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LASSE MÅRTENSSON OCH VETURLIÐI ÓSKARSSON

under medverkan av

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Innehåll

Sigurd Fries
Minnesord

LENNART ELMEVIK

Den 24 juni 2013 avled professor emer. Sigurd Fries, Umeå, 89 år gammal. Med honom har en framstående representant för svensk och nordisk språkforskning och en stor Islandsvän gått ur tiden.

Sigurd Fries var född i Stockholm 1924 som yngste sonen till botanisten Robert E. Fries, professor Bergianus vid Bergianska stiftelsen ett trettiotal år under förra hälften av 1900-talet. Sina akademiska studier bedrev han vid Uppsala universitet, med nordiska språk som huvudämne. Han blev fil. mag. 1948 — med utöver nordiska språk ämnena tyska språket, litteraturhistoria med poetik och fonetik — och fil. lic. i nordiska språk 1953. År 1957 disputerade han för filosofie doktorsgraden i ämnet på avhandlingen *Studier över nordiska trädnamn* och förordnades omedelbart till docent. Avhandlingen utkom som nummer 3 i den av Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien utgivna serien Studier till en svensk dialektgeografisk atlas. Det är ingen särskilt djärv gissning att avhandlingsämnet var inspirerat av faderns och den äldre brodern Magnus botaniska ämnesinriktning; Magnus Fries var professor i fanerogambotanik vid Naturhistoriska riksmuseet i Stockholm.

I nio år, 1957–68, verkade Sigurd Fries på docenttjänst och som tillförordnad professor vid Uppsala universitets institution för nordiska språk. I flera år var han också som timarvoderad medarbetare knuten till dåvarande Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala. En kort tid innehade han en tjänst som 1:e arkivarie vid detta arkiv, innan han 1969 blev den förste innehavaren av professuren i svenska språket, särskilt nusvenska, vid det unga universitetet i Umeå.

Bland Sigurd Fries uppdrag utanför universitetet kan nämnas ledamotskap i redaktionskommittén för nationalupplagan av August Strindbergs samlade verk och i Svenska botaniska föreningens arbetsgrupp för svenska växtnamn.

Akademiska studier i nordiska språk föder närmast oundvikligt ett särskilt intresse för Island, dess språk, kultur och samhällsliv. I Sigurd Fries fall förstärktes säkert detta intresse av att hans hustru Ingegerd hade varit bosatt på Island i ett tidigare äktenskap. Inom Isländska sällskapet i Uppsala gjorde Sigurd Fries betydelsefulla insatser. Han var ledamot av sällskapets styrelse i inte mindre än 47 år. Vid det möte den 26 april 1949 då sällskapet konstituerades valdes han, då som framgått ovan filosofie magister, till klubbmästare och vice sekreterare, poster som han besatte till 1959, då han utsågs till sällskapets sekreterare, tillika redaktör för årsboken Scripta Islandica. Dessa uppdrag lämnade han av naturliga skäl då han 1969 tillträdde professuren i Umeå. Bara några år senare, 1972, ställde han sig dock till förfogande för uppgiften att vara ordförande i sällskapets detta år bildade umensiska lokalavdelning.

Sigurd Fries valde alltså att i motsats till sin far och sin storebror inte ägna sig åt botanisk forskning. I en stor del av hans vetenskapliga produktion är ändå botaniken involverad. Ett första exempel härpå är alltså doktorsavhandlingen. Sigurd Fries är den förste som på grundval av ett stort material, som hänför sig till hela Norden, behandlat träd-benämningar. Tidsperspektivet är det vidast tänkbara: från den äldsta urnordiskan till våra dagar. Till grund för slutsatserna ligger i stor utsträckning dialektmaterial, men även ortnamnens vittnesbörd spelar en viktig roll.

I boken *Öländskt och uppsvenskt. En ord- och ortnamnshistorisk studie över uppsvenska drag på Öland och längs Götalands östkust* (1962) ger Sigurd Fries ett viktigt bidrag till kännedomen om språkliga spår som det gamla sveaväldets expansion söderut lämnat och till diskussionen om hur öländskan förhåller sig till vissa andra svenska dialekter.

Endast två år senare publicerade Sigurd Fries arbetet *Stätt och stätta i Norden. Ett verbalabstrakts betydelseutveckling och ett bidrag till studiet av hägnadsterminologien*. Skriften är ett värdefullt tillskott till nordisk ord och sak-forskning och ett betydelsegeografiskt bidrag av stort intresse. Även här kommer språkmaterial från hela Norden till användning. I undersökningen dras även in för resonemangen relevanta ortnamn.

Talrika är de skrifter om växtbenämningar utöver doktorsavhandlingen som Sigurd Fries författat. Ett tjugotal av dem, om tillsammans 220 sidor, finns samlade i den volym med titeln *Växtnamn då och nu* som han tillägnades på sin 70-årsdag 1994.

Stor uppmärksamhet har Sigurd Fries ägnat åt benämningar på växter i rikssspråket jämförda med dem i dialekterna. En rad uppsatser och en

bok från 1975, *Svenska växtnamn i rikspråk och dialekt*, har detta tema. Framför allt var han emellertid intresserad av Linnés olika skrifter, som han har studerat ur skilda aspekter. En av hans uppsatser (från 1971) har, för att ta ett exempel, titeln ”Linnés resedagböcker. Deras språk och stil i jämförelse med de tryckta reseskildringarna”. I särskilt hög grad lade han ned tid och möda på företaget att, med biträde av hustrun Ingegerd, ge ut *Iter Lapponicum* (1732) i tre volymer: dagboken, kommentardelen och faksimilutgåvan. För denna för Linnéforskningen viktiga insats tilldelades han år 2007 Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens jetong i guld. Tre år senare fick han för sin Linnéforskning emotta Uppsala universitets Linnémedalj i guld. Medaljen utdelas för i första hand ”utomordentligt framstående vetenskaplig gärning, särskilt inom de linneanska vetenskapsområdena eller Linnéminnet närliggande fält”.

Av områden inom vilka Sigurd Fries vetenskapliga produktion faller skall också särskilt nämnas ortnamnsforskning. Han har författat ett flertal väl underbyggda ortnamnsstudier, publicerade i bland annat Namn och bygd, en renommerad specialtidskrift för nordisk ortnamnsforskning. Att han hade ett brett vetenskapligt intresseområde visar också bidrag av hans hand som det som läromedel avsedda häftet *Lite om språksociologi* och uppsatser som ”Så jag målar … Rak ordföljd i stället för omvänd i svensk vers”, ”Informationsstruktur och syntax i Gustav I:s brev” och ”Lärdomsspråket under frihetstiden”, den sistnämnda med tydlig anknytning till Linné.

Sigurd Fries vetenskapliga författarskap är omfattande, mångsidigt och av hög kvalitet. Det rör både tal- och skriftspråk, både äldre och nutida svenska, vartill skall läggas att forskningsobjekten inte sällan krävt hänsynstagande till material också från andra delar av det nordiska språkområdet än den svenska. Arbetena faller inom flera av nordistikens centrala forskningsfält, främst ljud- och formlära, ordbildning, dialektgeografi, ord- och ortnamnsforskning. Sin mest grundläggande insats har han gjort genom sin forskning om växtbenämningar, varvid de som rör Linnés skrifter i språkligt och stilistiskt hänseende får anses vara de tyngst vägande.

Sigurd Fries verkliga eldprov blev att etablera den disciplin han företrädde vid ett universitet med bara några få år på nacken. Enligt samstämmiga vittnesbörd tog han uppgiften på stort allvar och lyckades också att föra den i hamn på ett imponerande sätt. Bland annat lyckades han bygga upp ett synnerligen välförsett institutionsbibliotek, viktigt för

en livaktig forskning. Han var omtyckt som lärare och forskarhandledare, och många doktorander disputerade under hans ledning. Till sin natur var han vänlig, omtänksam, generös och blygsam — en av hans elever, professorn i nordiska språk vid Umeå universitet Lars-Erik Edlund, har i minnesord över honom i några dagstidningar träffande uttalat att han inte var de stora ordens man, att han ofta t.o.m. tonade ned betydelsen av de forskningsresultat han uppnått.

Rune Palm
Minnesord

Daniel Sävborg

Professor Rune Palm avled den 12 oktober 2013, bara drygt en månad efter sin 65-årsdag. Som forskare och lärare på Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Stockholms universitet betydde han mycket för att den den historiskt inriktade filologin överlevde och utvecklades. Scripta Islandica har särskilda skäl att minnas honom. Under sin tid som medlem i tidskriftens redaktionsråd kom han med idéer och kommentarer som ofta markant förbättrade både den enskilda artiklarna och tidskriften som helhet.

Som forskare gjorde Rune sin mest kända insats inom runologin. Han disputerade 1992 på avhandlingen *Runor och regionalitet: Studier av variation i de nordiska minnesskrifterna*. Huvudsyftet var att komplettera det vanliga kronologiska perspektivet inom runologin med ett regionalt. Han visade att mycket av den variation som finns inom runmaterialet ofta i första hand återspeglar regionala kulturskillnader i vikingatidens Norden. 1996 följde ännu en runologiskt inriktad monografi, *Sandstone Runestones: The use of sandstone for erected runestones*, skriven i samarbete med Stefan E. Hagenfeldt. Där diskuterar han användandet av sandsten för runmonumenten, något som i Uppland ökar plötsligt vid mitten av 1000-talet och som krävt långa transporter av stenarna. Han visar hur runstenarna av sandsten har en stark koppling till kyrkor och sannolikt var avsedda som kyrkogårdsmonument, till skillnad från vanliga runstenar.

Vid sidan av runologin var det den norröna litteraturen som låg forskaren Rune varmast om hjärtat. Många av Isländska sällskapets medlemmar minns säkert hans föredrag vid höstmötet 2004 om den isländska skaldediktningen. Han utgick från Paul Diedrichsens grammatiska teori och lanserade en ny tanke om hur en så komplex form av poesi kunde ha förståtts av samtidens åhörare. I flera artiklar förenade han sina kunskaper i runologi och norrön litteratur och lät de två områdena belysa varandra, t.ex. i ”Muntlighet i runinskrifter” från 2006 (i *Grenzgänger: Festschrift*

zum 65. Geburtstag von Jurij Kusmenko). Dessutom behärskade han den fornsvenska filologin. Med sin grundlighet och sin metodiska medvetenhet gjorde han viktiga bidrag också inom detta område. Ett exempel är hans diskussion kring attributionen av ett utpekat Birgittabrev (”Ett svenskt Birgittabrev”, i *Ny väg till medeltidsbreven*, 2002), ett annat är hans omfattande bidrag till samlingsvolymen *Den medeltida skriftkulturen i Sverige: Genrer och texter* från 2010, där han förutom att vara en av redaktörerna också deltog med inte mindre än fyra artiklar. Hans lärdom kom 2004 allmänheten till del när han gav ut den populärvetenskapliga *Vikingarnas språk*. Mottagandet av boken gjorde klart att det finns ett brett intresse hos allmänheten för kunskap om så exklusiva ting som språkhistoria och isländsk skaldediktning — åtminstone om framställningen är välskriven och författaren uppenbart behärskar sitt ämne. Boken blev en välförtjänt försäljningsframgång.

Rune var en av de människor inom universitetsvärlden som tog sin uppgift som lärare och handledare på genuint allvar. Han satte studenterna i centrum, trots att det kunde gå ut över hans egen forskarkarriär. Han insåg att det tar tid och energi om man skall kunna förebereda och genomföra högklassiga lektioner och om man skall kunna ge sina studenter den hjälp de behöver för att utvecklas i sitt eget skrivande.

Han lade ner omfattande tid på handledning, både när det gällde doktorsavhandlingar och uppsatser. Men han tog sig inte bara tid att läsa och kommentera sina egna studenters texter. Många är de forskare som vittnar om hur han åtagit sig att läsa igenom deras manus och fått tillbaka dem med varenda sida översållad av värdefulla kommentarer. En snabb genomläsning för formens skull var honom främmande; allt läste han noga och övervägde. Det spelade ingen roll om det var kolleger bland de seniora forskarna eller unga studenter. För alla hade han tid. Rune blev med tiden en stor auktoritet på sitt område, djupt respekterad och säkert beundrad av många för sina kunskaper och sin skärpa. Men han tillhörde inte de forskare som håller sig med ett hov av beundrare som förväntas återgälda vägledarens engagemang i form av dyrkan och obrottslig lojalitet. De studenter och doktorander han handlett eller stött såg han efter deras examina som kolleger att diskutera med på jämställd fot.

De utfärder han anordnade årligen med sina studenter till runstenarna i Vallentuna-Täby blev legendariska. Även om regnet öste ner genomfördes de med sådan entusiasm att ingen önskade färden ogjord. Inför sagakonferensen i Uppsala 2009 planerades ett antal heldagsexkursioner, däribland en till just runstensområdena i Vallentuna-Täby. Det var själv-

klart för oss i organisationskommittén att be Rune leda denna; han var den ojämförlige experten. En tid före konferensen kom rapporter om att Runes hälsa vacklade, och idén väcktes att ersätta honom med någon annan. Men alla i kommittén som kände Rune visste att vi kunde lita på honom om han själv kände att han orkade, och det blev han som ledde rundturen bland stenarna kring Vallentunasjön precis som det var tänkt. Det blev för de flesta en upplevelse långt utöver det vanliga. Fortfarande får jag mejl från kolleger runt i världen som minns hur Rune nonchalant fimpade sin cigarett mot Jarlabankestenen vid Vallentuna kyrka och därefter höll en lärd och pedagogiskt lysande överblick över stenen, området och forskningsläget.

Som forskare var Rune kompromisslös på ett sätt som kunde skrämma upp dem som enbart fick höra talas om honom. Han var inte sällan hård i sitt omdöme om forskning som han uppfattade som modeinriktad men substanslös. När han satt i betygsnämnden för en doktorsavhandling som han inte ansåg hålla måttet yrkade han på underkännande, trots det exceptionella i ett sådant handlande. Hans attityd var så långt från inställsamhet man kan komma. Men som person var han allt annat än skrämmande. Han var en genuint varm människa som alltid hade tid att samtala, oavsett om det gällde ordföljden i skaldestrofer av Kormákr eller tankar om kärleken och livet. Vi är många som saknar Rune men som med glädje minns honom som vän och forskare.

Gun Widmark
Minnesord

Ulla Börestam

Professor Gun Widmark avled den 26 oktober 2013 efter ett långt och synnerligen verksamt liv. Så sent som i september deltog hon vid en sammankomst med Isländska sällskapet, en förening hon tillhörde från dess första början (1949), och som hon gjorde många värdefulla insatser för. Island och det isländska språket hade en särskild plats i hennes hjärta liksom det nordiska perspektivet som sådant.

Gun Widmark föddes 1920 i Stenkvista, Södermanland. Efter studentexamen 1939 i Eskilstuna blev hon Uppsalastudent. Under krigsåren på 40-talet tog hon först en kandidatexamen (1942), sedan en magisterexamen (1944). Några år senare (1951) blev hon filosofie licentiat. Därefter tog karriären fart och 1959 disputerade hon på en avhandling om det nordiska *u*-omljudet, nota bene del I (se nedan). Samma år blev hon docent vid Uppsala universitet. Efter en tid som lärare utanför akademin anställdes hon i mitten av 1960-talet vid Institutionen för nordiska språk. Därifrån kallades hon till Göteborg som professor i nordiska språk, den första kvinnan att inneha en professur i detta ämne. 1973 återvände hon till Uppsala där hon fram till sin pensionering (1986) var professor i svenska språket, särskilt nusvenska. Som forskare kom hon på många sätt under en brytningstid att själv personifiera sitt ämne. Samtidigt som hon var nordist i traditionell bemärkelse var hon med om att sprida språksociologin i Sverige, och förenade dessutom på ett fruktbart sätt det gamla med det nya. Inte sällan vände hon tillbaka till ett äldre material med nya metoder och andra perspektiv, till exempel i sina studier av Carl Gyllenborgs komedi *Swenska Sprätthöken* från 1737. Hennes vetenskapliga produktion var stor och bred. Inte minst under tiden som pensionär kom hon att lämna många värdefulla bidrag till nordistiken. Imponerande nog rörde det sig ofta om monografier. Med starkt intresse följde hon utvecklingen inom sitt ämne, vilket inte minst framgick av hennes engagerade inlägg vid

institutionens seminarier. Hennes betydelse för yngre utövare av ämnet kan inte nog framhållas.

I början av 1950-talet vistades Gun under tre år på Island som svensk lektor, och de åren blev mycket viktiga för henne. Sina första tryckta alster utgav hon i isländska tidskrifter och där presenterades svensk litteratur för en isländsk publik. Strax efter hemkomsten till Sverige var det en svensk församling som fick ta del av hennes rika kunskaper om den äldre isländska litteraturen. Det skedde vid ett föredrag för Isländska sällskapet 1954 och i en därpå följande artikel i *Scripta Islandica* under rubriken ”Den isländska litteraturen i stormaktstidens Sverige”.

Därefter skulle det dröja drygt ett decennium (1967) innan hon, också i *Scripta Islandica*, tog upp ett explicit isländskt tema. Artikeln behandlade ”Nordisk replikkonst i och utanför den isländska sagan” och frågan om sagornas muntliga och/eller skriftliga karaktär. Hon menar att vi utanför den isländska sagan ska tänka oss en berättartradition som inte bara var isländsk utan lika mycket nordisk och att det här fanns ett rikt stoff att ösa ur. De kärva replikerna kan vara ”skott på en gammal nordisk replik-tradition, om vilken vi vet så litet, därför att den endast på Island har blivit litterär” (s. 15). Samma tema återvände hon till drygt 30 år senare, även då i *Scripta Islandica* (2001) men i utökad form och med frågeställningen uppdaterad i anslutning till Walter Ongs forskning om muntlig och skriftlig kultur. Artikeln har fått rubriken ”Om muntlighet och skriftlighet i den isländska sagan”. En av de frågor hon ställer är varför just Island skulle komma att husera en så rik litterär tradition. Kanske sammanhänger det med de närmare omständigheterna kring mötet mellan muntlighet och skriftlighet just där — och då. Hon skriver (s. 62) att ”Skriftligheten slog där [på Island] rot vid en tidpunkt då det muntligt bevarade stoffet fortfarande var överväldigande.”

Vid Isländska sällskapets 50-årsjubileum 1999 var Gun Widmark en självskriven talare. Ämnet hon valde var ”Isländsk-svenska kontakter i äldre tid”, ett föredrag som senare kunde läsas i *Scripta Islandica*. Inledningsvis tar hon upp hur det var att sjövägen anlända till Island, något som tidigare givetvis var det normala. Endast då, efter strapatser följda av en bedövande skönhetsupplevelse, har man enligt Widmark ”sett Island på riktigt allvar” (s. 72), något som hon alltså gjorde.

Lagom till 90-årsdagen lade Gun Widmark fram den andra delen av sin doktorsavhandling, bara det en unik prestation. När hon i förordet uttrycker sin lättnad över att äntligen ha blivit färdig var det på isländska som orden föll och hon citerade Jón Helgason: ”Nú er flækjan greidd

sem ég gat það best, [...]” Med dessa modesta ord får nu även vi uttrycka vår tacksamhet för en imponerande gärning, här belyst genom några få nedslag från *Scripta Islandica*.

Bland ormar och drakar
En jämförande studie av Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen

Agneta Ney

På runristningarna vid Ramsund (Sö 101, fig. 1) och Näsbyholm (Sö 327; Gökstenen, fig. 2) finns en bildtradition som visar hur Sigurðr med sitt svärd dödar draken Fáfnir. I en nordisk litterär och ikonografisk tradition utgör detta det mest spridda Sigurdsmotivet. Förutom själva drakdödandet är andra välkända motiv också inristade, som Grani med guldskatten och Reginns död, men uttrycket och stilen skiljer sig åt mellan ristningarna. Ramsundsristningen utgör oftast en referens för identifieringen av Sigurdsmotiv på andra bildkällor, medan Gökstenen har ansetts som en sämre kopia av den förstnämnda. Det är dessa båda ristningars förhållande till varandra som den här artikeln avser att belysa.

Inledning

Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen hör periodmässigt till sen vikingatid. Vid den tiden hade kristendomen helt nyligen vunnit insteg på svenskt område, det vill säga det område som från tidigast 1200-talet kom att beteckna Sverige. Perioden kan därför karaktäriseras som en brytningstid, och man kan vänta sig att finna förkristet och kristet sida vid sida. I ett från- och tillperspektiv förändrades sättet att tänka kring bland annat begravningsskick, släkt och egendom, något som kom att påverka bruket att resa runstenar eller använda berghällar som minnesdokument. När önskemål om att resa stenar till minne av döda släktingar och fränder ökade, förde detta även med sig ett behov av ett ökat antal runristare, som arbetade antingen med text eller dekor eller bådadera. Detta medförde i

Ney, Agneta. 2013. Bland ormar och drakar: En jämförande studie av Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen. *Scripta Islandica* 64: 17–37.

sin tur att ett skrå av runristare bildades, något som främjade inspiration och ökade variationen i uttrycken (Brate & Wessén 1924–1936, s. 308 f., Källström 2007, s. 184, Lindkvist 1997, s.143, Palm 2004, s. 106 ff., Sawyer 2000, s. 17 ff.), en variation som bland annat Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen ger uttryck åt. Den här variationen har bland andra Lena Liepe diskuterat i syfte att främst analysera Gökstenens bildmotiv. Hon vill frångå den gängse uppfattningen om att Gökstenen är en dålig kopia av Ramsundsristningen (1989, s. 1–11, jfr Källström 2007, s. 82, not 58). Hennes analys omfattar emellertid inte runtexterna. Det är sannolikt att en analys av bildmotiven i relation till runtexterna kan bidra till tolkningen av monumenten som helhet och deras relation till varandra.

Sigurdsmotivens konstituerande drag

När det gäller identifieringen av motiv som kan knytas till en Sigurdstradition bör enligt Sue Margeson (1980) följande drag finnas för att fastställa dem som säkra motiv: Sigurðr dödar Fáfnir och det ska ske underifrån samt helst visa hur Sigurðr knäar för att göra detta (1), Sigurðr steker Fáfnirs hjärta över en öppen eld (2), Sigurðr bränner tummen och stoppar den i munnen för att lindra svedan (3), fåglar (i ett träd) som varnar Sigurðr för fosterfaderns Reginns svek (4), hästen Grani med Fáfnirs skatt som Sigurðr har lastat på hans rygg (5) samt en anknytning till Reginn: föremål som tillhör hans smedja och/eller Reginns död (6).[1] De här sex dragen bygger på litterära framställningar främst från *Völsunga saga* och Eddans hjältediktning, och det råder inte någon tvekan om att samtliga dessa motiv finns på Ramsundsristningen, men huruvida samtliga också finns på Gökstenen behöver klargöras (jfr Liepe 1989, s. 1).

I sammanhanget är det av vikt att ta hänsyn till kompositionen av de olika bildmotiven, eftersom den kan ange vilken status ett motiv har i förhållande till de omliggande. Lise Gjedssø Bertelsen framhåller att

[1] För en samlad berättelse om Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, se främst *Völsunga saga*, men även hjältediktningen i *Eddukvæði*. Sue Margeson betonar att det emellertid inte är nödvändigt att alla element finns med samtidigt. Hon framhåller dessutom att en ”Gunnarr-i-ormgropenscen” kan ingå inom ramen för säkra Sigurdsmotiv. Definitioner av Sigurdsmotiv *har* även diskuterats av Klaus Düwel (1986). Düwels och Margesons anförda drag skiljer sig i princip endast åt när det gäller scenen med Gunnarr i ormgropen, det vill säga detta motiv saknas hos Düwel som ett kriterium för Sigurdsmotiv.

Fig. 1. Ramsundsristningen (Sö 327), Jäder sn, Södermanland. Foto: R. Söderbaum, 1897. Riksantikvarieämbetet.

motiv som placerades centralt, längst upp eller i mittlinjen var det mest betydelsefulla i kontexten, och det som placerades längst ner eller åt sidorna var mindre viktigt (2002, s. 17).

Här följer en analys av först Ramsundsristningens bildmotiv, därefter av Gökstenens. Som Lena Liepe framhåller är detta oftast den metod som har använts, det vill säga att Gökstenen tolkas med hjälp av Ramsundsristningen. Hon anser i likhet med tidigare forskning att ”[...] det knappast går att ge en slutgiltigt säker tolkning av ristningen. Förhoppningsvis kan dock en analys med andra utgångspunkter än de gängse vara ett fruktbart bidrag till diskussionen” (1989, s. 1, för citatet, s. 2).

Ramsundsristningens berättelse om Sigurðr som drakdödare inramas av en övre och en nedre runslinga (egentligen endast *en* runslinga, eftersom den övre slingan saknar runor, men har dekorativa inslag). Den övre slingan består enligt Hans Christiansson av två rundjur vars stjärtar är sammanbundna i mitten. Deras huvuden syns i profil, ett till höger och ett till vänster (1959, s. 138). Det är dock en viss skillnad i deras utseende. Huvudet till vänster har huggtänder och öron, och det till höger har hugg-

tänder men saknar markerade öron. Det skulle därför kunna vara ett drakhuvud till vänster och ett ormhuvud till höger. Den nedre slingan utgör en drakes kropp, men frågan är vilket som är dess huvud. Enligt Carl Säve verkar huvudet till vänster vara gemensamt för det nedre rundjuret och det övre djuret till vänster. Hans Christianssom framhåller att det är osäkert till vilken slinga det vänstra huvudet hör. Om det hör till den nedre slingan ”[...] blir den motsatta ändens rika uppflikning till ’bakben’ och en tretungad stjärt” (Christiansson 1959, s. 138, Säve 1869, s. 330). Det är troligt att den motsatta änden är en treeggad drakstjärt. Eftersom Sigurðr genomborrar rundjuret med sitt svärd, bör det här drakliknande djuret avse Fáfnir.

I Ramsundsristningens centrum finns ett träd. En av trädets grenar är enligt Christiansson utformad som ett drakhuvud med huggtänder (1959, s. 138). Det kan snarare vara så att en drake slingrar sig i trädet eller möjligen är upphängd i det. Ett djurhuvud med huggtänder och öron är synligt, men troligen även en del av kroppen. Det förefaller således som det på Ramsundsristningen förekommer tre drakar (men endast två drakhuvuden synliga) och en orm. Detta har diskuterats tidigare, bland annat av Carl Säve som kommer fram till att det rör sig om tre ormar (1869, s. 10). Skulle det vara en orm i trädet skulle dess placering vara intressant. I trädet sitter två fåglar, varav den vänstra ser ut att vara placerad på den avslutande delen av ormen/draken och den högra är placerad på en gren ovanför Sigurðr. Den vänstra fågeln som sägs ge kunskap till Sigurðr ser i så fall ut att vara placerad på en av vishetens symboler.[2]

Centralt placerad förutom trädet är också Grani som står bunden med guldskatten på ryggen. Trädet, fåglarna och hästen är en tredelad komposition som bildar en enhet, men trots allt är det Grani med guldet som har ristats i den exakta mittpunkten, inte trädet. Sett ur en vertikal axel finns hästen omedelbart under den upp- och nervända mask som håller samman den övre slingan, något som också förstärker ett slags mittkomposition (jfr Gjedssø Bertelsen 2002, s. 17, jfr Düwel 1986, s. 230 f.). Beträffande maskmotivet har detta tidigare tolkats som ett förkristet motiv, men med hänsyn till mittkompositionen och placeringen i relation till korset och maskens icke-aggressiva uttryck kan den anses som en kristen symbol (Gjedssø Bertelsen 2006, s. 35, Hultgård 1992, s. 84 f.). Om en tänkbar

[2] Jfr fisl. *igða*, f., pl. *igður*, som i Collinders svenska översättning av eddadiktningen kallas för entitor. På Ramsundsristningen har fåglarna snarare drag av rovfåglar, jfr Säve som anser att det rör sig om två falkar eller hökar (1869, s. 11). Orm i träd-motiv har kommenterats bland annat av Gjedssø Bertelsen 2006, s. 35–40.

Fig. 2. Gökstenen (Sö 327), Näsbyholm, Härads sn, Södermanland. Foto: Anne-Sofie Gräslund.

orsak till varför Grani med guldet utgör Ramsundsristningens centrum återkommer jag till längre fram.

Längst upp till vänster i ristningens periferi, men innanför drakslingan, tar berättelsen sin början. Utöver myten om drakdödandet i sig kan det nämligen ha funnits något annat motiv eller tema som har fört traditionen vidare i tid och rum. Därför kan det vara fruktbart att tänka sig att själva upphovet/orsaken till dådet kan ha varit ett minnesvärt motiv. Den hundliknande gestalten kan av den anledningen vara en av tre avbildade bröder: Otr (Utter). Visserligen liknar denne mer en hund än en utter, men i sammanhanget och tillsammans med de båda andra bröderna Fáfnir och Reginn, är det givet att djuret bör vara Otr. Hans närvaro på stenen har kommenterats av bland andra Lena Liepe, som anser att han är på ”fel plats” i den för övrigt välbalanserade kompositionen (1989, s. 6). Kronologiskt sett från höger till vänster (om det är på det sättet som bildmotiven kan kodas) skulle Otr ha placerats inom ramen för runslingan ovanför och till höger om Sigurðr med svärdet. Möjligen skall läsningen av bilderna inte alls ske på det sättet. Det är därför viktigt att fråga sig varför Otr finns med. Hans perifera placering anger enligt min mening att hans närvaro

periodmässigt ligger utanför den drakdödarscen som ristningen berättar om, men som utgör en påminnelse om hur berättelsen om drakdödandet hade sin upprinnelse.

Otr blir enligt den litterära traditionen ihjälslagen av Loki. Boten som avkrävs för detta dråp var ansenlig – utterskinnet skulle täckas med guld. Otrs far Hreiðmarr ville ha guldet för sig själv, men Otrs bröder ville också ha del av det. När Hreiðmarr nekade, slog enligt *Völsunga saga* Fáfnir ihjäl sin far. Fáfnir tänkte i sin tur lägga beslag på guldboten, något som ledde till osämja mellan honom och Reginn. Fáfnir antog en drakes skepnad och lade sig att vakta över guldet på Gnitaheið, en mytologisk plats utan anknytning till verklig topografi. Reginn fann sig inte i att bli snuvad på sin broders bot, och för att med list komma åt denna, omtalade han allt för sin fosterson Sigurðr på ett uppfordrande sätt. Denne eggades av berättelsen och lät sig övertalas att dräpa Fáfnir och hämta guldet.

Längst ut till vänster syns Reginn ligga halshuggen. Hans händer är markerat stora, och i proportion till dessa är hans kropp betydligt mindre. Detta kanske beror på ett för litet utrymme innanför runslingan, men även Sigurðr framställs med obetydlig underkropp, där det har funnits utrymme för mera, något som för övrigt kan anknytas till medeltida bildframställning och monumental skulptur, i vilken händer med dess gestik generellt sett markeras med större proportioner i förhållande till kroppen. Att gestalten är Reginn tydliggörs genom smidesverktygen som ligger bredvid honom: hammare, bälg, städ och tång. Intressant i sig är huruvida dessa attribut var nödvändiga för att betraktaren skulle förstå att det är Reginn som ligger halshuggen, eller om verktygens funktion är en påminnelse om att berättelsen har en förhistoria, inom vilken Reginn smider Sigurðrs svärd (*Reginsmál*, i *Eddukvæði*, s. 226, *Reginsmål*, i *Den poetiska Eddan*, s. 207).

Sigurðr förekommer två gånger på Ramsundsstenen dels som drakdödare med svärdshugget, dels när han steker Fáfnirs hjärta över elden. Som drakdödare förefaller han att ha en hjälm, i varje fall finns en antydan till en sådan. Svärdet är ristat med fäste, hjalt och klinga synliga. Hans klädsel är koltliknande. Ögonen är runda och formade på samma sätt som ögonen på fåglarna samt på Grani, Reginn och Fáfnir. Sigurðr har här kraftiga armar och oproportionerligt korta ben och underkropp i förhållande till överkroppen. Kroppsstyrkan visas genom bål, armar och händer som också är stora. Till jämförelse påpekas i *Völsunga saga* att Sigurðr var så axelbred att man trodde att det var två män som man mötte (s. 164).

Även i ”grillscenen” är Sigurðrs händer markerade, någon klädsel är inte accentuerad, hjälmen är borta och hans hår syns halvlångt och vågigt. Samtidigt som Sigurðr stoppar sin brända tumme i munnen syns han vrida på huvudet bakåt som för att bättre lyssna till fåglarnas varningssång, för när han får drakblod på tungan börjar han i samma stund att förstå fåglarnas kvitter. Dessa avslöjar Reginns planer på att döda Sigurðr, men denne hinner därför förekomma honom.

Gökstenens bildprogram

Mellan Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen är det geografiska avståndet fågelvägen cirka fjorton kilometer. Gökstenens ristning finns på ett stenblock och gjordes sannolikt så att den skulle synas från Eldsundet i Mälaren, väster om Strängnäs. Gökstenen liknar som sagt på många sätt Ramsundsristningen när det gäller val av motiv och dess placering, men det finns även tydliga skillnader, inte minst i stil och utförande. Enligt Lena Liepe ger Gökstenen ett rörigt och dramatiskt intryck och det är svårt att tolka motiven (1989, s. 2, 6).

Att motiven i stort sett är samma på Gökstenen som på Ramsundsristningen kan bero på att den är en kopia av den sistnämnda, men sämre utförd (se bl.a. Blindheim (1972–1973, s. 16 f., 1973, s. 9, Düwel 1986, s. 229 f., Margeson1980, s. 193 f.). I äldre forskning framhålls dock motsatsen, det vill säga att Gökstenen kan vara äldre än Ramsundsristningen (se bl.a. Säve 1869). Vidare anser Hans Christiansson att Gök skulle kunna vara självständig i förhållande till Ramsundsristningen (1959, s. 103, 142).[3]

I likhet med Ramsundsristningen är alla motiv utom drakdödarmotivet placerade innanför en övre och en nedre runslinga, men med runor i båda. Stenen är skadad till vänster och det är därför svårt att med säkerhet säga

[3] Christiansson anser att den dualism som förekommer på Gök är ett sydskandinaviskt drag som kan tyda på en självständighet i förhållande till Ramsund. Det är de zoomorfa motivens särdrag som åsyftas, i synnerhet förekomsten av ett stympat djur: ”Motsättningen mellan elegant utförd ristning och dåligt tecknat eller ’fel’ anknutet djurhuvud torde möjligen böra ses som ett utslag av samma mentalitet, som bygger upp symmetriska mönster, men upphäver balansen mellan oregelmässiga förskjutningar och som förändrar ett motivs objektvärde eller som avbryter en yta i ristningskanten för att sedan åter ’taga in’ den i ristningen.” Se Christiansson 1959, s. 104.

hur rundjuret på den sidan hänger samman med runslingan. Men större delen av huvudet sticker fram, sett i fågelperspektiv. Det är avsmalnande och har streck framtill som kan avse en tveeggad tunga (jfr Liepe 1989, s. 5). Även på Gökstenen ska bildmotiven huvudsakligen läsas från höger till vänster, med början vid drakdödandet, men i likhet med Ramsundsristningen finns en förhistoria längst upp till vänster, som till och med kan vara utökad (se nedan).

