender representation in Old Norse culture at large, particularly in what concerns the self-body-emotion continuum that forms the individual.

The negation of male sexual volition in Old Norse-Icelandic depictions of rape: The case of *Adonias saga*

Matthew Roby, University of Toronto

This paper examines a rape scene in the fourteenth-century Icelandic romance *Adonias saga*, with a view to speculating on its underlying ideology concerning not only the consent of the female victim, but also the agency of the male perpetrator. I hope to show that the author of this episode exonerates the male party by negating his volition in this act, deflecting most if not all the blame onto another character: an evil duke who orchestrates the event. *Adonias saga* thus betrays a more extreme form of an ideology identified in other romances by Kathryn Gravdal: that rape is the inevitable but still condemnable effect of female sex appeal on (bad or weak) men (1992: 571). The mentality presented in *Adonias saga* is that once any man – even an otherwise benevolent protagonist – is placed in a sexually stimulating environment with a beautiful woman, he is bound to attempt to have sex with her regardless of her consent. And as long as he does not put himself into that situation and is powerless to get out of it, he can be portrayed as relatively blameless.

I begin with a word on genre. The Old Norse-Icelandic *riddarasögur* (romance sagas) are often divided into two groups. The first – the *þýddar* or translated *riddarasögur* – are more or less faithful translations of foreign romances into Old Norse. The second group, which includes *Adonias saga*, are the *frumsamdar* or original *riddarasögur*. These are romance-style sagas with no known foreign sources and so are presumed to be original Icelandic compositions. They are thus ideological fusions: guided by the tropes and themes of the imported romance genre, but also necessarily influenced by the Icelandic author's norms and literary heritage.

Scholars have already noted a key difference in the depictions of sexual assault and rape between these sub-groups of romances. In the translated *riddarasögur* and their foreign models, scholars note that – barring a few notable exceptions, such as the conception of King Arthur – rape is generally only perpetrated by antagonistic, low-status and/or supernatural Others (Sylvester 2008: 49; Saunders 2001: 187-9). But in the original *riddarasögur*, noble, otherwise benevolent, and even protagonistic characters can commit rape (Bagerius 2013: 90; 2009: 179-85). However, scholars have so far limited their discussions to one specific literary scenario in which this kind of rape occurs. This is the male protagonist's use of sexual assault to punish a maiden king, a figure who is biologically female but adopts the masculine role of king and military commander, often aggressively shunning all potential suitors. Male protagonists can – in a largely unproblematised fashion – use rape to defeat such maiden-kings, simultaneously conquering, re-gendering, and sometimes even presaging their eventual happy marriages to these figures.

The rape scene that I am discussing today – and, indeed, the whole text in which it appears – have received remarkably little scholarly attention. Both Henric Bagerius and Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir have referred to this scene, though in both cases only as a footnote to their discussion of the raping of maiden kings. Their analysis of the episode is limited to the fact that it seems to uphold an ideology, found elsewhere in medieval Icelandic and broader European literary and learned traditions, that women can come to enjoy a sexual encounter that begins as rape (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2016: 202; Bagerius 2013: 89). I hope to expand on this work here, demonstrating that at least one protagonistic figure in the original *riddarasögur* rapes a woman who is guiltless of any deviant act requiring correction, and that he does so without garnering any discernible opprobrium. But it's not that he escapes censure because his rape is framed as an acceptable act like the punitive rape of a maiden-king, nor is it only because – as implied by Bagerius and Aðalheiður – this rape is somewhat sanctioned in the victim's eventual enjoyment and endorsement of the encounter. Far from it: this act is implied to be heinous, including in the words of the female victim both before and after the event. The perpetrator

escapes censure because his volition in and responsibility for the act are negated, deflected onto the evil figures who contrive his placement in a sexually stimulating environment.

Here is a brief summary of the episode in question. There are five main characters to consider. Marsilius and Semerana are the king and queen of Syria. Marsilius's closest advisor is the evil duke Constancius. Constancius has a beautiful daughter named Remedia. And Constancius also has a trollish henchman called Grimaldus. Marsilius and Semerana are childless after five years of marriage, but the queen uses astrology to predict the night she will conceive. Constancius overhears her prediction and schemes to become the father of Semerana's child by plotting two simultaneous acts of rape. First, when the appointed date comes, he orders Grimaldus to capture Marsilius, while Constancius himself goes to the Semerana's bed in his place. In the darkness, Semerana presumes that he is her husband and has sex with him, becoming a victim of the 'bedtrick' motif. But it is the second rape upon which I will focus today. Constancius does not merely have Marsilius kidnapped, but rather orders Grimaldus to lock the king in a bedroom with the duke's own daughter, Remedia. Despite her protestations, they have what has been — but I argue should not be — considered consensual sex, which results in the conception of the main hero, Adonias (Sverrir Tómasson 1986: 387, 391; Loth ed. 1963: 86).

Marsilius's status as a benevolent figure is established in his introduction. This portrait is written in a cascade of alliterative doublets, a common device in the *riddarasögur* that not only ornaments but also emphasises key passages via aural patterning. In this case, it emphasises the king's qualities: he is "mikill og mektugur" (big and mighty), "örr og ágætur" (kind and excellent), "vars og visdomfullur" (wary and wise), "fimur og forsjáll" (nimble and foresighted), "mildur og mattugur" (generous and mighty), "linur og lítilátur" (gentle and humble), "tíður og tiguligur" (beloved and noble) and "vænn og vel siðaður" (beautiful and well-mannered) (Loth ed. 1963: 77). Marsilius is thus repeatedly and emphatically praised, including for his wisdom and morality. Such sycophantic introductions appear in many *riddarasögur* and are markers of protagonistic status: this is a character to whom we should relate with whom we should have sympathy and allegiance.

During the scene of Marsilius's kidnapping, the author goes to great lengths to emphasise how this benevolent figure is robbed of his agency. He is en route to Semerana's castle when he is ambushed by Grimaldus, who blindfolds him, grips him tightly, lifts him bodily, and carries him at speed for hours. The impact of these actions on Marsilius's autonomy is stated outright: "var hann og so fast haldinn at hann mætti sig hvergi hræra þó at hann við leitaði" (he was held so fast that he could not move at all, though he strove to do so) (Loth ed. 1963: 82-3). This excerpt assures us that Marsilius has no control over the location to which he is taken, and also draws specific attention to the fact that he tries to resist the will of his kidnapper but is not strong enough to do so. This establishes an asymmetrical power dynamic that might have guided audience interpretations of the scene to follow, priming them to hold the unconquerable Grimaldus chiefly responsible for the acts that he forces upon the unwilling but powerless Marsilius. Furthermore, considering the proximity of this description to a literal scene of rape, perpetrated against a woman who cannot physically overpower her attacker, it is tempting to interpret even further significance into this line. Grimaldus is a giant, and his gargantuan size allows the saga author to place the normally strong and martially capable Marsilius into the role of a powerless victim, arguably in terms reminiscent of a female rape victim being held fast by a stronger, male assailant. As I shall argue further below, this might have primed audiences to see him as one of the two victims, rather than the culpable perpetrator, of the sexual assault that follows.

After his journey in Grimaldus's arms, the king is put down in a lavish bedchamber, where Remedia — the most beautiful woman the king has ever seen — is sleeping. This must have constituted some comedy of incongruity, as this idyllic bower contrasts sharply with the grim torture chamber we were led to expect based on the trollish nature of his captor. Marsilius then has a conversation with Grimaldus, which re-emphasises his lack of agency:

‘Hverr er þessi hinn mikli maður er mig hefur ræntann minn kongligv valldi og borið mig burt frá minni eiginligri þúsv’... þessi maður svarar honum. ‘Þó eg sé otiginn maður enn þú tíginn maður. Þá skal eg þó ath sinna eiga valld yfir þér enn þú eigi yfir mér... Enn þó ath þú hefur mist þína konu náttlangt at sofa hía þá skal eg nú fá þér hálfu villdare og skæra jungfrú. Þá er fullkominn heidur væri j allz heims keisara hía ath sofa’ (Loth ed. 1963: 83-4).

“Who is this big man who has robbed me of my kingly power and carried me away from my own spouse?” ... This man answers him: “Though I be might an ignoble man and you a noble man, yet I shall have power over you and not you over me in this instance... And though you have lost your lady to sleep beside for the night, yet shall I now get a prized and pure maiden for you, one whom it would be a perfect honour for the emperor of the whole world to sleep beside”.

In addition to repeatedly emphasising how the king has been stripped of power, and that power over him now belongs to Grimaldus, this excerpt draws conspicuous attention to the fact this troll has forcibly separated the king from his wife. Marsilius’s phrase about his spouse implies that he would rather be with her right now, and puts the blame for the fact that he is not with her — and not having sex with her — squarely onto Grimaldus’s shoulders. This phrase also preemptively shifts some of the responsibility for the subsequent rape from Marsilius onto Grimaldus, since it suggests that he would have been faithful, with the tacit implication that he wouldn’t have been unfaithful, were it not for Grimaldus’s intervention. The henchman’s response confirms and extends this notion: not only is Grimaldus responsible for taking the king away from his lawful sex partner, but also it is his express will that Marsilius should have the beautiful Remedia as an adulterous sex partner in her place. Considering the now well-established sense that Marsilius is entirely subject to the whims of his captor, Grimaldus’s statement takes on the appearance of an order that he cannot refuse. The final sentence of this passage diminishes Marsilius’s guilt for his eventual rape of this woman in a different way. It suggests that Remedia is so beautiful that it would actually be fitting and even honourable for a monarch such as Marsilius — married though he is — to have her as a sexual partner. Although this view is ventriloquised through a decidedly wicked character, this line of reasoning still gets voiced, and might have been convincing to or even already shared by some audience members.

Beyond being placed in the same bedroom as this woman, there are several further actions that Marsilius must perform before he can initiate a sexual encounter with Remedia. However, since he is not permitted to take the initiative in any of them, his agency in and responsibility for this rape is further diminished. It is Grimaldus who forces Marsilius to carry out these preparatory acts, continuing in his role as the grotesque puppeteer of this event:

Og hær næst tekur Grimalldus konginn með afli. og afklæðir hann. Síðan tók hann vinkonnu og eitt gullkier. og gaf konginu svefnkier at drekka og lagði hann síðan niðr í sængina hía þessi hinna fríðu jungfrú. gengr síðan burt og læser aftur hurðum þegar hann hefur yfir konginn lagt klæðinn (Loth ed. 1963: 84).

And next Grimaldus takes the king with force and undresses him. Afterwards, he took a wine-jug and a golden cup and gave the king a sleeping cup to drink and then laid him down in the bed beside this beautiful maiden. He goes away after that and locks the doors again, after he has laid the blanket over the king.

In forcibly undressing Marsilius, carrying him to the bed, placing him next to the maiden, and laying the blanket on top of them, Grimaldus carries out all the physical steps he can — short of arousing the king himself and forcing their bodies together — to ensure that this sexual encounter takes place. This compounds the notion that his earlier offer of this woman was more of an imperative than a suggestion, and also prevents the audience from holding Marsilius accountable for these distinctly sexualised actions. A number of other details from this excerpt are significant. First, there’s the locking of the doors, of which we have already been told there are several consecutive sets. Although he is no longer being held so tightly that he cannot move, this

detail confirms Marsilius's enforced captivity in this sexually stimulating environment: he cannot escape until his captor returns to release him the next morning. Second, Grimaldus feeds the king an intoxicating liquid. If this was interpreted to be wine, as implied in the "wine-jug" from which it is poured, this would already constitute the negation of yet more of the king's agency and responsibility, though in a different way than physically clutching, carrying, or confining him. As amply demonstrated in stanzas eleven through fourteen of *Hávamál*, alcohol was considered to cloud a man's judgement, steal his wits, and make him forget about his obligations (Jónas Kristjánsson & Vésteinn Ólason eds. 2014: 324). On the other hand, if the liquid were interpreted to be a magical potion of some kind — as seems to be implied when the same term "svefnker" appears in *Clari saga* — this could have been interpreted as having an even stronger effect on Marsilius's ability to remain faithful to Semerana and resist the urge to initiate a sexual encounter with Remedía (Bjarni Vilhjálmsson ed. 1954: 32). This concept is most famously presented in the drink given to Sigurðr by Grímhildr to make him forget his obligation to Brynhildr and thus be free to marry her daughter Guðrún, and of course in the love potion that causes Tristan to begin his adulterous affair. In any case, the author's inclusion of this "sleeping cup" and the fact that it is prepared and forcibly served to him by his all-powerful captor further diminishes Marsilius's volition in, and responsibility for, his subsequent actions.

Before we move on, I'd like to spend just a little longer on this reference to Grimaldus taking the king "með afli" (with force), since it provides further evidence for my previous speculation that audiences might have interpreted King Marsilius as something approaching a victim of sexual assault in this scene. One of the most extreme examples of a trope I mentioned earlier — that is, the protagonist's use of sexual assault as a corrective measure against the violent and misogynistic tendencies of a maiden king — is the series of three successive rapes committed by the eponymous hero of *Sigurðar saga þögla* against a woman named Sedentiana. In one of these scenes, the author uses precisely the same phrase — "hann tok hana með afle" (he took her with force) (Loth ed. 1962: 203) — as a euphemism for the literal act of rape against this woman. The fact that this same phrase is used to describe the manner in which Grimaldus removes the king's clothing and lays him down in a bed — both highly sexualised actions, though obviously stopping short of literal penetration — might have been sufficient for audience members to frame Marsilius's experiences as, or at least reminiscent of, those of a victim of rape. Audience members, men in particular, might have shuddered at the thought of being gripped, carried around, undressed, intoxicated, and laid onto a bed by this huge troll, as they were forced to imagine a male figure experiencing the kind of vulnerability that they normally associated with the female victims of sexual assault. This interpretation of Marsilius's position would cohere with my interpretation of the episode as a whole. Although Grimaldus doesn't actually penetrate Marsilius himself, he does compel him to have sex that is repeatedly implied to be non-consensual: it is carried out against his will and takes place despite his attempts to prevent it.

I have no time to belabour the point here, but the saga author's disempowerment of Marsilius is even more gratuitous and repetitive than I have so far argued. To give but one more example, once Remedía awakes, Marsilius introduces himself and gives an explanation of his circumstances which — in case we had forgotten — explicitly reiterates the facts that he has been robbed of his freedom, taken away from his queen, carried to this place, laid down in this bed, unclothed, and locked up so that he may not get away (Loth ed. 1963: 85).

However, it must be acknowledged that, during this conversation with Remedía, the saga does imply that Marsilius has some agency to avoid raping her, in addition to the notion that he will be responsible for his actions if he doesn't make use of this agency. Remedía correctly infers that the whole situation has been orchestrated by her father, Duke Constancius, with the express intention of causing Marsilius to take her virginity. The very fact that this is Constancius's plan indicates the currency of the notion — certainly in the villainous mind of the imaginary duke, but perhaps also in the minds of some medieval Icelandic audience members — that all of the schemes I have so far analysed might be expected to succeed in tempting an otherwise

benevolent man to commit rape and adultery. And the fact that these schemes do ultimately succeed only corroborates that notion. However, according to Remedía, the larger reason that Constancius plans this second rape is that it will give the duke some *kompromat* to hold over Marsilius to ensure his silence about the events of that night. She says:

þetta er allt ráð fodr mins. at hann skyldr ydr sök moti mega gefa ef þessir hluter mætti opinberir verða. Nu samer ydr vel saker ydars kongdóms ath þier verdit saklausar fyrir honum. og fáir eg mior adra sæng (Loth ed. 1963: 86).

This is all my father's scheming, that he should give you blame in case these things were to become public. Now it befits you for the sake of your kingdom that you remain blameless before him, and that I should get another bed for myself.

Constancius's plan thus relies on the notion that Marsilius will become culpable if he forces himself upon Remedía. Regardless of all the factors reducing his agency and responsibility, such a deed would still lumber him with sufficient "sök" (blame or guilt) to act as a deterrent against him making it public. This statement thus tempers the saga's otherwise comprehensive exoneration of Marsilius. This speech is further significant in that it implies that, despite everything that Constancius and Grimaldus have done to facilitate this sexual encounter, it is apparently still within Marsilius's power not to rape her by letting her find another bed. This is an important point: although the scene ultimately upholds the notion that female sex appeal has a natural and irresistible effect on men, Remedía's words indicate that this ideology was not held to be incontrovertible among all medieval Icelandic saga authors and audiences: not raping the woman is still a plausible option at this point.

But the ensuing events do not support this notion. The apparently virtuous king does not even respond to Remedía's statement. He simply "snérist til" (turned to) her, a common euphemism in the sagas for initiating physical sexual contact (Jochens 1995: 72), and "med því at hon sá at eigi matti hon med afli móti standa kongsins vilja. sló hon sier til samþykkis við hann og elskuligra bragða og skemtanar leika sem líkamann lysti. og vöktu þau so alla þessa nótt" (with that she saw that she could not by force stand against the king's will. She gave in to agreement with him and the lovely tastes and enjoyable games which the body desires. And they remained awake in this way all night) (Loth ed. 1963: 86). It is this passage that has led Henric Bagerius and Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir to discuss the scene as further evidence of the notion that women might come to enjoy a sexual encounter that begins unwillingly. Indeed, based on the details of this excerpt, we might justifiably question whether this is a rape scene at all, in the sense of involuntary coitus: Remedía reaches "samþykkis" (agreement, accord) with Marsilius before it begins, and they both seem to enjoy it from start to finish. However, there are several key signs that certainly alert modern audiences, and possibly some medieval ones, to the fact that her consent is at the very least problematic. First, there's the fact established above that she initially begged the king not to violate her, which implies that it is against her wishes. Second, there's the causal relationship suggested in this passage between her eventual consent and the realisation that she can't match his strength. Her agreement is born not out of her own desire, but rather out of her physical inability to overpower him. The implication is that, even at the point of "samþykkis", if she could have refused him, she would have. It is also pertinent to note that the phrase used to describe this rape victim's inability to resist her attacker is expressed using the same construction – "med afli" – as we saw in Grimaldus's treatment of the king. This substantiates the parallel between these two figures I discussed earlier, framing the type of violence to which they are subject in the same terms: they are both victims of unconquerable force in this scene of sexual assault. And third, there's the verb used to describe her reaching this agreement. The term "slá sér" literally means to lie down, implying that Remedía gave in or surrendered to Marsilius's will. This is not affirmative consent, but rather acquiescence after expressing her lack of consent but realising that she is not strong enough to force the issue. The inclusion of these details and the couching of her consent in this cagey language might suggest

that the medieval author and audiences were genuinely interested in, and perhaps implicitly concerned about, the unenthusiastic nature of this woman's consent.

Equally significantly, the idea that Remedía's eventual enjoyment of this encounter indicates her authorisation of the sex itself – what we might call retroactive consent – is also undercut by her statements the following morning. Remedía's pleas before the act made it clear that this rape was undesirable to her at that point, and her words the morning after suggest that her position on the matter has not changed. Grímaldr barges into the room, forcibly lifts Marsilius out of bed, and reclothes him. Remedía's first words are a curse directed at this giant: “þv uondur suikari’ seger hun. ‘buggadir æ þessi nott þier sialfum makligan dauda’” (“you evil traitor”, she says, “you brewed yourself a fitting death this night”) (Loth ed. 1963: 88). Remedía clearly thinks that something that Grímaldr has done that night is so wicked as to warrant his death and, since his only job was to facilitate the sexual encounter between Marsilius and Remedía, we must presume that she is referring to this. Regardless of her apparent enjoyment during the event itself, this line makes it clear that Remedía still judges this sexual act to have been reprehensible. Furthermore, this passage substantiates my interpretation about Marsilius being robbed of volition in and responsibility for this act, since Remedía still seems to hold Grímaldr chiefly responsible for what happened. This is even after Marsilius has performed some acts – especially ignoring her protestations and penetrating her – in which we have been told explicitly he had a greater degree of volition than when he was physically in Grímaldr's clutches.

Remedía's words to Marsilius himself contribute to his exoneration. The spite that she had reserved for Grímaldr, the true “brewer” of the reprehensible events that occurred that night, seems to melt away, replaced by what seems to be genuine affection and care:

‘epter stutta glede mun koma lavng hrygd. ydra asionu mun eg alldri sia og eigi kemur miera óuart þó at minn fader Verdi yduar skadamadr og faræ nu morg oskaplig uerk fram’ og nu grætur hun sarliga. en Grímaldr tok konginn og bar hann burt (Loth ed. 1963: 88)

“after short joy will come long sorrow. I will never see your face again and it will not surprise me if my father is your slayer and many unhappy deeds will now spring from this.” And now she weeps sorrowfully, and Grímaldr took the king and carried him away.

Remedía thus expresses a contradictory mixture of convictions and emotions, which we might presume satisfied the author and audience's requirement for her to despise the rape but not the rapist, since he is the protagonist at this point in the saga and their sexual union results in the conception of the saga's main hero: Adonias. Her contradictory position is tenuously upheld by all of the details I have analysed above, which deny Marsilius too much agency in, and subsequent blame for, this sexual act.

Not only does Marsilius escape condemnation from the victim of his rape, but also he seems to be spared opprobrium in the saga as a whole. Admittedly, he is eventually killed by Constancius, but this act is not characterised as retribution for raping Remedía. Quite the contrary, this murder occurs in response to Marsilius's attempt to kill Constancius, apparently because the king can no longer stand the betrayals the duke has perpetrated against both his wife *and* himself (Loth ed. 1963: 95). Marsilius thus seems to go to the grave believing that this villain was responsible for what happened between Remedía and himself that night. Nor is the audience permitted to interpret Marsilius's death as cosmic retribution for the rape: when Constancius is finally punished at the end of the saga, one of the primary reasons is that he slew the king, characterising this as an unjustified act that deserved punishment (Loth ed. 1963: 226). Thus, Marsilius garners little to no condemnation throughout the text, exonerated for his actions on the basis that he was not as responsible for this rape as those who forcibly exposed him to Remedía's beauty. This episode thus constitutes an extreme demonstration of the ideology that even good men cannot be held accountable for their actions when, through no fault of their own, they find themselves in sexually stimulating situations with beautiful women. This scene might reflect the pre-existing currency of this notion in the medieval Icelandic sexual worldview

and/or, especially considering the popularity of this text attested by at least forty-five extant manuscripts from the fifteenth century and later, might have promulgated and reinforced this notion among its late medieval and early modern audiences.

In considering this question of the origins and prevalence of ideologies in the original *riddarasögur*, it is important to see whether there are analogues in the translated *riddarasögur*, their foreign models, and/or other Old Norse-Icelandic texts. Although there is no time to present my findings here, I have been looking at parallels in *Partalopa saga*, the Old Norse translation of *Partonopeu de Blois*, as well as numerous other Old Norse-Icelandic texts from outside the *riddarasögur*, including *Örvar-Odds saga*, *Ketils saga hængs*, and the Völsung cycle. My conclusions on the significance of these analogues will be discussed in the published version of the paper and I will be happy to discuss them during the question period. For now, though, I will bring my presentation to a close and would like to thank you your attention.

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Learned and imagined geographies in the *fornaldarsögur*

T. P. Rowbotham, Durham University

Analysing the strands of learned culture in the *riddarasögur*, Geraldine Barnes (2014) has examined how certain “bookish” texts in this corpus engaged with encyclopaedic traditions of geography, and to what end. Many of these texts reflect a common medieval conceptual geography – the division of the known world into the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe – and draw on this learned cosmographical material for specific rhetoric aims; *Nítiða saga* and *Victors saga ok Blávus*, for example, each in their own way reconfigure geopolitical cosmography so that the North lies at the moral centre of the world (Barnes 2014: 31-52). The *fornaldarsögur*, frequently regarded alongside the *riddarasögur* as belonging to an expansive corpus of fantastical saga literature, are beyond the scope of Barnes’ study, but a handful of them, at least in certain redactions, feature geographical excurses that seem extraneous to the narrative and demonstrate a familiarity and engagement with learned geographical traditions. The long redaction of *Gautreks saga* carefully situates the kingdom of Gautland, its immense forests, and the odd folk that inhabit them in a Scandinavian geography that closely resembles that of the *konungasögur*; *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* offers a detailed “textual map” of Denmark that is drawn directly from *Knýtlinga saga*; and the later, long redaction of *Qrvar-Odds saga* (186-187) lists cities and kings of Russia in a passage excerpted directly from an encyclopaedic text known from *Hauksbók* (155).¹ The prevalence of the *konungasögur* as sources for learned geographical material in the *fornaldarsögur* is by no means surprising, given the long-established intersection of geographical and historical writing in medieval literary tradition, which remained greatly indebted to Orosius’ *Historiam Adversum Paganos* in this regard. In medieval Icelandic and Norwegian historiography, we see this intersection in the geographical excurses of *Historia Norwegie* (52-75), *Ynglinga saga* (*Heimskringla* I: 9-10; and continuing into the account of the *translatio imperii* from Ásía to the Norðrlönd, 11-16), and the prologue to *Snorra Edda* (3-6). Though not as prevalent now as it once was, the perception of *fornaldarsögur* as rather fanciful texts has largely obscured from view how their geographical excurses with this learned tradition, but I will here make the case for this.

The interest in geography in the *fornaldarsögur* was noted by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in their 1971 study of Icelandic “legendary fiction”, which drew attention to the texts I will deal with here (26-35). This study was, in many respects, well ahead of its time in its sympathetic treatment of the *fornaldarsögur* as sophisticated literary works, prefiguring the reappraisal of the corpus in the 1990s by Stephen Mitchell (1991) and Torfi Tulinius (2002[first published 1995]), and, though the actual textual analysis offered is extremely brief, their comments on the geography of the *fornaldarsögur* remain remarkably incisive: “geographic learning in legendary fiction serves both to display the authors’ erudition and to give... the impression that the actual events are not invented” (Hermann Pálsson & Edwards 1971: 31). It is a pity both that this line of argument was not further pursued and that it did not become widely accepted; decades later, Mitchell described the settings of the *fornaldarsögur* as having “an air of unreality” to them, their references to far-off countries and cities being “merely ciphers for exotic settings” (Mitchell 1991: 28-29). A serious, comprehensive study of the spaces and places of the *fornaldarsögur* is wanting; in his contribution to *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (2017) on the subject of spatial representation, Sverrir Jakobsson (2017) demonstrates the importance and productivity analysing this aspect of Old Norse literature, but, as his survey of recent studies on this topic show, this potential has so far not been realised in relation to the *fornaldarsögur*, despite the renewed interest these texts in the last two decades.

¹ For the former two examples, see below. The passage in *Qrvar-Odds saga* seems not to have been copied directly from *Hauksbók*, but rather from a common antecedent (Simek 1990: 341-345).

Some important contributions to our understanding of the conceptual geographies of the *fornaldarsögur* have, however, been made. The conceptual geography of medieval Icelanders, especially for Eastern Europe and Russia, has been studied exhaustively by Tatjana Jackson (see especially 2019, and the long list of her own publications in the bibliography therein); in admitting the evidence of the *fornaldarsögur* in several of these studies, Jackson implies that these texts may be regarded as reflecting a medieval Icelandic mental map, but since her focus is primarily on what was known, the possible sources, and the accuracy of these mental and textual maps, there remains much to be said on the literary effect of the learned geographical material incorporated into the *fornaldarsögur*. In a study close to my present exercise, Rudolf Simek (1986) has analysed descriptions of the far north that appear in “late legendary fiction” – a term encompassing late *Íslendingasögur* (such as *Bárðar saga Snæfellsness*), *riddarasögur* (such as *Samsons saga fagra*), and *fornaldarsögur* – and attempted to reconstruct the geographical system of fourteenth-century Icelanders, suggesting that references to far-off Helluland and Bjarmaland, and even the quasi-mythical Jötunheimr and Glæsisvellir, did indeed map onto a “real” geography in the minds of the texts’ authors and audiences. But again, more recent comments on the vagueness of the *fornaldarsögur*’s settings suggest that the implications of Simek’s study, like those of Hermann Pálsson and Edwards’, were not widely accepted. This paper cannot hope to fully redress the matter, but will contribute to the argument that the imagined geographies of the *fornaldarsögur* were not entirely divorced from reality in the minds of their authors and audiences, and, furthermore, that something of the “bookishness” of the *riddarasögur* can be observed in at least some of the *fornaldarsögur*.

The question at the heart of this paper is whether the geographical excursions that appear in a handful of *fornaldarsögur* are intended to be taken seriously by their audiences. It is self-evident that such passages as those I will analyse below are rather self-conscious displays of learning, but we must ask whether the purpose of this exercise was to: impart a veneer of learnedness for aesthetic purposes; to impress upon audiences the author/narrator’s learned credentials; to map the events of the narrative onto a real-world geography; or any combination of these. I argue here for the third in this list, and furthermore that this anchored the narratives not only geographically but also historically. This investigation therefore has much in common with the analysis of the truth-claims or *apologiae* found throughout the corpus of *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*, for at stake in both questions is the intended truth-value of the respective texts. Claims made by narrators that events described *really* did happen have typically been read as precisely the opposite – invitations to the audience to suspend their disbelief and enjoy a made-up story – though Ralph O’Connor (2005; 2009) has argued at length that such *apologiae* were intended, at least on some level, literally. Just as it is possible to read such passages as genuine assertions of veracity, so too may it be possible to read the geographical excursions of the *fornaldarsögur* as genuine in their intent to convey geographical knowledge, at which point we may consider the effect of incorporating “real” geographies in their narratives, as Barnes has done for the *riddarasögur*.

In the pre-print of this paper, I will present two case studies from my investigation: *Gautreks saga* and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*. At the time of writing, my research on the passage in *Qrvar-Odds saga* is in its early stages, and I am not able at present to commit my analysis of this text to paper. I will offer this in the presentation of my paper at the 18th International Saga Conference and intend, with the feedback and engagement of colleagues attending, to publish the paper in its entirety in the future.

Gautreks saga

This text comprises two distinct *þættir* in its short (presumably older) redaction, with a third *þáttur* added in the longer (presumably younger) redaction. The first *þáttur* in both redactions is *Dalafífla þáttur* (‘The Tale of the Dale-Fools’), in which King Gauti of Vastra-Gautland becomes lost in the forest while hunting and is shown hospitality by a family of comically ignorant backwoods peasants. In the short redaction, no indication of place is given: Gauti is simply said

to have got lost following an injured stag. In the long redaction, however, considerably more detail is given:

Hann réð fyrir Vestra-Gautlandi; þat liggr milli Nóregs ok Svíþjóðar fyrir austan Kjölur alla, ok skilr Gautelfr milli Upplanda ok Gautlandz. Þar eru stórar merkr ok illt yfirferðar, þá er þelalaust er [...] Í þann tíma var víða bygt, þar sem miklir skógar voru umhverfirs, þvíat margir men ruddu mörkina, þar sem fjarlæg var almannabygð, ok gjörðu sér þar alhýsi sumir, þeir sem flýit höfðu af almannaveg fyrir nokkur sín ranglig tiltæki; sumir flýðu fyrir ljóðæsku eða nokkur æfintýr ok þóttu þá síðr spottaðir eða hæddir verða, ef þeir væri fjarri annarra manna athlátri, ok lifðu svó út allan sinn alldr, at þeir fundu öngva aðra men en þá sem hjá þeim voru. (*Die Gautrekssaga*: 1-2)

He ruled over West Gautland; it lies between Norway and Sweden, east of the Kjölur, and the Gautelfr separates Uppland and Gautland. There are great forests and the passage there is difficult when it is thawed [...] In that time the great forests all around were widely settled, because many men cleared the forests there, far away from well-populated areas, and built settlements, those who had fled for some of their wrongdoings; some had fled from the high road for their wrongdoings; others fled for their youthful habits or adventures, and thought they would be mocked and scoffed at less if they were far from the ridicule of other men, and thus they lived out all of their years without encountering any people, other than those who were with them.

The motif of the king/hero lost in forest while hunting is common in medieval romance, and a number of folktale motifs beside this have been noted in *Dalafífla þáttr* (Milroy 1966-69; Rowe 1998). *Dalafífla þáttr* is thus commonly read as parable or *exemplum*, with various themes or morals suggested (Rowe 1998; Kalinke 2009), and I have elsewhere argued elsewhere that it functions as a cultural-mnemonic for the pre-Christian past (Rowbotham 2018: 47-52). But regardless of how we read *Dalafífla þáttr*, there is a clear attempt in the passage quoted here to anchor this narrative to a real-world geography. There are no exact parallels to suggest that anything in this passage is a direct borrowing from a learned source, but the location of Gauti's kingdom of Vastra-Gautland repeats several reference points for conceptualising the political geography of Scandinavia. Two Old Norse geographical tracts – one in AM 731 4to and one in AM 198 8vo – refer to the Gautelfr (Mod. Swed. Göta älv) as the border between Norway and Sweden.² In *Ynglinga saga*, Snorri Sturluson gives the Gautelfr, along with the Raumelfr (Mod. Norweg. Glomma), as one of the borders of the kingdom of Álfheimr (*Heimskringla* I: 79), which is replicated very closely in *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum* (*Danakonunga sögur*: 58-59, 70). Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* places in the mouth of a farmer named Brynjólfr úlfðali a note from the treatise now extant in AM 731 4to, that the Gautelfr runs west from Lake Vænir into the sea, adding that the Eiðaskógr lies to the north, and north from there the Kjölur (lit. 'Keel', The Scandinavia Mountains or Scandes) extends to Finnmark (*Heimskringla* II: 79). In the geographical description of Finnmark in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, the Kjölur seems to refer to the northern part of the range, running nearly as far south inland as Hálogaland extends south along the Norwegian coast (*Egils saga*: 18). Elsewhere, Norwegian and Swedish lands are referred to as either west or east of the Kjölur (see, for instance, *Orkneyinga saga*: 4, 53, 56; *Heimskringla* I: 165, 216-217; *Heimskringla* III: 8, 17, 68-69).

² AM 731 4to, 18r has "Gautelfr skilr Nóregs konungs ríki ok Svía konungs ríki; hún fellr úr vatninu Væni ok vestr í haf" ('The Gautelfr separates the kingdom of Norway and the kingdom of Sweden; it flows out of the lake Vænir and west into the sea') (*Íslensk Alfræði* III: 6). AM 198 8vo has "Noregr er kalladr nordan fra Végistaf [...] ok sudr til Gaut-elfar. Þesa ríkis ero endimork: [...] en Gaut-elfr fyrir sunnan [...]" ('Norway is called [the land] from the north from Veg(g)istaf [...] and south to the Gautelfr. These are the kingdom's boundaries: [...] and the Gautelfr to the south [...]') and then lists Gautland and Sweden as the territories east of the Gautelfr: "Gaut-land er fyrir austan Gaut-elfi, enn þar næst Suþjóð [...]" ('Gautland is to the east of the Gautelfr, and Sweden next to there') (*Íslensk Alfræði* I, 11). A similar description of Norway's borders is found in Oddr Snorason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (*Færeyinga saga*: 203).

The relational geography of West Gautland, though short, nevertheless indicates an engagement with the kind of learned geographical material that historiographical works likewise incorporated, either from geographical treatises directly or through saga literature, primarily the *konungasögur*. The following ethnography of the forests of Gautland, and their inhabitants, serves a more obvious narrative function: that the customs of these folk should be a source of ridicule is borne out later in the *þáttr* when the family that takes in King Gauti reveal their ignorance of sexual reproduction and their catastrophising of the slightest diminishment to their material means. That the family regards suicide – after a snail crawls over their gold, or a bird eats a single kernel of their grain – specially as a sacrifice to Óðinn suggests that we read this as a late-medieval mockery of pre-Christian foolishness. Still, there is something of a learned quality to the above description of the forest’s inhabitants. The topographical details of wide forests, impassable unless the ground is frozen over, may have further given the impression of an authoritative, perhaps even well-travelled, narrator. Furthermore, there may be a parallel between this and a passage in *Hákonar saga góða* in *Heimskringla* (I: 165) concerning the establishment of Jamtaland and Helsingjaland. Snorri relates that King Eysteinn illráði of the Upplendingar raided in Þrándheimr and that many people there, led by one Qnundr, jarl of Sparabú in Þrándheimr, fled and sought refuge in the forests across the Kjölr. The motif – that of refuge sought in the forests east of the Kjölr – is similar, as is the phrasing that men “ruddu markir ok bygðu þar stór heruð” (‘cleared forests and settled large districts there’; c.f. *Gautreks saga*, above, “men ruddu morkina [...] ok gjörðu sér þar alhýsi”).

Milroy (1966-69: 219-20) noted that in both redactions of *Gautreks saga* (though especially so in the short redaction), Gauti is named just a few times in *Dalafífla þáttr*, and is more often referred to simply as *konungr*, suggesting that the composer or editor of the saga added direct references to Gauti “in the most convenient places to a story that was not originally about him”. In doing so, the *þáttr* is consigned to a particular epoch in the medieval Icelandic historical imagination – the *forn qld* – and in the geographical excursus of the long redaction we can see a similar effort to anchor the narrative to the real-world Scandinavian geography of encyclopaedic and historiographical literary traditions. As I have argued in more detail elsewhere (Rowbotham 2018: 56-63), the motif of the king lost while hunting indicates a transition into a discrete space for fiction or folktale, but in the long redaction there is a concerted effort to situate this space within the “real”, reflecting the preference in medieval Iceland, observed by Marlene Ciklamini (1997), for historicising moral *exempla*.

Göngu-Hrólfs saga

Surely the most well-known and well-studied geographical tract in the corpus of the *fornaldarsögur* is the so-called “textual map of Denmark” in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (FN II: 458-459), which has a close parallel in *Knýtlinga saga* (*Danakonunga sögur*: 150-152). I will not reproduce these passages here, both for the sake of space and because they have been printed side-by-side elsewhere (Hartmann 1912: 103-105; Jackson 2012: 64-67), but they may be surmised: at the conclusion of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, a joint wedding is held in Denmark for the eponymous protagonist, his companion, Stefnir, and their friend, King Haraldr of Víncestuborg (Winchester); Haraldr returns to England, the major towns and productive industries of which are named; Hrólfr appoints Stefnir jarl of Jótland (Jylland), and the textual map follows. Jylland and Limafjörðr (Mod. Dan. Limfjorden), Fjón (Fyn), Sjáland (Sjælland), and Skáney (Skåne) are named, with their principal urban centres (*hofuðstaðir*), as well as several other of the Danish islands. The corresponding passage in *Knýtlinga saga* is slightly longer but names the same main parts of Denmark and their centres (calling them *biskupsstólar* rather than *hofuðstaðir*), and gives for each *biskupsstóll* the number of parish churches and the number of ships in the king’s naval levy (*útbord*), all of which is omitted in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*. Both passages include an anecdote of how Haraldr Sigurðarson (Harald III Hardrada) fled King Sveinn Úlfsson of Denmark (Sweyn II), dragging his ships across the isthmus between Limfjorden and the North

Sea, and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* adds references to the coronation of Danish kings at Vébjörg (Viborg) and to the rule of the Skjöldung kings in Denmark.

Jackson (2012: 69-70) offers a comprehensive overview of the scholarship on the source for this passage as it appears in *Knýtlinga saga*, the consensus emerging that a written exemplar was imported more or less wholesale, though it has not been identified.³ There is also now a firm consensus that the author of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* copied this passage directly from *Knýtlinga saga*, abbreviating it slightly; this was the view of Jacob Wittmer Hartmann in his 1912 (72) study of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* and it has found the recent support of Philip Lavender, who notes that the passage in the AM 589 f 4to copy of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is even closer to *Knýtlinga saga* in the list of Danish islands it gives, naming eight out of the nine listed in *Knýtlinga*, compared to the four named in the AM 152 fol. copy used as the base text in Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's edition (Lavender 2018: 97). The only real challenge to this theory came in 2012 (to which Lavender responds), when Jackson claimed that *Knýtlinga saga* and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* shared a common source for the textual map and that *Knýtlinga saga* had a second source for the bishoprics, parish churches, and naval levy. This, Jackson proposed, would account for the heterogeneity of the passage in *Knýtlinga saga* compared to its streamlined form in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (Jackson 2012: 68-70). Furthermore, this would account for the absence in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* of explicit mention of *Knýtlinga saga* as a source for the description or the reference to a "sögu Haralds konungs" (*Danakonunga sögur*: 151) for the anecdote of Haraldr's escape in Limfjorden, which is conspicuous in a text that names several other textual sources.⁴ However, Jackson has more recently disavowed this hypothesis, examining the slight variation in phrasing between *Knýtlinga saga* and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s description of Limfjorden, as well as the source for Haraldr's escape from Sveinn in *Heimskringla*'s *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* (c.f. *Heimskringla* III: 139-140); she thus aligns herself with the simpler solution that *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* did indeed copy the passage from *Knýtlinga saga*, expunging the ecclesiastical and naval minutiae, though she maintains that these details were originally extraneous to the geographical excursus (Джаксон 2021: 270). Why the author should not name his source here, when he is at pains to elsewhere in the saga, is unclear, but Hartmann's explanation for why references to contemporary (that is, late medieval) religious and military institutions are omitted remains compelling: "The author of GHS wanted to produce the impression that here was a real *fornaldarsaga*, in the literal sense [...] something genuinely old, antedating the introduction of Christianity by hundreds of years" (Hartmann, 1912: 75). The claim in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* that contemporary Danish kings are elected at Viborg seems to run counter to this, but it enhances the author's learned self-image and does not disrupt the geographical tract nearly as much as the church and naval details would have.

This brings us to the function of this passage in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, on which relatively little, compared to its textual history, has been written. This digression serves little to no purpose to the narrative of the saga, where it is entirely incongruous, but it is very much in keeping with the style of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, which, perhaps more than any other *fornaldarsaga* exhibits a profound interest in mapping the world in the vast number of places – regions, kingdoms, cities – it names. This passage must therefore be analysed as part of the saga's wider programme of spatial representation. The vast geography of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is documented by Hartmann, who, in an appendix to his study of the text (1912: 106-110), lists seventy unique place names in

³ In Jackson's review, Finnur Jónsson's is the lone voice suggesting an oral source, on the grounds that the terms of cardinal directions in this passage reflect an orientation system that was archaic by the thirteenth century when *Knýtlinga saga* was written (Finnur Jónsson 1900: 35). However, as Lavender has also noted, such archaisms only indicate that the source for the textual map was *old*, not whether it was textual or oral (Lavender 2018: 96-97).

⁴ Including *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (FN II: 360), *Yngvars saga víðförla* (361), *Alexanders saga* of "meistari Galterus" and *Trójumanna saga* of "Umeris skáld" (418 – though, of course, the latter work belongs to the pseudo-Dares Phrygius tradition, not to Homer himself), *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* (436), and **Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* (460). Other texts may have been cited in manuscript witnesses not used by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in their edition (c.f. Hartmann 1912: 28-32).

the saga (though not unique to it).⁵ His analysis of the geographical knowledge displayed in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is primarily concerned with its provenance and he laments its lack of specificity, especially for Garðaríki, where much of the action takes place. What emerges in the course of this, however, is that the author of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* describes journeys and geographies in good faith with whatever specificity he can muster, for which a couple of examples will have to suffice. The saga describes Hrólfr's journey from Sweden to Garðaríki as follows:

Þeir fóru um Svíþjóð ok þaðan til Garðaríkis. Ekki er þat greint, hverja leið þeir fóru, fyrr en þeir kómu til Aldeigjuborgar. (FN II: 386-387)

They went through Sweden and from there to Garðaríki. It is not mentioned which way they went before they came to Aldeigjuborg.

Hartmann (1912: 65) reads statements such as *ekki er þat greint...* as indicative of “the author’s timidity to accept any responsibility for his geographical references”, but hardly more detail than this is offered in the accounts of the same journey in the *konungasögur*, where Aldeigjuborg is the first port of call from Sweden east into Garðaríki (c.f. *Heimskringla* I: 338-39; *Heimskringla* II: 414-415; and the reverse journey in *Heimskringla* III: 3-4, 91). The statement on Russian geography at the end of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* –

Þriðjungur Garðaríkis er kallaðr Kænugarðar. Þat liggr með fjallgarði þeim, er skilr Jötunheima ok Hólmgarðaríki. Þar er ok Ermland ok fleiri önnur smáríki. (FN II: 459)

A third part of Garðaríki is called Kænugarðar. It lies along the mountain range that separates Jötunheimr and Hólmgarðaríki. Ermland and other small kingdoms are also there.

