HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS STUDENT CONFERENCE
ON THE MEDIEVAL NORTH

Proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North (Reykjavík, April 15–17, 2021)

Edited by Katrín Lísa L. Mikaelsdóttir, Felix Lummer, Eirik Westcoat, Ermenegilda Müller, Luca Panaro, Lea Pokorny, and Giulia Zorzan

University of Iceland Centre for Medieval Studies

Proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North
(Reykjavík, April 15–17, 2021)

Proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North
(Reykjavík, April 15–17, 2021)

Edited by Katrín Lísa L. Mikaelsdóttir, Felix Lummer, Eirik Westcoat, Ermenegilda Müller, Luca Panaro, Lea Pokorny, and Giulia Zorzan

Proceedings of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North
(Reykjavík, April 15–17, 2021)

Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief: Katrín Lísa L. Mikaelsdóttir
Felix Lummer

Copy Editors: Eirik Westcoat
Ermenegilda Müller
Luca Panaro
Lea Pokorny
Giulia Zorzan

Advisory Board: Maximilian Jesiolowski
Kristine Mærsk Werner
Giorgia Sottotetti
Adela Quero

Table of Contents

Preface

Katrín Lísa L. Mikaelsdóttir
President of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North
Reykjavík, October 2021

The Háskoli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North was established in 2011 as an annual international and interdisciplinary forum for graduate students of Old Norse and broadly defined Medieval Scandinavia including but not limited to Archaeology, History, (Comparative) Literature, Old Nordic Religion, Linguistics, Editing and Digitisation, Codicology, Manuscript Transmission, Gender and Queer Studies, Ludology, and Modern Reception Studies. The conference is organised by Early Career Researchers and postgraduate students and at the University of Iceland.

In recent years, the Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North has become a successful event with a steadily growing number of attendees. As the conference was held for the tenth time from April 15–17, 2021, we were delighted to expand the conference to a three-day online event on Zoom and Twitch and to introduce several new initiatives including a virtual exhibition of 14 posters, two keynote lectures, a manuscript showcase and a workshop on bookmaking and illuminated manuscripts. The conference comprised papers and posters from 51 graduate students and Early Career Researchers affiliated with 29 universities and institutions in 15 countries. These proceedings compile selected abstracts from the event in a more easily accessible format.

The papers and posters at the conference showed a variety of novel research in the field of Medieval Norse Studies. Among the wide range of diverse, interdisciplinary topics, an encompassing question became evident: How do our interactions with the past shape the present and the future of research and us as researchers? Three key themes emerged:

First, a significant number of papers engaged with the layers that comprise cultural identity, in particular, how it is created, how it impacts the relationship between individuals and communities, and what we can learn from it. Some speakers considered the internal and external perception of Old Norse culture, people and language, most notably regarding ability and disability, supernatural entities, and other marginalised groups. Some speakers focused on abstract concepts, for instance, dreams, performance, memory, and emotions, while others explored the changing image of Old Norse concepts in postmodern literature, media, and games.

Second, several papers demonstrated instances of exciting technologies, such as LiDAR DEMs, 3D models, databases and mapping tools that can be useful contributions to our understanding of the Old Norse world. This trend underlines the increasing importance of Digital Humanities.

Third, particularly the two keynote lectures and concluding conference reception presented strategies for Early Career Researchers to discuss how we can benefit from the knowledge and understanding of the Medieval North, and how to use it to develop our professional careers and build networks. Both keynote speakers, Dr Beeke Stegmann and Dr Luke John Murphy gave significant insights into the different possible pathways of academic careers by sharing their personal journeys with the audience.

The organising committee would like to thank all participants of the 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North. We would also like to thank the sponsors of the conference for their generous support, particularly Enkon A/S, Reykjavík UNESCO City of Literature, and Rimmugýgur, and we are grateful for the following institutions and universities which have been providing facilities,

Conference Organizers and Participants

The 10th Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North
Virtual Conference, Reykjavík, Iceland
15th – 17th April 2021

Organising Committee

Katrín Lísa van der Linde Mikaelsdóttir
Ermenegilda Müller
Felix Lummer
Eirik Westcoat
Luca Panaro
Lea Pokorny
Kristine Mærsk Werner
Giulia Zorzan
Giorgia Sottotetti
Adela Quero
Maximilian Jesiolowski

Keynote Speakers

Beeke Stegmann (The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies)
Luke John Murphy (University of Iceland)

Participants

Aaron Sheldon
Alisa Heskin
Amrei Katharina Stanzel
Amy Blank
Ben Chennells
Bethany Porter
Carina Damm
Caterina Casati
Charles Tolkien-Gillett
Clare Mulley
Colin Fisher
Dariana Plăeșu
Davide Salmoiraghi
Eline Margrete Hjellum
Eliza Bond
Ema Grey Bushnell
Eugenia Vorobeva
George C. Manning
Gregory Gaines

Hakan Keith Hazzard
Harriet Clark
Helen Malbon
Ioannis Siopis
Isabella Clarke
Isabelle Maria Soares
James Robert Burns
Jan Martin Jürgensen
Karl Farrugia
Katherine S. Beard
Kim Bergqvist
Kári Pálsson
Luna Polinelli
Lysiane Lasausse
Megan Schlanker
Michael Lazar
Miguel Diogo Andrade
Natasha A. J. Bradley
Nicola Louise Nuttall

Olivia Little
Olivia Elliott Smith
Piergiorgio Consagra
Rebecca Mae Mason
Ryan Fenster
Samuel R. Levin
Sarah Sulollari
Scott T. McCreadie
Sean Spillane
Sergey Chesta
Tom Lorenz
Tristan Alphey
Victor Barabino

Official Conference Programme

THURSDAY, APRIL 15th (09:00 – 17:30)

09:00
Welcome and opening remarks – Katrín Lísa van der Linde Mikaelsdóttir

09:15 – 10:15
Session 1: Seeing the World Through Different Eyes: Medieval Art and Maps
Chair: Luca Panaro

> 09:15
> **Ioannis Siopis, PhD student, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Research Fellow of the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I - ΕΛΙΔΕΚ), Greece**
> *The Byzantine Last Judgement in Flatatunga of Iceland. A New Approach*
> 09:45
> **Amrei Katharina Stanzel, MA student, University of Vienna, Austria**
> **Sarah Sulollari, MA student, University of Vienna, Austria**
> *Mapping Heimskringla: In the tracks of the Old Norwegian Kings*

10:30 – 12:00
Session 2: King – Bishop – Pawn: Of Historical Figures and the Creation of Cultural Identity
Chair: Lea Pokorny

> 10:30
> **Harriet Clark, PhD student, University of Nottingham, England**
> *Becoming King: The Successions of Co-Rulers in Norway, c.1035–1130*
> 11:00
> **Sergey Chesta, PhD student, Lomonosow Moscow State University, Russia**
> *Thomas Becket as an Equivalent to a Dynastic Saint: Martyrdom, Name-giving and the Legitimation of Power in Late Twelfth-Century Denmark*
> 11:30
> **Olivia Elliott Smith, PhD student, University of Oxford, England**
> *Incompatible Pasts? Proximity to the Dead and the Negotiation of Icelandic Cultural Identity in Þorláks saga helga, Laxdæla saga and Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*

12:00 – 13:30
VIRTUAL POSTER EXHIBITION
Moderator: Giulia Zorzan | 3D-Model: Adela Quero

> *12:00 – 12:30: Q&A Group 1: Archaeological Perspectives in the Medieval North*
> **Amy Blank, MA student, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland**
> *Finding the Norse in Medieval Orkney*
> **Colin Fisher, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland**
> *Holy hörgr, haugr horror: Interactions with Passage Tombs in the Viking Age*
> **Rebecca Mason, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland**

The Burial Mound and its Occupant in Old Norse-Icelandic Saga Literature
Nicola Louise Nuttall, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland
War or Peace? Viking Settlement in the 10th Century North-West England
Luna Polinelli, MA, University of Iceland, Iceland
The Historicity of the Völva: A Comparative Analysis

12:30 – 13:00: Q&A Group 2: The Importance of Memory and Cultural Concepts
Jan Jürgensen, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland
Of Legomancy and Magic Song – Words of Power. Law, Magic & Poetry in Old Norse Saga Literature
Lysiane Lasausse, PhD student, University of Helsinki, Finland
Vikings in Gaming, Gaming with Vikings
Olivia Little, MA student, University of York, England
The Role of Memory in Viking and Anglo-Scandinavian Identity
Andrew Yakovenko, MA student, Moscow Pedagogical State University, Russia
The Concept of Sin in the Early Irish and Anglo-Saxon Tradition

13:00 – 13:30: Q&A Group 3: Law, Religion, and the Role of Women
Victor Barabino, PhD student, University of Caen, France
Warriors of Odin: Fighting for a God before Militia Christi in Medieval Scandinavia
Eliza Bond, MA student, Queen's University, Canada
Fluid Valkyries: Roles and Personalities of the Women in Beowulf
Alisa Heskin, MA student, Western Michigan University, USA
'If Necessity Drives Him to It': Legal Culpability in Hrafnkels saga
Tom Lorenz, PhD student, NTNU, Norway
Liturgical Books in Icelandic Palimpsests
Anastasiia Gnatchenko, MA student, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia
The Image of Scandinavia in the European Cartography of the XV and XVI Centuries

13:30 – 15:00
Session 3: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Vikings Beyond Scandinavia
Chair: Kristine Mærsk Werner

13:30
Carina Damm, PhD student, University of Leipzig, Germany
Raiding for Love – Patterns of Polygyny among the Eastern Vikings
14:00
Karl Farrugia, MA student, University of Oslo, Norway
Did the Arabs Call Vikings 'Magians'? A Reevaluated Analysis
14:30
James Burns, MA student, University of York, England
*'Some went mad, some were covered in sores, some discharged their guts':
Christian Schadenfreude and Humiliating Depictions of the Vikings*

15:15 – 16:15
Session 4: Chivalric Romances and the Quest for Retrieval
Chair: Dr Felix Lummer

15:15
Caterina Casati, PhD student, École Pratique des Hautes Études, France
The Icelandic Flóvents saga and the Italian Fioravante.
Research on a lost version of the Chanson de Floovant

15:45
Isabella Clarke, PhD student, University of Oxford, England
Remembering Love: The Hall of Statues in Tristrams saga

16:30 – 17:30
Session 5: The Post-Medieval North: Modern Reception of Old Norse Culture
Chair: Luca Panaro

16:30
Gregory Gaines, PhD student, University of Maine, USA
The Cultural Legacy of the Vinland Sagas and Scandinavian Emigration

17:00
Isabelle Maria Soares, PhD student, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil
History and Memory in Bernard Cornwell's 'Saxon Stories'

17:30: Official programme ends

18:00: Workshop: Manuscript crafts
Instructors: Ermenegilda Müller and Rain Mason.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16th (08:30 – 18:00)

08:30 – 09:30
Session 6: Shape of You: Perceptions of the Human Body
Chair: Ermenegilda Müller

08:30
Megan Schlanker, MSc student, University of York, England
Disability in the Viking Age

09:00
Eline Margrete Hjellum, MA, Assistant Professor, NLA University College, Norway
Symbolic Meanings of the Human Body in The Old Norwegian Homily Book

09:45 – 11:15
Session 7: Words Define Who We Are: The Meaning of Names and Expressions
Chair: Kristine Mærsk Werner

09:45
Eugenia Vorobeva, PhD student, University of Oxford, England
Thrown Purse or Overthrown Authority:
Proverb, Emotion and Power-Shifting in the Saga Narrative

10:15
Piergiorgio Consagra, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland
"Rannveig mælti": An Analysis of the Role and Utterances of a
Secondary Character in Brennu-Njáls saga

10:45

Tristan Alphey, PhD student, University of Oxford, England

Landnámabók – A Socio-Onomastic Case-Study

11:30 – 13:00

Session 8: Inner Workings: Analysing the Narrative Use of Emotions in Saga Literature

Chair: Dr Felix Lummer

11:30

Aaron Sheldon, PhD student, University of York, England

The 'Bed of Grief': Fathers, Sons, and Love in Old Norse Sagas

12:00

Dariana Plăeșu, PhD student, University of Bucharest, Romania

An Analysis of Cunning in the Conflicts of Gísla saga and Njáls saga

12:30

George C. Manning, PhD student, University of Oxford, England

Anger and Self-Control in Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar

13:00 – 14:00: Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:00: Keynote Speaker: Dr Beeke Stegmann, Research Lecturer, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

Hopes and opportunities: Thoughts on pursuing an academic career

15:15 – 16:45

Session 9: Active Outskirts: Rituals and Conversion in Iceland and Shetland

Chair: Giorgia Sottotetti

15:15

Ema Grey Bushnell, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland

Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust: Ritual Activity at Hofstaðir, Northern Iceland

15:45

Hakan Keith Hazzard, MSc student, University of Iceland, Iceland

Helen Malbon, PhD student, Keele University, England

Detection, Identification and Interpretation of Celtic Roundhouses at Jarlshof, Shetland and Seltjarnarnes, Iceland from Remotely-Sensed Data

16:15

Scott T. McCreadie, PhD student, University of Glasgow, Scotland

Norse Christianisation and Conversion in Viking Age Shetland

17:00 – 18:00

Session 10: How to Train Your Dragon: The Role of Dragons in Narratives and Illuminations

Chair: Giulia Zorzan

17:00

Miguel Andrade, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland

Sigurðr hinn þǫgli – Growing up with Dragons in Indigenous Riddarasǫgur

17:30

Bethany Porter, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland

East Anglian Influence in Icelandic Medieval Manuscripts

18:00: Official programme ends

18:30: Foundations of the Field: A Virtual Manuscript Exhibition
in Cooperation with Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum
Ermenegilda Müller, Giulia Zorzan, Lea Pokorny and Luca Panaro

SATURDAY, APRIL 17th (09:00 – 18:15)

09:00 – 09:30
Session 11: Objects of Power and the Power of Objects
Chair: Eirik Westcoat

> 09:00
>
> **Katherine Beard, PhD student, University of Oxford, England**
> *The Eitri Platform: A Digital Analysis of the Þórr's Hammer Symbol*

09:45 – 11:15
Session 12: A Link to the Past: Memory, Identity, and Imagination
Chair: Eirik Westcoat

> 09:45
>
> **Ben Chennells, PhD, University College London, England**
> *Dual Identities and 'Double Scenes':*
> *The Transformation of Physical and Mental Space in Performances of Eddic Poetry*
>
> 10:15
>
> **Samuel R. Levin, MA, University of Iceland/University of Oslo, Iceland/Norway**
> *Hlǫðskviða and Wīdsīð: A Case Study in Oral-Literate Networks and*
> *Medieval Memory of the Migration Period*
>
> 10:45
>
> **Kári Pálsson, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland**
> *Timing of Dreams in Gísla saga Súrssonar*

11:30 – 13:00
Session 13: Of Monsters and Men: Interpersonal Relationships and Supernatural Encounters
Chair: Dr Felix Lummer

> 11:30
>
> **Natasha Bradley, PhD student, University of Oxford, England**
> *The Dynastic Family: Vertical Relationships in the Hauksbók redaction of Breta sǫgur*
>
> 12:00
>
> **Clare Mulley, PhD student, University of Oxford, England**
> *Trollbusting: The Use of Poetic Language in Supernatural Encounters*
>
> 12:30
>
> **Sean Spillane, PhD student, Fordham University, New York, USA**
> *Translating the Werewolf: the Strengleikar, Bisclavret, and*
> *King Hákon Hákonarson's Royal Court*

13:00 – 14:00: Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:00: Keynote Speaker: Dr Luke John Murphy, Postdoctoral Researcher,
University of Iceland
'I Have a Cunning Plan': Strategy, Flexibility, and Reality in Early Research Careers

15:15 – 16:45
Session 14: The Challenge of Being a Christian: Unsung Heroes and the Struggles of Kingship
Chair: Giorgia Sottotetti

15:15
Davide Salmoiraghi, PhD student, University of Cambridge, England
Ambrósíuss saga biskups. Notes on the Norse Vita of a Neglected Church Father
15:45
Ryan Fenster, PhD student, University of Iceland, Iceland
Adalbert in Kiev: The Story of an Unsuccessful Missionary, 959–962 AD
16:15
Kim Bergqvist, PhD student, Stockholm University, Sweden
*Allegory, Literary Representation, and the Legitimation of
Rebellion in Fourteenth-Century Sweden*

17:00 – 18:00
Session 15: Here and Back Again: Reception of Iceland from the Middle Ages to Modern Times
Chair: Ermenegilda Müller

17:00
Charles Tolkien-Gillett, MA student, Merton College, England
Journey to 'Sagaland': W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice's Letters from Iceland (1937)
17:30
Michael William Duncan Lazar, MA student, University of Iceland, Iceland
*Lost on the Way to Vínland: Pseudohistory and the
Norse Exploration of North America*

18:00: Closing words – Katrín Lísa van der Linde Mikaelsdóttir

18:15: Official programme ends

The 'Bed of Grief': Fathers, Sons, and Love in Old Norse Sagas

Aaron Sheldon

Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York

as1910@york.ac.uk

This paper explores one expression of love in father-son relationships in Old Norse sagas: the 'Bed of Grief'. I have formulated this phrase to encapsulate the motif of an old man retreating to bed after his beloved son's death, seeking death for being unable to obtain vengeance. Through this study, I posit that this form of love in father-son relationships was intertwined with the honour culture in medieval Iceland.

To explore how this expression of grief reveals love in father-son relationships, I employ various case studies from the *Íslendingasögur*. These episodes are split into three groups, forming my paper: the first discusses *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, focussing on Egill's and Kveld-Úlfr's love for their respective sons; the second covers three smaller case studies, each omitting elements from the pattern seen with Egill and Kveld-Úlfr yet still containing the 'Bed of Grief'; and the final section explores *Brennu-Njáls saga,* in which is an inverse relationship, where the father dies, but follows the pattern before parting from it.

Egils saga Skallagrímssonar presents the fullest depiction of the 'Bed of Grief'; Egill is described as loving his son and, after his son's death, he retreats to his bed-closet, intending to die of starvation. He asks why he would want to live with such *harmr* ('grief'), further illustrating how his love for his son created grief. Earlier in the saga, the text depicts Kveld-Úlfr's reaction to his son's death. While Kveld-Úlfr is not explicitly presented as loving his son, he retreats to his bed from grief, suggesting that he loved his son.

The smaller case studies mirror Kveld-Úlfr's reaction more than Egill's, as these shorter episodes make no explicit mention of fatherly love yet show fathers retreating to bed from grief. Indeed, in *Heiðarvíga saga*, Guðmundr learns of his son's death and, with *mikill harmr* ('great grief'), retreats to his booth to lie down. The saga later states that he lives no longer than a month after that. *Gunnars saga keldugnúpsfífls* attributes *mikill harmr* ('great grief') to Þorgrímr, after seeing his sons' corpses. Another character later hears of Þorgrímr's death and how it resulted from *harmi eptir sonu sína* ('grief for his sons'). The saga does not explicitly state that there was a bed for him but, while this could complicate matters, the sagas are intertextual; considering the other episodes, it is possible that audiences would have envisioned a bed. *Þorskfirðinga saga* offers further complications, describing neither love, nor grief, nor a bed. Nevertheless, the saga's account of Þórir's reaction to the (false) news of his son's death suggests grief, and thus love. Indeed, Þórir disappears and people believe he became a dragon, laying upon gold chests. While fantastical, this transformation can be viewed as a form of death and the chests as a serpent's bed, as alluded to in some kennings. Therefore, this moment invites consideration of its resemblance to the 'Bed of Grief'.

The scene in *Brennu-Njáls saga* differs from the previous episodes, as the father is the one deceased. In response to his beloved foster-father, Njáll's, death, Þórhallr's body swells and he faints. His swelling does not stop there; it later returns as a boil, representative of his unexpressed emotions at the lack of vengeance, consequently preventing him from helping prosecute Njáll's killers and forcing him to lie in bed. Unlike the others, however, Þórhallr was young. Hearing that the prosecution failed, he stabs a spear into the boil, allowing him to leave the bed and finally obtain vengeance.

Throughout these cases, the 'Bed of Grief' occurs repeatedly and variously but always alongside an inability to obtain vengeance. This inability generally arises from the father's age and the assailant being impossible to slay. Divergent from this is Þórhallr, whose youth allows him to claim redress. Considering these episodes through the 'Bed of Grief' motif uncovers some of the interactions between vengeance, father-son relationships, and the emotions in those relationships. Vengeance was interwoven with honour, meaning that these fathers had lost not only their sons but also honour; this loss of both honour and sons resulted in men going to bed, seeking death. Therefore, I would posit that love between fathers and sons was intermingled with the culture of honour, in medieval Iceland.

Bibliography

Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 12. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954.

Jóhannes Halldórsson (ed.). *Kjalnesinga saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 14. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959.

Sigurður Nordal (ed.). *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. Íslenzk fornrit 2. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933.

Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson (eds). *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*. Íslenzk fornrit 3. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1938.

Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (eds). *Harðar saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 13. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991.

'If Necessity Drives Him to It': Legal Culpability in *Hrafnkels saga*

Alisa Heskin
Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University
alisa.heskin@wmich.edu

Prioritising the legal consequences of characters' actions in *Hrafnkels saga* offers a substantive change in how one reads the inciting incident of the saga's conflict: Einarr's choice to ride the forbidden horse Freyfaxi. The coercive nature of Einarr's situation and Hrafnkell's regret over the killing effectively generate sympathy for the hapless herdsman and drive a characterisation of Einarr as innocent, his decision to ride Freyfaxi as minor, and Hrafnkell's response as disproportionate at best. In the saga, Þorkell Þjóstarsson describes Einarr as 'saklausan,' but legal texts such as *Grágás* and *Jónsbók* reveal otherwise. The law 'On Horse-Riding' in *Grágás* stipulates the following:

> If someone jumps onto the back of a man's horse without leave, the penalty for that is the seizure mulct of six ounce-units. If he rides it from where it was standing, then the penalty for that is a fine of three marks.