Som drakdödare är Sigurðr placerad in mot mitten av Gökstenen, något som enligt Lena Liepe ger ett mer livaktigt intryck än på Ramsundsristningen. Kroppen är tämligen proportionerlig med långa, kraftiga ben som har den för drakdödarmotivet typiska knäande ställningen, ryggen är böjd. Den spetsformade huvuddelen kan vara en reminiscens av Ramsundsristningens hjälm (Liepe 1988, s. 2 ff.). *Svärdet* är dock mindre detaljerat än på Ramsundsstenen. I *Fáfnismál* uppges att Sigurðr gräver en grop och stiger ned i den för att döda Fáfnir, i *Völsunga saga* sägs han gräva flera gropar. Till skillnad från Ramsundsristningens drakdödarmotiv är ett slags halvcirkel ristad runt omkring Sigurðr som drakdödare på Gökstenen. Detta kan bland annat jämföras med en kyrkportal från Lunde kyrka i Norge som visar tre gropar. (*Fáfnismál*, s. 231, *Fafnesmål*, s. 209, *Völsunga saga*, s. 151, *Völsungasagan*, s. 80 f., Blindheim 1973, s. 8 f.)

Den synliga armringen på Sigurðr i drakdödarpositionen är en skillnad mellan Gökstenen och Ramsundsristningen som framhålls av Lena Liepe. Ringen skulle kunna vara Andvaranautr. Ramsundsristningens Sigurðr vid elden tolkas av Liepe som Reginn på Gökstenen. Han har en hammare i höger hand och Fáfnirs hjärta på ett spett i vänster hand. En annan ändring kan vara att den halshuggne Reginn på Ramsundsristningen av Gökstenens ristare har gestaltats som Hreiðmarr. Han har i likhet med Gökstenens Sigurðr en ring om vänster arm: ”Ringarna är alldeles för tydligt markerade för att det ska röra sig om slumpmässig utsmyckning, armringarna måste ha en betydelsebärande funktion.” (Liepe 1989, s. 9).[4] Enligt min mening ser ”hjärtat” snarare ut att vara ett ämnesjärn och hör därför till attributen till Reginns smedja – förhistorien till drakdödandet betonas således ännu tydligare på Gökstenen, där inte enbart föremål från smedjan har tagits med, utan även Reginn i färd med att smida. Det skulle förvisso kunna vara Hreiðmarr med en armring, något som

[4] Carl Säve (1869) har tolkat figuren som Reginn med ett ämnesjärn, medan Erik Brate och Elias Wessén håller för troligt att det är Sigurðr, 1924–1936, s. 307.

skulle framhålla förhistorien mera än på Ramsundsristningen, och det är troligast att det är Reginn som ligger halshuggen även på Gökstenen. Om denne kan anses ha en armring förefaller osäkert.

Vid en första anblick saknas alltså ”grillscenen” med fingerprovet på Gökstenen, något som vore märkligt. Denna ingår i den mest berömda episoden i Sigurdstraditionen och är utbredd i bildframställningar (Blindheim 1972–1973, 1973). Hör detta kanske till en yngre tradition? Knappast inom ikonografin, eftersom exempelvis alla Sigurdsmotiv från Isle of Man daterade till 900–1000-talet visar fingerprovet. På det huvud som sticker fram bakom Granis bakdel finns förvisso en antydan till fingerprov, men den ”grillscenen” är i så fall onekligen komprimerad. Detta huvud är för övrigt svårtolkat. Det definieras av Lena Liepe som ett ”föremål”, men av tidigare forskning som ett huvud och en hand (1989, s. 9, Brate & Wessén 1924–1936, s. 308).[5]

Gökstenens ristare har till skillnad från Ramsundsristningen ett inkonsekvent sätt att avbilda ögon. Sigurðr som drakdödare har ett öga som ser ut som ett litet streck (som om han blundar). I smedjan är Regins öga en rund ring, så även på fågeln, Grani och Otr, medan manshuvudet som syns bakom Granis bakdel har ett öga i form av ett kryss. Drakhuvudet och ormhuvudena har runda glosögon, men det är på Gökstenens vänstra orm och på ormen i trädet som dessa syns avbildade ovanifrån, något som kan ange stenens tillhörighet till en äldre period (Gräslund 1991, s. 45).

Orm eller drake?

Huruvida det är drakar eller ormar på Gökstenen har diskuterats. Enligt Lena Liepe består Gökstenens runslinga av två drakar eller ormar (1989, s. 5). Det förefaller trots allt som om den stenen avbildar tre ormar dels i form av två rundjur, dels av en orm i trädet. Gökstenens ormhuvud till höger ger ett livligare intryck än Ramsundsristningens drak- och ormhuvuden, som visserligen visar gap med huggtänder, men är mer stiliserade. Gökstenens högra orm har ett vidöppet gap utan synliga huggtänder, möjligen med en utsträckt tveeggad tunga som två streck, men det ser ut som att den

[5] Det finns till jämförelse en äldre irisk heroisk episk tradition, i vilken en man vid namn Finn macCumaill ska hålla ”vishetens lax” varm över elden. Han bränner sig och när han stoppar fingret i munnen för att få svalka vid tillagning får han kunskaper. (The Fenian Cycle, s. 60.)

även har något som sticker ut i gapet. Ormen indikerar mer rörelse än motsvarande rundjur på Ramsundsristningen. Ormen till vänster har, när det gäller det framtittande huvudet likheter med ormen på den gotländska bildstenen Hangvar Austers I (Ney 2006, s. 63–67.)

Att *ormr*, m., var det fornisländska ordet för både orm och drake kan ha spelat roll för föreställningen om utseendet på det djur som skulle avbildas, att jämföras med eddadiktningens ord för Fáfnir som är *ormr*: ”[…] Fáfnir lá á Gnitaheiði og var í ormslíki”. (Fafne låg på Gnitahed i en orms skepnad. *Reginsmál*, s. 226, *Reginsmål*, s. 207.) I Codex Regius av Snorres Edda används även *ormr* som beteckning för Fáfnirs omvandling från människa till djur: ”[…] en Fáfnir fór upp á Gnitaheiði ok gerði sér þar ból ok brásk í ormslíki […]”. ([…] Fafner drog upp på Gnitahed och gjorde sig ett näste där, tog skepnad av en orm. Codex Regius, s. 177, Codex Regius, övers. Johansson & Malm, s. 146). I *Völsunga saga* används *ormr* för att beskriva Fáfnir, utom i ett fall. Den svenska översättningen har benämningen orm, förutom i två fall, där ordet drake används (*Völsunga saga*, s. 150 f., *Völsungasagan*, s. 80 f.):

> Ok þá er ormrinn skríðir til vatns […]
> ([…] när ormen kryper till sjön […])
>
> Ok er ormrinn skreið til vatns, varð mikill landskjálfti, svá at öll jörð skalf í nánd.
> (Och när ormen kom krälande ner till sjön uppstod det en så kraftig jordbävning att hela marken i närheten skalv.)
>
> Ok er ormrinn skreið yfir gröfina, þá leggr Sigurðr sverðinu undir bægslit vinstra, […].
> (Och när draken kröp fram över gropen, stack Sigurd in svärdet under vänster vinge […].)
>
> Ok er inn mikli ormr kenndi síns banasárs, þá laust hann höfðinu ok sporðinum, svá at allt brast í sundr, er fyrir varð.
> (Och när den väldiga draken kände sitt banesår slog han med huvudet och stjärten så att allting som kom i vägen krossades.)

Fáfnir är i (a–d) i den isländska texten beskriven som ett krälande djur med stjärt (*sporðr* m.), och det anges att han också har vingar (svärdshugget tar under vänster vinge; *undir bægslit vinstra*). Óðinn gav Sigurðr emellertid rådet att sticka i hjärtat: ”ok legg til hjartans orminum” (*Völsunga saga*, s. 151). På Ramsundsristningen ser svärdssticket ut att gå in i Fáfnirs kropp

eventuellt vid hjärtats placering. Fáfnir är dessutom beskriven som en ofantligt stor best som orsakar jordskalv när han tar sig fram. När Sigurðr inser att det är en mycket stor best som han skall bekämpa, påpekar han det för Reginn (*Völsunga saga*, s. 150, *Völsungasagan*, s. 81):

> Þat sagðir þú, Reginn, at dreki sjá væri eigi meiri en einn lyngomr, en mér sýnast vegar hans ævar miklir.
> (Regin, du sade att draken inte var större än en ljungorm, men för mig ser det ut som han behöver mycket stor plats.)

Det är således endast i Sigurðrs *direkta* tal som *Völsunga saga* använder *dreki* i stället för *ormr*. En förklaring till det är att direkt tal och dialoger kan vara författarens eget tillägg till en i övrigt mer eller mindre fixerad narration, något som kan ha påverkat terminologin. Vid 1200-talet kan skillnaden mellan flygande drake och orm dessutom ha gjorts tydlig i språket. Men när det gäller drakar som bildmotiv är det enligt Signe Horn Fuglesang först omkring 1070 som en bevingad drake finns på bild i Skandinavien, nämligen på en svensk runsten i Antuna (U107; 1986, s. 187 ff.). Från samma tid finns även en bevingad drake på Bayeuxtapeten. Enligt Blindheim är ormen den äldre djurgestalten och draken den yngre (1972–1973, s. 15, jfr Brate & Wessén 1924–1936, s. 309 f., Musset 2005, s. 16).

Brödrasvek

Ramsundsristningen och Gökstenen förmedlar till betraktaren en bildberättelse om Sigurðrs dåd. Det är en hjältes kamp mot ett odjur (orm eller drake), något som också förefaller vara utgångspunkten, eftersom övriga motiv i kronologisk kompositionell ordning följer efter själva drakdödandet: grillscenen, fingerprovet, fåglarnas varning, Reginns död och Grani med skatten. Men frågan är om det enbart är drakdödandet i sig som fångat traditionsförmedlarna eller om det finns underliggande perspektiv att ta hänsyn till. Och varför just Sigurdsmotiv?

Det finns ett annat tema som träder i förgrunden. I likhet med Gökstenen berättar Ramsundsristningen om förhistorien till drakdödandet, nämligen ett brödrasvek. Bildkonstnären har sett till att bröderna Fáfnir, Reginn och Otr finns med på ristningarna, och inom ramen för deras maktkamp och svek, som symboliseras av guldet, kan Sigurðr i en mening beskrivas som

endast en bricka i spelet. Otrs närvaro skulle kunna analyseras utifrån ett homosocialt perspektiv med avseende på brödrasvek. Att ett svekmotiv ansågs passa på ett minnesmärke över en man kan emellertid förefalla långsökt. Ger möjligen runtexterna någon ledtråd?

Ramsundsinristningens genealogi och socioekonomiska betydelse

Det var en kvinna, Sigrid Ormsdotter, som lät rista stenen vid Ramsund, och inskriften berättar om att hon lät bygga en bro för sin makes själ (troligen sitt andra giftermål): **siriþr : kiarþi : bur** (sic!) **: þosi : muþiʀ : alriks : tutiʀ : urms : fur · salu : hulmkirs : faþur : sukruþar : buata · sis ·** . Uttrycket ”[...] **buata · sis ·**” tolkas som ’sin bonde’, det vill säga ’sin make’. I nusvensk tolkning har följande översättning gjorts av Thorgunn Snædal: ”Sigrid, Alriks moder, Orms dotter, gjorde denna bro för sin make Holmgers, Sigröds faders själ” (1984, s. 34 f.).

En omdiskuterad fråga är i vilket släktförhållande Sigrid och Holmger stod till varandra. En annan tolkning än den som refererats till ovan har presenterats av Erik Brate och Elias Wessén, nämligen att Holmger var Sigrids svärfar och att hon själv var gift med Sigröd: ’Si(g)rid gjorde denna bro, moder till Alrik, dotter till Orm, för Holmgers själ, faderns till Sigröd, sin make.’ (1924–1936, s. 71–73, 388).[6]

Upplysningar om Sigrids son Alrik (troligen i ett tidigare gifte) finns på Kjulastenen nära Eskilstuna (Sö 106). Alrik reste nämligen en sten till minne av sin fader Spjut, som dött utomlands. Genealogiska upplysningar på två inskrifter antyder således att Sigrid och Spjut hade varit gifta och hade sonen Alrik. Spjut, som var en skicklig krigare, stupade ”västerut”: ”Alrik reste stenen, son till Sigrid, efter sin fader Spjut [...].” Alrik hänvisar till sin mor och Sigrid till sin son Alrik, något som tyder på att båda var i livet när Ramsundsristningen respektive Kjularistningen kom till, i varje fall om namnfrasernas placering beaktas. Enligt Magnus Källström förefaller det som om fraser innehållande son eller dotter och med ett framförställt namn användes om levande personer. (Källström 2010, s.

[6] Mansnamnet **sukruþar** ’Sigröd’ finns även på Bro (U 617) och syftar på samme man. Enligt Brate och Wessén (1924–1936, s. 72) samt senare av Ann-Sofie Gräslund (2001, s. 78 f.) kan Sigrid vara svägerska till Ginnlög som nämns på Brostenen.

125, 133 f., citat, se Thorgunn Snædal 1984, s. 84). Till jämförelse nämns på Bro (U 617) tre barn till Holmger, troligen i ett tidigare gifte: Ginnlög, Göt och Sigröd. Tänkbart är att de båda bröderna Göt och Sigröd inte var i livet, eftersom det var Sigrid som lät göra en minnessten efter deras far. Namnfrasen **faþur sukruþar** 'Sigröds far' ger inte motsvarande argument för att Sigröd var i livet.

En tänkbar anledning till Sigurdsmotiven på Ramsundsstenen kan enligt Brate och Wessén ha varit namnlikheten mellan *Sig*-röd och *Sig*-urd. De håller för troligt att Sigröd skulle ha varit uppkallad efter någon med namnet Sigurd och att detta i sin tur skulle ha givit upphov till en "sägen" om att dessa män tillhörde völsungasläkten (1924–1936, s. 72–73). Möjligen skulle ett genealogiskt släktskap mellan Sigröd och Sigurðr Fáfnisbani kunna utgöra ett underliggande motiv, men något sådant antyds inte på annat sätt än genom själva ristningen. En möjlighet kan vara att Sigrid förutom att hon lät göra en bro för sin makes själ också lät denna minnessten gälla även sonen Sigröd, vars namn och betydelse hon ville förknippa med Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (Jesch 1991, s. 125–136, Appendix III, s. 136). Förleden *sig-* 'seger' kan även utan genealogisk anknytning ha ansetts passa väl till en stormanssläkt.

I Brates och Wesséns tolkning är det således Sigröd som skulle vara huvudpersonen. Att förleden i Sigröd skulle ha gett upphov till en eventuell sägen om att nämnda släkt härstammade från Sigurðr är en tolkning som utgår från ett tänkande kring i första hand fadersättens betydelse, men förleden förekommer även i kvinnonamnet Sigrid. Det är Sigrid som bör framhållas, det är hon som har låtit bygga en bro och att det är hon som velat göra associationer till Sigurdstraditionen är mest troligt. Det är förleden i hennes namn som kan associeras med mansnamnet *Sigurðr*, och det är hennes egen släkt och härkomst som lyfts fram i runtexten: Sigrid är Alriks moder och Orms dotter. Med tanke på den status som Ramsundsristningens initiativtagare torde ha haft, är det alltså mest troligt att Sigrid var Holmgers maka och att deras gemensamme son Sigröd var död. Därför bör andra förklaringar sökas.

En förklaring av ekonomisk karaktär kan prövas. Om Sigröd var i livet, skulle han sannolikt ärva sin far och på sätt och vis i likhet med Sigurðr "vinna guldet", men om så vore fallet, kunde man ha väntat sig att han och inte makan skulle ha tagit initiativ till ristningen. Hade Holmgers andra söner varit i livet skulle i så fall faderns egendom i första hand gå till äldste sonen, och om inte söner fanns, skulle arvet gå till dottern Ginnlög. Oavsett om Holmger var Sigrids make eller svärfar, skulle arvet

efter honom tillfalla Ginnlög, förutsatt att hennes bröder var döda. I äldre lagstiftning finns dock vissa regler som begränsade en dotters arv efter sin far om hon var gift. Det är givetvis inte säkert att en sådan arvsordning tillämpades vid denna tid, men inte heller orimligt. Kunde möjligen Sigrid komma i fråga som arvtagare? En jämförelse kan därvidlag göras med en av de äldsta nedskrivna lagarna på nordiskt område som ger upplysningar om att make och maka inte ärvde varandra. Däremot kunde en kvinna ärva sina barn (Grágás 1:118, s. 218 ff., jfr Sawyer 2003, s. 37–60), det vill säga Sigrid skulle kunna ärva hennes och Holmgers son, men kanske även efter hans söner i tidigare äktenskap. För att också återknyta till mittplaceringen av Grani med skatten, kan det kan således finnas en koppling mellan guldskatten och ett omfattande jordarv – om Sigrid vinner guldet, i likhet med Sigurðr, men källorna lämnar i det fallet också här endast underlag för spekulationer och sannolikhetsresonemang (jfr Lindkvist 1997, s. 143, Sawyer 2000, s. 125 f.).

Änkan Sigrids föreställningar om manligt ideal och prestige kan utgöra en annan referensram för tolkningen. Bildscenerna visar en vida känd hjälte med yttre och inre egenskaper som tillskrevs en idealisk man och som var välkända för betraktaren. Ramsundsstenens textslinga säger däremot inte något om ett manligt ideal. Det gör däremot andra runstenar i Södermanland. På sörmländska runstenar omtalas att döda män hade ideala egenskaper, men Sigrid lät inte omtala Holmger med något epitet som hyllade hans godhet, klokhet eller tapperhet, utan lät i stället associera honom med legenden om Sigurðr. Sigrid ansåg möjligen att hennes make hade de egenskaper som motsvarade en manlig idealbild vid den här tiden och hyllade detta genom Sigurdsmotiven. Brödrasveket som motiv komplicerar den bilden, men möjligen lyfts detta fram som en kontrast till hjälteidealet.

Frågan är hur det kom sig att en förkristen gestalt fick pryda den här stenen med flera andra som tillkommit under kristen tid. När berättartraditionen om Sigurðr fick en skriftlig och ikonografisk form kom den att uttrycka ett slags sociala och kulturella realiteter för dem som återgav dem. Margaret Clunies Ross framhåller att den fornnordiska mytvärlden förvisso förändrades på ett genomgripande sätt i och med kristnandet, men det behöver inte nödvändigtvis betyda att myterna tömdes på sitt ”sanningsvärde” (1996, s. 15f., 20 ff.). Att ta hänsyn till hur myterna recipierades är därför väsentligt för tolkningen. Det kan till och med enligt Thomas Lindkvist vara ”mytmötet” i sig som är den viktigaste referensramen. Lindkvist framhåller vikten av guldskatten som Sigurðr

kom över, att den torde ha haft en central betydelse för Sigrid Ormsdotter (1997, s. 143, se även Hultgård 1992, s. 49–103, jfr Nordanskog 2006, s. 33).[7]

De som betraktade Ramsundsristningen skulle sannolikt associera till Sigurðr med guldet. Att Sigrid önskade att betraktarna, som i första hand kom sjövägen skulle lägga märke till den imponerande ristningen och därmed ge ett socialt och ekonomiskt styrkebesked när det gäller henne själv är mycket troligt. Visserligen framhävs Sigurðr som drakdödare, och underförstått visste sannolikt alla som kände till något om legenden att guldet blev Sigurðrs. Det som talar för den ekonomiska orsaken är att hästen Grani satts i central position, och att guldbördan tydligt syns på hästens rygg.

Icke-lexikal inskrift?

Gökstenens inskrift är i jämförelse med Ramsundsristningen en sparsam inskrift när det gäller information: **... ịuraʀi** *auk* **isaio** *ræisti stæinn þannsi at* **þuaʀ** *faður* (efter Bianchi 2010, s. 176). Inskriften är svårtydd, men det har gjorts försök till tolkning (se Brate & Wessén 1924–1936), men den kan inte användas för att ge någon som helst ledtråd till valet av bildmotiv. Den lämnas därför åt sidan här. Generellt sett kan man fråga sig huruvida inskriften snarast kan betecknas som en icke-lexikal inskrift eller delvis icke-lexikal inskrift, det vill säga att den saknar helt eller delvis ett språkligt innehåll. Enligt Marco Bianchi är den ett undantag eftersom den både har och inte har detta: ”De båda [Sö 327 och Sö 324] ger prov på en ristare som kan formulera/imitera grundstommen i en runstensinskrift utan att lyckas eller vilja förmedla namnen på de inblandade på ett genomskinligt sätt.” (Bianchi 2010, s. 175 ff, för citatet se s. 177, jfr Thompson 1972, s. 511–521). För övrigt kan en imitation i sig ha haft ett socialt värde i den tidens mentalitet (Herschend 2005, s. 92 f.).[8]

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[7] Jfr Herschend 1994, s. 102: ”[…] the role of the more or less outstanding individual that changes, as well as the meaning of the collective. It is the tensions between the individual and the collective that bring about the societal change in which these categories are themselves changed.” Enligt Lars Lönnroth skulle till jämförelse Gökstenens motiv bidra till att synliggöra att hjältemyten vid den här tiden gick mot sin upplösning samtidigt som kristendomen vann insteg (1999, s. 49).

[8] Jfr ”nonsensinskrift” som benämning på Sö 327 med flera liknande inskrifter, se bl.a.

Är Gök en kopia av Ramsund?

Både Gökstenen och Ramsundsristningen belyser i en mening samma berättartradition om Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, något som anges genom bildmotiven som helhet, men ristningarna visar som har påpekats en del betydelsefulla skillnader. Här vill jag bortse från det estetiska uttrycket, eftersom detta kan vara komplext i relation till vår tids uppfattningar om det sköna. Frågan är om olikheterna är av det slaget att de skulle kunna bidra till att rucka på den gängse föreställningen om Gökstenen som en sämre kopia av Ramsundsristningen. Frågan är om det finns detaljer på Gökstenen som kan tala för att den tillkommit före eller i varje fall obeoende av Ramsundsristningen.

Den synliga armringen på Sigurðr i drakdödarpositionen är en skillnad mellan Gökstenen och Ramsundsristningen. För Gökstenens bildristare har det uppenbarligen varit viktigt att avbilda Sigurðr med armringen. Med tanke på ringmotivet och även på förhistorien till drakdödandet som framhålls mer på Gökstenen kan det således förefalla som om dennes bildristare har velat återge Sigurdslegenden på ett annat sätt än vad som är fallet med Ramsundsstenen.

Medan Ramsundsristningen således visar två drakhuvuden (varav ett tillhörande draken i trädet) och ett ormhuvud, syns på Gökstenen två ormliknande djur samt en orm i trädet. När det gäller gestaltningen av Fáfnir som orm eller drake indikerar ormdjuret på Gökstenen till skillnad från Ramsundsristningens drake att den förras berättelse kan tillhöra en äldre ikonografisk tradition. En detalj när det gäller Gökstenens vänstra orm samt ormen i trädet är att de båda är sedda ur ett fågelperspektiv, något som också anger en äldre bildtradition. Det förefaller som om ristarna hade olika föreställningar om Fáfnir som drake eller orm. Frågan är om den skillnaden mellan de båda ristningarna kan ha betydelse för respektive datering, det vill säga att runslingan med drakhuvud kan höra till en senare (eller möjligen en annan) tradition är runslingan med ormhuvud.

Medan Ramsundsristningen har två fåglar i trädet har Gökstenen endast en fågel som sitter på marken eller i varje fall inte i trädet, vilket stämmer

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Thompson 1972, s. 511–521. Benämningen är pejorativ och kan dessutom vara anakronistisk. Jfr Bianchi 2010, s. 175: ”Ett antal av dessa är sannolikt otolkade på grund av den moderna forskningens bristande insikt i språk och samhälle på vikingatiden.” Då det i denna struktur finns likheter mellan Gökstenen och Åsbystenen (Sö 324) är det för övrigt troligt att det är fråga om samme ristare. Båda ristningarna är gjorda på stora stenblock och ligger endast någon mil ifrån varandra, se Bianchi 2010, s. 176 f.

överens med ett par litterära källor. Enligt *Fáfnismál* och *Völsunga saga* hör Sigurðr entitor kvittra i riset och inte från ett träd: ”Hann heyrði að igður klökuðu á hrísinum.” (*Fáfnismál*, s. 238, *Fafnesmål*, s. 213, *Völsunga saga*, s. 155). I *Snorres Edda* sitter däremot fåglarna i ett träd (*Snorres Edda*, s. 178, Codex Regius, övers. Johansson & Malm, s. 147, jfr Düwel 1986, s. 228, 230 f.).

Motiv och teman hämtade ur den ursprungliga förkristna traditionen om Sigurðr kan alltså ha fått en ny betydelse över tid och gestalten kom att ingå i en kristen föreställningsvärld. I det sammanhanget skiljer sig Gökstenen från Ramsundsstenen genom den förras avbildade kors innanför runslingan. Trädet har inte samma centrala placering som på Ramsundsristningen, utan syns i det högra fältet framför drakhuvudet. På Gökstenen är det i stället korset som är centralt placerat. Medan Gökstenens kors och *inte* dess runtext anger den kristna anknytningen förhåller det sig tvärtom när det gäller Ramsundsristningens runslinga. I den uttrycks den kristna tanken genom uttrycket **fur salu**. Placeringen av drakdödarmotivet visar att svärdshugget går in precis mellan **fur** och **salu**, mellan ’för’ och ’själ’, det vill säga omedelbart i anknytning till ett kristet uttryck för synen på döden. Brobyggandet som en Gudi behaglig gärning har ofta påpekats, men enligt Lena Peterson kan **fur salu** ha en mer specifik innebörd. För resonemanget har kasusformen betydelse. Grammatiskt har **salu** på Ramsundsristningen ansetts som en ackusativform, men frågan är varför. Peterson framhåller därvidlag att prepositionen *fyriʀ* (**fur**) kan betyda ’utbyte mot, som betalning för’. Det handlar således om ” [...] att någon har gäldat ett brobygge för någons själ, och det är genom prepositionen *fyriʀ* detta uttrycks.” Brobygget skedde således i utbyte mot att själens tillvaro i skärselden underlättades (1991, s. 341–351 och där anförda arbeten, för citatet, se s. 347).

Ramsundsristningen saknar kors, men har däremot ett maskmotiv som troligen avser en kristen symbol. Huruvida detta kan vara ett stöd för dateringen av ristningarna kan diskuteras, men troligen kan korset uppfattas som den äldre och primära kristna symbolen, medan själens behov av Guds stöd genom brostenen torde bekräfta att beställaren (och ristaren) mer initierat uppfattat det kristna budskapet.

Båda ristningarna ger uttryck åt en viss variation inom Sigurdstraditionen. Ett antal drag på Gökstenens motiv kan indikera en äldre tradition, men någon säker slutsats kan inte dras av dessa. När det gäller specifika motiv framstår Gökstenens ristare otvivelaktigt som självständig i förhållande till Ramsundsristningen, i synnerhet korsets centrala position, en utökad

förhistoria till drakdödandet samt fågelmotivet som utgår från en äldre litterär tradition. Ramsundsristningens mer kontrollerade återgivning sätter dock större fokus på samtidens användning av myten i förhållande till social och ekonomisk status, kristen tro och handling i ett maktexponerande perspektiv.

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Summary

On the runic stones at Ramsund (Sö 101) and Näsbyholm (Sö 327; the Gök stone), there are motifs showing how Sigurd the Dragonslayer with his sword kills the dragon Fáfnir. In a literary and iconographic tradition, this is the most widespread motif from the heroic legend of Sigurd. Besides the dragonslaying, there are other well-known motifs at the carvings, such as Grani with the gold treasure loaded on his back, and the smith *Reginn*'s death. However, the expression and style differs between the stones. The Ramsund carving usually provides a reference for identification of Sigurd motifs at other iconographical sources, while the Gök stone carving has been regarded as a less successful copy of the first. The aim of this article is to study the relation between this two runic stones regarding the Sigurd motifs and how to interpret them. At the Gök stone, Fáfnir is depicted as a snake, unlike the Ramsund runic stone, where he is a dragon. A further detail is that Fáfnir at the Gök stone is depicted from above. This perspective from a bird's- eye view and the snake, indicate that the motifs belong to an older narrative tradition. Regarding symbols for Christianity, there is a cross at the Gök stone, but not at the Ramsund stone. However, the inscription at the latter tells of Christian influence. Whether this can be used for dating this runic stones may be discussed. Finally, the Gök stone seems to be more dynamic than the more controlled Ramsund runic stone, the latter focusing more on the contemporary use of myth, and thus may perform a powerful manifestation of socioeconomic status.

Keywords: The Ramsund Runic Stone (Sö 101), the Gök Runic Stone (Sö 327), Sigurd the Dragonslayer, dragon, snake, cross

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Death and the king
Grottasǫngr in its eddic context

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Introduction

The fortuitous preservation of *Grottasǫngr* — copied out by a scribe at the end of a chapter in just one medieval manuscript of *Snorra Edda*[1] — augments the body of extant eddic poetry which is concerned with the figure of a king. During the encounter between King Fróði and the giantesses who work wonders at his mill, the king is exposed as a cruel tyrant, more concerned with stockpiling gold than with the judicious exercise of power and the prudent use of the magical mill, which had the potential to bring him and his people lasting prosperity. The mill-stone Grotti, the giantesses reveal, was once part of a mountain, dislodged and rolled down into the human domain to enable its chthonic power to be exploited. It became available to men, however, not as a result of geological processes but apparently in order to test the custodianship of natural resources by their leaders. The forces that transformed the mountain rock into an industrial tool had their eye on Fróði if not from the beginning then from an early point in his reign, and this parable of political ecology centres on the king's reaction to opportunity in relation not just to his own good fortune but to the well-being of his people. This 'grand allegory', as Axel Olrik and Lee M. Hollander termed it (1919: 466), had inspired Viktor Rydberg's social critique of industrial exploitation — of both workers and resources — in his poem *Den nya Grottesången* (1891) and it continues to resonate today.

During the course of *Grottasǫngr*, the forces that deliver the power of

[1] The text of the poem quoted throughout this article is that presented by Anthony Faulkes in his edition of *Skáldskaparmál* (1998: 52–57). The numbering of the stanzas of the poem there (vv. 159–82) is within the sequence of poetic quotations within *Skáldskaparmál* as a whole and has been altered here to st 1–24.

Quinn, Judy. 2013. Death and the king: *Grottasǫngr* in its eddic context. *Scripta Islandica* 64: 39–65.

the mill-stone turn out to be rather complex: as young giantesses, Fenja and Menja (as they are called) rolled Grotti down the mountain (sts 9–12), and now, disguised as slave-girls, they work the mill-stone at Fróði's behest (sts 1–8), offering the possibility of a utopian society with boundless wealth and no crime (st. 6). In between times, it transpires, they have served as valkyries (sts 13–15), intervening in battle to promote a good king while bringing about the demise of another, demonstrating in the process their powers of discrimination between kings fit to rule and those from whom power (and life) must be wrested. Fróði's cruel treatment of his slaves — in his greed for round-the-clock production he allows them little rest while he himself sleeps — prompts the giantesses to turn against him and to engineer the king's defeat at the hands of an approaching army (sts 16–22). Throughout the poem, the girls describe themselves as prescient (*framvísar*, st. 1 and st. 13), adding to the complexity of their nature: in addition to their appearance as giantesses (albeit disguised as slave-girls), they morph between the role of *vǫlva* and the role of *valkyrja* familiar from other eddic poems, embodying fate not as it is usually understood — with hindsight, as ineluctable inevitability — but as a series of unfolding opportunities, in relation to which the worthiness of kings to continue to rule (and live) will be judged.[2]

I have presented a detailed analysis of the mythological undercurrents in the interaction between the king and the giantesses in *Grottasǫngr* in a recent essay (Quinn 2013), a study which will be augmented, in this essay, by an exploration of the poem in the context of its manuscript preservation and its generic relation to the other poems in the eddic corpus. An examination of the preservation of the poem within *Skáldskaparmál* sheds light on the legendary tradition to which the poem belonged, while a consideration of the genre of the poem in relation to other poems in the eddic corpus, particularly those in the Codex Regius collection (GKS 2365 4to, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum) reveals how much *Grottasǫngr* and the poems of the anthology have in common. *Grottasǫngr* exhibits the same interest evident in a number of other eddic poems in the personification of fate as a female figure, with whom a king is depicted in some form of negotiation. By capturing this encounter, eddic poets were able to explore, among other things, aspects

[2] For a discussion of the different supernatural female figures embodying fate, see Bek-Pedersen (2011: 13–72), although she does not include giantesses in her survey.

of predetermination in relation to the king's capacity for autonomous action, a point I shall return to later in this essay.

Towards the end of *Grottasǫngr*, in the second last stanza of the poem (st. 23), the mill-stone Grotti is said to have split in two, ending forever its usefulness to men. But in the prose passage which follows the mention of the poem in *Skáldskaparmál*, Grotti is said to have been destroyed on a later occasion, when another king, Mýsingr, having opportunistically seized the slave girls and Grotti from Fróði, sets them to work milling salt for him. His demise is as memorable as Fróði's spectacular punishment (awaking from his self-indulgent slumber to the alarm of battle), with the sea-king going down with his ship which has become overloaded by the excessive quantity of salt he had demanded be milled for him. Both legends revolve around Grotti and both describe the unfortunate end of a king who, through his own lack of judgement, misuses both the opportunity provided by supernatural intercession and the agents who offered the king that opportunity. The duplication of the situation of the poem in the prose epilogue indicates the significance of the political idea of prudence in relation to opportunities for industrial production, the conceit of the magical quern productive in both media.

