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Roman Alphabet Inscriptions in Early Medieval Norway – A Distinct Writing Culture?

Johan Bollaert (University of Oslo)

During the early Middle Ages in Scandinavia, two writing systems were in use: the Runic and the Roman alphabet. Runes are often associated with an oral society's short texts on i.a. wood or stone, and the Roman alphabet with literate works on parchment. However, there are many Roman alphabet inscriptions in Scandinavia too. Up until recently, these have been largely ignored, especially in Norway. Nonetheless, they should play an essential role in our understanding of medieval writing traditions as they clearly intersect the cultures associated with literacy and orality.

This study investigates the questions of why these two alphabets were used simultaneously in a similar epigraphic context, and how they were used differently. Did the carvers have different aims? Did they follow a different set of norms? Did they have different competence? Are Roman alphabet inscriptions more *written*?

The study ties in to previous works on literacy in Scandinavia and is founded theoretically in Wulf and Oesterreicher's¹ work on *Verschriftung und Verschriftlichung*. Roman alphabet inscriptions are collected from several locations in Norway and compared quantitatively and qualitatively to both runic and manuscript material. The inscriptions are studied from sub-word to text level, among others interpunction, formularity and lexicon are discussed. Initial results show that the Roman alphabet inscriptions may be more standardised, but that the norms followed can be remarkably different from the manuscript material.

¹ Koch, Peter & Oesterreicher, Wulf. 2007. "Schriftlichkeit und kommunikative Distanz." In *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* 35.3. s.346-375.

Nis þæt heoru stow: Unpleasant Places in *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga*

William Brockbank (Jesus College, Oxford)

'That is not a pleasant place!', exclaims Hrothgar after describing the bleak landscape of the Grendelkin's mere to Beowulf. Grendel and his mother's status as liminal figures stalking the boundaries of society is attested to by Hrothgar's men who have seen *twegen micle mearcstapan moras healden*, 'two great march-steppers guarding the moors' (lines 1347–48). But not even their reputations as skulking inhabitants of the wild space around Heorot can prepare the audience for Hrothgar's vivid description of their hellish abode (lines 1357–77). Similarly, Grettir's monstrous adversaries are to be found in places far beyond the boundaries of human society: in distant burial mounds, up in the mountains, and behind waterfalls. While descriptions of these landscapes do not compare to Hrothgar's, these places are nonetheless held to be somehow dangerous or unpleasant: the burial mound of Kárr the *haugbúi*, for instance, is *myrkt ok þeygi þefgott*, 'dark and not altogether sweet-smelling' (chapter 18).

Focusing on the mere of Grendel and his mother, this paper examines the relationship between landscape and its monstrous inhabitants in *Beowulf*, with recourse to pertinent examples in *Grettis saga*. Furthermore, it argues that these monsters are feared and reviled so much not simply because of their own monstrosity but because of their removal to hostile landscapes beyond the peripheries of society. And by adopting an ecocritical approach, this paper will be able to probe further into the relationship between wild space, inhabited places, and the non-humans that populate them.

The Role of Women in Old Norse Medicine

Luthien Cangemi (University of Cambridge)

This paper will look at depictions of women in Old Norse literature who are involved in medical practices from midwifery to the healing of injured warriors. The research will be conducted using new anthropological and psychological approaches towards literary sources, as well as by comparing the roles played by women with regard to medicine in poetry and prose. By using a number of selected instances where there is a mention of medical practices, I will try to outline changes which occur in relation to male and female healers in the literature. In addition to accounts in eddic poetry and other sagas, particular emphasis will be placed on *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, *Magnuss saga goða*, some of the *Íslendingasögur*, *Biskupasögur* and *Heimiskringla* because they convey the most relevant accounts of medical practices and practitioners in medieval Iceland. The comparison will provide an account of factors that have tended to remain stable, as well as an account of factors that have changed across time. Those changes which are due to the influence of Christianity and more intense contact with the Continent will also be highlighted.

Advice, Betrayal and Possession: The Word *ráða* in the Eddic Poems about Sigurðr's Youth

Francesco Colombo (University of Cambridge)

The verb *ráða* and the related noun *ráð* appear many times (around 40 in total) in the section of the Poetic Edda about the youth of Sigurðr, comprising *Grípisspá*, *Reginismál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál*. The word covers a wide semantic spectrum and all its principal meanings are represented in these poems, where it is employed to mean 'advise', 'consult', 'decide', 'have something at one's disposal' (and therefore 'possess', 'rule'), 'betray' and 'read'. Some of these concepts are among the most important from a thematic point of view in this section, of which *ráða* is therefore one of the key words.

This paper starts with an analysis of the etymology of the word and continues with a close reading of some of the most significant stanzas in which the word appears. Thematic developments are traced and new interpretations of some passages are suggested, exploring possibilities with regard to the composition and transmission of these verses and providing some insight into the techniques of the eddic composer(s) and compiler(s). The result is a fuller understanding of the word *ráða* as well as of some significant aspects of this section of the Codex Regius.

