

BERGEN SYMPOSIUM

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Abstracts

Textual Traditions and Textual Criticism

'Svá segir Starkaðr': Manipulating Memorialisation in *Gautreks saga*

Jonathan Hui

Using *Örvar-Odds saga* as a paradigm of verse usage, I will seek to examine the verses in 'Víkars þátrr', which can be found in the longer redaction of *Gautreks saga*. While *Örvar-Odds saga* uses different types of verse in their appropriate prose contexts, 'Víkars þátrr' interpolates verses, seemingly of various origins and sometimes of different style, into a prose account of the early career of Starkaðr, which peaks with his famous sacrifice of his lord Víkarr to Óðinn. There is one verse which follows the stylistic conventions of *Örvar-Oddr's* flyting, which, curiously, suggests that a flyting poem involving Starkaðr once existed. It also testifies to the usefulness of the flyting form as a vehicle for the preservation of heroic deeds, and the metatextual resonance of the flyting scene in *Örvar-Odds saga* has already been considered by Lars Lönnroth in this regard.

The use of verse in 'Víkars þátrr' changes significantly after Víkarr's death. This is my second major point. Characterisation replaces substantiation as the narrator's primary objective. Discussing Norna-Gests þátrr, Elizabeth Rowe discussed the ready manipulation of Starkaðr's character for moral reasons within the entertaining þátrr. Given that *Gautreks saga* is introduced as *eina kátliga frásögn* ('an amusing story'), it remains possible that the narrator is doing likewise in *Gautreks saga*. I will explore the possibilities that consequently arise concerning the interpretation of the saga.

The Literature of Learning

On Some Icelandic Miracles of St Cecilia

Maria Teresa Ramandi

The suggested paper will focus on the analysis of the account of the two Icelandic miracles of St Cecilia, appended to the text of *Cecilíu saga meyjar* in Stock. Perg. fol. 2. The latter, a legendary dating from the first half of the fifteenth century is the only manuscript preserving these miracles, even though *Cecilíu saga* is found in other two manuscripts as well (AM 235 fol and AM 429 12mo). While *Cecilíu saga* is a translation of the longer version of the Latin legend of St Cecilia (BHL 1495), this miracle account — quite genuine, despite the many supernatural elements involved in the narration — is an original Icelandic production, rather unique in itself, in fact it represents one of the few accounts describing miracles performed by foreign saints in medieval Iceland. The paper will also explore the relationships between the text of the miracle account and that of *Cecilíu saga* and the importance of the two of them in terms of establishing the cult of St Cecilia in Iceland, especially if one considers that the events recorded in the account seem to have happened before 1179, date of the official adoption her cult in Iceland.

Norwegian Law in the Middle Ages

Political Constructions in Prose and Verse Accounts of Magnús berfœttr

Caitlin Ellis

Although the reign of Magnús berfœttr (1093–1103) was short-lived, his activities and death in the Insular world had lasting consequences and captured the literary imagination of many authors. Several sources draw comparisons between Magnús and his grandson Haraldr harðráði. Rosemary Power has considered the various prose sources for Magnus—*Orkneyinga saga*, the synoptic history *Agrip af Nóregskonungasögum* and the *konungasögur Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*—but earned criticism from Judith Jesch for excluding skaldic verse from her considerations. In addition to considering the varying portrayals of Magnús and his expeditions across the range of available Norse sources, I will further examine whether different viewpoints and allegiances can be detected in the skaldic verse composed by skalds in the insular sphere compared to their Norwegian counterparts under royal employ. West Norse sources generally reflect the Norwegian perspective on the Norse diaspora in the British Isles and deliberately construct a socio-political geography beneficial to Norwegian claims in the area. In reality, however, the political relationships of the Norse-influenced or Norse-speaking hybrid communities in Scotland and Ireland were far more complex than this view of ‘natural’ Norwegian domination. In the case of Magnús, an added layer of partiality can be identified in that our Icelandic sources are more positive than our Norwegian ones: whereas the Icelanders depicted Magnús as a saga hero, according to Snorri the Norwegians deemed Magnús’s forays too expensive. It is also worth noting in this context that one of Magnús’ daughters married into the influential Oddaverja family of southern Iceland who may have commissioned *Orkneyinga saga*.

Transformations of the Heroic

The Other Hero: Gísli's Place among the (Monstrous) Outlaw Heroes of the

Íslendingasögur

Rebecca Merkelbach

Among the Sagas of Icelanders, the group of sagas about outlaw heroes is a particularly interesting one. Not only do these characters betray Icelanders' preoccupation with the social outsider, they also depict protagonists who often roam or even transgress boundaries into the realm of the monstrous. These characters – Grettir, Hörðr, the sworn brothers Þorgeirr and Þormóðr – kill, steal, associate with trolls and the undead; in short, they disrupt social stability. Gísli Súrsson, on the other hand, is a good craftsman, never steals from anyone, and does not portray the arrogance so typical of Grettir or Þorgeirr. How, then, does he fit into this group of ambiguously depicted, socially disruptive, potentially monstrous figures? This paper aims to answer this question. I will base this investigation on the longer version of *Gísla saga*, which is not only severely understudied but also provides us with a different, more nuanced reading of Gísli's character and his understanding of heroism, and of the importance of the family for Gísli's fate. These features render this version of the saga a particularly interesting text for the present investigation into Gísli's transgressing of boundaries and the resulting associations with the monstrous.

The End in the Beginning: Continuing without Closure in the Hildir Legend

Katherine Olley

The paper will consider the question ‘What happens next?’ in relation to the *Hjadriningavíg*, as depicted in medieval Scandinavian sources. In particular it will examine how the legend turns established methods of conflict resolution, that is exogamous marriage and settlement by combat, on their heads; confounding narrative expectations by demonstrating their capacity to beget further conflict where an audience would expect them to bring reconciliation.

The narratives' failure to resolve can be contrasted with excessive impetuses to begin the battle. Nearly every account offers a different motivation, from allegations of dishonour (Saxo), to witchcraft (*Ragnarsdrápa*), to the brutal murder of Högni's wife (*Sǫrla Dáttir*).

This production of additional motivation is symptomatic of social discomfort surrounding the underlying familial tension, arising when a woman's loyalties pass from paternal to marital kin. Attributing the impetus for battle to something else, even a magical sword (Snorri), conceals this antisocial tension, which discouraged the necessary assimilation of wives into their husband's kin and potentially allowed a fragile resolution to be reached.

In this way the end is written in the beginning, manufacturing a conclusion without the need for a realistic social resolution.

Making Space for Power in the Narrative of *Erbyggja saga*

Joanne Shortt Butler

I would like to present a paper based on the first case-study of my thesis, concerning character and structure in *Eyrbyggja saga*. This would involve briefly setting out the aims and objectives of my thesis and establishing my chosen terminology for the discussion of a certain subset of characters in the *Íslendingasögur*. The paper, like my thesis, will explore the relationship between saga structure and non-magical 'villains', especially those described as *ójafnaðarmenn*, who can be relied on to provide conflict in the narrative; in a sense to kickstart the narrative itself. The term 'villain' is used to denote a functional role played by these characters in the sagas, but a more specific, more useful terminology for describing this particular group of characters will be explored. Three characters will provide the focus of this paper: Þórólfr bægifótr, Víga-Styrr Þorgrímsson and Óspakr Kjallaksson. Their introduction and placement within the narrative of *Eyrbyggja saga* will be shown to have an important bearing on the famously episodic structure of this saga's narrative, providing necessary conflict at key moments in the career of Snorri goði Þorgrímsson.