– attempts to organise some of the placenames in a mental map, as does an account of the situation of Tattaríki and Garðaríki earlier in the saga, and recalls the style (if not the contents, exactly) of Snorri’s mytho-historical Eurasian geography in *Ynglinga saga*:

Fjallgarðr mikill gengr af landnorðri til útsuðrs; sá skilr Svíþjóð hina miklu ok önnur ríki. Fyrir sunnan fjallit er eigi langt til Tyrklands. (*Heimskringla* I: 14)

A great mountain range runs land-north [north-east] to out-south [south-west]; it separates Svíþjóð the Great and other kingdoms. To the south of the mountains, it is not far to Tyrkland.⁶

Göngu-Hrólfs saga can be seen, therefore, to not only enumerate as many exotic locations as possible, for the sake of a wondrous far-away setting, but to attempt to do so in a scholastic fashion. We return, then, to the intractable question of whether this is learned window-dressing or if there is any serious intent to impart worldly knowledge. Evidence for the latter is perhaps to be had in what I have called the “historical anecdotes” of the textual map of Denmark (see above), which indicates that the geography of the saga was the very same real-world geography in which contemporary events (the coronation of Danish kings at Viborg), near-historical (Haraldr’s escape at Limfjorden) and ancient history (the Skjöldung rule of Denmark) took place. Similar work can be observed in the *Geographical Treatise* and the description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem (excerpted from the *Leiðarvísar* of Abbot Nikulás) in AM 736 I 4to (c.1300), which, as Kedwards has observed, provided frameworks for the narration of events in Salvation history (Kedwards 2020: 40-53); as he succinctly puts it, “medieval world maps [both written and drawn] were visualisations of history as well as geography, and depicted events in time as well as space” (Kedwards 2020: 114). This may also indicate that the saga author’s true purpose in flaunting his learned credentials is to assure the reader of the veracity of the narrative, lending weight to O’Connor’s face-value reading of the saga’s *apologiae*; these are the true events of Hrólfr Sturlaugsson’s life, which *really* took place in the *real* world.

⁵ There is in fact some discrepancy, as Hartmann (1912: 55) gives the figure of seventy, though his Appendix III has sixty-seven entries.

⁶ Alternate translations in [] after my literal renderings of *landnorðr* and *útsuðr* follow Finlay & Faulkes (2016: 8).

Finally, some comments must be made on *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s interest in the British Isles towards the end of the saga. The author seemingly names as many places here as he can; further to those in England that Lavender notes ("among them, Brentford 'Brandfurðu', Sherston 'Skorsteinn' and Ashingdon 'Asatún'", Lavender 2018: 98) we might add Dungalsbær and Mórað in Scotland (*FN* II: 450) and the island Lindisey (451). The most detailed account of England's geography, however, shortly precedes the textual map of Denmark:

England er kallat gagnauðigast land af Vestrlöndum, því at þar er blásinn allr málmr, ok þar fellr hveiti ok vín, ok alls konar sæði má þar hafa. Eru þar ok klæði gerð ok margháttaðir vefir meir en í öðrum stöðum. Lundúnaborg er þar höfuðstaðr ok Kantaraborg. Þar er Skarðaborg ok Helsingjaborg, Víncestr ok margir aðrir staðir ok borgir, er hér eru eigi nefndir. (*FN* II: 458)

England is called the most productive country of the Westernlands, because all kinds of metal are cast there, and wheat and vines are produced there, and all kinds of crops are to be had there. There are also cloths made, and many kinds of textiles, more than in other places. London is the chief place there, and Canterbury. There is Scarborough and Hastings, Winchester, and many other places and towns, which are not named here.

Since this passage does not have a precise analogue in a known source, it has not attracted nearly as much attention as the description of Denmark that follows it, though Hartmann (1912: 76-77) noted that *Knýtlinga saga* again was the source of the English placenames in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, and suggested that the former's claim that "England er auðgast at lausafé allra Norðrlanda" ('England is the wealthiest of all the Northern lands in terms of moveable goods', *Danakonunga sögur*: 124) may have inspired the description of England's industries in the latter. Regarding its function in the saga, we may again say that the author of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* sought, at the very least, to impart a learned aesthetic to the text, an appearance of "bookishness" even if there is no coherent intellectual programme in the manner that Barnes has observed of the *riddarasögur*. But it is no great leap to further suggest that, in doing so, the author sought impress upon the audience his learnedness, perhaps in order to bolster his narratorial authority, an aim consistent with O'Connor's reading of the saga's *apologiae*. Finally, given the discussion above, I would venture that this description of England served to anchor the 'England' of the narrative to the real-world place and thus also to the annals of history, and not mere imagination; that this was achieved through an account of England's economy may have been particularly significant to a late medieval Icelandic audience, for whom trade links with England became increasingly important, culminating in the so-called "English Age" of Icelandic history in the fifteenth century. Such an ambition would be entirely congruous with the intertextual genealogy linking *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* with **Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* and *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, which Lavender characterises as an "[attempt] to tie up loose genealogical ends [...] from the legendary period of Scandinavia's history" (Lavender 2018: 107; c.f. also 99-106). This rather downplays the significance of the intertextual genealogies of the *fornaldarsögur*, another of their characteristics that, as I argue elsewhere (Rowbotham 2018: 220-234), were an important strategy in their historicisation.

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Assembly sites and non-violent intercultural interaction in the viking diaspora

Alexandra Sanmark, University of Highlands and Islands, & Irene García Losquiño, University of Santiago de Compostela

The *þing* is a fundamental element of Old Norse legal culture and is also closely connected to the political, social, ritual and economic functioning of individual communities. It was a defining cultural trait that was transported with vikings to the places in which they settled. Assembly sites in the viking-settled North Atlantic world present a variety of commonalities that tell us much about the nature of the *þing*. However, Old Norse models of assembly should not be assumed to be a characteristic only of places clearly dominated by viking culture. Were assembly sites also utilised in those areas of the viking world with a smaller viking presence? Did assemblies play a role in the interaction between vikings and pre-existing local cultures? How was the Norse legal society experienced by these local communities? Did the settlers bring all the aspects of the *þing* or only selected parts? Was assembly a fundamental instrument for non-violent interaction in the diaspora? We will compare two case-studies in areas of Scotland that were not heavily settled by Norse groups: the first is Dingwall (Ross and Cromarty) and the second Tinwald (Dumfriesshire). By combining place-names, landscape archaeology and written sources this paper will investigate the nature of assembly in areas of the diaspora in which vikings established a presence in an already-occupied territory.

***Riddarasögur* and saga style**

Daniel Sävborg, University of Tartu

It is a common claim that the text of the Norse *riddarasögur* deviate a lot from the continental originals and that the changes made by the Norwegian 13th century translators concern especially features such as emotional description, internal analysis, love, monologues and subjective comments by the narrator. It is also a common claim that the translators were strongly influenced by saga style and its characteristics, which should explain the changes mentioned (Jónas Kristjánsson, Mats Malm etc.). This paper attempts to challenge these claims. It is argued that the *riddarasögur* we find in the 13th century manuscripts are generally quite close to the original texts and exhibit very little of the alleged reworking – the strongly reduced and reworked texts are the ones found in later, post-reformation Icelandic manuscripts, and this type of reworking probably belongs to a different time and environment than 13th century Norway. It is also argued that the translators in early 13th century Norway, such as Brother Robert, were unlikely to be influenced by saga style, which was a rare, mainly Icelandic, phenomenon in that time, but rather by the relatively large amount of religious texts in Old Norse which existed in that time – homilies, *heilagra manna sögur* etc. – whose style is very different from saga style and, in contrast, rather emotional and subjective. It is further argued that the reduction of some of the features of the French originals, such as very long internal emotional monologues, which nevertheless occurs in the Norwegian translations, is something that has a counterpart also in other translations of French romances of the time, such as the Middle English translations of Tristran and Yvain. The reduction in the Norwegian translations is therefore not a connection to saga style, but a sign of a general European tendency to reduce the more extreme features of French courtly style.

Jómsborg as a heterotopia: Law in *Jómsvíkinga saga*

Roland Scheel, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

The genre classification of *Jómsvíkinga saga* entails well-known problems: On the one hand, it is a Kings' Saga, dealing with the history of the rulers of Denmark and Norway, while on the other hand, supernatural encounters put it in proximity of *Fornaldarsögur*. It has also been counted among the "political sagas" dealing with the expansion of royal rule at its fringes (Berman). While this expansion of power certainly is a fact at the beginning of the 13th century when *Jómsvíkinga saga* was written, it has been argued that the emergence of central power is not the main theme but rather the status of different social strata represented among the *Jómsvíkingar* (Torfi Tulinius).

Through a comparison with Saxo Grammaticus's version of the story, it becomes clear in which way *Jómsvíkinga saga* shapes the plot in order to give the confederacy certain characteristics. In this context, it proves decisive that Jómsborg is a Scandinavian exclave at the Baltic rim, geographically remote from the centre of Danish power and the sphere of the king's rule. It allows the saga author to construct a society of warriors which is dominated by a law given in the central chapter 16 by Pálma-Tóki með vitra manna ráði and used later on to evaluate the conduct of the Jómsvíkingar in the battle of Hjörungavágr. Jómsborg, protected by a massive fortification and its laws, proves to be a heterotopia due to its situation in the Baltic. It is far away enough that it may function as a projection uniting different social spaces and strata: the king's court, a warrior society adhering to the heroic ideal of the *forn qld*, a mixture of noblemen and *bændir*. While the precarious constellation between King Sveinn and the Jómsvíkingar serves as a frame, the heterotopia within this frame allows to separate the constellation at the court from the court itself. This function of a heterotopia, manipulating the normality of space and time and distorting or overdrawing social reality, is underlined by the fact that there are significant overlaps in contents between the law of the Jómsvíkingar and the Norwegian *Hirðskrá*, the law of the court (after 1263). In the heterotopia of Jómsborg and its warrior society, which thus becomes the image of a king's retinue, narrative chronologically precedes actual law, a feature recurrent in Scandinavian texts dealing with a distant past. This phenomenon is especially prominent in texts dealing with distant spaces: *Jómsvíkinga saga* finds a parallel in Sven Aggesen's *Lex Castrensis* that also relocates the founding of law into another geographical space, which serves to highlight what the law of the court is actually about. Liminal epochs and a special localisation at the fringe of the "North" are a feature of this discourse, and it is in this way that the Baltic area is integrated into the mental map of *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

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Finnar, Freyr, or Fate in Vatnsdæla – (Over-)mapping Iceland in Scandinavian cultural geography

Andreas Schmidt, Independent Scholar / Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

Vatnsdæla saga is known for its many strange elements in its tale of the settlement of Iceland. In what seems almost a subversion of the medieval Icelandic myth of freedom, the settlement narration is driven against the will of its protagonist, Ingimundr gamli, who initially sees no point in settling *í eyðibýggðir þær* (*Vatnsdæla saga* 29). In order for him to change his mind, it takes the unwanted prophecy of a Sami seeress, a disappearing talisman, a kind of spiritual scouting journey by three other Samis, the encouraging words of Haraldr hárfagri and signs of fertility in the land that Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has read as markers of a subliminal presence of Freyr. Only then will Ingimundr accept that *eigi má við sköpunum sporna* (*Vatnsdæla saga* 42).

My paper will explore two intersecting aspects of *Vatnsdæla*'s depiction: I will re-scrutinize the Kings' Sagas motif of sorcerous Sami people, thereby exploring how *Vatnsdæla saga* takes part in the mapping of a Scandinavian cultural geography. This will serve to examine how the motif is deployed in the saga in order to specifically map Iceland within this cultural geography as a fruitful combination of the elements that bring Ingimundr there: the saga seems keen on underlining its settlement narrative with as many supra-human signs of fatefulness as possible. This examination will lead on to a reading of the saga's concept of fate, seemingly a combination of all those signs at once. This over-coding is, however, in fact destabilising the concept and leading to the possible questioning of its nature by the audience upon closer inspection: it becomes increasingly questionable what is in fact the driving force behind Ingimundr's journey to Iceland – and, whether 'luck' truly runs deep in his family. This reading may then be related back and help us understand why this is the only *Íslendingasaga* that heavily draws on the cultural geography of Samis to develop the plot of its settlement narrative.

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The wisdom of the sagas in post-medieval Icelandic proverb collection

Christine Schott, Erskine College

Human beings seem to have a built-in liking for wisdom sayings; they appear in literate and oral cultures, industrial communities and hunter-gatherer societies. And our impulse to gather such sayings into collections seems nearly as old as writing itself. From the biblical book of Proverbs to the gnomic poetry of the Old English elegies, all the way up to the commonplace books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, literate people have felt compelled to gather into one place all the wisdom sayings they could get their hands on.

Iceland is no exception to this preoccupation, and proverb collections survive from the thirteenth century onward. The oldest concerted collection in Norse is *Hávamál*, surviving in the Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to) from the 1270s, though its contents predate the manuscript. In the middle of the sixteenth century, a scribe named Tómas Arason collected some two hundred proverbs (as well as a fair bit of other material including ciphers and complaints) in the margins of a book of *rímur*, Staðarhólsbók (AM 60 4to), which he was copying. In the late 1880s, Kristian Kálund edited and published these proverbs as *En islandsk ordsprogsamling*. And the tradition continued, with manuscript and print collections appearing with regularity well into the twentieth century.

What I would like to do today is to focus on just one of those print collections, Guðmundur Jónsson's *Safn af íslenskum orðskviðum*, the most extensive and possibly the most important collection published in the nineteenth century, to examine the sources of its proverbs in light of the romantic nationalist movement, which was gaining momentum at the moment of the book's publication. I will offer a brief history of this collection and an overview of my previous study of its sources. Then I will zero in on what we can discover about the medieval origins of some of its proverbs, and finally, I will revise my former conclusions about Guðmundur's project. I had previously argued, in an article published last year in *Saga-Book*, that Guðmundur was deliberately archaizing his collection in order to represent Icelandic wisdom as being uniquely insular and even uniquely "Viking". But I think the evidence we will see today indicates that, while he may indeed have been archaizing his proverbs, he may not have been doing it as deliberately as I had originally thought.

Discoveries about Guðmundur's methodology

I discovered a couple of intriguing things about Guðmundur's process of selecting which items from the manuscripts to include in his printed collection. The most important discovery for our purposes has to do with religious proverbs. Of the proverbs beginning with the letter *G*, 11% of them in Guðmundur's *Safn* begin with some form of the word *Guð*, "God". But the octavo has 14%, the quarto has 19%, and the folio has 32%. In other words, Guðmundur records only a small portion of "God" proverbs from what was available to him based on his sources.

The contrast between manuscript and printed collection is even starker if we consider proverbs invoking Christ or Christianity by name. The quarto has three proverbs that begin with some form of the word *Christus* or *Christni*, "Christianity", while the folio has fully nineteen "Christ", "Christian", or "Christianity" proverbs. Not one of these appears in the *Safn*. The word *Kristur* does appear four times, but it never comes at the head of the sentence. The word *kristinn*, "Christian" only appears three times in his entire book. I was puzzled by the fact that Guðmundur seems to be deliberately limiting the presence of Christianity in his collection and yet does not eliminate it entirely; I think today's paper may help explain why.

The other thing I noticed in comparing Guðmundur's manuscript sources to his *Safn* is that Guðmundur uses older and more distinctly Norse spelling forms than the manuscripts do, even though the manuscripts are significantly older than Guðmundur himself. Most noticeable is the nominative singular masculine ending, which today (and in the manuscripts) is spelled *-ur*, but which Guðmundur spells *-r* as was done in the Middle Ages. Likewise, both the quarto and the folio use the Latin form of Christ's name, *Christus*, rather than the Icelandic *Kristur*, which is the

only way it appears in the *Safn*. In using the *K*, Guðmundur is following Rasmus Rask's reform of Danish orthography of 1825 (*Forsøg til en videnskaelig dansk Retskrivningslaere*), which sought to regularize and eliminate redundancies in spelling (like the letter *C*) but had the effect of setting the orthography of Norse languages apart from others that used the Latin alphabet.

Based on these facts and a few others I will not detail here, I have concluded that Guðmundur was curating his collection to strip it of material that was obviously the result of foreign influence (in this case, Christianity) while at the same time choosing spelling that invoked uniquely Norse and uniquely older forms. All evidence points to an unspoken desire to reach back beyond Christianized Iceland and represent the wisdom of the Icelandic people as stemming not from foreign influence but from native roots: true Norse, true Viking.

This impulse puts Guðmundur very much in the thick of the most important cultural movements that were going on in his day—both in Iceland and in Europe more broadly. Guðmundur was working in the golden age of the romantic period, which saw a sharp upswing in interest in the pagan past of Celtic and Norse language and culture. Guðmundur's project stood at the crossroads of this important cultural-linguistic movement and the rise of romantic nationalism all over Europe. The argument I made in my *Saga-Book* article about the *Safn*, then, is that the implied search for “original” Icelandic wisdom is, in fact, a subtle political statement.

Guðmundur's actual medieval sources

My question for today, then, is this: how much of Guðmundur's material is actually medieval? To find out, I did two selected studies whose results I will present here. First, I checked any known origins of the 713 proverbs in Guðmundur's *Safn* that begin with *A* (long and short). I chose this as a control group of sorts to render the large quantity of data manageable. Second, I pulled all the material identified as proverbial from *Laxdæla saga* (again, a limited data set selected as representative) and checked to see how much of it appeared in Guðmundur's *Safn*. My findings, as you will see, are rather mixed.

My main resource for this source study was Jón G. Friðjónsson's 2014 compendium *Orð að sönnu*, which chronicles the attestation of proverbs in the sagas and other literary sources as well as printed collections from the seventeenth century on. Tables are provided here for reference:

Table 1. Direct sources of proverbs in the *Safn*

Total <i>A</i> -proverbs	713
Not found in <i>Orð að sönnu</i>	180
19 th century	424
18 th century	14
17 th century	71
16 th century	9
Medieval	15

Table 2. Variants of proverbs in the *Safn*

Total pre-19 th -C variants	84
18 th century	6
17 th century	49
16 th century	5
Medieval	24

In summary, this is what I found: of the 713 proverbs in the *Safn* that begin with *A*, 180 of them are not recorded in *Orð að sönnu*. This absence is explained by Finnur Jónsson, who points out that many of the items Guðmundur records *eru alls ekki málshættir og hafa aldrei verið*, “are not at all proverbs and never have been” (Finnur Jónsson 1920: x). Hence *Orð að sönnu* does not include them. Additionally, many are also repetitions, which Guðmundur didn't realize because he alphabetized his collection by first word, so many variants of the same proverb slipped in without being recognized as such.

Of the 533 proverbs that do appear in the compendium, 424 do not appear in the printed record until the nineteenth century (417 of those being first recorded in the *Safn* itself). Fourteen appear first in the eighteenth century, 71 from the seventeenth (almost all of those being from Guðmundur Ólafsson's *Thesaurus adagiorum*, assembled in the last decades of the century), and nine from the sixteenth (seven of which are from Kålund's edition of the Staðarhólsbók marginalia). We could hold a debate over whether to consider the Staðarhólsbók material properly medieval; Tómas Arason was a priest in one of the last Catholic areas of Iceland and so had strong ties to medieval lifestyles and ways of thought, but the practice of jotting things in the margins of manuscripts is a particularly Early Modern habit attested all over western Europe; thus, Tómas's culture is representative of that in-between phase which necessarily muddies the boundaries between periods. If, for the sake of argument, we treat Tómas's marginalia as modern, then only fifteen of the 713 A-proverbs can be traced explicitly to medieval sources. That is just over 2% of the data set selected for study. However, a further twenty-four proverbs appear in variant form in medieval texts (for example, *Eigi leyndu augu ef ann kona manni* in *Gunnlaugs saga* for *Aldrei augu leyndu*, etc., in the *Safn*, both meaning the same thing: "the eyes cannot hide if a woman loves a man"). If we include such variants, that brings the total to 39 out of 713 items, or 5.5%. Even so, this is obviously not a large proportion. The following list of sources reveals that most sources provide only one or two proverbs, and the most frequent source is, perhaps not surprisingly, *Hávamál*, providing four proverbs directly and six variants:¹

• <i>Áns saga bosveigis</i>	1
• <i>Bandamanna saga</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Egils saga</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Elís saga og Rósamundu</i>	1
• <i>Fafnismál</i>	2
• <i>Flóamanna saga</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Gísla saga</i>	2, variant versions
• <i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	3, variant versions
• <i>Hávamál</i>	4, direct; 6, variant versions
• <i>Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Hrólfs saga kraka</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Hugsvinnsmál</i>	1, direct; 1, variant version
• <i>Jónsbók</i>	1
• <i>Ketils saga hængs</i>	1
• <i>Laxdæla saga</i>	1, direct; 1, variant version
• <i>Málsháttakvæði</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Nikulás saga leikara</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Njáls saga</i>	2, direct; 1, variant version
• <i>Orkneyinga saga</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Sólarljóð</i>	1, direct; 1, variant version
• <i>Song of Roland</i>	1, variant version
• <i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	1
• <i>Þiðriks saga</i>	1, variant version

Thinking perhaps that my data set was to blame—that, for instance, there might randomly be fewer medieval proverbs beginning with A than with other letters—I decided to check the proverbs of a particular saga to see if they appeared in Guðmundur's *Safn*. I selected *Laxdæla saga* in part because it is fairly proverb-rich and in part simply because it is my favorite. Its proverbial material is indexed in Richard L. Harris's "Concordance to the proverbs and

¹ Note: some proverbs appear in more than one source.

proverbial materials in the Old Icelandic sagas”, and this concordance was my source for the proverbs I sought to find in the *Safn*. In this case, the results are more interesting. The rate of correspondence was not as high as we might expect, but it is much higher than what I found with the A-proverbs. Of the 44 proverbs in the saga, fourteen appear in Guðmundur’s *Safn*. Numerically, that doesn’t look very impressive, but it is in fact a correspondence rate of 32%.

Analysis of results

Some limitations of these studies should be acknowledged before we draw conclusions. First, just because early printed collections don’t represent a large number of medieval proverbs doesn’t necessarily mean that medieval proverbs weren’t circulating in Iceland into the modern period; there may be a selection bias or simply a coincidence that the people who collected proverbs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries didn’t know or didn’t record older examples. Likewise, just because *Orð að sönnu* traces proverbs to eighteenth or nineteenth century sources doesn’t mean that their origins might not be older; we can only base our conclusions on evidence that survives in written form, so a proverb may have circulated orally in the Viking or medieval period but only show up in writing much later. The stability of orally transmitted material is much debated, but the form of proverbs—short, pithy, often alliterative or rhyming—would make them more easily memorized, and so it would not be impossible for a proverb to have circulated in oral form for several centuries before finding its way into writing. We should remember, too, that the printed collections themselves are based on older, unpublished sources, so the material recorded in the compendium as originating with Guðmundur’s *Safn* in fact dates to at least half a century earlier, in his source manuscripts.

These limitations notwithstanding, though, what conclusions can we draw about this study of Guðmundur and his antiquarian project? First, based on the fact that the highest rate of correspondence I found is a mere 32% (between the *Safn* and *Laxdæla saga*), with a miniscule 5.5% of the A-proverbs being medieval, we can conclude that surviving proverbs, though by nature they strike us as representing “the wisdom of the ancients”, in fact tend to be skewed heavily toward younger material. Eliminating proverbs that have variants dating to earlier periods,² fully 48% of the A-proverbs in the *Safn* are recorded first in the nineteenth century. So although Guðmundur seems to have desired to minimize modern influences from his collection, the fact is most of his proverbs seem not to be very old at all.

However, what is interesting about the material that we can securely date to the medieval period is that it is the exact sort of material we would *expect* to persist in the popular imagination. Just a selection of the *Laxdæla* proverbs found in the *Safn* reads like a list of quotable quotes to anyone familiar with the saga: *þar er fangs ván af frekum úlfí*, “a bite is to be expected from a fierce wolf”³; *betra vera at fá skjóta sæmd en langa svívirðing*, “better to have short-lived honor than long-lived disgrace”; *úlfa eta annars ørendi*, perhaps best translated “one wolf eats another’s kill”); *misjöfn verða morginverkin*, “unequal is our morning’s work”. Several of these are known from multiple medieval sources, but the last of them seems likely to have originated in the very specific context of Guðrun’s comment to Bolli after his killing of Kjartan—and, so, in a sense, it really is a “quotable quote” that was ultimately granted proverbial status. The conclusion I’d like to draw here is simply that, although much of what we might now consider proverbial in the sagas may not have persisted as popular proverbs down through the centuries, what did persist has remarkable staying power, as we recognize these sayings even now.

The last conclusion I would like to draw, however, is perhaps the most interesting. Guðmundur was a learned man and could, if he wished, have combed the sagas and *Hávamál* for

² 424 proverbs are first attested in the nineteenth century in the form in which Guðmundur records them. From this number we deduct the 84 proverbs attested earlier in variant forms. Hence, Guðmundur records 340 proverbs first attested in any form in the nineteenth century, or 48% of the total 713 A-proverbs.

³ Appears first in *Regismál* v. 13.

his proverb collection, but he didn't. He limited his source material almost entirely to eighteenth-century collections and what he and his friends could add off the top of their heads (he says as much in his introduction).⁴ The realization that Guðmundur did not comb genuine medieval sources for proverbs, and that his actual material was predominantly modern, suggests that the archaizing impulse I highlighted earlier in my paper may, in fact, not have been a deliberate effort at all. This suggestion may help explain why Guðmundur limited his obviously Christian-influence proverbs but did not eliminate them entirely: he may have favored material that at least looked like it could be Viking in origin, but that impulse may have been completely or at least primarily *subconscious*.

Conclusion

If this is the case—that Guðmundur was unconsciously influenced by an antiquarian aesthetic—it gives us a strong sense of what was in the air in the first third of the nineteenth century when Guðmundur was compiling his *Safn*. He was working at the vanguard of the romantic nationalist movement; most of its landmark events would not take place until after 1830. Although they were working simultaneously, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen's collection of Norwegian folklore and fairy tales would not be published until a little over a decade later. In 1835, five years after the *Safn* appeared, the nationalist literary magazine *Fjölur* would begin publication; in 1844, the great Icelandic nationalist Jón Sigurðsson would be elected MP to the newly reestablished Althing. But even though these public events were still years in the future, the increasing sense of value assigned to their native language and culture already seems to have been deeply rooted in the minds of Icelandic thinkers like Guðmundur very early in the nineteenth century.

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⁴ He says he added material *er mér þá í bráð fëllu i hug*, "that immediately came to mind" (Guðmundur Jónsson 1830: 13).

Law: What is it good for?

Ela Sefcikova, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

This paper examines the use of law in *Ljósvetninga saga* for literary purposes. The literary uses of law are under-researched, with law in the sagas generally being viewed in a limited socio-historical context. This paper will show how the law is used in *Ljósvetninga saga* in the construction of saga narrative, as a key component of the plot and a technique for characterization. It will argue that the law has been overlooked as a literary component of the sagas, with lawsuits, court cases and private settlements playing a central role in *Ljósvetninga saga*. It will also argue that the text uses characters' pursuit of lawsuits (or lack thereof) as well as their conduct at *þing* assemblies and their treatment of their opponents at court cases to define the character in question; they might prove themselves to be aggressive, peaceable, assertive or weak.

In terms of plot, legal cases can serve as turning points or dramatic climaxes. The paper will discuss the sequence of events that lead to the death of Þorkell hákr, showing how court cases and legal negotiations are used in the text to build tension up to the final killing. It will then be argued that the final climax of *Ljósvetninga saga* is not the battle at Kakalahóll, as Theodore Andersson has argued, but the lawsuit which follows it, where the conflict between the saga's two warring kin groups is finally resolved. The paper will discuss the implications of considering law in a literary context, including the nature of feud and its relationship with the law. It will be argued that feud is not, as has been previously argued, a fundamental component either of the law as presented in the sagas, nor a fundamental component of saga structure and narrative composition, and that conflict in the sagas must be understood in a broader context, taking into account a much wider variety of conflict-mitigating strategies involving private negotiation, legal cases and violence.

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St. Óláfr's *Miracula* in Eastern Europe revisited

Daria Segal, University of Iceland

Old Norse-Icelandic sources underline St. Óláfr's importance not only as a ruler but also as a Christian martyr, whose cult, undoubtedly, laid the foundation for the formation of Christian identity in Scandinavia. The presence of St. Óláfr among venerated saints in the early polities of Rus' is indisputable; even some Old Church Slavonic prayers, such as the *Litany to All Saints*, mention his name, in addition to archaeological material and Old Norse-Icelandic written sources. While the cult and *miracula* of St. Óláfr in general (Holtsmark 1937; Phelpstead 2001; Jiroušková 2014) and in particular in Novgorod (Melnikova 1996; Jackson 2019; Lindow 2008) have been addressed in previous scholarship, the cultural and social significance of the *miracula* performed in Eastern Europe received little attention.

This paper, therefore, will discuss the miracles of St. Óláfr performed on the territory of the early polities of Rus', described in *Passio Olavi*, the *Old Norwegian Homily Book*, the *Legendary saga*, the skaldic poem *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, and *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók*, situating these events in the context of Eastern European history. The testimonies of the four miracles performed by St. Óláfr in life and posthumously differ drastically: the first is preserved only in the skaldic poem, the interpretation of which is still debatable (Smirnitskaja 1980; Jackson 2019), and describes the healing of, most probably, Volodimer Sviatoslavich. The second miracle, preserved only in saga tradition, revolves around a high-born boy with a boil in his throat. Two others are attested to both in saga material and *Passio Olavi*, and recount posthumous appearances of St. Óláfr in Rus'. This paper will analyse the aforementioned narratives in order to understand their value and significance both for Scandinavian and Eastern European societies. Furthermore, this study will compare St. Óláfr's miracles to the broader Medieval Christian tradition to gain a better understanding of their place in the corpus of Medieval *miracula*.

Óðinn's ale-bearers: Masculinity and the mead of poetry

Ann Sheffield, Allegheny College

Introduction: Drink and gender

In *Skáldskaparmál*, his work dedicated to the art of poetry, Snorri Sturluson describes an encounter between the skald Bragi Boddason and an unnamed troll-woman (*Edda* 83–84). The woman accosts Bragi, asks him who he is, and recites a skaldic stanza describing herself as a *tröll*. Bragi counters with a stanza of his own (“Exchange of verses” 1; trans. Sheffield):¹

<i>Skald kalla mik,</i>	[They] call me skald,
<i>skapsmið Viðurs,</i>	Viðurr's [= Óðinn's] shaping-smith,
<i>Gauts gjafrøtuð,</i>	Gautr's [= Óðinn's] gift-finder,
<i>grepp óhneppan,</i>	lavish poet,
<i>Yggs qlbera,</i>	Yggr's [= Óðinn's] ale-bearer,
<i>óðs skap-Móða,</i>	shaping-Móði [= god] of poetry,
<i>hagsmið bragar.</i>	skilled smith of verse.
<i>Hvats skald nema þat?</i>	What is a skald but that?

Whether Bragi himself composed this verse is unknown, but it was certainly attributed to him in the early thirteenth century (Clunies Ross 2017: 64). Among its catalog of synonyms for “skald”, one term—*Yggs qlberi*,² “Óðinn's ale-bearer”—could be read quite differently in another context. The literal bearers of drink for Óðinn are the valkyries: the eddic poem *Grímnismál* 36 says of them: *þær bera einherjum ql* “they bear ale to the Einherjar”, and in the anonymous skaldic poem *Eiríksmál*, Óðinn himself says *bað ek . . . valkyrjur vín bera* “I asked valkyries to bring wine” to prepare for King Eiríkr's arrival in Valhöll (1). In fact, the brewing and serving of drink are consistently depicted as “women's work” throughout the early Norse and larger Germanic worlds (Jochens 1993: 166, 171–72; 1995: 107, 127; Sheffield, forthcoming). Further, this association between women and drink was freighted with cultural significance: as Michael J. Enright asserts, “The evidence indicates that a very strong correlation existed between the concept of aristocratic femininity among the Germans and the ability to distribute liquor” (1996: 127).

This association of women with preparing and serving drink is equally evident in skaldic poetry itself. The Skaldic Project lists 274 instances of kennings for “woman” (“Expressions for woman”); of these, thirty (11% of the total) depend on an association with drink or objects related to it. Typical examples are *ql-Gefn* “ale-Gefn [goddess]” (Þjóðólfr, *Haustlǫng* 11); *mjaðar Hrist* “Hrist [valkyrie] of mead” (Ormr, “Woman” 4); *gǫfug Hǫrn hvítungs*, “noble Hǫrn [goddess] of the drinking horn” (Einarr, *Geisli* 37), and the unusually specific *hrosta hanglúðrs Þrúðr* “Þrúðr [goddess] of the hanging vessel of [brewing] mash” (Ormr, “Woman” 3). Within a single stanza, Ormr Steinþórsson refers to a woman as *bjórs brík* “board of strong drink” and, in an allusion to the brewing of the mead of poetry by dwarfs, to his own poetry as *drykkir Dvalins*, “drink of Dvalinn” (“Woman” 5).³ Male cupbearers started to appear in courtly environments in the later Middle Ages (Jochens 1993: 172; 1995: 107), but this cultural shift appears to have had little effect on the tropes of skaldic poetry: woman-kennings based on drink continue to be attested right through the thirteenth century and beyond. Late examples include Kálfr Hallsson's designation of St. Catherine as *veiti*selja víns* “offering-willow of wine” (*Kátrínardrápa* 42) and a description of a woman as *öls æskiselja* “wishing-willow of ale” in the anonymous poem

¹ Translations of stanzas published by the Skaldic Project (as of 1 May 2022) are those of the respective editors except where noted. Translations of other works in this paper are mine.

² Kennings outside of their original contexts have been normalized to the nominative case of the base noun.

³ Russell Poole takes *dauds* as part of the same poetry-kennings (thus: *dauds drykkir Dvalins* “drink of the dead Dvalinn”) and suggests it may reflect a general connection between dwarfs and the dead (2017: 330). Poole also translates *bjórr* in the woman-kennings as “beer” (SkP III, 329), but the word is more likely to have denoted a stronger and more prestigious drink fermented from honey and fruit (Fell 1975; Kylstra 1974).

Máruvísur I (14). Both of these works are considered to have been composed no earlier than the second half of the fourteenth century (Wolf 2007: 931; Gade 2007: 679). In addition, in the corpus of poetry by (probably) historical and (definitely) legendary women edited by Sandra Ballif Straubhaar (2011), no female skald refers to poetic composition in terms of the mead of inspiration, even when she is unambiguously speaking about poetry. Thus, as far as we are able to determine from the surviving evidence, kennings that refer to the literal production or serving of drink are used exclusively to refer to women, whereas drink in the metaphorical sense of poetry is produced and served exclusively by men.

The frequency and familiarity of kennings that treat poetry as drink perhaps explain why the gender implications of the metaphor have previously been overlooked. Yet those implications are potentially significant. As Alsop and coworkers observe about hegemonic masculinity (2002: 140, 143):⁴

Within a particular society or social context, . . . there is a culturally dominant construction of masculinity, a hegemonic discourse . . . Hegemonic notions of masculinity demand that to be a ‘real man’ requires the rejection of all things feminine, in that masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity.

For Norse society in particular, that masculinity required exclusion of the feminine was emphatically the case: as Preben Meulengracht Sørensen notes, “The mere suggestion of a man in a female role was enough to symbolize unmanliness” (1983: 23). In addition, as Gareth Lloyd Evans emphasizes in his study of masculinity in the Sagas of Icelanders, the homosocial world depicted in Norse literature is characterized by “the vigilant policing of men’s masculinities” (2019: 61). The result is that, as Carol Clover puts it, a “man’s descent into the feminine was just one real or imaged act away” (1993: 375). Yet skalds continue to describe themselves in terms of the female acts of making and serving drink. Some of the more transparent examples are:⁵

- *gerðak veig . . . Váfaðar*, “I brew Váfuðr’s [= Óðinn’s] potent drink”
- *tíð erumk vitnis váða / víngerð*, “I myself am skilled in the wolf’s danger’s [= Óðinn’s] wine-making”
- *þats berk framm, / Billings [...] burar full*, “that which I serve up: the cup of Billings’s son [= dwarf? *jǫtunn*?]”
- *Hárs saltunnu hrannir / hrærum*, “We [I] stir the waves of the hall-cask of Hárr [= Óðinn]”

These examples have been translated here in terms deliberately suggestive of brewing and serving drink to emphasize that such a reading would have been available to a medieval audience. In the first two cases in particular, the key terms are derived from *gera* “to make”; *gera* or *heita* (“to heat”) *ql* are the expressions typically used to denote ale-brewing (CV, s.v. *brugga*). In the fourth example above, *hræra* has the general meaning of “to move” but is also used specifically of stirring a kettle (CV, s.v. *hræra*).

For Bragi’s verse in particular, the context that Snorri provides does nothing to redeem the skald from the potentially feminizing implications of being Óðinn’s ale-bearer. Snorri introduces the poet as *hinn gamli*, “the old” (*Edda* 83), and old age was associated with a loss of masculinity in Old Norse literature (Clover 1993: 381–85; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2008; Morcom 2018). As a woman in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* says, proverbially, *svá ergisk hverr sem eldisk* “as someone ages, so he becomes *argr* [= effeminate]” (126). Bragi fares no better in the eddic poem *Lokasenna*, where Loki calls him *bekkskrautuðr*, “bench-ornament”—a description better suited to a woman—and directly accuses him of cowardice (15). Although *Lokasenna* presents the gods in the worst possible light, there is generally a grain of truth in Loki’s accusations.

⁴ In their characterization of the field of masculinity studies, Alsop *et al.* (2002: Ch. 6) credit the work of R.W. Connell in particular, but they also discuss the contributions of other scholars.

⁵ From, respectively: Einarinn skálaglammi, *Lausavísur* 1; Hofgarða-Refr, “Fragment” 5; Ormr Steinþórsson, “Woman” 2; Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal* 31. My translations.

For Bragi and his fellow-skalds, therefore, the ambivalence generated by the metaphor of a man making or serving drink remains unresolved, yet the image is a common and persistent one in the skaldic corpus. This paper explores how skalds respond to this ambivalence in their poetry and defend their masculine status.

Corpus and approach

The poems discussed here are all drawn from the volumes published to date in the “Skaldic poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages” series. Specifically, the verses describing poetry appear in Volume 1, *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1* (2012); Volume 2, *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2* (2009); and Volume 3, *Poetry from treatises on poetics* (2017).⁶ The advantages of using these works are several: first, the Skaldic Project articulates a clear definition of skaldic poetry and uses it as the criterion for selecting material to include (Clunies Ross 2012). Second, all volumes in the series are produced under a consistent and conservative editorial policy that treats emendation as “a last resort” (Whaley 2012: xxxiv). Third, the presentation of each poem includes thorough documentation of the manuscripts used to prepare the text of each stanza and the variations among them. Fourth, previous scholarship, including alternative interpretations of difficult verses, is summarized and addressed in the commentary on each stanza. Finally, all of this material is readily available on the Skaldic Project website <skaldic.org>.⁷ Translations of verses in this paper are those of their respective Skaldic Project editors unless noted otherwise. A disadvantage of the approach used here should also be acknowledged: the Skaldic Project volume on poetry in the Sagas of Icelanders has not yet been published, and the absence of these verses represents a significant omission from the corpus. The work presented here should therefore be considered a preliminary investigation.

The stanzas selected for analysis are those cited on the Skaldic Project webpage “Expressions for poetry”, which lists all poetry-kennings in the volumes published to date. These 65 kennings appear in 52 separate stanzas from 35 *lausavísur* or named poems. They are attributed (sometimes with significant reservations) to 26 named skalds and three anonymous poets. The putative dates (again, sometimes assigned with significant reservations) range from the ninth to the thirteenth century CE; a plurality of the named skalds was active in the tenth century.

Without exception, all of the poetry-kennings in these stanzas refer, however obliquely, to the myth of the creation and subsequent history of the mead of poetry as described by Snorri Sturluson in *Skáldskaparmál* (*Edda* 3–5). The following analysis addresses how the skalds who created these verses attempt to dissociate themselves from the feminine associations of creating and serving drink. The discussion generally focuses on features within the same stanza where the reference to the mead of poetry occurs; in a few cases, the context provided by other stanzas that can be confidently associated with the same poem are considered as well.

Skaldic strategies: Assertion, explication, and distancing

Several strategies were available to skalds to counter their self-presentation as creators or servers of metaphorical drink. First, they might directly assert their masculinity by associating themselves with typical male activities such as smithcraft, seamanship, or warfare. Second, they might directly or indirectly point out that their poetic metaphor refers to spoken verse, not literal drink. Finally, they might employ some kind of rhetorical distancing, either of themselves from the act of production or serving, or of poetry itself from the concept of drink. Often, a skald employs multiple techniques within a single stanza or poem. Below, each strategy is considered in turn before analyzing a few examples in more depth.

The strategy of *assertion*, in which a skald describes himself as engaging in typically masculine behaviors, appears in some of the verses already mentioned. For example, in *Háttatal*

⁶ Henceforth and in the Bibliography, these works are referred to as SkP I, SkP II, and SkP III, respectively; Volume 7, *Poetry on Christian subjects* (2007), is cited as SkP VII.

⁷ Both the online text and the published volumes have been consulted in the preparation of this paper; cited page numbers refer to the printed works.

31, Snorri seems particularly anxious to assert his masculinity: he calls himself *Stáls dynblakka stökkvir*, “compeller of the prow’s din-steeds”—i.e., a ship-master—and *Odds bláferla . . . / qrbjót*, “liberal breaker of the spear-point’s dark paths”—a warrior—before mentioning that he also stir’s Óðinn’s hall-cask. Hofgarða-Refr, also quoted above, similarly precedes his mention of his *víngerð* “wine-making” by referring to himself as a seafarer: *hinn, es hranna / hádyri vel stýrir* “the one who steers the tall animal of waves well” (“Fragments” 5). Haraldr harðráði uses this strategy as well: in *Gamanvísur* 4, the skald embeds his skill at making *Yggs líð* “Yggr’s [= Óðinn’s] drink” in a list of manly *íþróttir* (“accomplishments”) such as horseback riding, swimming, skiing, shooting, and rowing. He also describes his creation of drink using the verb *smíða*, which is typically used of masculine crafts such as metalwork and carpentry. In his poetic response to the troll-woman, Bragi likewise associates himself with smithcraft: his self-description as *Yggs qlberi* is bracketed by references to himself as a *skapsmiðr* “creating-smith” and *hagsmiðr bragar* “skilled smith of poetry”.⁸ In fact, as Margaret Clunies Ross has noted, this idea of poetry as “a craft or skill, an *íþrótt*” is one of the “fundamental ways in which medieval Scandinavians conceptualised poetry” (2005: 83).

By saying explicitly that what he creates through his smithcraft is *bragr* “poetry”, Bragi is also deploying the second strategy of *explication*. As it happens, he uses this technique five times within this single stanza: what he creates is not only *bragr* but also *óðr* (another term for poetry), and he refers to himself as a *greppr* and (twice) a *skald*, both meaning “poet”. The image of him as an ale-bearer is thus surrounded by multiple assurances that he is in fact talking about poetry. Ormr, the poet mentioned above as serving up a *full* “cup”, calls his poetry *hróðrsmíð* “praise-craft” and *bragr* “poetry” in the stanza preceding his self-description as a cupbearer (“Woman” 1).⁹ He thus uses both strategies discussed so far, assertion, in that he associates his art with the masculine sphere of smithcraft, and explication, in that he identifies what he creates as poetry. Other skalds similarly refer to their creations as “poetry” (*bragr*, *óðr*), “praise” (*hróðr*, *lof*), and the like.¹⁰ Poets may also signal that they are referring to spoken verse by using verbs such as *segja* “to say”, *telja* “to tell,” or *pylja* “to recite”,¹¹ or by asking the audience to attend to them by using terms such as *heyra* “to hear”, *hlýða*, “to listen”, or *hljóð* “hearing”.¹² In a relatively late example, *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, Bjarni byskup Kolbeinsson makes his point by affecting not to (1):

*Engan kveðk at óði
órum málma rýri
(þó gatk hróðr of hugðan)
hljóðs (atferðar prýði).
Framm mun ek fyr qlðum
Yggjar bjór of færa,
þó at engir ýtar
ættgóðir mér hlýði.*

I call upon no diminisher of metal weapons for a hearing for our [my] poem; nonetheless, I have produced a praise-poem about the courageous adorning of action. I will bring forth the beer of Yggr [= Óðinn] before people, although no well-born men may listen to me.

Bjarni was bishop of Orkney from 1188 to 1223, and his poem is innovative in that, instead of describing contemporary events, it deals with a battle that took place in the late tenth century. As

⁸ Margaret Clunies Ross translates *skapsmiðr* as “mind-smith” (SkP III, 64) but also notes the possibility that *skap*-may be read as “creating” here (2017: 65).

⁹ My translations.

¹⁰ E.g.: *bragr*: Haraldr hárfagri, *Snæfríðardrápa* 1; Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Lausavísur* 27. *Óðr*: Bjarni byskup, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* 1; Hallar-Steinn, “Fragments” 5. *Hróðr*: Einarr skálaglamm, *Lausavísur* 1a; Kormákr Qgmundarson, *Sigurðardrápa* 5. *Lof*: Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Háleygjatal* 13; Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal* 31.

¹¹ E.g., respectively: Arnórr jarlaskáld, *Porfinnsdrápa* 1; Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa* 1; Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Pórsdrápa* 3.

¹² E.g., Einarr skálaglamm, *Vellekla* 1, 2.

Bjarne Fidjestøl points out, the bishop also approaches his subject “in a light-hearted, ironic manner” (1993: 48). Though the poet expresses doubt that anyone will listen to him, Bjarni’s use of *hljóð* and *hlýða* leave the audience in no doubt that he is speaking. He announces that he will “bring” (*færa*) Óðinn’s drink to his (ostensibly) inattentive hearers, but he also explicitly identifies that drink as *óðr* and *hróðr*.

The final strategy available to skalds to subvert the image of themselves as makers and providers of drink is *distancing*. The most common form of this technique involves modifying the base-word of the fundamental poetry-kenning “drink of [Óðinn, dwarf(s), giant(s)]” so as to make the skald’s connection with the production and serving of alcohol less obvious. Poets may also distance themselves from the creation of their own verse by describing it as something that happens on its own, or that the poet is receiving rather than offering.