A Reappraisal of *Konungastyrelsen* – A Swedish Medieval Treatise on the Art of Royal Governance

Heidi Synnøve Djuve (University of Aberdeen)

Since its rediscovery in the late nineteenth century, the Swedish fourteenth century treatise *Konungastyrelsen* has been characterised by obscurity and controversy. The original manuscript is presumed lost forever, and our only source which renders the work in its entirety today is a transcription from 1634. Until the nineteenth century, it was commonly believed amongst scholars that this transcription was a forgery, and that the original work never existed in the first place. Despite this claim later being discredited, the negative perception of *Konungastyrelsen* and its authenticity remained, and unfortunately proved to be determinedly persistent. As a result, the political treatise has often, and without just cause, been overlooked and underestimated.

Konungastyrelsen follows the literary pattern of a particularly didactic and ethical type of texts, popularly referred to as the 'mirrors for princes'. The text was most likely written during the 1340-50s, to educate King Magnus Eriksson's sons, Erik and Håkan. One of the author's main literary influences was Aegidius Romanus' work, *De regimine principum* (c. 1280), from which *Konungastyrelsen* adopted its political programme and endorsement of absolute hereditary monarchy. Initially, the Swedish treatise was discarded as merely a translation of Aegidius' text.

This paper aims to demonstrate how this East Norse text was not a translation or interpretation. With textual examples I will showcase how *Konungastyrelsen* draws inspiration from several medieval Swedish sources, and subsequently suggest that the extent or intention of the work's absolutist proclamation that derived from Aegidius has been misinterpreted or exaggerated in previous studies. The objective of my paper is to approach the text's ideological contents from a comparative perspective, and ultimately reappraise the historical value of *Konungastyrelsen* in research on the East Norse medieval period.

Memory, Law and Pragmatism: The Institutionalisation of the *leiðangr* in Scandinavia during the Civil Wars

Beñat Elortza (University of Aberdeen)

Between the mid-twelfth and the mid-thirteenth centuries, the realms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were ravaged by regular outbursts of dynastic struggles. These periods of internecine warfare took place when different branches of the leading aristocratic families tried to place their contender on the throne by force. This period, too, oversaw a rapid expansion of royal power over the aristocracy, economic resources and the military apparatus alike.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the transformation of the Scandinavian naval levies, or *leiðangr*, during this tumultuous period. The relatively decentralised military apparatus present in Scandinavia at the time was brought increasingly under royal power through necessity and legislation alike. The paper will explore the situation of the *leiðangr* during the early twelfth century, and how different approaches were made in each country to establish royal control over the organisation, including the commutation of armed service for taxation. The process in Norway will be particularly highlighted, as it clearly shows a pragmatic approach during wartime and a codification of legislation during the long, relatively stable reigns of Håkon IV and Magnus VI. The creation of “origin myths” for the *leiðangr*, especially in Denmark and Norway, will also be mentioned in less extensive detail.

A Case for Lasting Old Norwegian Influence in Northern Iceland

Patrick Farrugia (University of Bergen)

While many manuscripts can be linked to a place of production or traced to a particular area, relatively little work has been done to compare the orthographic, paleographic, and linguistic features of such manuscripts. This relative lack of attention is perhaps a reflection of the fact that manuscript 'origin stories' are often incomplete or unreliable.

However, in the case of a group of fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts, namely Holm. Perg. 8vo nr. 10 IX, AM 573 4to, AM 764 4to, and Möðruvallabók AM 132 fol., both philological data and semi-historical anecdotes suggest that these manuscripts are linked with the Northern part of Iceland, particularly the area that is more or less centered around the historical episcopal see at Hólar.

In these manuscripts, there are peculiar features that may suggest a dialectal variation in this particular area of Northern Iceland, and / or a continued Old Norwegian influence into the late fourteenth century. These features include but are perhaps not limited to: delayed development of the Svarabhakti vowel before word-final r, orthographic representation of intervocalic [ʏ] as 'gh', delayed development of the diphthongization of etymological [á], and the form and position of the letters uncial d, insular f, and r rotunda.

In this project, I will aim to fill in the gaps in the current research surrounding these manuscripts primarily through the use of digital transcriptions according to the MENOTA standard, XML mark-up, and the generation of data tables and a searchable database.

Subsequently, I will conduct an analysis designed to determine whether these manuscripts indeed share common scribes, whether it can be said with any certainty that they originate from the same centre of manuscript production, and whether their contents display a distinct variety of Old Icelandic, or region-specific remnants of Old Norwegian influence on the language and scribal practice.

