



# THE 13TH BERGEN INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM IN OLD NORSE STUDIES

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MIDDELALDERKLYNGEN



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# MEMORY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND GEOGRAPHY IN *GÖNGU- HRÓLFS SAGA*

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## **Alisa Valpola-Walker (Cambridge)**

This paper will examine the version of Göngu-Hrólfs saga in the fifteenth-century manuscript AM 589f 4to as a mediator of cultural memory. It will focus on the saga's use of intertextuality, both its implicit and explicit references to other texts, to examine its engagement with the continual reconstruction of memories of the legendary past. Specifically, it will consider the saga's geographic settings (which stretch across Britain, Scandinavia and Russia) and, in comparison to the alternative models available, suggest why it represents them in the way it does. It will situate the text in its fifteenth-century context, a period when Iceland was caught up in conflicts between Scandinavia, England and the Hanseatic League, to explore how depictions of the past evolved in response to present situations. Acknowledging the instability of medieval Icelandic sagas, this paper will focus on a singular manuscript witness to enable a discussion of how the text's framing influences its meaning and how it may have contributed to a wider literary/political project. Ultimately, this paper aims to shed light on the historical significance of this version of Göngu-Hrólfs saga, both as a work of history in itself and as a historical source for fifteenth-century Iceland.

# FRATERNAL STRIFE, NORTHERN HISTORY, AND WORLD HISTORY

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## Bond West (Oxford)

Historiographical sibling rivalry is as old as the World-Historical narrative's archetypal brothers, Cain and Abel, who introduce into the biblical narrative a perennial struggle between the older and the younger son for their father's inheritance, a theme that finds its eschatological culmination in Jesus's crucifixion. Fraternal strife is also weighted with eschatological significance in pre-Christian Scandinavian belief, in which Höðr's slaying of his older brother, Baldr, grimly precedes Ragnarök, the doom of the gods. In Snorri Sturluson's chronicle of the Norwegian kings, *Heimskringla*, the slaughter of brothers returns in generation after generation of the Skydlings after Gísl and Ondur first conspire to regain their inheritance from their half-brother, Dómaldi, plaguing the family throughout the history of the Norwegian kingdom. In *Egils saga*, the titular character's relationship to his brother, Þórólfr, is defined by a fraught mixture of jealousy and affection, evoking imagery from both Christian sources and pre-Christian beliefs.

This paper will examine the struggles between brothers in three levels of history: on the world-historical level in *Stjórn* and Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, the national level in *Heimskringla*, and on the level of the individual family in *Egils saga*. Close readings and comparative analysis between these texts using the exegetical practices of the Augustinian tradition will help to illuminate the societal and religious implications of fraternal strife in shaping the identity and spirituality of the individual, the family, and the nation.

# A NEW METHOD FOR THE (LAND-)TAKING: SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS AND *LANDNÁMABÓK*

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## Cassidy Croci (Nottingham)

Individual groups such as early Christians, strangers, women, and family units have been identified in *Landnámabók* by previous scholars, however; no attempt has been made to understand the networks that connect the approximately 3,500 individuals referenced within the text, both before and after their settlement of Iceland. With the development of Social Network Analysis and Visual Analytics, it is now possible to plot the connections between such large numbers. Furthermore, given that there are five extant versions of *Landnámabók* (*Sturlubók*, *Hauksbók*, *Melabók*, *Skarðsárbók*, *Þórðarbók*), the methodology enables an analysis of how such networks might have been perceived over time.

The paper will introduce this interdisciplinary methodology in the context of *Landnámabók* combining Social Network Analysis and Visual Analytics with traditional historical and literary approaches. It will discuss how this methodology will be applied to *Landnámabók* to reveal the networks of Icelandic migration and settlement as described in the text. Additionally, it will examine the possibilities for analysing this network including the potential of identifying familial, social, and spatial sub-networks.

# DEATH AND WISDOM: A STUDY OF THEIR PROXIMITY IN *HÁVAMÁL*

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## Christopher Mawford (Nottingham)

In stanza 141 of *Hávamál*, the narrator (Óðinn) of this particular section of the poem claims that he has become wise and fertile. However, only three stanzas prior to this declaration of wisdom the same narrator was left dying and hanging while being sacrificed to Óðinn, or as the narrator claims, 'sjalfr sjalfum mér'. From this dying state the narrator is able to learn runes 'nam ek upp rúna' and is now fit to receive instruction in magic 'fimbulljóð níus'. This instance is striking and invites analysis in the broader context of the poem. This brings us to the question as to what extent the Narrator's death has an impact upon his own intellectual capability. More importantly if there are other instances where death and wisdom have a clear impact upon one another, does this represent a trend within *Hávamál*? *Hávamál*'s complex composition gives us a wide variety of narratives that might not be otherwise collected together. It can also make connections between the various sections seem tenuous. *Hávamál* is unified by having a common Odinic narrator, although that narrator is not necessarily always Óðinn, nor is the poem necessarily a chronologically-structured narrative.