We turn first to a consideration of kennings for the poetic mead itself. Often, the mead is equated to some other liquid, typically water. Examples include: *día fjörðr*, “fjord of the gods”; *vágr Rognis* “wave of Rognir [= Óðinn]; and *Pundregn* “rain of Pundr [= Óðinn].¹³ Such kennings may also incorporate a kenning for the determinant, which has the effect of further obscuring the fact that the expression refers to drink, e.g. *berg-Mæra bára* “wave of the mountain-Mærir [= people of the mountains, *jötunar*]” and *Hjaldrgegnis Hildar geðfjarðar lô*, “water of the mind-fjord [= breast] of the promotor of the noise of Hildir [= promoter of battle, i.e., Óðinn].¹⁴ In *Háleygjatal* 1, Eyvindr skaldaspillir calls his poetry *hverlōgr* “cauldron-liquid,” but he provides such an elaborate explanation that his audience would have had no doubt that his meaning was metaphorical. He says that he speaks:

*í hverlegi
galga farms
...
hinn es Surts
ór sökqdolum
farmqgnuðr
fljúgandi bar.*

in the cauldron-liquid of the burden of the gallows [= Óðinn], that which the travel-furtherer [= Óðinn] carried flying from the treasure-valleys of Surtr [= giant].

Poets may also distance themselves from the image of serving mead by selecting base-words for their kennings that do not refer to liquids at all, e.g., *gjof Grímnis* “gift of Grímnir [= Óðinn]”, *gjöld Gillings* “payments for Gilligr”, *Yggs fengr* “Yggr’s [= Óðinn’s] booty”, and even *orða Sónar sáð* “seed of the words of Són”.¹⁵ Kennings of the type “ship of dwarfs” are a special case of this technique:¹⁶ Snorri provides an elaborate rationale for how this expression arose (*Edda* 3–4); he also notes, more plausibly, the near-homonymy between *lið* “ale” and *lið* “ship” (14).

The other option available to skalds to distance themselves from the image of bearing drink is to shift agency away from themselves. The poem/mead itself may become an active subject that *kemr* “arrives”, *grær* “grows”, *hrynr* “rushes”, *glymr* “resounds”, or *þýtr* “roars”.¹⁷ The skald may also depict himself as the recipient, rather than the giver, of the mead/poem, as when Völu-

¹³ From, respectively: Kormákr Ögmundarson, *Sigurðardrápa* 3; Einarr skálaglamm, *Vellekla* 3; Hallar-Steinn *Reksteffja* 8.

¹⁴ From, respectively: Hofgarða-Refr, “Þorsteinn” 1; Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa* 1.

¹⁵ From, respectively: Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa* 1; Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Háleygjatal* 1; Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal* 31; Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórdrápa* 23. Gilligr is the father, or possibly uncle, of the *jötunn* Suttungr, who extorts the mead of poetry from the dwarfs who brewed it as compensation for Gilligr’s death; Són is one of the vessels containing the mead (Snorri *Edda* 3–4).

¹⁶ E.g., *skip dverga* “ships of dwarfs” in Anonymous, “Stanzas from *Snorra Edda*” 1.

¹⁷ *Kemr*: Rognvaldr jarl, *Lausavísur* 11; *grær*: Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórdrápa* 23; *hrynr*: Haraldr hárfagri, *Snæfríðardrápa* 1; *glymr*: Hofgarða-Refr “Þorsteinn” 1; *þýtr*: Arnórr jarlaskáld, *Þorfinnsdrápa* 1.

Steinn says *mérs fundr gefinn Þundar*, “the discovery of Þundr [= Óðinn] is given to me” (*Qgmundardrápa* 1).

An extended example that shows a skald gradually distancing himself from the production of his own poetry is Einarr skálaglamm’s *Vellekla*, a poem praising Hákon jarl Sigurðarson. The same stanzas also make use of the strategies of assertion and explication, so Einarr’s composition provides a convenient demonstration of how all three techniques work together to open this poem “in a very unconventional way” (Marold *et al.* 2012: 284).¹⁸ In the first stanza, Einarr begins with the typical call for a hearing: he asks jarl Hákon to hear (*heyra*) the *fyrða / fjarðleggjar brim dreggjar* “surf of the dregs of the men of the fjord-bone [= dwarfs]”, which he also calls *Kvasis dreyri*, “blood of Kvasir”. He thus alludes unmistakably to an early episode in the myth of the mead of poetry, its creation by dwarfs from the blood of the wise being Kvasir. In addition, by referring to the mead as *brim* “surf”, he introduces the marine motif that he will elaborate in the stanzas to follow. In st 2, he again asks that his audience listen (*hlýði*) and grant him a hearing (*hljóð*), this time for a poetry-kenning, *berg-Saxa fley* “ship of the mountain-Saxons [= dwarfs]”, that has lost any association with drink. The poet also starts to dissociate himself from his creation as the poem/sea effectively begins to generate itself: *Nús, þats Boðnar bára / . . . tér vaxa*, “Now it happens that the wave of Boðn grows”.¹⁹ In the third stanza, the image of poetry as an ocean wave intensifies as the poem starts to act directly on both the poet and the audience: the “wave” (*vágr, alda*) “rushes” (*eisar*) in front of the jarl and “roars” (*þýtr*) on the *fles galdra* “flat skerry of spells”, i.e., the poet’s teeth.²⁰ In the fourth stanza, this rising wave engulfs the audience: *gengr of alla / asksogn . . . / bergs grynnilô dverga*, “the shoal-wave of the rock of dwarfs passes over the entire ship’s crew,” i.e., it swamps jarl Hákon’s retinue. At the conclusion of the poem’s opening section in st 5, Einarr says: *Hljóta munk . . . / hertýs . . . / . . . at ausa / austr vín-Gnóðar*, “It will fall to me to bail out the bilge-water of the wine-Gnóð [= ship] of the army-god [= Óðinn].” Here, rather than providing Óðinn’s wine to the “ship’s crew”, the skald, in a characteristically masculine act, bails out the waterlogged vessel that was inundated in the preceding stanza.

To summarize this analysis of poetry-kennings and the mead of inspiration: of the 52 stanzas in the analyzed corpus, two are verses of insult directed at another poet’s work.²¹ Of the remaining 50 stanzas, only 7 use none of the strategies discussed above. Among the 43 stanzas that do, 10 stanzas contain a direct or indirect assertion of masculinity; 25 explicitly refer to speaking, hearing, or poetry itself; and 31 include examples of some form of distancing. In this final group of 31 kennings that involve distancing, 14 refer to the mead of poetry in terms of something other than drink, 7 elide the poet’s role as producer, and 10 do both.²² Distancing is thus the most common strategy used in this group of poems, and a likely reason for its popularity is the scope it affords for poetic invention.

The uncomfortable fact remains that none of these strategies can ever succeed completely. Consider the following *helming* by Hallar-Steinn (“Fragments” 5):

*Ek hef óðar lokri,
qlstafna, þér skafna,
væn mork, — skala verki
vandr — stefknarrar branda.*

¹⁸ Though it has already been stated above that translations of verses are those of the Skaldic Project editors except where noted, it seems appropriate to acknowledge for this detailed discussion of *Vellekla* that all of the translations in this paragraph are those of Marold *et al.*

¹⁹ Boðn is one of the vessels containing the mead of poetry (Snorri *Edda* 3–4).

²⁰ The translations in this sentence are mine.

²¹ One of these is considered further below.

²² These counts necessarily involve a degree of subjective judgement, and different readings of the texts, or decisions about the category to which an expression belongs, would change the totals reported here. The overall pattern should stand, however.

I have smoothed the bows of the refrain-ship [= *drápa*] for you with the plane of poetry [= tongue], beautiful forest of ale-prows; the poem should not be difficult.

The poet describes himself as practicing the masculine craft of carpentry; he explicitly identifies his creation as poetry by calling it *óðr* and by mentioning its *stef* “refrain”; and he represents his poem as a ship rather than as drink. At the same time, by referring to the woman he addresses as “forest of ale-prows” [= drinking horns], Hallar-Steinn erases the distinction between seagoing vessels and drinking vessels, and he also reminds the audience that serving ale is a feminine activity.²³ Such unwelcome reminders are inevitable, though rarely this direct. Even in the most complex elaborations of poetic metaphor, the skald relies on his hearers’ knowledge of the underlying myth: the audience must recognize the allusion to the mead of poetry for the poem to be intelligible, and the skald inescapably remains a purveyor of this drink. How, then, do skalds respond to the potential taint of effeminacy inherent in the acts of making and serving drink/poetry?

Conclusion: Troublesome poets

As discussed in the Introduction, masculine status is always precarious in the world depicted in Norse literature. As a consequence, the men depicted in these narratives experience acute “anxiety over their own gender performance” (Evans 2019: 61). The inescapable threat of being perceived as less than masculine may help to explain skalds’ traditional reputation for irascibility and contrariness.²⁴ In particular, their intense sensitivity to perceived slights can be read as a kind of defensiveness that betrays their underlying anxiety, an anxiety to which verbal representations of skalds in the feminine role of brewers and servers of drink may well have contributed.

Fortunately for the skalds, the same mead that makes them potentially vulnerable is also their greatest defence. John Lindow suggests that, in the confrontation with the troll-woman where Bragi calls himself an ale-bearer, the exchange of verses has a deeper, even a “cosmic” significance (2006: 24): Bragi “is a hero, but one who fought with words, not weapons” (25). Other poets were similarly armed, and a skald’s power to malign other men gave him a potent way to strike back at his opponents. For example, in a creative use of the myth of the mead of poetry, Þórarinn stuttfeldr slanders a rival skald (*Lausavísur* 3):

*Fullvíða hefr fræðum
Fjǫruskeifr of her veifat
lystr ok leiri kastat
lastsamr ara ins gamla.
Ok vannt eina krôku
orðvandr á Serklandi
— Skeifr, bart Hǫgna húfu
hræddr! — varliga brædda.*

Far and wide Fjǫruskeifr has dispersed his poetry, gleeful, among people, and, eager to blame, he distributed the dung of the ancient eagle. And, word-wary, you barely managed to feed one crow in the land of the Saracens; Skeifr, you wore Hǫgni’s cap [= helmet] fearfully!

The first *helming* focuses on the moment when Óðinn, fleeing after his theft of the mead of poetry, expels some of his burden backwards: that is, Þórarinn accuses his rival of serving up not mead but excrement. In the second *helming*, he further insults his victim by calling him a coward, and as Meulengracht Sørensen notes, “cowardice and effeminacy were two aspects of the same thing” (1983: 11).

Þórarinn stops short, however, of actual *níð*, poetry that directly accuses a man of female behavior such as bearing a child or taking the receptive role in sexual relations. Such verses

²³ Some scholars have interpreted the stanza differently and postulate two woman-kennings, *mǫrk skála* “forest of bowls” and *Bil ǫlstafna* “Bil [= goddess] of ale-prows” (see discussion in Marold *et al.* 2017: 207). Such proposals only strengthen the stanza’s emphasis on women’s role of serving drink.

²⁴ For discussion of this stereotype of the skald’s character, see Clunies Ross 2001.

constituted a symbolic act of “phallic aggression” (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983: 27), and this verbal act demanded physical violence in response: anything less would allow the intolerable accusation to stand (31). Because of its social potency, creating *níð* was a crime punishable by outlawry.²⁵ Composing *níð* was thus what we might now call a “nuclear option”, and—as is the case for nuclear weapons—the ability to deploy it could have acted as a deterrent to potential challengers. Anyone who mocked a skald for bearing drink like a woman might find himself accused in verse of something far more shameful.

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Old Norse *seiðr* and Old Russian *volkvy*: Sub-arctic shamanism in Rus'?

Leszek P. Słupecki, Rzeszów University

Old Norse Shamanism is one of the classic topics in Old Norse Studies, not much was done however regarding striking similarities between *seiðr* in Nordic religion and *volkhvovanie* in East Slavic religion. It is astonishing remembering how frequently Old Norse research use parallels between *seiðr* shamanism in Saami, Finnish, Baltic and even Siberian religions.

Scandinavian, German and Anglo-Saxon studies into *seiðr* demonstrated its foreign, “Finnish” origin, and examined questions concerning extasy, black and white magic, etc., and more or less literary background of the records.

All that contributed a lot for the problem of mosaic character of Viking Period Scandinavia making clear that it had a genuine system of power and values including laws, customs and religion(s), but used (almost) Saami magic, Mediterranean vine, Roman/Byzantine military knowledge, Slavic pottery, and Arabic silver.

It seems for me, that in Rus' which was in Viking Period a part of Scandinavian colonial world, the mosaic character of society was even more important because of multi-ethnic population living on the territory going to be Russia in the future. In the process of Slavisation and Christianisation of Rus', done thanks to the creation of Russian state in consequence of Swedish conquest appears a phenomenon of some “wizards” - *volkvy*, as those people are named in Old Russian chronicles (*letopisy*). According to those narratives in pagan times *volkvy* advised rulers they consult them, but after conversion contest Christianity organising pagan uprisings. The natural explanation seems to be that they were Slavic pagan priests, but the problem is much more complicated and all what we know about them from *letopisy* don't fit well to the rest of our knowledge about Slavic paganism.

In stories about *volkhvy* I wish to search for similarities to Finnish shamanism and Baltic sorcery. The records about *volkhvy* didn't bring detailed description of their practices (contrary to the case of *seiðr* seances well described in sagas), but precisely like in Scandinavia one should notice the lack of deep extasy and drums in connection to *volkhvy*. All *volkhvy* mentioned in *Povest' vremennykh let* were men (the case of Vladimirs/Valdimars mother belong to the saga literature!) while in ON *seiðr* the female *völur* played the most important role.

Despite differences it seems to me quite obvious that *volkhvy* have played in Old Russian, multi-ethnic society a similar role as “Finnish” (originally Saami) *seiðmanna* in the North, to some extent monopolising magic and divination, and in the time of conversion defending as the last professionals the pagan cult. The fact that the art of such people originate from the culture foreign for both Scandinavians and Slavs is in such a domain as magic not astonishing as it is always rather a great advantage for practitioners.

Putting the past on display: Museological approaches to the interpretation of the past in saga literature

Olivia Elliott Smith, University of Oxford

Scholars have often noted that Old Norse literature displays a marked preoccupation with the pre-Christian past. While other medieval literary traditions sought to euhemerize, Christianize, or erase the pagan past, Old Norse depictions of pagan life, including customs, beliefs, and rituals, serve rather to put this past on display. Though much scholarly attention has been given to evaluating to what extent these sources can be used as evidence of pre-Christian practices, it must be remembered that most of these texts were committed to vellum within the thoroughly Christian culture of the 12th–14th centuries. These depictions of the pagan past can therefore be read as interpretations of that past which facilitated an interaction, and perhaps a confrontation, between a medieval audience and their pre-Christian heritage. This paper introduces museology as a conceptual lens through which to view this interaction and argues that processes analogous to those employed by museums can be detected in Old Norse texts. Museum processes and modes of display mirror the medieval, literary preservation and interpretation the pre-Christian past. Texts preserved in manuscripts function like museum exhibitions, and the museum can therefore be used as an analogy for examining the processes whereby depictions of pre-Christian funerals came to be collected, preserved, and exhibited in text during the Middle Ages. This theoretical framework is based on three core concepts: the process of musealization; the idea of the curatorial present; and the production of Authorized Heritage Discourses (AHD). Employing the museum as an analogy allows for the temporal frame in which museums are generally discussed to be extended back beyond the founding of the museum as an institution to the Middle Ages, and thus to the interpretation of the pagan past within Saga literature, and particularly to the depiction of the pre-Christian funerals and burials.

“Grei þetta er fullt flærdar og falskleita”: The many ghosts of Hamlet in sagas and folklore

Thomas Spray, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

In May of this year the Icelandic writer Sjón took to social media to promote the companion book to *The Norseman*, a quasi-historic revenge thriller from director Robert Eggers. Sjón commented that it was a book “about the making of *Amlóðasaga*” (2022). Cinema-goers across the globe were quick to take up the suggestion, perhaps thrilled to see the dry, wordy, unrelatable *Hamlet* of their secondary-school English classes reinvented as a bloody, Scandinavian epic. *Hamlet* was not a Renaissance revenge drama after all; it was an Icelandic saga. In fact, Eggers’ blockbuster is not even the first film to make such a claim. Director Gabriel Axel relied on the same national interests in Anglo-Scandinavian history for his 1994 film *Prince of Jutland*, which appeared in the USA as *Royal Deceit*. Both films based their appeal on the suggestion that Shakespeare’s play was copied from or at least strongly influenced by an Old Norse saga: a kick in the shins for the literati, and a win for the common people.

Naturally, this line of thought long precedes the film industry. Since the rediscovery of the name Amlóði in a skaldic verse from Snæbjörn Galta in the *Prose Edda*, the possibility of a literary link between Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and an earlier, lost Old Norse saga of the same narrative has drawn many a writer from many a nation. Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s 1874 dictionary of Old Norse listed Amlóði as the “true name” of Shakespeare’s hero, and traced the story’s origin back to tenth-century Iceland (Wawn 2000: 345). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe planned an *Amled-Ballade*, sadly never completed, based on the premise of a long-lost German version of the tale (Sieveking 1947: 5). Writing in 1898, Israel Gollancz may have captured something of the contemporary academic mood when he described the endeavours of Torfæus and Árni Magnússon to link the tale to an older rendition of the Icelandic *Ambales saga* as a “long and painful struggle” with diminishing returns (vii). Yet the results of Gollancz’s own extensive work cataloguing and collecting variants of the tale in the late eighteen-hundreds and early nineteen-hundreds proved precisely the opposite: they evidenced a rich reception history which spanned many nations. According to the tale ‘Mývatns-skotta’, one of the saga’s scribes was supposedly even haunted by the ghost of a murdered woman while attempting to convert the saga into rímur (Gollancz 1898: lxxxv—lxxxvi). Indeed, the many manuscripts of the *Saga af Amlóða eður Ambales* which Gollancz recorded (none of which predate the seventeenth century) are only part of an extensive collection of rímur, folktales, and histories stretching from Jutland over Grimsby to Mývatn. Claims to the tale’s sole Old Norse derivation prior to the Amleth of Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum* may encounter problems in the face of Latin and Irish Hamlets, but viewed purely from the perspective of wider cultural influence, many recognisable elements of the tale—particularly the use of feigned idiocy as part of a revenge narrative—are features which can be found in the *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur* alike.

My intent in this paper is to demonstrate the widespread applicability of common literary motifs from the Hamlet legend across medieval Scandinavian literature. I intend to briefly revisit and update Gollancz’s catalogue, most significantly with the addition of the post-classical *Íslendingasaga Svarfdæla saga*. The study will first outline the basic features of the Hamlet narrative, and review the possible sources of Shakespeare’s version. It will then re-examine Israel Gollancz’s 1898 edition and essay. Finally, the paper will consider the example of *Svarfdæla saga*, an often-overlooked family saga which shares a number of elements with the Hamlet narrative. I believe highlighting the many ghosts or versions of Hamlet in European literature is critical for our understanding previously obscure elements of the individual texts involved. There has been long-running battle to claim artistic causality for Shakespeare’s work, and the reinvigoration of interest in Amlóði following Eggers’ film will likely only exacerbate this debate. My goal is therefore not to put a flag in the tale, and claim it for the North as it were, but rather demonstrate how widespread many of the supposedly unique narrative elements are.

Hamlet: A tale out of joint

In order to compare and contrast the different versions of the text we need to establish a basic framework around which the deviations can appear. Whether it was Ambales, Amblett, Amleth, Amlodi, Amlóði, Hamblet, or Hamlet prince of Denmark, European literature has long had a legendary figure with a revenge story around the concept of deceit and madness. The basic elements are easily recalled. A king is killed by a rival who takes both the kingdom and the queen. The young prince feigns madness to escape execution, but the new king and his advisors are not entirely convinced and test the prince in a number of ways, including temptation through a young woman and a trip abroad designed to kill him off. Overcoming these tests, the prince returns to the court in order to act out his final scheme, putting the usurper to death and revealing the intricacies of his revenge in the process. This then is an extreme abridged version of the play familiar to us today, through Shakespeare's tragedy, composed sometime 1599—1601.

The story of Hamlet undoubtedly begins far before this date, however. As mentioned, the Old Norse name 'Amlóði' is recorded in Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* c. 1225, where it appears in *Skaldskaparmál* in a list of kennings related to the sea, the named poet being Snæbjörn 'Galti' Holmsteinsson, a tenth-century Arctic explorer mentioned in *Landnámabók* (Faulkes 1998: 38). Gollancz provided Snæbjörn's verse as proof that Hamlet's name had "lived on the lips of the people for probably the greater part of a thousand years" (1898: vii). The name itself is possibly from the Danish or Icelandic *amlóði* which could denote a 'fool' or 'simpleton' (potentially from *ama* 'to annoy' and *óðr* 'madness') (Gollancz 1926: 32). It is also possibly a translation of the Latin *brutus* ('stupid'). The tale of Lucius Iunius Brutus, found in book one of Livy's history of Rome, bears striking similarities to that of Hamlet. Brutus is described as:

A young man very different in intelligence from the dullard he pretended to be. For since his uncle had killed the leading men of the state, including his own brother, he decided to leave nothing in his person for the king to fear or in his possessions for him to covet: safety lay in being an object of scorn, now that justice was no more. He therefore deliberately began to act the part of a dull-witted fellow. (Livy 2008: 65)

Indeed, Livy mentions that the young man used the name Brutus "as a shield" to protect him, a guise of stupidity (Livy 2008: 65). Amlóði is also possibly a version of Olaf taken via Irish (*Amhladh*) to Old Norse. Interestingly, however, although Hamlet and Hamnet were both popular English names in sixteenth century, there is no evidence that Amlóði was ever a popular name in Scandinavia (Bevington 2014: 22).

Nonetheless, the name Amleth was known to Latin readers in the thirteenth century through parts three and four of Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* (a text similar to the twelfth-century *Chronicon Lethrense*) (see Bevington 2014: 8—10). Saxo's tale of Amlodi or Amleth has been described as "unapologetically a tale of revenge, derived from ancient Norse legends" (Bevington 2014: 11). The passages of interest are in book three. Here the rule of Jutland is given to brothers Orvendil and Fengi (also Horwendil and Fengo). Fengi kills his brother and marries the widowed Gerutha. Amleth, aware of his uncle's treachery, feigns madness: "to avoid stirring his uncle's suspicions by behaving intelligently, [he] pretended to be an imbecile, acting as if his wits had gone quite astray" (Ellis Davidson 1980: 83). Saxo's description is more extreme than Shakespeare's, and reminiscent of Icelandic coal-biters:

Every day he would stay near his mother's hearth, completely listless and unwashed, and would roll himself on the ground to give his person a coating of filth. His grimy complexion and the refuse smeared over his face grotesquely illustrated his lunacy. Everything he said was the raving of an idiot, everything he did smacked of a deep lethargy. Need I go on? (Ellis Davidson 1980: 84)

Having met his mother and killed a spy, Amleth visits Britain, where he avoids death and provides further proof of his wisdom. Returning to Denmark, he attends a royal feast, where he burns down the hall and kills Fengi. Saxo cannot praise him enough:

What a brave man this Amleth was, worthy of everlasting fame! He wisely fortified himself by an incredible performance of stupidity, submerging under it a brilliant reason transcending mortal faculties; thus his wits provided him with a safe-conduct and kept him alive until he reached the moment for revenging his father. (Ellis Davidson 1980: 90)

François de Belleforest's 1570 *Histoires Tragiques*, available to English readers via an uncredited 1608 translation, took Saxo's narrative and rewrote it in French, adding the ghost, the modern spelling 'Hamlet', and the encroaching melancholy (Bevington 2014: 12-14), although scholars have suggested this alone does not represent a significant departure from Saxo's version (Felce 2016: 111). Belleforest's French translation is commonly given as Shakespeare's inspiration, together with Saxo's *Danorum Regum heroumque Historiae* (Thompson & Taylor 2016: 66—71).

As with all things in literary history, however, things are not that simple. There is the lost *Ur-Hamlet*, which was known in the 1590s, and is a likely source for Shakespeare's work. Possible authors include Thomas Kyd, whose play *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) contains a number of parallels. Meanwhile, David Bevington, in his 2014 history of *Hamlet's* reception history, describes the tale as "a Scandinavian heroic saga" from its earliest days, and points to both the narratives of *Hrólfs saga kraki* and *Ambales Saga* as "not unlike that of Saxo Grammaticus" (2014: vii, 200). The extant Icelandic versions of *Ambales saga* or *Amlóða saga* are all much later than Saxo, and while there was potentially an earlier tenth-century ON poem, no copy has survived. Out of the three manuscript variants of *Amlóða saga* from the late seventeenth century (represented by AM 521a, 4to; AM 521b, 4to; and AM 521c, 4to, while the related *Ambales rímur* can be found in AM 521e, 4to) it is unclear which is oldest (Uecker 2005: xvii). Suggesting causality or literary inspiration between the different sources becomes increasingly problematic, not least as the separate versions each have their own internal irregularities which can only be explained through further lost sources. Ian Felce, in his 2016 discussion of *Ambales saga* and its relation to Saxo, suggested that there were almost two distinct concurrent traditions, Hamlet the Icelander and Hamlet the Dane: "Where Hamlet the Icelander is characterised by a revenge ethic, action, determination, cunning, verbal dexterity, self-reliance, ruthlessness, and feigned lunacy, Hamlet the Dane is characterised by Christianity. Delay, melancholy, contemplation, ontological enquiry, kindness, and descent into genuine madness" (114).

Hamlet in Iceland: Ambales and Brjám

In 1898, Israel Gollancz published his own edition of *Ambales saga* entitled *Hamlet in Iceland*, based on a later version of AM 521c, 4to and complete with an introduction outlining the extent to which previous scholars had tried to find literary precedence for Shakespeare's work in Icelandic tradition. Gollancz's work was part of the wider Northern Library series, which included John Sephton's translation *The Saga of King Olaf Tryggvason* and Frederick York Powell's *The Tale of Thronð of Gate (Færeyinga saga)*, and was dedicated to Iceland's staunchest ex-pat Victorian Eiríkur Magnússon, who proof-read the translation. Gollancz writes that he "soon became keenly interested in diagnosing Iceland's long and painful struggle for a Hamlet saga", finding "something almost pathetic" about the efforts (1898: vii). Notable attempts included Torfæus, who recalled hearing the tale of Amlode as a child, and Arni Magnússon, who after a period of intense searching received a copy of the saga from Jón Thorlaksson in 1705. Both scholars, however, abandoned their search, and Gollancz sought to pick up where they had left off.

In Gollancz's facing-page translation, 'Hamlet the Fool; The Icelandic Saga of Ambales or "Amlóthi Hemiski"', the protagonist Ambales is born to King Salman and Queen Amba of Cimbria. A wastrel from youth, he is called 'Amlode' by the court: "Ambales was all unsightly, much bigger than his brother, would hearken unto none, nor learn aught good; but was most stubborn with all men; he was larger-limbed than other folk; in all his ways he seemed to have but few his like, and the courtiers and the king called him Amlode" (Gollancz 1898: 13). When the kingdom is attacked by Faustinus (no relation to Ambales), the invader and Salman meet in

battle, and Salman is killed. As a test of loyalty to their father, Faustinus invites Ambales and his brother Sigurd to Salman's execution in order to note their reactions:

Faustinus said to the sons of the king: "Now ye shall have a sight of how lustily the king your father meets death." He had them led up to the gallows. And when Sigurd saw his father die so grievously, he wept sorely, and wrapped the skirt of his cloak around his head, but Ambales went boldly near, and stared at the body of his father while he was in his death-throes. Ambales laughed most gleefully at every pang that stirred his father's body, and he became the gayer the more life waned. At this the heathens wondered so much that they were struck silent. (Gollancz 1898: 39)

Sigurd is put to death, but Ambales merely laughs and throws dirt at the corpses. Seemingly harmless, he is allowed to live, as entertainment for the court. Far from withdrawing, he continues his guise of foolishness and depravity:

[H]e seemed the ugliest in gait and look and temper. He kept mostwhile in the kitchen-stead, and fed on whatsoever was there, and he stayed there until he was glutted, and folk deemed he made a huge hole in the dish he tasted; but when the maids said aught to him, he bespattered them with fire and with hot swill, and stinted not till he was sated. His face and head were most uncanny, what with dirt and filth and if a man strove to mend his ways and washed his face and clothes, forthwith he befouled them anew with dirt and filth. (Gollancz 1898: 73—75)

Ambales repeatedly uses tomfoolery to escape death, and even appears to spare the king's life at one point, when a sword unexpectedly comes into his hands. When Faustinus' advisors become suspicious he once more uses the guise of stupidity to throw them off the scent: "The king said to him: 'Where didst thou feel sorest when thou sawest thy father die?' Ambales laughed heartily and answered: 'In the buttocks'" (Gollancz 1898: 81). Of all the king's court, it is only Addómólus who sees through Ambales' ruse: "*grei þetta er fullt flærðar og falskleika, og hylur heipt sína með limskunni*" (The cur is full of guile and falsehood, and hides his anger under wiliness) (Gollancz 1898: 76—77). After overcoming a series of scenarios designed to test his madness, Ambales puts his final plan into action. He uses his guise once more to gain access to Faustinus' court, nail down the revellers, and burn them to death:

[...] but the fool went on with his pranks, so as to turn their minds from the departure of the queen; and when he was nigh bringing his sport to an end, their guest suddenly turned to Gamaliel, and gently carried him in his arms out of the hall, and slammed the door to, and even as he leapt over the threshold, flames burst forth from a bundle which lay there, and the hall was soon all ablaze, and those who would have fled were pinned fast to their seats, and there was great whooping and lamentation, and the hall and all the people therein were burnt. (Gollancz 1898: 169)

Ian Felce excellently reviewed and summarised Gollancz's findings in 2016, so I will only provide a brief sketch here of some of the central ideas. Crucially, three separate readings of the literary history of Hamlet emerge from Gollancz's research. Firstly, there is the suggestion that *Ambales saga* is a "post-medieval invention" compiled from a lost Low German version of the tale, itself copied from Saxo's narrative (Felce 2016: 103). Bjarni Einarsson (1955) and Hermann Pálsson (1952) both hold this view. Secondly, one could posit that there was an ongoing oral tradition of the *Ambales saga* from the tenth or eleventh century, and that this earlier narrative was only put to vellum in the late seventeenth century (Uecker 2005: xvi—xvii; Hansen 1983: 13; Felce 2016: 103). Gollancz's own theory suggests that there was an independent tradition in Iceland, but one that had little bearing on Saxo's narrative, and indeed that Saxo's text influenced the later written versions in Iceland (Felce 2016: 104). Gollancz concurrently believed that there was a native Hamlet tradition in northern Scandinavia, derived from older legendary material, and one which Saxo used significantly in his history: "We have in Saxo's 'Hamlet' a general framework probably derived from Northern mythology (or rather from Northern mythology which had passed through the various stages of the heroic-myth and

pseudo-history)” (1898: xxxviii—xxxix). While all three theories have appeal, Felce advises caution in making any bold statements on literary precedence or influence. “Although it is an alluring notion that such an icon should be native to the shores of the North Atlantic and have enjoyed a long and distinguished career before his arrival on the Shakespearean stage, those critics who look for his origins, even as far as the earliest signs of his appearance in Norse legend, soon discover a textual history shrouded in mystery” (Felce 2016: 101).

One of the most intriguing features of Gollancz’s collection is the sheer number of northern tales with literary parallels. There are similarities in the Jutland folktale *De kloge studenten* (The clever student), and possibly in the lost *Sciöldunga saga* (Gollancz 1898: xxx). Iceland itself has a parallel folktale, the tale of Brjám, which Gollancz noted “substantially agrees with the *Ambales saga* where the saga diverges from Saxo”, and a *Brjáms saga*, found in AM 602e, 4to (1898: lxix). In its folk tale form it was collected by Jón Árnarson and translated into English in 1866 by Magnússon and Powell as ‘The Story of Brjám’ (596—602). Brjám’s tale bears a number of interesting features. Much like Ambales, Amleth, and Hamlet, Brjám feigns madness to avoid death at the hands of the king’s men:

The messengers asked the children where they felt the greatest pain. All the children slapped their breasts, save Brjám, who slapped his behind with a cold and silly smile. Then the king’s men killed all the children that had slapped their breasts, but said there was nothing lost by letting Brjám live, for he was a mad wretch. (Jón Árnarson 1866: 597)

After a number of trials of his supposed foolishness, Brjám eventually gets his vengeance on the king’s court by creeping into the dining hall and secretly nailing all the guests’ clothes to the floor so that they riot and kill one another, mirroring Ambales both in the method of killing and the accompanying dialogue. Thereafter Brjám marries the king’s daughter and becomes ruler of the realm, and “laid aside all his foolish manner”, demonstrating that the foolishness was merely a ruse (Jón Árnarson 1866: 602).

Ambales saga and *Brjáms saga* together certainly make a tempting case for an Icelandic tradition of Hamlet, and Felce adds that *Ambales saga* is far more a cousin of other Icelandic literature than of Saxo’s text, sharing thematic similarities with *Hrólfs saga kraka*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Gísla saga*, and *Grettis saga*, among others (Felce 2016: 105). In the last part of this paper I want to go on to examine another late Icelandic saga with striking similarities to the Amlóða plot.

Karl ómáli and Svarfdæla saga

Composed in the late fourteenth century, *Svarfdæla saga* covers the fortunes of two rival families in the district of Svarfaðardalr; Þorsteinn *svörfuður* or Þorsteinn Þorgnýsson (the saga is unclear) is on one side and local goði Ljótólfr Alreksson is on the other. The saga is found in the Íslenzkt fornrit series, where it is edited from the seventeenth-century AM 161, fol. and supplemented with the fifteenth-century fragment AM 445c, 4to. Due to its damaged state, palimpsestic story-construction, and multiple scribes, the saga has few fans and numerous open critics, Guðbrandur Vigfússon first and foremost. In contemporary scholarship the major studies comprise Robin Waugh’s ‘Misogyny, Women’s Language, and Love-Language’ (1998) and Rebecca Merkelbach’s ‘Approaching the Alterity of the “Post-Classical” Sagas of Icelanders’ (2020). Jónas Kristjánsson may have been the first to point out the parallels between the Hamlet legend and *Svarfdæla saga* in his scathing deconstruction of the latter: “The elements of this powerful story are of course of foreign origin. They deserved a more capable author than the man who put together our revised of *Svarfdæla saga*. They get better treatment in other European Literature – we need only think of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*” (Jónas Kristjánsson 2007: 245). The comparison went no further.

As with *Ambales saga*, *Svarfdæla saga* is not particularly well-known so I will provide a short plot summary of the relevant episode. On Þorsteinn’s arrival in Iceland the saga concentrates on his kin, namely his son Karl inn rauði, nephew Klaufi Snækollsson, and niece Sigríður

Snækollsdóttir. Blood-brothers Karl and Klaufi abduct and forcefully marry Yngvildr Ásgeirsdóttir, the *frilla* (mistress) of Ljótólfr, having previously boasted they could take her. Ljótólfr's forces retaliate but the resulting battle does not have a clear winner. Yngvildr and her brothers successfully plot Klaufi's death, but Klaufi returns from the grave and calls upon Karl to avenge him. Karl unsuccessfully searches for Yngvildr's exiled brothers and tortures the slave Skíði instead. In the following settlement, Yngvildr, who has now married Skíði, breaks up proceedings, ensuring the conflict continues. Karl is killed by Skíði, with the help of Ljótólfr's forces. At this point in the narrative, Karl Karlsson, called *ómáli* (speechless), is born. He is generally considered to be an idiot. Ljótólfr and the sons of Yngvildr are divided on his peaceful nature, and attempt to coax Karl ómáli into revealing himself. Finally, the nature of Karl's revenge becomes apparent. After gathering local farmers to his aid, Karl storms Skíði and Yngvildr's farmstead and beheads all three of their sons. He tortures Yngvildr and repeatedly has her sold into slavery around Scandinavia. When he eventually buys her back the saga implies that she commits suicide. Ljótólfr is found mutilated in his homefield, presumably by the undead Klaufi, and Karl Karlsson has his relative's remains exhumed and burnt to put an end to his hauntings.

The parallels between Karl Karlsson's revenge and that of Ambales may be self-evident, but we will underline them here. I count seven in all, namely: dead fathers; slow starts and feigned idiocy; tests of character; revelation of wiles; the trip abroad; the evils of women; and the glorious return to the court. We will take each in turn.

Firstly, dead fathers. Karl and Ambales both share a childhood defined by the murder of their father by armed forces, in Karl's case the combined forces of Ljótólfr and Skíði. While both have personal grounds to take out Karl inn rauða, doing so essentially hands the dale to Ljótólfr, eliminating all potential rivals.

Secondly, slow starts and feigned idiocy. Chapters 23 and 24 cover the childhood and apparent idiocy of Karl. Like Ambales, he is called *ómáli* from an early age after showing no inclination to speak, “en er hann var nökkurra vetra gamall, þá óxu þá eigi mikit vitsmunir hans; hann mælti ekki orð, ok því var hann kallaðr ómáli”, while by the time he is twelve he still has not spoken, and most people in the land say he is *fífl*, or an idiot (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 192—93). The reader might understand this a shared trait with his paternal grandfather Þorsteinn, who is earlier described as *kynligt* by his own family (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 131). Felce notes the unique nature of Ambales' madness, seemingly a childhood trait rather than a guise: “In Saxo's story, Amlethus adopts his mask of madness as a pragmatic ruse to protect himself from seeming a threat when his uncle usurps the throne. In the saga, however, Ambales appears to grow into a simpleton from the moment he is born [...] It is incredible that Ambales should assume the simpleton character when he is born, physically growing into the brutish disguise that he will drop once he is avenged” (Felce 2016: 104—05). Contrary to Saxo's rendition, Karl likewise appears to take on the characteristics of the dim-witted child before he is old enough to comprehend his status or formulate a plan.

Thirdly, tests of character. In chapter 23, Þorkell Skíðason appears to goad the twelve-year-old Karl by offering him his own axe and a pair of gloves in compensation for his father's death. Karl becomes angry and throws the axe against a stone, shattering the weapon. After conferring with Ljótólfr, Þorkell decides to further test Karl by tricking him into talking with the promise of a bag of silver in order to find out if his idiocy is real or feigned: “*Hann er fífl, ef hann þegir við, en ef hann svarar, þá er hann ekki jafnheimskr sem hann lætr*” (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 194). Karl repeats Þorkell's words back at him and then smashes him across the face with the bag (as in *Gisla saga Surssonar*), grievously wounding him: “*Siðan setti hann sjóðinn á nasir Þorkels svá fast, at brotnuðu tvær ór höfðinu ok stóðu blóðbogar ór andlitinu*” (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 194). It is probably not lost on Ljótólfr, who warned Þorkell against goading Karl ómáli in the first place, that the wounds appear to mirror those given to Skíði by Karl inn rauði.

Fourthly, revelation of wiles. As Ljótólfir suspects, the growing signs of violence in Karl's behaviour are foreshadowing a violent future. In the fashion of other coalbiters, Karl goes from asocial nobody to superhuman young adult, wrestling with a horse and then ominously stroking Þorkell Skíðason's axe. Following Ljótólfir and Þorkell's trials Karl uncharacteristically speaks to a group of men, hiring them for an unspecified future task, offering one hundred ounces of silver for one day's work. He successfully recruits (or cons) his brothers, Þorgrímr, Þorsteinn, and Þorvaldr. When he finally calls on the pre-hired men, they find him dressed in full war-gear, and realise their folly. "*Ok er þeir koma út, sjá þeir, at Karl ver herklæddr; þá skaut þeim skelk í bringu ok vildu nú gjarna hafa engu keypt*" (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 196). Their mistake is even more apparent once they realise Karl's intent, to kill all three of Yngvildr's sons and abduct her as a slave. Karl's wily nature is underlined by the fact that he successfully maintains his reputation as a harmless fool even as his plan comes to fruition.

Fifthly, the trip abroad. Rather than visiting the shores of Britain, Karl sails to Sweden and Norway with Yngvildr captive. Even though his father has certainly been avenged at this point, Karl still adopts a mysterious personality. When he puts Ljótólfir in charge of his farm while he is out of the country, the older man is clearly unsure of his exact plans, and makes a similar misjudgement to Skíði's sons: "*Undarligr maðr þykki mér þú vera, en þó vil ek jata at taka við fé þínu, ok mun þat flestra manna mál, at þú verðir heimskr af þessu*" (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 200).

Sixthly, the evils of women. Misogyny is already woven into Saxo's account of Hamlet, and Ophelia and Gertrude have been problematic characters for over four-hundred years. The later scribe of *Svarfdæla saga* takes this trend to an extreme in the depiction of Yngvildr, on paper the co-author of the deaths of both Klaufi and Karl inn rauða, although she physically assaults neither of them. Karl's chosen punishment is to reduce her to a figure of horror, from the most sought-after figure in the dale to a hysterical wreck. In Norway, Karl meets a stranger dragging a naked woman soaked in her own blood. The stranger says he is considering killing her rather than selling her on at a loss. Karl steps in and buys the woman, and only at this point does the saga mention that it is Yngvildr: "*Karl leiðir hana til skips, ok var þar Yngvildr fagrinn*" (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 204). Skíði and Ljótólfir both forsake Yngvildr and let her take the blame for Karl inn rauði's death. In a uniquely violent saga, the saga author presents fair Yngvildr as the ultimate threat.

Lastly, the return to the court. As with the tales of Ambales and Amleth, the avenger carries out their plot in the villain's own home. In Karl's case this involves taking Skíði and his sons from the fields and bringing them to the farmstead. Karl asks if Yngvildr is there and when is told "*Hon er í rekkju sinni*", he goes in anyway, "*ok bíðr Yngvildi upp standa. Hon stóð upp ok vildi klæðast ok komst eiga í fleira en í serk sinn. Karl tók í hönd henni ok leiddi hana út í tún ok setti niðr einhvers staðar í túninu. Hon var faldlaus ok hafði hárit bæði mikit ok fagrt*" (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 197). Asked if the scars of the torture wounds his father inflicted on Skíði have healed, Yngvildr tells him there is no scar to see. Karl responds by beheading her son Þorkell, before asking once again. All three of her sons are killed in this way, and she answers in a similar fashion each time. The brutality of the scene is heightened by Karl brandishing his sword towards her during the interrogation, and while he does not use physical violence on her, he does use a particularly chauvinist threat, namely wiping his sword, coated with the blood of her offspring, *miðri skyrtu hennar* (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 197–98). The version of the revenge narrative here is far closer to that of *Ambales saga* or Saxo than Belleforest's or Shakespeare's. As Waugh notes, "the old order that enlists Karl is particularly discernible in his demand for physical compensation in the authoritarian manner of "an eye for an eye", and in the way that a father's word is law in the saga" (Waugh 1998: 174-75). There is no introspection, religion, or complex moral philosophy about Karl ómáli's revenge.

Conclusions: Hamlet—a norseman?

The history of the Hamlet legend, as both Gollancz and Felce rightly identified, is too shrouded in obscurity to make salient conclusions. “It is difficult to say anything that is not purely conjectural”, as Felce summarises (2016: 106). Nevertheless, in *Ambales saga*, *Brjáms saga* and *Svarfdæla saga* we can see a level of interest in the legend and something of a native tradition with its own characteristic episodes and tone. Richard Perkins described *Svarfdæla saga* as an interesting work, “put together from the heterogenous elements of half-forgotten traditions and highly-stylized literary motifs” (Perkins 1969: 269). While in comparison to its more famous companions in the *Íslendingasögur* this seems like a back-handed compliment, thinking about *Svarfdæla saga* as part of a wider tradition of legendary material may be the best way to tackle this problematic text. Or to put it another way, the parts might be greater than the sum. Where Karl Karlsson’s tale appears shockingly brutal for a family saga, it fits into the pattern of revenge through feigned idiocy, particularly if we imagine the characters as nobles rather than farmers.

The theory of an Amlóði tradition in Iceland is indeed enticing, and it is not difficult to see why so many scholars have been drawn to it over the years. Looking at the *fornaldarsögur* and the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* as a source for elements of wider European legends takes a step back from national concerns of literary origins and highlights the international nature of medieval literature. With the tale of Amlóða once more on the international stage following Eggers’ film, there will likely be a host of new inquiring scholars undertaking the “long and painful struggle” towards the lost literature of Hamlet. A retelling of the wider context may help avoid generalisations on causality, to quote Horatio, “even while men’s minds are wild, lest more mischance on plots and errors happen” (Thompson & Taylor 2016: 493). *Exeunt*.

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The medieval North in 19th century French literature

Pierre-Brice Stahl, Sorbonne University

In *Génie du Christianisme*, François-René de Chateaubriand introduces the Eddas among “[...] the productions most foreign to our morals, the sacred books of unfaithful nations”¹ (Chateaubriand 1828: 258). This vision of the “medieval North” presents a form of otherness that is in tension with that of a North as a place of poetic evocation found in Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine or Arthur Rimbaud (Briens 2018: 156). However, Chateaubriand’s remarks relate solely to religion. French authors in the 19th century describe the figure of the Nordic barbarian in a positive light, even with affection in the case of Flaubert who describes himself as a barbarian (Flaubert 1980: 123). Olivier Jules Richard specifies about the barbarian that “his worship is strength, and his faith is courage”² (Richard 1883: 16). This notion of courage, which is heir to the discourses of the 17th and 18th centuries, is accompanied by a discourse on chivalry and its code which originate for these authors in the North.