Bishops and Witches in Fourteenth-Century Iceland

Michael Frost (University of Aberdeen)

Three sets of the Icelandic annals record that in the year 1343 an Icelandic nun named Kristín was burned at the stake after being accused either of blaspheming the pope or making a pact with the Devil. The incident is a curious one as both of these alternative accusations, and the punishment of death by burning, were unprecedented in Iceland and arguably in Scandinavia as a whole as well. The case is all the more interesting given the involvement of the local bishop Jón Sigurðsson, who degraded Kristín (i.e. formally stripped her of monastic status) and presumably also oversaw the trial. Both he and his colleague Ormr Ásláksson had only just arrived in Iceland, and before the year was out both bishops would also become involved in disputes with other monasteries in their respective dioceses, a fact which suggests Kristín's trial may have been connected to these other conflicts in some way. The case is thus interesting not just from a legalistic and ideological perspective but also as an important incident in political and ecclesiastical history, but in spite of all this very little is understood about the episode, notwithstanding a couple of tentative discussions in histories of Iceland and of Scandinavian witchcraft. One such is in my PhD thesis, which briefly discusses the careers of both Jón and Ormr as part of its study of the late-mediaeval bishops of Iceland, and this paper means to expand upon that and to apply the thesis's findings in an effort to gain some new insight into the remarkable events of 1343.

Creating Problems: The Smith-Poet Figure in the *Íslendingasögur*

Tom Grant (University of Cambridge)

The figure of the poet looms large in the *Íslendingasögur*. Gísli Súrsson, Egill Skallagrímsson and Króka-Refr are some of the most memorable figures in Icelandic saga literature, and scholars have long occupied themselves with the fascinating egotism, tenacity and ferocity of these characters, which often places them at odds with the normative standards of their community. But one often-ignored quality which all these skalds share is their proficiency in physical crafts, mainly metal- and wood-working, which further distinguishes them from their peers. It is time we question why this parallelism between verbal and material crafting is so prevalent across the *Íslendingasögur*, and what kind of characters this parallelism creates. My paper aims to provide an answer to both questions.

In order to understand the genesis and character of the smith-poet in the *Íslendingasögur*, it will be necessary to talk briefly about smiths and skalds more widely, as well as the creative processes in which they specialise. I will demonstrate that these agents were perceived as innately threatening and extra-normative, both on account of their otherworldly creative abilities, and also because they could directly affect the socio-political influence of ancient Scandinavian rulers.

In this paper, I will chiefly be analysing the perception and nature of the most significant smith-poets of the *Íslendingasögur*. I intend to demonstrate that the natural fusion of the related roles of smith and poet culminates in, and can be used to understand, some of the most enigmatic and ambivalent characters in the saga.

Oaths in Medieval Scandinavian Law and Literature

Viktória Gyönki (Eötvös Loránd University)

In this presentation I would like to introduce oaths and their role in medieval Norwegian and Icelandic legal tradition with a focus on similarities between the medieval law codes *Grágás* and *Gulatingslove*. How much similar or independent are the Icelandic laws is a well-known debate, and it has been an interest of scholars in the last decades. Outlawry for example is a punishment present in both Icelandic and Norwegian laws, and it has its roots in Germanic legal culture. One can understand this type of punishment as a tool for peacekeeping, since the one outlawed had to leave the community. Conflicts could be also solved with outlawry as a closing act.

Another tool of peace-making and peacekeeping were oaths. An overview will be given in the presentation of oaths, but the focus will be on *Trygðamál*. This oath is known in both Norwegian and Icelandic legal tradition. While it is fragmentary in *Gulatingslove*, *Trygðamál* has been preserved as a whole in a great number of Icelandic texts – both legal and literary. The aim of this paper is to present *Trygðamál* as a shared legal piece of text by discovering its way from *Gulatingslove* to *Grágás*. Similar oath is to be found in *Heiðarvíga saga* and *Grettis saga* – the context and function will be also discussed in the presentation.

Birds of a Feather: Avian Taxonomies in Skaldic Kennings

Katie Haley-Halinski (University of Cambridge)

One problem faced by scholars when looking at animals in past cultures is how to understand how animals were conceptualised and categorised without recourse to the Linnaean taxonomies that guide present-day scientific and popular thought. For instance, to a speaker of Modern English, *worm* and *snake* are two very different creatures, but the Old Norse *ormr* can refer to both, suggesting a closer taxonomic relationship between them to an Old Norse speaker.

This paper will model the conceptual interrelationships and differences between different kinds of bird in late Viking Age and early medieval West Norse thought through the inspection of kennings relating to birds found in the corpus of skaldic poetry. Kennings are related to their implicit referent through both metaphor and metonym. For instance, *gull of battle* could refer to a raven or eagle, as a gull is a large bird, and both eagles and ravens are conventionally associated with battle. By inspecting the words used in bird-kennings, this paper will use repeated associations between types of bird and their metonymic associations to model the ethno-ornithological taxonomies of Old West Norse peoples, and why they might have come about.