> There are three horse-rides which carry full outlawry as the penalty. One is if a man rides where there are three farms on the same side of him and he rides past them. The second is if a man rides over mountains that make a watershed between districts. The third is if a man rides from one Quarter into another (Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 2000: 82).

Possible mitigating factors include Hrafnkell's joint-ownership of Freyfaxi with Freyr, Einarr's employment as both shepherd and Freyfaxi's caretaker, and the supernatural circumstances resulting in only Freyfaxi being available to ride. Necessity can also negate the legal consequences of a crime that would normally result in outlawry, i.e., theft of food to prevent starvation (Schulman 2010: 201).

The starting point in determining a case of illegal horse-riding is permission. Hrafnkell specifies that his new herdsman should not resort to riding Freyfaxi 'hversu mikil nauðsyn sem þér er á' (Taylor 1956: 62). Even if the supernatural circumstances surrounding Einarr's decision are read as the other owner of Freyfaxi, Freyr, giving 'permission,' all parties of jointly-owned property must consent (Schulman 2010: 213). Einarr's role as caretaker for the horses does not automatically grant permission to ride them. *Grágás* K§226 distinguishes between hired out livestock where the borrower has full responsibility and use of the animal, as opposed to kept stock where the caretaker is responsible for upkeep and not privileged with use (Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 2000: 174–75). In the case of necessity, Einarr rides Freyfaxi to recover Hrafnkell's missing sheep, but Einarr frames the decision to ride a horse as a matter of expedience.[1] Hrafnkell made clear that no need would be great enough to warrant riding Freyfaxi. Doing so also violates the agreement Einarr made with Hrafnkell upon employment.

Figure 1. Map of Hrafnkelsdalur and the surrounding area in eastern Iceland with black arrows indicating the approximate path of Einarr's search for the lost sheep starting at Grjótárgil and a white arrow that shows the distance of traveling to three farms[3] (Icelandic Saga Map, accessed March 25, 2021, http://sagamap.hi.is/is/).

There are minor and major cases of horse-riding, and the latter 'carry full outlawry as the penalty' (Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 2000: 82). The determining factor is distance, and Einarr exceeds the distance of riding past three farms outlined in *Grágás* K§164 (Figure 1). The saga provides an estimate for that distance when Þorbjǫrn rides from his home at Hóll to Aðalból, Laugarhús, and Leikskálar. Freyfaxi's muddied and exhausted condition after the ride also conveys the intensity of the ride.[2]

Of course, Hrafnkell does not pursue legal action and instead confronts Einarr directly and kills him. The chieftain has a reputation for frequently killing other men and never offering any compensation. That reputation as an 'ójafnaðarmaðr' is ultimately what he pays for, rather than what has been perceived as the gross injustice of Einarr's death. The same pride that drives Hrafnkell to eschew the law, whether aggressor or aggrieved, also drives his downfall, temporary though it may be. Einarr's offense was not trivial, but Hrafnkell takes the law into his own hands and is punished for it when he becomes vulnerable to the law himself.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   *Hrafnkels saga* states that 'hann mundi fljótara yfir bera, ef hann riði heldr en gengi' (Taylor 1956: 62).
2   *Hrafnkels saga* states the following regarding Freyfaxi's appearance and condition: 'Hestrinn var vátr allr af sveita, svá at draup ór hverju hári hans, var mjǫk leirstokkinn ok móðr mjǫk ákafliga' (Taylor 1956: 63).
3   The path for Einarr and Freyfaxi's search is adapted from Macrae-Gibson (1975–6): 241.

Bibliography

Primary Sources
Dennis, Andrew, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins (trans.). *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000.
Schulman, Jana K. (trans.). *Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland*. Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2010.
Taylor, A. R. (ed.). "*Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*." In *An Introduction to Old Norse*, edited by E. V. Gordon and A. R. Taylor, 2nd ed., 58–86. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.

Secondary Sources
Icelandic Saga Map. "Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða." Accessed March 25, 2021. http://sagamap.hi.is/is/.
Macrae-Gibson, O. D. "The Topography of *Hrafnkels Saga*." *Saga-Book* 19 (1975–6): 239–63.

Finding the Norse in Medieval Orkney

Amy Blank

Archaeology Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands

19019557@uhi.ac.uk

Archaeological remains are a primary attraction for visitors to the Orkney Islands (Figure 1). Among these remains are Neolithic complexes, such as Skara Brae and Iron Age Brochs, such as the Broch of Gurness. Relatively few medieval features remain in the Orcadian landscape outside of the urban centre of Kirkwall. The Broch of Birsay and Broch of Deerness represent unique high status Norse sites. In contrast, upstanding medieval rural remains in the Orkney islands are absent, contributing to the understanding that the later Norse and later Medieval periods in Orkney can be termed the 'invisible centuries' (Yeoman 1991: 112– 28).

The relative lack of upstanding rural medieval features in the Orcadian landscape has meant the topic has been sidestepped in the archaeological literature. The focus remains on metanarratives often ignoring the pivotal role of the rural Norse in the wider economy. The interdisciplinary approach of landscape archaeology can rectify this gap in knowledge and illuminate the past of farmers and farming rectifying the medieval gap in the ongoing processes constantly changing the Orcadian landscape.

Figure 1. Map of Orkney including places named in text. © Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordinance Survey (EDINA Service).

The pivotal question is not simply where the Norse in the Orcadian rural landscape were, but did Norse culture prevail in the rural landscape following Orkney's bequeathment to the Kingdom of Scotland by the Danish-Norwegian king, Christian I? Finding evidence that Norse culture prevailed might explain the contemporary connectedness many Orcadians feel to Scandinavia. Firstly, there is chronological confusion throughout the literature concerning the Viking and Norse period in Orkney.

Generally, the Viking Age is thought to come to end in Orkney around the same time as it does in Scandinavia, approximately 1050 (Østmo and Hedeager 2005: 435). From that point on, medieval power structures come to dominate Orkney. The centre of power shifts from coastal high-status sites, such as the Broch of Birsay (Figure 2), abandoned by approximately 1300, to medieval towns like Kirkwall. Dispersed coastal settlements are centralized although there is no information for whether rural settlements underwent a similar transition. Fenton's *The Northern Isles* indicates no architectural transition between longhouses and the crofts that began to dominate the landscape in the nineteenth century (Fenton 1997). This assumes a stagnation of around 800 years. Historical sources attest that during this time Orkney was part of a northern crossroads (Figure 3) for trade and movement, rather than the marginal space Orkney occupies today. Consequently, it seems unlikely that presumably successful burghs show no evidence of change in the later medieval period.

Figure 2. Brough of Birsay from above. Author's own image.

To find this evidence, we must look beyond the upstanding features of the landscape. Palaeoenvironmental evidence from Tuquoy, Westray, Orkney, suggests land use continuity (Timpany et. al. 2020). Mixed agriculture continued from the Viking Age with the two main cultivators being barley and oats while coprophilous fungal spores indicate the presence of grazing animals (Timpany et. al. 2020). Molluscan evidence from Tuquoy and Quoygrew, also on Westray, suggests fishing of Cod and Saithe continuing but intensifying throughout the Viking and into the Medieval era (Milner et. al. 2007). This correlates with the expansion of the medieval fish trade focusing on dried cod (Barrett et. al. 2011). Continuity of Norse rural practice is further corroborated by geoarchaeological evidence revealing that anthropogenic soil from Quoygrew is virtually identical to parts of Shetland and Northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Simpson et. al. 2005: 374).

Figure 3. Orkney and Shetland in their Northern European Crossroads setting. (Fenton 1993: 3).

It is evident that Norse culture persisted in rural medieval Orkney. A mixed agrarian society with an emphasis on fishing continued from the Viking Age. These practices are reflected in the landscape through the dominance of heathland and shrubs in place of forests as communities cleared areas for pasture and cultivation. Although there is little to no upstanding evidence, scientific methods and a landscape approach reveal communities previously invisible. The evidence from Westray attests to a long-lived community with successful mixed-agricultural practices. The Norse to Medieval transition in Orkney may have refocused urban activities to Kirkwall, however, the rural communities remote from Kirkwall still had potential to thrive.

Bibliography
Barrett, James, David Orton, Cluny Johnstone, Jennifer Harland, Wim Van Neer, Anton Ervynck, Callum Roberts et al. "Interpreting the expansion of sea fishing in medieval Europe using stable isotope analysis of archaeological cod bones." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 38, no. 7 (2011): 1516–24.
Fenton, Alexander. *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*. East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1997.
Milner, Nicky, James Barrett, and Jon Welsh. "Marine resource intensification in Viking Age Europe: the molluscan evidence from Quoygrew, Orkney." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 34, no. 9 (2007): 1461–72.
Simpson, Ian, James Barrett, and Karen Milek. "Interpreting the Viking Age to medieval period transition in Norse Orkney through cultural soil and sediment analyses." *Geoarchaeology* 20, no. 4 (2005): 355–77.
Timpany, Scott, Tim Mighall, Ian Foster, Antonio Martinez Cortizas, Olwyn Owen, Anthony Krus, and Ilse Kamerling. "Later Prehistoric and Norse Communities in the Northern Isles: multi-proxy environmental investigations on Orkney." *Environmental Archaeology* (2020): 1–22.
Yeoman, Peter. "Medieval Rural Settlement: The Invisible Centuries." In *Scottish Archaeology: New Perceptions*, edited by W. S. Hanson and Elizabeth Slater, 112–28. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991.
Østmo, Einar, and Lotte Hedeager (eds). *Norsk arkeologisk leksikon*. Oslo: Forlag A/S, 2005.

Dual Identities and 'Double Scenes': The Transformation of Physical and Mental Space in Performances of Eddic Poetry

Ben Chennells

Scandinavian Studies, University College London

john.chennells.20@ucl.ac.uk

Performances of all kinds produce a 'second reality,' distinct from everyday life (Schechner 2002: 45). In the oral performance of certain eddic poems, however, this effect is intensified in a 'double scene' (Lönnroth 2011: 244). In this paper, I expand on the implications of the double scene for both the settings and participants of eddic performances, particularly those of *ljóðaháttr* poems, which involve direct first-person speech (Gunnell 2016: 98).

The hall is a likely setting for eddic performances. *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, and *Lokasenna* are set in halls, whilst, in sagas, skaldic poetry is commonly delivered in rulers' courts (Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason 2014: 322–55). *Norna-Gests þáttr*, moreover, describes the performance of *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Reginsmál* in King Óláfr Tryggvason's hall (Guðni Jónsson 1954: 305–35). For eddic poems set in a fictional/mythological hall and performed in real halls, double scenes can be envisioned, wherein the real dramatic space and the enacted fictional place become homologous, encapsulating the audience within the performance (cf. Lönnroth 2011: 244).

Three aspects of halls stand out as potential means for doubling: architecture, situation, and decoration. Terry Gunnell (2001: 18) describes the *hof* hall-type as a 'symbolic pagan microcosm,' identifying parallels between its internal architecture and structures in Norse mythology. The situation of Iron Age Nordic farmsteads (see figure 1) can also be compared to the Norse mythological map, with humans inhabiting a central, civilised position (i.e. Miðgarðr), just as the gods inhabited Ásgarðr, and both were circumscribed by Útgarðr (Murphy 2016: 159). In this way, the hall and Ásgarðr are paralleled as symbols of civilisation.

The most famous example of mythological decoration is Óláfr pái's hall at Hjarðarholt, described in *Laxdœla saga* as follows: 'Váru þar markaðar ágætligar sǫgur á þilviðinum ok svá á ræfrinu' (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934: 79). Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*, which was composed about these images and describes scenes like Baldr's funeral, was apparently recited within Óláfr's hall and, hence, carried a visual, as well as an aural, immediacy (Gade and Marold 2017: 402–24). By extension, halls can be viewed as participants within the poetic performances, imbued with architectural, situational, and decorative parallels that could be identified and intensified.

Figure 1. Based on Murphy (2016): 150.

I envision eddic performance to be a solo practice, exemplified in *Norna-Gests þáttr* and Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's recitation of *Bjarkamál* in *Óláfs saga helga* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1945: 361–2). Although *ljóðaháttr* poems involve many characters and direct speech, *Hávamál* demonstrates that a performer could move between roles whilst maintaining audience comprehension (Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason 2014: 322–55). The discrepancy between speaking voices in *Hávamál* 138 and 143 and other persona changes discussed by John McKinnell suggest that an eddic performer must have been an adept shape-changer (McKinnell 2013: 27–42).

Such identity changes may have involved *uppvakning*, a religious sacred time 'in which the gods manifest themselves among, or in front of, the audience' (Gunnell 2016: 98–9). Although no evidence exists

for this, *uppvakning* might be compared to *seiðr* performance, which is described in *Eiríks saga rauða* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson 1935: 208).

As McKinnell highlights, verses spoken in saga accounts of *seiðr* are always in *fornyrðislag*. (McKinnell 2005: 97). If eddic performances did constitute *uppvakning*, the implication is that the performer's mind was shareable with the enacted entities. A doubling effect, therefore, can be envisioned in both dramatic space and mental state; the performer would invoke a double consciousness within a double scene.
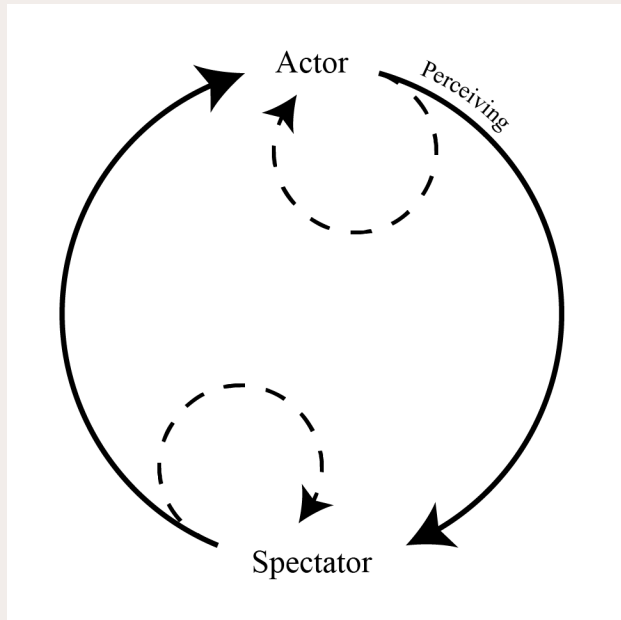
Figure 2. 'Feedback loop' based on Fischer-Lichte (2008): 96–9.

Audiences are also implicated in this doubling of space and identity. If, as Murphy suggests, audiences become simultaneously 'themselves and the inhabitants of the mythological hall' during performances of the hall-based *ljóðaháttr* poems, they would be embroiled within a double consciousness of their own (Murphy 2016: 159). This second identity could be envisioned as a spiritual presence, but more favourable is Erika Fischer-Lichte's 'radical concept of presence,' a moment in the actor-spectator feedback loop (see figure 2) in which 'the spectator experiences the performer and himself as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming' (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 99). Audience members might not share their mind, but they would be implicated in a 'process of becoming,' conscious of their involvement in the transformation of space and identity.

In *Norna-Gests þáttr* and *Óláfs saga helga*, eddic performers manipulate the audience's double consciousness. Norna-Gestr and Þormóðr put Fisher-Lichte's feedback loop into practice; recognising that their audiences are warriors, they focus on heroic narratives. In doing so, they establish double scenes and double consciousnesses, spurring their audiences to identify with legendary heroes. Here, eddic performances provide a social function, manipulating the participants' identities and encouraging them to embody ideal cultural values.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Primary Sources
Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (ed.). *Óláfs saga helga*. In *Heimskringla*. Vol. 2. Íslenzk fornrit 27. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945.
Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Laxdæla saga*. In *Laxdæla saga, Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar, Stúfs þáttr*, 1–248. Íslenzk fornrit 5. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934.
Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson (eds). *Eiríks saga rauða*. In *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttr ǫrva, Eiríks saga rauða, et al*. Íslenzk fornrit 4. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935.
Gade, Kari Ellen and Edith Marold (eds). *Húsdrápa*. In *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, 402–24. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017.
Guðni Jónsson (ed.). *Norna-Gests þáttr*. In *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, 305–35. Vol. 1. Reykjavík: Islendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954.
Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (eds). *Eddukvæði*, 2 vols. Íslenzk fornrit. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2014.

Secondary Sources

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Translated by Saskya Iris Jain. New York: Routledge, 2008. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203894989.

Gunnell, Terry. "Eddic Performance and Eddic Audiences." In *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, edited by Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn, 92–113. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316471685.006.

———. "*Hof*, Halls, *Goðar*, and Dwarves: An Examination of Ritual Space in the Pagan Icelandic Hall." *Cosmos* 17 (2001): 3–36.

Lönnroth, Lars. "The Double Scene of Arrow-Oddr's Drinking Contest." In *The Academy of Odin: Selected Papers on Old Norse Literature*, 243–60. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2011.

McKinnell, John. *Meeting the Other in Old Norse Myth and Legend*. Woodbridge: Brewer, 2005.

———. "Personae of the Performer in *Hávamál*." *Saga-Book* 37 (2013): 27–42.

Murphy, Luke John. "Continuity and Change: Forms of Liminality in the Sacred Social Spaces of the Pre-Christian Nordic World." *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2016): 137–72. https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VMS.5.112421.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002.

East Anglian Influence on Icelandic Illuminated Manuscripts

Bethany Porter

Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, Háskóli Íslands

brp15@hi.is

The illumination of manuscripts was a part of art in the Middle Ages in Iceland, as in many other places in Europe. Here, the question arose as to where Icelandic illuminators received their inspiration. After taking a close look at Icelandic illuminations, a predominantly East Anglian influence on Icelandic medieval illuminations was found, whilst acknowledging influences from other places and time periods, even within the same illustration. The aim of this research was to explore the idea that Icelandic Medieval illuminators created their own unique style, whether deliberately or not.

In order to perform this research, a sampling of fourteenth-century manuscripts was used. These included KBAdd. 1 fol., *Ártiðaskrá Vestfirðinga* (1300-25),[1] AM 233 a fol. (c1300–1360), AM 241 a I fol. (c1325), AM 249 d fol. (c1350–99),[2] AM 227 fol. (c1350), GKS 1005 fol., *Flateyjarbók* (1387–95), AM 673 a III 4to, *Teiknibókin* (c1450-75), and AM 350 fol., *Skarðsbók* (c1363). Illuminations in these manuscripts were compared to contemporaneous manuscripts of East Anglia. Limitations of this research include not looking at variations between scriptoria and the lack of digital copies of Anglian manuscripts.

Similarities between East Anglian and Icelandic illumination styles were found in the stylization of the figures in such manuscripts as GKS 1005 fol., AM 673 a III 4to and AM 350 fol. An example is on 27r of AM 350 fol., *Skarðsbók* (Figure 1). Here, the elegant style including the posture and the way the clothing is folded, the pointed and conical features, and the short arms with large hands are similar to the King David in *Ormesby Psalter*, 10r (Figure 2; see Liepe 2009: 178). Another example found was the Christ figure in AM 673 a III 4to, 2r (Figure 3). The posture of Christ, the flag in the left hand, the two angels on each side, and the direction the soldiers are looking compared to the Christ figure are all similar to such illuminations found in MS 12 *Stowe Breviary*, 87rb and MS 158.926/4f *Norwich Hours*, 50r (Figures 4, 5; see Drechsler 2017: 27). A final instance is on GKS 1005 fol., 9v (Figure 6). The bottom margin displays twisted tree trunks and gigantic leaves similar to those on *Gorleston Psalter*, 8r (Figure 7), even though the Icelandic illumination is more minimalistic.

Figure 1. *Framfærslubálkr*, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*), 27r. Photo: handrit.is.

Figure 2. Initial "B" for *Beatus* with King David. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 366 *Ormesby Psalter*, 10r. Photo: Bodleian Library.

Figure 3. Resurrection of Christ, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 673 a III 4to, 2r. Photo: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.

Figure 4. *The Bible*, London, British Library, MS 12 *Stowe Breviary*, 87rb. Photo: British Library.

Figure 5. *The Bible*, Norwich, Castle Museum, MS 158.926/4f *Norwich Hours*, 50r. Photo: Stefan Drechsler.

Figure 6. Initial "B" for *Beatus* with Tree of Jesse and scenes from the Childhood of Christ, London, British Library, MS Additional 49622 *Gorleston Psalter*, 8r. Photo: British Library.

Figure 7. Birth of Ólafr Tryggvason; hunting scenes, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, GKS 1005 fol. (*Flateyjarbók*), 9v. Photo: handrit.is.

The blend of both contemporary and older styles as well as styles from outside of East Anglia were found in illustrations such as on KBAdd. 1 fol., *Ártíðaskrá Vestfirðinga*, 7v and AM 249 d fol., 8v. For example, in the former, according to Liepe (2009), the voluminous and angular shapes of the folds of the garments are similar to contemporary East Anglian illuminations (Figure 8). However, the small zigzag pleats placed along unbroken stretches of drapery, the face shapes with squared jaws and large noses, and the crumpled fabric around the elbows of Mary and John correspond to English illuminations from around 1225-1275 (Liepe 2009: 194). In AM 249 d fol. 8v (Figure 9) the stylisation of the nimbi was a common feature in illustrations from London, according to Morgan, although East Anglian influence can be seen in Christ's feet and Mary's gown (Morgan 1982–8: 64; Liepe 2009: 217). Another example found was the initial in AM 241 a I fol. (Figure 10). Liepe (2009: 223) has pointed out that in both England and the Continent, this style of decorated initial was popular in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries but was used in Iceland even after the Reformation.
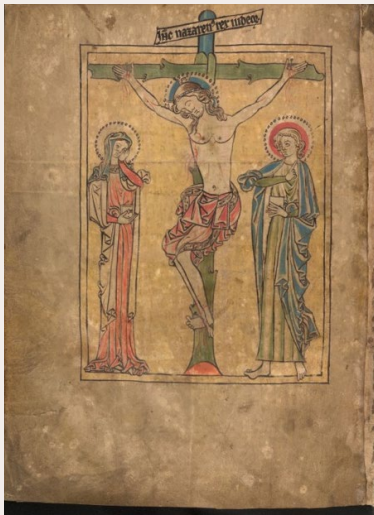
Figure 8. Calvary group, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, KBAdd. 1 fol *Ártíðaskrá Vestfirðinga*, 7v. Photo: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.