Using the notion of *boreal medievalism* (Stahl 2022), this paper proposes to analyze the reception of the medieval North by 19th century French writers such as François-René Chateaubriand or Leconte de Lisle.

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¹ “[...] les productions les plus étrangères à nos mœurs, les livres sacrés des nations infidèles”.

² “Son culte, c’est : la force, et sa foi : le courage”.

Trouble will find me: Narrative structure and character development in *Króka-Refs saga*

Zuzana Stankovitsová, University of Bergen

The structure of the 14th-century *Króka-Refs saga* has been described as a set of loosely connected episodes. This has been understood in scholarship as resulting from the saga drawing inspiration from multiple other texts, even suggesting that the second part may have once been a separate **Narfa þáttur* that has been incorporated into the saga in its present form. Refr is introduced as a kolbíttr figure, a common character type in saga literature that indicates the upcoming development into a hero. Typically, the protagonist must overcome an obstacle or challenge in which he proves his masculinity. In *Króka-Refs saga*, the masculinity of the protagonist is repeatedly challenged and questioned. This leads to a series of conflicts in which Refr must assert himself, and as a result is also repeatedly forced to relocate, essentially living the life of an outlaw. He gradually travels further towards the periphery, from his birth farm into the uninhabited parts of Greenland, before he eventually settles down and is reintegrated into society in Denmark at the end of the saga.

This paper will examine the connection between the narrative structure, character depiction and motivation in *Króka-Refs saga*. It will argue that the episodic nature reflects the gradual development of the protagonist. This aspect is strengthened through the motif of the journey, as each new location can be understood as a station in Refr's development. At the same time, it explores the character's motivation for action, through which the saga enters into a discourse on honour and masculinity.

What (missing) part of Eyja-fjalla-jökull don't you understand: Truncated compounds in Icelandic saga landscape

Ilya Sverdlov, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies

In 2010, the eruption of Icelandic stratovolcano Eyjafjallajökull wreaked havoc with two things: the European air travel and the worldwide announcers' articulation. The poor journalists had no idea how to pronounce the bloody name, which was not only incomprehensible but also criminally long. They were, in a word, lost – lost in the absence of a translation. Almost without exception, Icelandic place-names are compound nouns, and this particular one has three parts, *Eyja*- “island”, *fjalla*- “mountain”, and *jökull* “glacier”, yielding a transparent, and one assumes, easier to pronounce, ‘Glacier of Island Mountain’. Even so, there is a catch (including this particular place name), because the task facing a translator of an Icelandic compound name is in fact more complex than just faithfully rendering each part. In this paper, I discuss cases of the so-called truncation of multi-stem compound nouns in Old Norse, especially saga place names and some saga personal names, many of which survive from the saga times into Modern Icelandic: they appear to be complete morphologically yet in fact have “missing parts” which, though invisible, are nevertheless there and in need of retrieval from the native speaker's memory for correct understanding of spatial references, or for correct translation into a foreign language, or indeed for correct formation of a name-list for a map, medieval or modern. I also discuss what are the linguistic/cultural triggers for retrieval of these parts, and how can we be sure that there are indeed parts missing (as opposed to simply absent, non-existing), contrasting this case, somewhat peculiar to Icelandic grammar (or mind?), with the more usual cases in other languages where parts of utterances are only half-missing in specific constructions like coordinated ellipsis and depend much less on pure memory for their retrieval. This way one discovers not only the missing parts of names themselves but also a key feature of the grammatical system of Old Norse and Modern Icelandic.

Morality, communal action and pre-Christian religion in the North

Declan Taggart, University of Iceland

Recent research in the Cognitive Science of Religion has argued that religious rituals consolidate cohesion within social groups. Chief among the postulated mechanisms for this process is *costly signalling*, the theory that rituals involving a cost to their performers increase the credibility of those undertaking them and signal their reliability to the rest of their group. In this paper, I survey archaeological and literary sources related to worship at Skedemosse and Gamla Uppsala. I look for evidence that supports or challenges the theory of costly signalling with the aim of enriching modern scholars' understanding of the impact of these sites on related social structures.

My study of Gamla Uppsala mainly takes from Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* and Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. Archaeological evidence is compared with these texts, and in some cases is my main source, such as for possible processions at the site. Regarding Skedemosse, the rich material culture of the area compensates for the lack of documentation. In both cases, the data speaks of dramatic communal rituals involving sacrifices of wealth and of people. Some of these sacrifices even seem to be performative double sacrifices, the public destruction of an object preceding its deposition.

Various forms of credibility building and costly signalling can therefore be isolated at these sites. In the former case, these are related to, for example, group action and the promotion of certain individuals' prestige (even according them a supernatural quality); in the latter, they may be costly financially, in terms of time, and perhaps physically. Who benefits from them? To what extent? How does that affect social organization more broadly? Does Old Norse religion foster cooperation, consciously or otherwise? By responding to these questions, I hope to elucidate the relationship between pro-social behaviour, social structure and Old Norse religion as well as to test the robustness of the theory of costly signalling itself.

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The long road home: Veteran identity and the Varangian guard

Rue Taylor, University of California, Berkeley

The elite mercenaries of the Varangian Guard spawned a lasting legacy of famed warriors and glorious deeds. But what happened to these men upon returning home? Little is known about the fate of Varangian veterans, but they maintain a small yet notable presence in the Old Norse saga corpus. These figures are not particularly historical – their depictions speak less to the actual mercenaries of the 11th century, and more to the mentality of 13th century writers and audiences. They are hand-crafted for their respective sagas to play roles only someone with their background can play; as a result, these characters are primarily informed by contemporary zeitgeist.

Although Varangian veterans in the sagas are diverse in their representations, their one unifying feature is that they are changed men because of their time in the Guard. Accordingly, these characters draw on and reflect perspectives on what a changed man looks like under similar conditions, an angle most visible through the lens of trauma. The Viking Age is defined by the act of Norse traveling internationally to wage war, and the conflicts of the following centuries similarly generated veterans at every turn. However fictionalized the Varangians may be in the sagas, the psychology behind their portrayals is not only based in reality, but reflects a deeply ingrained part of the social landscape. As a result, we can read these characters as vehicles built to explore a very familiar component of the medieval North. The Varangians of the sagas represent one of most extreme forms of this experience, placing them in a powerful narrative position to give voice to a deeply personal emotional journey that must have been as immensely difficult for medieval warriors to articulate as it remains for modern soldiers.

This paper will focus on two Varangian veterans, Þorkell Þjóstarsson of *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* and Gríss Sæmingsson of *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, as case studies on how these characters are utilized in the sagas and what they can tell us about Norse perspectives on trauma and the personal cost of war.

I know you are but what am I? Film studies and genre in *Finnboga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*

Yoav Tirosh, University of Iceland

Finnboga saga, an Icelandic saga that takes place in North Iceland and centers around the calamities of its protagonist Urðarkottr/Finnbogi has often been grouped with the so-called “post-classical *Íslendingasögur*“. This group of texts has been marked with the stigma of a late composition date, fantastical elements, and degrees of apparent fictionality. *Vatnsdæla saga*, on the other hand, has been frequently—especially in the early half of the twentieth century—held to be a classical saga par excellence, an almost historical text with its basis in the political and social realities of tenth and eleventh century Iceland.

Despite these apparent differences, *Finnboga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* share many structural and thematic elements, as well as characters and events. The two sagas describe the struggle between Finnbogi Ásbjarnarson and Jökull Ingimundarson in a considerably different manner. *Finnboga saga* sheds a harsh light on Jökull who kills many of Finnbogi’s loved ones in his refusal to forgive an insult to his honor, whereas *Vatnsdæla saga* is somewhat more forgiving to this quick-tempered man. The two sagas also share an inclination to draw on folklore that, in the case of *Vatnsdæla saga*, has been understated, and in the case of *Finnboga saga*, overstated.

This paper will examine the two sagas through a close analysis of where they sport stylistic and structural similarities and where they differ, with the question of whether or not there is any significant basis for separating them generically. To ensure full appreciation of the variety of narrative and structural styles in the *Íslendingasögur*, this paper offers an approach towards genre that is rooted in the application of film studies, a theoretical avenue that has seldom been explored in Old Norse scholarship up to now, in particular Rick Altman’s “Semantic/Syntactic” approach towards generic groupings.

Bolli's choice: Female inciters and social constraint in thirteenth-century Iceland

Torfi Tulinius, University of Iceland

Bolli Þorleiksson is an important but little researched character in *Laxdæla saga*. Despite his many qualities, he grows up in the shadow of his cousin Kjartan, who outshines every young man in Iceland. While Kjartan is detained in Norway, Bolli asks for the hand of Guðrún in marriage. She is the most remarkable woman of her generation and had her heart set on Kjartan. Bolli tells her that his cousin is about to wed the Norwegian king's sister and proposes. She accepts with reluctance. When Kjartan comes back, he is disappointed, but marries another young woman. The cousins attempt to make the best of the situation, but Guðrún cannot contain herself. The author of the saga deftly allows the passions between Kjartan and Guðrún to simmer in a series of events leading to the former's double humiliation of Guðrún and Bolli and, finally, to Bolli's slaying of his cousin.

Considerable attention has been given to the characters of Guðrún and Kjartan, but little to Bolli. Though not as striking as the other two, he is nevertheless the one on which the drama hinges. He asks for Guðrún's hand, knowing the strong bond between her and Kjartan. During the fatal fight between Kjartan and Guðrún's brothers, Bolli is prompted to decide whether to take the side of his kinsman or his in-laws. His choice will decide the outcome of the battle. The question is whether he really had one.

The aim of this paper is to seek a better understanding of what made Bolli a plausible character for a mid-thirteenth-century audience in Iceland by considering the social and psychological constraints operating on him. The results of this analysis will be discussed in relation to the motif of the *Hetzerin* or female inciter, a salient feature of medieval Icelandic literature, but also in connection to the violent and traumatic times during which the Sagas about early Icelanders emerged. The working hypothesis is that the literary theme of the female inciter stands for often unformulated but active social forces that make it inevitable for young men to engage in violence.

Creating the medieval saga

Úlfar Bragason, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

Sturlunga saga is a compilation of contemporary sagas recounting events supposed to have taken place in Iceland in the late 12th and 13th centuries. The compilation is preserved in two parchment manuscripts dating from the latter half of the 14th century, *Króksfjarðarbók* and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* – neither of which survives complete – and in about 40 copies on paper from later times. Most scholars are of the view that the compilation was originally made around 1300.

According to the so-called *Sturlunga-prologue*, the contemporary sagas are based on oral and written sources. Nevertheless, scholars have not paid much attention to the orality of the contemporary sagas. Most of their energy has been used on the research of the family sagas.

Íslendinga saga by Sturla Þórðarson is the backbone of the *Sturlunga*-compilation. In this paper I will discuss the creation of *Íslendinga saga*. If the compiler's Prologue to *Sturlunga* is to be believed, Sturla based his work on accounts of older people, together with his own experiences, as well as written documents. What is the origin of these accounts? What do they remember? What do they forget? How were they preserved? How reliable are they? Where and when were they written down and why? How was *Íslendinga saga* structured? These are the questions the paper deals with.

“Who will die with him?”: Gender and sacrifice in Arabic accounts of the Rūs

Tonicha M. Upham, Aarhus University

Discussions of Arabic travel and geographical accounts of the Rūs often focus on the idea of funerary sacrifice. This is unsurprising; that a significant number of descriptions of the Rūs in both Arabic and Persian sources choose to describe funerary sacrifice suggests that just as the topic of human sacrifice catches the attention of scholars of the Vikings and the Rūs today, so too was it an interesting aspect of Rūs behaviour in the eyes of a number of Islamicate geographers between the tenth and sixteenth centuries AD. Modern scholarship has particularly focused on the use of a limited selection of predominantly Arabic geographical sources on Rūs human sacrifice, as a means of supplementing the study of Old Norse ritual practices across the Viking diaspora.

Typically, the type of victim considered in accounts of Rūs funerary sacrifice is female and enslaved. Reflecting on an increasing tendency for modern scholarship to consider instances of the sacrifice of enslaved men in various Rūs funerary contexts, this paper takes as its focus a selection of sources which deal with the sacrifice of men. My primary focus is on Ibn Faḍlān's *Risāla* and its later variants, Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-Umam*, and al-Hamaḍānī's *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabari*, drawing on a selection of contexts in which the actual or possible sacrifice of men is discussed.

Beginning with an overview of key methodological and source critical issues affecting the study and use of Islamicate geographical texts on the Rūs, particularly when undertaken from a Viking Studies perspective, my paper offers an overview of work on Rūs sacrifice undertaken as part of my PhD. My research takes multiple approaches to the gendered study of sacrificial victims, dealing with comparative source analysis, semantic analysis, the study of emotion and the foregrounding of the experiences of those enslaved by the Rūs. With reference also to Islamicate geographical texts which discuss the sacrifice of men by the Ṣaqāliba, my paper begins to question the ways in which we approach gender as a factor in the selection of Rūs and Ṣaqāliba sacrificial victims. I seek to offer new angles for gendered approaches to the Islamicate geographical sources and to widen the scope and depth of the aspects of this source material currently utilised by Viking Studies.

Mediums of storytelling in late fifteenth-century Iceland: A study of AM 586 4to and AM 589a-f 4to

Alisa Valpola-Walker, University of Cambridge

This paper will investigate the ‘media-consciousness’ (Glauser, 2010) of a group of late fifteenth-century manuscripts that were written by the same two hands (Loth, 1977) — AM 586 4to and AM 589a-f 4to — which contain a variety of ‘comic-adventurous’ *fornaldarsögur*, Icelandic *riddarasögur*, ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*, and *ævintýr*. These texts drew heavily on popular oral traditions (or ‘folklore’) for much of their content, as is evident in their liberal use of ‘supernatural’ motifs that likely circulated informally outside of official clerical spheres (Mitchell, 1991). They also demonstrate a pronounced interest in the written text as a medium. Their various prologues, epilogues, and other narratorial asides contain a variety of self-conscious references to their own compilation, which sometimes also refer to the oral traditions from which they were (in part) derived (for example the prologue to *Bósa saga* in 586). Further, although the manuscripts were produced by elites, judging by references to their own oral reception (for example the epilogue of *Vilmundar saga*), the texts contained within them were likely received beyond the strictly literate sphere (O’Connor, 2005; Mundal, 2018). These texts were, therefore, directly engaged with oral tradition, both in their creation and transmission. This paper will explore this complex relationship. It will begin by examining how different types of narratives are presented in the texts by looking at the above-mentioned metatextual comments as well as two scenes of oral storytelling (*Egils saga einhenda* in 589e and *Af þrimr kumpánum* in 586). It will then explore how materials which were probably derived from oral tradition are framed and hierarchically brought into contact with clerical and learned matter and then relate that to the way the texts otherwise depict class and construct elite identity. The overarching aims will be to shed some light on how the scribes understood the role of the medium in which they worked as well as their own roles as mediators of popular traditions. As a result, it will examine how the texts they produced might be considered ideological instruments that sustained elite power and negotiated class relations in late fifteenth-century Iceland.

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“Alheil(l)”: Miracles, cures, and constructions of disability in the *byskupa sǫgur*

Natalie M. Van Deusen, University of Alberta

Scholars have only recently begun to examine constructions of impairment and disability in medieval literature and history, utilizing interdisciplinary approaches to deepen our understandings of attitudes towards visible and invisible difference in the Middle Ages. In the field of Old Norse-Icelandic literature and medieval Icelandic history, the most recent work on this subject has been undertaken as part of the interdisciplinary project “Fötlun fyrir tíma fötlunar” (Disability Before Disability, 2017–2020) at the University of Iceland, whose recently published Routledge volume has made a significant contribution to the field. I seek to build upon and extend the boundaries of previous work on physical, mental, and sensory difference in Old Norse society by looking closely at examples from within the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic hagiographic literature, which played an important and ongoing role in the development and production of vernacular “secular” saga literature.

This paper focuses on examples of impairment and disability in the *byskupa sǫgur*, Icelandic hagiographies can be seen as a kind of bridge between translated hagiographic and vernacular “secular” saga literature, and which contain a number of examples of miracles and miraculous events surrounding individuals who were cured of a variety of visible and invisible impairments. I have excerpted and will analyze a selection of these examples in order to demonstrate how miracles lend valuable incidental insight into how disability and difference were constructed in medieval Iceland, particularly through the perspective of the church, and also how they shed light on the lives and experiences of the individuals experiencing disability. I will look closely at a number of examples that highlight the connection between disability, gender, and religion, and which underscore the importance of using these texts as sources for medieval understandings of the intersection of these matters.

I would like to begin with a brief note on terminology. Disability is, of course, a modern term and concept that carries with it modern connotations, and as Christopher Crocker, Yoav Tirosh, and Ármann Jakobsson have argued in their chapter in Hanna Björg Sigurjónsdóttir and James G. Rice’s 2021 volume on disability in medieval Iceland, there are a number of problems with applying a contemporary idea to literature where such a concept did not exist. They conclude that “When seeking to understand disability in the context of medieval Iceland, scholars must avoid projecting their own contemporary assumptions about disability onto the past and recognise that the perception of and values assigned to physical, mental, and sensory differences are subject to a variety of social factors” (23–24). I follow the lead of these scholars by referring to what the sagas show us not as disability, but rather as examples of physical, mental, and sensory difference. I additionally employ the term “madness,”¹ which has been used by a number of historians of the Middle Ages to describe individuals experiencing mental distress.

As with the work undertaken by the contributors to the above-mentioned volume, my research method is grounded in the social model of disability studies, and is therefore informed by the interdisciplinary field of critical disability studies. In the social model, a distinction is made between impairment and disability. Impairment denotes what Colin Barnes describes as “perceived abnormalities of the body and/or mind, whether real or ascribed,” while disability is “the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (qtd. Hammell 2016: 61). As such, an individual is disabled not due to their impairment, but rather because of the boundaries created and imposed by their society. Both impairment and disability are socially constructed, that is,

¹ Much like Aleksandra Pfau in her 2021 book *Medieval Communities and the Mad*, I acknowledge the issues and debates surrounding this term, particularly as shown by Mad Studies scholars and activists. However, like Pfau and others, I find it a useful term for analysis as I attempt to understand the lived experiences of people who are described by themselves and their contemporaries as experiencing mental distress.

they are not inherent to an individual, but experiences informed by shared ideas among a group of people about what it means to be able-bodied. While the social model has come under criticism (by, for example, Tom Shakespeare), it is, nonetheless, still useful for examining difference within a medieval context (Kuuliala 2014: 136).

While the understanding of disability and of neurodiversity specifically is that of the social model, I also consider the moral/religious model of disability, which Karen Whalley Hammell (2016) states “probably represents the oldest and also the most pervasive framework of understanding disability” (55). This model views impairment and disability as a “consequence of possession by evil spirits, as punishment for wrong-doing (such as breaking taboos) or of sin committed either by the individual ... or the parents (particularly the mother)” (55). As Hammell notes, “the theme of bodily restoration as spiritual redemption is essential to Christianity” and there has been a long tradition in Christian thought of demonizing disabled people, who were considered as belonging to the category of those who were ‘unclean’” (55-56). This model arguably underlies the understanding of disability in medieval Christian Iceland, as is especially clear within ideas about causes of and cures for individuals experiencing mental distress.

A particularly important body of source material for our understanding of the experiences and perceptions of mental distress and of madness specifically in medieval Iceland are miracle narratives. Miracles, which Margaret Cormack (2008) defines as “exceptional, unexpected events, usually providing a solution to some basic human problem,” serve the purpose of demonstrating the saintly quality of an individual, often as part of the canonization process (335); they also, as Cormack points out, “serve to advertise the power accessible at a particular shrine” (334). Accordingly, saints’ lives contain the necessary accounts of miracles performed both during the life of the respective individual and after their death, sometimes much later, at a place where they were buried or one of their relics was kept. As Jenni Kuuliala (2014) argues with regard to continental examples, miracle testimonies used for canonization processes are important sources for views of the disabled body. She notes that healing miracles, which, within a Christian context, are found first in the Bible, “were a fundamental miracle type from Late Antiquity onwards” and “played an essential role not only in the interaction with saints, but also in the creation of sainthood” (137). The impaired body is central in these miracles of healing, and, as Kuuliala argues, it is an “integral element” of how the laity in particular understood the power of the saint (136-37).

Miracle narratives from medieval Iceland, both from the sagas of saints and the local bishops’ sagas, contain a plethora of examples of impairment of varying degrees of visibility and severity, allow scholars to gain an understanding of how difference was constructed, understood, and treated in medieval Iceland. Echoing the fundamental biblical miracles performed by Jesus, holy men and women channeled the power of God to “cure” (or, to put it more bluntly, eradicate the condition of) the blind, deaf, leprosy, physically impaired, and mentally troubled. Such examples, whose primary purpose is to demonstrate the sanctity of a saint, local or not, lend important incidental insight into the lives and experiences of individuals with visible and invisible impairments. Equally illuminating is viewing the material from the perspective of *why* people call upon the aid of saints. While depicted as maladies to be cured, and in this way presenting these individuals as mentally, physically, or sensorially different, these miracles sometimes show the great love and care given to such individuals. In either presentation, such examples provide a window into how visible and invisible differences were experienced, understood, and treated in medieval Iceland, and how intricately linked these experiences, understandings, and treatments were to medieval Christian thought.

The *byskupa sögur* contain a large number of examples of individuals who are miraculously cured of a perceived impairment, which help us to understand how difference of mind and body was constructed and understood at that time from a different and more localized perspective than the translated saints’ lives. For example, *Hungrvaka*, a thirteenth-century text that recounts the history of the first five bishops of Skálholt, tells us already in the second chapter that Bishop

Ísleifr Gissurarson, Iceland's first bishop until his death in 1080, healed those who came to him who were "óðir" (mad):

Inn efra hlut ævi Ísleifs byskups bar marga hluti honum til handa, þá er mjök birti gæzku hans fyrir þeim mǫnnum er þat kunna at skynja, af því at margir menn váru þeir óðir færðir honum til handa er heilir gengu frá hans fundi (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 10)

In the latter part of the life of Bishop Ísleifr, many things happened to him, which greatly showed his goodness before those people who knew how to understand it, because many mad folk who were brought to him who went away from him healed

The A-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga* provides a wealth of examples of individuals who are different and then cured of their differences, either visible or invisible. The saga tells us that the twelfth-century Skálholt Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson not only performed miracles of perceived differences, but also that he himself was experienced speech-related issues, which made it difficult for him to teach:

Þorlákr byskup kenndi opt kenningar, ok var þat af því mikil manna-raun at honum var málit stírt ok óhægt, en svá várum orðin sœt ok vel saman sett at ávallt mátti þeim þat í hug koma er hans kenningum hlýddu sem Davíð segir í psaltara, at 'sœtari eru mál þín, Dróttinn, í kverkum,' segir hann, 'heldr en seimr ok hunang í munni mínum' (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 68-69)

Bishop Þorlákr often taught lessons, and that was a great trial because speech was difficult and painful for him, but the words were so sweet and well put together that what David says in the psalter always came into the minds of those who listened to his lessons: that 'sweeter are your utterances in my throat, O Lord,' he says, 'than honey and the honeycomb in my mouth.' (Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 13)

Þorlákr would later be invoked to heal a man at the Þing who "tók enn æsiligt mein...er þegar ók vitit frá honum" ("suffered such a violent pain...which at once bereft him of his wits"). The miracles surrounding Þorlákr relate that he also cured a man who could barely see his own fingers, so that his sight was not only restored but sharp. Bishop Þorlákr was also invoked for a woman who "tók svá æsiliga sótt at af henni tók málit ok vitit" (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 91-92) ("suffered such a violent sickness that her speech and wits left her" [Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 27]) who afterwards "varð...heil" (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 92) ("was healed" [Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 27]).

Þorláks saga A also tells us about an old priest who broke his collar bone and had such pain and swelling that he became disabled – "ófœrr" (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 92)—and did not heal until after he called upon Bishop Þorlákr. Sight and hearing are restored when Bishop Þorlákr's miracles read out loud at the Alþingi:

Þá er Páll byskup lét it fyrsta sinn upp lesa jarteinir Þorláks byskups á alþingi fekk blindr maðr sýn, en daufr maðr heyrn, er þar váru við staddir (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 93)

When Bishop Páll had the miracles of Bishop Þorlákr read aloud at the Althing for the first time, a blind man and a deaf man who were standing by received their sight and hearing (Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 28)

Þorlákr also evidently healed two people—a man named Uni and a maiden—who were both "kreppðr" and "kreppð" (crippled) respectively (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 98; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 31). The very end of the saga tells us of the powers of Þorlákr's shrine, and the various conditions that can be cured when his name is invoked in prayer:

Þar fá blindir sýn, daufir heyrn, krypplingar réttask, líkþráir hrinsask, halter ganga, vitstolnir ok djöfulóðir fá fulla bót, herteknir frjálsask hvar á lǫndum er kalla á hans nafn. Mállausir fá mál, ok alls konar innansóttir ok sjúkleikar batna þar, ok þat er ekki til meins mǫnnum eða fénaða á sjó eða landi at Guð gefr eigi heilsu ok hjálp fyrir árnararöð síns blezaða vinar Þorláks byskups, þegar á hanner heitit (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 99)

The blind receive their sight there, the deaf their hearing, the crippled are made straight, the leprous are cleansed, the lame walk, the insane and demon-possessed receive full cures, captives are freed wherever in the lands they call upon his name. The dumb receive the power of speech, and all kinds of internal illnesses and sicknesses improve there, and there is no injury of humans or cattle by sea or by land that God does not grant healing and help on account of the intercession of his blessed friend Bishop Þorlákr, as soon as he is invoked (Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 32).

Such examples, which only scratch the surface of what the genre of bishops' and saints' sagas have to offer us in terms of examples (and, indeed, what the sagas of Þorlákr alone have to offer, based solely on those examples from the A redaction of the saga), begin to give us a glimpse into what people perceived to be in need of being healed, thus showing what constituted physical, mental, and sensory difference. These examples also underscore the role that religion played in the "healing" process.

The examples from the *byskupa sögur* also reveal an interesting interplay of disability and gender and the gendered way in which physical, mental, and sensory difference can be constructed. This appears to especially be the case with psychological difference, as in examples of miracles and miraculous events that take place surrounding women who are described as being insane, possessed, or accosted by demons, experiences and events that are essentially interchangeable within the texts. Indeed, it is difficult to separate madness and demonic possession in medieval thought; as Claire Trenery and Peregrine Horden (2017) observe in their chapter on "Madness in the Middle Ages" in the *Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health*, "Demonic and humoral explanations for madness were not mutually exclusive, and the precise aetiology of cognitive malfunction was often difficult to discern" (69). Indeed, there is often little distinction made between madness and demonic possession in hagiographic literature. Trenery and Horden write that "[a]s was the case with madness, signs of demonic possession included wild gestures, violence, twisted facial expressions, and shouting. Signs more typical of demoniacs were abnormal powers, convulsions, blaspheming, abhorrence of sacred objects, and aggression. Madness, especially violent madness, could be associated with demonic interference. The language of possession – that victims were 'seized' or 'tormented' by demons – illustrates the violence with which this affliction was connected" (68).

The bishops' sagas already have several such examples, and they usually centre on women. One such example describes certain events involving Guðrún kirkjukerling (old church-lady, fl. c. 1100-50), and is found in *Jóns saga byskups* (the Saga of Bishop Jón) in both the L and H recensions:

Sú var ein á Hólstað á dögum Ketils byskups er Guðrún hét ok var kennd við kirkjuna ok kǫlluð kirkjukerling. Hon unni mikit Guði, en þó gerði hon marga hluti óvitrliga, því at hon var fám monnum lík at undarligum hlutum ok siðum. Þessi kona vakði nætr allar nær í gegnum í kirkju hjá líkum. Hon hafði gort sér hjá hurðu kirkjunnar svá sem altari nokkut eða stall. Þar sté hon á þann stall daga ok nætr ok kallaði þaðan til Guðs ok mælti svá: "Tak þú mik, Krístr, ok skjótt. Tak þú mik. Eigi er þegar nema þegar sé (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: 249-50).

There was a woman called Guðrún at the cathedral of Hólar in the days of Bishop Ketill [1122-45]; she was nick-named after the church and called "the old church-lady." She loved God very much, but nonetheless did many things unwisely, because she was unlike most people with respect to strange habits and customs. This woman held vigil in church with corpses nearly all through the night, every night. By the church door she had made herself something like an altar or pedestal. She stood there on the pedestal day and night and called to God from it with these words: "Take me quickly, Christ, take me! It's not at once unless it's now." (Cormack 1994: 199)

Guðrún's actions are portrayed as bizarre by society, from which she has been marginalized due to her difference. Her story serves to preface a scene involving the anchoress Hildir, who was

awoken by the disturbances caused by Guðrún. The saga relates that Hildr “lauk upp glugga einum er á var sönghilinu, ok leit hon fram í kirkju ókyrrleik mikinn. Henn sýndisk kirkjan öll full af draugum hræðiligum ok skuggum, ok sóttu allar þessar sjónhverfingar at Guðrúnu” (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: 251) (“awoke, and she wanted to know what the disturbance was that she heard in the church. She opened a window in the wainscoting of the choir, and saw a great disturbance in the nave; it seemed to her that the church was completely full of terrifying *draugar* [animated corpses] and shadows, and all these illusions were attacking Guðrún” [Cormack 1994: 199-200]). Hildr then became unable to move or to avert her gaze from the scene, so she called upon her foster-father, Bishop Jón, so that he might free her “af þeirri fjándans freistni, svá sem hann hafði áðr gort” (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Foote 2003: 251) (“from this temptation of the devil, as he had done before” [Cormack (1994), 200]). Bishop Jón appeared immediately and expelled the bad spirits with his staff and his crozier, thus freeing Hildr and Guðrún kirkjukerling both.

A second example of a woman and the saintly bishop who cures her of mental distress occurs in a miracle in which St. Þorlákr heals a woman of demonic possession. The A redaction of *Þorláks saga byskups* (The Saga of Bishop Þorlákr) relates: “Kona varð djöfulöld, en er men helltu smjóri því í munn henni er Þorlákr byskup hafði vígt, varð hon þegar heil” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 96) (“A woman was possessed by the devil, but when men poured into her mouth oil which Bishop Þorlákr had consecrated, she became well at once” [Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013: 31]). Little in the way of detail is provided as to the woman’s condition, other than she was possessed by the devil—there is no explanation of how this affected her mind or her body, and the focus instead is Þorlákr’s ability to heal her and free her of demonic influence, before moving on to listing the next miracle, in which a tree had fallen on a woman and injured her, and Þorlákr cured her in her sleep.

A different example involving Þorlákr, however, is more illuminating and provides greater insight into the connection between demonic possession, gender, and madness. The second book of miracles of St. Þorlákr (*Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur*) includes an account of a miracle performed by Þorlákr for an anchoress at Þingeyrar monastery named Úlfrún. The text relates that Úlfrún suffered from “meinsemi mikla ok matleysi ok hugarválað ok svefnleysi, ok var þat milli Ambrósíusmessu og Agnesarmessu er fastast tók” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 241) (a great pain, lack of food, depression, and insomnia, and that was between the feast days of Sts. Ambrose [7 December] and Agnes [21 January], when fasting occurred). Because of her condition, which included “hugarválað” (depression/melancholy), Úlfrún called upon the aid of St. Þorlákr, after which point she fell asleep: “hét hon á inn sæla Þorlák byskup ok sofnaði eptir þat” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 241). Úlfrún then had a dream in which there were many strangers in her room, one of whom was approaching her bed: “Hon þótisk vera í húsi einu ok mart ókunnra manna, ok sá hon inn ganga ógurligan mann ok illiligan ok at rekkju sinni, ok varð hon hrædd mjök (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 241-42). At this point, she saw Þorlákr, who drove them all out: “Þá sá hon inn koma inn sæla Þorlák byskup í kanúkabúnaði ok mælti: ‘Herfiliga dragizk þér út allir.’ Ok þeir flýðu allir” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 242). However, Úlfrún told Þorlákr that one was still hiding in her room: “Hon þóttisk svara at hann mundi þar leynask” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 242). Þorlákr then seized this last remaining stranger and removed him, after which point Úlfrún awoke, completely healed: “Hon þóttisk svara at hann mundi þar leynask. Þá tók hann þann ok dró út nauðigan, en hon vaknaði heil síðan ok lofaði Guð ok in sæla Þorlák byskup” (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 242). As Sian Grønlie (2017) observes, “[t]his story functions as a miniature psychomachia, describing what is going on inside Úlfrún; the room is an internal space, and the sins that are causing her illness are personified as people” (170). We are to understand that her state of mental unrest is due to sin, and that, as such, it can be remedied by the proper holy individual—namely, St. Þorlákr.

Finally, the D redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups* includes a miracle in which Bishop Guðmundr Arason (1161-1237) is said to have cured a woman experiencing mental distress on Flatey using holy water:

Á þessum tímum síra Guðmundar var kona nökkur norðanlands svá sjúk og sálug, at sakir [þess] varð hún opt at þola bönd ok bardaga. Heitið var á vára frú fyrir henni, ok aðra heilaga menn, ok stóð it sama hennar vanmegn þar til at tigulig júngrú birtist um nótt konu þeirri, er mesta dygð ok manndóm sýndi þeim aumíngja (Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1878, II: 18).

In this time of the Rev. Guðmundr there was a certain woman from the north, so sick and wretched, that because of this she often had to endure bonds and floggings. Our Lady was invoked for her, along with other saints, and her powerlessness remained the same until a noble virgin appeared during the night to that woman, who showed the most virtue and courage to the wretched one.

The individual who dared approach the woman experiencing mental distress was, in fact, the Virgin Mary herself, who had earlier been invoked on the woman's behalf. She states that Guðmundr is the best at blessing water, and that it is for this reason that previous attempts to heal the woman using consecrated water had failed. The saga tells us that, just as the vision had predicted it would be, the holy water consecrated by Guðmundr was effective at curing the woman's sickness. After this, "varð hún í stað alheil, lofandi sinn græðara herra Jesum Christum" (Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1878, II: 19) (she was at once completely healed, praising her saviour Lord Jesus Christ). It is unclear what kind of condition plagues this "certain woman from the north," but the fact that she must be bound and beaten and is described as powerless, and that only the Virgin Mary would dare approach her suggests a condition affecting not only the body, but also the mind, and one that results in her being treated as an outsider by society.

It is also significant that there are so many examples in which the individual experiencing mental distress due to demonic possession was a woman. Margaret Cormack (1994) points out that a "feature found only in women's visions in rescue from demonic attack. [Women] are all asleep or in a trance when rescued from the machinations of the devil by saints" (196). In contrast, men "in full possession of their senses" when attacked by demons (196). There is one exception within the corpus of hagiographic literature, Cormack points out – a man in chapter 14 of *Ceciliu saga meyjar*. As Cormack observes, "[t]his is not to say that men are not attacked by demons, nor do these examples exhaust the attacks on women. The victims of the remaining attacks, however, are awake, and they are predominantly male" (196). In this connection, it is useful to take into consideration medieval epistemological ideas about women's bodies and their perceived vulnerability to spiritual possession. I am particularly interested in Nancy Caciola's arguments in her 2003 monograph *Discerning Spirits*, in which she posits that

female nature was understood as more malleable and impressionable than male. This notion led to the perception that women were inherently susceptible to subtle outside influences, and thus to the loss of individual identity implied in spirit possession states. After the twelfth century, the ever widening scope of medical theories about the four humors and their role in regulating the human organism led to learned explorations of how different kinds of bodies might be more or less vulnerable to spiritual invasion. The female humoral balance, it was said, was characterized by a greater physical 'openness' or 'porosity,' which permitted freer entrance to possessing spirits. In short, the female body was easier for spirits to enter and control than the male (25).

Caciola's observations are, I believe, key to helping us understand the peculiar connection between demons, madness, and women in medieval Icelandic religious texts, and to reading instances of women who experience madness due to demonic possession in the *byskupa sögur*, whose stories may be interpreted using the social and religious models of disability studies.

A close reading and analysis of the examples discussed in this paper is important for a number of reasons, and has implications for what considerations—such as religion and gender—must be taken when examining mental difference in medieval Icelandic literature more generally, and what might account for how physical, mental, and sensory difference are in the larger saga corpus. Indeed, it speaks more generally to the importance of examining hagiographic narratives alongside their “secular” counterparts, especially the *Íslendingasögur*. Siân Grønlie (2017) recently argued for the importance of the lives of saints in the development of vernacular saga literature and for its continued influence on the sagas throughout the Middle Ages. In her *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature* from 2017, Grønlie rejects the “model of linear development from saint’s life to saga” (31) and illustrates “the ways in which sagas engaged creatively with saints’ lives over the medieval period” (36) by adopting, challenging, and interfering with hagiographic motifs, character types, and narrative structures. Indeed, the sagas of saints and bishops were produced in the same scriptoria and sometimes by the same scribes as the Sagas of Icelanders, and probably for overlapping audiences (23). Moreover, as I hope to have shown, instances of physical, mental, and sensory difference in medieval Iceland cannot be considered outside of their Christian religious context, which had major implications for the perceived causes of and remedies for visible and invisible impairments. Accordingly, instances of impairment and disability in vernacular saga literature cannot be viewed in isolation of their depictions and constructions in hagiography or the biblical models and medieval Christian rhetoric on which they were based.

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Inspiration Between Two Worlds

Bob Oscar Benjamin van Strijen

The parallels between Óðinn hanging from the tree in the Old Norse poem *Hávamál* and Christ hanging from the cross in Christian mythology have been the subject of scholarly discussion for at least 125 years, but may have been best summarized in Annette Lassen's article *The God on the Tree*: "Óðinn and Christ are both 1) hung on wood or a tree; 2) wounded by a spear; 3) sacrificed to themselves [...]; 4) they got no food or drink; 5) Óðinn hung for nine nights, while Christ died in the ninth hour; and 6) they both look down at the end of their hanging" (Lassen 2009: 232), although Mikael Males rightfully noted that "one might also add 7): they both willed their crucifixion" and, if stanza 145 is taken into consideration, that "[t]he verb *rísa upp* and the noun *upprisa* are the two words commonly used for Christ's resurrection", which might add 8) they both *rísa upp* (Males 2013: 108).

Two arguments have been presented for these parallels to have been Christian influences. Sophus Bugge, followed by several others, suggested that Vikings, upon their stay in the British Isles in the 8th and 9th century, combined medieval Christian teachings with their own pagan ideas of a hanging god, while more recently Lassen believes these stanzas from *Hávamál* to have been composed in an (Icelandic) Christian context and intended to portray an inverted crucifixion, "consistent with the doctrine of paganism as misunderstood or inverted Christian doctrine" (Lassen 2009: 241), and she concludes that this is "serving to show that the Old Norse pagans knew the concept of a sacrificed god on a tree" but also "that the idea of Óðinn on the tree is mere heathen misunderstanding of a fundamental Christian truth" (ibid: 244). Mikael Males points out, however, that "Christian interpretation and composition is still argued by only a minority of scholars and has been contested in recent years" (Males 2013: 108). With her argument, Lassen more or less circumvented these contesters, who, like Jens Peter Schjødt, argue that "the myth of Óðinn's self-hanging must be unambiguously understood as the expression of a pagan thought complex" (Schjødt 2008: 177). Noting how a Christian understanding of the texts has been strongly opposed while other strict models fail to convince, Males concludes that "the last sixty years of research [...] indicate that some alternative way forward may have to be sought" (Males 2013: 126).

In this paper I will present such an alternative. Following an assessment of the extant archaeological and historical evidence for a cult of Wodan/Óðinn, juxtaposed with the spread of Christianity and Christendom in the first half of the first millennium, this paper considers the possibility that the idea of Óðinn's self-sacrifice on the tree, and perhaps his entire cult, originated in ancient or Early Medieval Christianity and the concurrent figure of Christ of Late Antiquity. The paper contains the findings of my so-far unpublished thesis from 2016, but may be seen as providing context in support of Frog's recent papers on 'Creolized Christianity in Migration Period Europe' (Frog 2020, 2021). While this hypothesis is necessarily impossible to prove, this paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship questioning outdated grand narratives of a homogenous Germanic past. In particular, it aims for a re-evaluation of the term 'pre-Christian' and the artificial divide between Christianity and 'paganism' in northern Europe during and following the end of the Roman empire.

Evidence for a cult of Wodan/ Óðinn

Evidence for the existence of a cult of Wodan or Óðinn is scarce. In fact, for the early Middle Ages, it is practically non-existent. The most evidence we find is in the form of theophoric place-names. The, to my knowledge, latest evaluation of Scandinavian place-names with a Wodan/Óðinn-element is by Stefan Brink (Brink 2007: 112-113 & 129-131). The problem with these, however, is that the earliest attestation dates from 988 CE, for Odense (Othenesuuigensem), Denmark (ibid: 131). How much older than the earliest record such a place-name is, will remain a mystery. Luckily, we have some older attestations of the name in the runic record. Óðinn being known as the god of the runes, one would expect there to be a lot

of material to work with. There are, however, only three runic inscriptions bearing his name (or a variant of it): one from Bryggen dated to late 12th-century, one on the Ribe skull fragment (DR EM85) dated to the 720s, and, possibly the earliest, on the Nordendorf I fibula which could date between ca. 550CE and the 8th century. These last two inscriptions were found on items easily transportable, so their final locations tell us little to nothing. The earliest date for direct evidence of Wodan/Óðinn, however, can be tentatively put at 550CE.

Moving briefly to possible iconographical evidence, Karl Hauck has argued that the central figure portrayed on most of the bracteates, and particularly on the C-bracteates, is a representation of Óðinn, an identification resting on 1) the iconographic analysis of the human profile, 2) the kinds of animals on the A- and C-bracteates, and 3) the characterisation of Odin as a healer (f.ex. Hauck 1986; summarized in Starkey 1999: 376). Although Kathryn Starkey, in her article *Imagining an Early Odin: Gold Bracteates as Visual Evidence*, quite convincingly refutes these arguments, she does not go as far as to say none of the bracteates depict Odin (Starkey 1999). We can, for the sake of the argument, assume that Hauck was right, and focus on the dating and spread of these bracteates. Going by internal dating, based on various styles of ornamentation, as well as external chronology, a few things are of interest. First, which will show to be important later on, that the bracteates in Scandinavia belong to the fifth century Migration Period or Early Germanic Iron Age, and that they are thought to have been modelled after fourth-century imperial medallions of which a number has been found in Denmark and Norway. Second, that the datable grave finds of bracteates of Scandinavian make or tradition in England and the continent show that most finds belong to the middle of the 6th century, with possibly only a few earlier—not by much—and very few later. I will also return to this point later.

The oldest attestations for place-names with a Woden-element in the British Isles are earlier than those in Scandinavia, although these should be used with care. Of the approximately ten place-names, the earliest is *Woddesbeorge*, current Wednesbury, mentioned in the annal of 592CE in one of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. However, a date for the earliest manuscript is unknown, and the oldest extant manuscript is dated to around 900CE. As the latest entry in this manuscript is for 891CE, this may be held as the first certain date for the name *Woddesbeorge*. Again, how much older than this earliest record such a place-name is, will remain a mystery. Still, we can tentatively hold 592 CE as an earlier date in the British Isles.

There is another connection between Britain and Woden, however, with Woden in the role of royal progenitor. Bede is the earliest extant source to mention Woden as royal ancestor to the Anglo-Saxon kings. According to Bede, the first leaders of the Angles were the brothers Hengist and Horsa, who “[e]rant autem filii Uictgisli, /cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit”¹ (Colgrave & Mynors 1969: 50). Invaluable work on the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies is found in Kenneth Sisam’s article *Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies*, as well as the critical examination and expansion of this work in David N. Dumville’s *The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists*. The oldest extant manuscript dates to about 737CE, with the original probably having been written in 731CE. Additionally, four manuscripts still contain royal genealogies and regnal lists of the Anglo-Saxon kings. An original manuscript containing the Anglian royal genealogy has been postulated to have been compiled during the reign of Offa (757-796) (Dumville 1976, 38). This places the first certain link between Woden and the Anglo-Saxon kings around the middle of the 8th century. However, Dumville also makes the argument that genealogy can be employed to express a political situation or fulfil a propagandist function. Richard North picks up on this notion, and suggests that “[t]he ideology that gave Woden his dynastic role would have flourished at a time after 604 and before c. 650, and probably not long

¹ “They were the sons of Wihtgisli, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claim their descent” (Colgrave & Mynors 1969: 51)

after a prominent Anglian king, by dying in battle, became the first ‘son’ of Woden to be entered into the written record” (North 1997: 114).

I want to highlight here that explicit evidence for the existence of a cult of Woden in England since the Anglo-Saxon invasion of 410CE is non-existent. The earliest evidence we find would be bracteates that may or may not depict him, starting around 500CE, followed by a place-name supposedly from 592 but first recorded in 891CE. For a deity that is supposedly supreme among the war bands of the Germanic tribes (see below), this is remarkably scarce.