Hún mællti þá hlæjandi með miklum ógangi: Laughter in Íslendingasögur and fornaldarsögur

Claudia Hoßbach (University of Cambridge)

Cheerfulness, affection, insecurity, relief, superiority, gloating and contempt — these are only some of the emotions that can be expressed through laughter, which in turn triggers social mechanisms. It is a basic human trait that has fascinated scholars for generations and attitudes towards it have varied continually according to society and epoch. In cultural and literary studies research on emotions has gained considerable significance in the last fifteen years, and William Ian Miller in particular has shown that it is very rewarding for Old Norse literature as well. In contrast to the Eddas and the Kings' sagas, little attention has been paid to laughter in the *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*. This may be because laughter, usually represented by *hlæja* or *brosa*, is a phenomenon that can only be observed occasionally. Nevertheless, it is those instances that stand out and provide a surprisingly wide range of various types of laughter: it is never coincidental and sometimes even its absence is remarkable. This paper aims to examine the portrayal of laughter in the two genres. It focuses on both its literary function and the importance of laughter as a social corrective, with its connotations of moral values and norms.

Medieval Literature and ‘The National’: Normative Discourses in Research and Perception

Sven Kraus (European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) / Humboldt University Berlin)

The material I will concentrate on in my presentation will be the MS DG 4-7 (c. 1270, Bergen area; now at Uppsala University Library), which is associated with Hákon Hákonarson and the translation activities at his court. It might appear natural to label DG 4-7 as a *Norwegian* MS. However, I find this label to be more limiting than it is helpful. Therefore, I will discuss the question in how far a more careful consideration of norms and labels in academic and non-academic discourse can broaden the scope of manuscript studies and to which extent. A new and different mode of reception can open up by identifying the norms that are being read into texts and their contexts.

In the main part of the presentation, I will address the methodological and theoretical approach to discourses concerning medieval (translated) literature as outlined above focusing on strategies of writing this type of literature into a normative framework. I shall demonstrate in greater detail in how far my approach can lead to new and relevant findings that do not only have an impact on manuscript studies but may also shed new light on literary and cultural activities in medieval Europe.

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The Layout in Prologue and Law Text

Anne Ladefoged (University of Copenhagen)

With the paper, I will present my latest research project, an analysis of the layout of law texts and prologues found in 13 Danish medieval law manuscripts from the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen. The manuscripts are dated between 1275-1525, and all contain one or more of the Danish provincial laws; the Law of Scania (SkL), the Laws of Zealand (VsL & EsL) and the Law of Jutland (JL).

The law text and the prologue can be defined both as parts of a whole and as separate writings, and the aim has been to analyze this relation between the two types of texts based on their layout. The focus is on similarities and differences within layout, especially the hierarchy of the initials, and the visual expression of the two texts as individual elements or coherent parts of one text, including variations due to the combination of prologues and different laws. Remarks are also made on different types of prologues and their likewise different layouts and functions, and on the connection between layout and type of contents.

Rethinking Runology

Elisabeth Magin (University of Nottingham)

Runology is a subject rarely available at universities throughout the world. There is no chair for it, and academics doing runology are usually linguists, German, English or Scandinavian philologists or archaeologists with a special interest in that area. On the one hand, this provides runology with a wide range of different approaches inspired by the researcher's field; on the other hand, studies of runic inscriptions will therefore necessarily focus on aspects that the individual researcher is familiar with. Another hurdle is presented by the sheer number of runic inscriptions available – at 6000 and counting (albeit slowly), no researcher is still able to recall details about every single runic inscription, thus rendering it difficult to conduct studies beyond the single researcher's knowledge.

With the rise of modern data processing methods, it is only a question of time until these will have to be implemented in runology to protect the discipline from becoming obsolete and even more obscure than it is now. During my PhD research, I have therefore concentrated on addressing the various issues runologists face when attempting to make use of mechanical data processing. In this talk I will present some of the solutions, many of which are also applicable and/or interface with linguistics, graphematics, literature studies and archaeology.

The Oscillating *hirð* in *Morkinskinna*

Tom Morcom (Oxford)

If it is broadly permissible to think of the *íslendingasögur* as ‘family sagas’, in that in these texts the complex dynamics of familial interaction regularly drive their narratives, then the *konungasögur* can be thought of as ‘*hirð* sagas’, with the characterisations of kings being crucially informed by their relationships with their circle of retainers. This is demonstrated in a particularly overt manner within *Morkinskinna* where frequent and fractious dialogue between kings and their *hirðmenn* are central to the idiosyncratic style of depicting Norwegian history within this manuscript. The specific detailing of what form an Icelandic redactor, in this case likely writing c.1220, would have expected the *hirð* to take is, however, often lacking in discussions of the literary and historical credentials of *Morkinskinna*. This paper will make use of *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Hirðskrá* which, as 13th-century codifications of elite Norwegian society, can be fruitfully compared with the slightly earlier *Morkinskinna*. Both *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Hirðskrá* depict a *hirð* that is highly hierarchical, with positions of intimacy to the king often reserved for the Norwegian aristocracy, and with methods of initiation, even into more lowly positions, being ritualised, formal, and reliant on the goodwill of established *hirðmenn*. This paper will demonstrate that the redactor of *Morkinskinna* has a similarly detailed knowledge of the structure of the *hirð*, and demonstrates a remarkable understanding of the specific functions of a variety of roles within a king’s retinue. This depiction of retainers is not consistent, however, and the strictures of the *hirð* are at times relaxed, or even ignored, for literary effect; this occurs most frequently in the *þættir*, where Icelanders leapfrog conventional elite hierarchies to gain immediate informal intimacy with a king.