Figure 9. Calvary group, Copenhagen, The Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 249 d fol., 8v. Photo: Suzanne Reitz, Elin L. Pedersen.

Figure 10. Psalms 51, 52, Copenhagen, The Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 241 a I fol., 64r. Photo: Suzanne Reitz, Elin L. Pedersen.

The results of this research indicate that strong East Anglian influence can be found in Icelandic medieval illuminations, but there was also influence from other parts of England and the Continent, as well as from other time periods. Whether this was done knowingly or unknowingly is difficult to determine, and what is seen now as an entire corpus of manuscripts, medieval Icelanders may have only seen a small portion of at a time. Further research could be done to better ascertain the chronological and geographical patterns of these influences, for example between Þingeyrar and Helgafell and other parts of Iceland, to see if certain influences were more popular in specific locations than others.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   Dating of manuscripts was taken from the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (ONP) unless otherwise noted.
2   This is according to handrit.is. ONP provides 'diverse dates' for this manuscript.

Bibliography

Drechsler, Stefan. *Making Manuscripts at Helgafell in the Fourteenth Century*. PhD thesis. University of Aberdeen, 2017.

Liepe, Lena. *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*. Snorrastofa 6. Reykholt: Snorrastofa, Cultural and Medieval Centre, 2009.

Morgan, Nigel J. *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, *II 1250-1285*. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982–8.

Raiding for Love: Patterns of Polygyny among the Eastern Vikings

Carina Damm

University of Leipzig and Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO Leipzig)

carina.damm@outlook.de

Among Scandinavian kings of the Viking Age the practices of polygyny and concubinage[1] can be observed as powerful political tools of high-status men, representing a central aspect for creating and securing power in a geographically widely dispersed and highly intercultural network (cf. Jochens 1995; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2013: 79–105). Latest studies (Raffield et al. 2017) have proposed new insights into this phenomenon, suggesting that the need for seaborne raids would have been fuelled by the impact of concubinage and polygyny on Scandinavian society.

In the light of these innovative approaches, the paper explores a case study related to *Austrhálfa*, the eastern quarter of the Viking oecumene: namely, the concubinage relationship between the Swedish king Óláfr Eiríksson (c. 980–1022) and Eðla, a 'dóttir jarls af Vindlandi' (*Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 88). Focusing on the Slavonic origin of this royal *friðla*, the paper elaborates on the following two central questions:

1. Why did medieval Icelandic authors incorporate polygyny into their narratives?
2. Which role is ascribed to *Vinðr*, the Slavic population of the Southern Baltic coast, within those episodes?

As outcome of the comparative study, I suggest that medieval scribes such as the cleric Adam of Bremen (d. after 1081) and Snorri Sturluson (1178/9–1241) deliberately referred to polygyny as an endogenous pattern that was eventually moulded into an elaborate social system by the high medieval Christian society (cf. Rüdiger 2020). Considering the predominantly negative image of West Slavs in the medieval sources, a clear authorial purpose becomes apparent. This endeavour consisted in underlining the superiority of the reigning Christian and ecclesiastical elites over the pagan *Vinðr*. Latter ones represented a rhetorical device epitomizing the other per se, whereby toponymic designations such as *Vinðland* stand for the strange and diabolical regions at the peripheries of the Norse cultural sphere (cf. Aalto 2010; Morawiec 2013: 61). Intriguingly, the contrasted depiction of Slavonic actors prove that medieval voices distinguished in a nuanced manner between different Slavophone populations known to them. Obviously, the heathen *Vinðr* of the Baltic coast were indicating a distinct degree of otherness compared to specific Polabian tribes such as the Abodrites. This resulted from the fact that latter ones had at least nominally been promoting Christianity in the tenth and again eleventh centuries in order to preserve political sovereignty vis-à-vis the aggressive missionary and expansion aspirations of the neighbouring Saxons (cf. Lübke 2008).

Concluding with an overall summary and perspective, it needs to be highlighted that concubinage relationships were – like monogamous marriages – frequently arranged to either strengthen existing dynastic ties or to link and thereby neutralize political opponents (cf. Dzhakson 2019). However, those practices were not restricted to men as main agents nor to the Viking Age as temporal setting. Auður G. Magnúsdóttir (2001; 2008) showed that polygynic patterns prevailed in Iceland and continental Europe until the Late Medieval period, whereas Philadelphia Ricketts (2010) conducted a comprehensive study on aristocratic widows in High Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire. This, eventually, underlines the multifaceted aspects of the topic that holds numerous research desiderata worth examining within future comparative studies: identity, legitimacy, and emotional aspects, to mention but a few.

Notes

1   Zeitzen (2008: 3) defines polygyny as a state or practice 'in which one man is married to several wives,' whereas Clunies Ross (1985: 6) uses the term concubinage to illustrate "circumstances in which a man might have a plurality of sexual partners, specifically where one of these is a legal spouse and the other a concubine [...] without legal recognition." Several Old Norse accounts (such as *Laxdœla saga* and

Vatnsdæla saga) and a few runic inscriptions (Sö 297 and U 1039) provide examples for polygyny. The related concept of concubinage is, among others, prominently reflected in *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* and *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (ed.). *Heimskringla*. Íslenzk fornrit 26–8. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941–51.

Finlay, Alison, and Anthony Foulkes (trans.). *Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla*, 2nd ed. London: University College London, 2014–6.

Heinrichs, Anne et al. (eds). *Legendary Olafs saga hins helga = Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf den Heiligen (Hs. Delagard. saml. nr.8^II)*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1982.

Schmeidler, Bernhard (ed.). *Adam of Bremen: Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, 3rd ed. (MGH SS rer. Germ. 2). Hannover/Leipzig: Hahn, 1917.

Tschan, Francis J. (trans.). *Adam of Bremen: History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Secondary sources

Aalto, Sirpa. *Categorizing Otherness in the Kings' Sagas*. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland, 2010.

Auður G. Magnúsdóttir. *Frillor och Fruar: Politik och Samlevnad på Island 1120-1400*. Department of History: University of Gothenburg, 2001.

———. "Women and Sexual Politics." In *The Viking World*, edited by Stefan Brink and Neil Price, 40–8. London: Routledge, 2008.

Clunies Ross, Margaret. "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England." *Past & Present* 108, no. 1 (1985): 3–34.

Dzhakson, Tatiana N. "Marriages and political alliances in medieval Scandinavia in the light of Old Norse-Icelandic sources." In *In the North, the East and West meet. Festschrift for Jens Petter Nielsen*, edited by Kari Aga Myklebost and Stian Bones, 153–62. Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk, 2019.

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Jochens, Jenny. *Women in Old Norse society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Lübke, Christian. "Christianity and Paganism as Elements of Gentile Identities to the East of the Elbe and Saale Rivers." In *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs. Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, edited by Ildar H. Garipzanov, Patrick J. Geary, and Przemysław Urbańczyk, 189–204. Cursor Mundi 5. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

Morawiec, Jakub. "Slavs and their lands in Old Norse literature." In *Scandinavian culture in Medieval Poland*, edited by Sławomir Moździoch, Błażej Stanisławski, and Przemysław Wiszewski, 53–63. Wrocław: Polish Academy of Sciences, 2013.

Raffield, Ben, Neil Price, and Mark Collard. "Male-Biased Operational Sex Ratios and the Viking Phenomenon: An Evolutionary Anthropological Perspective on Late Iron Age Scandinavian Raiding." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 38, (2017): 315–24.

———. "Polygyny, Concubinage, and the Social Lives of Women in Viking-Age Scandinavia." *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 13 (2017): 165–209.

Ricketts, Philadelphia. *High-Ranking Widows in Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire: Property, Power, Marriage and Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. The Northern World, 49. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010.

Rüdiger, Jan. *All the King's Women. Polygyny and Politics in Europe, 900-1250*. The Northern World 88. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020.

Zeitzen, Miriam Koktvedgaard. *Polygamy: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*, Oxford/New York: Berg, 2008.

The Icelandic *Flóvents saga* and the Italian *Fioravante*: Research on a Lost Version of the *Chanson de Floovant*

Caterina Casati
École Pratique des Hautes Études – Paris
caterina.casati@etu.ephe.psl.eu

The *riddarasögur* are among the narratives of Norwegian and Icelandic mediaeval literature that have been least examined: as translation literature, they have often been perceived as less interesting than the indigenous genres. Likewise, Romanists have neglected them despite their being valuable witnesses to several Anglo-Norman, Old French and Latin texts. Yet, the example of *Flóvents saga* and the Italian *Libro delle storie di Fioravante* ('Book of Fioravante's stories') shows how Scandinavian and Romance studies can mutually benefit each other.

Flóvents saga, translated in Norway during the thirteenth century, has been preserved by eleven Icelandic manuscripts, the oldest dating back to the fourteenth century. The plot, relating the deeds of a young knight, Flóvent, nephew of the Roman emperor Constantine, bears striking similarities with a fourteenth-century Tuscan prose, the *Libro delle storie di Fioravante* (henceforth *Fioravante*). The resemblance between these texts is not limited to the storyline: it concerns likewise anthroponyms and toponyms, hence suggesting the existence of a common source. The protagonist's name would point to the French *Chanson de Floovant*, dating from the twelfth century. However, its comparison with *Flóvents saga* and *Fioravante* shows that these texts only share the overall structure, while diverging in terms of single episodes. The source for the Icelandic and Italian translations had to be another *chanson de geste* which has not survived – its protagonist being Constantine's nephew, and not king Clovis' son, as in the preserved poem.[1]

Some vestiges of this lost *chanson* are retained in *Flóvents saga*. Besides the quotation of a French proverb, the text includes the first attestation of a few Gallicisms, most likely borrowed from the model.[2] The saga also features a fair number of French proper names; the vast majority do not occur in the preserved *Chanson de Floovent fils de Clovis*, but they are included in other cycles of *chansons de geste*. As some of these names appear in *Fioravante* as well, they must have belonged to the lost *Chanson de Floovent neveu de Constantin*. The author of this French poem would have exploited the success of the already existing *Chanson de Floovent fils de Clovis* by composing a narrative preserving the overall structure of a *poème d'enfance* ('childhood poem') with its typical components (the exile from the homeland, the exploits of the young hero, the acquisition of power, his reconciliation with the family, and marriage to a princess). He introduced variations and new episodes, taking the inspiration for new characters from other *chansons*, thus linking through evocative names the adventures of Constantine's nephew to the most famous epics. This reworking would have then reached Scandinavia via Anglo-Norman England, and Italy through the Continent.[3]

The case of *Flóvents saga* and *Fioravante* clearly shows that the study of peripheral textual traditions, such as Old Norse translations or Italian adaptations, can be of primary importance for Romanists, as these texts are likely to attest not only the existence of lost mediaeval works, but also the presence of alternative versions of otherwise preserved French poems. Similarly, the knowledge of Romance literary production could help define the translation activity behind each *riddarasaga*.

Notes

1   To distinguish the two *chansons*, we will adopt the conventional titles proposed by Skårup (1998: 49) : *Chanson de Floovent fils de Clovis* ('Clovis' son') and *Chanson de Floovent neveu de Constantin* ('Constantine's nephew'). The Danish scholar uses the unmarked form *Floovent*, while *Floovant* bears the Eastern Old French trait *en > an*.

2   These loanwords are all included in the same phrase: *Þar skorti eigi agættar senðingar, allzconar druck, piment ok isope ok clare* (Cederschiöld 1884: 124). The three substantives all refer to a specific kind of spiced wine.

3   Proper names in the Italian prose feature continental traits. The form *Giffroi*, for instance, includes the continental evolution of the diphthong *oi < ei* (see §226–8: Pope 1934: 104–5). Anglo-Norman, on the other hand, preserves the original diphthong *ei*: in the saga, the same character is called *Jofrey*.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Andolf, Sven (ed.). *Floovant, chanson du geste du XIIe siècle publiée avec introduction, notes et glossaire*. Uppsala: Almqvist, 1941.

Cederschiöld, Gustav (ed.). *Fornsögur Suðrlanda: Magus saga jarls, Konraðs saga, Baerings saga, Flovents saga, Bevers saga*. Lund: Berling, 1884.

Darmesteter, Arsène (ed.). *De Floovante vetustiore gallico poemate et de merovingio cyclo, scripsit et adiecit nunc primum edita Olavianam Flóventi Sagae versionem et excerpta e Parisiensi codice 'Il Libro de Fioravante'*. Lutetiæ Parisiorum: F. Vieweg, 1877.

Guessard, François, and Henri Michelant (eds). *Floovant, chanson de geste publiée pour la première fois d'après le manuscrit unique de Montpellier*. Paris: Jannet, 1889.

Gunnlaugur Þórðarson (ed.). *Bragða-Mágus saga með tilheyrandi þáttum*. Copenhagen: Páll Sveinsson, 1858.

Rajna, Pio. *I reali di Francia. Volume I: Ricerche intorno ai reali di Francia, seguite dal libro delle storie di Fioravante e dal cantare di Bovo d'Antona*. Bologna: Romagnoli, 1872.

Secondary Sources

Jón Ólafsson. "Flóventis sagæ Olaviana versio. Flóventis regis Francorum vita." In *De Floovante vetustiore gallico poemate et de merovingio cyclo*, edited by Arsène Darmesteter, 115–71. Lutetiæ Parisiorum: F. Vieweg, 1877.

Langlois, Ernest. *Table des noms propres de toute nature compris dans les chansons de geste imprimées*. Paris: Libraire Émile Bouillon, 1904.

Morawski, Joseph. *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle*. Paris: Champion, 1925.

Moysan, André. *Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et de lieux cités dans les chansons de geste françaises et les œuvres étrangères dérivées*, 5 vols. Genève: Droz, 1986.

Pope, Mildred K. *From Latin to modern French with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman: Phonology and Morphology*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934.

Singer, Samuel. *Sprichwörter des Mittelalters*, 3 vols. Bern: H. Lang, 1944–47.

———. *Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi: Lexikon der Sprichwörter des romanisch-germanischen Mittelalters*, 13 vols. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1996.

Skårup, Povl. "Flóvents saga et la chanson française de Floovent neveu de Constantin." *Revue des langues romanes* 102, no. 1 (1998): 45–55.

Stricker, Eugen. *Entstehung und Entwicklung der Floovant-Sage*. Halle a. S.: Karras, 1909.

Walther, Hans. *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters in alphabetischer Anordnung*, 9 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963–86.

Journey to 'Sagaland':
W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice's *Letters from Iceland* (1937)

Charles Tolkien-Gillett
Merton College, University of Oxford
charles.tolkien-gillett@merton.ox.ac.uk

When W. H. Auden first came to Iceland in the summer of 1936, he did so with a literary imagination primed by the formative years of his life-long and generative fascination with the medieval North. Auden is not most known for his travel writing, but unlike his other pieces from the 1930s, his experience of what he terms 'Sagaland' and 'Njál country' necessitated a confrontation between the reality of his voyage with his cherished image of the island as a refuge, with both its geographical distance from the looming war on the Continent and rich medieval literary culture.

Positioning *Letters from Iceland*'s feature poem 'Journey to Iceland' as Auden's most direct discussion of Iceland itself in his expansive poetic corpus, the analysis of the individual poem and its immediate literary context seeks to demonstrate how Auden figures himself as a mediator of medieval and modern English and Icelandic literary heritages.

Contributing to the current historicist turn in the study of the Long 1930s, this paper re-examines archival evidence from Auden's early years at Oxford's English School to re-characterise his engagement with Old Norse-Icelandic as a delicate balance between enthusiast and mediocre scholar in the years leading up to his first expedition to the island and the writing of *Letters from Iceland*. In addition to examining the roles of various allusions to saga narrative and skaldic and eddaic verse, the historical context in which Auden sought the commission from Faber is investigated in order for us to better grasp the complications in genre and form which, alongside many silent authorial revisions, have historically fettered the work's critical tradition. The paper concludes by looking towards Simon Armitage and Glyn Maxwell's *Moon Country: Further Reports from Iceland* published by Faber in 1996 and how they actively choose to record and respond to the literary and cultural impact of Auden's Icelandic fascination.

Bibliography
Armitage, Simon and Glynn Maxwell. *Moon Country: Further Reports from Iceland*. London: Faber, 1996.
Auden, W. H. "*Journey to Iceland.*" *Poetry* 1 (1937): 179–81.
———. *The Spoken Word: W. H. Auden*. London: British Library, 2007. Compact disc.
Auden, W. H. and Louis MacNeice. *Letters from Iceland*. London: Faber & Faber, 1937 [2018].
———. *Letters from Iceland*. 2nd ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1967; repr. 1985.
Carpenter, Humphrey. *W. H. Auden: A Biography*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1981.
Dronke, Ursula (ed. and trans.). *The Poetic Edda*, 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 12. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954.
Isherwood, Christopher. "Some Notes on Auden's Early Poetry," *New Verse*, 26–7 (1937): 4–9.
Oxford, English Faculty Library, XB 6.26, *Honour School of English Papers, 1920–1929.*

Trollbusting: The Use of Poetic Language in Supernatural Encounters

Clare Mulley
University of Oxford
clare.mulley@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk

As it would be redundant to state the importance of poetic interjections to the unfolding of saga narrative, and would take several books simply to list the number of instances in which stanzas and poetic language enhance the prose, let alone the various ways they affect an audience's reception of the stories, my paper focused specifically on the use of poetry during supernatural encounters in sagas. It began by exploring the ways in which poetry vivifies and enhances these encounters for readers and/or listeners and then went on to discuss how such techniques have evolved within the fantasy storytelling tradition.

Before going on to illustrate the use of poetic language in my chosen encounters from sagas, I pinpointed three major ways in which the supernatural develops a stronger presence through poetic underlining:

- **Pace change and sensory meaning**
  The first is that poetic language creates an obvious textual change (in rhythm, pace, and style) which helps to highlight the strangeness of a supernatural encounter. The form and musicality of poetry also have a visceral quality to them that is a level above prose in terms of its immediate impact—an extra layer of sensory meaning that lies alongside the meaning of the words themselves. This means the supernatural presence is felt as much as announced.

- **Tension and the instilled desire for resolution**
  The physical appearance of poetry, along with the aforementioned change in pace and more intense musicality, helps to reflect the tension inherent in any supernatural encounter. The appearance of the supernatural in a plot always triggers tension independent from any extratextual knowledge of motifs or formulae, because, while some encounters are less obviously intimidating than others, intratextually the human personae cannot themselves predict what the being will do, or how the encounter might alter them, which ultimately affects our reaction as an audience. Poetry, especially a poetic exchange, heralds this rising of tension, implying a need for resolution before normal progress can resume.

- **Structurally and thematically creating an uncanny presence**
  As first suggested by Freud, effective creation of the uncanny, so as to most effectively impact those who encounter it, is done by combining the strange and the familiar. This happens on two levels with poetic language and the supernatural in sagas. Firstly, the appearance of poetic language within a prose narrative creates textual dissonance by interrupting the flow, but, thanks to the repetitive nature of certain motifs and kennings, there is potential for a simultaneous sense of intertextual familiarity. There is also a character factor: by definition, supernatural creatures are chaotic to the natural order, but their intellectual grasp of ordered, cadenced poetic language in certain encounters, which is equal to a human's, is far from chaotic. This is the Uncanny at its best—it makes such creatures an even greater force to be reckoned with, highlighting their power and menace.

Having illustrated these points, I went on to describe rising degrees of 'trollishness' in the use of poetry during supernatural encounters, categorised using a self-dubbed 'Richter Scale of Poetic Trolling.' At the bottom of the scale was poetry's use to highlight resignation and/or dismissal, an example being the alliterative and assonantal mirroring in the parting words of the ghosts at their trial in *Eyrbyggja saga*. This was followed by its use as a test and territory marker, as seen with the cave dweller in *Bergbúa þáttr,* and

the way interspersed stanzas can also signify the presence of a magical object or spells. The scale grew in intensity to encompass poetic language as a gloating tool and, as is common in exchanges between female trolls and human males, as a sexually charged form of combat.

Finally, my paper concluded by drawing attention to significant parallels between these saga examples and the ways in which more modern fantasy has employed poetry in supernatural and/or liminal encounters. While I found time to mention George MacDonald and his poetry-hating goblins, this part of my talk focused primarily on Tolkien, whose employment of *jötunn*-like ents who remember their heritage in rhyme, rhythmically gloating goblins, and riddle matches (along with Bilbo, a hero who learns from his more supernatural adversaries that poetry can be used as a taunt in combat) not only bears resemblance to the sagas, but has proven roots in Old Norse studies.

Ambrósíuss saga biskups: Notes on the Norse *Vita* of a Neglected Church Father

Davide Salmoiraghi

Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (ASNC), University of Cambridge

ds938@cam.ac.uk

Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–97), Father and Doctor of the Church, is a fundamental figure in Western Christianity. In Iceland, traces of the cult of the saint date to the late twelfth century, and an account of the saint's life, *Ambrósíuss saga biskups*, is preserved in four manuscript witnesses, whose chronology stretches from the mid-thirteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth. In the past, scholars have devoted little attention to the saga: Besides the edition of the text's redactions (Unger 1877, I: 28–54; Loth 1969–70, II: 57–93), Peter Foote produced the only textual analysis of the saga, detecting the majority of its ultimate sources and providing few remarks on their adaptation (Foote 1962: 21–2). With my doctoral research, I intend to put the saga at the centre of the discussion from its usually peripheral position, giving the text and its protagonist a systematic evaluation and assessing their place within the Norse literary panorama.