This paper will look at the curious yet near omnipresent relationship between death and wisdom in *Hávamál*, focusing upon how characters gain knowledge through ordeals in which they come into contact with death, either their own or others', while also looking into the lack of internal chronology within the poem, and how this impacts the research question.

# THE PROSIMETRUM OF HELGI AND THE YOUNG SIGURÐR SECTIONS OF THE CODEX REGIUS

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## Francesco Colombo (Cambridge)

Although it is generally considered a compilation of poems, the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda is in fact a prosimetrum, i.e. a text composed of segments of prose in alternation with segments of verse. The prosimetric nature of this work is particularly evident in two sections of it: the one about the two heroes named Helgi (Hundingsbani and Hjörvarðsson) and the one about the youth of Sigurðr. Both of these sections start with a stylistically coherent poem (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* and *Grípisspá* respectively), after which poetic coherence seems to break down: *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar/Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* and *Reginismál/Fáfnismál/Sigrdrífumál* are characterised by the presence of a great number of prose passages interspersed with short runs of stanzas which are all but homogeneous in style and content.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an analysis of significant aspects of these two sections of the Codex Regius. After touching on the implications of the prosimetric form of the compilation, I will move on to examine the main features of the Helgi and the young Sigurðr prosimetra, providing examples that can offer clues about the aims and methods of their creator(s). I will explore what sources they might have had at their disposal and how they handled them, looking for similarities and differences between the two prosimetric sequences. Based on this analysis I will finally make some considerations about whether the creators of these two sections might have been a single person and whether they might coincide with the composer of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, of *Grípisspá*, or with the Codex Regius scribe.

# ‘EKKI HÖFU VÉR KVENNA SKAP [...] AT VÉR REIÐIMSK VIÐ QLLU’: ANGER AND FEMININITY IN THE *ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR*

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## George Manning (Oxford)

Sif Ríkharrðsdóttir postulates that Old Norse literary genres, and particular groups of characters portrayed in these genres, adhere to culturally-contingent ‘emotive scripts’, conventional codes of emotional behaviour. She argues convincingly that the male emotive script in the *Íslendingasögur* champions self-reservation, whilst female characters, despite exhibiting a degree of self-control, are cast as more emotionally animated in saga-society.

I argue that female ‘emotional practice’ in the *Íslendingasögur* regards anger, one of many emotions in the female armoury, as a useful weapon for feminine prosperity in a male-dominated arena. My paper explores both well-trodden and fresh examples to demonstrate how and why female characters wield anger. By looking at scenes from *Laxdæla saga*, *Njáls saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, and *Víglundar saga*, I examine the female expression of anger (through somatic indicia, dialogue, and narrative action), and analyse female ‘whetters’, female characters who stage anger, and those who turn to physical violence, to show how they use anger as a means to achieve a desirable end. Implementing Bourdieu’s ‘Theory of Practice’, I show how the habitus of female characters is infused with this particular ‘emotional practice’, and how it operates within the wider field of saga-society.

# THE VIKINGS IN IRELAND: BARBARIANS OR ECONOMICALLY STRAINED LEADERS AND BUSINESS MEN?

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## Ingrid Hegland (Aberdeen)

This interdisciplinary paper discusses how classical works of literature such as Gaius Cornelius Tacitus' *Germania* and Jordanes' *Getica*, ancient continental place-names and Scandinavian archaeology demonstrate how close interaction existed between Scandinavia and the continent from the Roman period to the Merovingian period, and deliberate how this contact can be regarded as evidence of a Scandinavia that was well accustomed with the Christian continental culture, politics and religion long before the commence of the viking age. Supported by similar evidence from other Germanic settlements, this data will form the basis of an argument suggesting that – instead of being interpreted as heathen reactions to the Christian faith – the early viking raids in Ireland can be perceived as actions committed by distressed Scandinavian leaders whom after being cut off from an increasingly Christian European market, sought new and efficient methods to gain stabilisation of power through wealth and gifts for themselves and their social echelon.