The main issues which preoccupied earlier generations of scholars of *Grottasǫngr* were the provenance, dating and original form of the poem. While Karl Müllenhoff believed it belonged among the very oldest Old Norse poems (1889: 32), Finnur Jónsson disagreed, dating its composition to the second half of the tenth century (1920: I, 217). Feeling certain that the poem could not be Icelandic, Finnur also disagreed with Eugen Mogk, who did not think it could be Norwegian (1904: 609), while Axel Olrik postulated that the poet might have been a Norwegian living in Britain (1919: 471).[3] Svend Gruntvig, meanwhile, had considered the stanzas depicting valkyrie activity to have been interpolations (1874: 252), a proposal with which Axel Olrik concurred, adding 'har der virkelig været sagn, hvor overnaturlige væsner deltog i svenske småkongers kampe?' (1910: II, 282). Finnur, on the other hand, argued that the first four stanzas of the poem were added as 'en episk indledning' to what was the original form of the poem (1920: 217), although he did not regard the valkyrie verses as an interpolation (1932: 168). The perceived disjunction between

[3] See de Vries (1964: I, 96–98) for a detailed exploration of the possible development of the poem over time. He posits the poem's origin in Denmark, after which it was revised during its passage through Norway and on to Iceland.

mythological interest and the reigns of legendary kings in fact provides an important clue to the rationale of the poem, in which female supernatural figures engage directly with a king in order to assess his calibre as a regent. That the supernatural beings appear as both giantesses and valkyries is undoubtedly 'curious', as Gudbrand Vigfusson noted (1883: 184), and presents an interpretative challenge. That challenge, however, is not solved by editing out certain stanzas of the poem or by denying that the role Fenja and Menja played when they intervened in battle to decide the fate of warrior-kings is akin to the mythological role elsewhere played by valkyries.[4]

In more recent scholarship, the difficulty of dating an orally transmitted poem such as *Grottasǫngr* is more readily acknowledged.[5] Even among those who still subscribe to the belief that a point of origin for a work can be deduced from a later text, the point or date range chosen varies considerably. Clive Tolley considers the poem 'late' and dates its composition to the twelfth century (2008: 31–2), as does Vésteinn Ólason, who ventures that the poem may not be much older than *ca* 1200 (2005: 132). Ursula Dronke (2011: 151) opts for a broader date range, as do von See *et al*., who propose the extensive span of years between the lives of Eyvindr skáldaspillir in the tenth century and Snorri Sturluson in the thirteenth (2000: 857). The relationship between *Grottasǫngr* and other Old Norse poems, and indeed the relationship between words or lines within *Grottasǫngr* and words or lines in other works, is similarly still open to contestation. The approach taken in this essay, of illuminating the meaning of the poem through a consideration of generic analogues, departs from the fashion of identifying 'borrowings' or inferring direct influence.[6] Centuries (or even decades) of oral transmission inevitably cloud our view of the way in which the poem was recollected between performances and the manner in which it might have been renewed in the process, drawing on ideas and verses in oral and written circulation over the course of its transmission. The text as it has been preserved is therefore the focus of my study, the patterns of meaning built up across the sequence of verses made more complex, and more interesting in my

[4] Finnur argued, for instance, '[f]ordi jættekvinderne har deltaget i kampe, er de ikke derfor valkyrjer' (1932: 168).

[5] See Fidjestøl (1999) for a thorough review of the methodological problems.

[6] Tolley, for instance, treats the poem as 'a literary product', regarding parallels with other poems 'as allusions or borrowings', though he does acknowledge that it is 'impossible to be certain that this was always the case' (2008: 32).

view, by considering them in the context of other eddic dialogue poems in which power is contested. In that regard, it is interesting to note that one characteristic of the poem which almost all scholars of *Grottasǫngr* have remarked on is its combination of mythological and legendary material. While from a classificatory point of view this appears to be an unusual straddling of the conventional categories of eddic verse, to which I will turn in the next section, the intersection of mythological and legendary spheres in the poem has a straightforward explanation. In Old Norse mythology, the valkyrie inhabits the contact zone between divine forces and the playing out of the lives of warrior kings since she chooses the best of them from the battlefield for deployment in Valhǫll in preparation for *ragna rǫk*. The giantess, in her turn, inhabits the realm from which natural resources are derived, apparently venturing beyond her mountain home on missions of various kinds when moved. Both figures interact with kings and in so doing they expose the king to scrutiny that is underwritten by divine authority.

Kings in the eddic corpus

While eddic poetry is conventionally divided into two main groupings — mythological and heroic — the demarcation between the two is far from straightforward, especially since in poems which stage encounters between human figures and supernatural ones the heroic is frequently charged with the mythological and *vice-versa*. In the late thirteenth-century Codex Regius anthology of eddic poems, the compiler — or possibly one of his predecessors — grouped together poems involving human kings belonging to or associated with the Vǫlsung dynasty in a roughly chronological cycle that forms the second part of the compilation (the so-called heroic poems).[7] Other kings, such as King Geirrøðr and King Níðuðr, make their appearance in the so-called mythological part of the manuscript (in *Grímnismál* and *Vǫlundarkviða*), even though the poems are set in the human world and appear to draw on legendary material about ancient kings. In many respects the mythological nature of

[7] See Lindblad (1954) for a palaeographical analysis of the manuscript and an account of the clusters of poems that appear to have been gathered together at earlier stages in the written transmission of the collection.

a poem such as *Vǫlundarkviða*, where an elf-prince intervenes in the lives of a king and his family,[8] is comparable with that of the first poems of the heroic cycle, where a valkyrie intervenes in the life of a prince (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar* and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*). In both cases, the mythological figure leads a double life — the elf-prince as a smith and the valkyrie as a princess — and to this extent the poems may be distinguished from the earlier poems in the mythological part of the manuscript which involve unequivocally mythological figures such as the gods Óðinn and Freyr (though Óðinn is wont to disguise himself as a quasi-human figure, as an itinerant magician in *Grímnismál* and a ferryman in *Hárbarðsljóð*). The awkwardness of the sequence in which *Vǫlundarkviða* is placed in the compilation — within a grouping of poems featuring Þórr, immediately before the god's dialogue with a dwarf in *Alvíssmál* — demonstrates that the compiler was wrestling with a corpus of poetry that did not easily submit to classification by protagonist, just as the chronological overlap between heroic poems in the second part of the manuscript reveals how difficult it was to arrange the Vǫlsung poems into a linear narrative.

While it is admittedly an argumentum *ex silencio*, it is nonetheless tempting to speculate that the compiler left out any number of eddic poems because they did not fit the categories he was working to forge in his compilation. Of the eddic poems recorded in other contexts, for instance, we find a number which engage with the fortunes of a legendary king: as well as Fróði in *Grottasǫngr*, there is Óttarr (albeit disguised as a non-speaking boar) in *Hyndluljóð*, a poem recorded in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol. Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum); an un-named young king in *Darraðarljóð,* an eddic poem quoted within *Njáls saga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954: 454–58); and in *Rígsþula,* a poem preserved in Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling), the protagonist is named Kon ungr, or Konungr, making his story the quintessential biography of a king. In addition, there are the many legendary kings who feature in the so-called Eddica Minora (as edited by Andreas Heusler and Wilhelm Ranisch), the body of eddic stanzas quoted in the *fornaldarsögur* ('sagas of ancient times'). Had they been known to him (and many of them very probably were),

[8] On the mix of the heroic and the mythological in *Vǫlundarkviða*, see, in particular, Grimstad (1983) and Vésteinn Ólason (2005); Vésteinn also discusses the generic relations between *Grottasǫngr* and *Vǫlundarkviða*.

these poems would presumably not have qualified for inclusion in the Codex Regius compiler's cycle of heroic poems because they were not part of the Vǫlsung legend. And while a poem such as *Hyndluljóð* fits squarely within the mythological realm depicted in many of the poems preserved in the first part of the compilation, it may well have fallen outside the compiler's parameters for inclusion since, with the exception of *Vǫlundarkviða*, the collection appears to have been designed to present poems gathered according to a sequence of *æsir* protagonists (Óðinn, Freyr and then Þórr).

Of the cluster of eddic poems not included in the compilation but recorded elsewhere, it is striking that two of them feature giantesses as kings' benefactors:[9] in *Grottasǫngr*, the mill-working slave-girls, Fenja and Menja, declare that they are descended from giants (st. 9), and in *Hyndluljóð*, the giantess Hyndla is portrayed as a sceptical and ultimately reluctant provider of genealogical information to the goddess Freyja that will enable her lover Óttarr to gain political advantage over another princely contender. While all the legendary material that might once have been cast as eddic poetry can of course never be recovered, *Grottasǫngr* stands as a valuable supplement to the corpus recorded in the Codex Regius. In its dramatic staging of a conflict between a king and giantesses (who are, to begin with at least, more willing benefactors than Hyndla), the poem significantly extends our understanding of eddic poetics as well as casting light on some of the farther reaches of Old Norse mythology. Before looking in more detail at the genre of the poem, however, the unusual context of its preservation needs to be surveyed.

The preservation of *Grottasǫngr*

The transmission history of the poem is interesting for what it reveals about the impulses of manuscript compilers to record in full a work, knowledge of which seems to have been taken for granted in the earliest mentions in the written record of the legend it transmits. As part of his survey of different periphrases for gold within *Skáldskaparmál*, by way of explanation for the well-attested kenning for gold, *mjǫl Fróða*

[9] While John McKinnell surveys Old Norse texts for encounters with what he terms 'the helpful giantess' (2005: 181–96), he does not discuss *Grottasǫngr*.

('Fróði's meal'), Snorri tells the story of two enslaved girls, Fenja and Menja, who mill gold for a king named Fróði Friðleifsson, turning against him after he mistreats them and milling out instead an army to oust him from power. A number of kennings alluding to the legend are quoted by Snorri either following the explanation or at another point in his account of kennings for gold, and some of these are from poems thought to have been composed as early as the tenth century:

> *mjǫl Fróða* ('Fróði's meal'), Egill Skallagrímsson, *Hǫfuðlausn* 18 (*Skjaldedigtning* A1: 39, B1: 33)
>
> *forverk Fenju* ('Fenja's toil'), *Bjarkamál* 4 (*Skjaldedigtning* A1: 181, B1: 170)

In the corpus of skaldic verse preserved in works beyond *Snorra Edda*, there is also evidence of the productivity of the story in generating circumlocutions for gold, as this example, also from the tenth century, illustrates:

> *meldr fáglýjaðra þýa Fróða* ('flour of the little-satisfied bondswomen of Fróði'), *lausavísa* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson (*Skjaldedigtning* A1: 73, B1: 64)

The ubiquity of the legend in oral tradition is underlined by another reference to it in a verse composed by the twelfth-century priest and poet, Einarr Skúlason, which is quoted immediately following the narrative account of the legend in *Skáldskaparmál*:

> Frá ek Fróða meyjar
> fullgóliga mólu
> […]
> Grafvitnis beð […] (Faulkes 1998: 57)
>
> (I have heard that Fróði's girls ground with great energy Grafvitnir's [a snake's] bed [> gold])

Snorri himself chose to fashion kennings from the legend in his demonstration in *Háttatal* of what he regarded as one of the most virtuosic of skaldic metres, *in minni alhenda*:

> Samþykkjar fremr søkku
> snarr Baldr hjarar aldir,
> gunnhættir kann Grotta
> glaðdript hraða skipta;
> féstríðir kná Fróða
> friðbygg liði tryggva,

fjǫlvinjat hylr Fenju
falr meldr alinveldi. (Faulkes 1991: 21)

(The swift Baldr of swords [> warrior] promotes men with unity-bringing treasure [> gold]. The battle-darer [> warrior] knows how to share out Grotti's bright snow [> gold] quickly. Money's enemy [> prince] secures the troops with Fróði's peace-barley [> gold]. Freely available Fenja's meal [> gold], many-meadowed, covers the ell-realm [> forearm].)[10]

Snorri clearly knew the legend of the millstone Grotti (his kenning *Grotta glaðdript* is in fact the only recorded kenning for gold that mentions Grotti) and it seems probable that he knew the poem *Grottasǫngr* too, although he himself may not have recorded it in whatever text or texts of *Skáldskaparmál* he left behind him. In one of the earliest witnesses of *Skáldskaparmál*, the Uppsala Edda (Uppsala, De la Gardie 11), a manuscript whose contents indicate a close connection with Snorri and his family, the account of the legend is comparatively brief (Grape *et al*. 1977: 87/5–12) and without any substantiating quotation,[11] a point I shall return to later in this essay.

In another manuscript of *Skáldskaparmál*, however, from a century or so later, AM 748 II 4to (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum), the poem *Grottasǫngr* is cited within the account of the legend of the mill-working girls —

[…] þa er sagt, at þær qvæþi hliod þav, er kallat er Grottasavngr. ok er þat vpphaf at […] (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 135)

([…] it is said that they sang those songs called Grottasöngr, and this is how it begins […])

— after which the first stanza of the poem is quoted. The narrative account then resumes:

Ok aðr letti qvæþinv, molv þær her a hendr Froþa […]

(And before they had finished the song, they had ground out an army against Fróði […])

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[10] Here and throughout the essay, translations of *Snorra Edda* are based on Faulkes (1987) and the glossaries to his editions of *Snorra Edda* (1991 and 1998).

[11] In the Uppsala codex, the text of *Skáldskaparmál* is presented in two sections (Grape *et al*. 1977: 35–42 and 51–87), separated by *Skáldatal, Ættartala Sturlunga* and *Lǫgsǫgumannatal*; the passage explaining the kenning *Fróða mjǫl* comes towards the very end.

For another compiler of *Snorra Edda*, working earlier in the fourteenth century, the elision of poetic detail in this style of account must have seemed frustrating, despite the prevailing tendency in manuscripts of *Skáldskaparmál* to quote mainly single stanzas as evidence of kenning formations. In this manuscript, GKS 2367 4to (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, known since the seventeenth century as the Codex Regius of *Snorra Edda*), the name of the poem is cited within the account of the legend — in parallel with the text of AM 748 II 4to — yet at the end of the account, a text of the entire poem of twenty-four stanzas is recorded. This is the only example of an entire poem quoted within *Snorra Edda,* although whole poems are included in the compilation manuscripts that preserve Snorri's work.[12] On the other occasions where extensive quotations of poems are used as evidence in *Skáldskaparmál*, the sequences of stanzas are introduced by the distinctive formulation 'Eptir þessi sǫgu hefir ort [poet] í [poem]'. In the case of *Haustlǫng* by Þjóðólfr hvinverski, a version of this phrasing is used to introduce the two separate quotations from the poem of seven and thirteen stanzas respectively.[13] In the case of the longer quotation of nineteen stanzas from Eilífr Guðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*, the existence of two other stanzas apparently from the same poem quoted elsewhere in *Skáldskaparmál,* in addition to the use of the introductory phrasing, indicate that the sequence of stanzas was not being presented as an intact poem.[14] The incorporation of a whole poem into the text of GKS 2367 4to, without any introductory formulation, is therefore strikingly anomalous in style.

The text of the single stanza recorded in AM 748 II 4to differs slightly from the Regius text in its narrative orientation (Tab. 1). The Regius version of the stanza opens with the words of the giantesses themselves, only shifting into the narrator's voice in the second half stanza, whereas in AM 748 II 4to the clauses in both half-stanzas are cast in the third person. Grammatical levelling of this kind is possibly the result of the truncated nature of the quotation in the manuscript context of AM 748 II 4to, though deictic re-orientation is also a feature of textual variation in oral tradition (Quinn 1990). In addition, there is variation in the verb

[12] On the manuscripts of *Skáldskaparmál*, see further Faulkes (1998: xxxix–xlviii) and on the preservation of the poem, von See *et al*. (2000: 838–39).

[13] 'Eptir þessi sǫgu hefir ort Þjóðólfr hvinverski í Haustlǫng. Svá segir þar' and 'Eptir þeiri sǫgu orti Þjóðólfr hvinverski í Haustlǫng' (Faulkes 1998: 22 and 30).

[14] 'Eptir þessi sǫgu hefir ort Eilífr Guðrúnarson í Þórsdrápu' (Faulkes 1998: 25). See also v. 44 and v. 53 and the Notes by Faulkes (1998: 164, 165 and 171–2).

Tab. 1. Comparison of the texts of GKS 2367 4to and AM 748 II 4to.

GKS 2367	AM 748 II
Nú **erum** komnar	Nú **eru** komnar
til konungs húsa	til konungs húsa
framvísar tvær	framvísar tvær
Fenja and Menja.	Fenja and Menja.
Þær ró at Fróða	Þær eru at Fróða
Friðleifssonar	Friðleifssonar
máttkar meyjar	máttkar meyjar
at mani **hafðar**.	at mani **gjǫrvar**.
(Now we two fore-knowing	(Now the two fore-knowing
ones, Fenja and Menja, have come	ones, Fenja and Menja, have come
to the residence of the king.	to the residence of the king.
They are at Fróði Friðleifsson's,	They are at Fróði Friðleifsson's,
the powerful girls, kept as slaves.)[a]	the powerful girls, made to be slaves.)[a]

[a] Translations of Grottasǫngr are my own, but have benefitted from the glossaries of Faulkes (1998) and Beatrice La Farge and John Tucker, as well as the translations in the recent editions by Ursula Dronke (2011) and Clive Tolley (2008).

forming the past participle in a non-alliterating position in the last line of the stanza, the choice of *gjǫrvar* (rather than *hafðar*) perhaps expressive of oral variability as well, denoting a greater degree of compulsion in the relationship of the girls to the king (compare Dronke 2011: 147). Whether the rest of the poem the compiler of AM 748 II 4to knew differed in other respects it is not possible to say, since it is only the first stanza of the poem that is recorded. There is another generally less reliable text of the whole poem in a later paper manuscript of *Snorra Edda*, Codex Trajectinus (Utrecht, University Library Ms. 1374), in all likelihood derived from the same exemplar the Codex Regius text is copied from.[15]

[15] The Trajectinus manuscript does nonetheless provide a number of valuable readings of particular lines, for example 6/5, 17/5 and 21/7; see further Tolley (2008: 1).

Grottasǫngr and eddic genres

Generically, *Grottasǫngr* belongs among the group of eddic poems which dramatize an encounter between speakers from different mythological spheres, such as the contests between a giant and a god in *Vafþrúðnismál* and between a god and a dwarf in *Alvíssmál*; the recitation of genealogy provided by a giantess to a goddess in *Hyndluljóð*; the exhibition of Odinic lore delivered by the disguised god in the presence of a king and his son in *Grímnismál*; and the dispute about reputation between a giantess and Queen Brynhildr in *Helreið Brynhildar*. Like those poems, *Grottasǫngr* stages a moment of crisis for at least one of the players in the action, who, whether aware of it or not as they converse, is in mortal danger in the face of powers they have inadequately sized up. The extent of Fróði's misjudgement is highlighted by the complacent role he plays in the dialogue, apparently sleeping through most of it after barking out his uncompromising orders to Fenja and Menja.[16] Their 'song', meanwhile, fills most of the poem (1/1–4, 3/3–6, 5–6, 8–22, and 24/3–6) with just a few linking lines by the narrator. Like those poems, too, by concentrating the action into a conversation which ranges back and forth in time, the back-story to the drama is exposed during the course of the conversation, with the audience expected to twig to the implications before the doomed or soon-to-be-silenced one does. And because the poem is staged as a single encounter, the action takes only as much time as is necessary to undo the presumption of the interlocutor: the giant acknowledges his doom after the sleight-of-hand question by the god that ends the debate in *Vafþrúðnismál*; the drunk and (by this point in the dialogue) thoroughly disreputable Geirrøðr is no match for the enflamed god by the end of his tirade in *Grímnismál*; and after restoring her reputation by declaring her version of events, the queen orders the giantess who disrupted her journey to Hel to sink back down (*Helreið Brynhildar*). In *Hyndluljóð*, where the balance of power between goddess and giantess is more evenly poised, the giantess registers her irritation if not her discursive victory by farewelling her interlocutor with a curse.[17]

From the arrival of the mill-workers, who offer the prospect of a society bathed in gold, to the fright of the enemy attack they produce instead,

[16] In *Grímnismál* too, as Lindow observes (2002: 151), 'there is an implicit contest of wisdom here despite Geirröd's silence'.

[17] The meaning of the manuscript text of the ending of *Hyndluljóð* (which does not require the emendations usually made by editors) is analysed in Quinn (2002: 264–69).

the action of *Grottasǫngr* is staged during the interval between dusk and dawn, from the fateful moment when Fróði denies the giantesses any rest to the moment when he is roused from rest for the last time. King Fróði's misjudgement — of both the true identity of Fenja and Menja and of the way to benefit from their power over the magical mill – is the cause of his demise, just as King Geirrøðr is brought down (in *Grímnismál*) by his inability to identify the travelling stranger and by his fatal denial of hospitality to him. Both kings lack the judgement expected of a ruler and their reigns are accordingly ended summarily by divine forces. In the manner in which Fenja and Menja recount their earlier lives, their stance also bears some similarity to the retaliatory reminiscences of the eddic heroines, Brynhildr, Oddrún and Guðrún, though in their cases the wrongs against them involve a complex chain of social interaction, unlike the single ill-judged action which brings down Fróði and Geirrøðr. (The course of action taken by both kings is nonetheless implicitly symptomatic of their unsuitability to rule). The similarity between *Grottasǫngr* and some of the eddic elegies extends too to the manner of their staging, with a single central scene and minimal narrative framing (Vésteinn Ólason 2005: 130–32).

Despite the sophistication of its staging and its mythological conception, *Grottasǫngr* has sometimes been described as a work-song, Anthony Faulkes going so far as to suggest the extant poem is 'apparently a literary reworking of what may originally have been an actual work song' (1998: 188).[18] While the notion that women working at a mill might sing as they toiled is unquestionably one of the cultural codes deployed in the compositional matrix of the poem, as Harris has termed it (1990: 239), the development of a mythological poem out of a reworked work-song nevertheless seems an unlikely pre-history for the work given the discursive complexity of so many eddic dialogue poems (Quinn 1992). Viewing the relationship the other way round, Anne Holtsmark argued that the eddic poems sung by supernatural female figures can be counted among medieval work-songs only because of the assumption that they reflect real-life conditions (1956: 202). The broader relationship of *Grottasǫngr* to historical reality is complicated, to say the least, the confusion of allusions to legendary history making it impossible to square

[18] Terry Gunnell also suggests that the poem 'might have a basis in actual corn-grinding songs', though he does not discuss the poem in any detail (1995: 337); see also Harris (1993: 245), Naumann (1999: 99) and von See *et al*. (2000: 846–48).

its representation of relationships and events with that of other sources,[19] let alone to isolate the particular historical and political contexts in which the poem was composed and performed. Nonetheless, *Grottasǫngr*'s engagement with political and ethical issues is plainly legible and the use of eddic conventions and mythological tensions in the composition to enact a critique of kingship contributes in no insignificant way to our understanding of the reception of mythology by those who composed and transmitted eddic poems.

In that regard, Faulkes's description of the work as an 'eddic-type poem' (1998: 188) is probably influenced by its codicological status as an outlier to the main corpus rather than by its structure or themes, which are very much in keeping with other 'canonical' eddic poems. One of its closest analogues, *Grímnismál*, presents a particularly interesting counterpoint to *Grottasǫngr* in the elaboration of the testing of the king set out in the prose prologue to the poem. Two shipwrecked princes, Agnarr and his younger brother Geirrøðr, are fostered by an elderly couple, Frigg and Óðinn in disguise. Óðinn encourages his protégé, Geirrøðr, to abandon his brother and to claim the throne in his homeland, his father having since died. Óðinn gloats over Geirrøðr's success and ridicules the fortunes of Agnarr, who now keeps company with a giantess:

> 'Sér þú Agnar, fóstra þinn, hvar hann elr born við gýgi í hellinum? Enn Geirrøðr, fóstri minn, er konungr ok sitr nú at landi.' [20]
>
> ('Do you see where your foster-son, Agnarr, has children with a giantess in a cave? Whereas my foster-son, Geirrøðr, is a king and rules the land.')

In response to this, Frigg claims King Geirrøðr denies his guests food and tortures them, a claim Óðinn disputes in a wager with her. The poem opens with Óðinn indeed being tortured and denied food by the prince he had promoted to kingship, while the king's son (also called Agnarr) demonstrates kingly virtues in offering a drink to their guest, a move which prompts Óðinn to switch his favour to him and to abandon Geirrøðr to his inevitable demise. While Agnarr's fate in ending up living with a giantess in a cave is presumably meant by Óðinn to signal career failure for an aspiring regent, the larger pattern of the tale shows

[19] For a discussion of other sources mentioning the legendary figures of the poem, see von See *et al*. (2000: 840) and Tolley (2008: 4–9).

[20] Quotations from other eddic poems are from the edition of Neckel and Kuhn (1983) with normalized spelling.

Agnarr prevailing (through his namesake), with Frigg's choice — and arguably the giantess's too — vindicated. Óðinn's behaviour of boastful competitiveness at home and terrifying (if justified) bullying abroad cannot mask the fact that he chose a candidate for kingship who did not possess the quality of generous hospitality necessary for a good ruler. Like *Grottasǫngr*, *Grímnismál* explores the mechanisms by which kings without the requisite qualities might be deposed. A mythological rationale is elaborated in each case — the king loses divine favour one way or another — with *Grottasǫngr* (and the prose prologue to *Grímnismál* to some extent) associating the reliable discernment of kingly qualities not with Óðinn but with female supernatural figures.

There is a thematic analogue to the action of *Grottasǫngr* in *Vǫlundarkviða* as well, where a king greedy for gold enslaves and then mutilates a smith in order to turn his manufacturing skill to the king's own benefit (Grimstad 1985: 3). As Vésteinn Ólason has pointed out, both smithy and mill were vital sites of production in the Viking-age economy (2005: 127), and both poems tap into the social importance of their control. While the structure of *Vǫlundarkviða* spans more than one scene, the final scene (in which the now airborne Vǫlundr reveals the devastating nature of his revenge on the king, having impregnated his only daughter and murdered his two sons) bears some similarities to eddic poems constructed as retaliatory reminiscences. Female supernatural figures do not play a direct role in the bringing down of King Niðuðr, although Vǫlundr's supernatural fury at his imprisonment is fuelled at least in part by the loss of his valkyrie-like swan-wife, for whom the ring given to Niðuðr's daughter was intended. Overall, the poem provides another object lesson in the dangers courted by a king who decides to chance his hand at controlling a supernatural being in order to exploit resources.

Also at play in the explanation of Geirrøðr's demise in the prologue to *Grímnismál*, however, is the tangling of Frigg's apparent prescience with her manipulation of events (she sends her servant to warn the king that a suspicious magician — whom dogs will not approach – will visit him). The wording of the prose prologue to the poem does not make explicit whether Frigg's assessment of Geirrøðr's miserliness is based on insight or prescience (with which she is credited in *Lokasenna* 29) — or, more mundanely, spiteful retaliation for Óðinn's boast — but the poem leaves no doubt that her claim is true, even if made true.[21] While the staging of

[21] Compare Lindow (2002: 150). The author of the prose prologue inclines to the view that

the poem as an escalating monologue of doom might provide diminishing scope for Geirrøðr to negotiate his way out of his misjudgement, nonetheless the potential is implicitly there in the dramatization of the scene: if Agnarr can intervene, so might his father.[22] The staging of *Grottasǫngr* — with two spoken interventions by the misguided king (indirectly reported at stanza 2 and directly at stanza 7) — also exploits the tension between fatal miscalculation and the possibility of reassessment. Far from shutting down the potential for redemption, the presence of the giantesses doing Fróði's bidding in fact keeps alive the potential for him to demonstrate his worth. The complex mythological force represented by Fenja and Menja is not simply fate foreseen; it is also fate, underwritten by social judgement, being enacted. Their prescience therefore paradoxically keeps the focus on the autonomous action of the king.[23]

The personification of fate in the lives of kings

Without engaging in an overtly scholarly fashion with the philosophical issue of predestination versus self-determination, *Grottasǫngr* nonetheless performs the paradox of divine foreknowledge and individual will in the staging of Fróði's encounter with fate. The idea that predestination might be negotiated with the female supernatural figures who personify it seems to be inherent in much eddic dialogue, however subtly: the story of Sigrdrífa, in particular, demonstrates how a valkyrie might change the script while enacting divine predestination. According to a prose interlude within

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labeling Geirrøðr as miserly is slanderous ('Enn þat var inn mesti hégómi, at Geirrøðr væri eigi matgóðr'), and implies that his torture of the visitor is based on the reaction of dogs: 'Ok þó lætr handtaka þann mann, er eigi vildu hundar á ráða […]. Konungr lét hann pína til sagna ok setja milli elda tveggja […]' The more prudent assessment by Agnarr, not only that the visitor should be offered a drink to quench his thirst but that his father is wrong to torture a guest, prevails as the prologue closes: 'Agnarr gekk at Grímni ok gaf honum horn fult at drekka, sagði, at konungr gorði illa, er hann lét pína hann saklausan'.

[22] In the prose epilogue to the poem, it is suggested Geirrøðr does eventually try to rescue his visitor from the fire, but by then it is too late: 'Enn er hann heyrði at Óðinn var þar kominn, stóð hann up ok vildi taka Óðni frá eldinum.'

[23] The poem does not lend itself to a literal interpretation of their psychological motivation, such as Tolley offers: 'The irony that this foresight had failed to prevent their enslavement is not considered […] and their enslavement is regarded (perhaps disingenuously) as a deliberate act of self-humiliation to achieve their final goal' (2008: 44).

Sigrdrífumál, Óðinn had promised victory in battle to a warrior called Hjálm-Gunnarr, whereas Sigrdrífa decided to kill him and let another warrior win: 'hét annarr Hjálm-Gunnarr […] ok hafði Óðinn honum sigri heitið; […] Sigrdrífa feldi Hjálm-Gunnar í orrostunni.' In this context, an individual such as a warrior king cannot, of course, force an operative of fate to alter the plan, but fate, once animated, may be presented as exercising her own will. There is an interesting scene in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (sts 2–4), which casts light on this possibility, though the scenario is ancillary to a fabricated alibi within the rather disjointed plot of the poem. In order to evade capture, one of the archetypal heroes of eddic legend, Helgi Hundingabani, disguises himself as a woman working at a mill. The ferocity in his eyes as he works the mill, however, gives rise to comment (st. 2):

> 'Hvǫss eru augu í Hagals þýju,
> era þat karls ætt, er á kvernum stendr […]
>
> (Sharp are the eyes of Hagall's slave-girl; that is not one of the lineage of workers who stands at the qvern […])

In order to protect him, the fervour in the eyes of the extraordinarily strong mill-worker is explained away by Helgi's accomplice as that of a princess-valkyrie who has been imprisoned by Helgi and put to work milling for him (st. 4):

> 'Þat er lítil vá, þótt lúðr þrumi,
> er mær konungs mǫndul hrœrir;
> hon skævaði skýjum efri
> ok vega þorði sem víkingar,
> áðr hana Helgi hǫptu gorði;
> systir er hon þeira Sigars ok Hǫgna,
> því hefir ǫtul augu Ylfinga man.'
>
> (It does not mean much, even though the mill-stand thunders when the king's daughter turns the handle; she darted over the clouds and dared to fight like vikings before Helgi made her his prisoner; she is the sister of Sigarr and Hǫgni. That's why the Ylfings' girl has frightening eyes.')

Capturing fate and setting it to work is, of course, an impossibility, but the force built up by the imagined attempt is used here figuratively to represent Helgi's explosive heroic power, and, in the development of the poetic sequence as a whole, to mark him out as a preeminent warrior

king.[24] The appearance of a mill-working valkyrie in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* might also suggests that the idea of imprisoning an agent of fate in order to harness her potential for personal advantage might have been a conventional motif, albeit one that has left only a few traces in the recorded eddic corpus. In this instance, the fact that the valkyrie is a figment of the imagination of his accomplice saves Helgi from the ire that Fróði faces when the strong women he captured to work his mill turn out to be the ones deploying an alibi.

The poetic design of *Grottasǫngr* pits a legendary king against giant-kind in order to explore how the larger patterns expressed by the mythology affect the workings of human society, with a particular focus on the harnessing of natural resources for social benefit. Tension between the *æsir* and *jǫtnar* is widely exemplified in mythological sources and in many cases conflict stems from a desire by the gods to acquire and exploit the power of the giants as it is represented by their possessions, knowledge and abilities. As Lindow succinctly puts it in his discussion of *Grottasǫngr*, 'Odin and the gods may be able to acquire precious objects from the giants, but humans had better be very careful about such matters' (2002: 153). The framework for Lindow's assessment is, however, one in which the predisposition of giants is understood to be inimical to the interests of men — 'The poem gives us the sense that the giants threaten humans as well as gods, but whereas the gods can mostly keep the giants in check, humans cannot' (Lindow 2002: 153) — a framework which does not take into account the mythological polyvalence of giantesses like Fenja and Menja who are, in part, conceived of as personifications of fate. Once they engage with kings, at least within the generic conventions of eddic poetry, female supernatural figures such as these emerge into a highly interactive arena where the terms of engagement appear to be significantly different from those in operation between gods and giantesses. In this regard, scholars have often deduced a false connection between the visit of the two giantesses to Fróði and the scene in *Vǫluspá* 8 in which three giantesses arrive to disrupt the gods, who are cheerfully playing a table-game in the meadow, well supplied with gold ('[…] var þeim vættergis vant ór gulli, unz þrjár kómu […]'). In Snorri's paraphrase of this scene, he explicitly identifies the giantesses as

[24] For a discussion of the similarities between this scene and *Grottasǫngr*, see von See *et al*. (2000: 845–46) and Tolley (2008: 29–30).

destroying the golden age of the gods,[25] though as Margaret Clunies Ross observes (1994: 163), it is possible Snorri was influenced by classical analogues when he went beyond the description in the poem, where the vision remains enigmatic. The scene does not provide a close fit with the circumstances of *Grottasǫngr*, where, for one thing, it is the giantesses who introduce into the society the prosperity freely-milled gold could bring, and for another, it is the reign of a king rather than a game among gods that is disrupted. Nonetheless, the assumption that the poem deals with similar themes to *Vǫluspá* 8 is common.[26]

Whatever the meaning of the trope in *Vǫluspá*, in *Grottasǫngr* the cessation of gold production is figured as divine retribution and is motivated by socio-political values (presumably the giantesses could, after all, have smashed their way out of servitude whenever they chose to). The political motivation of the giantesses underlies Ursula Dronke's reading of the poem as well — she describes the girls as 'manic fighters for a fine cause' (2011: 147) — though she regards the generosity offered by the milling giantesses to be without ulterior motive — 'they are idealists' (2011: 152) — and not as any kind of test of the king.[27] The critique of exploitation is also picked up by Clive Tolley, who notes that the poem 'is concerned to show the dark underbelly of the "golden age" of Fróða friðr, truly a sham which is bought at the price of inhuman cruelty towards the underclasses […]'.[28] No age of peace and prosperity actually eventuates in the poem, however, and it remains a chimeric possibility in the sleeping hours of the kingdom, between the commencement of gold milling and the arrival of the dawn army. It is a missed opportunity for a society led by an irresponsible king, to be sure, but hardly the social underbelly of a profligate age of conspicuous regal spending. That is not to say that a legendary age of peace and prosperity is not invoked in the poem; it

[25] '[…] ok er sú ǫld kǫlluð gullaldr, áðr en spiltisk af tillkvámu kvennana. þær kómu ór Jǫtunheimum.' (Faulkes 1988: 15); 'and that age is called the golden age before it was destroyed by the arrival of women. They came from Giantland.'