Egils saga Skallagrímssonar and the Rejection of his Father's Authority

Lauren O'Brien (University of Nottingham)

Previous scholars have examined Egils Saga and father-son relationships, such as Ármann Jakobsson, Cathy Itnyre and Christine Fell. Egils saga concerns itself with the construction of fatherhood and the cyclical nature of intergenerational conflict between father and son. However, it is through Egill's own creation of identity that he shirks the inevitability of becoming a mirror image of Skallagrímur. Moreover, it is Egill's loyalty, friendship and desire to keep his family relationships intact which distinctly removes him from being the complete mirror image of his father; rather, he is a son who in all aspects wishes to separate himself from his father's previous actions.

Co-Presence or Consumption: Transgressing Kinship Norms in Old Norse Mythic-Heroic Literature

Katherine Olley (University of Cambridge)

The paper will explore Old Norse kinship in mythic-heroic texts in the light of Marshall Sahlins's definition of kinship as 'mutuality of being' or 'intersubjective participation', according to which kinsmen are those who are co-present in one another and members of one another. While co-presence is usually taken metaphorically to mean a process of identification and empathy between a group of individuals, the interplay between shared substance and kinship means it can also be extended in some cases to include narratives of literal consumption or cannibalism. When Atli eats his children in the Atli-poems of the *Poetic Edda*, when Bera is forced to eat the transfigured flesh of her dead husband Björn in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, or when Sigurðr eats the roasted heart of his foster-father's brother Fáfnir, whenever kinsmen take the flesh of another inside themselves, however briefly or unwitting, the consequences are momentous and often disastrous. The paper will explore what happens when mutuality is taken to harmful extremes, contrasting it with positive narratives of consumption in the same texts, such as feasting and drinking, which are used to reinforce kinship bonds, showing how the same principles which underlie making kinship are perverted in order to break those same ties.

Linguistic Criteria for the Age of Eddic Poetry: Will We Ever Be Able to Achieve a Consensus on the Date of Eddic Poetry?

Leiv Olsen (University of Bergen)

My MA thesis focuses on the dating of eddic poetry. I have concentrated on the poems in the *Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda*, and investigated the following linguistic criteria: so-called expletive particles, so-called *vindanðin forna*, hiatus or contracted forms, prepositions, enclitic use of *ek* and *es*, enclitic articles, late placement of verbs (violations on the V2-rule), alliterations between *v* and vowels and the Proto-Nordic Frontier.

The different criteria give similar dating to a surprisingly high degree. Some linguistic changes took place in the 11th and 12th centuries. All the poems seem to have been composed before this. Some poems have no traces of *vindanðin forna*. These poems display late traits with regards to other linguistic criteria, too. Those that have traces of *vindanðin forna*, show no late linguistic traits.

The most precise criterion for dating is the so-called *expletive particle*, or *of/um*-particles, which I claim were not expletive — they were particles with a specific effect. Poems with a high degree of *of/um*-particles also show a high degree of other archaic linguistic traits. Poems with medium degree of *of/um*-particles show archaic traits to a moderate degree, while poems with few *of/um*-particles show very few archaic linguistic traits. 2/3 of all poems in *Codex Regius* ends up with the same classification in all traits I can quantify, while 1/3 — 9 poems — deviate, but never in more than one trait.

Investigation of possible Christian thoughts, and investigation of Pre-Christian mythological *kennings*, confirms this picture.

The great majority of poems in *Codex Regius* must be from Pre-Christian times, i.e. from before ca. 1000 AD. Some very few poems must be from Christian times, but not later than around 1100/1150. A great deal of the poems may be from the 9th and 10th

centuries. Some poems with a high degree of *of/um*-particles, many violations to the V2-rule and few or none violations to the so-called *Bugge's law*, seem to be the oldest layer of eddic poems. Probably they are from the oldest Norse times. We can't exclude that some of them may be from Pre-Norse period.