# WOMEN AS LOVERS AND WARRIORS IN OLD NORSE LITERATURE

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## Isabella Clarke (Oxford)

In my paper, I will aim to give an overview of female individuals in combat and romantic contexts in Old Norse literature. Instead of arguing that this implies an equal 'status' with male characters, I hope to show that the portrayal of women, specifically valkyries, is specific and particular to them. The characterisation of women who combine combat skills, sensual attractiveness and supernatural powers creates a rich and multi-faceted view of 'the female.' However, it would be misguided to see their marriage or sexual involvement with the hero as a disempowering aspect, while their supernatural and military abilities constitute a locus for reading female empowerment. Ideally, it would be helpful if we could read these women as partaking in what is essentially a 'normal' human emotional life; which involves both violence and romance. Following this line of argument, I would like to draw a parallel between valkyrie women and women in sagas who act as 'whetters' or driving forces behind revenge acts or feuds. I will be using a wide range of texts rather than focusing on a particular example, and aim to keep the dualistic nature of women as the guiding focus of the argument.

# AN OVERGENEROUS LORD? IRONY AND THE KENNINGS OF *PLÁCITUSDRÁPA*

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## James McIntosh (Cambridge)

*Plácitusdrápa*, preserved in the twelfth-century manuscript AM 673b 4to, is the earliest extant Old Norse narrative hagiographic poem. It adapts the Legend of St Eustace, a quasi-romantic hagiography that was popular in medieval western Europe. Major themes of the Legend include the relationship between secular and spiritual vocations and endurance of worldly loss.

As a product of the twelfth-century skaldic renaissance, *Plácitusdrápa* contains many kennings, most of which stress his worldly nobility rather than his sanctity. However, these kennings have been largely dismissed as empty embellishments necessary to the form of skaldic verse. An examination of the kennings and their contexts, however, indicates that the skald combined several of these kennings with careful irony to reinforce the losses endured by Eustace during his Job-like trial, and to tie his degradations closer to his social position. The kennings therefore form an exploration of the interplay between religious and secular vocations in a distinctively Norse fashion. This paper will analyse kennings relating to Eustace's trial to demonstrate the use of irony in this exploration of secular and spiritual worth, and the endurance of loss. It will also examine interactions between hagiography and Norse literary traditions beyond saga literature.

# WEATHER MAGIC IN THE MEDIEVAL FAR NORTH

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## Jennifer Hemphill (Aberdeen)

Of the magical skills featured in Old Norse narratives, the thought that individuals could magically control the weather is one of the most prominent themes. Examples of weather magic range from calling storms to dismantle armies to controlling the winds for favorable sailing and can be found throughout Old Norse literature. In these narratives, the persistent emphasis on weather and the notion that individuals can possess magic skills to harness the elements alludes to the utmost importance that weather had over daily life in the Nordic Middle Ages.

Stephen Mitchell has argued that although weather magic is a common reoccurring literary motif within saga literature, there is a lack of physical evidence to substantiate that this type of magic was actually practiced in medieval Scandinavia (Mitchell, 2011, p. 66). In this presentation, I will demonstrate that weather magic should be categorized as a type of 'rationalized' magic, or magic that would have been indistinguishable from realism (Hume, 1980, p. 2), rather than 'constructed' magic that would have been accepted as fictitious. Furthermore, I will use the combination of church records, literature and archaeological finds as compelling evidence that weather magic was practiced throughout the Nordic Middle Ages.

Hume, K. (1980). 'From Saga to Romance: The Use of Monsters in Old Norse Literature'. *Studies in Philology*, 77(1), pp. 1-25.

Mitchell, S. (2011) *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

# ABOUT THE OBJECT POSITION IN OLD NORWEGIAN: EXAMINING INFORMATION STRUCTURAL INFLUENCE ON WORD ORDER VARIATION IN THE KONOKS-CORPUS.

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## Juliane Tiemann (Bergen)

Old Norwegian is considered a VO-language with a strong V2-rule (cf. Faarlund 2004, Aamodt Nielsen 2013), as is his modern counterpart. However, it is well known that ON shows alternations with both, OV and VAux patterns. In this paper, I discuss the word order variation found in the Old Norwegian text of *Konungs skuggsjá* (AM 243 ba fol.) by providing a close investigation of the interplay between information structure, prosody and syntax. I will present a new corpus (KoNoKs, under development) that is annotated for syntax and information structure. Assuming an underlying AuxVO base structure, word order alternation can be explained as information-structural driven in line with Hinterhölzl/Petrova (2018), Pintzuk/Taylor (2012, 2015) or Hróarsdóttir (2010). In my analysis, I will examine what the nature of OV/VO variation was, and specifically, to what extent it was influenced by information structural constraints. In the study, I included subordinate clauses with finite auxiliary, non-finite main verb and referential object. The results show that OV is generally preferred with given information, while VO is mixed in terms of information status of the object. The prosodic/grammatical weight of an object too significantly determines its surface position, with heavier objects surfacing more often in post-verbal order. This effect can overwrite information structural requirements to some degree. These results will be presented and discussed in more detail.