Ambrósíuss saga is based on the most popular account of the saint's life in the Middle Ages, *Vita Ambrosii* (*BHL* 377), written by the bishop's own secretary, Paulinus of Milan, in the early fifth century. In the saga, the Latin text is integrated with additional material that describes the historical background of St Ambrose's times, which was taken for granted in Paulinus' text. A textual analysis led me to agree with Foote on the identification of most of the sources, and to update some of his conclusions. In light of *Vita Ambrosii*'s manuscript tradition (Cracco Ruggini 1963), I argue that the material drawn from Pseudo-Cassiodorus' *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* and Gregory of Tours' *De miraculis sancti Martini episcopi* may have been already attached to the version of the hagiography that reached Iceland in the late twelfth century. Conversely, other passages seem to be unique to the Norse text. Some of them are drawn autonomously from both Late Antique (Ambrose, Orosius) and Medieval authors (Honorius of Autun, Geoffrey of Monmouth), whilst some others can be attributed to the creativity of the Norse scribes (chs. 7, 15, and 22), be it at the moment of translation or at a certain stage of the saga tradition, around the mid-thirteenth century.

The structure that results from this combination of sources follows the literary modes of saga-writing. In adapting the Latin text to the target culture, the narrator intervened on the text with eliminations and additions according to their own perspective, ultimately influencing the audience's perception of the narrative (Lönnroth 1970). In *Ambrósíuss saga*, homiletic excursuses are systematically eliminated for the sake of narrative flow and structural coherence, whereas greater space is given to historical events. Particularly prominent in the saga are the scenes of confrontation between the bishop and powerful rulers, such as Emperor Theodosius, the Arian Empress Justina, and the usurpers Magnus Maximus and Eugenius. These scenes are fundamental in the characterisation of St Ambrose as an authority in both ecclesiastical and secular affairs, and their importance is stressed by the use of direct speech and dramatization according to a common practice in saga-writing.

In my research, I argue that *Ambrósíuss saga* provided the Icelandic Church with a notable precedent and an example of episcopal authority whereby bishops could defend their prerogatives and extend their claims beyond ecclesiastical matters. An evaluation of the reception of St Ambrose's *exemplum* as reflected in certain *Biskupa sögur* will shed more light on the ways the saga could have been used in relation to the recurrent clashes between ecclesiastical and secular authority that characterise the momentous thirteenth century.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Foote, Peter G. (ed.). *Lives of Saints. Perg. fol. nr. 2 in the Royal Library,Stockholm*. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 4. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962.

Loth, Agnete (ed.). *Reykjahólabók: Islandske helgenlegender*, 2 vols. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, A, 15–16. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969–70.

Unger, Carl Richard (ed.). *Heilagra manna søgur. Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, 2 vols. Oslo: Bentzen, 1877.

Secondary Sources

Cracco Ruggini, Lellia. "Sulla fortuna della *Vita Ambrosii*." *Athenaeum* 41, no. 1 (1963): 98–110.

Lönnroth, Lars. "Rhetorical persuasion in the sagas." *Scandinavian Studies* 42, no. 2 (1970): 157–89.

Symbolic Meanings of the Human Body in *The Old Norwegian Homily Book*

Eline Margrete Hjellum

Assistant Professor, NLA University College, Department of Teacher Education, Bergen

ElineMargrete.Hjellum@nla.no

The oldest Norwegian book preserved is *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* (AM 619 4to),[1] written in Bjǫrgvin in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The codex is written in Old Norwegian and is a compilation of religious texts of different origin, consisting of both sermons and other religious writings. In her research, Kirsten M. Berg (2010: 74) suggests that this particular manuscript served as a handbook for the training of the clergy connected to the cathedral chapter in Bjǫrgvin. This, along with the fact that *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* is written in the vernacular, underlines that although the codex is a compilation, studying its religious content as a whole, provides a valuable insight into the religious beliefs and practices in medieval Norway.[2] This paper studies some of these beliefs and practices, examining how the human body, a core Christian symbol (Engberg-Pedersen and Gilhus 2001: 15), functions as a religious symbol within the corpus.

The ways in which the body symbol is utilised in *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* can be categorised into three main aspects. Firstly, the body's physical needs, especially the need for food, is given symbolic meaning. Five of the texts of the corpus contain the Biblical comparison of the body's physical need for food to the soul's spiritual need for The Word of God. Additionally, though the inner nourishment is of primary concern, celebrating feasts by eating good food symbolizes nurturing the inner, spiritual life. On the other hand, eating is also used as a metaphor for sinning, and fasting is considered a powerful antidote against giving in to the temptations of the Devil.

Secondly, the dead and dying body has also many symbolic meanings attached to it. The bodily sacrifice of the martyrs giving their lives for Christ serves as a symbol for the suppression of evil desires, whereas the dead bodies of the parishioners' forefathers in the churchyard serve as examples of leading either a sinful life or a good Christian life. In one of the sermons, resurrected bodies and dead bodies also contrast the understanding of the *The Old Testament* with and without the spiritual interpretation of the apostles, respectively.

Finally, at the core of the symbolic universe of *The Old Norwegian Homily Book*, we find the body of Christ, a vital part of the very essence of Christian faith. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation, the belief that Jesus Christ, son of God and the second person of the Trinity, becoming man in flesh and blood, is a central theme in *The Old Norwegian Homily Book*. Here, both the circumcised body of Christ and the dead body of Christ, as well as the crucified body of Christ, serve as central symbols. The circumcision of Christ functions as an example of leading a pure life, whereas the dead and crucified body of Christ has many different meanings attached to it, not least those that concern various aspects of salvation of the human soul as well as the human body.

As evident in the preceding paragraphs, the various ways in which the body symbol is utilised in *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* suggest that the religious understanding of the body in medieval Norway is neither solely negative nor positive. Additionally, at the same time as the holy bodies of Christ and the martyrs are given symbolic meaning, the everyday bodily experiences of ordinary members of the congregation also serve the same purpose. The examination of the symbolic meanings of the human body in *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* thus shows a strong, complex, and ambivalent connection between the physical and the spiritual, offering the human body a natural place in the religious cosmos.

Notes

1   In studying the manuscript, Indrebø's (1931) diplomatic version is used as the main source.
2   The value of *The Old Norwegian Homily Book* as an important source of insight into the religious life of medieval Norway has been pointed out by many scholars, such as Bang (1876: 359), and Knudsen (1952: 1).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Indrebø, Gustav. *Gamal norsk homiliebok.* Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1931.

Knudsen, Trygve. *Gammelnorsk homiliebok, etter AM 619 qv.* Oslo: Selskapet til utgivelse av gamle norske håndskrifter, 1952.

Secondary Sources

Bang, Anton Christian. "Prædikenen i den norske Kirke under Katholicismen." *Theologisk Tidsskrift for den evangelisk-lutherske Kirke i Norge.* Ny rekke, no. 4 (1876): 298–359.

Berg, Kirsten M. "Homilieboka – for hvem og til hva?" In *Vår eldste bok. Skrift, miljø og biletbruk i den norske homilieboka,* edited by Odd Einar Haugen and Åslaug Ommunsen, 35–76. Oslo: Novus forlag, 2010.

Engberg-Pedersen, Troels, and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus. "Innledning." In *Kropp og oppstandelse*, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, 9–23. Oslo: Pax forlag, 2001.

The Cultural Legacy of the Vinland Sagas and Scandinavian Emigration

Gregory C. Gaines

History Department, University of Maine

gregory.gaines@maine.edu

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Scandinavians were emigrating from Northern Europe into North America, the cultural legacy of the Vinland Sagas influenced their travels and settlement. Even before archaeological confirmation of the Norse presence in Newfoundland, Scandinavians had cultural memory and knowledge of medieval voyages to the New World. Eighteenth and nineteenth century publications of the Vinland sagas (as well as other sagas from the larger corpus) provided a cultural legacy for nineteenth century Scandinavians to emigrate to the US and Canada. While these sagas were certainly not the main reason for emigration, they played an important role in the mass-movement of Scandinavians into the western hemisphere. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the work of scholars in the then burgeoning field of Scandinavian studies connected Scandinavian Americans to their medieval past. Academics like Rasmus B. Anderson, George T. Flom, Paul Sindling, Olaus Dahl, and many others, were publishing about the 'viking' discovery of North America, potential Scandinavian settlements in what is now Massachusetts, and the importance of the cultural connection between Scandinavian immigrants to North American and the land from which they emigrated.[1]

This paper explored the connections between turn-of-the-century academic production surrounding the Icelandic sagas and particularly the Vinland sagas, and the cultural identity of Scandinavian Americans. Drawing on current research from Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen, Anita Olson Gustafson, David M. Kruger, Adam Hjorthén, and others, those connections were explored and presented as possible framing and bounding areas for the created concept of Scandinavian American ethnicity. This was supported by primary document research into those turn-of-the-century scholars listed above, particularly George T. Flom and Rasmus B. Anderson. Flom was an especially important individual for making the connection between Scandinavian American identity and early-twentieth-century academia because of his 1907 and 1911 (respectively) *A History of Scandinavian Studies in American Universities together with a Bibliography* and "A Sketch of Scandinavian Study in American Universities," in issue 1 of *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*.

Flom's works show a direct and growing connection between the Scandinavian American population and the study of medieval Scandinavia across several fields. He lists philologists, linguists, literature scholars, and others, as producers of work in the field of Scandinavian studies, many of whom were Scandinavian American themselves. Rasmus B. Anderson's *America Not Discovered By Columbus* is one of the more direct assertions of Scandinavian American ethnic identity within the changing cultural landscape of turn-of-the-century America. Anderson's work influenced people outside of the Scandinavian American community, as shown by Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen (2018) in his paper about the Leif Erikson monument in Boston and Anita Olson Gustafson (2018) in her book *Swedish Chicago*.

This paper was part of an ongoing project investigating the role played by Scandinavian studies scholars in the creation, maintenance, and bounding of Scandinavian American ethnicity around the turn of the twentieth century. The eventual goal of the project is to better understand the social networks and cultural interactions between academics, community leaders, and the public, and the ways in which those interactions influenced identity creation.

Notes

1   Please see attached references list for more information about the works used in the preparation for this talk, or contact the author at gregory.gaines@maine.edu for the paper in its entirety.

Bibliography

Anderson, Rasmus B. *America Not Discovered by Columbus, an historical sketch of the Discovery of America by the Norsemen in the Tenth Century*. 5ᵗʰ ed. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1901.

Blanck, Dag. *The Creation of an Ethnic Identity: Being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, 1860–1917*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.

Conzen, Kathleen Niels, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli. "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 1 (1992): 3–41.

Flom, George T. *A History of Scandinavian Studies in American Universities, Together with a Bibliography*. Iowa City: The State University of Iowa, 1907.

———. "A Sketch of Scandinavian Study in American Universities." *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study* 1, no. 1 (1911): 12–20.

Gustafson, Anita Olson. *Swedish Chicago: The Shaping of an Immigrant Community*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018.

Guttormsen, Torgrim Sneve. "Valuing Immigrant Memories as Common Heritage: The Leif Erikson Monument in Boston." *History and Memory* 30, no. 2 (2018): 79–115.

Hjorthén, Adam. *Cross-Border Commemorations: Celebrating Swedish Settlement in America*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018.

Kruger, David M. *Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking Martyrs and the Birthplace of America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

The Byzantine Last Judgement in Flatatunga of Iceland: A New Approach

Ioannis Siopis

School of History and Archaeology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
Research Fellow of the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I), siopis8383@gmail.com

The engraved panels from Flatatunga in Iceland (and the nearby panels in Bjarnastaðahlíð), now partially preserved in the National Museum of Iceland, were originally mounted on a wall in the hall at Flatatunga (Figures 1, 2). Selma Jónsdóttir (1959) dated the panels to the last quarter of the eleventh century, and also successfully supported the idea that these engraved panels represented a Last Judgement scene created by a local, individual artist who based their design accurately on the patterns of the equivalent Byzantine theme (Figures 3, 4). In addition, the same researcher claimed that these panels were an artistic creation that came from the influence of a Byzantine art manuscript or an icon that was brought to Iceland by some Byzantine missionaries who came from Italy and, more specifically, from the monastery of Monte Cassino in the second half of the eleventh century (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 77–87).

The current approach extends these associations and relates Flatatunga's engraved panels with the Scandinavian battalions, the so-called Varangians, who served in the imperial court of Constantinople during the eleventh century. The Varangians were a select unit of mercenaries who possessed special military skills and whose main task was to protect the Byzantine emperor. Their presence in the court of Constantinople dates from the middle of the ninth century until the beginning of the twelfth century.[1] Several noble Icelanders served as Varangians, such as Bolli Bollason, Úlfr Óspaksson, and Halldór Snorrason. *Morkinskinna* mentions Már, a prominent Icelander who stood out in the Byzantine guard. All these Icelanders may have played a special role in the spread of Byzantine culture in Iceland upon their return home (Sverrir Jakobsson 2020: 62–4).

We must keep in mind that, when the Icelandic veterans returned to their homeland after their tenure in the court of Constantinople, they brought a large number of valuable items as a reward. It is possible that, among the many gifts and rewards which they received for their services from Byzantine ecclesiastic or secular officials, that there was a manuscript or an icon that depicted the Last Judgement and which functioned as an artistic model for the Icelandic artists of Flatatunga's panels.

Furthermore, the Varangians were inevitably in constant visual contact with the rich religious and artistic environment of Byzantium's palaces and churches. As a result, they were influenced by Byzantine art and, after having returned to their homelands, they transmitted the knowledge and experiences gained during their tenure in the distant empire. It may well be argued that since most of the Icelandic Varangian veterans were nobles, they might have been the patrons or the indirect influencers of the creation of the panels in Flatatunga. These representations of the Last Judgement[2] may imply an iconographic propaganda adapted to the local artistic style (Ringerike) that indirectly promotes the image of the local power and justice, which are imitating the Byzantine standards of justice.

In conclusion, Byzantine influences in Iceland arrived with manuscripts and oral tradition and gained a new expression within the local idiom in art and literature. The Last Judgement on Flatatunga's panels is an indication of the rich cultural exchange between the North and Byzantium. In that exchange, we can notice that the Icelandic Varangians had a leading role, as they were present in Constantinople during the Byzantine artistic renaissance of the ninth through the twelfth centuries. A future study could shed more light on the connections created between Icelandic historical figures and the enigmatic Last Judgement panels in Flatatunga.

Notes

1   For Varangians and their relation with Byzantium, see Benedikz (1979): 1–166.
2   The cosmic dimension of the representation of the Last Judgement, which is related to the immediate administration of justice, is suitable for the decoration of spaces associated with the governance of state and judicial power. Flatatunga's Hall was such a characteristic case. (See Semoglou 2020: 282–3).

Bibliography

Benedikz, Benedict. *The Varangians of Byzantium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Selma Jónsdóttir. *An 11ᵗʰ - century Byzantine Last Judgement in Iceland*. Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið, 1959.

Semoglou, Athanasios. "Damned in Hell, Damned in the Church: Imagery and Space in Byzantium." In *Hell in the Byzantine World. A History of Art and Religion in Venetian Crete and the Eastern Mediterranean*, vol 1, edited by Aggeliki Lymberopoulou, 281–308. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Sverrir Jakobsson. "Araltes: The Evolution of a Varangian Stereotype." *VTU Review: Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2020): 55–67.

Appendix: Figures

Figure 1. The engraving panel from Flatatunga
(Photo source: Selma Jónsdóttir, *An 11ᵗʰ century Byzantine Last Judgement in Iceland*,
Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið, 1959, 66).
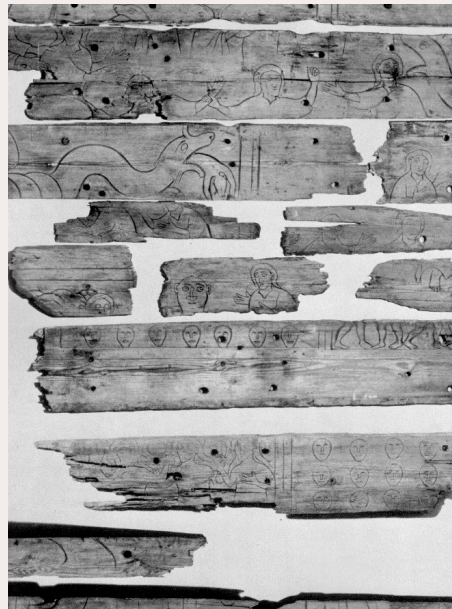
Figure 2. The engraving panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð
(Photo source: Selma Jónsdóttir, *An 11ᵗʰ century Byzantine Last Judgement in Iceland*,
Reykjavik: Almenna Bókafélagið, 1959, 1).
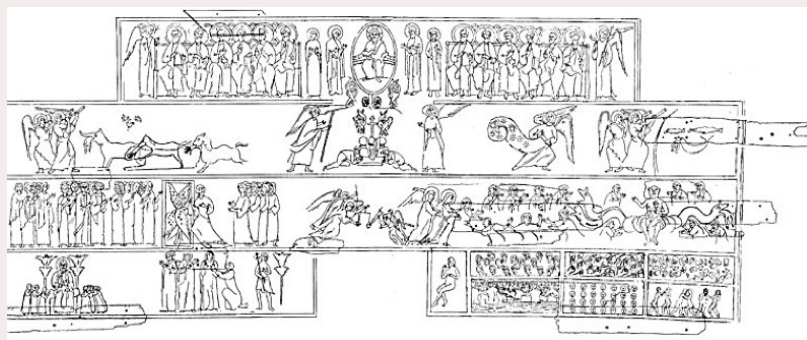
Figure 3. Drawing reconstruction by Hörður Ágústsson showing how the remaining panels of
Bjarnastaðahlíð may have fit an original mural of the Last Judgment.
Photo source: http://dkpeshkadds.com/scandinavian/keynoteSASS2011/ESchjeideSASS11.html
(Retrieved on 14.07.2021).

Figure 4. Mosaic of the Last Judgement, Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello
(second half of the eleventh century).
Photo source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_the_Last_Judgment_of_Santa_Maria_
Assunta_(Torcello)1.jpg (Retrieved on 14.07.2021).

'Some went mad, some were covered in sores, some discharged their guts': Christian Schadenfreude and Humiliating Depictions of the Vikings

James Burns
Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York
james.burns757@outlook.com

When we think of the Vikings, we tend to think of a warrior towering over an unfortunate victim. What we do not usually think of is a pale, sore ridden figure, squatting down, spilling out his own guts. It is an image contrary to ideas of Viking strength that are medieval as well as modern: the ninth-century *Annals of Fulda*, written in the Carolingian East Frankish kingdom, described the impressive physique of the Northmen (Reuter 1992: 884 AD, 95). Indeed, historian Simon Coupland has argued that Vikings were portrayed in Carolingian sources 'as brutally cruel, devilishly cunning and of superhuman stature' (Coupland 2003: 186). Certainly, that the Vikings seemed unusually strong is not surprising given their advances into Christian kingdoms – advances which contemporaries interpreted as a punishment for the sins of Christian people (Coupland 1991: 554). But the image of the Vikings in medieval texts was more diverse than Coupland allows. The Vikings were human and vulnerable, and when they were afflicted by natural disaster, certain writers seized on this to depict them in degrading situations. I want to draw particular attention to the *Annals of St-Bertin*, a Carolingian, West Frankish chronicle (though not actually written at St-Bertin).

Firstly, to its entry for 845 AD, which was probably written by Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861) (Nelson 2013: 845 AD, 61–2). This described how the Christian God afflicted the Vikings with blindness and insanity, so that their attacks on monasteries and claims that God was powerless would not go unpunished. This divine punishment was far more pointed than the loss of life and riches inflicted upon the Franks. Literal blindness and insanity mirrored the metaphorical blindness and insanity of trusting in pagan religion rather than following the Christian God.

The entry for 865, this time written by Hincmar (d. 882), archbishop of Rheims, took an even more savage tone: 'The Northmen who had sacked St-Denis became ill with various ailments. Some went mad, some were covered in sores, some discharged their guts with a watery flow through their arses: and so they died' (Nelson 2013: 865 AD, 129). For Hincmar's and Prudentius' audience of Christian Franks, Viking infirmities served as a consolation that put into perspective the punishment God seemed to be inflicting upon the Carolingians. What injuries they were unable to stop would be divinely avenged through storm and disease. Prudentius and Hincmar inherited an Old Testament understanding of history, where though the people of Israel did not escape divine punishments, they were still spared the plagues that befell the Egyptians.

Moreover, dwelling on the evacuation of the bowels was a trope steeped in Christian schadenfreude, and one that could be used to contrast the fates of those who merely fell short in their standards of piety with those who actively questioned the (perceived) word of God. It was the fate that had befallen the heretic Arius (d. 336), whose demise as described by his enemy Socrates Scholasticus established this form of death as an almost comical punishment meted out to God's enemies (Socrates Scholasticus: I.38, 34–5). Indeed, Hincmar may have been laughing at the Vikings. There are certainly other examples from Carolingian Europe of men doing so. In the stories of court life under Charlemagne (747/8–814) and Louis the Pious (778–840) written by Notker the Stammerer (d. 912), a monk of St Gall, there are jokes at the expense of the hairiness, vanity, fickleness, and stupidity of the Vikings (Notker II.13, 75–6).

These images of laughable Vikings, blind and mad Vikings, and gut-defecating Vikings may have reflected a desire to take pleasure in their weaknesses and misfortunes. Medieval writers were all too human. We may be seeing schadenfreude — though, with its overtones of divine judgement, schadenfreude very much of a Christian kind.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Haefele, Hans F. (ed.). *Notker der Stammler: Taten Kaiser Karls des Grossen*. MGH SS rer. Germ. N. S. 12. Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959.

Nelson, Janet (trans.). *Annals of St-Bertin*, 2nd ed. Ninth-Century Histories 1. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Reuter, Timothy (trans.). *Annals of Fulda*. Ninth-Century Histories 2. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace (eds). *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories*. NPNF Series II, 2 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890).

Secondary Sources

Coupland, Simon. "The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of Viking Invasions." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42, no. 4 (1991), 535–54.

———. "The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History." *History*, 88, no. 2 (2003), 186–203.