So it was written, so it shall be? Investigating Written Primary Source Evidence for Viking Expansion to England, Ireland, and Eastern Europe in the 8th to 10th Centuries

William Pidzamecky (University of Nottingham)

The expansion of Scandinavians into Western and Eastern Europe during the Viking Age had a profound cultural, social, and political impact on the peoples they encountered. Accordingly, many accounts were written to record and interpret these interactions. Despite, generally, being written from the perspective of those on the receiving end of Scandinavian expansion, the literary accounts provide crucial information on the details and impact of these cross-cultural interactions. This paper stems from current PhD research on Scandinavian expansion from the 8th to 10th centuries and will investigate the nature of the literary sources and their usefulness in studying this topic.

“Gilded Axe-Heads and Sword-Hilts” Examining Aristocratic Identity in Sven Aggesen’s *Lex Castrensis Sive Curiae*

Will Raybould (Durham University)

Sven Aggesen’s *Lex Castrensis*, written towards the end of the 12th century, purports to be a forgotten law code that was used to govern the organisation of the court of King Cnut the Great. It aims to limit the amount of bloodshed and violence amongst the king’s followers. Little is known about Sven himself, except that he is clearly a learned individual, and we know that he came from an important aristocratic family, who had an uneasy relationship with royal power. On more than one occasion members of his family had chosen the losing side in rebellions against the Danish crown.

Previously, scholars have often used this text to evaluate conceptions about the nature of royal power, and the king’s status as both law maker, and as a subject of his own legal pronouncements. Others have argued that we can use the *Lex Castrensis* to reconstruct the functioning of the royal court during Sven’s lifetime and even as far back as King Cnut’s reign.

Instead, this paper offers an exploration into the portrayal of the aristocracy’s self-understanding and identity within the *Lex Castrensis*. It also seeks to emphasize how the text fits into a wider European context of political thought concerning relations between lords and their followers, and to explore the development of aristocratic identity in Scandinavia throughout the central middle ages. To do so comparison with texts such as Saxo Grammaticus’ version of the *Lex Castrensis* in his *Gesta Danorum*, *Konungs skuggsjá*, and the German *Sachsenspiegel* will be useful.

Udal Law, Place Names and Thing Places? The Problems of Interdisciplinary Research as an Archaeologist of the Viking Age and Late Norse Period of Skye and the Outer Hebrides

Joseph Ryder (University of Bergen)

The issue of interdisciplinary studies within Viking Studies has been the subject of much debate in recent years. Often, archaeologists working on material from the Viking Age are confronted with evidence from outside archaeology, such as historical sources, literary sources, and place names. Archaeologists working in the Viking Age sometimes just mention the non-archaeological material in passing if it happens to match up with the archaeological material, often without a critical eye taken to material from outside their discipline. As an archaeologist researching the Viking Age and Late Norse periods of Skye and the Outer Hebrides, it is easy for me to ignore the material from outside my discipline. In this paper, I will opt to explore the possibilities of interdisciplinary studies from the perspective of an archaeologist, and confront some of the historical, place name and literary data relevant to my area of study of Skye and the Outer Hebrides. A specific emphasis will be placed on Udal Law, place names, and Thing places. While it is impossible to ignore evidence such as Old Norse place names in the Hebrides, it is difficult for archaeologists to utilize sources from outside archaeology critically. An alternative route is to collaborate with scholars of other fields from within Viking Studies.

On Origins: George Dasent, Charles Darwin, and Old Norse ‘Glossology’

Thomas Spray (Durham University)

The second half of the nineteenth century gave birth to two works with long-lasting influence on their respective fields. Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* was first published in 1859 and popularised a number of pre-existing scientific and social theories regarding the history of the natural world and humanity’s place within it. Particularly influential would be comments (drawn from the works of Herbert Spencer and added to Darwin’s fifth edition) describing evolution as a process of ‘Survival of the Fittest’, imposing a notion of pre-ordained superiority on Darwin’s theory in the minds of generations of so-called “Social Darwinists” to come.

In the same year, George Webbe Dasent published his essay ‘On the Origin and Diffusion of Popular Tales’, attached as an introduction to his *Popular Tales from the Norse*. Dasent is more widely known as the first translator of *Njáls saga*, and indeed his *Story of Burnt Njal, or Life in Iceland at the End of the Tenth Century* remained the sole English translation for almost a century, attracting both artists and academics. The scholarship of ‘Darwin’ Dasent – a comic alias imparted by Charles ‘Umbra’ Clifford – held sway as expert commentary on Old Norse sagas and their relevance for Victorian Britain.

Yet Dasent’s seemingly objective scholarship was the end product of decades of pre-Darwinian theories of an ethnic-nationalist nature. For Dasent, Iceland’s literature was an ancestral record of Victorian values now returned to its rightful place under the watchful supervision of British foster-parents. Old Norse ‘Glossology’ (palaeontology’s philological cousin) provided evidence of missing links between barbarism and civilisation, as well as proof of the extinction of inferior races. This paper offers a comparison of thematic interests held by these two highly-influential Victorian scholars; it examines Dasent’s application of nineteenth-century theories of racial superiority to the field of Old Norse, and considers the extent to which *Popular Tales* set the tone for future Old Norse Philology.