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# TRULY TRICKY? EXAMINING THE ROLE OF LOKI AS A TRICKSTER CHARACTER

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## **Kara Kersh (Aberdeen)**

Many of the Norse gods have been characterised in ways meant to extol their characteristics or emphasise areas over which they have power. In the 20th Century some scholars began to refer to Loki as “the trickster”. This paper will explore the classification of Loki as a trickster and whether it is an appropriate title true to his character. To begin, this paper will identify a definition of “trickster” by comparing other trickster figures and definitions. The Loki myths will then be reviewed to ascertain if his actions fall into this definition.

The main works to be examined will include the Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda; however, some attention will also be given to Scandinavian folklore. A brief look at runes involving Loki will also be included. As the object of this paper is to establish Loki’s original character, only medieval primary sources will be consulted for accounts of his actions and will exclude any popular interpretations. Loki has been a popular topic of scholarly research and therefore secondary sources will contribute to not only identifying why he was first called “the trickster” but what others have concluded about his behavior and whether their findings agree with the category of trickster or if other theories have a more congruous summation of Loki’s character. Working with primary and secondary sources the outcome of this paper will provide a definition of the term “trickster” against which to compare the actions of Loki to ascertain if he truly embodies the role of trickster.

# BEAR YOUR DEVIL YOURSELF: THE RAVEN BANNER IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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## **Kathryn Haley-Halinski (Cambridge)**

One of the more widespread pieces of Old Norse animal symbolism is the so-called Raven Banner. This is a battle-standard, said to have been used by Norse troops, which depicted a raven and could reputedly predict or even bring victory to its bearers. It is mentioned in several texts from medieval Iceland and England, and it is often used by scholars to draw links between ravens and Óðinn though a shared link with battle.

However, the primary texts' uses of the Raven Banner are often glossed over in favour of treating the Raven Banner as single, objectively real item. This presentation will analyse each account of the Raven Banner, from Old English, Old Norse, and Latin texts, and discuss the uses and meanings of the Raven Banner in each instance. In doing so, I will touch upon the question of the reality of the Raven Banner, but more importantly, I will discuss how the cultural memory of the Raven Banner operated in later texts to create a sense of identity constructed in relation to the banner. This will open up discussion not only of pre-Christian animal symbolism, but of Christian uses and understandings of pre-Christian animal symbolism.

# THE CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF GUÐRÚN'S EMOTIONAL AMBIGUITY IN TWENTIETH AND TWENTY- FIRST CENTURY ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE *POETIC EDDA*

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## Katie Harling-Lee (Durham)

This paper addresses the ambiguous and complex character of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir through the comparison of twentieth and twenty-first century English translations of the *Poetic Edda*. As each translator necessarily brings different temporal and cultural perspectives to their understanding of the medieval texts, as well as more consciously choosing to emphasise certain aspects in order to accord with their general view of Old Norse society and culture, each translation of the Eddic poems concerning Guðrún should be viewed as an interpretation. By comparing a selection of these translations alongside the Old Norse texts, new insights into Guðrún's character are revealed as she is mediated and re-created within each interpretation. Her character is also tied to key themes within Old Norse literature and culture: the experience and expression of grief; the relationship between the heart, mind, and emotion; the potential physicality of emotion; the simultaneous roles and duties of women in Norse societies as wife, sister, and mother; and the concept of revenge as desire or duty. This paper will highlight examples of the differences available in translations, particularly focussing on the presentation of Guðrún's emotional experiences and responses (or lack of), and how the various translation choices may affect our understanding of Guðrún as either, for example, a heartless monster, or a heroic warrior with the ability for extreme self-control. The aim is not to judge the 'best' interpretation, but instead to place these translations in dialogue with one another, and with the Old Norse texts, in order to explore the creative translation possibilities which Guðrún's ambiguity inspires.

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# POETIC IDENTITY AND POETIC ADDRESS: THE FUNCTION OF *MANSÖNGVAR* IN MEDIEVAL *RÍMUR*

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**Lee Colwill (Cambridge)**

While the introductory *mansöngvar* stanzas of medieval *rímur* poetry have on occasion been mined for clues to performance context or autobiographical details of the poets' lives, they have seldom been approached literary texts in their own right. In this paper I will argue that these introductory stanzas are deliberately used by *rímur*-poets to create a sense of poetic identity in dialogue with their audiences. Though *mansöngvar* vary hugely between *rímur*-cycles – and indeed within a single cycle – when the genre is looked at as a whole, certain patterns begin to emerge. Certain themes are returned to again and again in *rímur*-cycles by different poets, and I suggest that these themes are part of an effort by *rímur*-poets to position themselves within a poetic lineage that descends from skaldic poetry as well as continental courtly poetic styles.