The Eitri Platform: A Digital Analysis of the Þórr's Hammer Symbol

Katherine S. Beard
Faculty of English, University of Oxford
katherine.beard@linacre.ox.ac.uk

The Norse god Þórr, from pre-Christian Scandinavia to modern times, is instantly recognizable by his hammer, Mjǫllnir. The hammer symbol has been vested with meaning for over a thousand years, and its power as a statement carries into the modern era. The symbol of Þórr's hammer can be traced directly to the surviving mythological literature, most notably the eddic poetry and *Snorra Edda*, and it has a notably robust archaeological record.

Small hammers are some of the most well-known symbols passed down from the Viking Age and are one of the most frequently found amuletic shapes of jewelry in Scandinavia. Hammer amulets, pendants, and hammer rings have been found in graves and treasure hordes in many countries across northern Europe, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the UK, and Iceland. Today, however, these hammer pendants are regularly discovered as loose, contextless finds, often by metal detectorists.

When I began my research into the possible meanings of the hammer symbol, I quickly noticed a significant discrepancy between the number of hammer amulets claimed to exist in academic scholarship and the actual number of objects that I encountered. Many scholars reference a figure, most commonly attributed to Gabriel Turville-Petre, that approximately 40 hammer specimens have been found throughout Scandinavia, which largely date from the ninth to the eleventh centuries (Turville-Petre 1964: 83). Any more than a cursory glance at the archaeological data available today, however, quickly reveals this number to be outdated.

A great many hammer amulet specimens have been found since Turville-Petre was writing in the mid-1960s. Much of this archaeological bounty is due to advances in metal detector technology and the rise of centralised digital collections where loose finds can be recorded and researched, like the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme (finds.org.uk). To date, my hammer count is in the 300s—with new finds coming to light seemingly every day. However, a great deal of twentieth century scholarship was based on a much smaller number of hammer finds, and these outdated perspectives have had an outsized impact on our understanding of the symbol. By taking full advantage of modern advances in archaeology, technology, and scholarship, we can refresh and update our understanding of the hammer symbol for the twenty-first century.

With this paper, I would like to introduce an updated theory pertaining to the shape change of the hammer symbol over time: that the hammer evolved from ax-like hammers to cross-like hammers over the course of the Viking Age, with a clearly distinct intermediate hammer form appearing as the symbol shifted from ax to cross. This 'spectrum theory' grows out of a similar theory from Lotte Motz, who suggested in 1997 that the hammer-like pendant might not be hammers at all but instead represent a stylistic development of the ax-like pendant en route to cross amulets. Motz's interpretation thus demands that the hammer symbol cannot be viewed as a clearly distinct iconographic tradition (Motz 1997: 340). Unlike Motz, however, I firmly believe that this intermediary stage does in fact represent a distinct hammer tradition. Most strikingly, a hammer pendant found in 2014 in Købelev, Denmark bears a runic engraving on its head reading: 'This is a hammer' which clearly shows the owner's understanding of the hammer as a distinct form.

This 'spectrum theory' is further supported by the general evolution of hammer shapes: hammers with cross-like characteristics tend to come from a later date, while hammers with ax-like characteristics are predominantly from an earlier period.
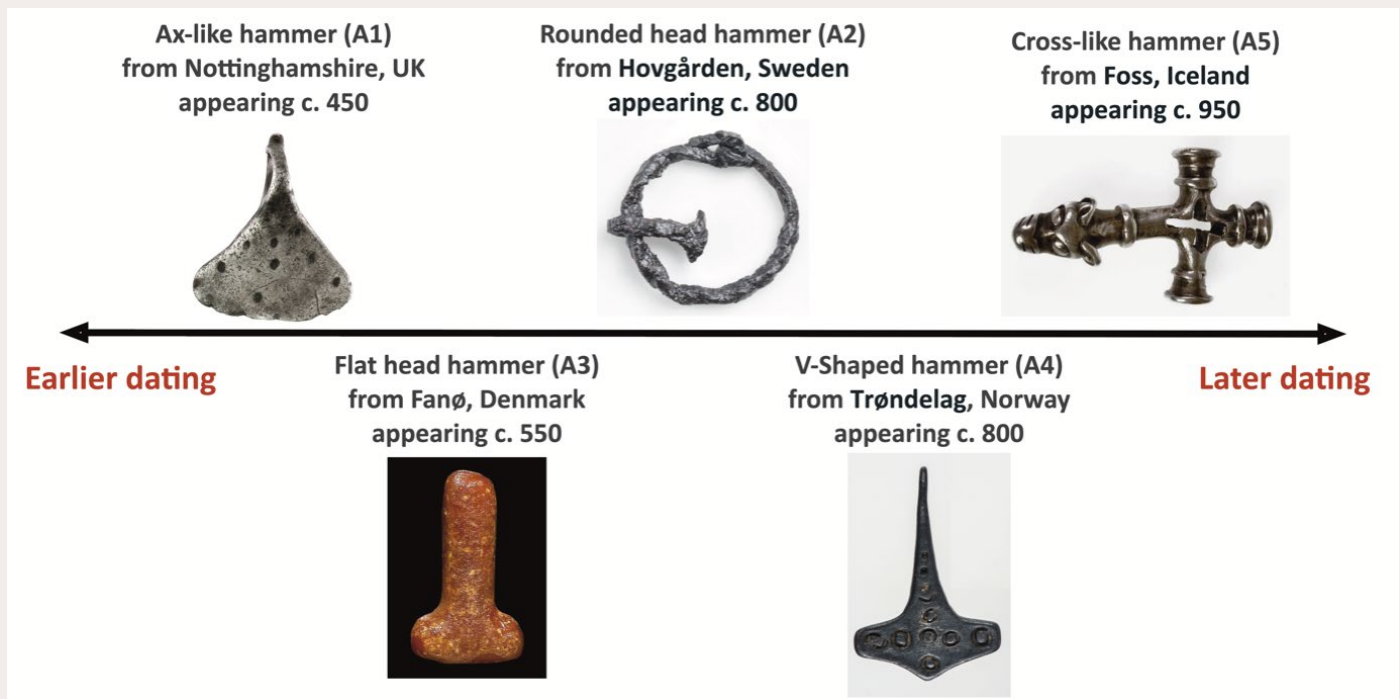
Figure 1. Hammer shape spectrum according to head shape. Graphic created by author (Beard 2019: 140).

The visual portrayal of the evolution of the hammer shape illustrates how the symbol subtly changed throughout the centuries, showing that the shape of a hammer can serve as a rough indicator of the time period in which it was created and entered circulation. The distinct style of both the rounded head and V-shaped hammers also seem to point to the existence of a shape tradition quite distinct from the earlier ax-like amulets and the later cross-like pendants. I came to these conclusions by using a new analytical web platform, named Eitri (eitridb.com), which was created as a means to collect all of the archaeological hammer finds to date in one place and unlock their full potential. Eitri is named for the dwarven smith Eitri, one half of the duo who forged Mjǫllnir in *Skáldskaparmál* (Faulkes 1998: 42), and contains two key elements: first, a centralised database of artifacts and second, a set of analytical tools to understand them.

Digital humanities tools, like the Eitri platform, seek to marry traditional academic scholarship and rigour with modern data analysis techniques to generate new insights and foster greater understanding of the past. Unfortunately, most modern analytical techniques require scholars today to either rely on generic off-the-shelf technologies or have training in more advanced technical skills like programming. Generic tools like Excel can certainly be used to perform detailed analyses of artifact finds. However, it takes quite some time to generate and explore useful visualizations, and Excel has limited support for free-text artifact descriptions and nearly no support for images. In contrast, an enterprising academic with a programming background could use a database query language like SQL or a programming language like Python, but those kinds of technical skills are not widely available in the humanities. Thus, custom web-based platforms like Eitri can be used to bridge the gap between usability and utility.

As I applied Eitri to my research, I discovered a virtuous circle between researcher and technology. The initial version of Eitri did not include a hammer shape taxonomy, as it had yet to be discovered. As I started to play with the timeline, histogram, and gallery view, however, I began to see the first clues that hammer shape would prove to be a valuable axis for analysis. From there I created my taxonomy and added it to Eitri, which further opened up the ability to perform the analysis in my demo. The virtuous circle between the technology identifying new insights, the scholar codifying those insights, and then the technology finding yet further insights is a powerful phenomenon. It means that our understanding of the past will hopefully only accelerate as we move into the future, and that the best digital humanities approaches will be constantly evolving and growing along with that understanding.

However, the creation of digital tools like Eitri certainly come with a set of associated challenges that are intimately familiar to many scholars, not only in Scandinavian studies, but across disciplines: the difficulties of data collection. Out of necessity, I have accepted that any database, including Eitri, is necessarily continually evolving and never truly finished. Hodgepodge data silos spread across libraries, universities, and museums, translations, and data standardisation all force upon the editor a responsibility to decide which sources are trustworthy and which attributes to include in their standardised compilation. As such, no collection can ever be perfect or complete. These limitations do not mean that such data collection endeavours are fruitless, only that they are time-intensive exercises and that the challenges of data collection need to be taken into consideration. In fact, new hammers are discovered frequently, and I eagerly anticipate how each new discovery affects the spectrum theory and the ever-evolving study of the hammer symbol.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Beard, Katherine. "Hamarinn Mjǫllnir: The Eitri Database and the Evolution of the Hammer Symbol in Old Norse Mythology." MA thesis, University of Iceland, 2019.

Faulkes, Anthony (ed.). *Edda: Skáldskaparmál I*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998.

Portable Antiquities Scheme. "Summary Definition of Treasure." Accessed June 1, 2021. https://finds.org.uk.

Turville-Petre, Gabriel. 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964.

Allegory, Satire, and the Legitimation of Rebellion in Fourteenth-Century Sweden

Kim Bergqvist
Department of History, Stockholm University
kim.bergqvist@historia.su.se

In fourteenth-century Sweden, several depositions of kings (in 1318, 1364, and 1389) were followed by the production of literary depictions of those kings' reigns, pointing out their many faults, the wickedness of their advisors, or the tyrannical nature of their rule. Thus, Latin and vernacular literature could serve a legitimating function, presenting both the actions of the rebels and the succeeding regime as lawful. These texts were composed shortly after the events in question, giving one faction's view of a recent conflict; they portray motivations, modes of composition, and a historical consciousness distinct from regnal history writing.

Parts of St. Birgitta's *Revelations* and the text *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* depict the misrule of King Magnus Eriksson (r. 1319–64) in similar ways, criticising his tendency to engage foreigners in his service and his failure to heed the advice of domestic lords. The *Libellus* has a later successor in one of the most idiosyncratic Old Swedish texts: the anonymous allegorical poem on King Albrecht (r. 1364–89) from c. 1390.[1] Here, similar allegations are levelled at the next Swedish king to be deposed. The poet claims that Albrecht would have remained in power had he but listened to the counsel of the Swedish lords.

The poem emphasizes Albrecht's German-ness and has an anti-German bias; his failure to properly address his subjects in the Swedish language becomes a main point of criticism. In fact, it is hard to know whether the election of Albrecht as king of Sweden in 1364 should best be described as an invasion or whether it was a response to an invitation made by a group of Swedish magnates who were displeased with the rule of Magnus Eriksson and saw his nephew as the most proximate substitute in terms of hereditary rights. This version of events promotes the idea that the magnates had a great deal of influence and firmly believed in their right to depose the king, given his breach of the oath of office.

To what extent would the notion of Sweden as a luscious garden invaded and ravaged by wild beasts during Albrecht's reign have rung true for the poem's audience? Surely, an allegorical imagery that likened the stint on the throne of the often-criticised Magnus Eriksson to a paradisiacal time of bliss should have been met with a doubtful response. But by separating the reign of Albrecht from earlier Swedish history, the poet avoids the notion of Albrecht as a link in a chain of Swedish monarchs, and presents him as an anomaly: a German-born king, responsible for introducing Germans into important positions at his court and in the kingdom. What this implies is that the realm was better off in the custody of native-born magnates, and the rule of the regents in 1319–1332 for the minor king was a Golden Age, when the magnates were undivided and unaffected by the misrule of a useless king. The poem thus presents the collective rule of the council aristocracy as the best state of affairs.

A fundamental distinction between satirical and comic laughter is the mobilisation of harsh emotions: contempt, anger, and disgust. Though satire includes a comic intent, its greater purpose is social criticism, commentary, and intent to affect improvement, using irony or parody to signal important issues. The poem is an attempt at intervention in the current political situation. It uses mockery and ridicule as a performative method, placing the allegory in a satirical mode. If it was meant to agitate the Swedish commonalty, its rhetoric may, however, be considered to have failed, given the aristocratic gaze and bias the poet displays, but the strong note of nativism and the anti-German rhetoric would become foundational for political critique in the subsequent century.

How effective the poem was as a piece of propaganda is hard to assess, though the poet must have had trouble appealing to wider social strata, due to its aristocratic perspective. Nonetheless, political allegory can be directly related to the functions of delegitimation of royal rule and legitimation of resistance. Allegorical political poetry and prose can be used alongside other sources to give a more comprehensive view of medieval political thought on the right of resistance and the legal status of rebellion.

Notes

1   Published by G. E. Klemming as "Om konung Albrekt," in *Svenska medeltids dikter och rim*, 177–84 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1881–82). See bibliography for essential previous studies of this text.

Bibliography

Andersson, Ingvar. *Källstudier till Sveriges historia, 1230–1436: inhemska berättande källor jämte Libellus Magnipolensis*. PhD dissertation, Lund University, 1928.

Blom, Conny. "Liknelsen om konung Albrekt. Skämtet och löjet som politiskt vapen i en medeltida rimkrönika." *Scandia* 58, no. 1 (1992): 31–46.

Ferrari, Fulvio. "Who laughed at King Albrekt's ineptitude? Some remarks on the Old Swedish *Dikten om kung Albrekt*." In *Texter och tecken från svensk medeltid*, edited by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, 59–71. Uppsala: Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, 2012.

Layher, William. *Queenship and Voice in Medieval Northern Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Phiddian, Robert. *Satire and the Public Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Vilhelmsdotter, Gisela. *Riddare, bonde och biskop. Studier kring tre fornsvenska dikter jämte två nyeditioner*. PhD dissertation, Stockholm University, 1999.

Vikings in Gaming, Gaming with Vikings

Lysiane Lasausse

Department of Culture, Religion, and Social Studies, University of South-Eastern Norway

lysiane.lasausse@usn.no

The video games' world is the stage of a Norse renaissance since 2015: from AAA games to indie studios, many are utilizing Viking Age history, culture and folklore to weave stories and create characters. For a long time portrayed as relentless warriors, fighting deranged gods and monsters, *Víkingar* have been shown in a bloodthirsty light, often as the enemies. Norse people and their mythology have a rich, but antagonistic role in many video games. However, new Norse people are on the horizon: games are beginning to show them as regular folk, with everyday trials and tribulations. With these new representations also comes an important aspect of human life everywhere: entertainment. This presentation aims to offer a glimpse of how video games include and utilize history to create, re-create or implement games within games.

By studying Ubisoft's 2020 release *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* (shortened *AC:Valhalla* from this point), I want to show how the developers have implemented mini games based on Norse traditions and folklore, going as far as inventing a board game (Orlog) to play within the game. The inclusion of such mini games poses the question: are we playing as Vikings, or with Vikings? Utilizing cultural heritage, history, and video game studies, this short presentation's first aim is to provide an insight on the influence of cultural heritage and medieval history in re-creating Norse environment from a historical point of view. The second goal is to delve deeper into the creation of games-within-a-game, by game developers, utilizing historians' knowledge and video game design. The third and final goal is to open a discussion on the influence of created games such as Orlog, and what it means in terms of cultural heritage and understanding of medieval history.

A Game within a Game

AC:Valhalla is a video game created by Ubisoft, released in November 2020. During the game's development, Ubisoft insisted on the franchise's improvement on historical accuracy. The company hired historians and experts on Norse culture and history to create a virtual environment that would match as closely as possible to real-world archaeological findings and historical reconstructions. They also used their hiring of historians as a marketing strategy to put emphasis on the historical accuracy of the game, and more largely, the *Assassin's Creed* franchise. As part of introducing historical culture and Norse traditions, *AC:Valhalla* has multiple mini-games, one of which is a tabletop strategy game called Orlog.
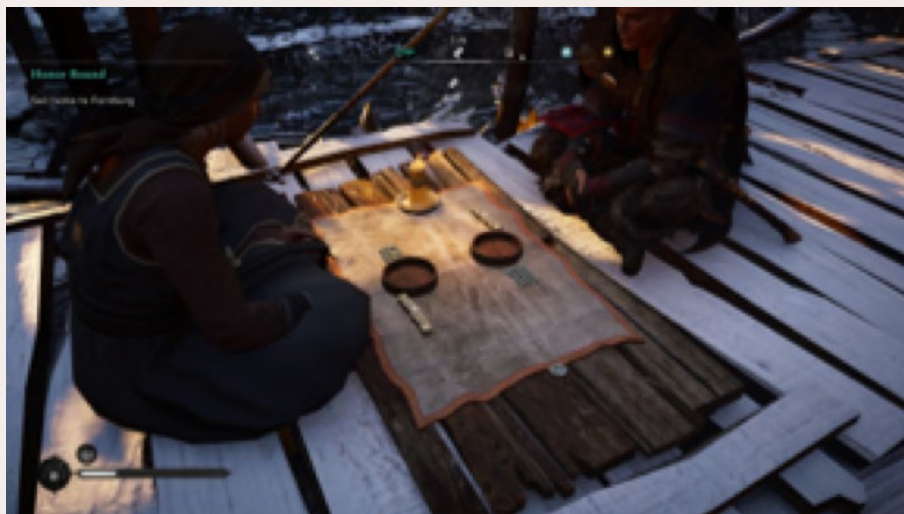
Figure 1. A screenshot from *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* showing two characters playing Orlog. Taken by Lysiane Lasausse.

Vikings in Gaming, Gaming with Vikings

Tabletop strategy games existed during Viking Age Scandinavia, with archaeological findings of game pieces and writings in sagas mentioning games demonstrating it was a popular pastime. However, Orlog is a game that was invented especially for *AC:Valhalla*; the game itself does not have any historical value, so to say. It was created to "look realistic" rather than to recreate existing games, for which rules are either missing or non-existent. Orlog contains Norse elements, such as carved figurines of Norse gods (Óðinn and Freyja, for example) and dice (used before and during Late Iron Age Scandinavia). These elements allow the game to fit in well with the rest of *AC:Valhalla*'s environment and create an additional layer of immersion for the player.
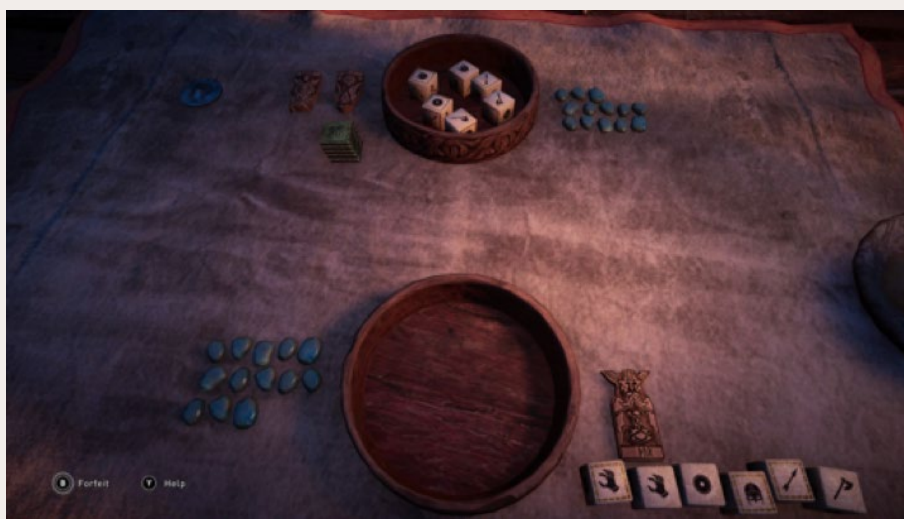
Figure 2. Screenshot from *AC:Valhalla*, showing the game of Orlog. The image shows dice, rocks, tokens, and carved figurines of Norse gods. Taken by Lysiane Lasausse.

History or Capitalism?

While Orlog may be an additional feature to create a sense of historical accuracy and immersion for the player of *AC:Valhalla*, the creation of this game-within-a-game poses the question of intent on the game's developers' part. A few weeks after the release of *AC:Valhalla*, Ubisoft announced the release of Orlog as a separate, physical board game in 2021. Was Orlog created to promote Norse historical culture and cultural heritage, or to be sold for profit? It is important to remember that game developers create video games firstly for profit, and that as academics, it is important to stay critical of marketing and public relations announcements surrounding digital games.

Bibliography:

Carter, Chase. "Assassin's Creed: Valhalla's Viking dice game Orlog will get a physical version in 2021." *Dicebreaker*, 23 November 2020. https://www.dicebreaker.com/games/orlog/news/assassins-creed-valhalla-orlog-physical. Accessed 21 March 2021.

Lasausse, Lysiane. *Vikings in gaming*. In *Viking Heritage and History in Europe: Practices and Recreations*. Routledge, forthcoming 2022.

McKay, Andrew. "Viking Games: Fun & Games Then and Now – Life in Norway." *Life in Norway*, 29 August 2020. https://www.lifeinnorway.net/viking-games/. Accessed 21 March 2021.

Newport, Joshua. "Game Review: Assassins Creed Valhalla." *Faculty and Staff Publications – Milner Library* 118 (2020). https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpml/118. Accessed 21 March 2021.

Ubisoft. *Echoes of Valhalla.* Produced by Ubisoft Entertainment SA. 2020. Podcast. https://www.ubisoft.com/en-gb/game/assassins-creed/valhalla/podcast. Accessed 21 March 2021.

Ubisoft. *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla*. Developed by Ubisoft Montreal. 2020. Video game.