Building a Stemma of the *Króka-Refs saga* Manuscripts

Zuzana Stankovitsová (University of Bergen)

The 14th-century *Króka-Refs saga* is preserved in over 40 manuscripts and manuscript fragments. Most of the manuscripts were examined by Pálmi Pálsson in preparation for his 1883 edition, but apart from outlining the filiations of a few main manuscripts, no stemma was proposed. Stemmatic analysis is not only crucial for text-critical and editorial purposes, but also provides a useful tool for research with a material-philological focus, as a genealogical tree provides an insight into the process of transmission and development of the text. In recent decades, computer-assisted methods borrowed from phylogenetics have been implemented to reveal relationships between manuscripts. Digital tools enable us to easily handle larger amounts of data, such as mapping out the entire transmission of a text, and give us the possibility to explore new avenues of research. At the same time, they pose some challenges. In this paper, I will explore the application of phylogenetic software to help construct a genealogical tree of the extant manuscripts of *Króka-Refs saga*, and discuss methodological concerns regarding the selection of variants for a stemmatic analysis.

Dealing with a Law Fragment

Nina Stensaker (Bergen)

The Norwegian *landsloq*, which was codified under King Magnús Hákonarson the Law-Mender in the 1270s, is preserved in a large number of manuscripts. According to the latest survey by Magnus Rindal (2013), there are 39 more or less complete manuscripts and approx. 45 fragments of once existing manuscripts. The whole *landsloq* contains approx. 50 000 words, while the fragments on the whole are much smaller, some of them only being part of a single leaf. The largest of the *landsloq* fragments is NRA 7, which consists of seven leaves, one of which, fol. 2, is cut into three smaller pieces. All together, this fragment contains 4 735 words.

As part of a course headed by Odd Einar Haugen and Robert K. Paulsen (spring term 2017), I transcribed fol. 2 of this fragment on three levels, a facsimile level, a diplomatic level and a normalised level. Photos of the fragments had been pasted up in a facsimile edition by Thorsten Eken (1963), so I had a good hypothesis for how they should be organised. However, it turned out that Eken had not pasted them up entirely correctly. This was pointed out in a term paper by Ruben Gramstad, one of the students on the course.

In my work, I was faced with a number of challenges in the actual XML encoding. Even if Menota had some examples of edited fragments in the archive, by young scholars like Beeke Stegmann, Matteo Tarsi and Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, there were a number of encoding questions that were not addressed in the Menota Handbook. In my work with the NRA 7 fragment, I had the opportunity to suggest encoding solutions. These were based not only on my work with this particular fragment, but also with the encoding of the five Norwegian fragments of *Konungs skuggsjá* (NRA 58 A, NRA 58 B, NRA 58 C, AM 1056 IX 4to and NKS 235 g 4to) as well as a fragment of *Fagrskinna* (NRA 51).

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Rindal, Magnus. 2013. "Håndskrifter av Magnus Lagabøtes landslov i norrøn språkform." Upublisert notat datert 13. mai 2013.

Stensaker, Nina, ed. Fragments of AM 1056 IX 4to, NKS 235 g 4to, NRA 51, NRA 58 A, NRA 58 B, NRA 58 C encoded on three levels. The Medieval Nordic Text Archive, <http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue>

Anger in *Njáls saga*: Body, Words and Gender

Brynja Thorgeirsdottir (University of Cambridge)

This paper examines how anger is represented in *Njáls saga* through emotion words and bodily expressions. It furthermore offers an analysis of how different types of emotional depiction reflect the literary construction of the main characters, as well as their gender and status.

There is a general consensus that emotions in *Íslendingasögur* are mainly depicted from an external point of view and that their substance needs to be inferred. However, the sagas do contain a variety of emotion words which can serve as a valuable analytical tool, as will be presented here. In light of this, anger in *Njáls saga* will be explored from three angles. First, the saga's vocabulary of anger-words will be presented, and the method of constructing the lexicon will be described. Second, it will be considered how anger is displayed through the body, with somatic markers and action. Third, the above will be used to analyse different character constructions, as well as the power structures related to gender and status inherent in the saga.

Viktors saga ok Blávus: **Global Narratives from the** **Edge of the World**

Alisa Valpola-Walker (University of Cambridge)

This paper will consider the way in which *Viktors saga ok Blávus* depicts the wider world, its different lands, peoples and cultures, and what it can tell us about late medieval Icelanders' global perception. It will look at how and the extent to which the saga adopts or rejects continental literary conventions of, for example, heroism and ethnicity, and how it merges those with native narrative traditions. It will explore how the saga's intertextuality makes comments on various literary/historical traditions: which ones are privileged and which are parodied. It will also examine the two main medieval manuscripts which contain versions of the saga and suggest how their different geographical and codicological contexts may have affected their interpretation. The overarching aim will be to shed some light on a text which has received little individual scholarly interest, and show how it fits within the wider corpus of saga literature. More broadly, it will demonstrate the worth of Icelandic chivalric sagas for the study of later medieval Icelandic worldview.