# WHEN DID UNSTRESSED PREFIXES DISAPPEAR IN OLD NORSE?

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## Leiv Olsen (Bergen)

So-called *expletive particles* are remnants of earlier unstressed prefixes. They are no longer prefixes, because they don't provide expressions with any meaning; or maybe they do? Are they just expletive particles, or is that term misleading?

The term «expletive particle», *fill word*, indicates that this word has no other function than to fill out empty passages (in poems). But why would skilled skalds use fill words? And if these words were just fill words, why were they not used arbitrarily anywhere in any unstressed position in poems? And why were they so numerous in the 9th and 10th century and hardly used at all after the middle of the 11th century?

No one claims that the term «expletive particles», 'fill words filling out empty passages', gives a completely adequate explanation of their function. Everyone admits that their use is restricted by their earlier function as prefixes. But to what extent does the term «expletive particles» lend 'fillwords' a satisfactory explanation? To what degree does this explanation need supplementary explanations; can alternative explanations — such as their role as prefixes — give better explanations for their use?

Unstressed prefixes disappeared at some point in Old Norse. The dominant theory is that they disappeared mainly during the syncope period, and definitely by the middle of the 9th century; the remnants, the so-called expletive particles, later served as fill words only. My alternative theory is that *of* and *um* still had some (weakened) function as prefixes until they gradually disappeared in daily speech (and at the same time in prose and poems) during the 11th-13th century.

# OLD NORSE LITERATURE AND THE ART OF VOMITING

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## Matthew Gan (Durham)

In Old Norse poetry, one frequently encounters poets pouring forth liquid as a metaphor for poetry. It is this paper's contention that a significant variation of this motif is that of the poet vomiting, as it combines the idea of poetic composition together with the aggressive assertion of masculinity, two major topoi in Old Norse literature.

This paper will suggest that there is an art to vomiting in Old Norse literature. It will address the following questions: What are the compositional elements of the vomiting motif? What is the relationship between art and vomiting? How do narratives employ the vomiting motif? The paper will examine how the motif of vomiting is situated within narratives, focusing sharply on two scenes: the first is in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, where Egill, as a poorly-treated guest of Ármóðr, shames his miserly host by spewing vomit on his face, and extemporizing a couple stanzas at the time; the other is an equally violent and vomit-filled scene from *Þorsteins saga uxafóts*, where a troll-woman fights with Þorsteinn, and vomits on his face. Next the paper looks at the relationship between poetry and vomiting in the myth concerning the mead of poetry, by looking at the salient points of the story as recounted in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*. Finally, the paper briefly examines *Þorleifs þáttr jarlaskálds*, and the ways in which it uses the idea of 'vomiting' as a unifying motif to give structure to the narrative as a whole.

# THE POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF VIKING AGE NORTH BRITAIN IN COMPARISON WITH SCANDINAVIAN POLITICAL STRUCTURES

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## **Nicola Shearer (Aberdeen)**

My presentation is based on the research I am currently conducting for my MLitt dissertation, the working title of which is “The political structures of Viking Age North Britain in comparison with Scandinavian political structures, with special attention paid to the relationship with native groups” supervised by Professor David Dumville.

The aim of the paper is to examine the political and cultural identity of Scandinavian kingdoms in Scotland and Ireland in comparison to their mainland Scandinavian counterparts. I will examine the relationship between Scandinavian settlers and the Picts in Scotland, the Gaels in Ireland and the west coast of Scotland. These interactions will be compared to those in mainland Scandinavia with the Sámi and other far North native groups. I am aiming to examine to what extent Scandinavians abroad in North Britain retained their “Scandinavian-ness” or whether they adopted parts of their host culture to create unique identities.

My paper will present some of my preliminary research findings, focused on the different primary sources I shall be looking at: sagas, archaeological evidence, place names, Irish Chronicles and Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. There are few academic studies of Scandinavian activity in the Viking Age, especially in their interactions with the host cultures, and this is an area which I would like to expand and develop in this paper.

# BITS AND PIECES: A STUDY OF SCRIBES IN A CORPUS OF OLD NORSE LITERARY FRAGMENTS

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## Nina Stensaker (Bergen)

In my PhD-project, I will examine the so-called literary Old Norse fragments in the National Archives (Riksarkivet) in Oslo. These fragments are from various Norse sagas, as well as secular and religious works. In total, there are 142 individual fragments, belonging to 35 different signatures, according to the catalogue. The fragments are all dated to the period 1200—1350.