The problem of Mercury

Despite lack of Germanic evidence for the existence of a cult of Wodan/Óðinn before the fifth (or perhaps even the sixth) century, as presented above, many scholars maintain ancient roots. For example, disregarding critical scholarship on various individual sources, Schjødtt reiterated that “taken together, they strongly indicate that Óðinn, although not exactly the same as the god that we know from the Nordic sources, has roots reaching far back in time, probably as early as the Indo-European era (at least 3000 BC)” (Schjødtt 2019: 67). This idea hinges on two arguments: a shared semantic centre of Wodan/Óðinn and the Indian god Varuna, and the equation of Wodan/Óðinn and the Roman god Mercury. Disregarding the Dumézilian argument of imagined Indo-European roots here, I will only argue against the latter claim. This equation of Mercury and Wodan/Óðinn is done in three ways: the names of the days of the week—particularly Wednesday; a reading of *interpretation romana*; and a number of medieval Latin sources.

The first argument goes that Germanic names for the days of the week were ‘translations’ of the Roman days, and that this would have happened around the 4th century CE. However, Philip Shaw’s thorough but mostly overlooked analysis in *The origins of the theophoric week in the Germanic languages* suggests that “the fourth-century dating of the transfer cannot be proven, and that an alternative date and cultural milieu in the seventh and eighth centuries AD could provide a plausible alternative model.” (Shaw 2007: 387) Without going too much into the article here, we can follow Shaw’s conclusions that 1) “[w]e cannot, on linguistic grounds, exclude the possibility that the borrowing took place later than [the period of the late Roman empire]” (ibid: 393); 2) that “[i]t is worth considering, therefore, an alternative model for the transference of the names of the days of the week into the Germanic languages” (ibid: 395); and 3) that “[t]he ultimate origins of the Germanic planetary week must, as Fell suggests, lie in interactions between Christians and pagans” (ibid: 400).

The reading of *interpretation romana* maintains that Tacitus’ famous description of Germanic deities, *Deorum maxime Mercurium colunt*, should be understood to signify Wodan/Óðinn. Of course, it has already been shown by Karl Helm that this was a historical trope copied from Herodotus, and/or Caesar’s *Commentarii de bello gallico* (Helm 1946: 7-12). The fact that Caesar was talking about Celts, and his description of religion among the Germani mentions worship of the sun, moon, and fire, does nothing to secure the reliability of such ‘historical’ sources. Either way, the argument that the foremost deity interpreted by Tacitus as a ‘Mercury-type’ must be Wodan/Óðinn is a projection of the latter’s supremacy in Old Norse material onto a Germanic society several centuries older. This becomes a circular argument and cannot be leading.

The earliest of the extant medieval Latin sources to equate Mercury and Wodan is *Vita sancti Columbani* by Jonas of Bobbio, dated to approximately 642CE. Saint Columbanus (543-615), who was spreading the Christian faith among the Suebians, in one account asked what they were doing with a large drinking vessel. The response was “*Illi aiunt se Deo suo Vodano nomine, quem Mercurium, ut alii aiunt, autumant, velle litare*”, which Shaw translates into “They say that they want to sacrifice to their god, called Wodan, whom, as others say, they call Mercurius” (Shaw 2002: 120). The most straightforward reading of this passage, Shaw analyses, “is that Jonas understood the Suebi to have a deity whom they called both Wodan and Mercurius” (ibid). He further explains it is unlikely that Jonas had Tacitus in mind, as *Germania* was little known in

the Middle Ages (ibid: 121) and that the Roman Mercurius would not be an obvious choice for an equivalent of a Wodan concerned with war and tribal identity (ibid). Instead, Shaw suggests that after their conversion, sometime in the 6th century, the Langobard elite turned to a patron saint of distinctly martial character, which they found in the Egyptian saint Mercurius (ibid: 122). The equation of Wodan and Mercurius in *Vita sancti Columbani* and subsequent medieval texts such as Paulus Diaconus *Historia Langobardorum* should then be seen in this light rather than as a continuation of the classical *interpretatio romana*. Conversely, the reading of this *interpretatio* rejected above becomes weaker still.

The rise of Christianity in the Western Roman Empire

Throughout the literature on Old Norse mythology and religion, its being pre-Christian is emphasized. Rarely, however, is 'pre-Christian' defined or contextualized, which may lead to confusing results. The trend of the last decades to speak of Old Norse 'systems of belief' rather than a religion takes in consideration the vast distances in space and time, yet it is unclear if this is kept in mind when Christianity and the Christianization of the North are discussed. It seems that most scholars consider 'Christianization' to be a fairly strict, albeit sometimes political, process in which individuals, groups, or entire nations, become Christian; they speak, for example, of the Christianization of Iceland in 999/1000 when the country became legally Christian during the *Alþingi*. Similarly, the Christianization of Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden has mostly been seen in light of the missions of Willibrord, Boniface, and Ansgar. This goes beyond the fact that prior to the Althing of 999/1000 a part of the population of Iceland was already Christian, or had at the very least been in touch with Christianity. It is, therefore, not unthinkable that those other countries had similarly been in contact with Christianity.

It is uncertain when exactly Christianity made its way to Rome: the earliest sources are rare, inconsistent, and often untrustworthy. However, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, dated to around 58 CE, suggests the existence of a Christian community in the city. Furthermore, Paul and Peter are considered to have been martyred during Nero's rule: blaming the Great Fire of Rome of 64 CE on the Christians, Nero initiated the first persecution against them. In the Roman Catholic tradition, Peter was considered the first pope and bishop of Rome, having been ordained by Jesus around 30 CE; although scholars question the extent of his role. Nevertheless, during the first century of the common era, Christianity started growing both in Rome and throughout the empire, despite occasional religious persecution. By 303 CE, a number of edicts again demanded that Christians comply with traditional Roman religious practices and revoked their previous legal rights, leading to a new period of persecutions. In 306 CE, Constantine was proclaimed emperor in Britain, and in the following years he also gained Gaul and Spain, before leading his army towards Rome. During this journey he reportedly had his famous vision of the Cross, and his siding with the Christian god seemed to win him the battle of the Milvian Bridge (Fletcher 1997, 19). Although, like many others in the early church, Constantine only chose to be baptized on his deathbed, he played an enormous role in the history of early Christianity. He did not decree Christianity the religion of the state, but a few months after his victory, in 313, he ended the persecution of the Christians with the Edict of Milan. In 325 he gathered a convention of Christian bishops, a meeting now known as the First Council of Nicaea, at which a consensus was sought between the various factions of Christendom. Here, the nature of the Son of God and his relationship to God the Father were discussed and decided on, a creed was constructed, and canon law was promulgated. All but one of Constantine's successors adhered to Christianity as well, raising it further out of the underground. In 380, finally, emperor Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica, or *cunctos populos*, turning the Roman population to Nicean Christianity. Bestowing the title of Catholic Christian on those who followed the doctrine of "one Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in an equal Majesty and a holy Trinity", he declared the others to be punished both by Divine and by earthly measures (Ehler & Morrall 1967: 7). By this time, however, the Gothic War had started, ushering in the collapse of the Western Roman Empire

under, among other things, the increasing number of Goth migrants, as well as the Sack of Rome in 410 by the Visigoths under Alaric (Heather 1996, 146-8).

The Christian expansion to the north

The Church of Milan was supposedly founded in the first century, a bishopric was established in Lyon by 177 CE, and the first Christian communities in Britain probably emerged around the same time. Approximately halfway through the third century, Augusta Treverorum—modern day Trier—became the seat of an archbishopric. Ninety-five miles north, in Colonia Agrippina—modern day Cologne—lay the northernmost continental bishopric of the Late Antiquity, with the earliest confirmed date of 313. Other dioceses in the third and fourth century lay in Tongern (Belgium); Augsburg, Mainz and Speyer (Germany); and Lorch (Austria). In Bonn, some fifteen miles south of Cologne, a church has initially been dated to just before 400 CE (Keller 2003: 419), although this has been revised to the mid sixth century (ibid: 424). However, it seems that there was indeed a Roman burial ground with Christian graves, dating to the late third century (ibid: 423). Some 50 miles east of Lorch lies Mautern an der Donau, the place of the Roman fort *Favianis*, where the missionary Severinus of Noricum died in 482 after having established monasteries there and at Passau, roughly 50 miles northwest of Lorch.

The places listed here were all part of or near to the Roman *limes Germanicus* and *limes Norici*, the modern name for the defensive lines of the Roman Empire against the Germanic *barbaricum*. Roughly following the flow of the Rhine and the Danube, the *limites* consisted of series of fortifications and watchtowers from *Lugdunum Batavorum* (present-day Katwijk, Netherlands) to *Castra Regina* (Regensburg, Germany) and on towards the Black Sea. In an empire that was increasingly tolerant and later favorable towards Christians, this religion thrived and spread far and wide. The effect on the remaining population, however, is uncertain. In a study on the symbol of the cross on brooches and pendants as part of female dress, Volker Bierbrauer observed that, “[a]mong the Franks, manifestations of personal Christian belief are found on a significant scale only from the middle of the seventh century onward.”, which was connected to surviving late Roman Christianity of the fifth and sixth century (Bierbrauer 2003: 437). Around the Alamans in northern Switzerland, Roman Christianity similarly stayed active, but the Bavarians and the rest of the Alamans were converted through missions from the aforementioned bishoprics as well as the Luxeuil mission from 590 onwards (ibid., 437-9).

As we can see in the assessment above, the Late Antique and early medieval Church was, almost literally, pushing the boundaries of the Roman Empire. With at least partially Christian populations, and the churches and bishoprics that came with them, the towns and fortifications along the *limes* attest to a wide spread of Christianity, usually not considered in the discussion of the supposedly ‘urban’ Christian cult versus the religions of the rural ‘heath’.

These *limites* were not a strict partition. Indeed, “[t]he phenomenon of ‘seepage’ at the peripheries of some dominant cultural system such as the Persian, Roman, Chinese or Islamic empires is one that is well known to historians and anthropologists”, as Richard Fletcher writes in his *The Barbarian Conversion* (Fletcher 1997: 229), although he only speaks of the results seen around the late antique Christian communities in Ethiopia, Arabia, Georgia, Dacia, Scotland and Ireland. Other scholarship also shows familiarity with the concept, as can be seen in *The Cross goes North*: “Further north in the fifth and sixth centuries, Germanic peoples not immediately threatened by the Christian empire, but acutely aware of it, expressed their view on the future of Europe on their brooches” (Carver 2003: 7). But this happens even earlier: Morten Axboe and Anne Kromann reflect that Scandinavian archaeologists know that the Germanic peoples and the Romans had been neighbours for over 400 years by the beginning of the Migration Period, but that they restrict themselves to the material influences of the artefactual record, which appears “as early as the 1st century A.D.” (Axboe & Kromann 1992: 271). The presence of Roman artifacts throughout Scandinavia has been widely attest, though mostly ignored in the discussion of mythology and religion. Louise Ströbeck, in her article *The Roman Iron Age in perspectives and perceptions*, has, through an analysis of what she aptly called

‘stuff’, illuminated “the people that previously have been invisible or found in the margins in studies of Roman Iron Age society” (Ströbeck 2006: 118). Additionally, she draws attention to a map by Lone Hvass, which shows the Roman trading routes in northern Europe around 200 CE (Hvass 1980:39). Following the North Sea coast, or the Weser, Elbe, Oder, or Vistula, these routes reached as far north as the Boknafjord and Oslofjord in Norway, or Bråviken in Sweden, as well as down the Kattegat to Sjælland and beyond. The lines and arrows showing these routes, Ströbeck summarizes, “mark the cultural contacts between members of the aristocracy, in terms of a Scandinavian import of prestige goods” (ibid., 117). These are, presumably, the same routes as those by which the imperial coins and medallions that modeled for the bracteates made their way into Scandinavia.

Inspiration

In summary, depending on your position on the Mercury of Tacitus, the evidence for an early cult of Wodan/Óðinn is late. So late, in fact, that it takes almost two centuries from the migration into the British Isles by Germanic warrior tribes that would supposedly worship this deity, before the first traces show up. Furthermore, later equations of Wodan/Óðinn and ‘Mercury’ seemed to have happened in a learned Christian context.

What this leaves us with is inspiration for a new perspective. Or rather, with a more open perspective to older insights. The idea that Óðinn was a late addition to the Nordic gods is hardly new (f.ex. Helm 1946). In an article arguing for ‘the Acceptance of Óðinn as Preparation for the Acceptance of God’, Terry Gunnell suggests almost parenthetically, that “[by] the time the cult of Óðinn was taken up by rulers, it may have already started adopting Christian rhythms (consciously or unconsciously)” (Gunnell 2013: 170). Gabriel Turville-Petre, in a chapter on Óðinn, said that “[i]f the myth of the hanging Óðinn did not derive from the legend of the dying Christ, the two scenes resembled each other so closely that they came to be confused in popular tradition” (Turville-Petre 1964: 43). As I proposed in my thesis, and as Frog delivered more eloquently in his recent Austmarr paper, it is quite possible that aspects of Óðinn, if not his entire cult, followed from interaction between Germanic tribes and Roman Christians. Not in a top-down conversion fashion, or a nation Christianizing overnight sort of way, but through the ‘seepage’ happening along the *limites*, and deep into the ‘heathen’ areas through the long trade routes and Germanic legionaries. It is not hard to envision that the image of Christ on the cross left an impression on those who were introduced to it. Although a suffering Christ may not appeal to a warrior elite, his resurrection after a few days hanging on a tree wounded by a spear may have interested them. Factions of the church, for example the Arian branch, supported a more warrior-like Christ. He has of course long been seen as the Lord, and a God of War, as in the account of Constantine and the Sign of the Cross. The lack of drink and food may be negligible, but it would be interesting to investigate a possible relation between Óðinn’s connection with wine and the use of the ‘blood of Christ’ during Mass, or with the transmutation of water into wine. Perhaps Óðinn’s relation with poetry may similarly be seen in light of the Mass. Óðinn’s *heiti* with a ‘father’ element can easily be understood in a Christian context; both those related to war, as with Constantine, or those related to the fallen. Raising of the dead and healing of the wounded may have also appealed to Germanic peoples.

Any of these examples may have appealed to a Germanic audience, and could have inspired them to develop them further. In the centuries in which they were able to do so without clerical guidance, this may have resulted in a wide variety of beliefs that could stray far from anything recognizable as Christian. As such, I would suggest they can be understood as the expression of a pagan thought complex; although perhaps not as unambiguous as some would like.

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The Lady Aud, a lifelike word-picture: Reinventing the foremother figure in 19th-century Icelandic folklore and Victorian travelogues

Sofie Vanherpen, Independent scholar, Ghent University

In the afternoon my host accompanies me across the sands, to another remarkable place of sepulture. Auda the Rich, widow of Olaf the White, king of Dublin, settled at Hvamm a thousand years ago. [...] She died; and her body being placed with many valuables in a ship, she was interred with it, as she requested, on the sands, below high-water mark. For, having been baptized a Christian, she would not let so much as even her remains lie in a land profaned by idolatry. [...] Great must have been the rejoicing among the spirits of darkness when her light was quenched. (Metcalf 1861: 280–281)

In the summer of 1860, the Reverend Frederick Metcalfe (1815–1885), an accomplished Scandinavian scholar and most fervent of Victorian Icelandophiles, undertook a two-month journey to Iceland. He chronicled his experiences in *The Oxonian in Iceland; or, Notes of travel in that island in the summer of 1860, with glances at Icelandic folk-lore and sagas*, which was published the following year. In the quote above, he recalls his visit to Hvammur in West Iceland, where he visits the tomb of the Christian Auda. This “Auda the Rich” is none other than the foremother and *landnámskona* [female settler] Unnr *djúpúðga* [of a profound mind], also known in literature as Auðr *djúpauðga* [the deeply wealthy]. As a memory figure in medieval literature, Unnr, the heathen foremother from *Laxdæla saga*, is slightly different from Auðr, the Christian settler woman from *Landnámabók*. However, later texts merge the heathen foremother into the Christian founding mother such that the distinction between the two becomes blurred. This holds also true for Metcalfe’s depiction of the famous foremother.

Like many of his contemporaries, Metcalfe was drawn to Iceland for its literature, as apparent from the title of his work. Moreover, he takes an interest in the encounter between the literature of the Middle Ages—the sagas, and popular literature—the folktales, a genre long ignored by Old Norse scholars. In the preface to his travelogue, he reveals that the referenced legends are collected “from the mouths of the natives; partly are taken from a little work called ‘*Íslenzk Æfintýri*,’ by Messrs. Grimsen and Arnasen, published at Reykjavik; partly are due to Professor Maurer’s valuable work ‘*Isländische Volkssagen der Gegenwart*,’ Leipzig, 1860” (Metcalf 1861: vii). Early in the chapter on his visit to the Hvammur saga-stead, Metcalfe contrasts Auðr’s Christian burial to that of the heathen Gullbrá: “On the introduction of Christianity here, one old lady Gull-brár, stuck to the gods of her youth, and after death, by her own request, she was buried in that dark gill in Skeggidal ‘where the sun never shines’ [...]” (Metcalf 1861: 279). In this way, the foremother figure from Old Norse-Icelandic literature becomes cross-pollinated with nineteenth-century Victorian responses to these medieval texts as well as with local lore. Travelogues such as Metcalfe’s therefore give us a unique insight into how local folklore contributed in shaping the image of the foremother figure in Iceland of the nineteenth century, the period when these folktales were collected and published for the first time.

In the same year as Metcalfe was traveling across Iceland, 1860, the Reverend Jón Porleifsson (1825–1860) recorded the Icelandic folktale *Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi*, which was collected by Jón Árnason (1819–1888) and published two years later, in 1862, in his *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* [Icelandic folktales and fairy tales]. Though not apparent from its title, the first part of the tale centers on the struggle between the foremother figure Auðr and a young woman named Gullbrá. As the scholar Paul Hermann remarked in *Zweite Reise Quer Durch Island*, “[d]as Bild, das die Volkssage von dieser grossartigen Frau [i.e. Auðr] entwirft, entspricht durchaus der alten Überlieferung, bringt aber insofar neue Züge, als sie ihr eine andere Frauengestalt, die Gullbrá, und den Skeggi gegenüberstellt” [the picture, that the folktale paints of this magnificent woman [i.e. Auðr], corresponds entirely with the old tradition, but brings new features insofar as when the folktale confronts her with another female figure, Gullbrá, and with Skeggi] (Hermann 1910: 155).

This paper explores the different word-pictures of the foremother figure Unnr *djúpúðga* / Auðr *djúpauðga* in nineteenth-century Icelandic folklore and Victorian travelogues, with recourse to the medieval literary figure preserved in *Laxdæla saga* and *Landnámabók*.

1. The genesis of the foremother figure

The oldest text to mention Auðr is *Íslendingabók* [Book of Icelanders]. Written between 1120 and 1133 by Ari Þorgilsson (1068–1148), Auðr is introduced as the only female out of four most prominent settlers of Iceland (*Íslendingabók* 6). Ari designates her as the founding mother of the Breiðafjörður area in western Iceland as well as the foremother, not only of himself, but also of the prominent bishop of Skalhólt, Þorlákur Runólfsson (1086–1133).

Auðr landnámskona, es byggði vestr í Breiðafirði í Hvammi, vas móðir Þorsteins ens rauða, fœður Óleifs feilans, fœður Þórðar gellis, fœður Þórhildar rjúpu, móður Þórðar hesthœfða, fœður Karlsefnis, fœður Snorra, fœður Hallfríðar, móður Þorláks, es nú es byskup í Skálaholti, næstr Gizuri. (*Íslendingabók* 26)

Auðr the female settler, who settled in the west of Breiðafjörður at Hvammur, was the mother of Þorsteinn the Red, father of Óláfr Little-Wolf, father of Þórðr the Yeller, father of Þórhildr Ptarmigan, mother of Þórðr Horsehead, father of Karlsefni, father of Snorri, father of Hallfríðr, mother of Þorlákr, who is now bishop in Skálholt after Gizurr.

Ari created a backcloth and prototype for all the later representations of the foremother figure, Auðr *landnámskona*, to come. Rather than slavishly follow Þorgilsson's literary prototype, two thirteenth-century sources, namely *Laxdæla saga* and *Landnámabók*, move beyond the archetype of the foremother and construct their own version of this figure.

The first new image of Auðr can be found in the mid-thirteenth-century text *Laxdæla saga*. The saga opens with the immigration of the *hersir* [chief, lord] Ketill Flatnose from Norway to the southern isles of Scotland. His daughter, Auðr—named Unnr *djúpúðga* here—accompanies him on his journey, and shortly afterwards marries Óláfr the White, the first Viking king of Dublin. After the treacherous deaths of her husband and only son, she cleverly devises a plan to escape to Iceland with a large retinue of family and followers, emerging, finally as a formidable political player in her own right. It is here, when Auðr takes charge of the situation, that the saga's author overlays the image of the foremother with mythological overtones; *Laxdæla saga* with the *Edda*, and, Auðr—the foremother of the Breiðafjörður area with Óðinn—the Allfather of the heathen pantheon. Here we have an example of what Haraldur Bessason terms mythological overlays—that is, “parallels between the Eddas and the Sagas in the use of literary technique and imagery” (Bessason 1977: 275). Indeed, there are a number of strong similarities between *Snorra Edda*'s Óðinn and *Laxdæla*'s Auðr (Vanherpen 2018: 750–55). Like Óðinn in the “Prologue” to *Snorra Edda* (*Snorra Edda* 8–11), Auðr is described as possessing both foresight and wisdom (*Laxdæla saga* 11). Auðr is known under more than one name (Auðr—Unnr), as is Óðinn in *Snorra Edda* (Óðinn—Wodden) (*Snorra Edda* 8–9). Furthermore, Auðr's journey to and settlement in Iceland (*Laxdæla saga* 6–11) mirrors the migration of Óðinn from Asia to the North (*Snorra Edda* 8–11). The foremother figure Auðr is compared to the “father of all” from the Old Norse-Icelandic mythology and depicted as a matriarch “in heathen style,” who secures the future of all her offspring and founds a dynasty (Vanherpen 2018: 750–55).

The *Laxdæla* author describes her achievements as “mikit afbragð annarra kvenna” [much superior to (that of) other women] (*Laxdæla saga* 7). *Laxdæla* continues that at the end of her life Auðr arranged a lavish wedding feast for her grandson. The following morning she was found dead in bed sitting “upp við hægendin” [up against the pillows] (*Laxdæla saga*, 13). The saga goes on:

Ok inn síðasta dag boðsins var Unnr flutt til haugs þess, er henni var búinn; hon var lögð í skip í hauginum, ok mikit fé var í haug lagt með henni; var eptir þat aptr kastaðr hauginn. (*Laxdæla saga* 13)

And on the final day of the feast Unnr [i.e. Auðr] was carried to the grave mound that was made for her. She was laid in a ship in the mound, and much treasure was laid with her in the mound, and after that the mound was closed up.

What begins as a wedding ends as a funeral, and she is interred with a ship in a funeral mound—a pagan custom (Vanherpen 2013: 71–3). Here, Auðr’s story concludes. At her death, she is a woman who has successfully fulfilled her role of foremother. The anonymous author of *Laxdæla* uses the prototypal image of founding mother as a springboard from which to create a more detailed and complex rendering of this figure. He created the foremother in heathen style, called Unnr. In the remainder of this paper, I will refer to *Laxdæla*’s representation of Auðr as “the heathen Unnr”.

A few decades later, Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), presents us with a more elaborate portrayal of Auðr in *Sturlubók*, the eponymous version of *Landnámabók*—the first preserved version of this text. Like his contemporary, Sturla draws on the prototypal depiction by Ari Þorgilsson, but elaborates on the story of the foremother figure in a slightly different way. Like its correspondent passage in the saga, *Landnámabók*’s account on Auðr is centred around her migration to Iceland and her subsequent settlement there. The *Landnámabók* narrative likewise concludes with a wedding turned funeral, when the *veizla* [feast] becomes Auðr’s *erfi*—a term comprising both funeral feast and inheritance ceremony (Sundqvist 2016: 476; Vanherpen 2013: 65; Vanherpen 2017: 577).

There are two major distinctions between the two renderings of the foremother figure. Firstly, *Landnámabók* is devoid of mythological allusions; our heroine is no longer compared to a pagan god (see above; Vanherpen 2018: 750–752). Secondly, Auðr is described as “vel trúuð” [a true believer], i.e. a Christian, holding prayers and erecting crosses at Krosshólar (*Landnámabók* 139; Vanherpen 2017: 573–574). Here, her internment takes place in consecrated ground on the shore where the waves wash over the sand, alluding to a Christian-style burial (Vanherpen 2017: 575–592; Vanherpen 2018: 751–752).

Þá nótt eptir andaðisk hon ok var graffin í flœðarmáli, sem hon hafði fyrir sagt, því at hon vildi eigi liggja í óvígðri moldu, er hon var skírð. Eptir þat spilltisk trúa frænda hennar. (*Landnámabók* 146–147)

The night after (the feast) she passed away and was buried at the flood-mark, as she had instructed earlier. Because she was baptized, she did not want to lie in unconsecrated earth. After that the faith of her family was corrupted.

These minor additions and alterations do influence the audience’s interpretation of the story as a whole, and in turn, the role of the foremother figure in it. The presentation of Auðr here seems to suggest that she was the “founding mother” of Christianity in Hvammur. By introducing and emphasizing a specifically Christian tradition, *Landnámabók* transformed the heathen Unnr into the Christianized foremother Auðr. Consequently, two competing memories exist side by side from the mid-thirteenth century onward: the heathen Unnr, as manifested in *Laxdæla saga*, and, the Christian Auðr, as manifested in Sturla’s redaction of *Landnámabók*.

From the fourteenth century and in subsequent eras, the older “heathen” foremother figure became overshadowed by her Christian counterpart. The fact that these texts and later saga literature would favour a portrayal of the foremother Auðr as a Christian, underlines that *Landnámabók* became the dominant vehicle for shaping the memory of the foremother figure. As a result, the heathen foremother is turned into a “counter-memory,” a term coined by Jan Assmann in his seminal work *Moses the Egyptian* to describe “a memory that puts elements to the fore that are, or tend to be, forgotten in the official memory” (Assmann 1997: 12). Even so, the figure of the heathen Unnr persisted through time in numerous copies of *Laxdæla saga*. Over time, it came to function as “counterhistory,” when counter-memory becomes “codified in the form of a traditional story or even in a work of written historiography” (Assmann 1997: 12). The Christian foremother figure will come to dominate later saga literature and versions of

Landnámabók, a trend that at first glance was to continue well into the nineteenth century.

2. The foremother, the witch and Hvammsland

In the nineteenth century, the folktale *Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* was recorded by Reverend Jón Þorleifsson in 1860 as two separate stories, entitled “Gullbrá” (Lbs 531 4to, ff. 66r–69r) and “Skeggi í Hvammi” (Lbs 531 4to, ff. 69r–70v), which were then collected by the Icelandic writer and librarian Jón Árnason and first published in his well-known collection *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* (1862–1864). The tale, however, is much older than this written version and was transmitted orally as early as the late-seventeenth century (Kålund 1916: 66).

The first part of the tale (Lbs 531 4to, ff. 66r–69r; *Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 146–149), the only one of relevance here, is set at the turn of the eight to ninth centuries, at a time when Auðr resided at Hvammur. She has set aside a certain portion of her farmland as sacred, upon which no crops should grow and no livestock should graze. When Auðr has grown very old, a young woman named Gullbrá wishes to purchase this sacred piece of land, because, she says, “því mér segir svo hugur um, að hær muni sá siður tíðkast, og það hús byggjast, sem mér er verst við” [I have a foreboding that a faith (i.e. Christianity) will be practiced here and a house (i.e. a Christian church) built that I hate most] (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 147; Malone 1942: 58). Gullbrá is able to trick Auðr’s overseer into selling her the land for a bag of gold. Auðr then abandons that plot of land, stretching from the sea up to *Krossgil* [Cross Gully], where she had three crosses raised. The beautiful Gullbrá then reveals her true nature as a wicked witch, and she builds her own heathen temple on her recently acquired “sacred” land.

And so the battle begins between these two women. The two never meet in person and the story informs us that a light from Hvammur and from Auðr’s crosses make Gullbrá forget her pagan practices. After Auðr’s death, Gullbrá’s land is hemmed in by Auðr’s grave on the shore on one side and the three crosses at Krosshólaborg on the other perimeter. In her struggle against Gullbrá, Auðr created these landmarks to protect the land, each of which were situated at an extremity of her land claim. So that even in her death, she could continue to protect the land and the members of her clan. The Christian foremother becomes the personification of a protecting spirit attached to the land of the *Hvammverjar* [the men of Hvammur]. Because of this, Gullbrá moves away from Akur to a remote part of the Dales. Whenever she has to traverse the Dale, she does so blindfolded. One day the blindfold falls off and she is blinded by the light emanating from the three crosses. Soon afterwards Gullbrá dies and becomes a ghost. In this rendition of her story, Auðr—a force of light, an agent of goodness and virtue, is contrasted to Gullbrá—a force of darkness, an agent of evil.

However, the folktale is much more complex than this simple dichotomy of good and evil would suggest. The memory of Auðr—the strong, authoritative, and exceptional *landnámskona* known from *Landnámabók* and *Laxdæla saga*—is preserved here in the folktale, and yet new elements are added to the picture of her. Already in these medieval accounts, Auðr’s religious affiliation is contested, with the oldest sources depicting her as a foremother in ‘heathen style,’ and later stories portraying her as a devout Christian woman. In the folk legend, Auðr acts out this religious duplicity by assuming a heathen persona when she calls upon the spirit of the land while she publicly embraces her Christian faith. As Eric Bryan corroborates, “[i]n one instance, she [i.e. Auðr] seems to rely on more than just Christian divine strength, for she states that no harm will come to Hvammur because the land is protected by a good spirit, a *fylgja* to use her exact word – a term that conjures memories of pagan attendant spirits by the same name” (Bryan 2011: 173; Bryan 2021: 53). I go a step further in suggesting that Auðr is depicted as a tutelary spirit or deity and propose a reading of the foremother figure based on both Christian and Nordic mythological traditions.

Written in the style of a hagiography or saint’s *vita*, the folktale describes the deeds and miracles performed by Auðr before and after her death (Malone 1942: 63). Marian resonances can be found in the tale’s portrayal of her. In Catholic theology, Mary is a pivotal figure in the salvation history as she redeems Eve’s fall (Reumann 1987: 249–252). Similar to the Virgin

Mary, Auðr is a key figure in the downfall and defeat of evil, represented here in the character of the sorceress Gullbrá. Like the mother Mary, the foremother Auðr acts as an intercessor and protectress of both her people—Hvammverjar, and her land—Hvammsland.

During her life, she raises crosses to serve as a place of worship for lack of a church on her land. As the text reveals later, these crosses also mark one boundary of Auðr's estate, of the ancestral land of the Hvammverjar. The crosses were placed at the so-called Krosshólar, "þaðan sást eigi til hofsins á Akri" [from there the temple at Akur could not be seen] (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 147), to ward off Gullbrá's witchcraft: "[P]ar lét hún setja krossa þrjá á fjallsbrúnina og heitir það síðan Krossgil, og kvað hún fjölkynngi Gullbrár eigi mundi yfirkomast krossa þessa, að sér lifandi" [there she had three crosses erected on the edge of the mountain and that is since called Krossgil (Cross Gully), and she said that Gullbrá's witchcraft would not be able to get past these crosses while she was alive] (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 147). Not only do the crosses serve as a visible token of God's protection, there are three of them according to the folktale—a likely reference to the three crosses on the Mount of Calvary, representing the crucifixion of Jesus (McKenzie 1995: 115, 319; Ries 1987: 4, 155, 161–165). The Christian symbolism is reinforced by the crosses giving forth a radiant light perceived only by Gullbrá whenever she practiced her lore, and which consequently failed her.

Even in death, Auðr will continue to protect her offspring and her land from Gullbrá. Similarly, as in *Landnáma*'s account, Auðr stipulates her burial wishes in life.

Áður Auður andaðist mælti ún svo fyrir, að hún eigi vildi liggja í óvígðri moldu, en kvaðst óttast yfirgang heiðninnar og bað því að grafa sig í flæðarmáli. Heitir þar nú Auðarsteinn, er hún liggur, og er það enn í dag almennt fjörumark á Hvammsfirði, að þá er um stórstraum rétt hálfvallinn sjór út eða að, þegar first brýtur á Auðarsteini. (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 148)

Before Auðr died, she ordered it thus that she did not want to lie in unconsecrated earth, but she said she was afraid of the heathendom's domination and asked to be buried at the floodmark. It is now called Auðarsteinn [Auðr's stone], where she [i.e., Auðr] lies, and to this day it is a familiar landmark in Hvammsfjörður, that the sea is at half flood or half ebb, when it first breaks on Auðarsteinn.

Auðarsteinn serves as a memorial stone and a token of Auðr's Christian faith; it might also have served as a precautionary measure for the protection of her settlement. Later in the text, we are told that Gullbrá only lived on at Akur for a short time after Auðr's passing and moved to the narrowest and darkest part of the dale. The text reasons that "þá festi hún ekki yndi, þar sem legstaður Auðar var fram af landi hennar í flæðarmáli, en krossar hennar innar við gilið á hlíðarbrúninni. Var hún þar í nokkurs konar úlfakreppu" [she did not feel happy, where Auðr's grave was in front of her land by the floodmark, and her crosses further inland by the gully on the brow of the mountain. She found herself in a kind of tight spot] (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 148). Gullbrá is literally hemmed in by Christian symbols strong enough to check her advance on Hvammur and Hvammsland. The crosses are a visible reminder of God's presence and protection, while Auðr's stone serves as a visible reminder of her ancestral presence, protection, and influence. Feeling hemmed in, Gullbrá decides to abandon the land at Akur and seeks refuge in the innermost part of the dale, "þar sem hann er mjóstur og skuggalegastur" [where it is narrowest and darkest'] (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 148).

Towards the end of the tale, Gullbrá is struck by a blinding light from Auðr's crosses and literally knocked right off her horse. Light in the Bible is conceived as a sign of the presence of God, and, particularly in the Old Testament, is a symbol of His saving power, and therefore a part of the theophany (McKenzie 1995: 510–511; Werblowsky 1987: 8, 549). The crosses and the radiant light emanating from them clearly denote the presence of God and his protection. Auðr not only acts as protector of Hvammsland and its people, but also as intercessor for the Hvammverjar.

Interestingly, the folktale Auðr also shares many characteristics with ancient mythical figures such as *fylgjur* [guardian spirits], (*land*)*dísir* [landgoddesses, ladies] and *landvættir* [land-spirits]. Earlier on in the text, Auðr calls on “Hvammslandi fylgja” to guard and protect the land and its people (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 147). In Old Norse literature, specifically, *fylgjur* are attendant spirits or guardian spirits connected to individuals or families (Mundal 1974; Mundal 1993: 624–625; Simek 1984: 115; Lindow 1987: 5, 460). Mundal even speculates that the *fylgja* motif might be remnant of female ancestor worship (Mundal 1974; Mundal 1993: 625).

From the start, the “Hvammslandi fylgja”, as its name implies, is connected to the land of Hvammur and the family of the Hvammverjar, although it is primarily associated with the foremother Auðr. Called upon by Auðr herself, the *fylgja* is a guarding and helping spirit that protects not only herself, but her whole family and retinue. The *fylgja* here appears in the shape of an unbearable light, a light that appears to be quenched with the death of Auðr.

[K]vaðst hún ávallt sjá ljós mikið á einum stað í Hvammstúni, og væri sér óþolandi birta þess, enda gleymdi hún þá og ruglaðist í fræðum sínum. Álíka ljós lagði móti henni af krossum Auðar á fjallsbrúninni, þó kvað hún þá ei verða mundi sér eins meinlega, og ljósið í Hvammstúni. (*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* I: 147).

She [i.e. Gullbrá] said that she always saw a great light in a particular place on the field in front of Hvammur and that this light was unbearable to her, since she became forgetful and confused in her lore. A similar light shone towards her from Auðr’s crosses on the brow of the mountain; however, she said they were not as harmful to her as the light from the field at Hvammur.

Gullbrá appears to be even more sensitive to the light coming from the field at Hvammur, than that emanating from the three crosses. After Auðr’s death, no more mention is made of the *fylgja* nor of the unbearable light coming from the field at Hvammur. It is a further indication that this character or guardian spirit is primarily connected to Auðr herself and with her death ceases to exist.

Auðr’s memorial stone could likewise be linked to other tutelary figures, such as *dísir* and *landvættir*. As many female figures in Old Norse literature and mythology possess the same qualities, it is not surprising that the folktale incorporates many of these shared characteristics in its portrayal of Auðr. Like the *fylgjur*, the *dísir* and *landvættir* are protective guardian spirits (Naumann 1993: 624; Simek 1984: 69–70, 228). The nineteenth-century *landdísir*, in particular, were believed to dwell in stones and were worshiped there, a practice which in its turn could represent a form of ancestor worship (Simek 1984: 228; Turville-Petre 1963: 201). Auðr has traits in common with the *fylgja*, the ancient female spirit protecting a clan, with the *landdísir*, representing the dead female ancestor who “lived” in a stone, and, finally, also with the *landvættur*, the guardian spirit who protects the land. Although Auðr is physically absent as she is deceased at this point of the narrative, her spiritual presence as a dead ancestral figure—betokened here in Auðarsteinn and Auðr’s crosses—affects the living. Auðr’s presence disturbs and drives away Gullbrá into the darkest corner of the valley.

What all these ancient figures—*fylgjur*, *dísir*, and *landvættir*—have in common is their connectedness to land and place. In some of their names—for example, the “Hvammslandi fylgja”, the *landdísir* and *landvættir*—the substantive “land” is suggestive of strong links to a specific territory. Indeed, if anything, the folktale deals with the protection, preservation, and perpetuation of ancestral land. The benign mythical spirits—*fylgjur*, *landdísir* and *landvættir*, were incorporated in the figure of Auðr, who is associated with light and radiance. Her landtake is soaked in sunlight and protected by divine light, both Christian and mythical in origin. On the other hand, the evil *tröll* is assimilated in the figure of Gullbrá, who seeks out the remotest and darkest corner of Hvammsland. She only abides in darkness and finds refuge in places devoid of sunlight or other natural light.

More than a simple story about the battle between Christianity and paganism, the tale of Auðr and Gullbrá is above all a rich and complex story about the struggle over ancestral land between

two strong women characters, personifying two ancient opposing forces—those of light and darkness, of good and evil, of divine and demonic. The foremother of old transcends into a powerful guardian spirit.

3. A Victorian tourist in Hvammur

Two years prior to the publication of the folktale, the self-named Oxonian Frederick Metcalfe, who was an accomplished Scandinavian scholar and was extremely interested in Icelandic folklore and sagas, undertook a two-month journey to Iceland during the summer of 1860. In his travelogue, Metcalfe, among several other things, also gives a detailed account of his visit to Hvammur in Chapter 19, entitled “Hvamm—The tombs of the pagan and the Christian [...]”. In this case, the title is already telling in that it refers to the tombs of Gullbrá—the pagan, and, Auðr—the Christian.

The account begins on the day after Metcalfe’s arrival at Hvammur, on which his host, the Reverend Þorleifur Jónsson (1794–1883)—father of the folktale’s informant Jón Þorleifsson, gives him a tour of the grounds:

Next morning, (Sept. 2), archdeacon Thorleifr takes me before the service to the site of the old judicature, which must have been of oval shape, and about 42 paces round. Close by are the traces of a castle. The ring on the church door is reputed to have belonged to the old heathen temple. On the introduction of Christianity here, one old lady Gull-brár, stuck to the gods of her youth, and after death, by her own request, she was buried in that dark gill in Skeggidal ‘where the sun never shines’ [...]. (Metcalfe 1861: 279).

Metcalfe’s account mentions “the old judicature” and “the traces of a castle”. The first might refer to what Ásgeir Ásgeirsson describes in his essay “Hvammur í Hvammssveit” as “forn, aflangur hringur suðvestur í túninu, nefndur “Lögrétta”” [ancient, oblong circle southwest of the field, named the court of law] (Ásgeirsson 1944: 16). The latter might refer to the ruins of Auðr’s farmstead, which is called *Auðartóftir* [lit. Auðr’s ruins] in *Landnámabók*. Besides these archaeological sites of interest, Metcalfe also refers to the folktale and Gullbrá. However, he does not connect Gullbrá to Auðr. In his portrayal, Gullbrá is a pagan, not an evil witch or *tröll*. Furthermore, she is “one old lady,” instead of a beautiful young woman.

In the afternoon of the same day, Þorleifur guided his guest to the shoreline, where he showed him “another remarkable place of sepulture,” namely, that of Auðr. Following a brief summary of her life, the text goes on:

And the following night she [i.e. Auðr] died; and her body being placed with many valuables in a ship, she was interred with it, as she requested, on the sands, below high-water mark. For, having been baptized a Christian, she would not let so much as even her remains lie in a land profaned with idolatry. And here, sure enough, is the spot, marked by a great stone covered with mussel-shells, now measuring 2½ ells in length, but doubtless much longer, before it sank so deep into the sand. (Metcalfe 1861: 280–281)

Metcalfe appears to have his sources mixed up here. The internment in a ship is taken from *Laxdæla saga*, whereas the location on the beach below the high-water mark is taken from *Landnámabók*. What follows, then, is a description and localization of her grave marker. Although he does not mention by name Auðarsteinn, Metcalfe does provide a detailed description of Auðr’s stone itself.

Metcalfe ends his entry on visiting the sepulchre of Auðr as follows:

Great must have been the rejoicing among the spirits of darkness when her [i.e. Auðr] light was quenched. The worshippers at the heathen temple would congratulate themselves that there was some chance of Thor having his rights again; while those goblins who had cowered into their cave near the church of Saelingsdal, yonder, again raised their hideous hum of mockery of the solemn tones which issued from the sacred edifice. (Metcalfe 1861: 281)

Here, once again, Metcalfe blends different sources together. He begins with referring to the folktale's dichotomy between darkness and light, with the "spirits of darkness" and "the goblins who had cowered into their cave" alluding to Gullbrá. Then he turns to *Landnámabók*, which narrates how Auðr's descendants relapse to the old faith and build a heathen temple.

About four years after Metcalfe's visit to the parish of Hvammur and its vicars, the folktales recorded by Jón Þorleifsson—"Gullbrá" and "Skeggi í Hvammi"—were published for the first time in the Icelandic language under the title "Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi." What a work like this by Metcalfe has shown is that through the form of a travel diary, folktales have circulated orally and been eagerly shared by locals, like Þorleifur Jónsson, with Iceland enthusiasts some time before they were printed. Moreover, travelogues illustrate the cross-pollination of various sources on Auðr to come to a hybrid picture of her.

4. Conclusion

This paper offers a contribution to the debate over post-medieval popular genres—such as folktales and travelogues—and the ways in which they represent figures from the Icelandic past. As a case in point, I have chosen the foremother figure Auðr *djúpauðga* Ketilsdóttir.

In the section on medieval texts, we saw that the figure of 'the Lady Aud' has her roots in the twelfth-century depiction of Auðr *landnámskona* in *Íslendingabók*. In this work, Auðr is portrayed as the foremother of its very author—Ari Þorgilsson—and the people of Breiðafjörður. The literary archetype of the foremother figure thus was born. Just a century later, two distinct characters are derived from this common archetype: the heathen Unnr and the Christian Auðr, two figures differing in interpretation of the same woman. *Laxdæla*'s foremother Unnr represents the noble heathen *landnámskona*, who is *djúpúðga*—intelligent—and, a conscious and astute political player. Her ship burial is fit for a heathen king. *Landnáma*'s foremother Auðr, on the other hand, is *djúpauðga*—profoundly wealthy, and one of the early Christian settlers in pre-Christian Iceland. She was buried, as she wished, *í flæðarmáli* [at the flood-mark]—a Christian ritual according to *Landnámabók*. Each author takes a radically different attitude toward the character. Consequently, two competing memories co-exist from then on.

In the nineteenth century, Jón Árnason began to collect and record folkloric texts, such as folktales, and Victorian Iceland enthusiasts started traveling to the land of the sagas. Both the folktale *Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* and the travelogue *The Oxonian in Iceland* build on various earlier depictions of Auðr and transform the Christian heroine from *Landnámabók* into a hybrid figure. In the folktale, the Christian heroine turns into a protective spirit guarding the people and the land of the Dales district. The travelogue paints her as the Christian foremother of old, with light brushstrokes of the being of light as pictured in the folktale.

In conclusion, across various genres—in the *Íslendingasögur*, in the historiographical works such as *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, as well as in folktales and travelogues—Auðr is remembered in a multitude of word-pictures. Even so, she remains the foremother—"the Lady Aud."

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Kinship, community and gender relations in the *Saga of the Jónsvikings* and in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

Annette Volfing, University of Oxford

In the *Saga of the Jónsvikings*, family structures are predictably important for the construction of identity and motivation. In particular, marriage tends to be presented positively, providing the man not only with descendants, but also with clever, far-sighted female advice. However, family relationships are also subjected to negative scrutiny, especially the father-son bond. Hákon sacrifices his son in order to achieve success in battle; and Sveinn has a problematic relationship not only with the biological father who rejected him, but also with his foster-father Pálnatóki.