Öland's Runes and its Clergy: a Case of interdependence?

Caroline Wilhelmsson (University of Aberdeen)

This paper will be a case-study based on two runic inscriptions from Öland: ÖI 34 and ÖI 35. These, which were painted inside a church, are particularly interesting in the way they depict the relationship between Christianity and runacy. Written in a mix of Latin and Old Norse using runes, they were raised very late, probably sometime around the mid-16th century. One encourages worshippers to dance and play music to praise God, which in itself contrasts with the more sinister approach to worship found elsewhere in Europe and Scandinavia. The other insists on the importance of knowing runes if one was to become the parish rector. At first glance, these two inscriptions offer an unusual mix between popular traditions and clerical culture. Runes, for instance, are often studied in opposition to Latin, in an artificial split between common people's supposedly archaic means of communication, and the clergy's educated ways. By contextualising them in wider regional history, we may learn about the religious landscape and practices of post-Reformation Öland. We will see that unlike common beliefs suggest, runacy may have been regarded as precious knowledge. The Church, in an attempt to connect with an insular population that retained many ancient customs, may have adapted to Ölandic traditions rather than the other way round.

“Alternative” Communities in the Sagas: Constructing a Methodology for Literary Interpretation

Alexander J. Wilson (University of Durham)

Scholarly investigations into how medieval Icelandic society understood the concept of community, both in the abstract and a practical sense, have focused on its normative understandings of community – that is, socially-sanctioned relationships of the kind that existed between friends, kinsmen, and political allies within normative social structures (see, for example: Miller 1990; Byock 1993; and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1999 and 2017). These analyses – which use saga literature as their primary sources, and which are themselves primarily sociological in scope – reveal which interactions and communal relationships were thought of as acceptable, ideal, or problematic by the medieval Icelanders who produced these texts.

Saga depictions of what may reasonably be thought of as “alternative” communities, however, also offer an intriguing possibility in terms of understanding how medieval writers, storytellers, and audiences responded to the concept of community through direct literary engagement. These sagas depict such highly stylised groups that are connected to, yet distinct from, normative relationships – such as the elite warrior group of the Jómsvíkingar, or the supernatural-yet-societal protagonists of *Bárðar saga* – suggesting a more sustained literary interest in the concept of community, which is understood in these texts by exploring its potential alternatives. This paper considers, particularly in relation to the critical debate over the fictionality of the sagas (see, for example: Meulengracht Sørensen 1993; Torfi Tulinius 2002; Vésteinn Ólason 2007), how medieval audiences may have responded to literary depictions of “alternative” communities, and how such responses would have informed their view of their own society.

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Loathly Ladies and Shape- shifting Women: Gender and the Supernatural in Medieval Icelandic and Middle English Literature

Jessica Yusek (University of Nottingham)

The supernatural creatures and folklore of both England and Iceland act as useful sites of analysis for questions of gender and subversion. These characters serve a dual purpose in creating representations of deviant women as a way to interpret transgressions, both real and fictional, as well as being characters who assert some degree of agency albeit in unique and marginal ways. The purpose of my paper, thus, is to compare and contrast case studies of women undergoing bodily changes from medieval Icelandic and Middle English literature in order to provide insight into cross-cultural European understandings of women and understandings of gender from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

Infernum Hyslandie – Gateway to Hell? Icelandic Volcanism in Medieval Texts, ca. 900- 1300

Jonas Zeit-Altpeter (Bonn)

Our modern image of Iceland is dominated by the country's various volcanic phenomena, and it has been claimed that volcanism has been "a strong force in shaping Icelandic society"¹ itself. This prompts the question of how volcanism was perceived during the Early and High Middle Ages, i.e. the time when Iceland was settled and Scandinavia became integrated into wider Europe both culturally and politically. However, volcanoes seem to be curiously absent from early Icelandic literature. The present paper will present two medieval theories of volcanism – one scientific, one theological – and trace their application to Iceland, focusing on texts such as the *Navigatio sancti Brendani*, *Historia Norwegiae*, *Gesta Danorum*, the Icelandic annals, and Alberic's of Trois-Fontaines *Chronicon*. An analysis of the description of Iceland in the Old Norwegian King's Mirror (*Konungs skuggsjá*), discussing and synthesizing both theories, has been chosen to conclude the discussion.

¹ Þórvaldur Þorðarson, „Perception of Volcanic Eruptions in Iceland, in: I. Peter Martini and Ward Chesworth (eds.), *Landscapes and Societies: Selected Cases*, Dordrecht 2010, 285-297, here quoting p. 285.