My project focuses on the scribes and the cross-connections between them in this corpus, and to some extent outside my corpus. Through a combination of paleographic and orthographic analyses, I will try to identify different hands, determine their provenance, and conduct a new review of the dating of the fragments. Paleography and orthography are variables that can give convergent or contradictory results. Since Old Norse scribes did not have a standard orthography, the orthography of a fragment may turn out to be as important as the paleography when trying to identify hands of a document. According to the latest catalogues, especially the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* (ONP), most of the fragments in my corpus are regarded as Icelandic, a few as Norwegian, while six of them have not yet been exhaustively investigated.

In order to perform the orthographic analysis, I am transcribing the fragments on three focal levels, and I supply this multi-level transcription with a full morphological annotation. The fragments are in the process of being published in *Medieval Nordic Text Archive* (Menota) as well as in emroon (an Etymologically and Morphologically defined Referential Orthography for Old Norse).

**Websites**

emROON: An *Etymologically and Morphologically defined Referential Orthography for Old Norse*

<http://emroon.no/>

Menota: *Medieval Nordic Text Archive*. Catalogue:

<http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue>

Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog

<https://onp.ku.dk>

# CODEX RUNICUS (AM 28 8VO): A PILOT PROJECT FOR ENCODING A RUNIC MANUSCRIPT

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## Paola Peratello (Venice)

The purpose of this presentation is to show the process of the encoding of fol. 25v of Codex Runicus AM 28 8vo. In this aim, I am using Oxygen xml Editor to create the encoding of the text in compliance with P5 TEI standards. This page has been chosen as a pilot project for the XML encoding of a document written in Runic script, which to the best of my knowledge has not been done before. The final project is to encode a larger part of the codex once this procedure has been tried and tested.

Fol. 25v contains a portion of the Skånske Lov written by the main hand, who is believed to have written two third of the texts preserved in the codex. The manuscript dates to ca. 1300 and it has been written in Skåne, probably in the scriptorium of the Cistercian Herresvadskloster. Indeed, the language is the Old Danish, in particular the Scanian dialect, rendered completely in dotted runes. Probably, not all of these runes will be found in the Unicode standard; therefore, I would consider an interim Private Use Area (PUA) solution for these.

Digitization, in this instance, would represent a development with respect to the traditional possibilities of editing it: in fact, it would build an image-based edition. Additionally, it would allow a granular analysis of the graphemic aspects in the use of the runes. Moreover, this example of analysis would be useful both to place the manuscript within the Danish runic tradition as a whole and possibly to point to peculiarities that can be explained with reference to the particular purpose of the document for a parchment codex.

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## Online Sources:

### Medieval Unicode Font Initiative

- <https://folk.uib.no/hnooh/mufi/>

### Text Encoding Initiatives:

- <http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml>
- <http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/Guidelines.pdf>

# **BRETA SÖGUR: WHY CLAIM THE TROJANS WERE IN THULE?**

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## **Patrick Farrugia (Bergen)**

Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-historical *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136) was translated, or rather, adapted, into Old Icelandic relatively soon after its original composition in Britain. Through the lens of the extant Icelandic manuscripts that contain this text, namely AM 544 4to, AM 573 4to, and AM 764 4to, this presentation will examine the role that this text may have played in the attempted contextualization of Medieval Icelandic literature and (pseudo-)history within a broader European and even Classical framework during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

This talk will discuss the various redactions of this text within the context of the manuscripts in which they appear; something of a New Philological approach, if you will. Each of the various redactions appears alongside other texts that, from a medieval Icelandic generic perspective, seem to have been a blend of Classical and Biblical pseudo-histories of perceived heraldic value, both within Iceland and Britain.

Subsequently, I will parse out some of the variations in the redactions, as well as what role this kind of emendation (seemingly deliberate in this case) may have played in the attempts to link Iceland to a broader history and tradition.

# FORETELLING IN THE *FORNALDARSÖGUR*

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## Paul Tan (Durham)

Foretelling is a recurring motif in the Old Norse literary corpus. This is evident across several genres, including eddic poetry and the *Íslendingasögur*, and it is especially important in the *konungasögur*. For my PhD, I am studying the nuances and literary uses of foretelling across multiple genres; the focus of this paper, however, is on foretelling in the *fornaldarsögur*.

Making use of *Völsunga saga*, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, and *Örvar-Odds saga*, with reference also to *Hrólfs saga kraka* and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, the paper discusses the complex interrelations between specific kinds of foretelling. It makes a distinction between prescient dreams, with their frequent representation of animal fetches, and biblical-style prophecy, where the future is directly stated and its reception is dependent on the reputation of the speaker. The paper also explores the close link between foretellings and curses, for example in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, where the motif of the cursed sword is used when Angantýr foretells that the sword Tyrfingr will be the ruin of Hervör's family. The paper then examines the connections between the minatory, the punitive, and the causal – as when Óðinn, in the same saga, foretells that King Heiðrekr will be killed by slaves *because* Heiðrekr attacked him, thus implying that such a fate was a punishment rather than something that had always been fixed, or when Oddr, in *Örvar-Odds saga*, attempts to prevent a *spákona* from foretelling his end, reacts violently when she does so, and tries unsuccessfully to evade his fate. Leading on from this, finally, the paper offers reflections on the much-discussed question of the relationship between determinism and free will.