[26] See, for example, Harris (1990: 240), Clunies Ross (1994: 163), Ármann Jakobsson (1994: 63) and Tolley (2008: 16). Compare Gro Steinsland, who, within her account of *hieros gamos*, observes: 'When a giantess emerges on the mythical scene, it means as a rule that something new is coming forth' (2008: 228).

[27] Dronke interprets the conclusion of the poem as 'a searing exposure of castigation and blame by the giant girls — a heartfelt revulsion against the king […] — who trod on their idealism […] They step away from the wreckage, like the ladies they are' (2011: 149). Vale Ursula.

[28] Tolley (2008: 17); see also Ebenhauer (1976).

is (particularly in the description of society offered in stanza 6), but in a rhetorical fashion within the foreshortened time-frame of the poem's staging. There are other sources in which a capricious act by a supernatural female does underlie the death of Fróði and the end of an age of prosperity — Saxo, for instance, tells how an acquisitive woman turned herself into a sea-cow and killed the king with her tusk (V, xvi) — but in *Grottasǫngr* the prospect of a golden age is presented not as a pre-existing state which the giantesses destroy but as one extreme of the pendulum of fortune supernatural female figures could swing for a king, if he deserved it.

I mentioned earlier that the only kenning for gold in which Grotti appears is in a composition by Snorri Sturluson. In the discussion of kennings for the sea in *Skáldskaparmál*, however, there is a verse by a poet named Snæbjǫrn,[29] which refers to Grotti in the context of the churning ocean:

> Hvatt kveða hrœra Grotta
> hergrimmastan skerja
> út fyrir jarðar skauti
> eylúðrs níu brúðir,
> þær er — lungs — fyrir lǫngu
> liðmeldr — skipa hlíðar
> baugskerðir rístr barði
> ból — Amlóða mólu. (Faulkes 1998: 38)[30]
>
> (They say nine brides of the skerries of the island-mill [> sea > waves] vigorously stir Grotti the most army-grim one, out beyond the edge of the land, they who, long ago, milled the meal of Amlóði's liquid [> sea > salt?/ sand?] — the ring-destroyer cuts with the ship's prow the dwelling of ships' slope [> wave > sea].)

While the syntactic order of this stanza (and the constitution of its kennings) is open to debate, the grammar of the first half-stanza is clear: the adjective *hergrimmastr* can only modify Grotti, which is the direct object of the verb *hrœra*. Most scholars have construed Grotti as the head-word of a kenning (working with either of the genitive-case determinants,

[29] Snæbjǫrn's poetry is only known from this stanza and one other quoted by Snorri; he is classed as an Icelandic poet of the eleventh century in *Skjaldedigtning* (B1: 201).

[30] Snorri offers some clarification after the quotation of Snæbjǫrn's verse by adding 'Hér er kallat hafit Amlóða kvern' ('Here the sea is called Amlóði's qvern'), though, curiously, the form of the name in the Codex Regius is *Amlona* (Faulkes 1998: 140).

skerja or *eylúðrs*),[31] although Grotti makes an unconventionally transparent head-word, referring apparently to itself. Accordingly, an interpretation is proposed above with Grotti modified only by the specific adjective *hergrimmastr*, and the determinants *skerja* and *eylúðrs* constituting a *rekit* kenning with the headword *brúðir* — though admittedly the transfer of syntactic and semantic load away from Grotti is not without awkwardness. In this reading, Grotti functions either as a simple legendary allusion or as a *heiti* for mill (derived from the legend). Syntactic ambiguity aside, this verse clearly reveals a deep association in Old Norse poetry between Grotti and maritime turbulence in addition to the association of generating the most ruthless of armies which is elsewhere only elaborated in *Grottasǫngr*. In his display of kennings for the sea, Snæbjǫrn also invokes the mythological notion that waves are themselves female personifications of the chthonic force that is the sea, and, tellingly, he figures their activity as a form of milling.[32] Here in a kaleidoscopic skaldic figuration of the sea, female supernatural figures are again attributed with creating danger for warriors — this time while they are voyaging across the ocean — though in the context of the praise poem this stanza was presumably once a part of, the ring-destroyer has an odds-on chance of surviving the challenges the waves throw at him and their presence is primarily designed to lend definition to his sea-faring prowess and his fearlessness.

Conclusion

Earlier in this essay I noted the unique preservation context of the poem, insinuated into the text of *Skáldskaparmál* at some point during the transmission of the text, possibly by redactors in the fourteenth century, either in full or with just the first stanza alluding to the whole. (It is not impossible that Snorri quoted the whole poem in his text of *Skáldskapar-*

[31] von See *et al*. construe the kenning '*skerja hergrimmastr Grótti* "der Schären menschenfeindlichster Grotti"' as meaning 'Mahlstrom' (2000: 844) as does Tolley (2008: 26). See also the discussion of this stanza by Meissner (1921: 92), Faulkes (1998: 182–83) and Vésteinn Ólason (2005: 119–20).

[32] Indeed, if the bipartite legend of Grotti told in *Skáldskaparmál* sets the interpretive frame, what they mill from the sea might possibly be 'salt', rather than 'sand', as it is usually understood under the influence of Saxo's account (III, vi).

mál, but the fact that there is no quotation at all in the Uppsaliensis or Wormianus codices, only one stanza in AM 748 II 4to, and no introduction to the quotation in GKS 2367 4to makes it more likely that the poem has been added at a later time.) The consequent inconsistencies between the prose account and *Grottasǫngr* were not subsequently smoothed over and therefore reveal the complexity of the legend in transmission: according to the prose account, Fenja and Menja are *ambáttir* ('servants') with no mention of their giant ancestry; there were two quern-stones not one; Grotti is not destroyed in the milling but is instead taken as booty, along with Fenja and Menja, by a sea-king named Mýsingr, who is the leader of the army ground out by the millstone. Furthermore in the prose account, King Fróði is explicitly identified as presiding over the legendary era of peace (Fróða friðr) — though peace prevailed before the arrival of Grotti — and the period in Scandinavian history when Fróði ruled is paralleled with the reign of the emperor Augustus, at the time when Christ was born (Faulkes 1998: 51–2). Some aspects of the prose account have influenced the interpretation of the poem: Fróði's specification that Fenja and Menja may sleep no longer than a cuckoo stops singing has prompted some editors to emend stanza 7 in line with the prose, for instance.[33] And the prose account makes explicit some things that are only implicit in the poem: the prose states, for instance, that Fenja and Menja had ground out an army against Fróði by the time they had finished their song,[34] an exact fit between the events depicted in the poem and the duration of the giantesses' recitation that is only implicit in the poem. By way of contrast to the prose account in the Codices Regius and Trajectinus, the earlier Upsaliensis text presents a much sparer account, with just one quern-stone which produces gold and nothing else, servant-girls who are the only ones who can move it, and no cuckoos.[35]

The 'explanatory and repetitive frames which spill over into the accompanying prose', as Harris described them (1990:239), therefore complicate the interpretation of *Grottasǫngr*, especially with regard to the sequel to the story, in which another king meets his doom at the

[33] See, for example, Tolley (2008: 48) and Dronke (2011: 147).

[34] 'Þá er sagt at þær kvæði ljóð þau er kallat er Grottasǫngr. Ok áðr létti kvæðinu mólu þær her at Fróða svá at á þeiri nótt kom þar […]' (Faulkes 1998: 52).

[35] Gvll er kallat miol froþa þvi at froþi konvngr keypti ambattirnar fenio ok menio. ok þa fanz kvernsteinn einn sva mikill i ðan morkv at engi feck dregit. En sv nattvra fylgþi at allt miol þat er vndir var malit varþ at gvllit. Ambattirnar fengv dregit steininn. konvngr let þær mala gvll vm hrið. Þa gaf han þeim eigi meira svefn en kveþa matti lioð eitt. Siþan molo þær her a hendr honvm […]' (Grape *et al*. 1977: 87).

hands of Fenja and Menja. The sea-king, Mýsingr, is transfixed not by the unalloyed pleasure derived from infinite gold production, but by the prospect of ceaseless milling of salt. In wording suggestive of the same dynamics between the girls and the king as in *Grottasǫngr*, they ask him at midnight whether he might not yet have tired of salt — 'ok at miðri nótt spurðu þær, ef eigi leiddisk Mýsingi salt' (Faulkes 1998:52) – their querulous posture reminiscent of the assured refrain of the *vǫlva*.[36] Like Fróði, Mýsingr commands them to keep milling, which they do. Within a short time, however, the ship sinks under the weight of salt, the eye of the millstone causing a perpetual whirlpool in the now salty ocean: 'ok var þar eptir svelgr í hafinu er særinn fellr í kvernaraugat. Þá varð sær saltr'. Like the forfeiture of prosperity which afflicts Fróði's kingdom, Mýsingr's misjudgement creates a lasting hazard for seafarers, as the energy unleashed into the sea by Grotti returning to its chthonic origin plays out for eternity. In both legends involving Grotti, the extraordinary benefits to human society of supernaturally endowed natural resources are lost, and in its seismic plunge, the mill-stone marks the surface of the sea forever with a reminder to men of the forces that control the natural world.[37]

While some of the poem's allusions to legendary figures do not sit easily with other sources and will remain baffling, *Grottasǫngr* readily yields its broader meaning once the mythologically motivated plot is taken into account and once the poem is considered in its generic context among other eddic dialogue poems. In focussing on the spectacular dawn defeat of Fróði at the hands of the night-milled army, the poem takes its place among the significant corpus of medieval Scandinavian works that are structured by the memorably sensational deaths of kings: *Ynglingatal* is the foremost example of the type, but the influence of the idea is also apparent in a number of compilations of kings' sagas. Behind such an interest lies the sense that in the manner of a king's death, the design of the fate he had been allotted is laid bare. Accordingly, the final judgement of a king's worth may not necessarily be the praise he commissioned in skaldic measure during his reign but the poetic rendering of his encounter with death in the anonymous, and popular, eddic tradition. Even if specificity of reign becomes lost in transmission, the values of good

[36] Compare *Vǫluspá: Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?* ('Do you know enough yet, or what?').

[37] The short treatise known as *Den lille Skálda* contains a brief account of the mill, Grotti, which locates Mýsingr's sunken ship and the resultant whirlpool in the Pentland Firth (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 259).

kingship are still clearly delineated in these eddic stagings of encounters between a king and his fate.

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Summary

The eddic poem *Grottasǫngr* is the focus of this essay, which begins by considering the circumstances of the poem's preservation (written out in one medieval manuscript of *Snorra Edda* at the end of a passage in *Skáldskaparmál* about gold kennings) as well as the genre of the poem. Generically, *Grottasǫngr* belongs among the group of eddic poems which dramatize an encounter between speakers from different mythological spheres. It shares some similarities with *Grímnismál*, in which King Geirrøðr's misidentification of his interlocutor spells the beginning of the end for him. Like Geirrøðr, *Grottasǫngr*'s protagonist King Fróði does not realise the slave-girls working at his mill are in fact giantesses, much less that they, like Geirrøðr's visitor, are assessing his worthiness to rule even while he announces his intention to allow them no rest from milling in order to satisfy his greed for gold. Parallels may also be drawn between *Grottasǫngr* and *Vǫlundar-*

kviða, in which a king enslaves a supernatural being who, in turn, brings about the king's demise. Greed (and its converse, miserliness) motivate the ill-judged behaviour of kings in all three plots. In each case, too, the king encounters a supernatural being. In *Grottasǫngr*, the figures the king must contend with represent a complex embodiment of fate, incorporating aspects of *valkyrjur* and *vǫlur* as well as the giantesses who, within the depiction of the poem, demonstrate control over natural resources as well as the fate of kings. By pitting the king against these agents of fortune, *Grottasǫngr* explores the tension between divine foreknowledge and individual will. The poem also adds to the body of Old Norse works that depict the memorable deaths of kings, which are likely to have had the aim of encouraging reflection on the values of good kingship.

Keywords: *Grottasǫngr*, eddic poetry, genre, *Snorra Edda*, legendary kings

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Divine Semantics
Terminology for the Human and the Divine in Old Norse Poetry

Brittany Schorn

Introduction: the Old Norse Gods in Context

In the world imagined by the Poetic Edda, the boundaries between the supernatural and human realms are nebulous and highly permeable. References to pagan deities abound throughout Old Norse poetry, but exactly how their reality was supposed to relate to that of the human audience is often far from clear, and doubtless varied across place and time. Yet these supernatural figures clearly enjoyed a continued relevance in the Christian period and managed to pass from myth into literature with considerable success (cf. Abram 2009: 7–19).[1]

The cultural background that made this transfer possible is reflected in poetic terminology for mankind and the gods: the gods were, in short, conceived of as essentially similar to human beings, inhabiting more or less the same space and governed by the same basic conditions of life. Even when belief in their divinity became absolutely disallowed, their rationalization as fully human allowed them to be preserved in literature as human archetypes. A widespread tendency, extending back to the Hellenistic Greek philosopher Euhemeros of Messina (fl. late 4th century BC), was indeed to see the gods as ancient humans of strength and power who had come in the course of time to be worshipped as divinities. Christian writers from Cyprian (d. 258) onwards took Euhemeros' proposal several steps further, specifically adding that demons had been responsible for the wrongful deification of men. However, there was less certainty about

[1] I am very grateful to Judy Quinn, Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen, Richard Dance and two anonymous readers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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the status of the figures themselves who had been cultivated as gods. For some writers they too were demons. Yet for other observers they remained heroes and dynastic founders, worthy of honour and celebration if not of worship. This was the view to which Snorri Sturluson and Saxo Grammaticus subscribed when they discussed the heathen gods in the Prose Edda and the Gesta Danorum (I.vii.1 (ed. Friis-Jensen and transl. Zeeberg 2005, I: 112–14)) respectively, and although explicit comments elsewhere in Scandinavian literature are scarce, euhemerism likely provided a widespread defence for continued propagation of stories concerning heathen gods (On the general background of euhemeristic thought in the ancient and medieval periods, see Winiarczyk 2002; and for Old Norse context Faulkes 1983; and Schjødt 2009).

The attraction which euhemerization held for Scandinavians may have derived from both its respectable scholarly origins and from features of pre-existing belief (Hall 2007: 50–51). Behind the latter were fundamental differences in the perception of pre-Christian and Christian deities (for an overview of which see Dubois 1999: 29–32). These differences facilitated the adoption of euhemeristic interpretations that perpetuated the view embedded in the wisdom poems themselves: that the wisdom of the gods speaks to the concerns of mankind. The question of what exactly a "god" or supernatural being is understood to be in any culture is a difficult one. Indeed, even a conception of "supernatural" depends on a firm sense of what can or could constitute "natural": a view which cannot always be traced in medieval or other pre-modern beliefs (Winzeler 2008: 6–9; and Eller 2007: 34–44). Nonetheless, the term will be retained for convenience, to refer to the congeries of unseen creatures, forces and entities which made up Old Norse pre-Christian belief. Religious anthropologists stress that while belief in the supernatural is widespread — perhaps even universal — in human cultures, incredible variety exists between societies in their concepts of how these beings or forces actually relate to each other and to the human world (for a selection of the extensive literature see Bowie 2000; Winzeler 2008; Lawson 2003; and Eller 2007: 82–109). Even the terminology is problematic and depends on an individual's point of view: many religions count as part of their conception of the natural order beings that outsiders would class as self-evidently "supernatural". Euhemerism, for example, was born out of philosophically informed reflection on Classical paganism, which provides an interesting analogue to Old Norse mythology and puts some of its distinctive features into relief. Classical paganism is better recorded

in the words of contemporary believers and more thoroughly studied by ancient and modern scholars (Henrichs 2010). The evolving conception of Greek divinities (to say nothing of many other supernatural entities such as "spirits") was markedly different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of a single God. As Albert Henrichs points out, however, the poets of epic literature tell us "who is who among the gods, but they do not reveal what it is that makes a god a god" (Henrichs 2010: 28). He goes on to suggest a generalized implicit definition of a Greek god as immortal, anthropomorphic and in possession of superhuman power. This power is the most ubiquitous and varied quality of divinity. It is not absolute like that of the Christian God, and is normally defined in contrast to human ability. Indeed, it often takes a display of superhuman power to reveal the presence of a god among men or corroborate their divinity. As in Old Norse texts, the possibility for deception that the gods' anthropomorphized form allows is often exploited in myths. Unlike the Christian God, the Greek gods are subject to conditions of mortal existence such as birth and reproduction, but not to death. Henrichs refers to immortality as the ultimate benchmark of the Greek gods' divinity. The contrast here with the Norse gods is striking, as some of the most prominent myths in the highly eschatological surviving representation of Old Norse religion centre on the gods' futile quest to circumvent their own mortality: age is delayed by apples, the destructive forces of the giants held at bay in the present and the possibility of resurrection held out for a select few; but again and again we are assured that the principal members of the pantheon will die.

"Gods" — however defined — should not be allowed to dominate views of pre-Christian Scandinavian beliefs completely. Other forces and entities can be traced through surviving texts, inscriptions, archaeological remains and comparative studies, particularly of the Sámi peoples. The latter in particular lived in close proximity to the pre-Christian vikings and preserved a rich set of beliefs with a prominent element of natural and ancestor "spirits" as well as "gods" comparable to those of Old Norse mythology (Pentikäinen 2007 and 1999; Honko *et al*. 1994; Karsten 1955; and Siikala 2002). Evidence for these beliefs is largely derived from later sources, and should not be applied to other parts of the pre-Christian Scandinavian world too readily. Even so, traces survive for similar, smaller-scale belief in "spirits" in various parts of the Old Norse-speaking area (Dubois 1999: 45–68). For present purposes analysis of pre-conversion religion will focus on the particular literary manifestation

in the Poetic Edda and related sources. In these texts, whatever the situation in earlier times, the gods stand out very prominently. To a large extent this is hardly surprising: such powerful, anthropomorphized beings tend to feature more prominently in literary sources in a range of cultures (Henrichs 2010: 23–28). Of necessity, the view taken here therefore focuses strongly on the beings which stand out in the literary view of the pagan world: particularly the Æsir, though they did not completely exclude the presence of Vanir, elves and other beings from the literature. Among all of them, hard and fast distinctions and definitions often prove evasive.

Words for Men, Gods and Others

Composers of texts in Old Norse were faced with applying native terminology to a broad range of supernatural entities. A systematic examination of this terminology is necessary in order to test assumptions and sharpen more general impressions about the nature of the supernatural world in which the texts of the Poetic Edda were set. By the time the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, and indeed all other extant Old Norse manuscripts, were produced Christianity had taken hold in Scandinavia, adding a whole new element to what was probably an already complex range of pre-existing labels. Writing and manuscript preservation were dominated by the Church: as such, a much clearer and richer view survives of the terminology applied to the figures of Christian belief. Eddic poetry on mythological subjects will therefore be taken as the starting point, but the evidence of skaldic terminology for the beings of pre-Christian mythology will also be considered. The large corpus of skaldic poetry provides important material for comparison, with the advantage of in many cases being attributed (albeit with varying reliability) to actual historical figures or associated with real events that may provide some basis for dating. Finally, I will briefly consider the vocabulary for the divine in explicitly Christian poetry, in order to highlight certain contrasts which suggest reasons why pagan and Christian subject matter was able to co-exist, not least in the language of skaldic poetry over several productive centuries.

By considering terminology for humanity and the divine across Old Norse poetry, it is possible to clarify how various supernatural beings were conceived of and, to an extent, how these conceptions were

reconciled with the world-view of Christian religion. Firm conclusions are not always possible, but some tentative hypotheses can be tested and are necessary for any productive study of the literary incarnation of Old Norse mythology.

The Treatment of Mythological Figures in Eddic Diction[2]

It is in eddic poetry that mythological figures, and Óðinn most of all, receive the most developed treatment. First preserved in manuscripts of the thirteenth century and after, this poetry is anonymous and purports to report the direct speech of beings who had not been the subject of active worship for centuries. The extant versions of some of these poems (though by no means all) may well originate in the oral, pre-Christian past, and retain some evidence of their function in the society that originally produced them, as previously discussed. The Codex Regius manuscript of the Poetic Edda has no preliminary disclaimer like Snorri's *Prologue* or *Skáldskaparmál* to explain why such material should be of interest to a Christian medieval audience and the scant clues that it does provide about its function have to be deduced from the nature of the compilation itself: the selection and ordering of the poems; sporadic passages of prose commentary that may have been added by the compiler; and so on.

While the world to which many of the eddic poems claimed to bear witness had long since passed away, they nevertheless retained value not only as repositories of factual information about the world as it had been (or as it was understood to have been) but also about the world and human society in the composers' and copiers' present. Precepts for behaviour feature throughout, although the largest concentration by far occurs in *Hávamál*, which I will examine more closely as a special case below. In the words of Carolyne Larrington, *Hávamál* "would have spoken to the anxious men and women of the Sturlung Age with the same relevance as when it was first put into metrical form" (Larrington 1993: 19).

[2] All quotations from the Poetic Edda are taken from Neckel and Kuhn 1983 and translations (with some adaptation) are taken from Larrington 1996. Discussion of individual words is informed by extensive use of Kellogg 1988; de Vries 1961; Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson 1957; and Meissner 1921 (to all of which references are generally elided for reasons of concision).

Indeed, the narrative frames of the other wisdom poems in the Codex Regius in general, although varying in complexity, are certainly all more developed than the monologues and colloquies recited by archetypal wise men that otherwise feature commonly in medieval wisdom literature. These narratives are generally preoccupied with exploring the source of the information the poems convey and its potential use as well as providing entertaining mnemonics. The potential for human beings to learn from these paradigms of behaviour is made more explicit by the narrative frame of *Grímnismál*: one of the few mythological poems in which human characters do actually figure, and in which wisdom is successfully extracted from Óðinn to the benefit of one man and the doom of another. This relies on the apparently unproblematic ability of divine figures to act in the human realm. Descriptions of human action in the explicitly mythological sphere are for the most part confined to the dead in the afterlife (as for example with the eddic memorial lays *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál* (ed. Whaley 2013 I, 171 and II, 1003). Yet some figures, like the valkyries and the enigmatic Vǫlundr manage to lead a dual existence as both human and supernatural beings.

Strong parallels between human and divine nature are suggested not only in the narratives of the Poetic Edda, but also by the vocabulary used to refer to different types of being. Many of the words used for men in these poems do not necessarily refer to human beings exclusively and appear to apply unproblematically to other types of creatures. Essential similarities between men and certain supernatural beings such as elves and gods or æsir have recently been traced by Alaric Hall, and share many parallels across the Germanic-speaking world and beyond (Hall 2007: 49–50). This is true of the vocabulary used for female mythological beings as well. While the range of terms attested for them in eddic poetry is relatively limited, they fall into the same broad patterns as the words for men, as generic terms apply equally to different types of women. In *Fǫr Skírnis*, the giantess the god longs for is a *mær* and a *man*. The fact that the resistance of Freyr's suit is based on tribal affiliations must be worked out through references to their respective social identities: Gerðr is the *mær Gymis*, a giant, and Freyr expects that "ása oc álfa þat vill engi maðr, at við sátt sém" ("No man of the Æsir or elves desires that they should be together") (*Fǫr Skírnis* v. 7 ll. 4–6, ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 70; transl. Larrington 1996: 62). Ultimately, however, the ability of the gods to assert their will over external forces is once again confirmed, but this outcome is only achieved through threats of a magically potent curse.

That the same terminology extends to goddesses is demonstrated by a reference to Freyja as Óðs mær in *Vǫluspá* (v. 25 l. 8 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 6; transl. Larrington 1996: 7)).

The flexibility of this type of vocabulary is most evident from the word *maðr* itself, which occurs most commonly in gnomic statements and elsewhere with the impersonal function of 'one' (although it means 'man' as well, translating it this way can be misleading and *menn* in the plural is used to refer to people in the non-gendered sense). It is clearly used in this way to refer to gods as well as men. Thus in *Fǫr Skírnis*, Freyr declares his feelings for Gerðr exceed those of *manni hveim, ungom* ('Any man, young') (*Fǫr Skírnis* v. 7 ll. 2–3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 70; transl. Larrington 1996: 62)), before him, and in *Hyndluljóð*, Heimdallr is described as a *naðgǫfgan mann* ('Spear-magnificent man') (*Hyndluljóð* v. 35 l. 6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 294; transl. Larrington 1996: 258)). This encompassing sense of the word is most in evidence in a couple of stanzas from *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* that contrast humans with other kinds of beings in which they are called *mennzcir menn* for the sake of clarity (*Grímnismál* v. 31 l. 6 and *Sigrdrífumál* v. 18 l. 8 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 63 and 193; transl. Larrington 1996: 56 and 169)).

This wider meaning is also evident in a number of words used synonymously with *maðr*, which are similarly applied to non-human beings in the Poetic Edda. *Halr*,[3] another term that occurs in gnomic pronouncements, is used in *Hymiskviða* by the giant Ægir in his description of Þórr as an *orðbæginn halr* ('Contentious man') (*Hymiskviða* v. 3 l. 2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 88; transl. Larrington 1996: 78)). Óðinn too aligns himself with *halar* in *Hávamál* when he quotes a maxim about the relationship between men and women:

> Mǫrg er góð mær, ef gorva kannar,
> hugbrigð við hali;
>
> ("Many a good girl when you know her better is fickle of heart towards men")

(*Hávamál* v. 102 ll. 1–3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 32; transl. Larrington 1996: 28).)

[3] While this poetic word seems to have the more specific sense of 'hero', it appears as an acceptable alternative for 'man' when it suits the demands of alliteration, as in the example below. Cf. the Old English *hæleð* (Holthausen 1974, 144–45).

He then exemplifies it with an episode from his own experience:

> þá ec þat reynda, er iþ ráðspaca
> teygða ec á flærðir flióð.
>
> ("I found that out when I tried to seduce that sagacious woman into shame")

(*Hávamál* v. 102 ll. 4–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 32; transl. Larrington 1996: 28).)

The woman here is Billing's girl; most likely a giantess (or possibly a dwarf: Lindow 2001: 79–80; and McKinnell 2005: 99–105; cf. Dronke 1969–2011, III: 41–43). This reference to her illustrates the gnomic observations about the falseness of both sexes in love, and demonstrates an underlying acceptance that the relationships between genders are fundamentally the same for different types of being.

The applications of the word *seggr* are similar to those of *halr*. In *Vǫlundarkviða* it is used separately to refer to human men and to Vǫlundr himself, who is also called *vísi álfa* ('prince of elves') (*Vǫlundarkviða* v. 6 l. 5, v. 7 l. 8, v. 23 l. 2 and v. 32 l. 2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 118, 121 and 122; transl. Larrington 1996: 103, 106 and 107). In one case *seggr* is possibly used collectively to refer to both men and supernatural beings. Frigg puts a stop to the exchange of insults between Loki and Óðinn in *Lokasenna* when they begin to reveal information that is too damaging by saying that their deeds should not be spoken of before *seggiom* (*Lokasenna* v. 25 l. 3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 101; transl. Larrington 1996: 89)). In its immediate context, this could refer to the assembled gods but it might also refer to the human audience of the poem.

Elsewhere in *Lokasenna* another common word for men, *ǫld*, refers specifically to the Æsir. As is often the case, the choice of word appears to be primarily dictated by the demands of the alliteration. When Loki arrives uninvited at their feast, Bragi confronts him and declares that the Æsir know *hveim þeir alda* ('which men') (*Lokasenna* v. 8 l. 5 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 98; transl. Larrington 1983: 86)) they should invite to their feast. Later in the poem, Heimdallr warns Loki against drunkenness with a gnome that would not be out of place in *Hávamál* or *Sigrdrífumál*.

> Þvíat ofdryccia veldr alda hveim,
> er sína mælgi né manað.
>
> ("For too much drinking makes every man not keep his talkativeness in check")

(*Lokasenna* v. 47 ll. 4–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 105; transl. Larrington 1996: 92))

There is no sense that the phrasing of this precept should prevent it from being applied to a god, whose divine nature does not shield him from the consequences of over-imbibing. The gods are accused of and admit to all kinds of human weaknesses and taboos in the course of the poem, and would perhaps benefit from *Hávamál*'s wisdom as much as any human audience. Stanzas 12, 13 and 14 of *Hávamál* all use the word *gumi* for those who should avoid drunkenness (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 19). Though it is used commonly in later gnomic poetry, it occurs relatively infrequently outside of *Hávamál* in the Poetic Edda and is never directly applied to a non-human character, but there are instances in which it has an indefinite function similar to that of *maðr*. Rather than setting up a dichotomy between standards of behaviour for divine and human characters, perhaps Óðinn means to boast that he in particular is able to function above this advice (Quinn 2010: 196–69). Another possibly ambiguous usage occurs in stanza 26 of *Fǫr Skírnis*. Skírnir threatens Gerðr, saying:

> þar scaltu ganga, er þic gumna synir
> síðan æva sé.
>
> ("There you shall go, where the sons of men will never see you again")

(*Fǫr Skírnis* v. 26 ll. 4–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 74; transl. Larrington 1996: 65).)

Her removal to *hel*, worded very similarly to other death threats, separates her not just from men but from the living more generally. Even if it is men as such that are meant, the repeated use of this and other similar formulae with reference to supernatural beings as well as human characters underlines their common mortality.

This is also evident from the use of another word commonly used for mankind, *firar*, whose prototypical meaning is something like "living beings" (Holthausen 1974, 121). It is used to refer collectively to Þórr and his human servant Þjálfi, for example, in Þórsdrápa (Eilífr Goðrúnarson, Þórsdrápa v. 82 l. 2; cf. Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 18 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 28; transl. Faulkes 1987: 84)). In the opening stanza of *Vǫluspá*, the *vǫlva* asks for attention as she relates *forn spiǫll fira* ('ancient histories of the living') (*Vǫluspá* v. 1 l. 7 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 1; transl. Larrington 1996: 4)), and then goes on to begin

her account with her first memories among the giants, well before the advent of man. The use of *firar* in *Alvíssmál* is particularly interesting, as in a listing poem such as this words for different kinds of beings must have been at the forefront of the poet's mind. The lists of poetic vocabulary for various natural features and phenomena contained in this poem are ordered according to the various types of creatures said to employ them. When Þórr first addresses Alvíss, he asks "hvat er þat fira" ("what sort of man is that") who seems to him þursa líki ('in the likeness of an ogre') (*Alvíssmál* v. 2 ll. 1 and 4 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 124; transl. Larrington 1996: 109); for interpretation see von See *et al*. 1997–, III: 300). In his reply Alvíss reveals his name and confirms that he is a dwarf. Þórr then goes on to quiz him about poetic *heiti* because, he says, Alvíss knows about all kinds of *firar*, those who live *heimi hveriom í* ("in each of the worlds") (*Alvíssmál* v. 9 l. 6 etc. (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 125; transl. Larrington 1996: 110)). The wisdom that the dwarf Alvíss then rattles off to impress Þórr takes the form of lists of *heiti* paired with the category of creature to which they are ascribed.

The one exception to this pattern in *Alvíssmál* occurs in stanzas 14, 18, 20, 26, 32 and 34, which also include a line identifying a word with the language of a place, rather than the types of beings that inhabit it. The poetic synonyms in these lines all alliterate with *hel*. The composition of the lists is not completely regular and while variation appears to be the ideal, repetition is allowed for the sake of the alliteration. Thus *menn* and *halir* are used in the same stanza (28), as are Æsir and *uppregin* (10) (*Alvíssmál* v. 28 and v. 10 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 128 and 125; transl. Larrington 1983: 113 and 110)). Though it is apparently acceptable, *halir* is, however, only used once. The apposition of those who live in *hel* with the various types of creatures living in other worlds thus appears to be deliberate. Their characterization as dead can be taken to be an identification as fundamental as the racial identifications of living creatures. Unlike other beings, they are defined above all by their cosmological location. The word *hel* is used almost invariably in eddic poetry to denote the place rather than the mythological figure, although this sense is well attested by early skaldic verse (Abram 2006).

Indeed, the distinction between the dead and the living appears to be more important in some ways than the distinctions between the racial classifications of beings. All are portrayed as geographically separate in *Alvíssmál*, but there are some indications elsewhere in the Poetic Edda that there is more difference between the living and the dead than among

individual living beings (for the distinctively universal, involuntary and unforeseen properties of death see Winzeler 2008: 159–68). The way the relationship between the different *heimar* in the mythological landscape is envisaged by the eddic poems is not entirely clear and is not necessarily consistent (for full discussion see Clunies Ross 1994–98, I: 50–56; and Lindow 1997: 13–20). *Heimr* can simply have the sense of 'home' and is commonly compounded with the names of various classes of beings. The prophetess in *Vǫluspá* remembers nine *heimar* (v. 2 l. 5 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 1; transl. Larrington 1996: 4)), and the giant Vafþrúðnir accounts for his knowledge about the secrets of gods and giants by claiming that he has been to all nine and beyond into Niflhel (*Vafþrúðnismál* v. 43 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 53; transl. Larrington 1996: 47)): the portion of *hel* in which the dead reside. The use of the word *heimr* elsewhere in explicit or implicit contrast with *hel* lends support to the idea that the realm of the dead is something fundamentally separate from that of all living beings.

When Óðinn has need to consult the dead in *Baldrs draumar* to get information that he cannot otherwise access, he commands the *vǫlva* to tell him the news from *hel*, because he already knows what is happening ór *heimi* (*Baldrs draumar* v. 6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 278; transl. Larrington 1996: 244); for context see von See *et al*. 1997–, III: 425–28). This use of *heimr* on its own to refer to the world in which all the living dwell also occurs elsewhere. Brynhildr's instructions for her funeral are her final wish í heimi ('in the world') in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (v. 65 l. 3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 217; transl. Larrington 1996: 190)), and to go from *heimi* is a common expression for dying. It is most often used, of course, with reference to human characters, but they alone do not populate *hel* and similar expressions can equally apply to other types of being. For example, in *Fǫr Skírnis*, Skírnir threatens the giantess Gerðr with a fate worse than death that will leave her "horfa heimi ór, snugga heliar til" ("facing out of the world, hankering towards hell") (*Fǫr Skírnis* v. 27 ll. 3–4 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 74; transl. Larrington 1996: 65)), and in *Lokasenna*, Þórr threatens to strike Loki with his hammer and send him í hel if he does not stop speaking (v. 63 l. 5 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 109; transl. Larrington 1996: 65)). Humans and supernatural beings all face death and many of the same conditions in life.