This paper will investigate the extent to which Jónsborg – the city constructed by the recently widowed Pálnatóki on the Baltic coast of Wendland – constitutes an alternative societal model. Membership of this city is restricted to men aged between eighteen and fifty; and actual kinship is irrelevant for admission, but is replaced by a notional bond, with each member being required to avenge another like his own brother. The fact that women are banned from the city effectively rules out procreation and gives this pagan community a curiously monastic aura, not unlike that of the highly combative, otherworldly Grail community in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* romance. There are also some functional analogies with the court of King Arthur: Jónsborg becomes a destination for young men who want to prove themselves.

The extreme discipline of the Jónsvikings eventually deteriorates when Sigvaldi takes over from Pálnatóki. Sigvaldi then starts the specific train of events leading to the destruction of the community: he not only aggressively engineers a marriage between Sveinn and Gunnhildr, but also enters into marriage himself, bringing his wife back to Jónsborg. The destruction of Jónsborg constitutes the climax of the narrative, raising the question as to why this model has to fail. Is the problem that the original ideology is too extreme for such a community to be allowed to thrive, even at edge of the Viking world? Or is it rather that the lapse in discipline renders Jónsborg narratologically dispensable, in the sense of no longer providing a meaningful alternative to mainstream life in Denmark and Norway?

Humiliation and situational ethics: A proverbial motif in some Sagas of Icelanders

Eugenia K. Vorobeva, University of Oxford

In family sagas – *Íslendingasögur* – the value judgement on each particular deed depended heavily on the unfolding of events surrounding it as well as on the narrative spun around it either by a storyteller or by saga characters. Due to the performative quality of either the characters or the text, i.e. their ability to affect an audience and function as a social act, the application of situational ethics justifying the choice of a particular dispute-processing strategy was to a considerable extent derived from the staging of the scene within the saga and the implementation of literary tropes, motifs, and lexical framing. In this paper, the relationship between a particular type-scene, a proverb-like utterance, and legal regulations shall be examined. It will be argued that a proverbial motif – Z.191 ‘Scorn by throwing gold in one’s face’ in Boberg’s Motif-Index – embedded in a particular setting could have evoked certain intertextuality and prompted certain emotional responses from its audience. By acting as an element in a humiliation episode, balancing on the verge of a shaming ritual, reference to a proverb-like statement – ‘modal verb + *bera e-n í sjóði*’ – affects the discourse unfolding around the conflict, circumventing its formal legalistic mode by appealing to paralegal and customary practices. This shift enabled the aggrieved party to take otherwise inconceivable kinds of action and also to gain in prestige. Analysing a series of instances containing one particular proverbial motif and its near formulaic lexical framing – **reka sjóð á nasar*; **liggja blóð á jörðu* – found in some sagas of Icelanders (e.g. *Gísla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, etc.), this paper addresses the interlinked problems of text-performativity, emotional expressivity and narrative devices used for the concise yet comprehensive depiction of violence and its repercussions within the saga. By paying attention to the scene-structure, its place in the broader literary tradition, and its connection to the social practices of the time, a new perspective on the complex relationship between gender, power, and regulations as they were seen by the sagamen and their audiences may be brought to light.

Canon law and violence against clerics in the contemporary sagas

Elizabeth Walgenbach, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

According to the canon *Si quis suadente*, first promulgated at the Second Lateran Council in 1139 and later incorporated into the second recension of Gratian's *Decretum*, anyone who attacked a cleric with *violentas manus* 'violent hands' was automatically excommunicated and could not be absolved except by the pope. This provision was slowly incorporated into laws in Scandinavia, we first see evidence of it in letters written at the end of the twelfth century, and it appears in lawcodes from the end of the thirteenth.

This paper examines the ways that violence against clerics, and clerics committing violence, is portrayed in saga literature, focusing on the contemporary sagas (including the bishops' sagas). After a brief introduction to the legal provisions and their transmission in Norway and Iceland, I examine the ways that saga writers engaged with this provision in the narration of violence both directed at clerics and violence committed by clerics. I begin with the earliest bishops' sagas and the Sturlunga compilation and then examine the evidence in the later bishops' sagas written in the late-thirteenth to early-fourteenth centuries.

Yngvar's expedition to Serkland: From historical event to cultural memory to fantastic literature in 15th-century Iceland

Sabine Heidi Walther, Universität Bonn

The case of Yngvar the Far-Travelled is fascinating: On the one hand, he is the hero of an Icelandic saga, and on the other hand, his expedition towards 'Serkland' is attested by a great number of Swedish runestones. The epilogue of the saga claims that the saga is based on an account written by "Brother Odd the Learned," who was identified as Oddr Snorrason (Hofmann 1981), the author of the Latin *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. If we believe in this epilogue, the saga dates to the 12th century. The 19th-century scholarship was rather skeptical toward the authenticity of this epilogue. However, more recent scholars (Hofmann 1981, Antonsson 2012) find it trustworthy and try to understand it in the context of a 12th-century political environment in Iceland.

The paper will critically review this dating and argue for a considerably later date of writing, based on the manuscript transmission that only starts in the 15th century as well as the dating of the genre of *fornaldarsögur* in general, which mostly date from the 14th and 15th centuries. The argument for a late dating of the saga is supported by the observation that the saga seemingly plays with already established genres: the historical – and therefore trustworthy – *konungasögur* and the fantastic *fornaldarsögur*. Part of this play may also be the source reference in the epilogue of the saga.

Finally, the paper will explore the modeling of a historical event in 1036-1041 into cultural memory in Sweden and beyond, and then lastly into literature in 15th-century Iceland. Which cultural contacts – where and when – made this possible? How did this memory become literature? Which role played the Baltic Crusades in this process? Finally, the paper will come back to the time of the manuscript transmission and ask which political and ideological agenda this story of a Christian expansion into the Southern Baltic sea region (and beyond) might have served during the time the saga was presumably written and rewritten.

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Tertiary worlds of the *Eddas*: Imaginary space and narrative in Norse legend and myth

Timothy Liam Waters, University of California, Berkeley

Academic discussions surrounding mythical space have often oriented themselves around proposed cartographies of the “nine worlds” of Norse mythology. Moreover, such discussions have often asserted that such cartographies reflect medieval pre-Christian conceptualizations of the cosmos, despite the fact that the pre-Christian Scandinavian world produced no extant maps, charts, or other physical representations of such spaces.

The present paper seeks to push back against the previous scholastic impulse to literally map imaginary, mythological space. It will first outline the ways in which the sources available hinder previous methodologies, and further suggests an approach that encourages a more nebulous, thematic figuration of the Norse cosmos. Drawing from the work of Aisling Byrne (2016), this paper argues that many of the legends and myths of the Norse corpus construct “tertiary” narrative worlds—spaces in which the fantastic and mythical operate freely—in order to provide discursive spaces for the ideologies, desires, and anxieties of the medieval people who produced them. This paper takes its departure by suggesting that the mythical “tertiary” worlds of Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda* reflect the artificial worlds meant to describe the Eastern Baltic in the *fornaldursögur* by exaggerating and inventing narrative details of foreign lands. In so doing, these details do not create accurate geographies or ethnographies of the lands they claim to represent, but rather offer a lens by which to interrogate the ideologies of Norse composers and their audiences.

Works cited

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“Hví ertu svá snimma á fótum, sonr?” Negotiating fatherhood in *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhöggs*

Jan Wehrle, University of Freiburg

Considering the importance of family relations in general, and father-son-relationships in particular, within the contexts of saga literature, it is noteworthy that there has been comparatively little research focusing on this topic; some noteworthy contributions notwithstanding. This can be contrasted with the fact that many, if not most, discussions of saga literature will inevitably have to address and discuss family relations at least indirectly, which raises questions of alterity: are we willing and competent to approach family relations intuitively; or would we have to try to reconstruct diachronic approaches to family? My paper aims to discuss these questions on the topic of fatherhood, as father-son-relations are often in the foreground of saga literature and therefore more easily approachable than other family relations. The discussion will for the purposes of the presentation mainly be based on *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhöggs*, with excursions to other Saga texts. The *þáttr* is suited to demonstrate different approaches in examining fatherhood, but could also be claimed to contain a discussion of different models of fatherhood within itself.

The Old Norse prosimetrum – Looking for parallels

Jonas Wellendorf, University of California, Berkeley

Most saga scholars agree that the earliest Old Norse historical writings are somehow indebted to Latin textual models. However, no medieval Latin prosimetrical work has been identified so far that integrates prose and poetry in a composite form comparable to that found in the Old Norse historiographical saga tradition.

The presentation will briefly sketch the growth of Old Norse historiography with an emphasis on the gradual development of the prosimetric form. It will then be argued that the absence of obvious parallels in the medieval Latin tradition can be explained by pointing to two circumstances that have been important for the development of Old Norse historiography which are not generally paralleled in medieval historiography written in Latin: 1) Old Norse historiographical works partly cover the period before the parchment-based book culture had established itself in the North and a sizeable part of the poetry included in the texts stems from this largely pre-literate age. 2) Poetry predating the *ritöld* would be composed in the vernacular poetic idiom of the poet which means that historiographers writing in Latin generally would have needed to recreate the poetry in Latin if they wanted to include it, and hence they would forfeit at least some of the evidentiary function of the poetry, dependent as it is, on perceived verbatim preservation.

A concluding part of the presentation will cast the net a bit wider and look for cross-cultural comparanda. One historiographical tradition, with which it may be fruitful to compare the Old Norse, is that of the Islamic world, notably the so-called *Ayyām al-‘arab* ‘The (Battle) Days of the Arabs’. In these texts, poetry may, broadly speaking, be said to fulfill functions analogous to those encountered in the Old Norse historiographical tradition.

A more detailed version of the arguments presented in this contribution has been accepted for publication in *Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literature* and can be read there once published.

Towards a literary history of the court skalds

Eirik Westcoat

Iceland has had held its poets in high esteem all throughout its history, giving them an exceptionally high amount of honor compared to other Western cultures—an honor that continues into the present day. This paper takes a preliminary look at the earliest roots of Iceland's esteem for its poets by studying some portrayals of court skalds across three saga genres: the legendary sagas, the sagas of Icelanders, and the contemporary sagas. I will look at portions of two sagas each from those three genres. This paper is part of a larger project to analyze the portrayals of court skalds across all of the sagas and all of the genres to trace their transformation where they occur and account for their substitution or absence where they do not occur. In this, I focus on the roles that these poets are given as characters in the narratives. These literary portrayals created and normalized a set of ideals around the figure of the court skalds that continue to influence Icelandic culture, but have not been systematically explored in this way.

The court skalds, who composed their works in honor of kings and chieftains, were the most notable and revered poets of the medieval period in Iceland. Their poetry was frequently quoted, especially in the kings' sagas, to substantiate the larger prose narratives. But the poets were often characters in the narratives as well, interacting with kings, chieftains, and numerous other persons, and it is not only the kings' sagas that feature them as such. Court skalds are also found as characters in other genres of medieval Icelandic literature: the legendary sagas, the sagas of Icelanders, and the contemporary sagas. By studying those, one could put together a kind of literary history of the court skalds, in a timeline ranging from their mythic origins in pre-settlement times as seen in the legendary sagas, through a golden age in the sagas of Icelanders and the kings' sagas, and finally to the end of their depictions in the saga timeline in the contemporary sagas. My project in this regard is, of course, not meant to document the actual history of the skaldic profession, but rather to describe and analyze the image of the skald that the Icelanders created through the saga literature—whether that image was intentional or not—and how they saw the court skalds evolving in that literary timeline. Of course, the sagas were not written in chronological order, so in some cases, it may be meaningful to speak of a legendary saga as “filling in the gaps” in the history, especially if that saga was written relatively late. As will be seen, it is also the case that the contemporary sagas describe events that purportedly took place at times extremely close to the composition of many king's sagas, which can lead to questions of the influence of the former on the latter, especially when there is a strong resemblance between the events depicted.

1. The legendary sagas

I begin with a look at skald portrayals in two legendary sagas, *Gautreks saga* and *Örvar-Odds* saga. Written by Icelanders, the legendary sagas would depict what was believed or idealized about the mythic origins of skalds in pre-settlement times. Many elements in them serve to provide mythic precedents for the figures and activities of later skalds.

1.1. *Gautreks saga*

Starkaðr Stórvirksson is listed in *Skáldatal* as the earliest skald, who composed about Danish kings. That relatively bare listing is buttressed by the extensive depiction of Starkaðr in *Gautreks saga*, in which he has a significant role, and poetry attributed to Starkaðr is cited to support details in the narrative about King Víkarr's battles which Starkaðr took part in, and Starkaðr praises his king. Here is a fairly representative example (*Fornaldarsögur* 3:17; *King Gautrek*, 149; all translations in this paper are from the sources cited):

Var Víkari
vant at fylgja
því at fremstr ok fyrstr
í flokki stóð;

Vikar was ever
in the vanguard of battle:
hard to keep up
with the hero ahead of us.

hjuggum hjálma
með höfuðgnípum,
brynjur sneiddum
ok brutum skjöldu.

We battered their helms
and broke their heads
and smashed and bashed
their byrnies and shields.

Starkaðr's poetry is in *fornyrðislag*, which follows the conventions that seem to have been well established elsewhere, such as in *Snorra Edda*—namely, that the recent skalds use *dróttkvætt* and related meters, but that poets of the distant past, whether gods or humans, use *fornyrðislag* or similar. If Starkaðr's poetry here is not genuine, this is a filling in the gaps of skaldic history and buttressing the mythic precedent for the use of *fornyrðislag* as an ancient meter.

Despite Starkaðr's faithful compositions in praise of King Víkarr, he later turns against him. King Víkarr and his army are planning to sail, but the wind is bad. Divination reveals that Óðinn wants a human sacrifice chosen by lot from the army, but King Víkarr's lot comes up every time. As the army tries to figure out what to do about it, Óðinn himself takes Starkaðr aside, and after a scene in which Þórr and Óðinn alternately curse and bless him—with Óðinn directly giving him the ability to make poetry as fast as he can speak—Starkaðr agrees to deliver King Víkarr to Óðinn. The king's counsellors decide upon a mock sacrifice. Starkaðr arranges this, with a reed-stalk for a spear, some calf guts for a rope, and a thin branch of a pine tree to hang King Víkarr on. But at the critical moment when Starkaðr pokes Víkarr with the reed and says “Nú gef ek þik Óðni” (“Now I give you to Óðinn”), the mock implements transform into the real things, and Víkarr is stabbed, hanged, and dies (*Fornaldarsögur* 3:24–27; *King Gautrek*, 155–57). Suddenly claiming an otherwise victorious king is the sort of thing that Óðinn does, and here Starkaðr does it as his representative. And there are many additional parallels between Starkaðr and Óðinn, as befits this earliest skald (Solovyeva 2021, 71–74).

It is a fascinating detail that this earliest skald Starkaðr has access to supernatural powers—he can cause miraculous things to occur. But instead of coming from his poetry, as is attributed to poets of later times, the power to transubstantiate the mock implements is granted by Óðinn himself, the patron god of poets. The scene portrays the days of the legendary sagas as a time when Óðinn directly gave the gift of poetry to poets, and he represented a higher authority who might choose to overrule the poet's loyalty to the king he served. It suggests that while poets may have their place in court, they could suddenly disrupts the status quo, even if treated well by their lord.

1.2. *Örvar-Odds saga*

In contrast to *Gautreks saga*, *Örvar-Odds saga* has much different portrayals. Its earliest manuscript is from the early 14th century (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:xviii). Its portrayals could be influenced by notable sagas written earlier, such as *Egils saga*. Strictly speaking, there are no court skalds in this one, but a number of features strongly associated with the court skalds are in this saga, so one might say it has some proto-skalds in it. I will treat two of them here.

Örvar-Oddr himself is in many ways reminiscent of Egill Skallagrímsson, as he is a belligerent, violent, and often ill-tempered warrior. But the saga is notably anti-pagan in its sentiment, as it says “Ekki vandist Oddr blótum, því at hann trúði á mátt sinn ok megin” (“Odd cared little for sacrifices to the gods, but trusted his own strength”), and later that Oddr was baptized, although he does not seem much of a Christian (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:286, 335; *Arrow-Odd*, 27, 72). This is quite a contrast to *Gautreks saga* and its extremely strong connections with Óðinn—it also contrasts other sagas I consider later. Without any indications of a poetic upbringing, Oddr simply starts speaking poetry in the middle of the saga, when Guðmundr asks him about his adventures. The two verses are given as situational, but they can also be seen as authenticating the earlier prose details about his fight with giants and his receipt of a nickname from them (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:302–03; *Arrow-Odd*, 42–43). Like much in *Gautreks saga*, this may be seen as providing legendary precedent for the role of situational or authenticating verses in sagas set in later times. Later in the saga, Oddr makes a good impression on King Herraudr, and is given many favors. Though it is not said that Oddr composed any verses for Herraudr, he

becomes the king's emissary on a tax collecting mission (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:377–79; *Arrow-Odd*, 109–10), somewhat reminiscent of how later court skalds such as Sigvatr Þórðarson travel on the official business of their kings.

But it is Hjálmar who cuts a better skaldic figure in the saga. First, when he and Oddr hear the approach of twelve berserkers lead by Angantýr, the two make verses back and forth about the coming battle with them. This is reminiscent of the famous scene in *Óláfs saga helga* where King Óláfr instructs his skalds to be in the shield-wall for the upcoming Battle of Stiklastaðir, so that they can make verses about it—each of the three skalds starts their verse-making right there, long before the battle (Snorri, Aðalbjarnarson, 2:358–60; Snorri, Finlay & Faulkes, 2:239–41). Hjálmar shows more traditional pagan religious sentiment here, as well as bravery in the face of death—one of his verses notes that the two of them shall not retreat and thus feast with Óðinn after they are slain, recognizing the suicidal odds they are facing (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:325–26; *Arrow-Odd*, 62–63). A detail emphasized in the Old Norse verse, but not the translation, is that Oddr and Hjálmar are foster brothers—a situation paralleled in *Fóstbræðra saga* with Þorgeirr and Þormóðr. Nevertheless, the battle ends with the twelve berserkers dead, and Hjálmar dying of his wounds, while it is clear that Oddr will live on. Hjálmar then composes an eight-stanza poem to commemorate his life and death, for Oddr to take home to Sweden, a worthy example for the court skalds of later generations to live up to. But he is not finished, and does something rather peculiar next. He requests that Oddr greet all their comrades, and provides their names in the form of a five-stanza list poem, and this is the first stanza (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:329; *Arrow-Odd*, 67):

Drukku vér ok dæmdum
dægr margt saman
Álfr ok Atli,
Eyvindr, Trani,
Gizurr, Gláma,
Guðvarðr, Starri,
Steinkell, Stikill,
Stórólfr, Vífill.

We talked and drank
deep many a day:
Alf and Atli,
Eyvind, Trani,
Gizur, Glama,
Gudvard, Starri,
Steinkell, Stikill,
Storolf, Vifill.

This poem is strikingly reminiscent of the *pulur*, the poetic lists of *heiti* for various things, such as gods, giants, rivers, wolves, and so forth that are found in *Edda* manuscripts, and whose purpose is to ensure the skalds are familiar with these *heiti* to facilitate the creation of kennings. This composition by Hjálmar can be seen as providing a mythic precedent for such lists, as the purported time in which the saga's events took place is quite ancient. Furthermore, his composition of this *pula* while dying implies extensive familiarity with the form—that is, he is a poet who has undoubtedly memorized many such *pulur* over the years. But this is strange, because it portrays a necessary counterpart of kenning-heavy skaldic verse as existing in a time before it would have been necessary—there is plenty of poetry in *Gautreks saga*, but there are no kennings that would make good use of such an extensive knowledge of *heiti* in it. This is just one of the many potential oddities that could be uncovered in my comprehensive look across the saga genres.

Then Hjálmar makes two final stanzas before he dies. In them, he notes a raven and eagle that he apparently sees, and specifically offers the eagle a bowl of his blood in the verse. Given Hjálmar's acknowledgement of Óðinn in the earlier stanzas prior to the battle, this should probably be taken as Hjálmar offering himself to Óðinn via one of his notable animal symbols, in the hopes he will soon feast with Óðinn (*Fornaldarsögur* 1:330; *Arrow-Odd*, 68). Hjálmar thus shows the skaldic identification with Óðinn that Oddr stubbornly eschews, an identification that is also seen in later poets in the sagas. And like Starkaðr, Hjálmar shows a level of belief in Óðinn that seems stronger than in later times.

2. The sagas of Icelanders

I will not be looking directly at *Egils saga* in this look at court skalds, except by way of comparison, as most are probably familiar with Egill's activities as a court skald anyway. Therefore I will turn to other sagas here. These sagas, along with the kings' sagas, appear to be a golden age of court skald activity, with bold adventures and rich rewards for the poets.

2.1. *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*

Hallfreðr is a good poet from an early age, but given to slander. He is not popular, but he is big, strong, and handsome—thus, like Egill Skallagrímsson, he has his flaws and comes across as a rather unsympathetic character at times. As Hallfreðr grows up, he takes a fancy to Kolfinna and spends much time with her. Álvaldi, her father, would have him marry her, but oddly, Hallfreðr does not want to marry, an aspect which is not explained, though he marries someone else much later. Álvaldi gets a different man to marry Kolfinna, trouble is caused by Hallfreðr's jealousy, and the resolution is that Hallfreðr goes abroad to win fortune (*Hallfreðar saga*, 144–51; *Saga of Hallfred*, 76–80). It is then we see him doing many of the classic court skald deeds.

Hallfreðr meets Jarl Hákon Sigurðsson, and offers him a *drápa*. The jarl admires his boldness and rewards Hallfreðr with a great axe inlaid with silver, fine clothes, and invites him to stay over the winter. No more service to Hákon is mentioned, and in a few years, the jarl is dead, and Óláfr Tryggvason is king. Eventually, Hallfreðr comes into his presence, and naturally the king pressures him to convert and receive baptism. True to skaldic conventions, Hallfreðr bargains with the king over this, getting the king's word to never turn away from him, and for the king himself to be his sponsor in baptism, the latter requiring some prodding from his bishop before Óláfr accepts. A verse attributed to Hallfreðr is used to authenticate Óláfr's sponsorship (*Hallfreðar saga*, 151–55; *Saga of Hallfred*, 80–83).

Hallfreðr is no model Christian, and he continues the brash, but skillful negotiation of his standing with King Óláfr. When Óláfr tries to refuse hearing a poem, Hallfreðr says (*Hallfreðar saga*, 155; *Saga of Hallfred*, 83):

Týna mun ek þá þeim fræðum, er þú lézt mér kenna, ef þú vill eigi hlýða kvæðinu, ok eru þau fræði ekki skáldligri, er þú lézt mik nema, en kvæðit er, þat er ek hefi um þik ort.

I will lose the doctrine you had taught to me, if you will not hear the poem, for the doctrine you had me learn is no more poetic than the poem I have composed about you.

This is an extremely scathing indictment of Christianity from the perspective of the skaldic profession. With a bit of understatement, Hallfreðr is saying that Christianity is unsuited to skaldic poetry, and that he cannot have a place in Christianity if it does not have a place for his poetry. For this saga that was likely written in the early 13th century, highlighting this incident may be a manifestation of the contemporary concerns over rehabilitating the old mythology—such as seen in Snorri's *Edda*—so that it can remain a key part of skaldic verse.

Óláfr relents and agrees to hear the poem and gives Hallfreðr his nickname, *vandræðaskáld* (troublesome poet). In various other verses, Hallfreðr expresses his lament that he can no longer honor Óðinn, in words that acknowledge Óðinn's key position in the skaldic art (*Hallfreðar saga*, 157–59; *Saga of Hallfred*, 84–85). Hallfreðr goes on various missions as Óláfr's emissary, another common skaldic role. He also delivers poems to Jarl Sigvaldi and to the King of Sweden. For a time, he seems to have gotten over Kolfinna, since he marries a woman named Ingibjörg, and has children with her.

But Ingibjörg dies untimely, and eventually Hallfreðr returns to Iceland, where he stirs up more trouble over Kolfinna. This is eventually settled, and Hallfreðr learns of the death of King Óláfr. He returns to Norway to learn more about the circumstances. He grieves for his lost lord and makes a *drápa* in his memory—again, a court-skald ideal, and this is also seen with Sigvatr Þórðarson in *Óláfs saga helga*. Hallfreðr gets captured by Jarl Eiríkr, and would be killed, except for the intervention of a man that Hallfreðr once spared, and Hallfreðr composing a poem for Eiríkr—the head ransom trope, although it is not called that in the saga (*Hallfreðar saga*, 194–

96; *Saga of Hallfred*, 105–06). Finally, after Hallfredr's death at sea, his coffin washes up on Iona, and eventually, he is given a proper Christian burial and church altar-goods are made from the treasures in his coffin (*Hallfredar saga*, 199; *Saga of Hallfred*, 108). This marks Hallfredr with a kind of almost-sainthood, the sort of after-death dignity that is befitting a notable court skald. One sees similar allusions with the skull of Egill Skallagrímsson being buried under a church altar, though Egill was never fully baptized (*Egils saga*, Einarsson, 181–82; *Egill's saga*, Scudder, 204).

Four of the sagas of Icelanders, including *Hallfredar saga*, are reckoned among the core group of the sub-genre known as poets' sagas (*skáldasögur*), and these have tragic love stories as a distinctive characteristic (Clunies Ross 2001, 26). I find these court skald love stories to be rather strange. They have no equivalent in the sagas found in *Heimskringla*, for instance. And it is often thought they are influenced by continental romances. Nevertheless, they are in need of reconciliation with the court skald figures portrayed in the rest of the saga genres. Here, in *Hallfredar saga*, I note the restricted localization of Hallfredr's love-sickness and jealousy—it only occurs in Iceland, and there is not a trace of this behavior in him while he is abroad. It is almost as if they are two different people. In a sense, it is this localization that serves to separate the love-sick poet from the renowned court skald, so that the two never overlap, and the ideal of the court skald is not sullied by Hallfredr's questionable behavior with Kolfinna. The contrast in the poets' sagas between home and abroad is not just here—generally, the others also have the poet getting into more trouble at home than abroad, except perhaps Egill Skallagrímsson, for whom it is the other way around (Whaley 2001, 297).

2.2. *Fóstbræðra saga*

Of the sworn brothers of the title, it is only Þormóðr Kólbrúnarskáld who is a court skald, although Þorgeirr also served King Óláfr helgi. Much of the saga, of course, is about matters other than Þormóðr's service to Óláfr, but it is nevertheless instructive about court skalds in those parts. Þormóðr's service to Óláfr is also mentioned in *Óláfs saga helga*, but some of the details are different here. Interestingly, these brothers seem reminiscent of Oddr and Hjálmar from *Örvar-Odds saga*, insofar as one is the more notable skald and the other is the more notable warrior.

In the third chapter of the saga, an authenticating verse is introduced about Þorgeirr, and it is noted that (*Fóstbræðra saga*, 130; *Saga of the sworn brothers*, 334):

Þá var Þorgeirr fimmtán vetra gamall, eg víg þetta varð, sem Þormóðr kvað í erfídrápu Þorgeirs.

Starf hófsk upp, þás arfa
auðveitir lét dauðan
—hestrennir vas hlunna
hugsnjallr—Klœings falla;
efnð tóksk Hávars hefndar
hafstöðs þás vas Móði
—hann varð happ at vinna
vettr—fimmtán vetra.

Thorgeir was fifteen years old at the time as Thormod says in a long memorial drapa he composed after Thorgeir's death.

The slayings started when the wealth-giver
brought doom to Jod,
Klaeng's son and heir;
the wave-horse's launcher was brave.
Havar's vengeance was won
when the sea-steed's god
was fifteen years of age;
resolute, he wrought that deed.

This *drápa* is repeatedly quoted from later throughout the saga in telling the story of Þorgeirr's adventures, and it is the high-minded encomium that would be appropriate for praising any king or chieftain. This usage could have the effect of reminding the audience that it is not only kings who can benefit from such eulogies, but that those closest to a court skald may be memorialized as well in such grand style. Perhaps it would promote a desire for more court skalds—or the available equivalent—in the time it was written. It is not an isolated portrayal, but reminiscent of Egill Skallagrímsson's memorial poem for Arinbjörn, although mention of that poem is not spread throughout *Egils saga* the way that Þormóðr's poem is in *Fóstbræðra saga*.

In one scene, there is even an imputation of magic power for Þormóðr's verse. Þormóðr is at sea on a ship, and the sail-yard is wrecked by bad weather. A strong man named Gestr suggests that Þormóðr could repair it and join the two ends together, saying (*Fóstbræðra saga*, 223; *Saga of the sworn brothers*, 373):

Hann er svá orðhagr, at hann mun yrkja saman rárendana, svá at fastir sé.

He has such a way with words he could charm them together with verse. That should hold them tight.

Ultimately, both Gestr and Þormóðr successfully complete the repairs together, but nothing is said about whether Þormóðr chanted any verses in doing so. But it would be another example of how the supernatural powers that Starkaðr wielded have now entered into the poetry directly, as has been seen with Egil Skallagrímsson and the poisoned drinking horn (*Egils saga*, Einarsson, 57–61; *Egil's saga*, Scudder, 72–76).

Later in the saga, we see Þormóðr's great loyalty to King Óláfr demonstrated (*Fóstbræðra saga*, 260; *Saga of the sworn brothers*, 392):

Þormóðr fór ór landi með Óláfi konungi ok þolði með honum alla útlegð. Hann fór ok aptr með honum til Nóregs, því at honum þótti betra at deyja með honum en lifa eptir hann.

He left the country with King Olaf and remained with him the whole time the king was in exile. When Olaf returned to Norway, so too did Þormod, for he thought it better to die at the king's side than to outlive him.

That return leads to the Battle of Stiklastaðir, and after Óláfr has died, Þormóðr is still unwounded, which he regrets, because that means outliving Óláfr. But then he is struck by an arrow in the chest, gladdening him because he knows that it will kill him. In appropriate court-skald style, he is making verses while dying from the wound, and the saga gives five separate stanzas before he finally dies. There is a strong tendency for Icelandic court skalds to go abroad and ultimately die abroad (Gade 2000, 79). We see that here with both Hallfreðr and Þormóðr, and a consideration—across all the saga genres—of the narrative motives that drive the court skalds to go abroad and stay abroad may reveal some new sides to these characters.

3. The contemporary sagas

As a genre, these sagas are especially fascinating from the perspective of portraying the court skalds. As they have the least distance from the events they purport to describe, they also have the least capacity for embellishment or other distortions, and would probably be the most accurate portrayals of what court skalds actually were at any time. The contemporary reality of court skalds could have a strong influence on how the Icelanders viewed the earlier epochs of court skalds in the sagas of Icelanders and the legendary sagas, and how the Icelanders reconciled these various portrayals is one of my interests in this research.

3.1. *Íslendinga saga*

Here, we have mention of Snorri Sturluson himself in a saga. One of the first notable skaldic events in the saga is that Snorri made a poem about Jarl Hákon galin, and another poet, Máni, commemorated the rewards that Snorri received from the jarl in a verse (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:269; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:162). This is a fairly high distinction—it is not common to see

other poets making verses about a fellow poet's rewards in the sagas portraying earlier times. Hákon galin was impressed enough that he wanted Snorri to visit, but the jarl dies before that takes place, and when Snorri reaches Norway, it is King Hákon Hákonarsson and Jarl Skúli who are ruling. Snorri receives fine gifts from Hákon galin's widow, whom he composed a verse about previously (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:271–72; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:165). Skúli wants to have an expedition harrying in Iceland in retaliation for some matters, but Guðmundr Oddsson, one of Skúli's court skalds, makes a verse against this. Snorri himself also advises against this, saying he can persuade the Icelanders to turn to Norwegians for protection. And at this, Skúli cancels the raid (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:277–78; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:171–72). Such verse persuasion backed up by the counsel of good men occurs elsewhere—it is very similar to a scene in *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in which King Magnús has been on a wrong course of action, and is persuaded toward better policy by a poem from Sighvatr Þórðarsson, which is also backed up by the counsels of good men (Snorri, Aðalbjarnarson, 3:25–31; Snorri, Finlay & Faulkes, 3:16–19). Given that *Heimskringla* is generally thought to have been composed by Snorri after this particular visit of his to Norway, it raises the interesting possibility of the *Heimskringla* scene being influenced by Snorri's personal experience, if this *Íslendinga saga* scene preserves an accurate report of Snorri's trip. There is also the possibility that the influence goes the other way around, as *Íslendinga saga* was composed after *Heimskringla*. These are some of the possibilities I could address in the full research project.

In any event, when Snorri leaves to return to Iceland, it is said that he was given fifteen noble gifts by Skúli, including the ship he sailed back on, and that Snorri composed two *drápur* about Skúli (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:278; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:172). One could say this is still the golden age of rewards for court skalds, as such rewards exceed what is seen portrayed in earlier times. Of course, this time, there are the royal intrigues about gaining dominion over Iceland, as well as the rivalry between Hákon and Skúli, which are surely coloring matters.

On Snorri's arrival in Iceland, it is said that the southerners mock the verses Snorri made for the jarl, and they compose parodies of them. In particular, Þóroddr in *Selvág* pays someone a whole sheep to compose the following (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:278–79; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:173):

Oss lízk illr at kyssa
jarl, sás ræðr fyr hjarli,
vörr es till hvöss á harra
harðmúlaðr es Skúli.
Hefr fyr horska jöfra
hrægamms komit sævar,
—þjóð finnr löst á ljóðum—,
leir aldri meira.

We have a jarl
Who rules all others!
Ill to kiss—
Hard-mouthed our Skúli—
Asses' news
Offends wise heads;
In such unreined verse
Are loyalties tangled.

This is quite a turn around. Snorri seems to be a richly rewarded skald, and yet mocked nonetheless—it would be difficult to find accounts (if any) of court skalds in the sagas of Icelanders or kings' sagas receiving such mockery for their well-rewarded verses.

Later, in a scene where Sighvatr Sturluson calls upon his son Sturla to gather some men for avenging the death of Sturla's brother Tumi, Guðmundr Oddsson, the skald mentioned earlier, is with them, and here, he functions as a court skald for the group here, making a verse about the coming battle (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:290; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:186). It, too, is reminiscent of the previously mentioned skalds-in-the-shield-wall scene of *Óláfs saga helga*. After the battle, Guðmundr makes a verse commemorating Sturla's successful revenge (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:293; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 1:188). As earlier, this makes a striking parallel to *Heimskringla* that purportedly actually occurred close to the time of its composition. There is more in *Íslendinga saga* to analyze, but it is time to turn to the last saga I consider here.

3.2. *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*

Þórðr Rufeyjaskáld is a poor man living on land owned by Porgils Oddsson. Porgils is a wealthy chieftain in the twelfth century who has the Reyknesing-goðorð. The saga seems to imply a kind of court skald and patron relationship between them, though it does not say much. He seems to be one of the few twelfth-century chieftains reported to have paid for poetry (Guðrún Nordal 2001, 132). Yet the most notable scene in *Porgils saga ok Hafliða* in this regard is of his poet not being paid, in chapter twelve, where it says: “Þórðr hafði ort kvæði um Porgils ok var eigi launat” (“Þórðr had composed a verse about Porgils but it had not been rewarded.”) Unrelatedly, Porgils had received a fine axe. Þórðr gets a look at it, and is told it was worth two marks. Then Þórðr rather openly asks for it with a verse (*Sturlunga*, Jóhannesson, 1:30; *Sturlunga*, McGrew, 2:47):

Metin es marka tveggja,
mér þætti Svartleggja
góð, ef grunlaus væri,
—getr vildri mér færi.
Ok fagslegin fála
fastleggs virði hála
semði sjá fyr kvæði.
Sleppr mörgum fullræði.

Porgils mælti, at Þórðr skyldi taka landsleigu undir sjálfum sér, en hann sagðist eigi eiga lóg til öxarinnar.

Two marks it merits,
Black-shanks would be fine
If it were faultless,
And none I'd prefer.
This well-wrought axe
Should richly reward
Such a man for his verses:
Few are so seldom repaid.

Porgils said that Þórð might own the whole earth without paying for it, but he still had no right to full use of the axe.

This sort of open reward-seeking is seen with court skalds among Norwegian rulers, such as with Einarr skálaglamm, when he composes a *drápa* about Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson called *Vellekla* (Lack of Gold), pointedly implying that Hákon should remedy the situation. Hákon ultimately rewards Einarr with a precious ornamented shield (*Egils saga*, Einarsson, 164–65; *Egil's saga*, Scudder, 184–85). Returning to Þórðr Rufeyjaskáld, it is not said who gave Porgils the axe, but he clearly is not ready to part with it. In this, his largesse does not quite rise to the level of a king. Alternatively, it may be that Þórðr has misread his patron in asking for a reward that is too much—one generally does not see the court skalds in Norway being refused like this in the portrayal of earlier times. It may leave one wondering if such refusal was more common than portrayed. One may also note that there is no idealized loyalty to the monarch or chieftain in the contemporary sagas—the level of devotion that Hallfreðr and Þormóðr show to their respective kings Óláfr is nowhere present. Nor do we see any imputations of magic or connections to Óðinn.

4. Conclusion

That the skalds of the sagas of Icelanders are well-studied is known. But it is time to bring the rest of the genres into this understanding to obtain the complete picture of how Iceland came to view its most esteemed poets and their full history. These short discussions about six sagas are just the beginning of this project, but they already demonstrate some of the possibilities it offers. One possibility is how the portrayals of the skalds in the legendary sagas are shaped by a need

for a skaldic history or mythic precedents for skaldic practices. Another, perhaps the most striking, possibility is the interplay between skaldic events that may have actually happened in the 1200s surrounding Snorri Sturluson and whether these influenced striking similar scenes that Snorri would pen for the sagas in *Heimskringla*. There are yet further possibilities unaddressed here that would be realized through consideration of all of the genres, such as what figures take over the roles of court skalds in the bishops sagas and chivalric sagas, for instance, and how Christian *dróttkvætt* verse by clerics in the 14th century and later manifests the court poetry impulses that are no longer expressed through poetry in honor of kings and chieftains. It may also be considered to what degree the promotion of court skalds was a project primarily of the Sturlungs and how much it caught on among other saga-writing families. Through all of this, it would be possible to trace the literary evolution of the court skalds, providing a sound basis for studying the various post-medieval Icelandic poet figures, especially those seen in folklore, as well as offering new ways to think about the roles of poets in today's world.

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“The quest of Seth” in Icelandic literature: The ecology of evil in Eden

Tiffany Nicole White, University of California, Berkeley

Seths reisa, or “The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Mercy,” was a wildly popular adventure story in the Middle Ages that partially chronicles the lives of Adam, Eve, and their offspring after their exile from Paradise. This widely disseminated text of Judaic origin has been repeatedly expanded upon and adapted up to and beyond the Middle Ages, when it was eventually combined with the History of the Cross-Tree and from there made its way into Old Icelandic literature. In its oldest form, it survives in a Greek text which was translated from an Aramaic original; medieval versions are extant in several European vernaculars. There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the story in its earliest forms, but little attention has been given to the Old Icelandic version, especially its afterlife in post-medieval *kvæði* such as *Sethskvæði*.

This paper will present the material about Seth’s Quest found in Old Icelandic literature and its instrumentality in understanding the medieval Christian view of the natural world—in particular, the corruption of nature after the Fall. Focus will be given to an eco-critical interpretation of the uniquely colorful description of the state of vegetation during Adam’s lifetime in the Old Icelandic versions.

Pendant figurines and pocket deities: Material culture as marker of public and private beliefs

Nancy L. Wicker, University of Mississippi

Material culture that denoted belief systems in Viking-Age Scandinavia had both public and private aspects. Rune stones as memorials to the dead were public, often carved with an overt Christian cross and accompanied by inscriptions that invoked Christian prayers for the dead and informed the literate viewer that the person commemorated was “buried in white clothes” (baptized). Burial rituals that involved the display of items intended to be placed in the grave, presumably also were public, expressing the desires of the survivors—whether in support of or contra the wishes of the dead. The most common object included in burials by which we identify the deceased as Christian is the pendant cross. Alternatively, certain pendants—especially pendants of Thor’s hammers and small female figures commonly identified as “Valkyries”—may have indicated Viking-Age pre-Christian beliefs.

In daily life rather than in graves, other kinds of images—both public and private—may reflect belief systems. Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century referred to large-scale sculptures at the Uppsala temple, but such public art does not seem to have been the norm. At a different scale, a passage in *Hallfreðar saga* refers to a man who carried a concealed ivory image of Thor as a “god of the pouch.” Comparable small-scale, three-dimensional figurines typically have not been found in burials but rather have been discovered as single finds, especially by means of metal-detecting in settlement contexts. These objects may have possessed a personal significance that was not shared with the deceased’s survivors who made choices about what to include in the burial. Instead, “pocket deities” may have been relegated to the detritus of private daily life.

Attempts to tie the material record of the Viking-Age Baltic area, including Denmark and Sweden, to the literary saga culture of medieval Iceland—so distant in both time and space—are fraught with difficulties. Yet, interpreting material culture in light of textual sources gives us a glimpse of a way to illuminate the public and private roles that pendants and pocket deities possibly had in settlement and burial contexts during the period of conversion.

Finland and Poland in the margins of Scandinavian runic culture

Kendra Willson, University of Turku

Finland and Poland were marginal areas in the Viking world – both had contacts with Scandinavia and at least temporary Scandinavian settlements, but were not central destinations of the Scandinavian expansion. In later times, the extent of early Scandinavian influence in these areas has been debated and politicized (Ahola & Frog 2014: 21, 29; Duczko 2013). National foundation narratives involve ambivalent relations to Germanic neighbors. Runes hold a central position in this debate.

In both Finland and Poland have been found a handful of authentic runic inscriptions (in Poland, early and Viking Age; in Finland, Viking Age and medieval), but it is unclear to what extent a local runic culture developed. In modern times there have been theories that runes were used to a greater extent than seen in the archaeological records and that they were used to write ancestors of the current majority languages. These ideas are connected to national identity formation and visions of an ethnic past. They are expressed in different genres and discourses from scholarly to popular to alternative. The problem of “missing runes” is addressed by different strategies, from rumors of lost runic inscriptions to interpreting other scratches as runes to carving modern inscriptions.

1. Few inscriptions, but varied

In Finland have been found a handful of Viking Age inscriptions, including the Tuukkala brooch, Hitis/Hiittinen runestone fragment, and a few coins and amulets (see Oja 2015: 72–78, 213–214). These are thought to have been inscribed elsewhere and imported, although the Hitis stone could have been raised near the find site (Åhlén et al. 1998; Källström 2016). A few late medieval inscriptions in Latin on everyday objects in Turku attest to a limited local practice connected to domestic religion and magic in the vicinity of the diocese (Harjula 2016, 2019). The tradition of runic calendar sticks came to Finland around the Reformation (Oja 2015: 84); in this context runes are not used as an alphabet but as calendric signs. Some ownership marks and other vernacular epigraphic practices found in Finland may be connected with runes (Ekko 1984: 74). There are also some overtly modern inscriptions and a few whose age has been debated (especially the finds from Vörå/Vöyri). However, there has been little discussion of possible continuity or attempt to describe a Finnish runic tradition.

Poland’s runic inscriptions are similarly understudied. Several Viking Age inscriptions have been found in northwestern Poland in archaeological sites showing Scandinavian features, mainly in urban settings (Nielsen 2014). A few early (3rd – 7th c.) inscriptions have been found scattered across the territory of present-day Poland and Ukraine. Duczko (2013: 23; 2014: 48–49) argues that the Viking Age inscriptions form incontrovertible evidence of Scandinavian settlements. Williams (2014: 174) points out that the number of inscriptions from the south coast of the Baltic is comparable to that found in Ireland. Nielsen (2014: 162) suggests that while historical sources on Slavic-Scandinavian contacts emphasize armed conflicts and royal alliances, the archaeological and runic record indicates peaceful coexistence. Krawczuk (2013) calls for a systematic inventory of Polish runic inscriptions.

2. Runes in discourses of identity

In both countries there have been vernacular beliefs that runes were used more extensively than the archaeological record has revealed. These are expressed in different forms, including rumors of lost inscriptions, interpreting other scratches as runes, and carving modern inscriptions. The idea of missing runes is often tied to an idea of a past golden age. While runes in Finland are especially associated with the Swedish-speaking population, there have also been suggestions that runes were used to write Finnish. Similar strategies for explaining the dearth of runestones are employed both by writers who want to emphasize the Swedish connections of Finland and Åland (such as Dreijer 1945) and by those who imagine a grand Finnish civilization before the

Swedish colonization (such as Nieminen 2015). Dreijer was the state archaeologist of Åland for decades, while Nieminen is regarded as a pseudoscientific conspiracy theorist; the motifs in question traverse genres and the boundaries between scholarly and non-scholarly writing are not always clear-cut.

All the known runic inscriptions from Finland are in Scandinavian languages or Latin. Interpretations of runic inscriptions from around the Nordic region involving a Finnic or Saami languages have been proposed from time to time (e.g. Olsen & Bergsland 1943), but have not gained general acceptance (see Willson 2012, 2019). At the same time, there are alternative discourses that propose that runes were used early on for writing Finnish (Berg 2003, Naddeo 2008) and even that evidence of this has been suppressed by a Swedish-dominated establishment (Nieminen 2015: 193–199).