# EATING HEARTS AND DRINKING BLOOD: SAGA HEROES AND THE ABJECT IN *HRÓLFS SAGA KRAKA* AND *VÖLSUNGA SAGA*'

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## Sam Ashby-Crane (Oxford)

My paper aims to consider the role of blood and organs as abject materials in *fornaldarsögur*, principally in *Hrólfs saga kraka* and *Völsunga saga*. I will draw upon Julia Kristeva's understanding of the abject as a material involved in both disgust and desire, and the significance of that relationship in both the homosocial bonds that the saga heroes engage in with other men, and the power they accrue from these rituals. Alongside this will be a consideration of how witchcraft and *seiðr* are also at play in the use of the abject, from a position of alterity, and how necromantic practices deemed abominable are positioned in contrast to the magical rituals of blood drinking and heart-eating that the heroes engage in.

As a result, I hope to find new approaches to the relationship between desire and heroism in saga narrative, as well as offer new readings of the men in sagas as having permeable boundaries that speak vividly to a more complex understanding of sexuality and gender.

# INDIGENOUS PRESENCE, SPATIAL RELATIONS AND QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY: SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM *EGILS SAGA* *SKALLAGRÍMSSONAR*

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## Solveig Wang (Aberdeen)

Of the Icelandic family sagas, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* is the work dealing most extensively and in most detail with ‘northern-Norwegian’ lifestyles and identities, particularly in its portrayal of the indigenous Sámi – the *finnar* in Old Norse sources – and the spatial relations introduced by contact between different ‘cultural’ groups. Already from its beginning, the saga introduces a Sámi literary narrative with the presentation of ancestry connected to both northern-Norwegian power-centres and Sámi descent.<sup>1</sup> As one of the key issues in the saga, the idea of Sámi affiliation is enforced throughout by the ‘Othering’ of characters and the attribution of literary stereotypes through descriptions connected to a [semi-]Sámi narrative. These descriptions allude to an awareness of shared landscapes, particularly in Hálogaland and Naumdœlafylki, where Norse chieftains like Brynjólfr halfbergrísi exercise self-governance and pursue grand-scale trade with the culturally ‘Othered’ population(s) of Finnmark.

Through an in-depth textual analysis, my presentation aims to demonstrate the large degree of cultural fluidity and liminality evident in the text, demonstrating the extensive cultural contact and exchange between the groups. By examining the patterns and structures describing the Sámi, their relations with the Norse and Norse-Sámi cultural awareness in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, I aim to present a less dual and more multi-cultural picture of medieval Scandinavia than previously accounted for in scholarly research.

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<sup>1</sup> *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, ed. By Sigurður Nordal (Reykjavik: Ízlensk fornrit II, 1933) p. 3.

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# **PAMPHILUS SAGA: PROVENANCE AND MODE OF TRANSLATION**

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## **Sven Kraus (Berlin)**

*Pamphilus Saga* in the MS DG 4-7 was translated from the Medieval Latin poem *Pamphilus, de Amore* sometime before 1270 and possibly in or around Bergen. Treated as somewhat of a curiosity by scholars, studies in its provenance are lacking and the mode and context of the translation and reception have not been studied exhaustively; at times the literature is even inconclusive.

In this paper I am going to focus on the morpho-syntactic features of the translation and the materiality of the MS. I assume the translation to be an exercise done by a student and will show how this claim is warranted by the morpho-syntactic analysis. The materiality of the MS on the other hand reveals details about the reception of the translation and its context in the Norwegian aristocratic milieu. These two together give a very clear picture of the MS's place in a wider European scholastic context during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period.

# DID DANISH NUNS PRAY IN MIDDLE LOW GERMAN? – MATERIAL, TEXTUAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION OF AM 70 4TO

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## Tom Lorenz (Bergen)

The structure of the manuscript AM 70 4to in Den Arnamagnæanske Samling in Copenhagen reflects its changing fate during the late Middle Ages and early modern times: The original codex seems to have consisted of 26 quires of each 5 bifolio leaves. It contained a Middle Low German translation of Saint Birgitta's *Sermo angelicus* with additional prayers forming a prayer book with lessons and prayers for the seven days of the week. It thus seems connected to one of the 15th century Birgittan convents in Northern Germany, either Marienwolde (Mölln/Lübeck) or Marienkron (Stralsund). The Middle Low German book of prayers was later rebound together with additional leaves in Middle Low German and in Old Danish, both in the same hand. Another hand, likely a later owner and Danish nun, added further prayers in Old Danish and Latin in empty spaces and in some cases instructions in Old Danish in the margins. Finally, several leaves have been cut out, probably because they contained miniatures.