Among the divine, Óðinn appears to be unique in his wisdom, not least because of his ability to access sources normally beyond the reach

of all living beings. He is able, for instance, to continue to exploit the counsel of the dead Mímir, by conversing with his disembodied head. The peculiarity of this ability is highlighted by those occasions on which he is called upon to act on behalf of others who need the information that the dead possess. The *vǫlva* of *Vǫluspá* begins her address with an invocation that *allar helgar kindir* ('all the sacred people') (*Vǫluspá* v. 1 ll. 1–2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 1; transl. Larrington 1996: 4)),[4] should listen to what she has to say and the broad scope of her revelation does indeed encompass the fates of all. As the poem progresses, however, it becomes evident that it is Óðinn who has prompted her to speak.[5] Despite the potential hostility of her position (Quinn 2002: 160–62), he manages to secure her cooperation with gifts and possibly the use of some magical ability, and once she finishes her prophesy she *mun søcqvaz* ('will sink down') (*Vǫluspá* v. 66 l. 8 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 15; transl. Larrington 1996: 13)).

The parallels between this narrative and *Baldrs draumar* suggest the ability to consult the dead may be particular to Óðinn. In the latter poem he is dispatched on behalf of the larger group when Æsir allir ('all the Æsir') meet in council (*Baldrs draumar* v. 1 ll. 1–2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 277; transl. Larrington 1996: 243)). In this case he is also aided by the physical ability to reach *hel* (and its knowledge), which his possession of the supernaturally gifted steed Sleipnir apparently affords him. The significance of this detail is underlined by Snorri's account of Baldr's death in *Gylfaginning* (ch. 49 (ed. Faulkes 1982: 45–48; transl. Faulkes 1987: 48–51); on the priority of different versions of this tale or motif, see von See *et al*. 1997–, III: 379), which claims that Hermóðr was lent Sleipnir when he volunteered to undertake the journey to *hel* in order to secure Baldr's release. Serious obstacles are alluded to as Óðinn rides into *hel*: as he passes a bloody dog, he is described as the *Galdrs fǫður* ('father of magic [spells]') (*Baldrs draumar* v. 3 l. 3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 277; transl. Larrington 1996: 243)). The challenges continue once he has reached *hel* and he must draw on all his skill to extract the desired information; first he must locate her grave, then raise her with the use of a *valgaldr* ('corpse-reviving spell') (*Baldrs draumar* v. 4 l. 6 (ed.

[4] The Codex Regius version omits *helgar*. On the significance of this see Quinn 1990: 303, and 2001: 79–80.

[5] Dronke 1969–2011, I: 51 notes that her use of the plural verbs in stanza 28 demonstrates her awareness that he asks on behalf of all of the gods, even as she addresses Óðinn by name and as *þú*.

Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 277; transl. Larrington 1996: 243)), and finally employ the sort of deceit typical of his wisdom contests in order to secure her cooperation. Like so many others, she does not recognize the pseudonyms he gives and reluctantly proceeds to answer his questions.

The realm of the dead, physically distanced from the living and sometimes associated with the hostile forces of the giants,[6] is clearly associated in Old Norse mythology with the most valuable wisdom. Óðinn's particular ability to access it thus undoubtedly does much to increase his own status as a figure from whom wisdom may be sought. This ability comes at the price of extraordinary and potentially compromising sacrifices on his part. The most extreme example is only referred to in the mysterious stanza 138 of *Hávamál*. Here Óðinn prefaces a boasting account of his most precious wisdom with the tale of how he acquired it hanging, wounded by a spear,

> […] oc gefinn Óðni
> siálfr siálfom mér,
> þeim meiði, er mangi veit,
> hvers hann af rótom renn.
>
> ("And dedicated to Odin, myself to myself, on that tree of which no man knows from where its roots run")

(*Hávamál* v. 138 ll. 5–9 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 40; transl. Larrington 1996: 34).)

While there is debate about how exactly this scene should be interpreted, the description of the tree strongly implies that it is Yggdrasill and that the knowledge he gains is located in the underworld (for recent discussion of which see Schjødt 2008: 178). This tendency to resort to extreme measures in order to attain otherwise inaccessible wisdom is mocked by the *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*, who reveals that she is aware that he has previously sacrificed his own eye at the well of Mímir in order to gain knowledge. Although he is not omniscient, Óðinn can offer something that goes beyond the commonplace, even though not all can succeed in grasping it and the effort entails great risk.

Several of the frame narratives of the wisdom poems play on this idea that not all participants in the scene, or indeed members of the audience, will

[6] This is not to say that the giants are to be identified with the dead, rather that they (along with the dwarves in particular) have functions that bring them within the same semantic field: Clunies Ross 1994–98, I: 247–56.

benefit equally from wisdom revelation. What sets them apart, however, is not their divine or human natures but their own intellectual engagement and ability to interpret what they hear correctly. Lars Lönnroth's concept of the "double scene" is useful here for explaining exactly how the context of wisdom revelation in the poems and the context of the poems' actual performance relate to one another. He observes that eddic poetry frequently makes use of settings, such as a hall, that — while fantastic and even supernatural in their poetic context — are readily analogous to the scenes in which the oral performance of poetry was likely to have taken place. One of the most popular motifs he identifies, and a favourite in the wisdom poems, is what he terms the Ulysses or Widsith Motif, which involves Óðinn or a great hero arriving in disguise as a wanderer (Lönnroth 1979: 95–97). This has the advantage of inviting the audience to identify the performer with the traveller and to create a context for didacticism that grants it mythic significance, by placing the scene at hand into the context of greater mythological or legendary narrative (Lönnroth 1971: 8). Even divine wisdom, in other words, can be transferred in a very familiar, relatable fashion.

The Treatment of Mythological Figures in Skaldic Diction

The other main source for poetic conceptions of mythological figures, especially the gods, and their relationship to mankind is the language of skaldic diction. Here mythological references abound, even as the actual subject matter is rarely mythological as such. It is uncertain whether skaldic poetry on mythological subjects was ever composed on a large scale (for the potentially contradictory evidence of poems invoking Þórr (mostly for the purpose of slaying enemies), see Lindow 1988). Even the shield poems, which are dominated by mythological narratives, take the human world as their starting point. This is not to say that skaldic verse is necessarily historical, nor that the version of reality it presents could be any less mythological than the obviously fantastic world of eddic verse. But although the impetus for skaldic poetic composition in each case is a human being, or the experiences of a human being, the implicit mythological context of all skaldic poetry is never far from the surface, even in some clearly Christian poems. In

the very act of composition poets align themselves with Óðinn in the myth of the acquisition of the mead of poetry (for which see Clover 1978: 68–75; Frank 1981; Quinn 2010; Clunies-Ross 2005: 69–82; and more broadly Kövecses 2002: 72–73). The human experience is then either explored, elevated, examined or even mocked by casting it against the backdrop of the mythological realm. This presented a heightened version of reality, but, as shown in the case of the language of eddic poetry, one not so far removed from that of mankind and also one that was in essence governed by the same constraints. Here it will be shown how, in skaldic poetry, the equivalence between the human and the supernatural was reinforced metaphorically by the structure of the kennings themselves, just as the interchangeability of base-words and determinants encouraged comparisons.

Thus in some ways the evidence of skaldic poetry is more promising in what it can reveal about how conceptions of human and supernatural beings were related than that of eddic verse; but it is also significantly more limited. Sustained mythological narratives in skaldic composition may have been relatively rare to begin with, and have certainly been preserved in small quantity. Datable pre-Christian poems (skaldic or eddic) with extensive interest in mythology as the basis of religious belief are difficult to identify and, like *Vellekla*, can be very hard to interpret. Our frame of reference, moreover, for interpreting this poetics is based on the treatises of the late medieval period, and above all those of Snorri Sturlusson. As with the eddic material, the way we understand skaldic diction reveals both an evolving world-view and the way it was ultimately synthesized by the generations responsible for recording it.

Snorri's own understanding of the pre-Christian conception of the world was shaped by versions of a number of surviving (and a few lost) eddic poems as well as skaldic poetry and the learned European thinking of his own time. He quotes and paraphrases eddic poetry extensively in *Gylfaginning* and his own choice of language in retelling myths throughout the Edda is clearly influenced by it. The conception of mythological figures as having essentially human natures would have squared well with the unique brand of euhemerization laid out in the *Prologue*. The *Æsir* and the *Vanir* are *menn* and *folk* (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. G56–7 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 2–3; transl. Faulkes 1987: 59–60)). Kvasir is said to have travelled throughout *heim* teaching and his sojourn among *mǫnnum* led him ultimately to the dwarfs who killed him (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. G57 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 3; transl.

Faulkes 1987: 61–2)). The word *maðr* here seems to mean something like "sentient being": Geirrøðr, we are told, could discern by looking into the eyes of Loki disguised as a bird that *maðr mundi vera* ('it must be a person') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 18 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 24; transl. Faulkes 1987: 81)). That said, there are certainly a number of ways in which Snorri's views may have led to what we would consider a distorted view of his native poetics, at odds with the very evidence he presents.

This is true not least of the ordering of Snorri's account of poetic language in *Skáldskaparmál*, which, at least as it begins, is hierarchical. The gods, beginning with the *Alfǫðr* ('all-father') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 2 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 6; transl. Faulkes 1987: 66)),[7] get first consideration and a variety of kenning types are exemplified, with the greatest number of examples being reserved for those Snorri views as the principal players. Óðinn, in his role as patron of poetry and supreme god, is the subject of the most extensive list of quoted examples, but the commentary accompanying them is accordingly minimal. More telling of the way in which Snorri conceives of the categorization of kennings is his summary treatment of the other divine figures. Most lists include family relationships, roles in mythological narratives and in some cases characteristic possessions or social roles. He also states at the start that all of them, as well as the elves, can be referred to by the name of another, modified by a deed or attribute of the one intended.[8]

> In þriðja málsgrein er kǫlluð er kenning, ok <er> sú grein svá sett at vér kǫllum Óðin eða Þór eða Týr eða einnhvern af Ásum eða álfum, at hverr þeira er ek nefni til, þá tek ek með heiti af eign annars Ássins eða get ek hans verka nokkvorra.
>
> ("The third category of language is what is called kenning [description], and this category is constructed in this way, that we speak of Odin or Thor or Tyr or one of the Æsir or elves, in such a way that with each of those that I mention, I add a term for the attributes of another *As* or make mention of one or other of his deeds")

(Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 1 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 5; transl. Faulkes 1987: 64).)

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[7] The interpretation of this name is discussed in Doolan 2009, Appendix: ix–lxii.

[8] As Margaret Clunies Ross (1987: 97–102) has observed, however, this is one of several areas in which Snorri's rationalization of the kenning system and the evidence of his own examples are somewhat at odds.

The phrasing here probably has more to do with the alliterative pair Ásum eð*a álfum* than any intention to differentiate categories of mythological beings (Thorvaldsen 2001: 270). Indeed most other types of mythological creatures are discussed incidentally as they occur rather than given as the subjects of devoted lists.

In Snorri's scheme, poetic references to the gods are implied to be paradigmatic of those available for all living beings, and it is assumed that the subject matter of skaldic composition is predominantly human beings. The few skaldic mythological narratives which he quotes are anchored to the human world by their historical contexts. Human and supernatural referents are further linked by the animate principle that Margaret Clunies Ross (1987, 91–117) has identified as the dominant criterion for the ordering of Snorri's lists in *Skáldskaparmál* (see especially ch. 55–75 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 83–117; transl. Faulkes 1987: 133–64)). When poetic expressions for *maðr* are discussed as such, it is in order to elaborate on how the system already presented can be used rather than to lay out an alternative system for human subjects (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 31 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 40; transl. Faulkes 1987: 94)). Thus, Snorri repeats that circumlocutions for men can be based on family relationships, possessions, actions and the names of Æsir:

> Hann skal kenna við verk sín, þat er hann veitir eða þiggr eða gerir. Hann má ok kenna til eignar sinnar þeirar er hann á ok svá ef hann gaf, svá ok við ættir þær er hann kom af, svá þær er frá honum kómu […] mann er ok rétt at kenna til allra Ása heita
>
> ("He shall be referred to by his actions, what he gives or receives or does. He can also be referred to by his property, what he owns and also if he gives it away; also by the family lines he is descended from, also those that have descended from him […] it is also normal to refer to a man using all the names of the Æsir")

(Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 31 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 40; transl. Faulkes 1987: 94).)

He adds that the names of giants and elves are also acceptable in order to show how this kind of naming can be used to convey the positive or negative associations of a character. At this point the widespread characterization of humans as trees is explained by means of a rather far-fetched etymology, based on the practice of referring to a man in terms of animate base-words in order to incorporate this common type into Snorri's categories of acceptable base-word types:

> Ok fyrir því at hann er reynir vápnanna ok viðr víganna—alt eitt ok vinnandi; viðr heitir ok tré, reynir heitir tré—af þessum heitum hafa skáldin kallat menn ask eða hlyn, lund eða ǫðrum viðar heitum karlkendum
>
> ("And because he is a trier of the weapons and doer of the killings, which is the same thing as achiever — *vidr* is also a word for tree, there is a tree called *reynir* [rowan] — on the basis of these terms poets have called men ash or maple, *lund* [grove, tree] or other masculine tree-names")

(Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 31 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 40; transl. Faulkes 1987: 94).)

These elaborations (which are further discussed in Clunies-Ross 1987: 108–10) do not serve to delineate distinct poetic expressions for human and divine characters, and a number of the examples quoted throughout *Skáldskaparmál* show that their use is not limited to human referents. Thus a verse ascribed to Úlfr Uggason envisages the scene of Baldr's funeral where valkyries and ravens are with a *sigrunni svinnum* ('wise victory-bush') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 2 (v. 14 l. 1) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 9; transl. Faulkes 1987: 68)).[9] A compound like *sigrunnr* would most commonly refer to a human warrior, but taken together the characterization of the man as *svinnr* and the nature of his company indicates that the individual meant is Óðinn. The same poet also refers to Óðinn as a *kynfróðr hrafnfreistaðr* ('strangely wise raven-tester') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 2 (v. 19 l. 2–3) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 10; transl. Faulkes 1987: 68)), again deliberately playing on the ambiguity of skaldic language in order to convey the most significant instance of a common scene. The *hrafnfreistaðr* or even *fróðr hrafnfreistaðr* could be any father, but there is additional *kyn* ('wonder') in this *minni* ('memorial') because he is Óðinn at Baldr's funeral (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 2 (v. 14 l. 4) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 9; transl. Faulkes 1987: 68)). Context, in all cases, was crucial. The close alliance in the mythology between gods and men can also lead to cases where ambiguities caused by semantic overlap are at least tolerated, and sometimes perhaps intended, as may be the case in *Haustlǫng*, for example, when the giant Hrungnir is called the *sólginn manna dólgr* ('voracious enemy of men') (Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski, *Haustlǫng* v. 16 ll. 2 and 4 (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, BI: 17); cf. Snorri Sturluson,

[9] This quotation is not included in the Codex Upsaliensis (Uppsala, Uppsala University Library, DG 11 (s. xiv^{in})).

Skáldskaparmál, ch. 17 (v. 67 ll. 2–4) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 23; transl. Faulkes 1987: 80)). The giants are ultimately the enemies of mankind as well as the gods, and the firmly mythological context here supports a reading of the divine characters as the representations of the joint interests of men and gods in the face of the giant threat.

There is some overlap too between the poetic terminology assigned to human and giant males. Within mythological skaldic narratives in which gods and giants fight, both sides are described with the types of kennings commonly applied to human warriors. In Þórsdrápa, Geirrøðr is a *hraðskyndir gunnar* ('swift-hastener of battle') and Þórr an álmtaugar ægir ('terrifier of bowstrings') (Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa* v. 18 ll. 1–2 and v. 16 l. 5 (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, BI: 139 and 142); cf. Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 18 (v. 88 ll. 1–2 and v. 87 l. 5) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 29; transl. Faulkes 1987: 85)). Beyond this, Þórr is defined by his allegiances to ættir Jólni*s* and ýta, while the giant's nature has more narrow associations. *Litla Skálda* confirms that a bad man should be described with the names of giants, which are included in the 'allra illra kvikvenda nöfnum karlkendra' ('names of all the evil masculine living creatures') (Snorri Sturluson, *Litla Skálda* (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1931: 257)). Equally, giants and dwarves may be called by the names of þjóða öllum ('all peoples') and *sækonunga* ('sea-kings') (Snorri Sturluson, *Litla Skálda* (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1931: 255)), when modified by association with mountains and stones. Such kennings are extremely common in the mythological narrative skaldic poems in which giants feature significantly. *Haustlǫng* refers to them individually as *hraundrengr* ('rock warrior') and *grundar gramr* ('prince of the earth') and collectively as *berg-Dana* ('rock Danes') (Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski, *Haustlǫng* vv. 17–18 (ed. Finnur Jonsson 1912–15, BI: 18); cf. Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 17 (vv. 68–69) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 23; transl. Faulkes 1987: 80)); and Þórsdrápa uses, amongst other names for giants, *Skotar Gandvíkr* ('Scots of Gandvik'), *hellis Kumra* ('Cumbrians of the cave') and *flóðrifs Danir* ('Danes of the sea-rib [rock]') (Eilífr Goðrúnarson, Þórsdrápa vv. 2 and 12–13 (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, BI: 139 and 142)). The sense is that giants are a particular type of men, in this case defined by their affiliations with the more hostile elements of nature (Clunies Ross 1994 I, 68, 105–06 and 188). The choice of tribal name for the base-word indicates their status as more primitive or the enemy. In the same way they can be referred to as gods as long as similar qualifications apply, as in the kenning *bǫnd setbergs* ('gods of the seat-

rock') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 52 (v. 268 ll. 1 and 4) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 76; transl. Faulkes 1987: 126)).

Thus skaldic diction for different categories of supernatural and human beings exploited fundamental similarities between them in order to project the mythological world onto the human realm of poets and their subjects — and, in a few cases, *vice versa*. The strength of these correspondences was reflected by the use of vocabulary and kennings that linked the supernatural with human society and behaviour. Skaldic poetics took full advantage of this latitude in determining referents in order to create metaphorical associations between normally discrete categories. In short, in the gritty world of skaldic poetry men were *menn*, but so were many other beings too. Sorting the *menn* from the æsir, *vanir*, álfar and others needed leaps of poetic inspiration, which opened new vistas for ontological and artful obfuscation.

The Treatment of the Christian God in Skaldic Diction

The question of how Christ ought to be referred to in skaldic diction is not taken up until well into *Skáldskaparmál*, although plenty of Christian examples are offered in connection with other points of interest.[10] Snorri concentrates in particular on the theoretical problems that the relevant kennings raise: he notes that "þar koma saman kenningar" ("there the kennings overlap") (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 53 (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 78; transl. Faulkes 1987: 129)), as kennings for Christ are based on those for a king, and interpreters must rely on the context to work out the referent the poet intends. There is potential for confusion when describing the subjects of a king both in terms of their nature, as when he is *stillir aldar* ('ruler of men'), and their geographical location, as when he is *konungr Róms* ('king of Rome') (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 52 (v. 268 ll. 3–4 and v. 270 ll. 3–4) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 76–7; transl. Faulkes 1987: 126)).

The other main category of Christ kennings, which uses verbal nouns as

[10] Margaret Clunies Ross (1987: 93–94) notes this deviation from the general division of animate and inanimate referents. She suggests that Snorri's ordering may be designed to draw attention to the potential for Christian poets to make use of old kenning types for Christian referents and the anticipation of some Christian beliefs in pagan religion.

base-words to refer to His deeds, also echoes the vernacular terminology commonly used for human rulers, the conventional terms for the divinity derived from Latin and in some cases clearly refer to His role in Christian belief. The dominant metaphor this language invokes is Christ, or God, as an exalted version of the temporal ruler whose praise is so often the subject of skaldic poetry (Weber 1970). This has the advantage not only of tapping into a well-developed aspect of skaldic tradition, but also of allowing poets to avoid semantic associations with the pre-Christian divine to an impressive degree.

A large number of the base-words in kennings or poetic *heiti* for God or Christ (between which there is considerable overlap, and also with the Holy Spirit: Clunies Ross 2007: lviii–lx) attested in skaldic poetry are also used very commonly for human men both in secular and overtly religious skaldic and eddic poetry. These include numerous terms for "prince" or "ruler", such as *deilir*,[11] *dróttinn*, *fylkir*, *herra*, *hilmir*, *jǫfurr*, *konungr*, *lofðungr*, *mildingr*, *ræsir*, *siklingr*, *skjǫldungr*, *stillir*, *vísi* (or *vísir*), *þengill* and *qðlingr*.[12] There are also a number of analogous nouns that are specifically associated with the Christian divinity, and which either relate directly to Christian beliefs or derive from Latin expressions. God is thus also the *skapari*, a designation which doesn't seem to have caught on for any particular members of the Æsir despite *Vǫluspá's* account of their involvement in the formation of the world and the various races. Sometimes conventional expressions are modified to indicate that not just any ruler is meant. *Þjóðkonungr* is a well-attested compound in secular poetry and in both *Máríudrápa* and the *Drápa af Máríugrát* it becomes *yfirþjóðskonungr* (*Máríudrápa* vv. 9, 18 and 27 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 485–86, 494 and 500–01); *Drápa af Máríugrát* vv. 28, 32 and 36 (ed. and transl. Gade 2007: 779, 781–82 and 784)).

Semantic overlap between expressions for the Christian God and mythological characters, however, is much less common. This owes in part to the scarcity of nouns with a primary sense denoting social status which are applied to supernatural figures in eddic poetry. *Konungr*, for instance, is never used for an unambiguously non-human character. The

[11] This is used of both God the Father and Christ, but is unusual for human kings. When it is used, it refers to Him as a *vella deilir* ('distributor of gold') of material wealth. See *Nóregs konungatal* v. 70 l. 8 (ed. and transl. Gade 2009: 803).

[12] While in context these terms are often best translated as simply "prince" or "ruler", many of them clearly relate to particular functions of ideal lordship, such as generosity, martial leadership and receiving praise.

one potential exception revolves around the interpretation of a mysterious allusion in *Helreið Brynhildar* (for the interpretation of which see Larrington 1996: 288; and von See *et al*. 1997–, VI: 532–36).

> Lét hami vára hugfullr konungr,
> átta systra, undir eic borit;
> var ec vetra tólf, ef þic vita lystir,
> er ec ungom gram eiða seldac.
>
> ("The wise king had our magic garments — eight sisters we were together — put under an oak; I was twelve years old, if you want to know, when I gave my promise to the young prince")

(*Helreið Brynhildar* v. 6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 220; transl. Larrington 1996: 193).)

This stanza forms the very beginning of Brynhildr's account of the events of her life leading up to her unhappy fate. In this context, the *konungr* is probably Óðinn (or her father) and the events alluded to are the beginnings of her life as a valkyrie.[13] Otherwise, *konungr* generally applies as unambiguously to human characters as do the ruler words that occur more frequently in eddic poetry, such as *gramr* and *fylkir*. There are, of course, some exceptions: *Vǫluspá* names the *dverga dróttin* ('lord of the dwarfs') and speaks of the hall of *dyggvar dróttir* ('worthy lords') that the surviving *dróttir* will inhabit after *ragna rǫc* (*Vǫluspá* v. 9 ll. 5–6 and v. 64 ll. 5–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 2 and 15; transl. Larrington 1996: 5 and 12)). This second instance at least may represent a deliberate use of the word, together with *dyggr*, to convey the difference between these gods and their less worthy predecessors. The use of *drótt* and *dróttinn* in particular to convey the general nobility of supernatural characters is most common and never indicates absolute dominion over the gods or men. It is used repeatedly in *Þrymskviða* as part of the refrain þursa dróttinn ('lord of ogres') (*Þrymskviða* v. 6 l. 2, v. 11 l. 4, v. 22 l. 2, v. 25 l. 2 and v. 30 l. 2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 111–15; transl. Larrington 1996: 97–101)), which serves to characterize the giant as a fitting opponent for Þórr.

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[13] It is also possible that the description of Him as *hugfullr* (cf. La Farge and Tucker 1992, s. v.) could be a further indication of his identity, but this would require an unusual interpretation of the compound, which generally has the sense "courageous". See, for example, *Sigrdrífumál* v. 31 l. 3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 196); Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Bersǫglisvísur* v. 4 l. 6 (ed. and transl. Gade 2009: 15–16); and Gísl Illugason, *Erfikvæði* about Magnús berfoettr v. 7 l. 3 (ed. and transl. Gade 2009: 421).

This is not to say that Christian skaldic poetry is devoid of mythological imagery rooted in the pagan past (Clunies Ross 2005: 120–25; Lassen 2011). Kennings for human characters especially make use of a wide range of mythological allusions (Clunies Ross 2007: lvii). Thus in *Harmsól*, a man is a *meiðr Hlakkar borðs* ('tree of Hlakkar's shield') and even "Gautr hrynvengis mens grundar" ("Gautr of the ringing land of the necklace of earth") (*Harmsól* v. 14 ll. 2–3 and v. 42 ll. 6–8 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 86–87 and 109–10)). Yet the types of basewords and *heiti* favoured for references to God and Christ do not strongly recall those used for pagan divinities. This owes in part to the general lack of kennings based on the relative social status of the gods, despite Snorri's attempts to present a clear hierarchy. Snorri claims, for instance, that Frigg could be called *drottning Ása ok Ásynja*, but the sparse uses of the word in skaldic and eddic verse are uniformly reserved for human women and the Virgin Mary (*Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 203)).

The skaldic evidence is more complicated and paints a broadly similar but perhaps slightly more nuanced picture. Unsurprisingly, within a medium more overtly concerned with the highest echelons of human society, there is more emphasis on the social status of the divine figures in the mythological realm who are held up as parallels for human rulers. Sometimes there is some coincidental semantic overlap between terms for Christian and pagan deities. Heimdallr, for example, is repeatedly referred to as a *vǫrðr* (*Grímnismál* v. 13 l. 4; *Skírnismál* v. 28 l. 6; and *Lokasenna* v. 48 l. 6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn 1983, I: 60, 75 and 106)). Every occurrence, however, limits this role to watchman of the gods and thus when Christ is designated the *vǫrðr* of heaven there can be no real confusion.[14] Similarly when the word *hirðir* appears occasionally in a mythological context, it carries none of the metaphorical associations which it has when applied to Christ. In some cases it is more difficult, however, to discern whether echoes of characteristically Christian

[14] Most examples occur in kennings for God with *vǫrðr* as the base-word and a kenning for the sky or heaven as the determinant: see Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* v. 19 (ed. and transl. Chase 2007: 22–23); Gamli kanóki, *Harmsól* vv. 5, 30 and 65 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 77, 99 and 131–32); *Leiðarvísan* v. 10 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 149–50); and *Máríuvísur II* (ed. and transl. Gade 2007: 702–03). He is also *gumna vǫrðr* ('guardian of men') (Gamli kanóki, *Harmsól* v. 52 l. 7 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 119–20)). There is, however, one instance in which confusion with a human ruler is possible: God is *fróns vǫrðr* ('guardian of the land') in *Líknarbraut* v. 15 l. 3 (ed. and transl. Tate 2007: 246), which, as Tate notes, belongs to a kenning-type otherwise applied exclusively to human rulers.

language are intentional. Thus Þórsdrápa calls the titular god "himinsjóli" ("god of the heavens") (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 18 (v. 81 l. 3) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 27; transl. Faulkes 1987: 84)), and in one stanza composed by the eleventh-century Icelandic skald Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson, Óðinn may be called *valdi* of the sky (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 2 (v. 17 l. 4) (ed. Faulkes 1998, I: 10; transl. Faulkes 1987: 68); for the meaning of *valdi* see Faulkes 1998, II: 412 and 419).

For all that kennings for God are based on those for human rulers, the relationship between God and mankind is very clearly drawn in skaldic poetry on Christian subjects. His position may be elevated, like that of a human king, but He is fundamentally distinct from the *guma kyn* by virtue of His divine nature. A number of poems play on this contrast between divine perfection and the failings of human nature as a structural feature. In these the poets map the vast differences that separate themselves and their audiences from God, and which ultimately require miraculous measures to bridge. The various means by which the human can approach the divine are examined in a number of poems. In Gamli kanóki's *Harmsól*, for instance, the poet's sins and inadequacies faced with divinity are enumerated at length (vv. 4, 7–9 and 12–16 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 76, 78–82 and 84–88)), while *Heilags anda drápa*, on the other hand, reveals how the Holy Spirit can help his children with *brauði skilningar* ('bread of understanding'), which "lætr glöð kyn guma skynja guðdóms eðli föður" ("allows the glad race of men to perceive the nature of the divinity of the father") (v. 4 ll. 7–8 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 454)).

When the generic terms for men that apply so unproblematically to mythological characters occur in this setting, they always denote humankind, separate from God himself, and (like the race of the angels) subject to him. Christ, who has been physically incarnate, and the Virgin Mary embody this hope most strongly, and it is unsurprising that most semantic confusion of the human and supernatural in a Christian context is concentrated on these two figures. *Lilja* makes the most of the paradox of Christ's dual nature, viewing it as the key to mankind's reconciliation with God. The poem tells of how mankind initially fell into temptation when the serpent told Eve of the limitations of their own nature and promised that they could be made like the *guðdómr*. The remedy for this original sin then comes when God is instead made like man and brought to his human subjects. Hence Christ, like other men, can be referred to in terms of his genetic relationships. Jesus is born to Mary as a *sveinn*

('boy'), a *barn* ('child') of Adam, and the poet pauses to comment on the paradox by which he is both a *maðr* ('man') and *guð* ('God') and Mary too becomes something supernatural: a *mær* ('virgin') and *móðir* ('mother') (*Lilja* vv. 33 l. 2, v. 34 ll. 3–4 and v. 64 l. 8 (ed. and transl. Chase 2007: 601–03 and 635–36). The stanza goes on to describe how in this moment heavenly glory was brought to earth and the usually separate and often twinned races of men and angels were also united. As the poem tells the story of Christ's life, the full extent of his human nature is reflected in the diction. He is called a *maðr* repeatedly, even an *ungr maðr* ('young man'), the *menniligir sonr* ('human son') of God and Mary (*Lilja* vv. 36 l. 4 and v. 44 l. 2 (ed. and transl. Chase 2007: 605–06 and 614). Satan is said to be baffled by *sá maðr* who resists temptation when all others have succumbed. The language of the poem seeks to foreground the full humanity of Christ's nature in order to seek a way of relating to an otherwise unapproachable *allsvaldandi* ('almighty') (*Lilja* v. 4 l. 8 (ed. and transl. Chase 2007: 566–67).

Mary's status as something between the human and divine is somewhat more complicated theologically, but indicated just as strongly by skaldic diction (kennings for her are discussed in Wrightson 2001: 139–40). In *Máríudrápa* she is conceived of not only as the mother of Christ, the human man, but also of the *yfirþjóðkonungr* and even of the abstract nouns *gleði* ('gladness') and *mildi* ('mercy') (*Máríudrápa* v. 1 l. 1 and v. 18 l. 6 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 478–9 and 494)). Like God, she is ruler (*dróttning*) of *heims* and *gotna* as well as of *himins* and *dýrðar* (*Máríudrápa* v. 3 l. 8, v. 5 l. 6, v. 9 l. 7 and v. 28 l. 2 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 480–81, 482–83, 485–86 and 501–02)). The poet explains how she can function thus with an interesting image of Mary as a vessel "þaðan flaut allr ilmr að ýtum […] allr guðs" ("from which spread all the perfume of God to men") (*Máríudrápa* v. 10 ll. 5–6 (ed. and transl. Attwood 2007: 486)). Where kennings for Christ based on family relationships can serve to emphasize his humanity, those for Mary more often do the reverse. She is both *móðir* and *brúðr* or *víf* of God, whose divine aspect is stressed by accompanying kennings, just as her son, Jesus Christ, is the *dróttinn*, and the *gramr* and *hilmir* of heaven. By focusing on her close proximity to the divinity and her current state of glory, these references to the Virgin Mary indicate the possibility that human beings can rise above the imperfection of their current state.

The separation of mankind from its divine creator lies at the heart of the Christian religion and is reflected in the language of skaldic poetry. Terms

for God may be based on those for human rulers, but it is always clear that He is ineluctably above them. When generic words for men occur they unambiguously reference his subjects, as opposed to God himself. The potential overlap caused by figures like Christ and the Virgin Mary is never allowed to cause confusion as poets often dwell, in kennings or other forms of description, on the nature of the paradox that allows them to function as part of the human race in one sense and entirely separate from it in another.

Conclusion

The treatment of Christian supernatural entities stands in stark contrast to the way Old Norse poets before and after the conversion used language suggesting fundamental parallels between mankind and the heathen gods. Indeed, the euhemeristic view of pre-Christian deities popular in medieval Scandinavia may have flourished in part because the pre-existing conception of pre-Christian gods was in many ways vastly different from the conception of the deity introduced by Christian religion. Gender remained an important point for both gods themselves and in dealing with humans. Death, in particular, remained an inevitable and largely insurmountable threat for both men and other supernatural entities: all were mortals. In consideration of the eternal Christian divinity, man remained the measure of all things, but in this case only in order to pale in comparison with other beings. God and Christ could be likened to human rulers, but were otherwise distinct from the sphere of mortality, and by extension from the euhemerized supernatural beings of bygone beliefs. In short, where the Christian God was physically as well as spiritually separated from human beings on earth, mythological figures belonged to and helped define the plane of existence inhabited by living, corporeal beings.

This understanding of the pre-Christian divine led to a poetics that fully exploited the mythological realm and its inhabitants, whether the subjects of active religious belief or pseudo-history, or as a means of contextualizing and thereby controlling the interpretation of actual human lives and events. From the point of view of Old Norse poetics, all gods moved in mysterious ways, and all had wonders to perform: what mattered was whether these ways and wonders belonged to the

death-bound world of men and mortal supernatural beings, or the eternal hereafter of Christian belief.

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Summary

This article considers terminology for mankind and the divine in Old Norse eddic and skaldic poetry in order to explore the ways in which eddic poets in particular conceptualised pre-Christian supernatural beings and expected their audiences to react and relate to them across centuries of religious and cultural change. References to pagan deities abound throughout Old Norse poetry, but exactly how their reality was supposed to relate to that of the human audience is often far from clear, and doubtless varied across place and time. Yet these supernatural figures clearly enjoyed a continued relevance in the Christian period and managed to pass from myth into literature with considerable success. The cultural background that made this transfer possible is reflected in poetic terminology for mankind and the

gods: the gods were, in short, conceived of as essentially similar to human beings, inhabiting more or less the same space and governed by the same basic conditions of life. Eddic poetry on mythological subjects is taken as the starting point, and is then compared with the evidence of skaldic terminology for the beings of pre-Christian mythology. Finally, a brief consideration of the vocabulary for the divine in explicitly Christian poetry highlights contrasts that suggest some of the reasons why these mythologies were able to co-exist, as they did in the language of skaldic poetry over several productive centuries. In short, where the Christian God was physically as well as spiritually separated from human beings on earth, mythological figures belonged to and helped define the plane of existence inhabited by living, corporeal beings. This understanding of the pre-Christian divine led to a poetics that fully exploited the mythological realm and its inhabitants, whether the subjects of active religious belief or pseudo-history, or as a means of contextualizing and thereby controlling the interpretation of actual human lives and events.