Lost on the Way to Vínland: Pseudo-History and the Norse Exploration of North America

Michael Lazar

Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Iceland
mwd1@hi.is

Actor-network theory provides a useful framework for conceptualising the position of pseudo-historical objects in relation to historical sources such as the Vínland sagas (*Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga*). Many pseudo-historical objects can be easily conceptualised as hybrids: objects that exist in (and constitute) greater constellations of heterogeneous relations to spheres of cultural, sociological, and historical knowledge. By evaluating these phenomena through actor-network theory as objects within a network, we can identify certain patterns of relation between them and common historical sources (i.e., the Vínland sagas).

This requires considering the Vínland sagas as quasi-objects/hybrids that are engaged with the cultural projects of purification and hybridisation (Latour 1993: 1). For example, *Eiríks saga rauða* is engaged with an ongoing negotiation of cultural boundaries and is exemplified through its portrayal of the Christianization of Norse society. It is because "accounts of Greenland allowed Icelandic writers to chart the parameters of Icelandic cultural self-consciousness in their writings" (Grove 2009–10: 45) that *Eiríks saga rauða* records such vivid contrasting images of pagan and Christian cultural practice – doing so emphasises the transition to Christianity and thus its position as the new dominant cultural structure.

This negotiation of boundaries occurs along geographic dimensions as well: as the binary opposition between the non-human and human is continually renegotiated to further lands and new human settlements are carved out of the non-human wilderness, each act simply throws into relief the possibility of a new step. But this process ultimately reaches its limit: "because of the extreme and insurmountable otherness of Vínland, the Norsemen find it impossible to stay, and the sagas end with the heroes defeated, barred from Paradise by the boundaries they have constructed" (Williamsen 2005: 476). But it is only too telling that the expedition to Vínland concludes with reference to a still-further *terra incognita*: Hvítramannaland.

This is essentially the condition in which the quasi-object of Vínland is received by modern Scandinavian settlers in North America. Modern Scandinavian settlers arriving in North America sought to create a modern identity for themselves by framing their settlement as a continuation of Norse Exploration (Schoolcraft 1856: 108). By using historical narratives such as the Vínland sagas – narratives that present Vínland as an inherently liminal space, beyond which lay the unknown – and when combined with a modern teleological understanding of Vínland as North America (Sverrir Jakobsson 2012: 502), this results in a cultural paradigm in which the constituent archaeological history of North America is prescriptively fit into the received narrative of the Norse exploration of North America.

Evidence for this operation can be seen in the progression of both pseudo-historical theories and objects but it is most clearly demonstrated in North American runestones which can be organized into two categories: misattributions of indigenous petroglyphs and hoaxes. Initially the first North American runestones that are 'discovered' in the late nineteenth century are re-publicized misattributions (Schoolcraft 1856: 110; Cram 1937; Robinson 2005; Feder 2019: 38). Following this there is a phase in which we see both re-publicized misattributions and hoaxes (e.g., the Kensington stone). Finally, hoaxes become removed from the historical project itself and become self-referential – stones that refer to previous hoaxes (Sprunger 2000: 140–54; Williams 2002: 40).

Bibliography

Cram, William. "Little Stories of Old New England." *Hampton Union & Rockingham County Gazette*, December 2, 1937.

Feder, Kenneth L. *Archaeological Oddities: A Field Guide to Forty Claims of Lost Civilizations, Ancient Visitors, and Other Strange Sites in North America*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Grove, Jonathan. "The Place of Greenland in Medieval Icelandic Saga Narrative." *Norse Greenland – Selected Papers from the Hvalsey Conference 2008, Journal of the North Atlantic* (2009): 30–51.

Robinson, J. Dennis. "Hampton Viking Grave is Hoax." *SeacoastNH.com*, 2005. http://www.seacoastnh.com/ hampton-viking-grave-is-hoax/?start=1.

Schoolcraft, Henry R. "[Dighton Rock] Antiquities." In *The History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1856.

Sprunger, David A. "Mystery & obsession: J. A. Holvik and the Kensington Runestone." *Minnesota History* (2000): 140–54.

Sverrir Jakobsson. "Vínland and wishful thinking: Medieval and modem fantasies." *Canadian Journal of History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 492–514.

Williams, Henrik. "The 'AVM' Stone from Minnesota (Kensington II)." *Nytt om runer* 17 (2002): 40.

Williamsen, E.A. "Boundaries of Difference in the Vínland Sagas." *Scandinavian Studies* 77, no. 4 (2005): 451–78.

Sigurðr hinn þǫgli: Growing Up with Dragons in Indigenous *riddarasögur*

Miguel Andrade
Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Iceland
migueldandrade@hotmail.com, mda6@hi.is

According to Tolkien (1997: 12), dragons with narrative significance in medieval Germanic literature are limited to the dragon of *Beowulf*, and Fáfnir of the *Vǫlsunga saga* and the Prose Edda, among other works.[1] Until recently, scholarship has neglected other dragons, above all those of the indigenous *riddarasögur*, in which the presence of these creatures is often seen as a mere derivation of older stories and haphazard deployment of motifs. In this paper, I looked at *Sigurðar saga þǫgla* (dated to the fourteenth century)[2] to argue that its author utilizes a dragon very effectively, even if not in an innovative way.

Up until the dragon episode, the saga's narrative follows the exploits of Sigurðr's two brothers. Sigurðr himself was thought an idiot, since at seven years old he could still not speak. He fits into the trope of a *kolbítr*, a 'coal-biter', those saga figures who are considered unpromising at a young age, always sitting by the fire. Later, however, they reveal themselves as heroes. After undertaking training with his foster-father, Sigurðr goes out adventuring and comes to the Rhine region, running into a flying dragon that had previously defeated his brothers. The dragon is dragging a lion and Sigurðr decides to intervene, striking him down, after he realizes that he has a lion inscribed on his shield. It is mentioned in the saga that this was his first feat of prowess.[3]

The dragon itself could perhaps be seen as inconsequential to the plot at large since it cannot be said to be associated with Sigurðr for the rest the saga. Undoubtedly, by fighting the lion (a common medieval symbol for Christ), the dragon is understood as a symbol of the Devil. I argue, however, that the dragon is also intentionally deployed by the author as a jump-starter of heroism at the beginning of Sigurðr's life. His growth is driven by the tried-and-true saga method of dragonslaying, which has been argued to have initiatory qualities and signify heroic growth as can be seen in the legends of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Ragnarr loðbrók (Lionarons 1998: 58; Ármann Jakobsson 2010: 37).[4] A new identity, adult life and eternal fame come after the slaying: the dragon makes the hero. It is also significant that both Sigurðr and Ragnarr kill their respective dragons during their youth (Ármann Jakobsson 2010: 46). In *Sigurðar saga þǫgla*, Sigurðr's bravery is emphasized in contrast with his brothers' failure, by defeating the dragon alone, which marks his entry into heroism, as his first exploit. His courage mirrors that of the old legendary heroes.

Jonathan Evans has highlighted that, in dragon episodes, one can detect a typical pattern of thematic associations and narrative structure that play upon the audience's expectations and convey a message, extending the significance of dragon fights (Evans 1985: 95–6). Similarly, here, the narrative builds up to the dragon-fight, reinforcing the heroification of Sigurðr. Several elements in the narrative anticipate or amplify the dragon fight. Two digressive descriptions contribute to this: that of the lion's qualities after the battle and that of Sigurðr's magical sword, given by his mentor in the 'preparation'-segment of the episode (Loth 1963: 139–41 and 145–6). It should be noted how Sigurðr þǫgull shares his name with the most famous dragon-slayer of Norse literature, Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (Evans 1985: 101). This is probably not accidental, as the text even directly mentions the latter Sigurðr.[5] I would highlight another marker that enlarges Sigurðr þǫgull's role as dragonslayer: the heraldry he carries (Loth 1963: 132–3), which mirrors the one carried by the most famous Sigurðr, in *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Þiðreks saga* (Finch 1965: 39–40; Bertelsen 1905–11, I: 344–7).

The hero is characterized as a typical Old Norse dragonslayer. Thus, the dragonslaying episode gains a new dimension and indicates the moment at which Sigurðr embraces heroism. The author of *Sigurðar saga þǫgla*, I argue, is deeply aware of the dragonslaying lore of the broader literary tradition into which he fits. The 'dragon versus lion'-episode portrayed in this saga, borrowed from Continental courtly literature, echoes the use of dragons in *fornaldarsögur* and Norse legend. Indeed, it symbolizes a fight of Good versus Evil, confirming Sigurðr as a Christian knight. Nonetheless, it is fundamental for the hero's development.

What we have here is a merger of cultural traditions, represented by two compatible meanings attributed to the dragon and resulting in a well-integrated dragon episode. It fits neatly into the narrative and adequately reflects both symbolical views of the creature. It may be called a generic dragon, but it is very precisely used.

Notes

1   Tolkien is not alone in this opinion, as some scholarship has seen the presence of dragons in most sagas, especially in the *riddarasögur*, as superfluous at best. For similar thoughts, see, for example, Hume (1980: 12) or Lionarons (1998: 21).

2   The text is extant in a long and a short redaction. I worked mostly from Agnete Loth's edition of AM 152 fol, containing the long redaction (1963: 93–259). The shorter redaction, for which Driscoll's 1992 edition was consulted, is preserved fragmentarily in AM 596 4to and does not include the part of the text containing the introduction to the dragon.

3   The dragon's first appearance and subsequent confrontation with Sigurðr (and his raid on the lair) is interrupted by an interlude (Loth 1963: 134 and 138–48).

4   Aside from the already mentioned *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, there are two legendary sagas which I believe contain dragon episodes particularly prone to reinforce this interpretation: *Ketils saga hœngs* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*. In both, initially ill-perceived characters show growth or gain recognition after a dragon (or dragon-analogue) is slain: see Guðni Jónsson (1954, I:62–9) for *Hrólfs saga kraka* and (1954, II: 153–5) for *Ketils saga hœngs*.

5   The saga uses the epithet *sveinn* ('boy') for him, similarly to *Þiðreks saga*, which suggests a reference to that text. This nickname highlights his youth. The fact that the combat takes place in the Rhine region may also be an intentional choice. The Rhine is associated with the Vǫlsung legend, if not specifically with its dragon; but in *Þiðreks saga*, it is also the region where the first dragon of the text appears, carrying not a kidnapped lion, but a knight.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bertelsen, Henrik (ed.). *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, 2 vols. Copenhagen: S. L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1905–11.

Driscoll, Matthew (ed.). *Sigurðar saga Þǫgla: The Shorter Redaction*. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1992.

Finch, R.G. (ed.). *The Saga of the Volsungs*. London/Edinburgh: Nelson, 1965.

Guðni Jónsson (ed.). *Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda*, 4 vols. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954.

Loth, Agnete (ed.). *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances: Volume II: Saulus saga ok Nikanors – Sigurðar saga þǫgla*. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Series B 21. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963.

Secondary Sources

Ármann Jakobsson. "Enter the Dragon: Legendary Saga Courage and the Birth of the Hero." In *Making History: Essays on the Fornaldarsögur*, edited by Martin Arnold and Alison Finlay, 33–52. Exeter: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2010.

Evans, Jonathan. "Semiotics and Traditional Lore: The Medieval Dragon Tradition." *Journal of Folklore Research* 22, no. 2/3 (1985): 85–112.

Hume, Kathryn. "From Saga to Romance, the Use of Monsters in Old Norse Literature." *Studies in Philology* 77, no. 1 (1980): 1–25.

Lionarons, Joyce Tally. *The Medieval Dragon: The Nature of the Beast in Germanic Literature*. Enfield: Hisarlik Press, 1998.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." In *The Monsters and The Critics and Other Essays*. London: HarperCollins, 1936 [1997].

The Failing Family: Vertical Relationships in the Hauksbók Redaction of *Breta sögur*

Natasha A. J. Bradley
University of Oxford
natasha.bradley@ell.ox.ac.uk

Breta sögur is an Old Norse translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*. It connects the British dynasty to Aeneas, tracing the classical figure's supposed lineage through the generations, recounting tales of figures such as King Leir, Constantine the Great, and King Arthur. *Breta sögur* exists in two main versions: a longer and a shorter redaction (Baccianti 2013; and Würth 2006: 298). The shorter version is considered a pseudo-history and is found within Hauksbók. This paper focuses entirely on the shorter redaction; the condensed nature of this version reveals interesting moments of focus where the translator expands, rather than paraphrases, Geoffrey's *Historia*. This paper examines three major scenes within the Hauksbók redaction where the Old Norse translator places a lingering emphasis upon the breakdown of vertical (parent-child) family relationships.

Aeneas and Dido

Breta sögur considerably expands upon the *Aeneid* section of Geoffrey's *Historia*, inserting many details of Aeneas' life, including his affair with Dido. The translator notably relies upon the Ovidian tradition; Dido reveals in her *planctus* that she is pregnant, and thus kills both herself and her unborn child in her suicide. This introduces the theme of familial breakdown in the very first story of the Hauksbók *Breta sögur*. A father neglects and a mother kills their unborn child. The translator makes subtle changes that accentuate the parental neglect in this passage.

Tonema

Tonema is the mother of two sons, Brennius and Belinus, who go against each other on the battlefield. Before they fight, Tonema goes between them and advocates for peace. This account is changed substantially in the translation. In Geoffrey, Tonwenna appeals to her sons with logic, convincing Brennius that Belinus meant him no harm. In *Breta sögur*, Tonema instead appeals to 'broðvrligrar astar ok moðorlegrar gleði' (Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson 1892–6: 255). The translator, however, adds an additional line to the account: 'hon for millim þeira ok villdi sætta þa en er hon gat þat eigi giort' (Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson 1892–6: 255). Instead of celebrating the parent-child relationships that are strong enough to generate peace, the translator inserts this initial failed attempt which continues to highlight the fragility of vertical family relationships.

King Leir

The story of King Leir in *Breta sögur* eclipses even that of King Arthur, who is the clear focus of the Galfridian text. It is by far the longest in the saga. While it is possible that the translator gave King Leir so much narrative space due to the story's popularity, this seems to contrast the general tendency of the Hauksbók redaction: to educate rather than entertain (Würth 2006: 304). Instead, it is possible that the episode is described in such great length due to its theme of familial breakdown. The translator appears to highlight this in his rendering. The dialogue between Leir and Cordelia focuses on the family dynamics, and the translator strips away other details of the account, concentrating the dramatic attention on the breakdown of the relationship between parent and child.

Overall, the translator draws particular attention to the breakdown of vertical family relationships in these three scenes within the shorter redaction of *Breta sögur*. This may provide some insight into the text's inclusion within Hauksbók, a miscellany containing information on various subjects such as history and genealogy. Although Baccianti suggests the text may have been included in this manuscript due to its

occasional references to Iceland and Scandinavia, it may also have been included for its depiction of fragile vertical relationships (Baccinati 2019: 588). Within a manuscript that seems at least loosely tied together by an exploration of genealogy, the family drama and intense emotions that can disrupt the relationship between parent and child seem particularly pertinent.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Black, Russell C. (ed). "*Breta sǫgur* from AM 544 4to: An Edition and Translation." (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2014)

Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson (eds). "*Breta sǫgur*." In *Hauksbók*, 231–302. Copenhagen: Thieles, 1892–6.

Wright, Neil. *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek MS. 568*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984.

———. *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth II: The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988.

Secondary Sources

Baccinati, Sarah. "The Latin Connection: Geoffrey of Monmouth in Iceland." In *Crossing Borders in the Insular Middle Ages*, edited by Aisling Byrne and Victoria Flood, 279–97. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019.

———. "Translating England in Medieval Iceland: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* and *Breta sǫgur*." *DQR: Studies in Literature* 52, no. 1 (2013): 561–88.

Hamel, A. G. van. "The Old Norse Version of the Historia Regum Britannie and the Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth." *Études celtiques* 1, no. 2 (1936): 197-247.

Würth, Stefanie. *Der „Antikenroman" in der isländischen Literatur des Mittelalters: eine Untersuchung zur Übersetzung und Rezeption lateinischer Literatur im Norden*. Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1998.

———. "The Common Transmission of *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sǫgur*." In *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts*, edited by A. N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf, 297–327. Tempe: ACMRS, 2006.

Incompatible Pasts? Proximity to the Dead and the Negotiation of Icelandic Cultural Identity in *Þorláks saga helga*, *Laxdæla saga,* and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*

Olivia Elliott Smith
Linacre College, University of Oxford
olivia.smith2@linacre.ox.ac.uk

The enshrinement of a saint's relics above the high altar, or the burial of their bones beneath it, was part of the special treatment of the holy dead required by the medieval Cult of the Saints. Though the burial in this location of any person less holy than a saint would be irreconcilable with these conventions, the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus contains two occurrences in which the bones of the pagan dead are discovered beneath a church. This paper examines the discovery and removal of the pre-Christian dead from sacred space depicted in *Laxdæla saga* and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* in relation to the practice of translation and the negotiation of cultural identity in medieval Iceland. It further explores the relationship between proximity to the dead, both saintly and pagan, and the literary negotiation of Icelandic cultural identity through the museological practices of *accessioning* and *deaccessioning*, the processes by which objects are formally acquired into or removed from a museum's collection. The medieval church is considered through the application of structuralist and philosopher Michel Foucault's *heterotopia* within the field of Museum Studies to demonstrate the similarities between the medieval church and the museum.

As spaces, the museum and the medieval church share several similarities. In particular, they both possess the ability to accumulate and preserve temporally and geographically diverse objects and present them within a single location. Both the medieval church and the museum can be regarded as heterotopias, which Foucault defines as 'Other Spaces . . . in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault 1986: 24). Regarding the heterotopic nature of the medieval church in Iceland, Sverrir Jakobson has asserted that 'for churches to become sacred places within society, places of intimate connection with holy events of the past and holy places in the world, places where a saint was present although he had never himself been there . . . ideas about space and time had to be modified through a new conception of space, a conception which had an operational power' (Sverrir Jakobsson 2010: 18). Following Sverrir, I argue that the medieval church can be viewed theoretically as a heterotopia, and that literary depictions illustrate how the holy dead, and therefore the Christian past, are made accessible through a curated collection of representations.

The translation of the relics of Saint Þorlákr, Iceland's first indigenous saint, in 1198, marked not only an important moment in the establishment of his cult, but also the beginning of indigenous Icelandic hagiographic literature. In the A-version of *Þorláks saga biskups*, Þorlákr makes several post-mortem appearances in the dreams of the surviving community. In one such account, he appears to the priest Þorvaldr and makes an appeal for the recognition of his own sanctity; his remains are exhumed and observed for traces of holiness and his relics are translated to Skálaholt (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002: 99). The museological practice of accessioning—the process by which an object is formally acquired and documented as part of a collection—can be employed to understand the relationship between Þorlákr's relics and the heterotopic church. Accessioning is generally accompanied by guidelines indicating what type of objects may be accessioned by an individual museum and why (See for example Museums Association 2004). The medieval church operates similarly: to be 'accessioned' into the Cult of the Saints, certain criteria must be met both before and after death to establish a person's sanctity (Klaniczay 2018: 43–4). Like museums, the Church had a didactic role through its curation of sacred objects, which necessitated a degree of scrutiny in determining what becomes part of the collective Christian past and what is excluded. Þorlákr's translation indicates that he possesses the qualities required to be accessioned into the collection—or cult—of the saints, and the enshrinement of his relics represents his presence in Heaven to the living on Earth through display.

Just as the museum and the church may acquire and accession objects and pasts, they may also need to remove them. The museum practice of deaccessioning, in which an object for various reasons is formally removed from the institution's keeping, are necessary for the responsible curation of the collection. (Museums Association 2014: 4). This process is often conducted 'to relieve the museum of objects which are not or are no longer compatible with the rest of the collection' (Museumvereigning 2016). In the capacity of the medieval church to perform as a heterotopic, museum-like space dedicated to the collection and representation of the Christian past, any objects contained in the church with connections to a past that is not Christian would consequently be considered irreconcilable with the rest of the collection. Such deaccessioning occurs in both *Laxdœla saga* and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.

In *Laxdœla saga*, the appearance of a pagan seeress in the dreams of the granddaughter of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir, the saga's protagonist, gives rise to the discovery of disfigured bones beneath the floor of the church where Guðrún prays nightly (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934: 223–4). The skeleton is described as 'blackened and horrible,' and is accompanied by a pendant and a large magician's staff, confirming the seeress' heathen identity. The skeleton is then removed from the church and reburied in an unknown place that is 'least in the way of people' (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934: 223–4). This event can be read as the inverse of the translation of Saint Þorlákr's relics: like Þorlákr, the seeress makes an appearance in a dream to alert the living to the state of her remains, but instead of being found preserved, her skeleton shows signs of extreme corruption. While Saint Þorlákr's incorrupt body is translated from the churchyard into the most central point of the church, the seeress' skeleton, having already been found in that most central place, is instead removed, and reburied in obscurity. If Saint Þorlákr's translation marks his accessioning into the Cult of the Saints and the collective Christian past made accessible within the heterotopic church, the removal of the seeress' body serves to deaccession the seeress and the pagan past that she represents.

Egils saga Skallagrímssonar presents a different view of the relationship to the pre-Christian past, one that implies a desire to remain in proximity to it, albeit at arm's length. Egill is initially buried in a heathen mound accompanied by grave goods but is later reburied by his beloved niece and foster-daughter, Þórdís, under the altar of the new church at Hrísbrú. The saga relates that when this church was later moved to Mosfell, an incredibly large and strange skeleton was found beneath the site of the altar; people were thus certain that these were the bones of Egill himself, and his skeleton is reburied by the edge of the new churchyard (Sigurður Nordal 1933: 298–9). As a renowned poet and warrior, Egill's bones may represent the desirable aspects of the past, as neither poetry nor prowess was entirely antithetical to Christian society, especially during the period in which the saga was committed to vellum. On the other hand, as a practitioner of magic, the seeress and her potential role within a pagan belief system renders her toxic to the worldview of the Christian Middle Ages. Unlike the seeress, Egill is permitted to remain nearby: though not part of the heterotopic collection of Christianity, his reburial under the churchyard wall exemplifies the desire to remember certain aspects of pre-Christian heritage which do not undermine or oppose Christianity.