There are allusions to writing by Slavs prior to the invention of the Cyrillic alphabet, but it is not known what system was used. The suggestion has been made that runes were used for this purpose. The notion of “Slavic runes” was mainstream in 19th century Polish scholarship. After the First World War and independence, this theme disappeared from scholarly discourse (Kowalski 2001: 147), and examples of “Slavic inscriptions” are now generally regarded as forgeries or fanciful interpretations (Krawczuk 2013: 431–432). However, the notion persists in alternative discourses (e.g. Kossakowski 2008; Kosiński 2019). Older works such as Leciejewski (1906) are reprinted for circulation in alternative circles. Kossakowski (2008: 97) interprets a runic inscription from Denmark as a poem in Old Polish. Kosiński (2019: 16) states expressly that the notion that Slavs were illiterate before Christianity is “wierutną bzdurą” [egregious nonsense] propagated by Germans and Communists. Although the hypothesis of Slavs using runes has been considered unscientific for a century, the recent discovery in Lány, Czechia, of a bone with runes found in a Slavic context, has led to a tentative reopening of the question (Macháček et al. 2021).

In Poland, there is currently much popular and scholarly interest in Vikings and in Scandinavian influences on early Polish history (see e.g. Bogacki et al. 2019). The question of whether chamber graves are to be interpreted as Scandinavian is hotly debated among archaeologists. This discourse is also connected to national identity (Murzyński 2021). The symbolism of Vikings in popular culture is multifaceted and dynamic; they can represent both national and international impulses (Gardeła 2020).

In Finland, the question of runes has been connected with language politics at least since the early 20th century (Karsten 1919: 7; Ojansuu 1920: 262; Nordling 1938). Runes would provide proof of a Scandinavian presence during the Viking Age, and the dearth of inscriptions has led some Swedish-speakers to carve modern inscriptions or view doubts as to the authenticity of finds as a conspiracy to suppress Swedish speakers’ long legacy in Finland. This was particularly evident in discussion of the Vörå runestones, which escalated into an authority crisis (Norrman 1983; Tarkiainen 2008: 36–37; Granö 2017) that could be compared to that surrounding the Kensington runestone in Minnesota (on which see Williams 2012; Krueger 2015).

3. Similarities and differences

There are some striking similarities in the use of runes in Finland and Poland. Each country boasts a number of inscriptions regarded as “authentic,” which include both a cluster from a small area and limited time and other geographically and chronologically scattered finds. The role of Scandinavians and other Germanic peoples in shaping the early history of the nations has been controversial. There are speculative connections between runes and other traditions better documented in the respective areas, such as heraldry (Poland) and ownership marks (Finland). In both contexts there have been (largely unsubstantiated) notions that runes were used more widely than is seen in the archaeological record and perhaps to write the modern majority languages, and some modern inscriptions have been carved as ways of enacting the history that “feels” right.

Of course, there are also significant differences. While both countries have a few Viking Age inscriptions, Finland so far boasts no older ones and Poland to the best of my knowledge no medieval ones. The political histories of the two countries are different. The notion that runes were used to write Finnish has never been mainstream, unlike the theory of Slavic runes. The contemporary alternative discourses on Slavic runes place more emphasis on occult aspects, while in the Finnish discourse supernatural elements seem incidental. Nonetheless, there are enough parallels that it seems worth investigating the two contexts in tandem, in relation to such open questions as: What can be inferred about literacy and the use of runic writing from such a small number of inscriptions? What is the relationship (if any) between the runic tradition in the Viking Age and adjacent periods and modern traditions about runes? What is the connection between the 19th century scholarly and modern “alternative” discourses – persistence, rediscovery, coincidence? Do traditions shift from folk to scholarly or vice-versa? These “alternative” traditions are national(istic), but show shared traits internationally – how do they circulate? How can studying the modern discourse inform source criticism for examination of the older runic record? What insights can comparing the two areas contribute?

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Code-switching and other kinds of Latin – Old Icelandic language contacts in the Bishops' Sagas

Yekaterina Yakovenko

Of all Icelandic Sagas these are the Bishops' Sagas that display, in accordance with their genre and content, most traces of Latin-Old Icelandic language contacts. Alongside old, fully assimilated latinized Greek and proper Latin borrowings (*engill*, *postuli*, *kirkja*, *biskup*, *prestr*, etc.), Latin impact is observed in numerous insertions in the text, which, not belonging to the Icelandic language system, should be identified as cases of code-switching. A question arises whether these insertions, or code-switches, bear witness to the narrator's erudition or just serve to fill gaps when rendering concepts of Christian culture.

The present study focuses on Latin insertions as observed in the Bishops' Sagas, mainly in *Þorláks saga*, *Ioans saga* and *Guðmundar saga Arasonar* (version D). The sagas in question display different kinds of code-switching: while *Þorláks saga* and *Ioans saga* use Latin for names of prayers and biblical quotations (which can be identified as extrasentential code-switching), *Guðmundar saga Arasonar* D demonstrates the wide use of intrasentential code-switching represented by single words or collocations naming Christian rites, feasts, prayers, books of the Bible, religious songs, etc. Taking an insight into functional peculiarities of these code-switches, we state that in most cases their morphology and syntax conform to the norms of Latin or both Latin and Old Icelandic (e.g., 'fyrsta bók Dialogorum', 'næsta dag fyrir nativitatem beatæ virginis'). As a rule, Latin words preserve their morphology, remaining unassimilated. However, several grammatical deviations appearing in the text (e.g., 'hann ... gengr síðan með psalmum Miserere') can be accounted for by either non-coincidence of the two grammatical systems, or by the scribes' mistakes, or their attempt to adapt their text to the audience.

Rigmaroles on the margins of the Nordic countries

Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

Icelandic post-medieval *pulur* (a relatively short type of folk poetry: fragmentary, intersecting, ever-changing sequences in very free poetic form, cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2020: 270–274) are not only inextricably interlinked with similar post-medieval Scandinavian poetry (here termed *rigmaroles*), but also with Scandinavian medieval ballads (ibid.: 33–37). Both Scandinavian ballads and rigmaroles were among the material that migrated to Iceland, supposedly before and around 1500 (cf. Vésteinn Ólason 1982: 105–109; Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2017: 141–142 & 2014: 112–113). Scandinavian ballads and rigmaroles had major influence on the formation of both Icelandic ballads – and post-medieval *pulur* (which have Old Icelandic *pulur* as their second foundation pillar, cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2020: 25–33). At the same time, there is no consensus on key place(s) of origin of ballads in Scandinavia and the ways they spread throughout it (cf. Liestøl 1937, Jonsson 1989, Solberg 2016).

Even less is known about origin of rigmaroles and their migration paths over continental Scandinavia, although similar rigmaroles are found in many Nordic countries, including widely distant ones such as Iceland and Finland (texts in Swedish). This is consistent with the fact that well-preserved ballads in Swedish were also found in Finland during their collection in the 19th century (Espeland 2016, especially chapter “Scandinavian ballad regions”). My research aims at tracing the rigmaroles’ migration paths throughout the Nordic countries, using chiefly printed sources and focusing, among other things, on similar texts preserved on the region’s periphery and on the question of coherence of the rigmaroles’ and ballads’ migration paths.

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Is there an “other” in *Qrvar-Odds saga*?

Jonas Zeit-Altpeter, University of Bonn

Like many other Old Norse texts, those belonging to the traditional genre of *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* (FAS) have frequently been analysed using terminology such as ‘the other’, ‘otherness’, or the binary of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ in the past decades. This kind of analysis aims to describe discourses of identity found within these texts, which may then be used for investigations into the mentalities of periods for which other sources are scarce.¹ In this paper I wish to consider the use of this terminology as applied to a single text, the younger redaction of *Qrvar-Odds saga* (‘A’) as found in the 15th century manuscript AM 343 A 4to, suggesting that the text constructs identities that cannot readily be placed on a spectrum between two opposite poles.

The aforementioned notion of a “Dual World” is defined most strongly in Eremenko 2006. Eremenko constructs a model of the universe found in the FAS where all phenomena may be placed on a straight line, the end points of which consist of the “Scandinavian world” and the “Magic world”, each possessing a “clearly traceable nucleus” (Eremenko 2006: 217). Each world is characterised by opposite qualities such as moderation and egotism or beauty and ugliness. ‘Story’ then arises from conflicts between these ethical poles (Eremenko 2006: 218). The worlds are defined (I) territorially, with familiar Scandinavia on the one hand and an unknown, potentially unstructured vastness on the other, (II) racially, as the “Magic world” is shared by strange humans and otherworldly beings, and (III) socially, as the “Magic world” is governed by radically different social rules (Eremenko 2006: 221). Thus, it may be characterised as “a world of chaos fundamentally alien to human beings” (Eremenko 2006: 222). Eremenko’s model, or similar ones, have been applied in research such as Arnold 2010 or Orning 2010, 2012, and 2017, and alluded to by Ferrari 2006 and 2009.

Terminology of ‘the other’ or the dichotomy of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ ultimately stems from Anglophone post-colonial studies. Wang 2020, however, argues that its generalised application runs the risk of reproducing the language of early modern colonialism in Scandinavia. Through a spatial reading of select *Íslendingasögur* passages with a focus on Norse-Sámi cultural contact, particularly *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, she argues that the north of Norway is a “culturally fluid space”, where “cross-cultural travel [is] mainly unproblematic” (Wang 2020: 254-55); hence “it is crucial to move the scholarly focus away from an excessive emphasis on the stereotypes presented in the literary narrative” (Wang 2020: 259).

I will first follow Wang’s spatial approach. The world of *Qrvar-Odds saga*, like that of many other sagas, is segmented much like the story of the saga, the borders between narrative units corresponding to changes in place. Space seems discontinuous, and the relation of one place to another is not always traceable. Oddr and his companions (and foes) move about mainly by ship or by boat, sometimes on foot, and on one occasion he is spirited away by a giant bird. The ‘connective tissue’ between places on land is the forest, into which one may disappear only to reappear somewhere else entirely, such as when Oddr departs Rísaland (cf. Rafn 1829: 239).

The lands of the Sámi and Bjarmar, on the other hand, are continuous with that of the Norwegians. They are reached by ship, and the northward passage is documented by the saga. Not only do Norwegians enter and traverse them, but people associated with these regions may also move to other parts of the world, such as the Sámi present at the conception of Oddr’s grandfather, Ketill hœngr, or Oddr’s nemesis, Qgmundr from Bjarmaland. In fact, Fulvio Ferrari describes these lands as “considered dangerous, haunted by warlocks and supernatural beings, but still part of the ‘real’ world” (Ferrari 2009: 371). One may ask, then, what the functional difference between ‘real’ and ‘fantastic’ is, and if insisting on a strict dichotomy in terms is helpful. It also seems questionable to describe southern Norway as a centre opposite a northern

¹ This, for example, is the aim of Orning 2012, cf. p. 292.

periphery in a saga whose world is wide and open, and differences between regions such as Norway, France, Rísaland, or Garðaríki abound.

Secondly, I wish to take a closer look at two instances of contact with possible ‘others’. In both instances, Oddr and his party first observe a building and its inhabitants and then come into contact with them. In the first instance, Oddr and his fosterbrother Ásmundr find a wooden hall in Bjarmaland in which people are gathering for some kind of festival. The hall and the activities within are described in similar terms to a Scandinavian hall and feast, but the language of the Bjarmar is unintelligible—Ásmundr characterises it as *fuglakliðr* “birds’ twitter”. However, there is a cupbearer serving at the benches who speaks Norse, as Oddr accurately predicts. The cupbearer is promptly abducted and interrogated, and he claims to have been held hostage for years by the Bjarmar. He goes on to direct the Norwegians at a sacred mound of silver waiting to be robbed, but escapes back to the Bjarmar as soon as he is unobserved. He then leads the Bjarmar in battle against the Norwegians, but his party is defeated and his ultimate fate remains unknown.

His ethnical (and *ethical*—the terms are aligned in Eremenko’s model) identity remains just as mysterious. All communication with the Bjarmar happens through him, but the reason as to why he speaks Norse becomes unclear once the Norwegians discover that he has been lying about being held hostage, as do his motives. One might argue that Oddr’s assumption that the cupbearer speaks Norse is based on the familiar cultural act of serving drinks, yet feasting, erecting mounds, and taking revenge for injustices suffered are equally familiar. The cupbearer wields great intradiegetic power both social (he leads the Bjarmar in battle) and communicative (he is shown to be on equal footing with Oddr in their short figurative exchange before the battle, cf. Rafn 1829: 178). Yet his power is also narrative, as his scheming ultimately leads to the ‘creation’ of Qgmundr, who goes on to haunt Oddr for the rest of his life.²

A second instance of cultural contact is found in Aquitaine, where Oddr and his companions discover a stone hall frequented by a crowd of people producing strange noises. Again the Norwegians hide to observe the strangers before speaking to them, and the hall turns out to be a church hosting a service ‘defamiliarised’ as it is focalised through the non-Christian party. Oddr’s companions become Christians, while Oddr himself is baptised, but insists on his right to travel the world and commune with heathens. The cultural practices of Christianity are imagined as entirely foreign in this instance, but communication does not pose any problem—in fact, the issue is never mentioned again after Bjarmaland.

Both Eremenko and studies based on his paper (emphatically Orning 2017: 133-205) point out that the borders between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ etc. are “fuzzy” (Eremenko 2006: 217) and subject to constant renegotiation. However, I would suggest that insisting on a fundamental binarism does not accurately characterise the people(s) and spaces encountered by Oddr and his companions. Even if on Eremenko’s scale the cupbearer, like any other phenomena, would be located somewhere in the middle, it seems implausible to single out qualities that draw him to either “nucleus”. Similarly, the correlation of the implicit reader in Iceland with intradiegetic Norwegians seems questionable, as the imagined Scandinavia of the *fornöld*, which is just as fictional as other spaces of the FAS, does not align neatly with 15th century Scandinavia. There is little in *Qrvar-Odds saga* to qualify the primacy of Norway as a centre to which all other spaces are secondary and peripheral. The character of Oddr instead seems to be travelling a ‘tableau’ of differences, some smaller, some greater, but they do not align along a single gradient. If there is a narrative centre, it must be Oddr himself, who is a larger-than-life figure who appropriates both Scandinavia and the rest of the world: whereas other saga heroes such as Yngvarr víðförli encounter the king of Garðaríki, Oddr *becomes* the king. He is a stranger to the reader and larger than life even in a literal sense: When he finally

² Orning analyses this passage similarly, though he retains the terminology of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’; cf. Orning 2017: 135-136.

dies after the centuries allotted to him, we learn that he appears to have continued to grow during all this time, and his coffin is twelve ells (*12 álna*, Rafn 1829: 322) long on the inside.

This is not to say that motifs typical of strategies of othering, such as the association of the Sámi with magic, are absent from the saga. Nor do I mean to suggest that the results of readings such as Orning's are invalid. However, if structuralist models such as the one described above can only ever be applied with strong reservations, and their fundamental terminology (the focus of the above criticism) run the risk of obscuring rather than illuminating their subject matter, it seems profitable to focus on the search for alternatives.

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Textual and oral re-composition: The case of the younger *Bósa saga*

Pórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

Bósa saga ok Herrauðs is a relatively prominent member of the group of medieval Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*. It is a well-structured and lively tale, which includes many of the hallmarks of the *fornaldarsögur*, but is unique in its elegant use of euphemism in explicit dialogues between the eponymous Bósi and three farmers' daughters he goes to bed with. What is less well-known is that the saga has a younger descendant, usually referred to as the "younger version" of *Bósa saga*, dated to the seventeenth century.

By comparing the two sagas, it becomes clear that a direct textual relationship is hard to trace. In this paper, this development will be explored further and it will be argued that the younger version is in fact a new story, only loosely based on the older version. Most of the characters are the same, and some of the plot, but the elegant euphemism has disappeared, the characters are more superficial, and instead of a neat and clear structure, it contains many additions and expansions. The younger saga is preserved in a number of manuscripts, the earliest from around 1660. The paper will furthermore speculate how the younger saga came into existence and to what extent oral culture may have played a part in the development. This will be done by comparing selected parts of the two sagas and discussing the relations between the sagas, as well as other texts that are sometimes compared with *Bósa saga*, that is *Bósa rímur*, *Viktors rímur* and *Viktors saga og Blávus*. In conclusion, it will be shown how the two *Bósa sagas* are ideal for further exploration on the relationship between textual and oral culture in general and how medieval texts could be or have been re-composed or reshaped in later centuries.

From Bálagarðssíða to *undirheimr*: The fantastic journey of Þorstein bæjarmagn from the Baltic Sea region to the underworld and beyond

Valerie Broustin, University of Bonn

The *Saga af Þorsteini bæjarmagni* (also known as *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*) takes the protagonist from Norway to Bálagarðssíða, Jamtaland and finally Risaland. Along the way he meets trolls, dwarfs and giants who offer him magic shirts, stones and weapons. The saga takes place around the year 1000, is associated with the historical King Óláfr Tryggvason as well as the legendary Goðmundr á Glæsisvöllum and was first transmitted in a manuscript in the 14th century.

This paper will focus mainly on the second part of the journey in which Þorsteinn travels from Bálagarðssíða to *undirheimr* by diving into a foggy river. Bálagarðssíða, presumed to be on the southwest coast of Finland, is where Þorsteinn encounters a bald-headed boy with a crooked stick and gloves who wants to go on a witch-ride and will become his companion on his journey to the underworld.

In Old Norse literature journeys like this are described as being especially fantastic. There are several other concepts, descriptions and possible locations of the underworld/world beyond like Hel, Ódáinsakr or Glæsisvellir (in the *Saga af Þorsteini bæjarmagni* situated in Risaland and prominently featured due to Goðmundr á Glæsisvöllum being described as one of Þorsteinn's main companions).

The paper will take a closer look at Bálagarðssíða, *undirheimr* and the associated creatures and objects. It gives an outlook by comparing these with other concepts and descriptions of journeys to and encounters in the underworld / world beyond. Are there more connections and references to the Baltic Sea Region? Do the texts maybe even support a categorization as the “other”? The genre of *fornaldarsögur* (e.g. *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*) will be the main focus in all aspects of research, but texts from other genres will also be taken into consideration.

Body and cosmos: The logic of mythical transformation in Old Norse religion

Jan Kozák, Charles University in Prague

The poster presents one of the theses of my Marie Curie project. It illustrates the typology of various mythical transformations in the eddic myths concerning bodies and body parts.

The Old Norse mythology contains a certain number of motifs of body transformation that serve as crucial points of the cosmogonic process. Gods or other anthropomorphic beings are sacrificed or wounded in various ways and these acts translate directly to the establishment of the Cosmos and its various features. The poster will present a number of myths concerning the most prominent gods – Óðinn, Týr, Heimdallr, Loki and others – and provide an analysis of the symbolic logic that governs the seemingly surreal narratives. I will show that the types of transformations in the myths correspond to the basic types of tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony. This perspicuous alignment of tropes and myths illustrates that they are related phenomena and that we need cognitive linguistics and the study of conceptual metaphors if we want to understand “the language of myth”.

Liturgical fragments of Medieval Iceland (1056–1402)

Tom Lorenz, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

The PhD project examines fragments of liturgical books produced, owned and used in Iceland in the period from the establishment of the first Icelandic bishopric of Skálholt in 1056 to the arrival of the Plague in Iceland in 1402, which caused a pronounced decrease in book production. It will connect the relevant manuscript fragments, held by manuscript collections and archives in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, in a common fragment corpus to identify the number of books belonging to the different liturgical genres that are preserved in the Icelandic fragment material. The project integrates methodology from material philology, fragment studies, book history and historical sociolinguistics in an interdisciplinary approach to virtually reconstruct the individual liturgical books and to study those reconstructed liturgical books in their respective historical sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts.

Sagas aus der Vorzeit: Producing a German translation of the fornaldarsögur

Valerie Broustin and Jonas Zeit-Altpeter, University of Bonn

Starting in 2018, a team around Rudolf Simek, Valerie Broustin, and Jonas Zeit-Altpeter has been translating the *fornaldarsögur* into German. Our aim was to produce an accessible rendering for a lay audience while still providing accurate translations as well as necessary context. Three volumes based on Valdimar Ásmundarson's edition have been published so far. They include all major texts of the genre, making *Sagas aus der Vorzeit* the first complete set of *fornaldarsögur* translations in the German language. A supplementary fourth volume including select *íslendingasögur*, original *riddarasögur*, and *þættir* is to be published later this year. The poster will document the processes of translation and publication and highlight individual problems and solutions chosen.

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Conceptualising emotions and bodies in Old Norse

Carolyn Larrington, University of Oxford, Caroline Batten, University of Oxford, Marie Novotná, Charles University, Prague, Edel Porter, University of Castilla-La Mancha, & Teodoro Manrique Antón, University of Castilla-La Mancha

In this round table, the speakers will discuss the ways in which conceptualizations of the body, the mind-body relationship, and the emotional systems posited for a range of Old Norse texts in various genres might interact with one another. The speakers will draw upon different theorizations and different topics of interest to bring together the latest thinking about emotions, bodies and texts within the literary systems of the North.

Better late than never: Olga Smirnitskaya's *The Verse and the Language of Old Germanic Poetry* appears in English

Ilya Sverdlov, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Haukur Porgeirsson, Árnastofnun, Mikael Males, University of Oslo, Michael Schulte, University of Agder, & Maria Volkonskaya

The proposed session is dedicated to a discussion of Prof. Olga A. Smirnitskaya's opus magnum, *The Verse and the Language of Old Germanic Poetry*, which is about to appear in English for the first time since its original publication in Russian in 1994. Prof. Smirnitskaya is a key founding figure in Russian Scandinavian Studies, a long-time ally of Mikhail Steblin-Kamenskij of the *Saga Mind* fame. The main speaker is the editor and translator; the translation is expected to appear in late 2020 – early 2021, published by Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, alongside a new 2nd revised and enlarged edition in Russian, published by Moscow State University, for which the main speaker is also responsible. The Russian original received a glowing 21-page review from Anatoly Liberman (*Scandinavian Studies*, 1998, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 87–108), as well as Lomonosov Prize. The book contains a series of major contributions to the study of poetry and verse in Old Germanic languages, principally Old Norse and Old English, as well as to the fields of comparative literature, oral formulaic theory, issues of authorship in Middle Ages, putative Indo-European poetic language, runology and many others. Inter alia, it presents a new metrical theory of the key skaldic metre *dróttkvætt* – all contributions that the Western parts of the fields of Old Norse and Old English studies have been operating in ignorance of due to the poor spread of knowledge of Russian. This hurdle now being overcome a little less than 30 years since the book's original publication, this round table gathers together a group of leading scholars in the field of Old Norse / Old English poetry, representing younger as well as older generation, men and women, Icelanders, Russians, Englishmen, Norwegians etc., who all agreed to read the full MS of the book made available to them beforehand and discuss whatever issues they find interesting and present their thoughts on the methods used in the book and the results achieved.

The centenary of Hermann Pálsson

Session led by Torfi Tulinius, University of Iceland

Hermann Pálsson was born 26 May 1921, and last year would thus have been his hundredth birthday, in the same year that we would have celebrated fifty years of the Saga Conference. Hermann founded the International Saga Conference when he organized the first one in Edinburgh in 1971 and deserves to be remembered for that. We would like to use this occasion to celebrate Hermann Pálsson, as a person, a friend and a remarkable scholar, especially in light of his contributions to the international field of Old Norse research and the Saga Conference itself.

The new ONP: Multifaceted approaches to medieval texts

Tarrin Wills, University of Copenhagen, Simonetta Battista, University of Copenhagen, Ellert Þórr Jóhannsson, University of Iceland, Johnny F. Lindholm, University of Copenhagen, & Pernille Ellyton, University of Copenhagen

A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose / Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog is a rich and detailed semantic analysis of the lexicon of Old Norse that is founded on the material record of the corpus. The project is hosted at the University of Copenhagen and part of the Arnamagnæan Institute. ONP accounts for the vocabulary of medieval Icelandic and Norwegian prose texts, from around 1150 to 1370 (Norway) and 1540 (Iceland). The dictionary material is the result of extensive excerption work mostly from scholarly editions of manuscript texts and in some cases directly from manuscripts.

The groundbreaking digital *Registre // Indices* (first published in 1989) and the later dictionary entries have always been closely linked, particularly since the major digitisation project of 2005-2009, so that all citations are connected in detail to the editions and manuscripts from which they have been excerpted. Since its launch in 2010 the online version of ONP has given access to the available dictionary material with expanded search capabilities and scanned citation slips and text editions.

In 2019 the online version was relaunched with a totally new interface to ONP. This builds further on this wealth of data to provide additional resources for those reading and interpreting Old Norse texts and genres, as well as interfacing with other digital projects in the field, particularly *Digitale Samlinger*, *Handrit*, *Menota* and the *Skaldic Project*.

This roundtable is a type of workshop that demonstrates many of these new features, as well as different ways in which they can be used to support research into Old Norse language and texts, such as generating glossaries to scholarly editions, accessing foreign parallels, linking to older dictionary resources, manuscript images and electronic text editions and so on. We also present possibilities for semantic analysis and categorisation with a variety of criteria, which may help support projects in different disciplines related to Old Norse studies. The roundtable is organized in three parts: “How it’s made: A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose” (Simonetta Battista & Tarrin Wills), “Ever changing, ever growing: Editing and expanding ONP” (Ellert Þór Jóhannsson & Johnny F. Lindholm), and “An Old Norse multitool: Using the digital ONP” (Tarrin Wills & Pernille Ellyton).

Finnish for total beginners

Alaric Hall, University of Leeds

A fun, no-homework-allowed session learning a bit of Finnish through the medium of English. We'll be learning orally/aurally, so you don't even need a pen! The session really is for total beginners (so don't expect to learn anything new if you have previously studied any Finnish). The session will help you get attuned to spotting the Germanic loanwords that make up vast amounts of Finnish vocabulary: you'll find that you know more Finnish than you think. You'll get to learn a few useful case-endings and enough verbs to put your inflected nouns into some sentences. You'll also start to get a feel for the agglutinative nature of Finnish grammar. We'll focus our vocabulary on words you might need in the pub, so by the end of the session (as well as being able to entertain your friends with a wide variety of existential statements about what in the pub is where), you might actually be able to order a drink.

Why are Finnic traditions interesting for Old Norse research?

Special exhibit sponsored by the Kalevala Society

Why are Finnic traditions interesting for Old Norse research? is formed of a series of posters each with accompanying videos. The posters may be approached in any order, but the exhibit is organized as a progression. Although the exhibit encompasses Finnic traditions generally, Finno-Karelian traditions receive greater attention. The first poster brings relevant traditions into focus by distinguishing Finno-Karelian traditions from the *Kalevala* as an internationally known literary work. The second poster turns to the substantial layer of old Germanic loanwords in Finnic languages, which reflect the richness of contacts and influences between cultures. The third poster turns from language to things people do with language, looking at Finnic and Germanic alliterative poetries and the relationship between them. The fourth poster advances to mythology and epic, drawing attention to the parallels that could hold interest for understanding Scandinavian traditions. The final poster considers ritual specialists as a social nexus of traditions. The following texts offer an overview of the content of the exhibit's five themes.

Poster 1: National epic versus tradition: The case of Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*

Frog and Joonas Ahola, University of Helsinki

Outside of Finland, Karelia and Estonia, most people's first contact with Finnic traditions is mediated through Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1835; 1849) or Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* (1857–1861). The *Kalevala* is usually known through its second edition, also called the *New Kalevala*, published in 1849. The *New Kalevala* radically reorganized the 1835 edition, now known as the *Old Kalevala*, and expanded it to nearly twice its length. Lönnrot's was a literary project to create an epic for the Finnish nation when the ideology of National Romanticism was in bloom, and Kreutzwald sought to do the same for Estonia. Lönnrot's epic, in focus here, is a mythography that reconstructed and reinvented ancient heritage through his own imagination and Lutheran ideology, leading it to resonate with the interests, needs and values of his contemporaries (not all attempted epics did). The *Kalevala* is built from oral poems that Lönnrot and others avidly documented. It is deeply embedded in discussions of the traditions to the point that Lönnrot's epic has shaped how we talk about them. Although a reader of the *Kalevala* becomes familiar with motifs and plots drawn from oral traditions, the epic is a magnificent mosaic of which Lönnrot was the artist as editor. He used the plots of oral epics as outlines that he could fill out or reinvent by cobbling together poems of different genres, inventing new stories from parts of a variety of songs, and even piecing together some passages line by line.¹ The epic's recognizability makes it an easy point of reference for discussing Finno-Karelian traditions, while it can hold additional interest for Old Norse scholarship as a type of analogue for reflecting on Snorri Sturluson's mythography in *Edda* (e.g. Tolley 2000; DuBois 2003). Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* is also quite interesting, but a vernacular oral epic tradition comparably rich in non-Christian mythological and martial epic was lacking in Estonia, leading to a much different literary epic with a distinct relation to the oral traditions (Hasselblatt 2016).

1.1. From oral poems to a long epic

The *Kalevala* is centrally developed from poems in the so-called Kalevala-meter. Kalevalaic poetry is anachronistically named from Lönnrot's epic, much as eddic poetry is named from Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*. The Kalevala-meter was used for a remarkable variety of genres, including epic and ritual poetry. Kalevalaic epic is a short epic form: individual epics were often between about 75–250 lines in performance, varying by plot and regional singing tradition. Although the poetry was variable, poems in narrative genres like epic could be verbally quite regular, repeatable texts (illustrated in Frog 2016) that collectors like Lönnrot believed they

¹ In English, see e.g. Pentikäinen 1999; Honko 2002; in German, see Fromm 1967; in detail, see Kaukonen 1939–1945; 1956; 1979.

could capture. In contrast, Karelian lament poetry frustrated collectors because, when asked to repeat something, lamenters would not use the same words (Stepanova 2014). The stability of the poetry was paralleled by variation, especially between kin group networks or villages and regions. On the one hand, the combination of text stability and variation aligned with approaches to oral poetry through manuscript philology with its reconstructive orientation. On the other hand, Lönnrot not only observed variation; he also seems to have actively asked singers about passages he thought were missing from their performances, and a few of them discussed with him how events in different poems link to one another and how poetry of one genre could be transposed as direct speech into epics, making songs longer. These threads became the warp on which Lönnrot wove his epic.

Such variation was particularly prominent in the northern region of Russian Karelia called Viena or White Sea Karelia. Immigration from other regions a few centuries earlier had brought different regional traditions into ongoing contact, which had two major impacts. It had a general stimulating effect on the tradition (Siikala 2002b), which simultaneously made the alternative features of the regional forms into resources that singers could use and manipulate: they could elaborate or alter individual epics and use the same resources across genres. Moreover, this region had remained the most remote from religious and secular administrative authority. From the perspective of the Russian Empire, it was an inaccessible wilderness comparable to Siberia. The people of the region were Christian,² but it was a self-defined Christianity of so-called “Old Believers”, whose religion remained outside of the 17th-century reforms of Patriarch Nikon and Church-authorized Christianity. Thus, Church-authorized representatives were generally absent, and, when they were encountered, they were usually linguistically, culturally and religiously other. This situation was quite different from the Christianization of Scandinavia, where the change of religion was imposed by authorities with a shared linguistic-cultural identity.

The mythology of kalevalaic poetry was intimately connected with the practices of a type of vernacular ritual specialist, for whom inherited cosmogonic knowledge was extremely important. The richness of vernacular mythology made traditions of Viena and other regions of Russian Karelia a treasure trove for heritage construction. Rather than a fundamentally Christian cosmology into which features of earlier religion survived in local adaptations, kalevalaic mythology retained its inherited framework into which elements of especially medieval Christian mythology were assimilated. These mainly remained complementary, for instance only used in ritual incantations, rather than replacing epic events of cosmological scope like the creation of the world from an egg. Lönnrot approached these traditions through the lens of Romanticism. He was influenced not only by the budding comparativism of his day, but also by Friedrich August Wolf’s (1795) theory that the great Homeric epics evolved from shorter, separate songs – not unlike the kalevalaic oral epics – organized and unified by a great poet – not unlike Lönnrot himself.

1.2. A reconstructive synthesis through an ideological lens

It might seem self-evident that Lönnrot considered many songs or dictated stories in verse as examples of the same text, and that he imagined the tradition in terms of texts that people expressed in different ways. This perspective was common at the time, although philological text criticism and stemmatic analysis were only beginning to take shape. It thus seemed reasonable to combine different examples, enriching and improving them, with a comparative approach that now seems more creative than analytical. And with each version of his epic (the first two initially remaining unpublished), Lönnrot took more liberties in developing its stories and their world.

Lönnrot’s reconstructive approach streamlined and systematized the traditions he presented. The wealth of both local and regional diversity and variation became invisible behind the *Kalevala* as a monolithic text. Exceedingly rare narrative material appears on equal footing with that which was most popular. The coherence of the epic was also contingent on identifying agents who were otherwise distinct in the oral tradition as the same character, creating links

² Cf. Karelian *ristikanza*, which is the basic word for “human being”, but literally means “Christian folk”.

between stories and cycles that were only exceptionally and inconsistently connected, if at all. Although most of the *Kalevala*'s prominent plots, motifs and characters have counterparts in the oral tradition, Lönnrot's creation of systematic links and his synthesis of diverse material simultaneously transformed these into something new, oriented to his contemporary, institutionally educated audience. Furthermore, cobbling together links between epics produced new characters and plots (which is the background of Aino), and he also stitched together diverse material that he envisioned as thematically linked (which is the background of Kullervo).

The Romantic ideological lens correlated nation, language and culture, marking Christian agents as "foreign", driving Lönnrot to erase them from his epic. Ideas of "natural religion" allowed stories of the *Kalevala* to have Christian parallels, and Lönnrot concludes his epic with a story interpretable as the inherited "pagan" religion being replaced by Christianity. However, he reassigned stories linked to Christian agents to non-Christian heroes and purged Christian references from the ritual poetry that fills the mouths of his epic characters. In the *New Kalevala*, Lönnrot distanced his heroes from their divinity so they were not "pagan" gods. For instance, he invented a character Ilmatar to displace Väinämöinen from the creation of the world. He also shaped the stories according to a lens that sought to balance the "spirit" of the people (as he imagined it through his impressions of the poetry) with his own deeply Lutheran ideology.

Lönnrot's vision for his epic seems to have sprung from a straightforward idea of presenting ideal versions of the epics he recorded and organizing and expanding these into a coherent "epic". His expansions drew on diverse material from different genres, which organically led to representations of traditional practices like those of a wedding within the *Kalevala*. These developments reciprocally made one aspect of the *Kalevala* a pedagogical project, representing traditional culture and as a point of reference for learning about it. For example, Lönnrot created a story in which he narrates a bear hunt as a framework in which to present bear hunting and ritual poetry associated with it. The idea of communicating things that people should learn was entangled with Lönnrot's values of family, society and religion, that are woven through his epic.

1.3. A restrictive and overgeneralizing frame

When considering the relationship between Lönnrot's epic and Finno-Karelian traditions, a few critical points come into focus. First, the *Kalevala* transforms traditions into a literary text, reifying them and dislocating them from practices. Such dislocation might seem obvious for ritual poetry in the epic, but some narratives in the *Kalevala* were customarily the narrative portion of a more complex ritual rather than told as "stories". More generally, oral traditions depend on contemporary relevance to survive, without which they are not communicated. They might simply cease or breakdown, with a retasking of elements that receive new meaning as they are adapted into other practices. The oral epics were not simply stories, and understanding their survival in certain regions rather than others is contingent on recognizing how they connected to practices in local societies. Second, the *Kalevala*'s representation not only gives an idealized, reconstructive representation; it more or less exclusively represents traditions told or performed through kalevalaic poetry. The *Kalevala*'s monolithic status eclipses Karelian ritual lament, countless song genres, legends, tales, and so on. Third, the *Kalevala* became viewed as the epic of all "Finnish" peoples, including Karelians and Izhorians. This not only rendered regional variation invisible, but also made the *Kalevala* a representation of heritage in regions of Lutheran Finland where the respective genres of epic and ritual poetry had disappeared. The *Kalevala* has obfuscated diversity and variation in Finno-Karelian traditions, leaving many questions unasked.

1.4. An analogue to Snorri Sturluson's mythography?

The relationship between Lönnrot's epic and oral traditions on which it is based is clear, owing to the extensive documentation of the traditions themselves. This situation offers a valuable frame of comparison for reflecting on the relationship between Snorri's *Edda* and the traditions in its background, for which evidence is extremely limited. Of course, Snorri was writing long before the Enlightenment, let alone Romantic Nationalism. It is grossly anachronistic to imagine

Snorri or his contemporaries wandering the Icelandic countryside, searching out isolated farms where illiterate people (“peasants”?) still remembered poems and stories about ancient gods and heroes that had long been forgotten in households too long within the reach of literacy.³ The analogy promotes reflection on the processes of selection, organization and systematization of traditions behind *Edda* through an ideological lens that was conjoined with an agenda and interpretations. It also provides a frame of reference for reflecting on the variety and diversity of traditions potentially both behind *Edda* and beyond its scope.

Poster 2: A superstrate of Germanic loans

Frog, University of Helsinki

Finnic languages are one branch of the Uralic language family,⁴ which makes Indo-European loans recognizable and also distinguishable by source language and the period of the loan. The classic view is that the earliest layer of Indo-European loans stem from Proto-Indo-Iranian, though the number of words is few and the impacts are found across other West Uralic languages. A subsequent layer of Proto-Baltic loans is considered to be of substrate character; it includes vocabulary that Petri Kallio proposes reflect the spread of Finnic speakers into a different climate zone, and thus may be connected to the spread to the Baltic Sea region (Kallio 2022 forthcoming). The next layer of loanword vocabulary is from Germanic, which eventually becomes tethered to the absolute chronology of Germanic languages through runic evidence. The number of loans is considerable. Kallio has described these as of superstrate character comparable to impact of French on English (2015: 26). The earliest loans derive from Early Proto-Germanic / Pre-Germanic and Germanic loans continue to enter through language contacts today, yet there appears to be a concentration in or just prior to Early Proto-Scandinavian (ca. AD 200–500/550), around the period of the transition from so-called Middle to Late Proto-Finnic (ca. AD 100: Schalin 2018: 69). Valter Lang (2018/2020) has recently made a major contribution to discussion from an archaeological perspective, correlating Late Proto-Finnic with an archaeological culture that emerges and spreads in connection with a trans-Baltic network during the first centuries of the present era. This archaeological study aligns nicely with evidence that the transition to Late Proto-Finnic shortly preceded the transition to Early Proto-Scandinavian (Schalin 2018). The impact of Slavic follows, with significant contacts only starting around the beginning of the Viking Age, carrying the vocabulary of Christianity (Kallio 2014: 164).

2.1. Background

Views of the history of Finnic and Samic languages and also of the broader Uralic language family have been changing rapidly across the past fifteen or so years. These changes have been driven by a combination of developments in historical phonology and introducing what may be described as historical socio-linguistic perspectives. The internal chronology of these languages has been shown to be much shorter than previously thought, the earlier idea that reconstructed proto-languages were uniformly spoken across vast geographical areas has broken down, and there is acknowledgement of the earlier presence of different languages that did not survive to documentation (which, in the region Northeast of the Baltic, mostly seem to be West Uralic, although some are considered Palaeo-European).

Linguistic evidence is crucial for gaining perspectives on the long-term history of Finnic-speaking populations in the Baltic Sea region. A stemmatic model of Finnic language

³ It is worth observing in this context that, in Viena Karelia, the Malinen family, known for their knowledge of epic and ritual poetry and their influence on Lönnrot’s *Kalevala*, were also locally esteemed for their literacy (although this is undocumented for the generation visited by Lönnrot), which also added to their prestige and local authority.

⁴ When the Samoyedic languages were recognized as historically related to the family of languages then called Finno-Ugric, the Samoyedic and Finno-Ugric families were interpreted as the two initial branches of an earlier proto-language called Uralic. Although the term Finno-Ugric remained in widespread use owing to the momentum of recognizability, that has been changing as this model of the breakup of Uralic has been contested, because Finno-Ugric would then not refer to a historical proto-language.

diversification (for which see Kallio 2014) is a conventional frame of reference for considering cultural changes where an absolute chronology is uncertain, correlating language and culture, although such a correlation is problematic (Saarikivi & Lavento 2012). The common principle that language change tends to be more rapid at the center of a language area and more conservative at the peripheries to which it spreads then suggests Southeast Estonia or perhaps east thereof as a center from which Late Proto-Finnic spread (Frog & Saarikivi 2015), but this picture is complicated by recognizing language contact zones (Grünthal 2020). An additional factor is that Germanic influence was formative in the emergence of Late Proto-Finnic oral poetries and their aesthetic principles (Frog 2019a). Insofar as genres of oral poetry are tied to cultural practices, the impacts on poetic systems appear to penetrate across fields of culture. This leads to a model in which the transition from Middle to Late Proto-Finnic was linked to intensive Germanic contacts with transformative impacts on culture. The emerging language form then spread with culture through areas where presumably Middle Proto-Finnic dialects were spoken. This model aligns with Lang's (2018/2020) model for linking the emergence of Late Proto-Finnic to the emergence of an new archaeological culture and its spread to other regions where Finnic became spoken, which in turn correlates well with perspectives on the transition to Late Proto-Finnic beginning slightly before the transition to Proto-Scandinavian (Schalin 2018).

The archaeological culture identified with the emergence of Late Proto-Finnic is situated on the coasts of the Gulf of Finland in a trans-Baltic trade network. This culture then spreads in connection with that trade network and also southward inland, into areas that would later be identified with South Estonian and Livonian. If Late Proto-Finnic dialect diversification of so-called Inland Finnic, which would later produce South Estonian, was beginning already by ca. AD 200 (Kallio 2014: 164), it would seem to be occurring in the process of spread through Middle Proto-Finnic or other language areas. Lang (2018/2019) observes that the region where South Estonian is later spoken retained features of its earlier culture. This opens the question of whether otherwise pervasive changes in language and culture linked to the spread of Late Proto-Finnic and the Common Finnic poetic systems also left room forms of diversity.

2.2. Germanic loans by Finnic language: A quantitative perspective

Diversity in the early phases of Late Proto-Finnic is observable in the distribution of early Germanic loans across Finnic languages, which also has implications for the spread of Late Proto-Finnic. The *Lexikon der älteren germanischen Lehnwörter in den ostseefinnischen Sprachen* (1991–2012; *LägLoS* hereafter) (“Lexicon of older Germanic loanwords in Finnic languages”) lists the languages in which loans have cognates and provides a basis for a quantitative overview of their distribution.⁵ Rather than a dictionary only of words borrowed from Germanic languages, *LägLoS*'s entries review words for which Germanic etymologies have been proposed. Each entry concludes with a label “Germanic”, “Germanic or older”, “Germanic or younger”, “Younger”, “Hardly Germanic” or “Not a Germanic loanword”, and any but the last of these may be accompanied by a question mark. *LägLoS* contain 1,460 entries, of which only the three categories including early Germanic loans and not labelled with a question mark are relevant here. These total 646 loans, with 6 identified as “Germanic or older”, 517 as “Germanic” and 123 as “Germanic or younger”, which together form a core dataset for a quantitative survey,⁶ noting that a few of these words derive from the same borrowed word stem and some are distinct borrowings of the same Germanic word.

A dataset based on *LägLoS*'s entries presents a number of caveats. First, all data is taken as given for the sake of quantitative study, rather than critically reviewing the etymologies or revising data on languages in which cognates are found or the later borrowing of words between

⁵ Etymologies below are cited according to *LägLoS*, unless otherwise noted; cited entries are all indexed with the Modern Finnish word as the headword.

⁶ These counts vary by a few items from the counts of Kallio (2015); Kallio has one additional “Germanic” and one “Germanic or younger loanword” from the count presented here.

Finnic languages.⁷ The exception is to distinguish North and South Estonian on the basis of the EVE database (in ongoing development), where entries are available. *LägLoS* was produced in a long-running project, most of the work on which antedates more recent developments in Finnic linguistics. These developments do not significantly impact interpretations of whether words are or are not Germanic loans, but *LägLoS* treats South Estonian as a dialect of Estonian; South Estonian is now recognized as a distinct language, descendant of so-called Inland Finnic, forming the first branch from the rest of Late Proto-Finnic (Kallio 2014).

Limiting intervention in *LägLoS*'s data is a practical necessity of gaining a quantitative perspective from the dictionary's data, which would otherwise move into producing a new dictionary. Etymological research on Germanic loans has been more prominent in Finland than in Estonia, which presents the possibility that the identification of loans has been weighted toward Finland, especially with regard to the identification of loans in Finnish versus Estonian dialect vocabulary.