Keywords: Poetic edda, supernatural, semantics, vocabulary

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Body Language in Medieval Iceland
A Study of Gesticulation in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders

Kirsten Wolf

I

Gestures — those bodily movement phenomena that are often used to supplement or substitute spoken words — have long fascinated scholars. Most of the research on this topic has, naturally, been done by psychiatrists, psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, and neurologists. These scholars have analyzed many aspects of gestures, including the role of gesture in communication, the conventionalization of gesture, the relationship between gesture and sign language, the integration of gesture and speech, and the role of gesture in the evolutionary origins of language.[1] But medievalists, too, have looked at gestures as a key to cultural codes and examined the manner in which visible bodily behavior is used to communicate people's thoughts, emotions, and dispositions in the prose, poetry, drama, and art of the English, French, German, and Italian Middle Ages.[2]

[1] For an overview of scholarship on gestures, see Adam Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 17–83.

[2] Recent studies in the form of books include Dietmar Peil, *Die Gebärde bei Chrétien, Hartmann und Wolfram: Erec–Iwein–Parzival* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1975); Robert G. Benson, *Medieval Body Language: A Study of the Use of Gesture in Chaucer's Poetry,* Anglistica 21 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1980); Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); M. J. Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter: Analyse von nichtsprachlicher Äusserung in mittelhochdeutscher Epik: Rolandslied, Eeasroma, Tristan* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991); Clifford Davidson, ed., *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art*, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 28 (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001); Gerd Althoff, ed., *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunkation im*

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In the preface to his study of gestures and looks in Chaucer's Troilus, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, and other texts, Burrow rightly comments that "[n]on-verbal communication in the medieval West is […] a vast and varied subject, and only some patches of it have so far been investigated (4–5).[3] It is the purpose of this essay to cover one small patch by drawing attention to descriptions of gestures in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. Its aim is to analyze not only which gestures were used among Icelanders in the Middle Ages according to the composers of the various texts, but also the manner in which the composers bring in descriptions of bodily movement as a means of non-verbal communication.[4] More specifically, it seeks to examine, if the significance and meaning of some of these non-verbal signs have undergone change over time, that is, between the medieval world represented in these texts and our own times, and if the conventions governing their use remain the same. By necessity, only those non-verbal acts that have a direct verbal translation can be considered.[5]

All the examples are from the indigenous Sagas and Tales of Icelanders (see the appendix), which are in the forefront of the analysis, since it was necessary to limit the scope of the investigation, though it is acknowledged that it might have been profitable to include also, for instance, *Sturlunga saga* and the bishops' sagas. The Sagas and Tales of Icelanders yield approximately one hundred and fifty references to gestures. In line with the standard definition of "gesture" as a movement of the body, or any part of it that is expressive of thought or feeling, only examples of gestures that are relevant for communication, primarily in situations of face-to-face interaction, have been included. Occurrences of laughter, smiling or weeping, which are usually not referred to as gestures, are

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Mittelalter (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbeck, 2001); and J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[3] Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (2002), p. 6.

[4] According to Michael Argyle, *Bodily Communication* (London and New York: Methuen & Co., 1975), p. 77, the main channels for the communication of emotion are the face, body, and tone of voice. The face is the single most important area for signalling emotions, while, gestures, posture, and bodily movements are the second channel for emotion. Paul Ekman and W. V. Friesen, "Head and Body Cues in the Judgment of Emotion: A Reformulation," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 24 (1967), 711–24, esp. p. 712, argue that the face conveys very specific emotions and the body the degree of the intensity of the emotion.

[5] Cf. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (2002), p. 3, who comments that "[u]nlike real people, persons in texts have no inaccessible insiders, nor can they harbor intentions beyond what their author states or implies."

not included.[6] Neither are those actions that are taken in the course of performing some task, whether it be eating or drinking, wrestling or fighting, or manipulating objects. Facial expressions, which have been demonstrated to be universal, have also been excluded.[7]

II

Although physical gestures may seem spontaneous, they have been shown to be regulated by and subject to social conventions. There is no "natural" or innate language of gestures, and the interpretation of them is culture-bound. *Eiríks saga rauða* offers an interesting example of non-verbal signalling as a means of communication with a different speech community, that is, the aborigines of North America. On both sides, a specific gesture appears to have a conventional meaning specific to an individual culture, yet the meanings of both are somehow deduced by the other side. It is told that one morning Þorfinnr karlsefni and his men caught sight of nine hide-covered boats. The men in the boats were waving wooden poles that made a swishing sound as they turned them clockwise around ("var veift trjám á skipunum, ok lét því líkast sem í hálmþúst, ok var veift sólarsinnis" [227.9–11]). Snorri Þorbrandsson interpreted this gesture as a sign of peace and recommended that the Norsemen take a white shield and lift it up toward them ("tǫkum skjǫld hvítan ok berum á móti" [227.13–14]). The natives evidently understood the sign, for after a short while they rowed away, and when the following year they returned in larger numbers and with poles being waved from every boat ("var […] veift af hverju skipi trjánum" [228.6–7]), the Norsemen again signalled with their shields, and the two parties traded peacefully, until Þorfinnr karlsefni's bull scared them away. But when the natives returned three weeks later in even larger numbers, all the poles were this time being waved counter-clockwise ("var þá trjánum ǫllum veift andsœlis" [228.24]). Accordingly, the Norsemen hoisted red shields, and six people were killed in the ensuing battle between the two races. Interestingly, what

[6] For a study of laughter, see Kirsten Wolf, "Laughter in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature," *Scripta Islandica* 51 (2000): 93–117.

[7] For a study of facial expressions, see Kirsten Wolf, "Somatic Semiotics: Emotion and the Human Face in the Sagas and *Þættir* of Icelanders," in *New Norse Studies*, ed. Jeffrey Turco, Islandica (Ithaca: Cornell University Library) (forthcoming).

brought about a fortunate turn of events in the Norsemen's clash with the natives was another gesture: the pregnant Freydís Eiríksdóttir pulled one of her breasts out of her bodice and slapped it with a sword ("hon dró þá út brjóstit undan klæðunum ok slettir á beru sverðinu" [229.21–23]).[8]

Formal and public gestures

The Sagas and Tales of Icelanders show that gestures played a significant role in ceremonies of homage. Reverence, humility, subservience, and dependency are shown by placing one's head on the knees of the dominant power, by prostration, or by kneeling. The latter two, which are signs of respect and reverence that acknowledge inferiority, are conventional ceremonial gestures when an individual seeks a hearing with a king.[9] *Hallfreðar saga* relates that Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld went before King Óláfr and fell at his feet ("fell til fóta honum" [53.8–54.1]), telling the king that he wanted to rid himself of the king's anger. *Þorsteins þáttr skelks* tells that Þorsteinn fell down before King Óláfr ("fell fram fyrir konung" [2: 2292.42]), admitting that he had disobeyed his order. *Auðunar þáttr vestfirzka* reports that upon his return to King Sveinn's court, Auðunn fell down at the king's feet ("fell til fóta konungi" [2: 2084.30]). And *Laxdæla saga* tells that when Óláfr greeted King Mýrkjartan, he took off his helmet and knelt before him ("tekr ofan hjálminn ok lýtr konungi" [57.22–23]). Placing one's head on the knees of a superior would seem to be a more extreme form of self-abasement and is mentioned in *Gísls þáttr Illugasonar*, which relates that after killing Gjafvaldr, King Magnús' retainer, who had dealt Gísl's father his death blow, Gísl was imprisoned and sentenced to death. Teitr, Bishop Gizurr's son, attempted to intercede, but Gísl didn't wish to put him in danger and informed him that he would offer the king his head. According to the tale, Gísl then removed his weapons, laid his head in the king's lap ("lagði hǫfuð sitt í kné konungi" [341.6–7]), and told the king to do as he pleased with his head. Similar examples are found in *Víglundar saga* and *Þorsteins saga hvíta*.[10] Further gestures of submission, deference, or petition are found

[8] For an analysis of this particular episode, see Kirsten Wolf, "Amazons in Vínland," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 95 (1996), 469–485, esp. pp. 480–485. See also below.

[9] *Qlkofra þáttr* is exceptional in that it tells of an individual (Qlkofri) falling to the feet of two *goðar*: "Hann fell til jarðar ok kraup til fóta þeim" (87.19–20).

[10] The former relates that Helgi revealed to Víglundr his true identity as the son of Earl

in *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*, which tells that Halli sat down at the king's knee ("sezk Halli fyrir kné konungi" [2: 2228.24]), while delivering his *drápa* about the king; in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, which reports that Þorkell the lawspeaker lowered his head ("drap niðr hǫfðinu" [2: 1304.22]), when Þorbjǫrn forced him to declare the beached whale his; and in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, which relates that Arinbjǫrn advised Egill to offer King Eiríkr his head and embrace his feet, and that Egill took the king's foot in his hand ("tók um fót konungi" [180.3]). The texts provide no examples of women showing deference by means of gesture.

Gestures typically accompany rituals, such as hallowing land, preparing a corpse for burial, or swearing an oath. *Hænsa-Þóris saga* relates that Oddr took a birch rafter from the burnt down farmstead in Ǫrnólfsdalr, rode counter-clockwise around the building with the flaming piece of wood, and laid claim to the land;[11] *Ljósvetninga saga* tells that when Guðmundr inn ríki had died, Einarr Þveræingr came and closed Guðmundr's eyes and nostrils and attended to his corpse ("veitti honum nábjargir ok umbúnað" [61.12–13]); and *Gísla saga Súrssonar* offers a description of the ceremony of sworn brotherhood.[12] The ritual involves scoring out a long strip of turf with both ends still attached to the ground, propping up the arch of raised turf with a long-shafted spear and walking under it, and drawing blood and mixing it. The ceremony concludes with the men — Gísli, Þorgrímr, Vésteinn, and Þorkell — falling to their

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Eiríkr. He also informed him that at the request of Hólmkell, the father of Víglundr's true love Ketilríðr, he had married Ketilríðr in order to save her for Víglundr and assured him that he had not taken advantage of her. He further requested that Víglundr make peace with Hólmkell and asked him for the hand of his daughter in marriage. According to the saga, Víglundr then went over to Hólmkell, placed his head on Hólmkell's knees ("leggr hǫfud sitt í kné honum" [115.32]), and told him to do with him as he wished. The latter tells that Þorsteinn fagri went to Hof to offer Þorsteinn hvíti self-judgment and compensation for the killing of Þorsteinn hvíti's son. When Þorsteinn hvíti refused, Þorsteinn fagri sprang up and laid his head on the knee of his namesake ("leggr hǫfuð sitt í kné […] nafna sínum" [2: 2059.6]), who announced that he wouldn't have him killed, and that he would consider them reconciled, if he moved to Hof as his helper with all his possessions.

[11] "hann [Oddr] seilisk til birkirapts eins ok kippir brott ór húsinu; ríðr síðan andsœlis um húsin með loganda brandinn ok mælti: 'Hér nem ek mér land'" (25.13–16).

[12] "Ganga nú út í Eyrarhválsodda ok rísta þar upp ór jǫrðu jarðarmen, svá at báðir endar váru fastir í jǫrðu, og settu þar undir málaspjót, þat er maðr mátti taka hendi sinni til geirnagla. Þeir skyldu þar fjórir undir ganga, Þorgrímr, Gísli, Þorkell ok Vésteinn. Ok nú vekja þeir sér blóð ok láta renna saman dreyra sinn í þeiri moldu, er upp var skorin undan jarðarmeninu, ok hrœra saman allt, moldina ok blóðit; en síðan fellu þeir allir á kné ok sverja þann eið, at hverr skal annars hefna sem bróður síns, ok nefna ǫll goðin í vitni. Ok er þeir tókusk í hendr allir […]" (22.7–23.5).

knees, swearing an oath, and clasping hands. The clasping of hands, which expresses a contractual relationship of vows and signals a binding obligation, is widely referred to in the settlement of legal matters. The action is clearly a transfer of troth and signifies a pledge of faith, oath, or promise.[13] In *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, for example, Ǫnundr sjóni and Þorsteinn clasped hands ("tókusk […] í hendr" [510.38]), when it had been decided that Egill should rule at the assembly in the dispute between Steinarr and Þorsteinn. And in *Þórðar saga hreðu*, Þórðr, Ásbjǫrn, and Skeggi clasped hands ("gengu þeir til handsala" [2: 2040.37]) when agreeing to have Eiðr arbitrate in all their disputes and manslaughters.[14] Handclasps also conclude business deals and betrothal and marriage arrangements to show the transference of a right or bargain from one person to another. *Njáls saga* offers an example of the former, when Flosi settled his purchase of a ship from Eyjólfr nef with a handclasp ("tók handsǫlum" [426.30]), and *Þórðar saga hreðu* an example of the latter, when Þórðr held out his hand ("réttir […] fram hǫndina" [2: 2019.28]) and Skeggi took it to settle the betrothal of Þórðr and Sigríðr. Further instances of handclasping appear in, for example, *Víga-Glúms saga*, which tells that Gizurr stretched out his hand ("rétti fram hǫndina" [38.11]) to offer Glúmr his daughter Þórdís in marriage, and in *Njáls saga*, which relates that Mǫrðr and Hrútr clasped hands ("tókusk í hendr" [9.9]) to settle the betrothal of Unnr and Hrútr.[15]

By contrast, the withdrawal of hands signifies a rejection of or refusal to meet the obligations imposed. This gesture is mentioned only in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* in connection with the ritual of sworn brotherhood. As the four men clasp hands, Þorgrímr points out that he feels no obligation towards Vésteinn and withdraws his hand ("hnykkir hendi sinni" [23.7–24.1]). Gísli then points out that he doesn't want to tie himself to a man,

[13] Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (2002), p. 14.

[14] Further examples appear in *Bandamanna saga* (28.6), *Eyrbyggja saga* (25.14, 21, 123.9), *Finnboga saga ramma* (1: 671.39), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* (2: 1402.28), *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* (21.2), *Kjalnesinga saga* (2: 1446.37), *Ljósvetninga saga* (28.21, 67.10), *Njáls saga* (39.22, 102.1–2, 110.22–23, 184.7, 310.18–19, 356.12, 368.13, 412.27, 413.18), *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs* (2: 2298.32), *Vatnsdœla saga* (121.22), and *Ǫlkofra þáttr* (88.27 and 89.6). *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* makes reference to an individual placing his foot upon a stone, when swearing an oath. At Hersteinn and Þuríðr's wedding party, the bridegroom reportedly went to where a stone was standing, put one foot upon the stone ("steig ǫðrum fœti upp á steininn" [34.4]), and swore that before the upcoming Althing was over, he would have Arngrímr goði declared a full outlaw.

[15] See also *Bandamanna saga* (8.8), *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* (45.17 and 46.5), *Njáls saga* (31.11–12), and *Svarfdœla saga* (169.3–4).

who refuses to bind himself to Vésteinn and withdraws his hand ("hnykkir ok sinni hendi" [24.2]) as well. By withdrawing their hands, Þorgrímr and Gísli show that they are uncomfortable with the arrangement and wish to annul their involvement.

A different gesture, but one that also signals refusal, is mentioned in *Ljósvetninga saga*. At Þorsteinn and Guðrún's wedding feast at Bægisá, a servant woman brings water to Geirlaug, the host's wife, who asks the woman to offer the water to Þórlaug, Guðmundr ríki's wife, first, because of her higher social standing. According to the saga, Þórlaug waved away with the back of her hand ("drap við hendi ǫfugri" [18.1–2]), that is, made a dismissive gesture, arguing that the servant woman was doing the right thing.

Old Norse-Icelandic makes no distinction between handclasping and handshaking, which implies a repeated moving of joined hands up and down. But handshaking, as opposed to handclasping, would seem to form part of the ritual of greetings, though there are only three examples in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders. One is in *Auðunar þáttr vestfirzka*, which relates that when Auðunn came to King Sveinn's court and the king recognized who he was, the king took his hand ("tók […] í hǫnd honum" [2: 2084.32]) and welcomed him. Another is in *Vatnsdœla saga*, which tells that Þorsteinn welcomed his son Ingimundr home with both hands "tók við honum báðum hǫndum" [28.7–8]).[16] The third is in *Njáls saga*, where it is told that when Hǫskuldr and Hrútr entered Mǫrðr's booth, Mǫrðr rose ("stóð upp" [8.10]), possibly as an act of deference, to receive them and gave Hǫskuldr his hand ("tók í hǫnd Hǫskuldi" [8.10–11]). There are no references to handshaking as a ritual of farewell. Indeed, in his study of handshaking, Herman Roodenburg suggests that shaking hands had a different meaning from the ritual act of greeting, arguing that "[i]t looks as if the gesture was not part of any greeting or parting behaviour at all but that it had quite different connotations which centred around such concepts as friendship, brotherhood, peace, reconciliation, accord, or mutual agreement."[17]

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[16] The phrase "to receive someone with both hands" ("taka á móti e-m báðum hǫndum"), which occurs also in *Heiðarvíga saga* ("tekr Þórarinn á móti honum [Narfa] báðum hǫndum" [2: 1364.29–30]) and *Laxdœla saga* ("Óláfr tók við henni [fóstru Melkorku] báðum hǫndum" [58.18–19]) may not necessarily be a gesture but simply imply that a person is given a warm welcome.

[17] Herman Roodenburg, "The 'hand of friendship': shaking hands and other gestures in the Dutch Republic," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*,

Similarly, Old Norse-Icelandic makes no distinction between hand-shaking and leading another person by the hand or arm, but instances of the latter are suggested by *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Njáls saga*, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Þorvalds þáttr víðfǫrla*, and *Grettis saga*. In *Eiríks saga rauða*, it is told that Þorkell invited the seeress Þorbjǫrg to visit his farm, and when she arrived and entered the hall, Þorkell took her hand ("tók […] í hǫnd henni" [207.6]) and led her to the seat that had been prepared for her. *Njáls saga* relates that when Hrappr found Ásvarðr, Guðbrandr's overseer, and Guðrún, Guðbrandr's daughter, in a nut grove together, Hrappr took her by the hand ("tók í hǫnd henni" [211.18]) and led her off alone. *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* tells that at Helgi and Þóra's wedding party, Hallsteinn's slave took the bride by the hand ("tók í hǫnd henni" [2: 1754.14]) and led her from the women's area into the hall. *Flóamanna saga* reports that when Þorgils arrived at Hjalli to bring home his wife Helga, he took her by the hand ("tekr í hǫnd henni" [316.19]) and led her out. *Þorvalds þáttr víðfǫrla* relates that Atli took the boy Ingimundr by the hand ("tók í hǫnd sveinimum" [2:2330.12]) and led him before the bishop, so that he could receive baptism. And *Grettis saga* tells that when Grettir invited Þórir þǫmb and his crew to stay at Þorfinnr's farm in Háramarsey and they reached the farmhouse, Grettir took Þórir þǫmb by the arm ("tók […] í hǫnd Þóri" [1: 981.39]) and led him into the main room. In *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grettis saga*, the gesture is an act of courtesy on the part of the host, and on both occasions the leader is on his home ground. In *Njáls saga*, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Flóamanna saga*, and *Þorvalds þáttr víðfǫrla* the gesture implies that the leader is taking charge. There are no examples of people walking together hand in hand in the texts examined.

Gestures used in witchcraft

In medieval pictures and sculptures, wicked people are typically characterized by grotesque gestures, and it is probably no coincidence that the only example of deviant or outlandish gesticulation in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders is that of a witch. The episode occurs in *Vatnsdœla saga*, which tells that when the five sons of Ingimundr arrived at Áss to avenge Hrolleifr's killing of their father, Hrolleifr's mother Ljót was in

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ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 152–189, esp. p. 174.

the process of placing a curse on them that would cause them to run wild and be driven crazy with fear. The saga reports that she had pulled her clothes up over her head and was walking backwards with her head thrust between her legs ("hon hafði rekit fǫtin fram yfir hǫfuð sér ok fór ǫfug ok rétti hǫfuðit aptr milli fótanna" [69.24–70.2]).[18]

The example of Ljót in *Vatnsdœla saga* shows that gesticulation accompanied the performance of magic rituals, and the same saga mentions also waving in connection with witchcraft. Gróa reportedly walked backwards around her house after sundown, looked up at the mountain, waved ("veifði" [96.9]) a kerchief in which she had wrapped gold, and asked that whatever was fated should come to pass. A rock then fell on the house and killed everyone inside. Later in the saga, it is told that when Þórarinn illi, Úlfheðinn, and Bárðr were on their way to where Þórarinn was to dual with Starri, the weather turned bad. Bárðr was asked to call off the bad weather and, according to the saga, he asked Þórarinn and Úlfheðinn to join hands ("handkrœkjask" [127.13]) and make a circle, while he went around backwards three times, spoke in Irish, and had them say 'yes' out loud. When finally he waved ("veifði" [128.1]) a kerchief at the mountain, the weather improved. A similar example of waving for magical purposes is found in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, which tells that Bjargey repeatedly incited her somewhat apathetic husband Hávarðr to avenge Þorbjǫrn's killing of Óláfr, and when eventually she had a chance to meet the culprit, she cast a spell on him. According to the saga, she had a bag in her hand and waved ("veifði" [2: 1313.7]) it around the shack, which Þorbjǫrn had just rounded. Eventually, Hávarðr managed to waylay Þorbjǫrn and slay him.

Moreover, four Sagas of Icelanders make reference to a mother, foster mother, or a woman skilled in magic stroking or examining with her

[18] Reference may also be made to Freydís in *Eiríks saga rauða*, who inspired such dread in the natives by belaboring her naked breast with a sword that they chose to retreat, though admittedly it is only in *Grœnlendinga saga* that she is portrayed as a villain. No explanation is offered for her behavior, but modern commentators have made suggestions. Matthías Þórðarson, *The Vinland Voyages*, trans. Thorstina Jackson Walters, American Geographical Society Research Series 18 (New York: American Geographical Society, 1930), for example, claims that "[Freydís] no doubt wished to indicate two things, that she was a woman and that she was unafraid and ready to protect herself with the sharp sword if attacked" (p. 54). Cf., however, William Hovgaard, *The Voyages of the Norsemen to America*, Scandinavian Monographs 1 (New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1914), who comments that "[i]t is difficult on the whole to reconcile causes and effects in the description of the battle, and the tale is evidently much distorted" (p. 142).

hands the body of a man before he went to battle, evidently to check for bumps, raised areas, or other irregularities that might portend wounds.[19] *Kormáks saga* tells that Helga had a foster mother, who could foretell the future and used to feel men with her hand ("þreifa um menn" [204.10]) before they went into battle. This she did before Ǫgmundr left home to duel with Ásmundr the Viking, and she declared that at no point would he be severely wounded. *Heiðarvíga saga* relates that before Barði took off to avenge his slain brother, his mother Þuríðr asked to pass her hands over him. She then placed her hands on top of his head, felt his body from all sides all the way down to his toes ("tekr til í hvirflinum uppi ok þreifar um hann ǫllum megin, allt á tær niðr" [2: 1374.32–33]), and announced that nowhere did she feel any great resistance to the movement of her hands. *Kjalnesinga saga* reports that the night before Búi was to fight a duel with Kolfinnr, Esja, his foster mother, bathed him and stroked her hand over every bone in his body ("strauk hvert bein á honum" [22.30]). And *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* tells that before Hrói left to fight against Vémundr, his foster mother wanted to feel all over his body ("vildi […] þreifa um hann" [2: 1741.38]), because she believed that in that way she could tell how it would turn out for him. She found something amiss on his foot, and, indeed, in the battle Vémundr threw a spear at Hrói and hit him in the instep.

Finally, the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders tell of men touching with their hands the face or body of a person to cause or cure an illness. In *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, Bárðr appeared in a dream to Gestr and placed his hands on Gestr's eyes ("tók […] at augum hans" [1: 74.1]), causing him an illness from which he died. And in *Egils þáttr Síðu-Hallssonar*, King Óláfr laid his hands on Egill's chest ("leggr […] hendr sínar á brjóst Egils" [2:2111.24]) with the result that Egill's illness abatet.

Gestures signifying interpersonal feelings, attitudes, and dispositions

The extreme reticence of the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders in dealing with gestures relating to emotion is well known. Accordingly, a gesture may

[19] Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, ed. *Vestfirðinga sǫgur. Gísla saga Súrssonar. Fóstbræðra saga. Þáttr Þormóðar. Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings. Auðunar þáttr vestfirzka. Þorvarðar þáttr krákunefs*, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1943), p. 163, fn. 1.

serve as an external signifier of an emotion that is not directly expressed by a character or commented on by the author.

Kissing is probably the most common sign of interpersonal feelings in the texts examined. There are no examples of someone kissing an object or another person's hand, leg, or foot to show veneration or submission. Virtually all the kisses in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders seem to be intimate tokens of love and passion and appear to be on the mouth or cheek. The kiss in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, which tells that at the sight of Solrún Þórðr fell deeply in love and then kissed her tenderly ("kyssti hana kærlega" [1: 65.16]) is probably a kiss on the mouth. The intensity of the kisses in *Kormáks saga*, which relates that when Kormákr was about to leave he gave Steingerðr two kisses in a long, drawn-out way ("kyssir […] Steingerði tvá kossa heldr óhrapalliga" [291.6–7]), and in *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, which tells that when Gunnarr was ready to sail abroad, he kissed Helga with great passion ("minnisk […] til Helgu með miklum elskuhuga" [2: 1150.26]) suggests French kisses. As in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Kormáks saga*, and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, it is typically lovers, who kiss;[20] in fact, only *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* and *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* provide examples of a husband and wife kissing. The former tells that when Hávarðr was about to avenge his son Óláfr, he turned to his wife Bjargey, kissed her ("minntisk við hana" [2: 1315.23–24]), and said that they might not meet again. The latter relates that Þórðr took his wife Oddný eykyndill on his knee, was affectionate to her ("er blíðr við hana" [142.9]), and kissed her ("kyssir hana" [142.9]) in order to taunt Bjǫrn, Oddný eykyndill's lifelong love. As in *Kormáks saga* and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, the kissing usually takes place when a lover has to depart. In *Víglundar saga*, Víglundr kissed ("kyssti [97.1], "minntisk" [98.16]) Ketilríðr, when he had to leave; and in *Njáls saga* Hrútr kissed Queen Gunnhildr ("minntisk við hana" [15.14]), when he left her room after their affair. The same saga also relates that when Hrútr was about to depart for Iceland, Queen Gunnhildr put her arms around his neck and kissed him ("tók hendinni um háls honum ok kyssti hann" [20.25–21.1]) and placed a spell on him, so that he would not have any sexual pleasure with the woman he planned to marry in Iceland. This is the only instance in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders of a woman kissing a man, and it is probably noteworthy that the woman is a queen

[20] Further examples of lovers kissing are found in *Hallfreðar saga* (27.2), *Kormáks saga* (229.3 and 293.10), and *Hrómundar þáttr halta* (2: 2175.37).

and socially his superior. There are no examples of women kissing each other, but, in addition to *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, which mentions that Þorbjǫrn kissed his sons ("minnisk við sonu sína" [2: 1325.18]) before sending them away after their killing of Ljótr, there are examples in *Njáls saga* of men kissing each other, though probably more as a sign of fraternity or a ritual of greeting and farewell than as an expression of affection. According to the saga, Kári and Þorgeirr kissed ("minntusk […] við" [421.16]) Hallr, when he arrived at Holt; and the sons of Sigfúss kissed ("minntusk […] við [427. 25]) Flosi, when they left Svínafell. Like the joining of hands, the gesture directly involves both parties and indicates a relationship of equality. Finally, *Njáls saga* tells that a father, Hǫskuldr, took his daughter, Hallgerðr, by the chin ("tók undir kverkina" [7.2] and kissed her ["kyssti hana" [7.2]), and *Svarfdœla saga* relates that when Klaufi and Þórðr wrestled, a slave woman intervened and told them to kiss ("kyssask" [157.21]) and make up.

The example of Þórðr's, Gunnhildr's, and Hǫskuldr's kisses in *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* and *Njáls saga* show that kissing is often accompanied by other signs of interpersonal feelings. Embrace is the second most frequent sign of affection in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders and certainly in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, which tells that when Óláfr met Þorbjǫrn's housekeeper Sigríðr, she was happy to put his arms around his neck ("henni þótti allgott at leggja hendr sínar um háls honum" [2: 1302.4–5]), it signifies amorous intentions.[21] Unlike most of the examples of kisses, however, embraces do not necessarily imply erotic feelings, for *Svarfdœla saga* reports that Yngvildr put her arms around Karl's neck ("lagði […] hendr um háls Karli" [204.28]) and cried, when he bought her out of slavery; *Grettis saga* tells that Þorfinnr embraced ("hvarf til" [1: 986.10–11]) Grettir, as he thanked him for killing the trouble-makers, who had been staying at his farm in Háramarsey; and *Þorsteins þáttr Síðu-Hallssonar* relates that when Einarr got angry with King Magnús for his unwillingness to settle with Þorsteinn and walked out of the hall in anger, the king went after him, put his arms around his neck ("leggr hendr um háls Einari" [2: 2290.40–41]), and managed to calm him down. Other examples suggest that, like kisses, embraces formed part of the ritual of greeting and farewell. In *Njáls saga*, the exiled Gunnarr embraced ("hverfr til" [182.14]) all the people at Bergþórshváll for their help and

[21] See also *Hrómundar þáttr halta*, which mentions serious embraces and caresses ("kneikingar með alvǫru ok blíðu" [2: 2175.27–28]) between Sleitu-Helgi and Helga.

support, when he was about to leave Iceland; in *Grettis saga*, Grettir's mother sat up and embraced Grettir ("hvarf til hans" [1: 1026.39]), when he returned home to Bjarg in the middle of the night; and in *Víglundar saga*, one of Earl Eiríkr's sons climbed up onto King Haraldr's footstool and hugged him ("hvarf til hans" [68.19]).

Three embraces in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders have a petitionary intention, and it is perhaps noteworthy that in these cases the phrase "hverfa til" is not used. One is in *Njáls saga*, which tells that Hǫskuldr sent Þjóstólfr away, because he had beaten one of Hǫskuldr's servants. Þjóstólfr rode to Varmalœkr and asked Hallgerðr to look after him. Hallgerðr then went to talk with her husband Glúmr, put her arms around his neck ("lagði hendr upp um háls honum" [47.17–18]) and asked him to let Þjóstólfr stay with them. The second is in *Kjalnesinga saga*, which relates that King Haraldr gave Búi the seemingly impossible task of fetching a game board from his foster-father Dofri. Búi spent the winter in Dofri's cave, during which he impregnated Dofri's daughter Fríðr. In the spring, Búi asked Fríðr to persuade her father to let him depart with the game board. Fríðr then went to her father, sat down on his knee, put her arms around his neck ("lagði hendr um háls honum" [2: 1453.18]), and asked how he was going to part with his winter guest. The third is in *Eyrbyggja saga*, in which it is told that after Þórgunna's death from illness, Þóroddr made preparations to burn her bedclothes. Þuríðr then put her arms around his neck ("lagði […] hendr yfir háls honum" [143.6]) and pleaded with him not to burn them. The favors that all three women requested were granted: Þjóstólfr received permission to stay with Hallgerðr, Búi was permitted to leave Dofrafjall with the board game and other fine gifts, and Þuríðr got to keep the quilt, the sheets, and the canopy.

In addition to putting her arms around Dofri's neck, Fríðr also sat down on his knee ("settisk í kné honum" [2: 1453.18]). This is a flirtatious gesture, and certainly in *Hallfreðar saga*, *Víglundar saga*, and *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, where men take women on their knees, it implies amorous feelings.[22] Hallfreðr, it is told, took Kolfinna on his knee ("setti hana í kné sér" [26.9]), drew her towards him ("sveigir hana at sér" [*Hallfreðar saga*, 27.1–2]), and the saga relates that there were a few kisses ("verða þá einstaka kossar" [*Hallfreðar saga*, 27.2]). As people

[22] Further examples are found in *Svarfdœla saga*, though here it is a woman (Yngvildr) sitting herself on a man's (Klaufi's) knee and showing him affection ("var við hann allblíð" [172.26–27], "var blíð við hann" [173.5]).

were watching the games at Foss, Víglundr reportedly went to the cross-bench, where Ketilríðr was seated, pulled her out of her seat, sat down himself, and then put her on his lap ("setti hana í kné sér" [*Víglundar saga*, 90.2–3]). And, as mentioned above, Þórðr took Oddný eykyndill on his knee ("setr Oddnýju í kné sér" [*Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, 142.7]) in order to provoke Bjǫrn.[23]

As evident from *Laxdœla saga* and *Grœnlendinga saga*, however, the gesture does not always reflect romance, for in these sagas it is portrayed simply as an expressive act to show tender feelings. The former relates that when King Mýrkjartan introduced Óláfr to Melkorka's nurse, Óláfr received her with open arms and placed the woman upon his lap ("setti kerlingu á kné sér" [58.19]). The latter tells that Þorsteinn Eiríksson died from illness, and that his wife Guðríðr, who had been sitting on a stool in front of the bench where Þorsteinn is lying, was overcome with grief. In order to comfort her, Þorsteinn svartr took Guðríðr from her stool into his arms ("tók […] Guðríði […] í fang sér" [92.30]), but as he consoled her, the dead Þorsteinn asked for Guðríðr. Þorsteinn svartr told her not to answer, crossed the floor, sat down on the chair with Guðríðr on his knee ("en Guðríðr sat í kjnám honum" [93.7]), and asked the dead man what he wanted.

Once, stroking someone's hair is mentioned as an amorous gesture. This is in *Víglundar saga*, which relates that Ketilríðr was married to Þórðr, while Víglundr was away on a warring expedition. When he and the foster brothers returned, they stayed with Ketill raumr. One day the three men were called together to have their hair washed, but Víglundr announced that he would not have his hair washed and had not washed it since he and Ketilríðr parted, and then explained the reason in a verse: "Langúðig strauk lauðri / líneik um skǫr mín" (104.7–8; The faithful linen-tree [woman] gently stroked my locks).[24]

There is in *Þórðar saga hreðu* an example of a man laying his head

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[23] The same saga, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, further relates that Oddný eykyndill offered Bjǫrn one of her and Þórðr's daughters as a bride in place of her, and that one evening Bjǫrn took the girls onto his knee ("setr meyjarnar í kné sér" [150.7]), recalling Oddný eykyndill's words. The incident clearly refers back to the scene, where Þórðr took his wife on his knee in order to provoke Bjǫrn.