The paper examines the material, textual and linguistic features of AM 70 4to and their implications for the circumstances of production, use and rearrangement of the manuscript in late medieval Northern Germany and Denmark.

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# ‘ÞEIR ER MIÐGARÐ, MÆRAN, SCÓPO’: RE-SHAPING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF NORSE COSMIC SPACE

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## William Brockbank (Oxford)

Through the recent work of Phelpstead (2014) and Abram (2019), Old Norse literature has been brought into the fold of ecocriticism, a recent school of critical thought, arising from modern concerns about the myriad existential environmental crises that we face today. Although we might productively enquire into notions of ‘environment’ in Old Norse texts, the risk of committing anachronisms is never far away: the absence of any term denoting ‘environment’ or ‘nature’ in Old Norse suggests that we need to conceive of new ways of approaching ‘natural’ (i.e. non-human) elements of the Norse ‘natural world’.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, structuralist models of the Norse cosmos (e.g. Meletinskij 1973–74), with their anachronistic systematisation of horizontal and vertical axes—not to mention diagrammatic representations of the Norse cosmos—‘need [...] not to be corrected but jettisoned’ (Wanner 2009, 41). Just as there is no lexicographical evidence for a concept corresponding to our modern ‘nature’ in the textual record, there is no evidence (textual or pictorial)—beyond Snorri’s *Edda*—of a coherent, schematised understanding of the Norse cosmos either.

In this paper, I bring theories of space and spatiality to bear on depictions of Norse cosmic space in the eddic corpus. I contend that these often nebulous depictions—rendered all the more so by the constraints of the poetic economy of Germanic alliterative metre—and free from the systematisation underway in Snorri’s *Edda*, speak to an understanding of space as an abstract concept, dependent upon the relationships between defined places and entities within it, which are themselves the products of culturally-engendered meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> ON *náttúra*, in the thirteenth century at least, does not seem to connote ‘nature’ as opposed to ‘culture’ as in modern English (or, for that matter, any of the modern Scandinavian derivatives, *natur*, *náttúran*).

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# KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ AND THE NORWEGIAN ARISTOCRACY

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## Will Raybould (Durham)

*Konungs skuggsjá*, otherwise known as *The King's Mirror*, presents a vision of society where service to the king is of the utmost importance. The dialogue between father and son emphasises that all men in society are supposed to serve and be obedient toward the king and that entering the king's direct service is an important source of prestige and honour. The king, then, occupies a central position in the idealised organisation of society presented in *Konungs skuggsjá*. The picture of the aristocracy that emerges from the text is one where men's status as aristocrats is defined by their relationship to the king. Many prominent Norwegian historians, such as Sverre Bagge or Kåre Lunden, have largely accepted this monarchy centred view of society, arguing that the aristocracy in this period can be thought of as royal representatives or officials who were in large part reliant on the king for their status in society.

In this paper, I argue that historians have relied too heavily on the idealised picture of society presented in *Konungs skuggsjá*. I demonstrate, rather, that the aristocracy had a stronger sense of belonging to a common group within society and that their status was not so reliant on the monarch as previously supposed. In addition, I challenge the assertion that the importance of these links with the king, which have been overstated, allowed for increased consolidation of the realm and was an important aspect of 'state building'.

# ADJUST AND ADAPT: POST-MEDIEVAL REVISIONS TO THE MEDIEVAL SAGA TEXT

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## Zuzana Stankovitsová (Bergen)

Variation is one of the primary characteristics of texts transmitted in a manuscript culture. While some changes occur inevitably and involuntarily as a result of copying by hand. Others are introduced into deliberately, as a result of the text being viewed as an open entity that can be subject to changes. Despite its ubiquity, variation has been regarded within traditional philology as a form of deterioration, bringing the text further away from its original form. It is thus not surprising, that comparatively little work has been done in saga scholarship on textual variation, particularly when it comes to post-medieval manuscripts without text-critical value. However, we can assume that deliberate changes were introduced into the text for a reason, and were a means for the scribe – or scribes – to shape the narrative, for instance by accentuating parts and features they considered important. Taking a look at the textual variation of a saga can, therefore, give us insight into how audiences understood, interacted with and adapted saga narratives. In this paper, I will examine the variation in a group of 17<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts of *Króka-Refs saga* and discuss their type and function in the narrative.