What both of these inverted translations have in common is that they leave a space, a vacancy at the centre of the church that seems to anticipate the arrival of Iceland's own patron saint nearly two centuries later. While Saint Þorlákr's sanctity would have been unknown to the characters depicted in these sagas, the thirteenth century audience for these texts would have been well acquainted with Saint Þorlákr's cult. The deaccessioning of pagan remains that results in an empty space beneath the altar can thus be read symbolically in anticipation of the accessioning of Iceland's patron saint, a compatible addition to the heterotopic collection of medieval Christianity.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ásdís Egilsdóttir (ed.). "Þorláks saga byskups." In *Biskupa sögur: Volume II*, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson, 47–99. Íslensk fornrit 16. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Laxdæla saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 5. Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934.

Sigurður Nordal (ed.). *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. Íslenzk fornrit 2. Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933.

Secondary Sources

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Translated by Jay Miscowiec. *Diacritics* 16, (1986): 22–7.

Klaniczay, Gábor. "The Inquisition of Miracles in the Medieval Canonization Process." In *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes*, edited by Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Christian Krotzl, 43–73. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.

Museumvereigning. "LAMO Guideline." 2016.

Museums Association. "Acquisition: Guidance on the Ethics and Practices of Acquisition." *Ethical guidelines: Advice from the Museums Association Ethics Committee* 1, 2nd ed. London: Museums Association, 2004.

———. *Disposal Toolkit: Guidelines for Museums.* London: Museums Association, 2014.

Sverrir Jakobsson. "Heaven is a Place on Earth: Church and Sacred Space in 13th-Century Iceland." *Scandinavian Studies* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 1–20.

'Rannveig mælti': An Analysis of the Role and Utterances of a Secondary Character in *Brennu-Njáls saga*

Piergiorgio Consagra

Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Iceland

pic1@hi.is

Brennu-Njáls saga has undoubtedly always been a pivotal topic in the research, not only focussing on Old Norse literature, but it has also been analysed in a broader context of European medieval literature. Moreover, it is possible to state that it is the most famous medieval Icelandic saga nowadays, given its length, wide variety of topics and characters, and large reception in the modern, popular culture. During one extensive and detailed reading of this saga, I came across an intriguing character that seems to have received little attention in previous scholarship: Rannveig Sigfúsdóttir, the mother of Gunnarr á Hlíðarenda. She is only one of a broad variety of figures appearing in *Brennu-Njáls saga*; however, the scenes in which she is present seem to allude, if read between the lines, to the importance of her utterances and opinions. Moreover, by scrutinising the character in light of her words, it is possible to observe an interesting evolution which seems to comply to the development of the saga plot as well.

In the paper which I presented at the *Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on The Medieval North*, I set up the analysis of the character of Rannveig as follows: firstly, I provided a thorough account of the instances in which she appears in the saga, where she gains agency by uttering words and expressing her opinions. This happens especially in scenes which take place during an eventful span where the saga reaches many of its peaks. Secondly, I outlined a general overview of Rannveig, aiming to assess her role in the household of Hlíðarendi and in relation to the other characters who interact with her. Thirdly, I analysed the words spoken by her and contextualised them in order to obtain a better understanding of her character.

The conclusions that have been drawn at the end of this paper have shown that Rannveig Sigfúsdóttir emerges, despite being a secondary character, as an intriguing figure of the saga. Her role in the household can be defined on different levels: she is a mother to Gunnar, mother-in-law to Hallgerðr, grandmother to Hǫgni, and, last but not least, matriarch of Hlíðarendi after the death of her son. For each of these roles, different aspects of her character are depicted: caring and worried mother, harsh and judging mother-in-law, goading grandmother, and authoritative matriarch.

Rannveig has been generally observed in *Brennu-Njáls saga* as an utterer whose words and comments seem to somewhat affect the saga plot, which, in the chapters where she is present, reaches its climax in the conflict between Hlíðarendi and Bergþórshváll. Besides this, she has also been read as a character who is listening during the development of the events of the saga; these two aspects of Rannveig, i.e. utterer and listener, have then led to a deeper analysis of her words, which have proven to have prophetic value.

Lastly, this brief investigation has also shed light on some sort of development of the character of Rannveig in *Brennu-Njáls saga*: if in the beginning she is depicted as a wise woman who attempts to prevent the blood feud by her words and reprimands, she ends up becoming a promoter of violence, goading her grandson to kill in order to carry on the quarrel between Hlíðarendi and Bergþórshváll in her last appearance in the saga.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 12. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954.

Jakob Benediktsson (ed.). *Íslendingabók – Landnámabók*. Íslenzk fornrit 1. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968.

Robert Cook (trans.). *Njál's Saga*. London; New York: Penguin, 2001.

Secondary Sources

Amory, Frederic. "Speech Acts and Violence in the Sagas." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 106 (1991): 57–84.

Anderson, Sarah and Karen Swenson (eds). *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Austin, John L. *How to do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.

Baldur Hafstað. "*Egils saga*, *Njáls saga*, and the Shadow of *Landnáma*. The work methods of the saga writers." In *Sagnaheimur: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 80th birthday, 26th May 2001,* edited by Ásdís Egilsdóttir and Rudolf Simek, 21–37. Studia Medievalia Septentrionalia 6. Wien: Fassbaender, 2001.

Borovsky, Zoe. "Never in Public: Women and Performance in Old Norse Literature." *Journal of American Folklore* 112 (1999): 6–39.

Bredsdorff, Thomas. "Speech Act Theories and Saga Studies." *Representations* 100 (2007): 34–41.

Clover, Carol J. "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe." *Speculum 68* (1993): 363–87.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson. *Á Njálsbúð: Bók um mikið listaverk*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1943.

Holcomb, Kendall M. "Pulling the Strings: The Influential Power of Women in Viking Age Iceland." *Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History)*. Paper 45. Western Oregon University, 2015.

Jochens, Jenny. *Women in Old Norse Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.

———. *Old Norse Images of Women*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Kristján Jóhann Jónsson. *Lykillinn að Njálu*. Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell, 1998.

Lönnroth, Lars. "Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas." *Scandinavian Studies* 42 (1970): 157–89.

Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. *Fortælling Og Ære: Studier i Islændingesagaerne*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1995.

Tucker, J. *Sagas of the Icelanders: A book of essays*. New York/London: Garland, 1989.

Hlǫðskviða and *Wīdsīð*: A Case Study in Oral-Literate Networks and Medieval Memory of the Migration Period

Samuel R. Levin

University of Iceland / University of Oslo

samuelrlevin28@gmail.com

Known from fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and seventeenth-century manuscripts, the legendary *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* builds the final portion of its narrative around the *Hlǫðskviða*, a poetic text describing a legendary battle between Gothic and Hunnic kings. The provenance of the poem is uncertain, but it has an analogue in *Wīdsī*ð, an Old English poem preserved within the tenth-century Exeter Book that mentions the same characters and contains a similar yet considerably longer tally of rulers and realms. These texts eminently feature the Huns, a formidable nomadic people whose movements many consider the principal trigger for the events of the fourth- to sixth-century Migration Period—and whose role in various other Germanic legendary narratives is markedly salient.

This study[1] undertook an analysis of these two Germanic alliterative poems—one in Old Norse-Icelandic and one in Old English—whose parallels in content suggest that the Migration Period narratives contained therein may have emerged and developed not solely in isolation but also as part of a wider network of cultural exchange and transmission throughout the Baltic and North Sea regions that proliferated, evolved, and throve across vast spans of time and space. The core of the inquiry employed a philological approach to the texts to establish their context and determine how they reflect a contemporary understanding and memory of past societies as well as the concerns of their present. In other words, it asked why these fourth- to sixth-century events were so significant and memorable to societies perpetuating narratives about them across broad planes of time and space, and how this shared tradition can inform our understanding of social, political, and economic relationships in early medieval Northern Europe. Through supplementary incorporation of further literary as well as linguistic, historical, runological, folkloristic, philological, and even archaeological spheres, the inquiry then offered a more thoroughly contextualised and relatively comprehensive evaluation of the content than a direct comparison of the two texts themselves could.

Ultimately, the findings indicated plausible feasibility not only in the contention that cross-cultural interaction and propagation of Migration Period traditions throughout the Baltic and North Sea regions during the early medieval period was more prevalent than has been supposed, but also in their proposed social, political, and cultural functions. While the case study of merely two poetic works in a wider corpus did not have the scope to answer the thesis' central research questions with complete and utter conclusive conviction, the findings demonstrated the merit of the investigative approach taken by the inquiry and presented a compelling case for further research utilizing it on a broader and more extensive scale.

Crucial here is that the validity of the investigative approach is of equal and potentially greater importance than the findings themselves: the study sought not only specific pieces of additional knowledge in the short term, but also a means by which further knowledge can be reliably obtained in the future. This makes it applicable not only to researchers and research groups conducting inquiries on the same or similar subject matter, but possibly also to the future of the field as a whole. Furthermore, the study commands relevance not merely in the field of historical scholarship but also in the context of humanity's present: its findings indicate paradigms of past societies' perceptions of tradition, worldview, construction of identity, and cross-cultural interaction that run thoroughly contrary to the shallow and narrow-minded conceptions of the past on which modern right-wing political extremist groups build and justify their hateful and bigoted rhetoric. The present study thus potentially offers an additional set of tools that the academic community can use to combat the misappropriation of the past on the part of groups with nefarious agendas.

Notes

1   For a full bibliography used in preparation of this talk, please consult Samuel Levin, *Hlǫðskviða and Wīdsīð: A Comparative Analysis of Oral-Literate Networks and Medieval Memory of the Migration Period*, MA thesis, University of Oslo, 2020 (https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/79258).

Norse Christianisation and Conversion in Viking Age Shetland

Scott T. McCreadie

Department of Archaeology, School of Humanities, University of Glasgow

s.mccreadie.1@research.gla.ac.uk

This paper focused on Norse Christianisation and conversion to Christianity in the North Isles of Shetland during the Viking Age, specifically through the examination of relevant chapel sites in Unst, Yell, and Fetlar. Primary survey data was collected during a season of fieldwork in Shetland in the summer of 2019, which examined the immediate landscape context of these chapel sites, as well as their interactions with the contemporary-built environment, such as Viking/Norse longhouses. This raw archaeological data was combined with two detailed case studies of excavated Viking Age chapels (St Ninian's Isle and Kebister) and was used to inform discussions about the persistence of Christianity in Shetland, the dating of these chapels, the role of chapels within landscapes of conversion, and to assess if any trends in chapel location could be identified. The exceedingly limited number of excavated Viking Age and Late Norse chapels in Shetland necessitated this comparative and innovative approach, with the dating of these sites being aided by surviving sculptural evidence.

It was found that chapels were frequently located in commanding positions overlooking the seaways and voes, such as at Cross Kirk, Clibberswick, on Unst. The majority of chapels possessed commanding views over the surrounding seaways; however, a small number did not conform to this trend. Those that were located further inland, with limited or no views of the sea, were associated with freshwater lochs – with West Sandwick on Yell being a prominent example. Clearly the landscape focus of these sites was distinct and deliberate, and it is possible that the large bodies of inland freshwater were employed in Christian liturgy or mass baptism during the early phases of Norse Christianisation. Many chapels were also located on high-status farms in the immediate vicinity of longhouses and were often sited on or very near to potentially contemporary land divisions or boundaries. A striking instance of this is St Mary's Chapel at Framgord on Unst that is located only metres away from an ancient field boundary and is overlooked by the 'Priest's Hoose,' which is the high status Norse longhouse associated with the chapel site. These factors in chapel location would have ensured the permeation of Christianity, and its associated material culture, into Norse society through the physical presence of chapels overlooking the daily activities of the local Norse community and the clear associations of the new religion with socio-economic dominance and control.

Figure 1. The twelfth-century chapel on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland (Author 2019). Below this structure survives an earlier pre-Norse chapel, highlighting the continuity of sacred space and Christianity from the Pictish period through the Viking Age and beyond.

Some of these chapels may represent the earliest flourishes of Norse Christianity in Shetland or in some cases the possible persistence of Pictish ecclesiastical institutions. This paper demonstrated that chapels were integral to rich and thriving Christian landscapes that were actively Christianising and converting the early Norse settlers of the North Isles of Shetland. Furthermore, the results of this research provoke questions and challenges to the traditional narratives and timelines for the Christianisation and conversion of the Norse communities throughout the wider Norse North Atlantic. The striking similarities between the simple cruciform crosses of the North Isles of Shetland and the examples excavated at Þórarinsstaðir in Seyðisfjörður highlight the flow of Christianity, its ideals, and its material culture throughout the Western Viking World from the very beginning of the Viking Age. It is very possible that Shetland, and the North Isles in particular, were at the heart of this early cultural and spiritual contact.

Bibliography

Barrowman, Rachel C. *The Chapel and Burial Ground on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland: Excavations Past and Present.* The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 32. London: The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2011.

McCreadie, Scott T. *Evangelists of Stone: Chapels within Landscapes of Conversion in Viking Age and Late Norse Shetland*. MA thesis. University of Glasgow, 2019.

Morris, Christopher D., Kevin J. Brady, and Paul G. Johnson. "The Shetland Chapel-Sites Project 1999–2000." In *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement Before 1300*, edited by Beverly Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor, and Gareth Williams, 265–84. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Owen, Olwyn, and Christopher Lowe. *Kebister: The Four-Thousand-Year-Old Story of One Shetland Township.* Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series 14. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1999.

Turner, Val E., Anne-Christine Larsen, and Julie M. Bond. *Viking Unst: Excavation and Survey in Northern Shetland 2006–2010*. Lerwick: Shetland Heritage Publications, 2013.

Various Authors. *Shetland Chapel-Sites Project Reports*. VESARP/GUARD unpublished reports, 1998–2000.

Translating the Werewolf at King Hákon Hákonarson's Royal Court: The *Strengleikar* and Marie de France's *Bisclavret*

Sean Spillane
English, Fordham University
Sspillane2@fordham.edu

King Hákon Hákonarsson of Norway (r. 1217–1263) established an expansive translation program—heavily focused on French-language literature—in order to facilitate a selective translation of European courtly ideologies to the newly formed royal court in Norway. I examine the cross-cultural contact of French-language literature and analyze how the Norwegian court translated and adapted continental literature. Scholars have only recently begun to investigate the traditionally understudied Old Norse genre of the translated *riddarasögur* as conscious adaptations of continental literary trends for a Scandinavian audience. This paper expands this scholarly discussion by closely examining the translation of Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, which was to become known in Old Norse as *Bisclaretz ljóð*, within the larger corpus known as the *Strengleikar*. Marie's *Bisclavret* is of particular interest for its presentation of the 'courtly werewolf' motif: a motif that also exists, though quite differently, within the Scandinavian tradition. I analyze how the Norwegian translator chose to translate the werewolf and examine how he synthesized the two werewolf traditions—broadly speaking, 'courtly' and 'Scandinavian'—within the courtly milieu (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2007: 277–303 [284 and 293–4]). I argue that the translation of the werewolf motif functions as a microcosmic exemplar of the strategies used by Hákon and his translators to transform the Norwegian royal court into a center of European courtliness.

Specifically, the Norwegian translator adopts a more straightforward narrative than Marie's text and clarifies Bisclavret's being and motivations. While Marie's Bisclavret and his werewolf-nature is purposefully ambiguous from the start, which allows the audience to perhaps read the lay as a satire of the knightly class, the Norwegian translator's Bisclavret is more explicitly tamed by the court. That is, where Marie can satirize courtly culture through the fantastic and often whimsical story, the Norwegian translator, perhaps at the behest of King Hákon, desires to emphasize the power of the royal court as a civilizing force. In many ways, then, I read the translation as an attempt to rework Marie's lay into a more simplified allegory of the civilizing effect of the royal court. Tied into this narrative, however, is the interesting addendum that the Norwegian translator adds to the end of the lay: the translator notes that in his childhood he knew a farmer who was able to transform into a wolf. This addition to the otherwise rather faithful translation—in terms of content—is one of the only times the translator(s) offer(s) their own voice in the whole of the *Strengleikar* and thus adds a verification of the fantastical elements of Marie's lay. Not only does this note re-situate Marie's werewolf in the 'Scandinavian werewolf' tradition, but it also adds a sense of realistic immediacy that Marie's lay lacks: while Marie's *Bisclavret* takes place long ago in a distant country, the Norwegian *Bisclaretz ljóð* takes place in the expanding and centralizing courtly milieu of Hákon's court.

In translating *Bisclavret*, the Norwegian translator—or adaptor—confronts issues with Marie's werewolf and renegotiates the tone and moral of the story, not only to resonate with his Scandinavian audience, but to instruct the court on European vassalage, kingship, and justice. Through analyzing the werewolf motif specifically, I argue that the Old Norse *Bisclaretz ljóð* becomes a story of redemption and justice rather than a playful story about vengeance, which bolsters Hákon's kingship and portrays the advantages of a centralized royal court, under a single king, in a kingdom still dealing with the infighting of the Civil Wars era. The werewolf motif was as much a shapeshifter as the werewolf itself, especially in King Hákon's burgeoning royal court, as Nordic literary traditions and ideologies were renegotiated and readapted alongside incoming European traditions, and the syncretic result was used as a royal tool to consolidate cultural and political power.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cook, Robert, and Mattias Tveitane (eds). *Strengleikar: An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais*. Norrøne tekster 3. Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt, 1979.

Ewert, Alfred (ed.). *Marie de France: Lais*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1944.

Secondary Sources

Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir. "The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, no. 3 (2007): 277–303.

Bagge, Sverre. *Cross and Scepter: The Rise of the Scandinavian Kingdoms from the Vikings to the Reformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

———. "The Europeanization of Europe: The Case of Scandinavia." In *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century*, edited by Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen, 171–93. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.

Budal, Ingvil Brügger. "A wave of reading women: The purpose and function of the translated French courtly literature in thirteenth-century Norway." In *Riddarasögur: The Translation of European Court Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, edited by Karl G. Johannsson and Else Mundal, 129–54. Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2014.

———. "The Genesis of *Strengleikar*: Scribes, Translators, and Place of Origin." In *Eddic, Skaldic, and Beyond: Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, edited by Martin Chase, 31–43. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Crane, Susan. *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Ferrer, Marlen. "State Formation and Courtly Culture in the Scandinavian Kingdoms in the High Middle Ages." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37 (2012): 1–22.

Fidjestøl, Bjarne. "Romantic Reading at the Court of Hákon Hákonarson." In *Selected Papers*, edited by Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal, translated by Peter Foote, 351–65. Odense: Odense University Press, 1997.

Irlenbusch-Reynard, Liliane. "Translations at the Court of Hákon Hákonarson: a well-planned and highly selective programme." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36, no. 4 (2011): 387–405.

Kalinke, Marianne E. *King Arthur North-by-Northwest: The matiere de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romance*. Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 37. Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels boghandel, 1981.

Larrington, Carolyne. "Queens and Bodies: The Norwegian Translated *lais* and Hákon IV's Kinswomen." *Journal of English and German Philology* 108, no. 4 (2009): 506–27.

Leach, Henry Goddard. *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921.

Leshock, David S. "The Knight of the Werewolf: *Bisclavret* and the Shape-Shifting Metaphor." *Romance Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1999): 155–65.

McCracken, Peggy. *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Sif Rikhardsdottir. *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France, and Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012.

Smith, Kirby Flower. "An Historical Study of the Werwolf in Literature." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 9, no. 1 (1894): 1–42.

Thomas Becket as an Equivalent to a Dynastic Saint: Martyrdom, Name-Giving and the Legitimation of Power in Late Twelfth-Century Denmark

Sergey Chesta

Department of Medieval History, Lomonosov Moscow State University

sochesta@yandex.ru

The coronation of the Danish monarch Knud VI (r. 1182–1202), which was held in Ringsted on 25 June 1170 and accompanied by the canonisation of Knud VI's grandfather and namesake, duke Knud Lavard (r. 1115–1131), was seen in scholarly literature as an act of sacral legitimation based on the authority of the Church (Hoffmann 1990: 131). However, analysis of little-known hagiographic texts provides some adjustments to the well-established interpretation of the Ringsted ceremony.

The work *Vita et miracula Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis* ('The Life and Miracles of Saint Thomas of Canterbury'), written by William of Canterbury around 1184, contains a text, according to which Knud VI successfully subjugated Slavic lands and saved the Danish ambassador from captivity. The day before Knud VI's expedition, the captured ambassador had a vision of Thomas Becket, who was 'crowned with the diadem of the Dacian kings' (Robertson 1875: 544). This vision foreshadowed the conquest of the Slavic lands.

Knud VI became the first crowned Danish ruler, hence the diadem on Thomas Becket's head is an integral attribute of Knud VI. This indirect reference to the Ringsted ceremony strongly indicates some connection between the archbishop of Canterbury and the Danish monarch. It seems that in the mentioned text, Thomas Becket performs the functions of the king's patron saint, Knud Lavard. We have to find out what the nature of this connection is.

The *Annales Lundenses* ('The Annals of Lund'), the oldest copy of which dates back to the end of the thirteenth century, mentions the martyrdom of Thomas Becket twice when dealing with the account of the coronation celebrations of 1170 (Jørgensen 1920: 10). Both times it is emphasized that Thomas Becket was martyred ('*martirizatus est*'). Knud Lavard was also named a martyr. The text stipulates that the martyr status of Knud Lavard is due to a papal message (Jørgensen 1920: 85–87). However, we could not find any hint to the Lavard's martyrdom in the bull of Pope Alexander III (r. 1159 – 1181) on the canonization of Knud Lavard (19 November of 1170) (Gertz 1908–12: 246–247).

It is noteworthy that Pope Alexander III initially showed disinterest in assigning the archbishop of Canterbury the status of a martyr (Bergsagel 2015: 79). It is tempting to assume that the confession of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, whose murder occurred in the same year as the transfer of the relics of Knud Lavard, was perceived in Denmark as additional proof of the martyrdom of Knud Lavard.