[24] See, for example, Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998), who comments that "[s]aga verses are obviously of greatest value when they help to reveal the mental and emotional life of the characters" (126) and that "[n]ot the least importance of saga verses is their capacity to remind us that there is more to the emotional life of saga

in the lap of his lover. This is Ormr, who was infatuated with Sigríðr, disregarded her brother Þórðr's instructions not to visit her and rode to Óss, where Sigríðr happened to be washing her clothes in a brook. According to the saga, he made her sit down and laid his head in her lap, placing her hands on his head ("setr hana niðr ok leggr hǫfuð í kné henni ok leggr hennar hendr í hǫfuð sér" [2: 2022.16–17]). A somewhat similar gesture, but clearly without erotic implications, is mentioned in *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Grœnlendinga þáttr*, and *Laxdœla saga*. *Vápnfirðinga saga* relates that when Bjarni killed Geitir, he repented and took Geitir's head in his lap ("settisk under hǫfuð Geiti" [2: 2001.8]), where he died. *Finnboga saga ramma* tells that when Urðarkǫttr and Finnbogi were riding back home from collecting debts owing to them, Finnbogi felt unwell, and, realizing that Finnbogi was about to die, Urðarkǫttr placed Finnbogi's head in his lap ("sezt Urðarkǫttr undir hǫfuð honum" [1: 633.32]). *Grœnlendinga þáttr* relates that after being struck by an axe between his shoulders, Einarr died in the bishop's lap ("í knjám honum" [2: 1117.7]). And, according to *Laxdœla saga*, Bolli took Kjartan's upper body in his lap ("settisk […] undir herðar honum" [154.7–8]) after having dealt him his death blow.

Gestures signifying dislike, contempt, and scorn are uncommon in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders, and there are, for instance, no examples of spitting, sticking the tongue out, or baring the buttocks. There is one example in *Grettis saga* of giving someone the finger. The episode takes place in a church in Norway, where Grettir was to carry hot iron in order to prove his innocence in the death of the sons of Þórir and their companions. As Grettir walked down the aisle, a young boy ran up, and, in a tirade of words, accused him of being a criminal. The boy also gave Grettir the finger ("rétti honum fingr" [1: 1016.24]), made faces at him, and called him names. Grettir killed him on the spot, and the saga comments that since no one knew where he came from or what became of him, it was generally believed that he was an evil spirit.

Similarly, threatening gestures and physical expressions of anxiety or discomfort are rare in the texts examined and limited to incidents in *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*. In the former, it is related that Guðmundr inn ríki was a guest at Tjǫrnes, where he was given the high seat with Ófeigr being assigned a seat next to him. When the tables were

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characters than the insatiable hunger for honour which seems to dominate many a saga plot" (128).

brought, Ófeigr laid his fist on the table ("setti hnefann á borðit" [58.24–25]), warning Guðmundr of its strength and potential with the result that Guðmundr took a different seat. In the latter, it is told that Þórólfr bribed Spá-Gils to ambush and kill Úlfar. When Spá-Gils and Úlfar met, Spá-Gils asked to see his fine sword, and the saga reports that Úlfar then began twirling his finger in his beard ("vatt við skegginu" [88.25–26]). Yet he gave both his shield and sword to Spá-Gils, who immediately killed him.

Gestures accompanying or showing feelings of sadness or grief are non-existent, the only exception being *Vápnfirðinga saga*, in which Helgi's foster mother is described as weeping with her face in her hands ("sá [hon] í gaupnir sér" [2: 1998.38]), because of a dream foreboding Helgi's death.[25]

Emblems

This type of gesture does not contribute to rituals and ceremonies and does not express emotion or attitudes in any significant way. Gestures of this kind belong to the category of what modern writers on non-verbal communication call emblems, which Kendon defines as follows: "A class of gestural action in which the gesture can stand by itself as a single act, is recognized as a standard item within the community that uses it, and can be given a verbal gloss with comparative ease."[26] According to Argyle, some common or universal examples of emblems are pointing, shrugging, head-nodding, clapping, beckoning, and waving.[27]

Emblems do not figure prominently in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders. There are no examples of shrugging, head-nodding, and clapping. Pointing occurs twice, in *Fljótsdœla saga* and *Laxdœla saga*,

[25] Mention should, perhaps, in this connection also be made of an incident in *Egils þáttr Síðu-Hallssonar*. When Egill asked King Óláfr to show him mercy by placing his hand on his breast, the king was greatly moved and dried his eyes with a cloth ("brá dúki um augu sér" [2: 2111.23–24]).

[26] Adam Kendon, "Geography of Gesture," *Semiotica* 37 (1981), pp. 129–63, esp. p. 135. Kendon points out that "[s]uch gestural actions are regarded as being complete utterances in themselves and are to be distinguished from actions, such as gesticulation, that are concurrent with talk and only comprehensible in this concurrence. They are also to be distinguished from gestural actions that are spontaneously improvided to meet the demand of the current discourse, such as the illustrative or descriptive actions someone might use as he gives an account of something" (135–36). Argyle, *Bodily Communication* (1975), p. 52, defines emblems as "gestures which have a direct verbal translation, like head-nods, beckoning, and pointing."

[27] Argyle, *Bodily Communication* (1975), p. 53.

respectively. In the former, Sveinungr stretched out his arm and pointed out to Droplaug's sons ("réttir til hǫndina ok vísar þeim til" [1: 712.20]) a man running south to the mountain; and in the latter, a servant at the farm at Vatnhorn showed Þorgils the way ("vísaði honum leiðina" [186.3]) to the shieling, where Helgi and his men were staying. Beckoning occurs once, in *Grœnlendinga saga*, which tells that as Guðríðr was sitting inside in the doorway of Þorfinnr karlsefni's farmhouse with her baby son, a woman entered and introduced herself, and Guðríðr then motioned to her with her hand ("rétti […] hǫnd sína til hennar" [95.25]) to sit down beside her.

The verb "signa," which implies a recognizable and representative gesture of an object occurs in *Njáls saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, and *Eyrbyggja saga*. Njáll and Bergþóra crossed themselves and the boy ("signdu […] sik bæði ok sveininn" [*Njáls saga*, 331.2]), as they prepared to die in the flames at Bergþórshváll. Steinvǫr crossed herself ("signdi sik" [*Grettis saga*, 1: 1055.23]) before Grettir carried her and her daughter over the swollen river. Þorsteinn svartr told his wife Guðríðr to cross herself ("signa sik" [*Eiríks saga rauða*, 216.6]), when her dead husband rose and asked to speak with her. And the people at Nes made the sign of the cross over the food ("signdu mat sinn" [*Eyrbyggja saga*, 144.22]) prepared by the dead Þórgunna before eating it. It is less clear what kind of arm or hand movement is involved, when in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* it is told that Bárðr made a sign ("signdi" [109.4]) over the poisoned draught. The phrase "gera krossmark," is found only in *Þorvalds þáttr víðfǫrla*, which relates that Bishop Friðrekr made the sign of the cross in front of himself ("gerði fyrir sér krossmark" [2: 2327.24]) before walking into the middle of the fire.

III

The people in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders communicate with body language as well as speech, and their gestures serve obvious public and private functions. Most of the gestures are voluntary and conventional. They typically occur within the context of direct or indirect speech and so serve as intensifiers, as in, for example, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, when first Þorgrímr withdraws his hand, saying that he feels no obligation to Vésteinn, and later Gísli withdraws his hand with the comments that

others may then do the same. Gestures are rarely used as the sole means of utterance, though they do occur in circumstances when speech cannot be used, as in, for example *Eiríks saga rauða*, when the Norsemen and aborigines meet, since evidently they don't understand each other's language and possibly can't hear one another. The range of gestures used by women seems more limited than that used by men, possibly because constrained behavior was somewhat more inherent in the female modesty code, but more likely because women were more restricted in public activities than men and because their actions were of less consequence to the composers of the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders.

Composed as they are before drama exerted a strong influence on other literary genres, the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders use gestures more sparingly than modern literature does. There is, for example, no mention of wringing one's hands as a sign of despair, bowing as an expression of respect, throwing up one's hands as a sign of supplication, and headshaking or headtossing as a silent 'no'. And some current and common gestures, such as thumbs up as a sign of approval, fingertip kissing as a signal of praise or salutation, and the temple-screw gesture for crazy, may have been unknown in medieval Iceland. Several texts make no reference to gestures at all, and the bodily movements are typically not described in any detail.[28] Although the limited mention of gestures may possibly be attributed to the rather terse style of these works, it is also quite possible that the use of gestures in the texts presents a realistic picture of interpersonal communication in medieval Iceland, for, as Fritz Graf points out, the stereotype says that Northerners gesticulate less than, for example, Mediterranean people.[29] Whether or not it is possible to

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[28] These comprise *Arnórs þáttr jarlaskálds*, *Bergbúa þáttr*, *Bolla þáttr*, *Brandkrossa þáttr*, *Brands þáttr ǫrva*, *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Einars þáttr Skúlasonar*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttr*, *Gull-Þóris saga*, *Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabana*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Halldórs þáttr Snorrasonar I* and *II*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, *Hreiðars þáttr*, *Íslendings þáttr sǫgufróða*, *Ívars þáttr Ingimundarsonar*, *Jǫkuls þáttr Búasonar*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Kumlbúa þáttr*, *Mána þáttr skálds*, *Odds þáttr Ófeigssonar*, *Ófeigs þáttr*, *Orms þáttr Stórólfssonar*, *Óttars þáttr svarta*, *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr*, *Stúfs þáttr*, *Svaða þáttr ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs*, *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls*, *Þórarins þáttr Nefjólfssonar*, *Þórarins þáttr ofsa*, *Þórarins þáttr stuttfeldar*, *Þorgríms þáttr Hallasonar*, *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*, *Þormóðar þáttr*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Þorsteins þáttr Austfirðings*, *Þorsteins þáttr forvitna*, *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs*, *Þorsteins þáttr tjaldstæðings*, *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts*, *Þorvalds þáttr tasalda*, *Þorvarðar þáttr krákunefs*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Vǫðu-Brands þáttr*, and *Qgmundar þáttr dytts*.

[29] Fritz Graf, "Gestures and conventions: the gestures of Roman actors and orators,"

make such generalizations, it is a fact that already by the late medieval period, various writers had noted that gestural practices differed widely from one region to another.[30] Peter Burke's study of later writers, those from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, reveals a growing sense of the inappropriateness of extensive bodily expressions and an increasing preference for restraint and moderation as evidence of self-control in bodily expressiveness. He notes that especially in northern Europe, a distaste for flamboyance in gesticulation is evident.[31] Certainly, the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders make considerably less mention of gestures than, for example, German and French romances composed during the same period. Modern studies of the uses and meanings of gestures, especially those of Desmond Morris, Peter Collett, Peter Marsh, and Marie O'Shaughnessy, who have attempted to map the geographical distribution of gestures in the western world from Scandinavia in the north to Greece in the south and from Ireland in the west to Turkey in the east have revealed that cultural areas within Europe differ significantly in the number and repertoires of gestures.[32] Scandinavia and Britain are found to be quite similar and decidedly different from Italy and Spain, which have been shown to have a markedly larger number of gestures and gesture repertoires.

The culture of the Middle Ages has been called a "gestural culture,"[33] and the importance of gesture has by some historians been regarded as a

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in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 36–58, esp. p. 36. Graf draws attention to Andrea de Jorio's study, *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire Napoletano* (Naples, 1832, repr. 1964), who attempted to reconstruct the mimic code of classical antiquity on the basis of the Neapolitan gestures of his own day; in his book de Jorio claims that the northern Europeans do not gesticulate due to the cold climate.

[30] Dilwyn Knox, "Late medieval and renaissance ideas on gesture," in *Die Sprache der Zeichen und Bilder: Rhetorik und nonverbale Kommunikation in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Volker Kapp (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990), pp. 11–39, esp. p. 12.

[31] Peter Burke, "The language of gesture in early modern Italy," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 71–83. Burke associates the interest in gestures with the reforms of gesture, which were part of the moral discipline of the Counter-Reformation.

[32] Desmond Morris, Peter Collett, Peter Marsh, and Marie O'Shaughnessy, *Gestures, their Origins and Distribution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979).

[33] Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, trans. Julia Barrow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 357; Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (2002), pp. 11 and 185; Jody Enders, "Of Miming and Signing," in *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art*, ed., Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art and Music Monograph Series 28 (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 1–25, esp. p. 5.

result of the weakness of literacy.[34] Certainly, handclasping as a pledge of faith, oath, or promise must parallel what would now be a written document signed by both parties. Accordingly, handclasping for these purposes has become obsolete. The same is obviously the case with regard to the gestures, which, according to the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders, accompanied magic rituals. Other gestures documented in the texts examined have largely fallen out of use. These include kneeling, which in the modern West is confined to churches, and gestures expressing hierarchies between social groups, such as prostration and placing one's head on the knees of another person, which are no longer used in the more egalitarian societies of northern Europe. Yet other gestures have undergone changes, such as public kissing, which, as an act of intimacy, has become more the exclusive privilege of the private sphere.

As Keith Thomas points out, "[t]he human body […] is as much a historical document as a charter or a diary or a parish register (though unfortunately one which is a good deal harder to preserve) and it deserves to be studied accordingly."[35] Despite the somewhat restricted range of gestures mentioned in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders, the texts nevertheless give an idea of the levels of gesticulation as accepted social acts within this corpus of literature. More importantly, they show that the body provided medieval Icelanders with a means of expression, and that speech and action served as a cohesive whole.

Appendix

Texts examined: *Arnórs þáttr jarlaskálds*,[36] *Auðunar þáttr vestfirska*, *Bandamanna saga* (ed. Magerøy 1981), *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (ÍS 1), *Bergbúa þáttr*, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* (ÍF 3),[37] *Bolla þáttr*, *Brandkrossa þáttr*, *Brands þáttr ǫrva*, *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar*,

[34] Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The rationale of gestures in the West: third to thirteenth centuries," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 59–70, esp. p. 59.

[35] Keith Thomas, "Introduction," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 1–14, esp. p. 2.

[36] This *þáttr* as well as the other *þættir* (unless otherwise stated) are all based on the ÍS (= *Íslendinga sögur og þættir*) edition.

[37] ÍF = *Íslenzk fornrit*.

Droplaugarsona saga (ÍF 11), *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (ÍS 1), *Egils þáttr Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Einars þáttr Skúlasonar*, *Eiríks saga rauða* (ÍF 4), *Eyrbyggja saga* (ÍF 4), *Finnboga saga ramma* (ÍS 1), *Fljótsdœla saga* (ÍS 1), *Flóamanna saga* (ÍF 13), *Fóstbrœðra saga* (ÍS 1), *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (ÍF 6), *Gísls þáttr Illugasonar* (ÍF 3), *Grettis saga* (ÍS 1), *Grœnlendinga saga* (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1978), *Grœnlendinga þáttr*, *Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttr*, *Gull-Þóris saga* (ÍS 2), *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* (ÍS 2), *Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabana*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (ÍS 2), *Halldórs þáttr Snorrasonar I* and *II*, *Hallfreðar saga* (ed. Bjarni Einarsson 1977), *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* (ÍS 2), *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (ÍS 2), *Heiðarvíga saga* (ÍS 2), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* (ÍS 2), *Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, *Hreiðars þáttr*, *Hrómundar þáttr halta*, *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* (ÍF 3), *Íslendings þáttr sǫgufróða*, *Ívars þáttr Ingimundarsonar*, *Jǫkuls þáttr Búasonar*, *Kjalnesinga saga* (ÍS 2), *Kormáks saga* (ÍF 8), *Króka-Refs saga* (ÍS 2), *Kumlbúa þáttr*, *Laxdœla saga* (ÍF 5), *Ljósvetninga saga* (ÍF 10), *Mána þáttr skálds*, *Njáls saga* (ÍF 12), *Odds þáttr Ófeigssonar*, *Ófeigs þáttr* (ÍF 10), *Orms þáttr Stórólfssonar*, *Óttars þáttr svarta*, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* (ÍS 2), *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*, *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr*, *Stúfs þáttr*, *Svaða þáttr ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs*, *Svarfdœla saga* (ÍF 9), *Þorsteins Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls*, *Þórarins þáttr Nefjólfssonar*, *Þórarins þáttr ofsa*, *Þórarins þáttr stuttfeldar*, *Þórðar saga hreðu* (ÍS 2), *Þorgríms þáttr Hallasonar*, *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*, *Þormóðar þáttr*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (ÍS 2), *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* (ÍS 2), *Þorsteins þáttr Austfirðings*, *Þorsteins þáttr forvitna*, *Þorsteins þáttr Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Þorsteins þáttr skelks*, *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs*, *Þorsteins þáttr tjaldstæðings*, *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts*, *Þorvalds þáttr tasalda* (ÍF 9), *Þorvalds þáttr víðfǫrla*, *Þorvarðar þáttr krákunefs*, *Valla-Ljóts saga* (ÍF 9), *Vápnfirðinga saga* (ÍS 2), *Vatnsdœla saga* (ÍF 8), *Víga-Glúms saga* (ÍF 9), *Víglundar saga* (ÍF 14), *Vǫðu-Brands þáttr* (ÍF 10), *Qgmundar þáttr dytts* (ÍF 9), and *Qlkofra þáttr* (ÍF 11).

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Summary

The article analyzes gestures used among Icelanders in the Middle Ages according to the composers of the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders, as well as the manner in which the composers bring in descriptions of bodily movement as a means of non-verbal communication. More specifically, it examines, if the significance and meaning of some of these non-verbal signs have undergone change over time, that is, between the medieval world represented in these texts and our own times, and if the conventions governing their use remain the same. It treats formal and public gestures; gestures used in witchcraft; gestures signifying interpersonal feelings, attitudes, and dispositions; and emblems.

Keywords: Gestures, body language, Old Norse-Icelandic literature

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Recensioner

Merrill Kaplan, *Thou Fearful Guest: Addressing the Past in Four Tales in Flateyjarbók*. FF Communications, edited for the Folklore Fellows, Vol. CXLVIII, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia / Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2011, 236 s.

Starting with a description of the experience of coming face to face with the ancient past in the form of the fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók* manuscript in the early hours of a Reykjavík morning, this rewarding book can be seen as a form of academic time travel which looks at the different ways in which narratives function at different times and in different contexts. It is particularly interested in the ways in which narrative materials dealing with the past can create a sense of disruption or "irruption" in the present, a sense that time has become temporarily "out of joint" and therefore needs setting right in some way. On another level, it can be seen as an honest representation of the personal journey into the past that all scholars undertake when they start "dealing with" Old Nordic literature, trying to interpret exactly what it "means". Readers of this book are invited to take a similar journey when they open the cover of Kaplan's book which displays the image of the door ring and lock of a medieval church. Turning the pages, they follow the author as she considers an early scribe writing of an event that took place before his time, in which a storyteller is tells of even earlier times. As Kaplan herself notes, the diagetic process is somewhat similar to that of opening a Russian doll or Chinese box, and it might be argued that her own book represents yet another layer within the narrative process.

Thou Fearful Guest focuses on four *þættir* contained in *Flateyjarbók* which show Norway's main missionary kings, Óláfr Tryggvason and St Óláfr Haraldsson encountering strangers who tell them stories of the pagan past: *Norna-Gests þáttr*, and the so-called "Ögvaldsnes episode" (from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*); and the account of how "Óðinn

kom til Óláfs með dul og prettum" and *Tóka þáttr Tókasonar* (from *Óláfs saga helga*). *Norna-Gests þáttr* and *Tóka þáttr Tókasonar* centre around figures who actually come from the past, while in the others, the visitor is none other than the Devil who has taken on the shape of Óðinn. Outside *Norna-Gests þáttr*, none of these intriguing accounts has previously warranted much scholarly attention. The original feature here, however, is that rather than attempting to trace the origin and development of the aforementioned accounts, Kaplan, the modern folklorist, is more interested in concentrating on their present manifestation and on the ways in which these stories might have been meant to function as part of *Flateyjarbók*.

Divided into a prologue and seven main chapters (themselves divided into three main sections, "Boundaries"; "Witnesses" and "Echoes"), the book starts by examining the material itself, and the ways in which different saga genres deal with the pagan past which seems to have both attracted and worried medieval writers. An introduction is given to the background and nature of the physical frame that contains the stories, *Flateyjarbók*, the author noting that the stories seem to have been deliberately placed either side of *Óláfs þáttr Geirstaðaálfs*.

The first chapter ("Time and Narrative": 39–61) sets out the theoretical background for the book, introducing the idea of "irruption" whereby the past temporarily breaks into the present causing both temporal and spiritual disorder for those present (as happens in all of the accounts in question). This idea is then applied to Mary Douglas' ideas of contamination, and John Lindow's suggestion that *Íslendingabók* can be seen as a kind of foundation myth in which universal Christian order is imposed on initial pagan disorder. Following this, we are introduced to the concept of simultaneous "heaped-up-ness" (a "confusion of different periods under the larger heading of 'the past'" [50]) which Kaplan feels scholars often avoid facing, and Genette's related ideas of diagesis, which, as the author demonstrates, can be effectively applied to the elements of "embedding" or "framing" several levels of narrative which exemplify these Old Nordic "accounts within accounts".

As Kaplan shows, all of the accounts in question feature the stock framing motif of the arrival of an "Otherly" visitor (or *gestr*, three of the visitors being called "Gestr" at some point). This leads on to an examination of the rules and dangers involved in the act of hospitality in medieval times, something which provides a well-understood context for each of the narratives in question, as the author effectively demonstrates. As she notes, the less embedding that occurs in the account (effectively

isolating the pagan past from the present), the more a sense of anxiety seems to arise for those involved.

The second chapter ("Unwelcome at the Threshold": 62–91) continues the examination of medieval *gestir*, underlining the need to examine these accounts within their present context rather than as interpolations (an approach which makes them potentially easier to deal with). As she stresses, for the early Nordic audiences, *gestir* commonly raised (among other things) questions of law and inheritance (the question of *gesterfð*), especially when figures like those encountered here leave behind them not only physical objects from the past but also memories and knowledge, all of which need to be dealt with. Another relevant question is that of the social standing of *gestir* (reflected in their physical placing within the hall). As Kaplan notes, the guests in these accounts all have intrinsic connections with the mysterious figure of Óðinn (the archetypal mysterious "guest"), stressing that in these accounts and in life, the concept of the *gestr* seems to be almost as problematic as that of the god: while it was related to potential positioning within the hall, it was also continually associated with an open doorway and movement back and forth into the mysterious outside. In short, *gestir* pose challenges to boundaries of all kinds. Kaplan goes on to analyse how this element forms a key feature of *Norna-Gests þáttr*, and not least in terms of the performances given by Norna-Gestr. As she notes, the performance of *Helreið Brynhildar* seems to be most problematic for the king because it problematically breaks down accepted boundaries such as those between past and present and life and death.

The second section of the book ("Memories") concentrates on the ways in which the past manifests itself in the present in the form of human memory preserved in various forms, and physical objects such as those found within the landscape, and not least in the shape of grave mounds. The first chapter of this section, "Corpus and History" (99–127), begins by examining the relationship between knowledge of the past and the medieval concept of "*fræði*", analysing among other things the different kinds of *fræði*/*fróðleikr* (Christian knowledge, heathen knowledge, and mythological knowledge) and different forms of historical account (*historia*, *fabula* and *argumentum*) that existed in medieval times. Discussion is then made of the ways in which readers / listeners evaluated the reliability of the sources available to them on the basis of age, lineage, witness value of speakers and then physical evidence. All of the above are then applied to the four accounts as a means of establishing how they might have been understood (trusted) at their different levels

by readers / listeners, in other words whether they were seen as *historia* or "*skröksögur*". The account of how "Óðinn kom til Óláfs með dul og prettum" is once again shown to be the most problematic account of the four because of the degree to which it irrupts into the present without offering comfortable resolution.

The following chapter, "Interrogating the Text" (128–42), continues the analysis of genre and function, considering how *Norna-Gests þáttr* actually walks a delicate path between the genres of *fornaldarsaga* and "*forneskjusaga*". As Kaplan notes, the *þáttr* nonetheless provides very useful information about "how people in the past thought about the problem of gaining access to a still more distant past" (134). The chapter goes on to focus on the way in which the oral and musical performances described in the *þáttr* provide "a moment of access to […] the age of Sigurðr, on the level of form as well as content" (138); and then the degree to which the *þáttr* (and especially its account of Sigurðr knocking Starkaðr's back teeth out) might have been regarded by listeners and readers as a form of safe "skemtan" (like *Þorsteins þáttr skelks*). A slight lost opportunity exists here when Kaplan fails to consider further how the deliberate first-person feature of *Helreið Brynhildar* might have explained why Óláfr Tryggvason was least comfortable with that part of Norna-Gestr's performance (because it would have involved a form of momentary resurrection of a dead pagan figure in the present).

The section ends with a short chapter on "Landscape and Memory" (143-51), underlining the ways in which landscape also served as a means of memory for people, and pointing to the narrative role played by local grave mounds in both the Ögvaldsnes episode and the *þáttr* of Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr. Original parallels are drawn between the concepts of embedding in landscape and embedding in narrative, and the ways in which both involve irruption of the past within the present. Kaplan goes on to consider the potential connections between the narrative of Ögvaldr's cow and the story of Ymir. She also points to parallels between relics in the physical landscape and linguistic relics like place names and proverbs (such as those mentioned in the Ögvaldsnes account), noting how all of the above involve elements of shared, living memory that underline shared experiences, while simultaneously offering (potentially irruptive) gateways into a past world.

The last section of the book, "Echoes", considers the ways in which the four accounts contain troublesome echoes of earlier pagan narratives. The central chapter of this section, "Óðinn and Ögvaldsnes" (151–91),

demonstrates how the ever-troublesome figure of Óðinn can be seen as lying behind all of the narratives in one form or another, the god himself forming a personification of the dangerous attractiveness of the past. Kaplan argues that each account can be viewed as a Christian attempt to exorcise the god (or figures closely associated with him and his world, like Hrólfr *kraki*, Starkaðr, Sigurðr and Hálfr). The focus here is placed on the presentation of Óðinn in the different extant versions of the Ögvaldsnes episode contained in *Odds saga munks*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*, and the two versions of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta,* and the ways in which the function of the account develops over time. As Kaplan notes, the ordering of events presented by Snorri in *Heimskringla* is different from the others, Óðinn's visit to Ólafr Tryggvason here preceding rather than following a planned attack on the king by Eyvindr *kelda* and a group of pagan sorcerers, meaning that the two events are no longer directly attached to each other (unlike in the other accounts). Furthermore, Snorri removes the suggestion that Óðinn is actually the Devil in disguise. As Kaplan notes, Oddr's version (echoed in those of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*) seems to emphasise the spiritual dangers that can be posed by the past, while Snorri's spotlights the danger that historical knowledge can present for the antiquarian. She underlines how in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* the two events are brought together as material for an Easter sermon presented by the king, thereby gaining a new function as part of the conversion process. The chapter ends with a consideration of how in *Flateyjarbók* the *þáttr* gains yet another function when placed in close proximity to the three other *þættir* under examination.

This last consideration is taken still further in the final chapter, "Der Zauberspiegel" (193–205) which deals with the archetypal "social drama" pattern of situation-complication-conflict-resolution that the stories create as a whole, raising the question of why they should have been chosen to be used in their present position in the two sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason and St Óláfr Haraldsson in *Flateyjarbók*. The chapter starts with an effective consideration of the ways in which *Flateyjarbók* shows the two Christian kings to share certain Óðinic qualities, Óláfr Tryggvason making mysterious disguised appearances to followers after his apparent death at Svölðr, while Ólafr Haraldsson takes on the disguised role of Grímnir to visit a pagan farmstead in *Völsa þáttr*. Kaplan goes on to examine how the two pairs of *þættir* are deliberately presented either side of *Óláfs þáttr Geirstaðaálfs*, and the ways in which this third pagan Óláfr

is shown to be intrinsically linked to both of the other kings. The author ends by reminding us that *Flateyjarbók* was originally intended for yet another royal Óláfr (Hákonarson), commenting that the overall effect of the narratives "might have been like that of standing in a hall of mirrors in which the young king faces an infinite-seeming series of kings Óláfr receding back into the pagan age, each one of them silently posing the question Óðinn puts to the saint: *which king would you most like to have been*?" (204).

In the short "Epilogue" (206–13), readers are effectively brought back through time, past a later Danish literary manifestation of Norna-Gestr, via the archaeological remains now on display in Ögvaldsnes / Avaldsnes in Norway, to the manuscript exhibition in modern Iceland where the book began. They are left facing the now closed covers of *Flateyjarbók*, encouraged to make their own life-changing encounters with the ancient Nordic past preserved within, and their own interpretations of what they might find there.

Thou Fearful Guest is a refreshing piece of scholarship, readable (which is not always the case these days), sensible, insightful, at times poetic and regularly personal. It displays not only a fine knowledge of Old Icelandic and a previous scholarship, but also a healthy insistence on the essential need for the close reading of Old Norse texts and analysis of the ways in which they function within existing contexts, rather than allowing itself to be governed by fashionable theory and jargon. Theory is drawn on only when it is applicable and useful (as with Kaplan's effective application of the ideas of Douglas and Gennette). Drawing on a variety of interdisciplinary approaches ranging from the fields of folklore and philology to archaeology and literature, Merrill Kaplan's book sheds valuable light on the ways in which all of these fields might find fruitful ways to work together in the future as a means of understanding the Old Nordic past in all of its levels.

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Lars Lönnroth: *The Academy of Odin: Selected Papers on Old Norse Literature*. The Viking Collection 19. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark 2011. 426 pp.

The Academy of Odin by Professor Lars Lönnroth is published in the book series *The Viking Collection* at Odense University Press, with Margaret Clunies Ross, Matthew Driscoll and Mats Malm as general editors. The book consists of seventeen articles organized in five sections: Origins (I), Saga Rhetoric (II), Structure and Ideology (III), Edda and Saga as Oral Performance (IV), Reception and Adaptation (V). The articles were originally published in English from 1965 to 2006, and are, according to the preface (9), presented with a standardized reference system, while some minor changes have been made to the original texts. There is also a postscript to each work which provides some information on subsequent research.

The section 'Origins' deals with the historical origins of early Old Norse literature and is introduced with an excerpt from Lönnroth's summary of his PhD-thesis *European Sources of Saga Writing* (1965), on saga genres and saga writers. Here, Lönnroth questions the common taxonomy of saga genres, and his investigation sparked a "lively and fruitful theoretical discussion with Theodore Anderson and Joseph Harris in *Scandinavian Studies* 1975" (22), still an important discussion for those concerned with Old Norse prose genres. The second subject of the excerpt addresses the question whether saga writers were clerics or laymen. Lönnroth emphasizes the importance of clerical influences in saga writing, a claim which is considerably less controversial today than it was in 1965. The succeeding piece 'Sponsors, Writers and Readers of Early Norse Literature' (1990) reveals some change in opinion considering the origins of saga literature. Lönnroth reluctantly accepts the existence of two different cultures in Iceland producing written texts, a lay culture and a clerical culture, but as opposed to the view held by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Lönnroth sees these cultures as "overlapping and peacefully coexisting" (34); they cooperated in the production of saga literature. The postscript develops this idea further, and Lönnroth argues that the indigenous saga genres "were based primarily on native oral tradition," although obviously dependent on influences from "foreign literature" (36). A seven page article on the transformation of genres from orality to literacy both extends and revises the ideas on Old Norse genres formerly presented by Lönnroth. The section on saga origins is concluded with the

well-known work "The Noble Heathen: A Theme in the Sagas," which points out how the Christian views of the saga writers shape the image of the saga heroes belonging to the pagan past. The good and noble saga heroes are typically "less heathen" than their ignoble or evil counterparts and these noble heathens may even catch glimpses of the Christian truth; they typically refrain from idolatry and belief in the heathen gods.

The section 'Saga Rhetoric' includes three articles. The first one, 'Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas', was originally published in 1969 and questions the common description of the saga style as 'objective'. Lönnroth points to several rhetorical means applied by saga authors to pass evaluation on characters, actions and ideas. 'Commentary', 'stylistic variation' and 'staging' are presented as broad categories, and Lönnroth gives numerous examples of how the saga narratives use such devices. Although explicit moral evaluations are rare in saga literature, the texts still reflect moral and ethical standards. Hence, some episodes in *Njáls saga*, Lönnroth argues, are almost like the medieval *exemplum*. The second article in the section follows suit in its investigation of *jartegn* in sagas (tokens, miracles), as these are also contrasted to ideas about saga objectivity and realism. The succeeding work, 'Dreams in Sagas' (2002), is according to Lönnroth a sequel to his piece on *jartegn*. Lönnroth addresses the subject of dreams in Icelandic family sagas, which in many cases are more complex—both in subject matter and function—than those found in Eddic poems and *fornaldarsǫgur*. Dreams often anticipate important events in all these genres, but as seen in *Gísla saga Surssonar* dreams may also play other roles, as these pass moral judgment or give unusual glimpses into the subjectivity of a saga character like Gísli, and the dreams in *Gísla saga* "also make us see the history of Gísli and his family in a broader perspective, as part of a universal conflict between good and evil" (137). The article on dreams is concluded with the following quotable statement on the apparent objectivity and realism of family sagas: "[T]he art of the best family sagas consists in concealing the mythical world so that it is just barely visible behind the deceptive surface of narrative realism" (138).

The third section of the book is titled 'Structure and Ideology' and consists of three articles. 'Ideology and Structure in Heimskringla' (1976) investigates—with references to Marxist analysis—how ideology is expressed in 'the narrative unfolding of plot and action' (p. 141), that is in the story of the conflict between Óláfr the Saint and Óláfr of Sweden in *Heimskringla*. Lönnroth compares the story in Heimskringla with the

older version presented in the Legendary Saga of Óláfr the Saint and argues that the Heimskringla version is more ideologically charged than its predecessor. Lönnroth claims that Icelandic politics of the thirteenth century is displayed in the story about the two kings, namely the ideological difference between feudal monarchy and the traditional clan society. Thus, the present of the authors shape their representation of the past, even in the saga structure. The short article 'Sverrir's Dreams' (2006) also deals with ideas about kingship, but here as they are expressed in the dreams of king Sverrir in *Sverris saga*. The work is partly a response to Sverre Bagge's claims that the image of king Sverrir is a traditional Norse one; the king is seen as a natural "gang leader" due to his strength, skill and fortune (Bagge 1996). Lönnroth suggests, on the contrary, that the dreams in *Sverris saga* attest to ideas 'within the mainstream of medieval tradition' (178), that king Sverrir is presented as a *rex iustus*. The section is concluded with a short text from 2008 on the ethics in *Njáls saga*. Here, Lönnroth defends the view he promoted already in his monograph on *Njála* from 1976, and more recently in the introduction to his Swedish translation of the saga from 2006. Lönnroth sees a development in the saga from pagan ethics in the first part to Christian ethics in the last part, a view countered by Daniel Sävborg and Theodore M. Andersson. Both scholars find it hard to accept the presence of two ethical systems in the two parts of the saga, but Lönnroth counters the criticism by presenting several readings to support his view.