Placing individual loans on even a relative chronology is in almost all cases contingent on identifying phonological features that historically change in one or the other language. At best, such features point to an overlap of language phases in the source and target languages, but in many cases it is only possible to say the loan was before or after a certain sound change, or the dating may simply be ambiguous. The only distinguishable substrate in Proto-Finnic is from Proto-Baltic, which suggests that other languages encountered in the region were (West) Uralic, from which loans prior to Late Proto-Finnic are not currently distinguishable from inherited Middle Proto-Finnic vocabulary (Kallio forthcoming), except in toponymy. *LägLoS* reviews cognates of relevant words that entered Samic languages, which can indicate their borrowing before the Great Vowel Shift marking the transition from Pre-Proto-Sami to Proto-Sami (Luobbal [Aikio] 2012). The idea that Finnic and Samic stem from a Finno-Samic proto-language is problematic (Saarikivi 2011). The Baltic substrate, specific to Finnic, makes it seem more likely that they arrived to the Baltic Sea region separately (cf. Kallio forthcoming), but loans between Pre-Proto-Sami and Middle Proto-Finnic cannot currently be distinguished, leaving it unclear whether Germanic loans into Pre-Proto-Sami have been mediated through Proto-Finnic or the Samic and Finnic loans are independent (Luobbal 2012: 73–74). The problem of distinguishing early loans between West Uralic languages is also relevant to the earliest Germanic loans in Finnic, as these may have been mediated by Uralic languages earlier present in the region.

In the core dataset of 646 loans, 124 (19%) are only found in North Finnic (i.e. Finnish, Karelian, Izhorian, Vepsian), with an additional 15 (21.5%) of which *LägLoS* gives possible cognates outside of North Finnic a question mark. Taking only the 523 loans labelled “Germanic” or “Germanic or older”, 92 (17.5%) / 99 (19%) remain. In contrast, just 8 early Germanic loanwords are only found outside of North Finnic in either dataset (1% / 1.5%). That close to 1 in 5 loans is only found in North Finnic while nearer 1 in 100 is only found outside of it is a difference too great to attribute to weighting by a history of national research (noting that the identification of an early loan prompts a search for cognates in other Finnic languages). The 8 loans (two of which derive from the same word stem) lacking North Finnic cognates are so few that they seem more likely lost from North Finnic than to have been borrowed independently. A number of the loans only found in North Finnic are prior to sound changes that mark the transition to Late Proto-Finnic or Early Proto-Scandinavian – i.e. they were borrowed already into Middle Proto-Finnic. The data points to what became North Finnic as at the nexus of early Finnic–Germanic language contacts and presumably the emergence of Late Proto-Finnic. When Late Proto-Finnic spread, it appears that not all of its Germanic loanword vocabulary spread with it, which suggests that it spread through language areas where sufficiently similar language

⁷ For the quantitative survey, loanwords are only treated as more recently borrowed from one Finnic language into another where this is indicated in *LägLoS*'s list of cognates, but not when it is addressed in *LägLoS*'s discussion text. Kallio identifies more cognate vocabulary as such loans in the EVE database, a significant portion of which is vocabulary that has apparently moved from Finland to Estonia.

forms were spoken to reduce the assimilation of “foreign-sounding” vocabulary. The loanword vocabulary supports a view that dialectal diversification emerged in the process of spread, which, for what became North Finnic, was in its lexicon rather than phonology. The differences in language presents the possibility of differences in local culture already at that time.

2.3. Semantic fields and cultural impacts

A detailed survey of these loanword’s distribution by semantic field remains pending, but the vocabulary has been much discussed and is not considered to be of substrate character (i.e. that populations in an area spoke a Germanic language and shifted over to Finnic). It includes few words concerning flora and fauna. Words related to the body indicate the closeness of contacts, but several of these form groups that point to a background of cultural influence, such as words for “butt, anus” (Fi. *laikko*, NF only), “sack, scrotum” (Fi. *kotti*), “vulva” (Fi. *kutta*, NF only), “hip, loin, pelvis” (Fi. *lantio*) and “stomach, belly” (Fi. *maha*). Similarly, several words related to hair seem likely to be connected to a number of words related to apparel. The latter are linked to additional vocabulary of textiles and weaving technology, but they are indicators of changes in fashion, noting that iconography of the Scandinavian Iron Age tends to distinguish gender by hairstyle and clothing, under which anatomical features are invisible. The most prominent semantic fields in the data concern animal husbandry, agriculture (with many words related to hay), terrain, seafaring, the built environment and also health, illness and injury or infirmity, which is also connected to vocabulary of the body.

That Proto-Finnic vocabulary related to sailing and fishing with nets derives from early Germanic contacts has long been recognized. Because Germanic loanwords for animal life are rather few, the Proto- (or Pre-?)Germanic loans for “seal” (PreG **selko-s* or PG **selxa-z* > PF **šelkeš* > *šülkeš* > **hülgeh* > Fi. *hylje* ~ ON *selr*) and “whale” (PG **xwala-z* > PF **valas* > Fi. *valas*) are likely closely linked to the fields of seafaring and fishing. The proportionately limited and diverse vocabulary related to religion and supernatural agents makes it likely that a similarly early loan for “water monster” (PG **þur(i)sa-z* > PF **tursas* > Fi. *tursas*) was not adopted in connection with cosmological mythology but as knowledge of sea life. Cultures considered Germanic-speaking were mobile across the Baltic Sea long before the Iron Age. Problems of distinguishing early loans from other Uralic languages into Middle Proto-Finnic open the possibility that some of these loanwords were borrowed into earlier languages spoken in coastal areas and mediated into Proto-Finnic. Words only found in Finnic and Germanic, like Fi. *hylje* ~ ON *selr*, could also be independent loans from a third, now-extinct language (Saarikivi 2022).

The extensive vocabulary related to animal husbandry, hay and grain agriculture point to significant changes in livelihoods, which can be considered alongside vocabulary linked to social categories like **kuningas* (< PG **kuninga-z* “king”). The vocabulary related to agriculture points to changes in diet. The vocabulary includes words for food, and the verb “to taste” (Fi. *maistaa* < LPF **mayi-* < MPF **maki-* < PG **smakō(ja)n-*, **smakke(ja)n-* or **smakkijan-* or NWG), suggests a change in food culture. Several items are linked to grain, including alcohol, raising the question whether there is a connection to North Finnic **maru* (“belly, fat around the belly”) – i.e. for “beer belly” (< PG **marxwa-z* or > EPSc. **marhwar* > ON *mǫrr* “fat of the innards; tallow”). The number of loans related to the built environment can be considered related to the same network of changes, of which the striking number of words related to logs or things made from trees or parts of trees are probably at least partly related, although the ways of looking at and distinguishing types of wood, logs or trees as resources may also be related to transportation technologies, including not only ships but also sledges and sleighs.

Vocabulary related to changing types of land usage and also how it is viewed from transport by water make it unsurprising to find a large number of loanwords borrowed for types of terrain and landscape. Less expected is that there are several words related to light or visibility and shadow. A number of words are also related to dirt, sand, muck, mucus and also cleanliness. This vocabulary links in some respects to vocabulary for types of terrain, but also to vocabulary of health and the body, which may itself be connected to changes in ritual technologies of healing.

Although vocabulary directly related to religion is relatively low, the changes in ways of life implied in other fields of culture make it unsurprising to find an early loan of the word for “hole, grave” (PG **sauþa-z* > MPF **šavta* > LPF **hauta* ~ OE *seāþ* “hole, grave, spring”). The name found for the agent “Death” is also identified by *LägLoS* as a quite early loan (PG **dawīni-* > MPF *tōne* > LPF *tōni* > Fi. *Tuoni* ~ ON *dán* f. “dead (one)”), and a word for “deceased (person); (Est.) Death” is from the same period or somewhat later (PG **wainaga-z* or EPSc **wainaga-R* > PF **vainaga* > Fi. *vainaja*). These loans point to impacts in understandings of death and probably cosmology as well as funerary practices.

2.3. Semantic fields and language distribution

The weight of loanwords in North Finnic raises the question of whether some of these reflect cultural influences and practices that were either never spread to other language areas or were only introduced into one language area after Late Proto-Finnic’s spread. However, the greater prominence of Germanic loans in North Finnic does not seem to correlate with one or more particular semantic fields of vocabulary. The substantial proportion of vocabulary linked to health and the body in North Finnic seems to correlate with the emergence of a North Finnic type of ritual specialist commonly called a *tietäjä* (“knower, one who knows”), noting that healing was one of his⁸ central function in society. The *tietäjä* is also called by the loanword *runo* (“singer, *tietäjä*”), only found in North Finnic (< PG **rūnō* or EPSc **rūnu* > ON *rún*), which is in complementary distribution with **arpoja* (“diviner”), an agentive noun linked to the **arpa* (“lot, share”), discussed in Poster 5. However, the general impression is that the main difference is mainly in quantity, and thus that what became North Finnic was at or near the center of the formation of Late Proto-Finnic, of which much of the “foreign” loanword vocabulary did not spread. It is also possible that North Finnic was a Middle Proto-Finnic dialect with proportionately more Germanic loans that were largely retained in the transition to Late Proto-Finnic.

The difficulty of assessment is connected with the difficulty of placing most individual loans more precisely on a chronology than “sometime before Scandinavian umlaut”. Nevertheless, even broad categories with relatively few examples tend to exhibit the trend of distribution across languages, such as four words related to weapons, of which 50% are only in North Finnic:

- Fi. *huotra* (“sheath”; NF only) < PG **fōðra-* or EPSc **fōðra* > ON *fóðr* (“lining; sheath”)
- Fi. *keihäs* (“spear”, NF only) < PG **gaiþa-z* > PSc **gaiRa-R* > ON *geirr* (“id.”)
- Fi. *miekka* (“sword”) < PG **mēkja-(z)* > EPSc **mākija(R)* > ON **mækir* (“id.”)
- Fi. *tuppi* < MPF **tuppe* < PG **duppa-z* or **duppan-* or NWG > ... > e.g. MLG *dop* (“(egg)shell, capsule, goblet, pot”), *doppe* (“id.”)

The quantity and extent of vocabulary points to tremendous cultural influences. The loanwords hold interest for the history of individual words, but, collectively, they have potential to offer socio-linguistic perspectives on contacts, through which the source culture is also reflected.

Poster 3: The Finnic alliterative poetries and Germanic alliterative verse

Frog, University of Helsinki

Proto-Finnic speakers not only borrowed Germanic vocabulary but also things people do with language. The poetic ecology of Proto-Finnic was transformed through these contacts, which seem to have entailed the assimilation of line-internal alliteration as a primary organizing principle of poetic discourse. It also involved the more direct assimilation of the Germanic alliterative meter, which produced the Finnic alliterative tetrameter. The Finnic tetrameter was used across a variety of genres, with implications for the spheres of culture into which its use penetrated. This type of assimilation of a poetic form contrasts with use in a single secular genre that is adapted across languages with the associated practices, as in the spread of the medieval European ballad. The Finnic tetrameter’s use extended to mythological epic (in the narrow sense

⁸ The specialist role was historically gendered, although women could also assume the role.

of an authoritative mode for representing knowledge of a collective past, rather than narrative poetry generally) and ritual poetry, linking it to collective social identities. When these factors are considered together, they point to a spread of complex networks of practices in conjunction with Late Proto-Finnic. This reinforces the view that the transition to Late Proto-Finnic is directly connected with a concentration of loanword vocabulary and that the poetic form emerged early enough in this process that it spread with the language form and associated culture. The Finnic tetrameter then emerged in the first centuries of the present era, in which case it provides the earliest evidence of the Germanic alliterative meter and its principles, such as the “resolution” of two light syllables for filling a single strong position.

3.1. Origin of the Finnic alliterative tetrameter or so-called Kalevala-meter

Historically, the Finnic tetrameter was syllabic and had a trochaic rhythm yielding verses of normally 2–4 words. A distinctive feature of the meter is a dual constraint on stressed syllables: in Finnic languages, lexical stress is on the initial syllable; long stressed syllables should be placed in metrically strong positions and short stressed syllables in metrically weak positions. The latter metricalized contrast between metrical and lexical stress seems counter-intuitive (Ross & Lehiste 2001: 116), and long went without a satisfactory explanation. A second distinctive feature is that line-internal alliteration is conventional but not metricalized or mandatory. Earlier theories of the poetic form’s origin focused on the trochaic tetrameter and secondarily sought to explain its distinctive features, brought into focus here.

Mikko Korhonen revealed the speciousness of early theories of the Finnic meter’s Baltic origin (1994: 82–84; cf. Kuusi 1994). He proposed a language-driven theory that became widely accepted: the levelling of contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables in the transition from Middle Proto-Finnic to Late Proto-Finnic “created sufficient conditions for the spontaneous emergence of a new metric system” (1994: 85). Korhonen construed the trochaic rhythm as a more or less automatic formalization of language prosody. An inherited poetic form evolving through language change is incompatible with Korhonen’s language-driven theory: Middle Proto-Finnic phonology reconstructs an accentual meter, excluding any historical relationship to Mordvin syllabic meters (1994: 77–82). The Late Proto-Finnic levelling of contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables seems to have been a precondition for metricalizing contrastive stress (1994: 86), but Korhonen’s extreme language-driven approach is unsound. Contrastive stress is justified as a metrical solution for using words with an odd number of syllables (1994: 86), a view that presumes a priority of the trochaic rhythm over variable stress placement. The effect of the performance mode on elocution (Collinder 1946: 38), which Pentti Leino (1994: 69) links to the emergence of contrastive stress, is overlooked, as is the idiom’s conventional solution for meeting metrical needs of modifying words’ syllabic structure using diminutive forms, verb affixes, particles, etc.⁹ Leino proposed instead that a preference for long syllables in strong positions led to the metricalization of the opposite, justifying the outcome rather than identifying its motivation.

Comparing the Finnic tetrameter with Northern Samoyedic shamanic song meter, Eugen Helimski proposed continuity of the trochaic tetrameter from Proto-Uralic, attributing its survival in these languages versus others to their conservative syllabic structure and continuity of ritual use (e.g. 1998: 44–45). His comparison bundles four metrical features as an (a) isosyllabic, (b) eight-position, (c) tetrameter with (d) trochaic rhythm. Trochaic prosody has been considered common for Uralic languages (Aasmäe et al. 2013: 31), octosyllabic verse has a wide areal distribution for relevant parts of Eurasia (Leisiö 2001), and isosyllabism may have deep roots in Proto-Finnic (Rüütel 1998). Helimski’s theory thus aligns with expectations. A four-millennium continuity of the four-feature bundle remains speculative; isosyllabism is most confident, while the eight-positional, tetrametric and trochaic structure are less certain. Helimski’s theory does not address the distinctive features of the Finnic tetrameter.

⁹ On Raivala’s theory that contrastive stress emerged to distinguish vowel length in song, see Leino 1994: 61–62.

The transition to Late Proto-Finnic coordinates with the assimilation of the Germanic superstrate. Old Germanic meters have a tetrametric base of four strong positions. Its accentual rhythm requires a heavy syllable or two light syllables undergoing “resolution” in strong positions, and metrical alliteration links its half-lines across a caesura. If the Proto-Finnic metrical ecology maintained a principle of isosyllabism in analogous genres, this would exclude “resolution”: short stressed syllables would be excluded from metrically stressed positions. Whether or not the tetrametric structure was inherited or results from the assimilation of the Germanic model, 2–4 words per line would mandate that all long stressed syllables be placed in strong positions while eliminating any regular caesura. Without a caesura, alliteration loses its metrical function, and it could not be metricalized without superseding rules governing the syllabic structuring of verses. This theory of metrical creolization accounts for the distinctive features of the Finnic tetrameter as an integrated part of the history of language contacts (Frog 2019a).

3.2. Alliteration as a poetic organizing principle in Proto-Finnic¹⁰

Alliteration was used across a remarkably wide range of genres in Finnic languages, but, for historical comparative purposes, it is necessary to look to whole poetic systems that can arguably be traced to a common Proto-Finnic heritage. The Finnic tetrameter existed in parallel with another poetic system linked to women’s lament poetry, which was a ritual genre that also provided resources for non-ritual expression. Lament traditions in the Baltic Sea region share a number of features related to long-term cultural contacts (Stepanova 2011), in which the movement of women between speech communities should not be underestimated. Alliteration was a primary organizing principle of Finnic laments, which were performed with a distinct poetic system that does not appear to have been historically based on syllabic rhythms or periodically repeating metrical structures (Frog & Stepanova 2011; Stepanova 2014; see also Oras et al. 2021). As a genre of practice, Finnic lament likely has an unbroken (if continuously evolving) continuity from Proto-Uralic (Stepanova 2012; 2014). Alliteration’s use as a primary organizing principle for this type of verbal art seems to be specific to Finnic languages. As with the Finnic tetrameter and Germanic verse, alliteration is internal to poetic units of utterance rather than linking them in series.

As a systematic verse-organizing principle, alliteration is improbable for Proto-Uralic and unlikely to have entered Proto-Finnic through contact with any language other than Germanic. Although independent emergence of this principle might be hypothetically possible, contextualizing Finnic and Germanic alliteration with their intense history of contacts among alliteration in poetics of the world more generally (where it is rare) makes multigenesis so improbable that it does not warrant serious consideration. The alliterative, accentual verse form is common across the Germanic languages; its emergence is obscure, but it most likely traces from a common language phase, quite probably connected with the shift to stem-initial stress already in Early Proto-Germanic / Pre-Germanic. Moreover, Germanic and Celtic alliteration exhibit a number of striking parallels (Travis 1942: 99) that make a historical relation unambiguous. The relation between Celtic and Germanic alliteration antedates intensive contacts between Germanic and Finnic, and thus cannot be attributed to Finnic contacts. When multigenesis is excluded, alliteration can be assumed to have entered Finnic through Germanic contacts, which would be consistent with the flow of vocabulary into Late Proto-Finnic, and with the flow of culture across the Baltic Sea more generally. Alternative scenarios are difficult to reconcile with language history. The history of Germanic contacts presents the possibility that alliteration entered Proto-Finnic before the tetrameter, but it seems most likely that both the tetrameter and poetic form of Finnic laments developed in connection with broader changes in society and practices across a period of perhaps a few generations. The radical developments in ethnopoetics would have been negotiated across this period to become established in more or less stable forms that spread with Late Proto-Finnic language and culture.

¹⁰ The text of this section has been adapted from Frog 2019a.

Poster 4: Parallels in mythology and epic

Frog and Jesse Barber, University of Helsinki

Much evidence of non-Christian Finnic mythology – or at least of that which is most widely known – stems from poetry in the Finnic tetrameter, and especially from regions of Karelia. In Lutheran Finland and especially in southwestern regions, only traces of this mythology were preserved. On the Gulf of Finland and through Estonia, the singing culture changed and mythological epic or its plots and motifs were assimilated into secular singing genres of what became a women's singing tradition. Comparison across these traditions points to Common Finnic mythological epics. However, North Finnic religion also underwent fundamental changes linked to North Germanic impacts, visible especially in connection with the ritual specialist called a *tietäjä* ("knower, one who knows"), and it is only in Finno-Karelian traditions that many of the striking parallels are found. The prominence of Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, the value placed on "epic" since the Enlightenment and a commonplace assumption that "mythology" is a systematic, unified, objectively existing entity have all made the epic traditions a focal point of discussion, but the mythology of lament is also of interest, as are "prose" traditions.

4.1. Thunder and his adversary

Stories, beliefs and practices related to the thunder god are exceptionally prominent in the Circum-Baltic area, a pattern of development related to long-term contacts, with many shared traditions of narrative, taboos, omens and so on. Many of these traditions exhibit a dualist structure of the god responsible for thunder and his antithesis, of which the narrative traditions are commonly in prose, often connecting strongly with taboos and legends. These traditions include an account (identified as tale-type ATU 1148B) about how the adversary of the thunder god stole his instrument for making thunder while the god slept, and how the god entered his adversary's home in disguise and recovered it. This tradition is found in Finnish, Karelian, North Estonian, South Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, with variations in Samic traditions on and near the Kola Peninsula, in addition to an early example in Greek. On this background, the story in the eddic poem *Prymskviða* looks like a parody, while Þórr's visit to the giant Geirröðr may have much deeper connections to the plot; Finnic variants of ATU 1148B incorporate a fishing adventure paralleling Þórr's with the giant Hymir (Frog 2011; 2014; 2019b).

4.2. Mythology linked to iron-working

Iron-working technology had transformative impacts that penetrated all areas of culture, also extending into mythology. Finnic mythologies had a "smith of heaven", which also seems to have entered into Baltic mythologies. This figure became marginalized in Finno-Karelian traditions and the evidence in North and South Estonian and Livonian is fragmentary, yet he is at the nexus of several motifs with Scandinavian parallels connected with Þórr. Individually, the parallels are weak; taken collectively, they suggest contact-based impact (Frog 2019b).

The mythic smith is attributed with forging the vault of heaven with his hammer and producing thunder and lightning by hammering atop this vault. Þórr is not ascribed with forging and identifying the image of an upturned kettle he lifts with the vault of heaven is contingent on interpretation. However, Saxo Grammaticus tells of giant "Thor's hammers" taken from a temple in Sweden and "ancient" beliefs that thunder was the sound of a blacksmith hammering in heaven (*Gesta Danorum* XIII.5.5). Such a belief may also connect to Finnic and Samic traditions of a "nail star" on which the vault rotates, with its potential counterparts in Old Norse mythology (e.g. Tolley 2009 I: ch. 10). In Finnic and Latvian mythologies, a spark from his hammering falls into a mythic body of water, which in Finno-Karelian mythology is swallowed by a fish, leading to the creation of a net, with which the gods catch the fish and recover this spark that is the origin of fire. Although no Old Norse origin of fire is preserved, Snorri Sturluson describes the invention of the net in connection with a fire, preceding the capture of the disguised Loki as a fish by the gods, in which Þórr becomes the main agent (*Gylfaginning* 50). The mythic smith's fabrication of a bride belongs to a common Finnic epic tradition; in North Finnic and (most)

North Estonian variants, the whole woman is produced from the forge; in South Estonian, she is carved of wood and ornamented by work from the forge. In Finno-Karelian epics, the process is characterized as the smith shoving material into the forge, from which an object results without hammering (a motif that could reflect bronze casting rather than iron-working), a process customarily repeated three times with different results, of which a woman is the last. Snorri describes similar actions by a smith of shoving materials into a forge and taking out completed objects, also in a series of three objects, followed by a second series of three in a challenge. The activity is instigated by Loki cutting off the hair of Þórr's wife Sif and results in her hair made of gold that grows like real hair, along with five additional objects that become attributes of Þórr, Óðinn and Freyr (*Skáldskaparmál* 35). The same motif of production linked to the mythic smith's / thunderer's life-like bride or her attribute is unlikely to be accidental. North Finnic and Baltic mythologies also identify the mythic smith with the liberation of the captured sun or celestial bodies, which is paralleled by the description of Þórr's response to the spoiling of the sky in *Völuspá* and Snorri's account of Þórr killing a giant that would otherwise take the sun, moon and a goddess (*Gylfaginning* 42).

Although the parallels are not at the level of plots, each involves a constellation of features, and each is linked to the “smith of heaven” or Þórr. Collectively, they suggest a “package” of mythology connected with iron-working and an associated god, even if some motifs may have much longer histories. The Finnic word for iron (Fi. *rauta* ~ ON *rauði* [“iron ore”]) is a Palaeo- or Pre-Germanic loan, which may have been introduced with iron artefacts before the technology (Kallio 2015: 30). The spread of the technology from Scandinavia across the Baltic around 500 BC opens the question of whether impacts on mythology reached Proto-Finnic speakers directly, or were (invisibly, in terms of etymology) mediated by speakers of other Uralic languages.

4.3. Cosmological sea life?

The etymological record points to seafaring and net-fishing technologies entering Finnic from North Germanic. Scandinavian mythology does not reflect a prominent maritime culture, presumably taking its essential shape prior to the Viking Age. The exceptions are Þórr's fishing for the world-encircling serpent (noting that the sea is not traversed to reach a different land), and when everyone sails to the final battle at the apocalyptic flood of *ragna røk*. The early loan of **tursas* (“water monster” < PG **pur(i)sa-z*) may be linked to the cosmogonic world serpent, but the earliest evidence of the ouroboros – a serpent forming a circle, biting/eating its own tail – first appears in the Migration Period (Oehrl 2013) and seems anachronistic for a Proto-Germanic loan. The Finnic traditions of the theft of Thunder's instrument include a fishing adventure of the thunder god, but no dragon-like monster is involved (Frog 2019a). A sea monster *Iku turso* (“Ancient Turso [diminutive of *tursas*]”) is present in kalevalaic mythology and one kalevalaic poem, recorded twice from a single early singer, tells of *Iku turso* raising his head from the sea to threaten the boat of *Jumalan poika* (“God's Lad/Son”), who banishes him not to rise again before the end of the world. This story's protagonist is Christian and its background is unclear.

4.4. The transformation of North Finnic mythology

North Finnic traditions show an assimilation of a Scandinavian ritual technology accompanied by transformative changes to the mythology, both restructuring the inherited mythology and richly adding to it. Although the impacts are pervasive, the theonyms are not borrowed, which points to a language ideology that “translated” Scandinavian traditions by equating them with vernacular gods, events and perhaps cosmological structures.

Uralic mythologies had a dualist structure of a sky god, called “Sky, Weather”, and his antithesis. This structure is disrupted in Finno-Karelian traditions. Ilmari or Ilmarinen, whose name identifies him with the inherited sky god, has assimilated the “smith of heaven” identity and retains a connection to thunder and lightning in associated motifs, but is otherwise marginalized. *Ukko* (“Old Man”) is the sky god responsible for thunder, the source of the *tietäjät*'s weapons, armour, and the model for the *tietäjät*'s banishment of agents of chaos (such as

illnesses) from the community. Ilmari rather than Ukko is an actor in kalevalaic epic, but he is most often in a secondary and subordinate position to Väinö or Väinämöinen, whose name identifies him with water and as the historical antithesis of the inherited sky god. Ukko seems to come from outside of the inherited mythology and remains disconnected from it, presenting the possibility that he reflects a more direct assimilation of an earlier form of Pórr (Frog 2013).

Väinö was the *tietäjä ikuinen* (“eternal *tietäjä*”), cultural model for that type of ritual specialist and god of song, as well as an agent of the cosmogony. He is the protagonist in the epic tradition’s wisdom contest, which is structurally contrasted with a competition of shamanic-type spirit-helpers, identified with the anti-hero Lemminkäinen, characterized as a social disruptor. Väinö is the sole demiurge. In the Uralic cosmogony, the sky god orchestrated the raising of the first earth from the primal waters by his antithesis in the form of a waterfowl (Napolskikh 2012). In kalevalaic mythology, the world creation is set in motion through the slaying of the demiurge Väinö, who falls into the primal sea, shapes the sea floor and raises part of his own body as the first earth, simultaneously victim and earth diver, with no sky-god present. The situation parallels the creation in *Völuspá*, where Óðinn and his brothers are presumably the slayers of the prime being Ymir and then raise the first earth constituted of his body from the primal sea, independent of a celestial god. Within the Finno-Karelian ideologies of power, the absence of Ilmari (or Ukko) excludes him from first-hand knowledge of the creation of the world, which is the ultimate source of power in the universe. Although the narratives are different, Väinö’s position directly parallels that of Óðinn as an agent historically contrasted with the celestial god but elevated to dominance as a god of poetry and sorcery characterized by contests of wisdom and its acquisition on otherworld adventures. Assimilating a Scandinavian ritual technology involved the assimilation of a model for the ritual specialist and a corresponding narrative discourse surrounding him. Väinö’s adventures are in mythic time, while Ukko is the most prominent and powerful god in the present world order and the model for acts of ritually expelling illness agents. Väinö and Ukko are complementary models for the *tietäjä*, which opens questions about the relation of Óðinn and Pórr if these were their models.

Parallels between Finno-Karelian and Scandinavian wisdom competitions and acquisitions of mythic knowledge are quite general, whereas narrative parallels in other epics are more pronounced. A long-debated example is of Baldr’s and Lemminkäinen’s deaths as (a) unsuspecting victims (b) of a plant-projectile (c) at or outside a gathering of gods (d) after which the mother attempts or orchestrates an attempt to retrieve her son from Death (Frog 2010). A less widely known example is of Väinö picked up by an otherworld ruler following the creation of the world. He cannot fashion the object of creative power called a *sampo* and promises to send Ilmari to do so in exchange for sending him home. Väinö draws Ilmari from his smithy with the illusion of a fantastic object atop a tree. When the smith climbs the tree to get it, he is carried to the otherworld ruler’s realm in the wind’s boat. Although the framing situation is different, this sequence formally corresponds to Snorri’s account of Loki ransoming himself from Þjazi and drawing Iðunn with the creative power of her apples from Ásgarðr to look at special fruit in a tree, where the giant takes her to his realm by flight (Tolley 2019: 192–194). After the *sampo* is created, Väinö brings Ilmari and a companion on a raid to steal it. The adventure unfolds through a narrative pattern corresponding to one found in several *fornaldarsögur* of a raid on a pagan temple from which the heroes flee by ship (Power 1984). Although this invites the question of whether the narrative pattern is rooted in a lost tradition about gods, Finno-Karelian cultures did not distinguish “divinities” from “humans”, so the contrast may have been unrecognized. More generally, kalevalaic mythology is predominantly framed as set in a maritime milieu, despite being mainly preserved in the inland forested regions of Karelia – Finnic language areas that were among the most distant from maritime environments (Ahola 2014). Scandinavian mythology, though predominantly recorded in Iceland, generally lacks maritime motifs. The repurposing of heroic motifs and narrative patterns might reflect a strategy to better fit the emerging mythology to the (presumably) contemporary Finnic-speaking society.

4.5. Lament mythology

Finnic lament did not narrate mythology; it was a form of verbal art for communication with the dead and other agents of the unseen world, yet ritual usages were embedded in cosmological models. The cosmological models were a frame of reference both referred to and communicated through laments. Both the Finnic tetrameter and lament poetry seem to trace back to the transition to Late Proto-Finnic and its initial spread. The mythology of Karelian laments exhibits marked differences from Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry. More generally, the symbolism of Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry exhibits contrasts in features shared by both lament and North and South Estonian poetry in the Finnic tetrameter. Contrasts in the cosmologies of Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry and Karelian lament may thus be connected to the changes in North Finnic religion. A fundamental point of difference is that kalevalaic epic and incantation characterize the realm of the dead as separated by a river, which in epic requires a ferry to cross. In lament, no river is mentioned, and the realm of the dead is accessed by roads, it is guarded by a dog, which the inhabitants should keep from barking at the one arriving, and it has gates, which must be opened by those inside – something that seems dependent on the pleas, not of the deceased, but of the lamenter. The realm of the dead in Karelian laments corresponds to what seems most common in Scandinavian mythology, where Hel's realm is surrounded by a barrier with a gate that never opens to anyone (living) who travels there; a river is mentioned, but it has a bridge rather than a ferry, and a dog may also be mentioned, although only in *Baldrs draumar*.

Potential relationships to Scandinavian mythology are extremely difficult to assess. Loans for “grave” and what becomes the name of the agent Death precede the sound changes of Late Proto-Finnic, whether at the beginning of the process that produced it or long before, and their significance is a mystery. Traditions related to burial undergo a marked transition during the Iron Age especially in North Finnic areas (Wessman 2010), which suggests changes in associated ideas about death and its realm. At the same time, lament traditions in the Circum-Baltic exhibit numerous shared features that reflect long-term cultural contacts (Stepanova 2011), and could continuously reshape the tradition over time.

4.6. Analogical comparison

For Old Norse research, perhaps the greatest value of Finnic traditions is their potential for analogical comparison. The vast corpora of mythological epic, spread across multiple language areas, can offer detailed perspectives on local and regional variation. The diversity of documented genres reveals that mythology differs considerably between types of discourses and specialists' traditions of verbal art. It offers perspectives on types of traditions that seem to have gone largely or wholly undocumented in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, such as women's lament or the rich legend discourse surrounding thunder and associated taboos. The Finnic materials highlight that the continuity of many traditions is linked to ritual specialist roles.

Poster 5: Ritual specialists

Frog, University of Helsinki, and Eila Stepanova, Karelian Culture Foundation

The intense documentation of Finnic traditional cultures in the nineteenth and early twentieth century revealed a variety of terms and practices linked to different types of specialist roles. The terms and practices are historically stratified and varied by region. Here, concern is for those with continuity from the Iron Age.

5.1. The **arpoja*

The earliest recorded term for a Finnic ritual specialist is Old Russian *arbuĵ* (“sorcerer”), which transparently reflects a derivative of Proto-Finnic **arpoja*, which means “diviner”, but also “healer” and/or “sorcerer” in Votic and South Estonian, and which simply means “witch, sorcerer” in Livonian. Proto-Finnic **arpa* (“lot, share”) is an early Germanic loan connected to divination and fate, a word also borrowed directly or indirectly into Pre-Proto-Sami. The derivative noun **arpoja* is only found outside of North Finnic, with the exception of North

Finnic examples in an isogloss around the region of intensive contacts with Votic. Phonologically, **arpa* could be borrowed from Proto-Germanic into Middle Proto-Finnic (PG n. **arba-* > OSw *arf* or PG m. **arba-z* > ON *arfr*) or Early Proto-Scandinavian into Late Proto-Finnic (PSc n. **arba* or m. *arba-R*). The Germanic cognates concern inheritance, which may be “a late juridical innovation” found in an isogloss of Indo-European languages (Kroon 2013: 33). The Finnic loan could reflect earlier (and perhaps at the time still parallel) semantics, which would support the possibility that the loan was linked to a ritual technology. The absence of **arpoja* from North Finnic, which retained **arpa*, indicates that it was either lost or never established in the respective Late Proto-Finnic language area. Although the agentive noun could be an innovation that only spread outside of North Finnic, Pre-Proto-Sami **arpa* supports an early prominence of the phenomenon and a connection to a North Germanic ritual technology, increasing the probability that **arpoja* was an early word to refer to an associated specialist.

5.2. The *tietäjä*

In North Finnic languages, *tietäjä* was the most commonly and widely used term for a specialist in healing and sorcery who was aligned with the community. Today, *tietäjä* has been elevated to a term for specialists that characteristically used a particular ritual technology built on kalevalaic poetry and associated rite techniques, and that was linked to understandings of the human body and of agents and forces in the world. The ritual poetry is discussed as “incantations”, earlier reified as “texts” with supernatural efficacy commensurate to verbal charms elsewhere in Europe. Cognates of the word *tietäjä* were not commonly used for ritual specialists in other Finnic languages, pointing to the designation itself as an innovation. Alongside *tietäjä*, the loanword *runo* (“singer, *tietäjä*” ~ ON *rún*) is also only found in North Finnic. West Uralic **nojta* (cf. North Sami *noaidi*) became stigmatized in North Finnic, referring to a dangerous and powerful outsider, whereas in Estonia it retained positive use (in parallel to becoming a word for “witch” through Christian discourse). The complementary distribution of *tietäjä/runo* and forms of **arpoja* is paralleled by the othering of North Finnic *noita*.

The *tietäjä* tradition is characterized by a number of distinctive features. The *tietäjä*’s incantations initially received special attention because they could incorporate epic mythological poetry of sometimes a hundred or many more lines in length. Although the incantations could incorporate parts of epics that were also sung independently, many mythological narratives such as *The origin of iron*, *The origin of fire* and *The great oak*, only circulated as ritually performed mythic knowledge, recited as the aetiology of the harm being treated in a healing event. Although short epic narratives described as *historiolae* are common in European incantations, the *tietäjä*’s so-called “origin incantations” were recognized early on as specific to the North Finnic tradition, not shared in North and South Estonian (Krohn 1901); this use of aetiological narratives in incantations was later shown to be generally unusual in the world (Honko 1959).¹¹ The shift in research attention from reconstructing ideal texts to performance turned attention from incantations themselves to healing events as a ritual drama in which the *tietäjä* acts as a representative of the thunder god, who provides weapons, armour and support to overcome the cause of illness or harm (Haavio 1967: 340–341). The *tietäjä*’s feats were enabled through distinctive incantations and rite techniques for “raising” his power. The state of “raised” power equated to a motoric trance characterized by a heightened embodied performance of anger and aggression (Siikala 2002a: ch. 11). The state of “raised” power was conceived in terms of embodied agency, which made the specialist’s body impenetrable to supernatural forces, sharp iron, bullets and so forth, as well as increasing the performer’s ability to affect other things, such as stopping blood flow, controlling animals, supernatural agents and objects. Rather than the *tietäjä*’s incantations functioning mechanically through recitation, they were conceived as

¹¹ Occasional phrases in Estonian charms like “I know your origin” do not necessarily refer to aetiologies; a *tietäjä* also made claims of knowledge of genealogical origins (e.g. knowing an illness’s parents their location), which has direct parallels in knowledge used in shamanic traditions discussed by Anna-Leena Siikala (2002a: 89–90).

situationally produced real-time engagements with unseen agents and forces. They were built on predictable strategies of action with correspondingly predictable outcomes while being variable in relation to the counter-roles projected in the ritual. The ritual technology has a number of distinctive features from text types and trance states to body image and the relation to the celestial god Ukko. The *tietäjä*'s central social position produced a predominance of the Finnic tetrameter for incantations generally, which is not matched in North and South Estonian.

Although verbal charms are preserved in several Old Germanic languages, the evidence is quite limited, and information on associated ritual performance is even more sparse. Neither this nor later evidence exhibits “origin incantations” in the sense of using the aetiology of the source of harm or illness as a *historiola*. The eddic poem *Heimdallargaldr* (“Heimdallr’s charm”) included the god Heimdallr’s origin, opening the possibility that knowledge of origins was linked to the charming tradition (Tolley 2021). Recitals of knowledge of origins and endings is central to the eddic poems *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Völuspá*, where it can be seen as a resource and the knowledge as a source of power acquired by Óðinn, the god of sorcery. Such a discourse surrounding mythic knowledge of origins could be connected to the use of such mythic knowledge in “origin incantations”. Alaric Hall (2009) has argued on the basis of runic charms that some Old Norse healing rituals identified illnesses as supernatural agents to be expelled or destroyed by the power of Þórr, which parallels the structure of *tietäjä* rituals in which the healer acts as the representative of the thunder god (see also Frog 2021). The *tietäjä*'s body image, conceived as having a boundary that can be made impenetrable to weapons, was enacted in legends by walking on sharp iron, like the blade of a scythe, or on hot coals. Its connection to an embodied performance of heightened aggression parallels descriptions of *berserkr* warriors. This is not to say that *berserkr* were ritual healers, but the principles of their ritual technology may have operated across practices. The *tietäjä*'s model of the body is also opposed to that of classic shamanism by excluding the possibility of a separable soul, like that in Sami shamanic traditions, which can move and act in the world independent of the body. This structural othering of bodies was also built into Finno-Karelian legend traditions, where it directly parallels that of Scandinavian legend traditions. The points of comparison are fragmented, but they are complemented by the numerous North Germanic loans in North Finnic linked to health and the body and also by the impacts on kalevalaic mythology and epic, which are in turn bound up with the ideology and identity representations of the *tietäjä* institution. Collectively, these fragments suggest a North Germanic technology and traditions were assimilated. These traditions also point to a competitive or hostile opposition to types of specialists called **noita*, but not **arpoja*.

5.3. The lamenter¹²

Laments are considered to be among the most archaic genres of verbal art and can be generally defined as:

sung poetry of varying degrees of improvisation, which nonetheless follow conventionalized rules of traditional verbal and non-verbal expression, most often performed by women in ritual contexts and potentially also on non-ritual grievous occasions (Stepanova 2015: 258).

As improvised sung poetry with its own conventional organizational restrictions, Finnic lament is a form of verbal art that deviates markedly from other forms of speech behaviour (Stepanova 2012; 2014; 2015). Lament in this formal sense is an unambiguously gendered practice emblematic of “lamer” as a woman’s role (Stepanova 2015: 270–271). Laments were customary to particular situations and integrated into certain ritual contexts, even if women might express themselves through lament in other contexts as well. The most central and historically enduring context was in connection with funerary and remembrance rituals. However, like other lament traditions in the Baltic Sea region, Karelian laments were also used in other rituals of separation where a person prepared to depart to become a member of another

¹² The text of this section has been adapted from Stepanova & Frog 2019.

community. The main additional contexts were weddings, in connection with the bride's departure to the household of the groom, and ceremonies for men conscripted into military service; both were conceived as symbolically equivalent to movement from the world of the living to the world of the dead (Stepanova & Frog 2015).

The modern conception of death based on biology does not correspond to ways of thinking in pre-modern cultures. Before modern understandings spread through Finnic societies, death was conceived as a transition from one community to another. In Karelia, for example, the cemetery was organized and understood as an inhabited, neighbouring village with which ongoing social relations were maintained (Tarkka 2013: 399–402). The movement of the bride was similarly to a new community where she would initially have the lowest status among adults and little or no contact with her birth family. In its turn, conscription to military service would be for many years, and a young man might not return, or would not return as the person who left: in vernacular imagination, these movements were equivalent to movements between worlds (Stepanova 2014; Stepanova & Frog 2015).

The Circum-Baltic area formed a macro-region of lament traditions in which the traditions influenced one another, developing networks of shared features across centuries of ongoing contacts (Stepanova 2011). Evidence of Scandinavian laments is scarce. Lament performance is represented in some eddic poems, but lament speech is conformed to the epic meter. Laments as such were not generally “saga worthy”, and, where lament poetry is expected may be found, skaldic *dróttkvætt* verse may appear, attributing the woman with the saga genre's characteristic mode for elevated speech. Nevertheless, lament is found more widely in Germanic traditions, such as the lamenter is described as performing at Beowulf's funeral, and lamenters were still found in Scandinavia into the nineteenth century (Stepanova & Frog 2019; Frog & Stepanova 2023).

Karelian laments provide an illustration of how tightly laments were linked to worldview. The lament register, rich in circumlocutions, was believed to be the only language that the dead could understand. Laments were thus a way of speaking that provided a crucial medium of communication with a deceased person and ancestors, for which alternatives were not available. Lamenters understood that the dead could reciprocally communicate through dreams or return in the form of birds or butterflies (paralleled by beliefs linked to Baltic and Slavic laments: Stepanova 2011: 138–139). Lament was also used for communication with other supernatural beings, where the potential for the use of other registers of communication is less clear (Stepanova 2012). As a specialist in an exclusive medium for interaction with certain otherworld agents and communities, the lamenter became an authoritative mediator representing the living community. In addition, laments were understood as crucial for a deceased person's successful journey to the otherworld. A lamenter awakened the ancestors, prompted them to open their gates, to quiet the dog guarding their realm, and to receive the newly deceased with candles: through her performance, the lamenter actualized the events unfolding in the unseen world, from the deceased's journey along otherworld roads to his or her integration into the otherworld community (Stepanova 2014; 2017). Karelian laments were thus supernaturally empowered.

Belief traditions connected with Karelian laments retained a pronounced vitality. It also retained an esteem that allowed its continued use into the present century as a mode of elevated and respectful speech outside of grievous situations, for example to express thanks and appreciation. The potential for laments to affect the world and laments' significance for both transition rituals and maintaining open channels of communication with deceased kin structured their significance in society. That significance changed along generational gaps and with changes in society that affected perspectives on lament's ritual uses in both Karelian and other lament traditions. The ritual power of laments in managing the movement between worlds and the tradition's evolution through cross-linguistic networks is illustrated by a distinctive use for banishing bedbugs, removing them from the house and lamenting their (permanent and irrevocable) departure. Such rituals are only rarely attested for Karelian laments and are more common in North Russian and Komi lament traditions (Mišarina 2012). Komi is an Uralic

language, but the Komi words for both “bedbugs” and a word for “lament” come from Finnic (Saarikivi 2018: 294–295): this distinctive banishment ritual may have spread through contact networks rather than reflecting a common Uralic heritage.

Recognizing that Scandinavia belonged to a macro-region of lament traditions adds a frame of reference for reflecting on practices behind social situations and what may be implicit and taken for granted in written sources. The macro-region suggests that lament was not only an integrated ritual component of funerary practices in which the lamenter would be a prominent or even emblematic figure, but also that lament would be equally integrated in wedding rituals and probably also in departure ceremonies for those going on long-term expeditions for war or trade.

5.4. Perspectives for Old Norse research

The different types of specialists reviewed here are of interest for potential historical connections to North Germanic traditions, their ritual technologies and practices. More generally, the examples of ritual specialists highlight how a specialist institution forms a nexus for the durability of traditions with which they are connected. They illustrate that the institutions develop structural relationships to one another and, alongside organic variation that develops between different regions and local communities, new institutions can become established or displace one another through historical changes, leading to significant differences even within a language area. The extensive evidence offers far more sophisticated and subtle perspectives on many specialist institutions than is possible in the Old Norse record, where some types of specialists and practices remain largely or wholly invisible.

6. Dimensions of interest

Finnic traditions hold numerous dimensions of interest for Old Norse research, of which only a few are mentioned here. Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* gives an idea about these traditions, but the perspective it offers is narrowly concentrated on Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry rather than on Finno-Karelian traditions generally, let alone on Finnic traditions more broadly. The representation that it offers is also idealized and filtered through the imaginative and ideological lens of its creator. Loanword evidence presents a solid base for considering historical contacts in different fields of culture. The linguistic data is complemented by evidence of fundamental impacts on oral poetry, which doubtless resounded through the genres with which the poetry was connected. These are further complemented by parallels in the mythology, which are particularly pronounced in Finno-Karelian mythology of kalevalaic epic and incantation. Although a historical connection behind individual parallels may remain ambiguous, taken together they point to similarly pervasive impacts. On that background, the lack of borrowed theonyms becomes more pronounced, reflecting ideological stances presumably linked to ritual specialists as central nodes for both stability and change in the traditions.

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