Our interpretation is confirmed by the passage of *Miracula Sancti Kanuti Ducis* ('Miracles of Saint Knud the Duke'), recorded in the Ringstead monastery, probably after 1156 (Gertz 1908–12: 187). The passage in question has some features in common with the text of William of Canterbury (barbarians put a merchant in prison, a saint saves a prisoner) (Gertz 1908–12: 244). It appears likely that behind the narrative of William of Canterbury there is a certain Danish primary source, in which the role played by Thomas Becket in the English text belongs to Knud Lavard.

In this case, the connection between Knud VI and Thomas Becket takes a different form. It is no longer just a connection between the king and his patron saint, but also a connection between descendant and ancestor united by the usage of a common name – between Knud VI and Knud Lavard. The act of name-giving, when a newborn member of the royal dynasty received a name in honor of a famous ancestor, was extremely important for the Scandinavian monarchs since it meant that the infant thus named was recognized by the father as the future heir to the throne (Uspenskij 2004: 23).

Thus, direct evidence of the veneration of the cult of Thomas Becket in Denmark turns out to be indirect testimony of the existence of the practice of name-giving as a means of the legitimation of power used by the Danish royal dynasty at the end of the twelfth century. The practice of name-giving and the

memory of the first coronation of the Danish monarch reveals a close connection between the two and forms an integral part of the identity of the Danish royal dynasty at the period under consideration.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Friis-Jensen, Karsten (ed.). *Gesta Danorum. The History of the Danes,* translated by Peter Fisher, 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Gertz, Martin Clarentius (ed.). *Vitae Sanctorvm Danorvm: novam editionem criticam*. Selskabet for udgivelse af kilder til dansk historie. Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1908–12.

Jørgensen, Ellen (ed). *Annales Danici medii aevi: Editionem nouam curaruit Ellen Jørgensen.* Selskabet for udgivelse af kilder til dansk historie med understøttelse af Carlsbergfondet. Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1920.

Robertson, James Craigie (ed.). *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III., A.D. 1173)*. Vol. 1. London: Longman et. al., 1875.

Secondary Sources

Bergsagel, John. "Kanute, cuius est Dacia? Knud Lavard, dux danorum: Murdered or Martyred?" In *Of Chronicles and Kings. National Saints and the Emergence of Nation States in the High Middle Ages*, edited by John Bergsagel, Thomas Riis and David Hiley, 73–90. Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 52. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2015.

Friis-Jensen, Karsten. "In the Presence of the Dead. Saint Canute the Duke in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*." In *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000-1300)*, edited by Lars Boje Mortensen, 195–216. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006.

Hoffmann, Erich. "Coronation and Coronation Ordines in Medieval Scandinavia." In *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, edited by János M. Bak, 125–43. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Uspenskij, Fjodor. *Name und Macht: Die Wahl des Namens als dynastisches Kampfinstrument im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2004.

Liturgical Books in Icelandic Palimpsests

Tom Lorenz

Institute of Language and Literature, NTNU: The Norwegian University of Science and Technology

tom.n.o.r.lorenz@ntnu.no

Introduction

Although the majority of the manuscripts from Medieval Iceland that survive today are written in the vernacular, most manuscripts produced and used in Medieval Iceland would have been written in Latin. The largest group would have included the different types of liturgical books required for Mass and the Holy Office. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the introduction of printing to Scandinavia, the Reformation and the increasing significance of the vernacular for the liturgy caused the old liturgical books, written in Latin and according to Catholic doctrine, to become obsolete. As these books were no longer used, their parchment could be reused to produce new manuscripts, either in book bindings or, after erasing the original text, as writing material, thus creating a palimpsest. The Arnamagnæan manuscript collection alone includes more than 30 manuscripts containing palimpsests, many of which are liturgical books (Jakob Benediktsson 1968: 84). Further Icelandic palimpsests can be found in other collections in and outside Iceland.

Definition & Typology

The term 'palimpsest' refers to a specific type of manuscript reuse or recycling in which the original content of a manuscript, both textual and non-textual, is partially or completely erased through scraping or washing off the ink and other pigments, and substituted with new content at a later point of time, creating a new, multi-layered artefact (Hødnebo 1968: 82–4). There are two distinctive subtypes of palimpsests, both of which are present in the Icelandic material: Type 1. Reuse of the Material and type 2. Adaption of the Artefact.

Type 1: Reuse of the Material

The most common type of palimpsest is the reuse of the writing material, usually parchment, of an old manuscript for a new manuscript of unrelated content. A palimpsest belonging to this type consists of both the underlying elements or *scriptio inferior*, which derive from the old manuscript, and the newly added overwritten elements or *scriptio superior*. An example for this type of palimpsest is Lbs fragm 29 (Figure 1). Lbs fragm 29 is a single-folio fragment, originally belonging to an Antiphonary written around 1100, possibly in France. The folio has been scraped off, folded in the middle and reused for an excerpt of Martin Luther's commentary on the Ten Commandments in the sixteenth century (Jakob Benediktsson 1959: 8).

Type 2: Adaption of the Artefact

Far less common is the incorporation of the artefactual features of the original manuscript in a newly created manuscript. This second type of palimpsest manuscript consists of both the underlying elements and overwritten elements, as well as a number of textual and non-textual retained elements which derive from the old manuscript and are reused in the new one. An example is AM 618 4to (Figure 2), a bilingual Latin-French parallel psalter from late-twelfth-century England. The French text, written in the right column of each folio, was erased and substituted with an Icelandic translation of the psalter in 1586 (Kålund 1994, II: 31–2), while the Latin text in the left column was retained. The result of this process is a Latin-Icelandic parallel psalter.

Conclusion

Icelandic liturgical palimpsests can be divided into different subtypes, based on the specific way in which the original manuscript is reused to create a new one. The closer study of these palimpsest subtypes offers new insights in the production, ownership and use of liturgical books in Medieval Iceland, as well as their preservation, reuse and destruction in Modern times.

Bibliography

Hødnebo, Finn. "Palimpsest; Alment og Norge." In *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid: Volume 13: Ormer–Regnbue*, edited by Finn Hødnebo, 82–4. København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1968.

Jakob Benediktsson. "Palimpsest; Island." In *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid: Volume 13: Ormer–Regnbue*, edited by Finn Hødnebo, 84. København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1968.

Jakob Benediktsson. "Skrá um skinnblöð í Landsbókasafni Íslands." In *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbóka-safnsins. II. aukabindi. Viðauki*, edited by Lárus H. Blöndal. Reykjavík: Landsbókasafni Íslands, 1959.

Kålund, Kristian. *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*. 2 vols. København: Gyldendalske boghandel, 1994.
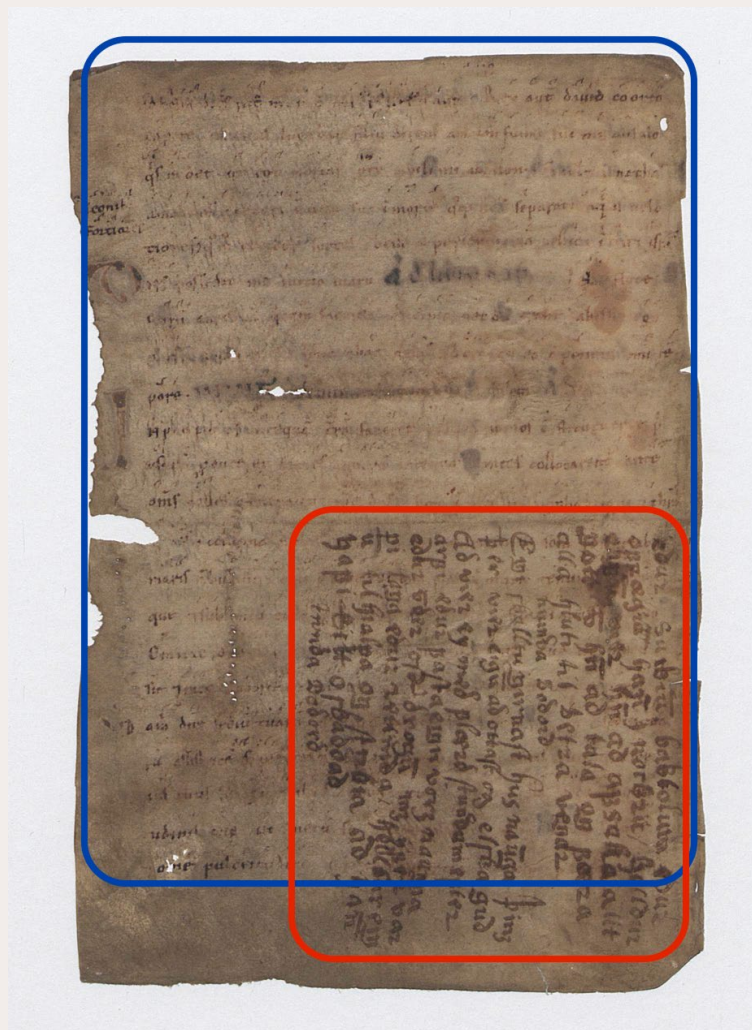
Appendix: Figures

Figure 1. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands, Lbs fragm 29, 1v.
Blue: underlying elements – Antiphonary (Latin), France?, ca. 1100
Red: overwritten elements – excerpt of Luther's commentary on the
Ten Commandments (Icelandic), Iceland, sixteenth century
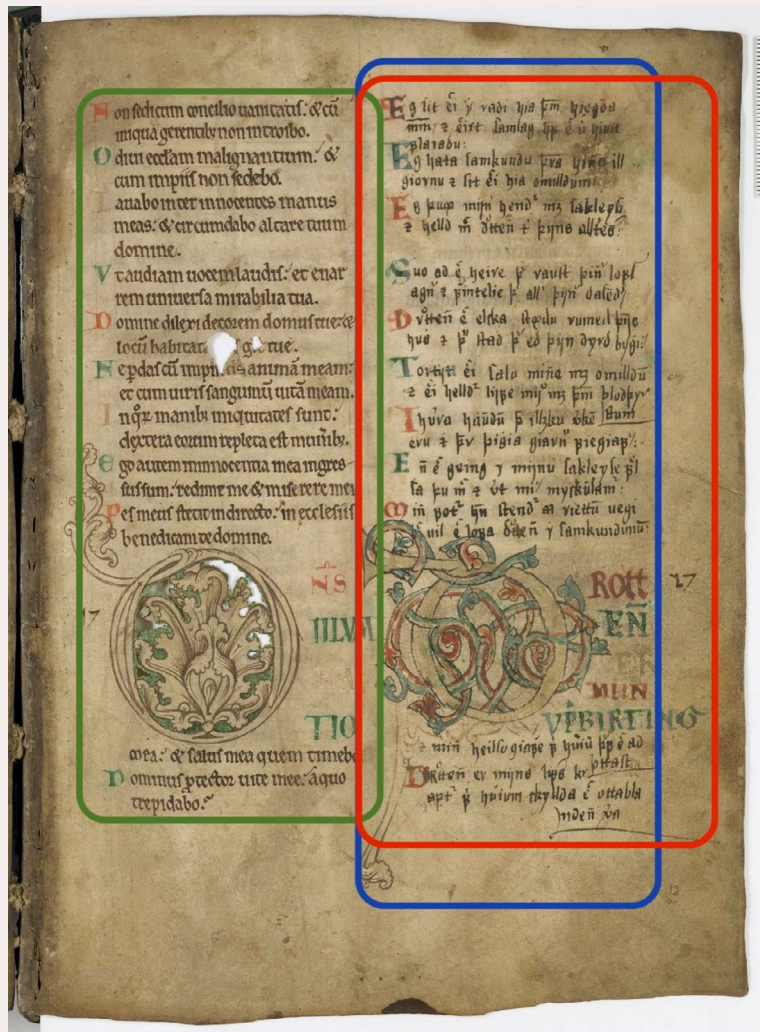Photo: handrit.is

Figure 2. Copenhagen, The Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 618 4to, 17r.
Blue: underlying elements – Psalter (French), England, late twelfth century
Red: overwritten elements – Psalter (Icelandic), Iceland, 1586
Green: retained elements – Psalter (Latin), England, late twelfth century
Photo: handrit.is

Landnámabók: A Socio-Onomastic Case-Study

Tristan Alphey
University of Oxford
tristan.alphey@stx.ox.ac.uk

Socio-onomastics attempts to contextualise names, including 'nicknames' (or 'agnomina', as in Peterson 2015), within socio-cultural systems. Agnomina interact with systems in a reciprocal manner; names people choose result from the systems that surround them, but those names then act back upon the systems (cf. Giddens 2020). Left with only the names, applying a set of ethnographic middle-range-theories, the historian might explore the invisible systems of past societies. Presented here is a specifically *historical* socio-onomastic analysis of the agnomina in *Landnámabók*.

Given its later date, the utility of *Landnámabók* in assessing Settlement Era Iceland is rightly questionable. Are the agnomina a later addition, highlighting certain individuals? In reality, there is no overwhelming correlation between the 'Important People' of the text, the presence of an agnomen, or their theme. As a result, I have accepted the *names* of individuals as likely a realistic preservation.

There are 191 individuals with agnomina; a few obvious trends emerge. Sheer frequency is remarkable–almost half of the individuals have agnomina (although, notably, *Landnámabók* primarily records the heads of families). The number of what Whaley (1993) terms 'anecdotal' names (contrasting 'observational' agnomen) is also remarkably high, both in *Landnámabók* and the broader Scandinavian pool. Conversely, most ethnographic data (including pre-Norman England) seems to point towards a dominance of observational names. Does this represent a distinct Scandinavian cultural trend in agnomina?

How can we explain these unique trends? First is the question of agnomina and group membership. Knowledge of nicknames is often understood to act as a password for access to a group; "only a community member who belongs to the circle of the nicknamed individual has the privilege of using it" (Pinto-Abecasis 2011: 141). Offensive names appear *sometimes* in a similar context, where permission is given to some to offend, but not to others, in an act of 'social solidarity', although there is a fundamental difference between an insult and a friendly jibe (Dorian 1970: 313). *Landnámabók* certainly identifies networks of informal group relations as a means of survival and organisation: kinship, boat-crews, freed slaves. Skipper (1986: 135) has observed that "the greater the need for solidarity in a group, the more likely the use of nicknames." Did agnomina function to enforce and maintain these groups, within the context of settlement into a vacuum?

Within groups, agnomina impart an individual with informal social currency; agnomina are given to individuals with a "leading position in society" (Tengvik 1938: 9). But acquiring these names helped *create* social currency, not just reflect it. Skipper (1984: 29) suggests that "nicknames indicate intimacy" with an individual and positive agnomina act as a tool to "communicate [...] social prestige" (Leslie and Skipper 1990: 273). Anecdotal names contribute most in this context, contextualising individuals in a past narrative, unlocking "a flood of recollection" (Dorian 1970: 314–5), creating "expectations which affect perceptions" (de Klerk and Bosch 1996: 526). This process of agnomina-giving might perhaps be directly tied to the systems of the *goðar* in Iceland. A chieftain class responsible for legal 'advocacy', Byock (2001: 186) places great emphasis on the popular nature of the *goðar*'s power. In a system of competition for followers, individuals benefit from a developed social profile. Are the frequency of agnomina part of the process of creating a kind of (proto?) *goðar*, generating identifiable individuals that ultimately became formalised in the system of advocacy?

Finally, we have the role of agnomina in keeping peace and enforcing social norms. Openly offensive agnomina are rare in *Landnámabók*, likely a result of the limited actual violence possible with Iceland's fragility (Vilhjálmur Árnason 1991: 171). Where negative agnomina do exist, they are consistently critical towards socially destructive violence: "stigmatizing the abnormal, nicknames serve to publish what is acceptable among those who promote such names" (Morgan, O'Neill and Harré 1979: 69). Agnomina act

also to promote positive actions, and in Iceland we see the consistent praising of the wisdom and level-headedness that a nascent Iceland required.

We are left with three possible ties between the themes of the agnomina and the socio-cultural systems that underly Settlement Era Iceland. It is not at all clear that *all* of these explanations are correct; however, here are a collection of agnomina *might* represent a unique cultural output of a historical society.

Bibliography

Primary Sources
Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (trans.). *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1972.

Secondary Sources
Byock, Jesse L. *Viking Age Iceland*. London: Penguin, 2001.
Dorian, Nancy C. "A Substitute Name System in the Scottish Highlands." *American Anthropologist* 72, no. 2 (1970): 303–19.
Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.
Klerk, Vivian de, and Barbara Bosch. "Nicknames as Sex-Role Stereotypes." *Sex Roles* 35, no. 9 (1996): 525–41.
Leslie, Paul L., and James K. Skipper. "Toward a Theory of Nicknames: A Case for Socio-Onomastics." *Names* 38, no. 4 (1990): 273–82.
Morgan, Jane, Christopher O'Neill, and Rom Harre. *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979.
Peterson, Paul R. "Old Norse Nicknames: Origins and Terminology." *Names* 67, no. 2 (2019): 89–99.
———. *Old Norse Nicknames*. PhD thesis. University of Minnesota, 2015.
———. *Old Norse Nicknames*. MA thesis. Háskóli Íslands, 2012.
Pinto-Abecasis, Nina. "Towards the Inclusion of Nicknames in the Genres of Folklore: The Case of the Former Jewish Community of Tetuan, Morocco." *Folklore* 122, no. 2 (2011): 135–54.
Skipper, James K. "Nicknames, Coal Miners and Group Solidarity." *Names* 34, no. 2 (1986): 134–45.
———. "Public Nicknames of Famous Football Players and Coaches: A Socio-Historical Analysis and Comparison." *Sociological Spectrum* 9, no. 2 (1989): 103–23.
———. "The Sociological Significance of Nicknames: The Case of Baseball Players." *Journal of Sport Behavior* 7, no. 1 (1984): 28–38.
Tengvik, Gösta. *Old English Bynames*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri-a.-b., 1938.
Vilhjálmur Árnason. "Morality and Social Structure in the Icelandic Sagas." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 90, no. 2 (1991): 157–74.
Whaley, Diana. "Nicknames and Narratives in the Saga." *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 108, no. 1 (1993): 122–46.

Warriors of Óðinn: Fighting for a God Before *Militia Christi* in Medieval Scandinavia

Victor Barabino
University of Caen
barabino.victor@gmail.com

Óðinn is sometimes described as the 'god of war' in popular imagination and was deemed the 'lord of hosts' by scholars until well in the middle of the twentieth century (Davidson 1964: 48). But Óðinn is not the only warlike god of the Scandinavian pantheon: thus, his status as the quintessential god of battle requires further investigation. In *Ynglinga saga* (Laing 1961: 7–43), Snorri Sturluson depicted Óðinn not as a god, but as an extraordinary war chieftain who is victorious in all his battles thanks to magic (incantations, sacrifices, use of herbs). This is confirmed in other sources such as Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, where Óðinn gives strategic advice to Danish king Harald against Ingi, king of Sweden (Elton 1905: 226–7).

Conversely, serving Óðinn meant being rewarded with various advantages in war. According to Saxo, Óðinn embodied a 'divine patronage' for warriors as he gave them 'the privilege of insuperability' on the battlefield (Elton 1905: 110). In tenth-century skaldic poems by Einarr Helgason skálaglamm, Óðinn even grants victory to King Hákon góði because of his loyalty to pagan gods (Turville-Petre 1976: 59–63).

Furthermore, warriors are sometimes described as Óðinn's own men, fighting under his command. Such is the case of the *berserkir*, warriors with superhuman abilities who are mentioned in some myths and sagas, but whose historical existence has not yet been proven (Samson 2011). This link between elite warriors, Óðinn and fury (*berserkrsgangr*) is ancient in Scandinavian war culture, as some runestones show, for example the funerary inscription of Tune which reads <*Woduride*> (Marez 2007: 197–233), thus referring literally to a 'horseman of Óðinn' (*Wotan) or a 'horseman of fury' (*wut). Even after conversion, references to ancient mythology remained important when praising the merits of warriors and warlords. For example, in the poem *Eiriksmál*, Óðinn and the warriors sitting at his table, the *einherjar*, welcome King Eiríkr blóðøx in Valhǫll, although the king was Christian. However, because of conversion, allegiance to the ancient gods was progressively forbidden and replaced by *militia Christi*. As a matter of fact, Magnús Hákonarson's *Law of the Hird* (*Hirðskrá*, c. 1263) was probably the first text to convey the concept of a war in the name of God in Scandinavia.

Thus, before and after Christianisation, fighting was considered both a military and spiritual activity that implied service to the gods and a specific relationship with them. However, crucial differences between serving Óðinn and serving Christ must be stressed. In Iron Age Scandinavia, warriors held a more personal relationship with the gods, whose attitudes and attributes were closer to those of humans: such was the case of Óðinn, who was seen as a war chieftain and a god who gave direct help to warriors on the battlefield, rather than a divine entity whose commands should be obeyed in the name of a specific religious doctrine. This latter idea, along with the concept of the 'just war,' would later develop in Christian times with the diffusion of *militia Christi* in Scandinavia.

Figure 1. Reproduction of Torslunda plate D: Óðinn and a *berserkr*. *Kongl. Vitterhets Historie och Antiqvitets Akademiens Månadsblad*, 1872.

Bibliography

Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. London: Penguin Books, 1964.

Elton, Oliver (trans.). *The Nine Books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus.* Vol. 1. London / New York: Norrœna Society, 1905.

Jónsson, Finnur (ed.). *Carmina Scaldica*. Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1929.

Laing, Samuel (trans.). *Heimskringla: Sagas of the Norse Kings – Part II*. Everyman's Library 847. London: Dent, 1961.

Marez, Alain. *Anthologie runique*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007.

Samson, Vincent. *Les Berserkir: Les guerriers-fauves de la Scandinavie ancienne, de l'âge de Vendel aux Vikings (VIᵉ-XIᵉ siècles)*. Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2011.

Turville-Petre, Gabriel. *Scaldic Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.