The fourth part of *The Academy of Odin* presents four articles on the role of oral performance in the composition of Eddic poetry and saga literature. The first article is Lönnroth's article "Hjálmarr's Death Song and the Delivery of Eddic Poetry" (1971) which discusses the relevance of Oral-Formulaic Theory to the study of Eddic poetry, also in the wider perspective of traditional Germanic poetry. Lönnroth is reluctant to transfer the theory developed by Albert Lord and Millman Parry to Eddic poetry, instead arguing that Eddic poems were more stable in oral transmission than the epic songs of the South Slavic *guslar*. He specifically addresses Hjálmarr's Death Song which occurs in two different sagas, arguably reflecting two independent "recordings" from oral tradition. The poem represents an old genre, according to Lönnroth, the death song of the hero, which is also represented by Beowulf's speech succeeding the killing of the dragon. By comparing the two versions of Hjálmarr's death song and the speech by Beowulf, Lönnroth presents the idea of an originally metric tradition (either purely epic or a mixture of

epic and dialogue) being transformed into the Old Norse prosimetrum. The distribution of formulas in Hjálmarr's death song can, according to Lönnroth, be explained with reference to oral-formulaic theory. The more traditional subject matter is thus presented in a more formulaic language than the subject matter of a more genuine nature. Since the stereotyped parts also vary more between the two versions of the poem than the original ones, Lönnroth entertains the idea that these parts were more improvised than the unique and individual parts of the poem. Although Lönnroth sees oral-formulaic theory as relevant to the study of Eddic poetry, he claims the need for substantial adaptation of the theory to the specifics of Germanic and Old Norse texts. The two articles "*Iǫrð fannz æva né upphiminn:* A Formula Analysis" (1981) and "Heroine in Grief: The Old Norse Development of a Germanic Theme" (2001) both adapt oral-formulaic theory to Old Norse and Old Germanic sources. The former addresses a formula consisting of the coordinated nouns *iǫrð* and *upphiminn* and their surrounding 'themes', attested in several Germanic sources. The latter article addresses the 'heroine in grief' in *Guðrúnarkviða I* as a theme in a Germanic perspective, and addresses the debated subject of the heroic elegy. The article "The Double Scene of Arrow-Oddr's Drinking Contest" (1979) presents Lönnroth's concept 'the double scene' which was introduced in a monograph a year earlier, *Den dubbla scenen. Muntlig diktning fran Edda til ABBA* (1978, reissued in 2008). The basic idea is that the subject matter and fictional setting of oral poetry constitute a scene which is meaningfully related to the actual scene of performance, in the case of Arrow-Oddr's drinking contest by the activity of drinking and the actual social implications of the fictional drinking contest.

The fifth section is titled 'Reception and Adaptation' and is introduced with a comprehensive work on the Rök-stone: 'The Riddles of the Rök-stone: A Structural Approach' (1977). Here, Lönnroth investigates the structure of this memorial inscription and argues that it primarily present riddles about heroic and mythological lore, *greppaminni*. The inscription consists of three main sections, each again consisting of two riddles followed by an answer in verse, an answer which is enigmatic in itself, partly because the stories alluded to are now lost and can only be reconstructed. Although Lönnroth does not exclude the possibility that the inscription carried a magic function, the obscure language of the Rök-stone (including the use of cipher) assumes that readers belonged to those few who possessed the necessary skill to interpret the text, and

Lönnroth even suggests that the enigmatic nature of the text "functioned as a kind of initiation for those who strove to attain the same position as the rune-master and his dead son" (p. 352). The next article in the section explains the title of the book, 'The Academy of Odin: Grundtvig's Political Instrumentalization of Old Norse Mythology' (1988). In this work, Lönnroth draws attention to the use of Old Norse mythology by N.F.S. Grundtvig himself and within the Grundtvigian movement in Denmark. The folk high school movement, which was based on Grundtvig's ideas, presented itself as an 'academy of Odin', as opposed to the Latin school associated with the classical heritage. Lönnroth shows how Grundtvig and his followers interpreted Old Norse myths according to their own ideological and political purposes, at times with more or less militaristic motives. The last article "The Nordic Sublime: The Romantic Rediscovery of Icelandic Myth and Poetry" (1995) deals with the Romantic reinterpretation of Old Norse material, and gives examples of how the Eddic poem *Baldrs draumar* was presented by for example Thomas Gray in the last half of the eighteenth century and in Richard Wagner's *Siegfried*.

The selection of articles presented in *The Academy of Odin* covers a wide range of subjects to which Lönnroth has made important contributions. The structure of the book seems reasonable enough, although some articles could have been placed under two or more section headings, since the subjects are obviously too wide to be mutually exclusive. Lönnroth's article on the noble heathen is placed in the first section 'Origins' although it could just as well have been part of 'Saga Rhetoric' (II) or 'Structure and Ideology' (III). It would perhaps have been more advisable to place it in the latter section (III), since it mainly deals with ideology, the Christian reinterpretation of the pagan past. A structural choice which seems more questionable, however, is the presence of the comprehensive article on the Rök-stone in the fifth section (Reception and Adaptation). Although the article deals with both 'reception' and 'adaptation', there is only a very vague relationship between a rune master's use of tradition in the ninth century, and the 18th and 19th century reception of Old Norse myths.

There is no room here for a full assessment of the seventeen articles in *The Academy of Odin*, and the following comments are selective and partly determined by the research interests of the reviewer. Although Lönnroth's works must be read with their original date of publication in mind, even

the earliest articles present theory, readings and interpretations which are still relevant in Old Norse studies. Some of Lönnroth's works have greatly influenced the field, as exemplified by the publications from his doctoral project. Lönnroth's claims about the influence of European models on saga genres may have been questionable in light of later development, as admitted by Lönnroth himself, but they led to a scholarly debate which greatly advanced the field, also through the reactions of scholars such as Harris and Andersson.

The research on oral performance presented in section IV is also of great importance. The articles on Eddic poetry gave necessary corrections to the first attempts to utilize the oral-formulaic theory of Parry and Lord in Eddic studies. Lönnroth saw the importance of adapting the theory to the specifics of Old Norse poetry, and made his point by analysis of the source material in a wider Germanic context, drawing lines to for example Old English and Old High German poetry. In my opinion, however, the theory about the double scene is perhaps the most central contribution to the subject of oral performance in the Old Norse context. The interplay between the actual scene of oral performance and the stories which are narrated or enacted, seems more relevant now than ever, due to similar points being made in other and expanding fields, for example in the cognitive sciences by scholars such as Mark Turner and David Herman. One can only hope that Old Norse scholars will see the importance of 'the double scene' in the future (the theory has of yet gained little attention), for example in the study of Eddic poetry, where the double scene may have the potential to explain some peculiarities of the texts, as shown by Lönnroth in the case of *Vǫluspá*.

Much more could be praised in *The Academy of Odin*, as we should expect from a book containing work from professor Lönnroth's long and illustrious career. Generally, the language, argument and structure of the pieces are easy to follow, although the eloquence of the author should not keep us from pointing out that aspects of his argument are questionable. The Old Norse conception of luck is mentioned several places in *The Academy of Odin*, and Lönnroth seems to think that terms like *gipta*, *gæfa*, *hamingja* basically reflect a Christian influence in the prose texts. In "Sverrir's Dreams", Lönnroth states that *hamingja* "was a concept that was well integrated into Christian ideology by the end of the twelfth century and used in a way similar to Latin *fortuna* or *felicitas*" (178). Peter Hallberg investigated Old Norse luck terms in a comprehensive study from 1973 (published in *Proceedings of the First International*

Saga Conference University of Edinburgh 1971), which is not cited by Lönnroth in *The Academy*, and concluded that "there is no basis for the hypothesis that this concept must be of foreign and Christian origin" (Hallberg 1973, 168). Hallberg even refers to a case from Western Sweden in which a native understanding of fortune is considered to be pagan as late as in 1349. Another point is that the two concepts luck and honor are connected in the sagas in such a way that luck does not appear to be some kind of addition to the archaic ethics of honor, but fully integrated with it. In Old Norse mentality, luck may thus have little or nothing to do with "morality" (cf. *The Academy*, p. 92).

The well-known work "The Noble Heathen" is first of all a brilliant article indicating how Christian authors portrayed the heroes of the past according to their own ideas about the past, and according to their own attitudes towards pagan and Christian belief. One could, however, point out that saga heroes are far more complex than simply fitting into a noble/ignoble dichotomy, a clear example being Egill Skallagrímsson who according to Lönnroth's criteria bears the traits of both a noble and ignoble heathen. At other places, Lönnroth simply makes claims which are quite controversial and poorly qualified, for example that "Hyndluljóð is a text composed in the same general spirit as the Rök inscription" (349). The former text (preserved in *Flateyjarbók*) is more than half a millennium younger than the Rök inscription, and although the comparison Lönnroth makes in the article is relevant to some extent, I find it very hard to justify the idea of the "same general spirit" being present in these two sources. The price of being well structured and clear is sometimes seen in what is omitted (and would cause digressions); if we stay with the article on the Rök-inscription and Lönnroth's use of *Hyndluljóð*, it is not all certain that the unmentioned god in the stanza *Varð einn borinn / ǫllum meiri* […] (One was born, greater than all …) is identical to Þórr. Yet, Lönnroth presents this as "fact" (349), completely ignoring the old and plausible identification of this being as Heimdallr.

The postscripts succeeding each article are different both in size and depth, ranging from comprehensive comments that develop or even criticize the argument, to a mere minimum of bibliographical information on the original publication of the work. The references to subsequent research are useful, but by no means complete. Without going into details, less eclectic presentations of the research would have been appreciated both by scholars who are now left unmentioned, and by readers who — inspired by the work of Lönnroth — would like to investigate the subjects further.

Lars Lönnroth's *The Academy of Odin* will be appreciated by Old Norse scholars now and in the future, and some of the selected works remain important pieces of scholarship, although the specific results are or will be moderated by subsequent research. Generally, the wide perspective of Lönnroth, exceeding the Old Norse context to include parallels to old and new literature is now uncommon in the field. Both the scholarly and rhetorical skill of professor Lönnroth makes his works highly original and readable and more resistant to corrosion than much else. The book also serves to consolidate the The Viking Collection as the most important series in Old Norse Studies.

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The Poetic Edda. Vol. III. Mythological Poems II. Edited with Translation Introduction and Commentary by Ursula Dronke. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2011. xii +159 pp.

This third and final volume of Ursula Dronke's long-standing edition of the Poetic Edda focuses on *Hávamál*, *Hymiskviða*, *Grímnismál* and *Grottasǫngr*; it was published shortly before her death in March 2012 at the age of 90. The edition's first volume, featuring texts and translations of and commentaries on four heroic lays, *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál*, *Guðrúnarhvǫt* and *Hamðismál*, appeared in 1969, with earlier articles confirming Professor Dronke's engagement with those texts and other eddic lays during that decade. Volume II followed in 1997 and dealt with *Vǫluspá*, *Rígsþula*, *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Lokasenna* and *Skírnismál*.

Inevitably, this latest volume should be viewed in the context of the overall project, whose three volumes have taken their time to appear, and, in all, treat just thirteen of the three dozen or so poems usually included in the canon. This unhurried progress is easy to understand. Quite apart from Professor Dronke's day-to-day academic duties, and her eagerness to help and encourage students and colleagues near and far, her dedication to the Edda project was marked by an uncompromising determination to leave no stone unturned in elucidating these old northern poetic treasures, and in presenting them elegantly and accessibly for her readers. Though the selection of poems in this final volume, and the others, as well as the order in which they are treated may seem somewhat random, Mrs Dronke certainly did not choose to focus on the easiest texts; rather, as her Preface confirms, she sought to treat "the four most complex—and in my view most outstanding—among the remaining mythological poems." Her interest lay primarily in exploring each Eddic poem as an individual work of art, rather than as a part of a written collection — that is, the 'Poetic Edda' as a whole; such an approach would have called for some attention to a medieval literary context and the effects of transformation from oral to literary.

Undoubtedly, Professor Dronke's engagement with the texts edited in this most recent volume has a lengthy pre-history, as in the case of *Hávamál*, about which she published an article in 1984 examining a couple of its stanzas.[1] Nevertheless, the editions of individual poems in this volume

[1] "Óminnis hegri". *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag den 9. juni 1984*. Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984, 53–60.

are to some extent unfinished, in the light of the format adopted in the two previous volumes, where for each poem there are sections entitled Text and Translation, Introduction, and Commentary on the Text. In Volume III *Hávamál* is the only poem with a separate (albeit short) Introduction, while in lieu of Introductions to the other poems there are short studies dealing with specific problems; in the case of *Grímnismál* there are no such studies, only a Preface consisting of just a few lines. This means that literary evaluation and comparative study feature less prominently than in the earlier volumes. Eddic scholars will nevertheless warmly welcome the translations and commentaries, as well as the accompanying material, because taken together they represent this learned and insightful scholar's most considered understanding and appreciation of these four important poems, developed over a lifetime of study.

At the beginning of her *Hávamál* Introduction, Mrs Dronke presents the intriguing idea that the stanzas of the first section, the "gnomic" poem, can be interpreted as a dialogue or rather as "the product of a party game: as if one of the company has to propose a thought or theme, and another is to complete it: seriously or humorously or ironically, just as he chooses" (36). This notion may seem problematic, since the poem is explicitly presented as a monologue, but such a reading makes it easier to accept the sudden and — as they often seem — whimsical changes of subject. A similar idea of frequent changes of speaker is suggested in the analysis of *Grottasǫngr*. In both cases, though these readings are subjective and unsupported by textual evidence, they propose a mode of performance which is rewarding to explore. Indeed, it is characteristic of Mrs Dronke's edition that she identifies textual nuances and poetic strategies that she assumes to have been created intentionally by the poet. She seems not to acknowledge that oral transmission may have contributed significantly to the final result. There are two difficulties inherent in this position; on the one hand, some may feel that many of the shades of meaning identified are the creations of a subtle twentieth-century critical mind, and, on the other hand, it seems unlikely that such a finely nuanced text could have survived intact in oral tradition. Yet we must acknowledge that many of Mrs Dronke's insights are both stimulating and persuasive. Her imaginative and suggestive readings are intellectually challenging and represent a valuable addition to the more down to earth, — not to say dry-as-dust — explications of much textual philology. In all three volumes the editor's somewhat impressionistic readings are soundly based in terms of philology, with minor corrections or suggested manuscript emendations clearly marked.

The Introduction to *Hávamál* is fragmentary but contains interesting ideas about the role of Óðinn in the poem and about *Loddfáfnismál*. Mrs Dronke uses the plural when discussing the poem's "architects" and "compilers", but it is unclear whether she has accepted the (very different) hypotheses about the complex origins of the poem as proposed relatively recently by von See and McKinnell respectively, both of whose important studies of *Hávamál* are conspicuously absent from the discussion and bibliography. In the commentary to individual stanzas of *Hávamál* there is much worthwhile material, which in some cases compensates for gaps in the Introduction. While some of the interpretations are unconvincing — for example, st. 139, l. 6 — others deserve to be taken into account in future editions and discussion.

Hymiskviða is the second poem treated in the volume, with the text and commentary accompanied by separate studies of five particular sections of the poem. In the first of these an unexpected and specific context is suggested: "*Hymiskviða* […] would seem to be a subtle and boisterous piece of *jonglerie* intended for the winter feasts of the Norsemen, to celebrate the defeat of the devil by Christ" (p. 84); yet, at the end of this section, interesting parallels with Indian mythology are identified. In the most substantial of these short studies, "The Christian Origins of the Story of Þórr's Killing of the World Serpent", Mrs Dronke looks to Christian sources for the main influence behind the central scene in which Þórr catches the Midgard Serpent. Although several Viking-Age skaldic stanzas and images on ancient monuments appear to bear witness to an indigenous pre-Christian origin for the myth, she argues that the myth may have arisen under Christian influence in a pre-Icelandic settlement period when the Norsemen had acquired some fragmentary knowledge of Christian ideas and images. She concludes: "the world serpent […] is, I suggest, a borrowed Leviathan, a serpentine enemy of God, which the Norsemen lacked in their mythology, and took from the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons, who knew of it from the Bible and from apocryphal legends and learning, and who came to make of it a favourite feature on their carved Christian monuments" (92–93). This is a good example of Mrs Dronke's general inclination to keep an open mind towards the possibility of influence from Viking settlements in the British Isles in Eddic poetry, a tendency she has inherited from her predecessor in Oxford Guðbrandur Vigfússon, although her conclusions are more moderate and better substantiated than many of Guðbrandur's. Some scholars will hesitate to swallow this Midgard serpent hypothesis as eagerly as the

monster itself swallowed Þórr's bait in the myth, but it certainly deserves serious consideration. Less likely to be accepted is a new stanza invented to fill a gap in the narrative (102–05). It is a hopeless venture to invent new material every time an Eddic poem jumps directly from one scene to another, although one may well suspect that a connecting stanza or stanzas have been lost. On the other hand, it is likely that an incident involving Þórr's goats in the frame narrative is a late addition to the story, as suggested in section VI. However, if *Hymiskviða* is as late as most scholars (including Mrs Dronke) think, this addition might well have occurred at the time when *Hymiskviða* in its present form was composed.

Although there is no formal Introduction to *Grímnismál* the short preface presents an important conclusion that challenges much earlier scholarship: "To celebrate their pagan past the Christian poets created *Grímnismál* as a verbal monument to their own imagination, to herald a new era" (111). Unfortunately, there is no discussion of when the converted Norsemen would have felt themselves sufficiently distanced from their paganism to be able to celebrate it in such a way. Nor is it clear that the poem is in fact celebratory. The lack of an Introduction is partially compensated for in the Commentary, where there are many striking insights and also a distinctive interpretation of *Grímnismál* that offers the reader much food for thought, although many details must be regarded as conjectural if not implausible.

Grottasǫngr is the last and most summarily treated of the poems edited in the volume. As so often there are perceptive remarks about details, and little with which one would wish to take issue.[2]

The Poetic Edda, Vol. III, is the final part of a great project that no student of Old Norse-Icelandic literature can ignore. For a wider range of readers of English it also offers an inspired introduction to an important branch of the scantily preserved narrative poetry of peoples who used Germanic languages in the Middle Ages. Professor Dronke's readings of the texts as poetry and as monuments to a complex and distant culture are of lasting value, irrespective of whether individual interpretative details find acceptance or not. Though it lacks the fullness and coherence of its predecessors, we should be grateful that Mrs Dronke was able to complete

[2] For more detailed commentary and background material on this poem, see Clive Tolley, ed., Grottasǫngr (London: The Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008), and, of course, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, vol. 3, eds Klaus von See et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2000).

this final volume, and to maintain to the end her remarkable intellectual vigour and enthusiasm.

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Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse. The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 2012. XI + 199 pp.

Sif Rikhardsdottir's monograph "explores various texts transmitted from the Francophone domain to Middle English and Old Norse reading communities in order to foreground the manifold facets of such cultural transmission in the late Middle Ages", as the author herself puts it. Here, she thoroughly discusses some major works of literature translated into Middle English and West Norse, within the framework of cultural, textual and translational theories. In Old Icelandic, these works are known as *Strengleikar*, *Karlamagnús saga*, *Ívens saga* and *Partalopa saga*. With the possible exception of the last-mentioned (which is difficult to judge) they have all been dated back to the middle of the 13th century, under the reign of king Hákon Hákonarson in Norway. They are Norse versions of francophone Anglo-Norman originals, composed in the preceding century. The Middle English versions belong to the 14th century and are, accordingly, younger than the Norse ones — even though the preservation of the latter in considerably younger manuscripts partly compensates for the lapse between the two moments of literary conception.

The study extends over a wide range of literary theory, from post-colonial criticism to gender oriented approaches. The concept of "textual mobility" (*mouvance*, after Zumthor 1972) is focal. Even theories on reading and reception are highly relevant, conceived by Rikhardsdottir within the frame of a "reading community". Inspiration is drawn from "new medievalism" as well as, of course, from "new philology", with its cultural and codicological approach to the study of manuscripts. The base is cultural semiotics: literary texts are viewed as part of a system of "artefacts" the analysis of which in a given cultural context helps us understand contemporary cultural discourse and textuality.

Closely related to the semiotic perspective is the one of translation theory, which is focal in this study. The formation of the target text in translation depends on, is part of and acts on the external conditions prevalent in the culture within which it is worked out, in a constant dialectical pattern. Translation is not mere linguistic transfer (if anyone still believed that!); translation means conveying, even developing, culture. Applying this view to the high medieval production of texts such as those treated by Rikhardsdottir ends up in the conception of a language shifting activity that is only partially similar to what we call translation

today. The shift from a foreign language to the one of one's own in "translating" a text was regarded in the Middle Ages, Rikhardsdottir reminds us, as part of the process called since antiquity *translatio*. In the bookish culture this was just another form of writing "as a part of a whole, which is the textual process, rather than […] a secondary derivative of a unique and fixed original". The products of medieval literary creation designated today vaguely as "translations" are, then, no "secondary or inferior replicas of their source texts". Rather, they are independent and complex cultural products.

This approach has proved fruitful in a fairly large number of studies on medieval "translation" in the last decades. Rikhardsdottir's West Norse and Middle English perspective brings to the fore questions within historical literary sociology. The royally initiated transference from French into Norse was probably aimed at the courtiers and the upper social strata of Norway, whereas rendering French literature in the vernacular in Anglo-Norman England took place under quite different conditions: the educated classes were francophone, scarcely needing this kind of translation. "Rather than simply proclaiming the Middle English texts to be the result of ignorance and incompetence arising from the social status of their creators and recipients", Rikhardsdottir conceives the various shifts and alterations in translation "as reflections of a cultural agenda" — an ambition governing the analysis even of the Norse texts. This review focuses on the latter.

Rikhardsdottir does certainly mention her sources of inspiration, giving adequate and ample reference concerning central theoretical conceptions underlying her study. However, it is not made quite clear that even her ideas on the character and status of medieval translation are nowadays embraced by a safe majority of scholars in the field. In fact, there is a fairly long list of recent philological contributions that prove exactly the same point. This becomes particularly evident when extending the view to research on East Norse medieval literacy. I will return to this viewpoint later.

In the introductory section certain general elements of the external historical background, as well as the source conditions, are made clear. The peaceful relations of the Norwegian court with the English in the 13th century, including the personal friendship between the kings Hákon and Henry III, form a credible political and diplomatic context for the import to Norway of Anglo-Norman manuscripts as well as for the transference of their content into Norse. In many cases, the role of the Norwegian king as a commissioner of literary undertakings is explicitly documented in the

manuscripts. Generally, the source conditions are more favourable for the Norse texts than for the Middle English ones: preserved manuscripts are more numerous in the former case, and they are often much younger than their lost originals, which makes them more prone to reflect culturally specific chronological layers.

The four complexes of texts are discussed in one chapter each, after a similar plan, though with a successive displacement of focus.

Patterns of imperial dominance are generally reflected in translation, particularly when applied to a culturally dominant speech-area, such as francophone Anglo-Norman England, in relation to the Middle English vernacular in the same geographical area as well as to Norse in Scandinavia. In the latter, the phenomenon is observed in the prose text called *Strengleikar*, which Rikhardsdottir discusses in the first chapter. This work is preserved in one sole manuscript, some decades younger than the original translation from the mid-thirteenth century. It renders a collection of rhymed "songs" (*lais*) in Anglo-Norman French, traditionally attributed to a female author (Marie de France), living in England some hundred years earlier. Here, Rikhardsdottir considers the significance of the royal translation commission. According to her, what Hakon probably had in mind — with this and other commissions of the same kind — was to emulate at home the refined courtly manners and princely ideals associated with the allied kings on the British Isles, particularly with his close friend Henry III of England. It is hardly accidental, Rikhardsdottir believes, that the West Norse didactic text *Konungs skuggsjá* was probably conceived at the same time and at the same court, and thus presumably served the same royal purpose. A Swedish medievalist would of course associate it (Rikhardsdottir does not even mention the obvious Scandinavian parallel)" with the slightly younger Konungastyrelsen, a piece of speculum literature of kindred spirit, written in classical Old Swedish, probably for king Magnus Eriksson of Sweden — and Norway!

Rikhardsdottir writes about the "infiltration" of a dominant ideology into a marginal society, which "highlights the imbalance of power and the imperial implication of the literary incursion". For Rikhardsdottir, the rendering in West Norse prose of the softly billowing verse of the French songs is an important formal element in this mediation of a dominant ideology, performed by a translator. The verse in French is filled with delicate nature poetry and empathetic sensitivity to the subtle shifts in the actors' emotional lives. The Nordic translator cannot rid himself (sic, *him*self: Rikhardsdottir makes a point of the translator being male!) from

the austere and abrupt style of the Icelandic saga prose, in which he is deeply-rooted, as is his audience. This results in a narration that focuses on the plot rather than the characters' thoughts and feelings. Rikhardsdottir claims to have observed here a transition from a *female* to a *male* attitude in the literary address. She illustrates this by contrastive close-reading of a few passages in some of these songs, pointing particularly at "[t]he depersonalisation of the narrative voice".

Rikhardsdottir's line of argument concerning a conflict intrinsic in literary translation is captured in the wording of one of the section headlines within this chapter: "cultural authority and linguistic resistance". The "imperialistic" endeavour of a dominant culture to force its own patterns of thought and expression on a dominated recipient culture, using translation as a powerful tool, meets with resistance from the same culture, deriving its nourishment from its domestic literary resources, equally mobilized in translation. "The textual modifications signal the effort of integrating the material into an existing tradition rather than supplanting that tradition." — One wonders to what extent this interesting observation is generally applicable. A linguistic society having at its disposal a strong domestic literary tradition, vigorously defending its inherited identity against "invading" translations and successfully integrating the foreign impulses, is certainly an attractive idea in the context of West Norse translations. Linguistic societies with poorer literary traditions in the vernacular, like the medieval East Norse, being more exposed, and tending to take over the foreign impulses entirely, is an equally interesting — though perhaps less attractive — hypothesis.

The analyses in the following three chapters are, in fact, variations of the same theme, with a shift of focus. Inherent in all translation is, then, to use another of Rikhardsdottir's numerous wordings of the same basic thought, "the decoding of the source and the reassembly of this decoded meaning in the target language". In the second chapter the perspective is moved from the national level, where the cultural identity of a linguistic society is negotiated, to a more individual one: the translator's culturally governed shift of specific elements signalling social and linguistic codes. In this case it is a matter of heroic ethos, firmly established in inherited Germanic warlike virtues and manly ideals. The text dealt with is one of the West Norse translations of French *chansons de geste*, included in the collection *Karlamagnús saga*, viz. *Rúnzivals þáttr*, rendering in prose the versified epos *Chanson de Roland*.

Rikhardsdottir adduces several examples convincingly illustrating the

close formal fidelity to the original of this translation, despite supplanting verse by prose. Again she emphasizes the established position held by prose writing in the West Norse tradition. Snorri Sturluson's kings' sagas had been written down at approximately the same time, offering a grand model for narrative prose in the vernacular. Rikhardsdottir deals in some detail with the few but significant transformations in "behavioural patterns", that the Norse translator considered necessary to undertake (increasingly so, as the text proceeds; that is something she notes in passing, but there is no discussion of this interesting observation of textual progression). These modifications, she argues, are similar to those in the translation of Marie de France's *lais*. The transition from psychological formation to action, from personal to impersonal address, is illustrated in the effects of a divergent ideal of manliness. Roland, in the French chronicle a crusader of the South, brave but sensitive, sometimes bursting into tears in grief for fallen comrades, is transformed by the translator into the taciturn Nordic warrior, taking any insinuation of weakness and tears as a deadly insult. "The weeping continental hero must […] have been a rather startling discovery to the Nordic audience", Rikhardsdottir remarks, seeing here a remaining reflexion of an ancient pre-Christian Germanic culture of honour and duty.

Strengleikar and *Rúnzivals þáttr* render French originals of quite disparate character: the one lyric, sensitive, "feminine", the other dramatic, thrilling, "masculine". Both works were adapted by the translators to the receptors' expectations, thus getting more similar to one another in Norse. This was accomplished, however, with varying success. The *Chanson de Roland* is more "translatable", and its Norse adaptation in *Rúnzivals þáttr* obviously caught the fancy of its audience more efficiently, preserved as it is in several manuscripts and holding a prominent position in later literary tradition, whereas *Strengleikar* is very sparingly preserved and probably less well-known.

In the third chapter the main focus is again displaced, now, as Rikhardsdottir writes, from social and ideological codes into narrative and structural aspects of textual transference. The material is the West Norse *Ívens saga* and the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*, both translated from Crétien de Troyes' classical verse novel *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion*. The Middle English work is preserved in one single manuscript, whereas *Ívens saga* is extant today only in a later, abridged Icelandic redaction, preserved in several manuscripts, going back to the original Norwegian translation, now lost.

The theme of the analysis is the narrative structure, which is seemingly taken over by the Norse translator without conspicuous changes. But appearances are deceptive, according to Rikhardsdottir. Certain deviations do occur, few in number but important. They are not due to misunderstanding or incompetence on the part of the translator; rather they should be viewed as evidence of a deliberate strategy, intended to signal an independent thematic and ideological agenda.

In Crétien's novel, scenes and episodes are knit together in a subtle pattern, reflecting the tension, central in the French courtly milieu, between chivalrous love and the duty of the bold warrior. Operating with minor modifications, additions and omissions, the Norse translator, Rikhardsdottir argues, skilfully moves the focus from description to narration. He very clearly brings out the hero's martial achievements at the sacrifice of his tender feelings. The immediate impression of formal fidelity in translation is contradicted by a deep-going shift in ideology and attitude.

When and by whom was this displacement brought about? By the first translator or by the Icelandic adapters? The latter has been argued (Kalinke 1981), but Rikhardsdottir maintains (with Barnes 1977) the former idea, claiming that the modifications of the secondary, Icelandic version display a systematic pattern reasonably traceable to the lost original translation, performed in Norway. This position entails a certain difficulty, when comparing the Norse version to the Middle English one. The chronologically stratified West Norse text tradition, Rikhardsdottir argues, "displays a more complex issue of cultural transformation". This is explained with the help of the assumption that the first Norse translation contained more "original elements of courtly values", which were later developed by Icelandic scribes along with various cultural ambitions; a similar dimension of time is lacking in the Middle English tradition. Between this admission of the impact of scribal interference with the text in its present form and Rikhardsdottir's scepticism to the same interference, pronounced in the same chapter, there may not necessarily be any actual contradiction. But, certainly, the balance is delicate.

However, this is not the only problem. Some clarifications might in fact have provided a much firmer ground for this balance, if only Rikhardsdottir had expanded her horizon a little to the east. There is in fact one Scandinavian parallel that offers a most relevant, possibly even decisive material for comparing the interlingual relations of *Ivens saga* and its French source text, namely the Old Swedish verse romance

Herra Ivan (one of the "Eufemiavisor"), dating back to 1303. Unlike the Icelandic version, it is not abridged. It has long been regarded as an established fact (latest very convincingly developed by Lodén 2010, 2012) that this Swedish version reflects directly *both* Crétien's French text *and* the lost original Norwegian translation. Presenting a version of the saga likely to imply more or less immediate solutions to the problems now only hypothetically dealt with by Rikhardsdottir, *Herra Ivan* is, nonetheless, totally neglected in her study. She does certainly mention this work en passant in a few other contexts, though assuming the very problematic view of the Norwegian originals of *Ívens saga* and *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* as the sole originals of the Swedish *Herra Ivan* and *Flores och Blanzeflor* (another of the "Eufemiavisor"; p. 117, note 12). It should be noted that even this being correct (which, at least in the case of the former work, it is not) *Herra Ivan* would have been equally helpful to the author's argument. A possible solution, or at least a very efficient sidelight, to an interesting problem under discussion in Rikhardsdottir's study was, then, within reach. It was missed due to a gratuitous limitation of the author's scope of Scandinavian references.

The "mobility of texts" — one of Rikhardsdottir's central concepts, thus claimed to be demonstrated in the West Norse Crétien tradition — is thematic even in the fourth and last chapter, now with focus on gender and power. The author starts with a fairly detailed account of the complicated tradition of Norse and Middle English translations of the French *Partonopeu de Blois*, composed in the late 12th century. The West Norse version, *Partalopa saga*, is preserved in some ten critically relevant manuscripts, apparently derivable to one and the same original translation. This, too, is traditionally considered to have been performed in Norway, under the reign of king Hákon Hákonarson. It differs, though, considerably from the other translations with the same background, since it was substantially reworked by later scribes in the Icelandic manuscripts from the late 14th century, which, incidentally, are the only ones preserved — unless the text is in fact translated a full century later than generally assumed. Rikhardsdottir accounts in some detail, i.a., in an Appendix, for the markedly varying content of this very vivid story in its several versions in French, Middle English and West Norse.

Under the section headline "female sovereignty and the concept of manhood", Rikhardsdottir returns to the problems of gender, which now become the actual focus of her analysis. After retelling the central seduction story, ending in the heroine's bed, she points out the interesting

displacement of values that is brought about by the Norse translator. In the French original, a terrified and pitiably weeping boy hero arouses the royal heroine's compassion, whereupon she accepts him as her consort, and with that as king, while she herself takes on the subordinate role of queen, in full accordance with a conventional pattern of gender. To the Norse translator and his audience, the weeping hero is, as mentioned, simply impossible. Instead, he makes Partalopi, who is portrayed here as a full-grown hero, laconically yet forcibly, "in a very Nordic manner indeed", pronounce his intention to defend manfully his recently acquired position in the heroine's bed against ten knights, if necessary. With that, the heroine has eventually come across the man whom she can accept as an equal to herself. Pursuing the theme of "female agency and masculine authority" (and with tangible sympathy for the Norse variant!), Rikhardsdottir then proceeds to analyse the same seduction scene in the other saga versions under discussion. The details of the erotic play vary, presumably reflecting the adaptation of the motif to varying conditions of reception. Under the theme "gender roles and power" the perspective widens, and Rikhardsdottir sums up the distinctive character of the Norse version of the saga as a celebration of "the union of two equally powerful individuals". In French and English versions, in contrast, female submission is confirmed, patriarchal hierarchy secured. "The autonomy and self-government denied historical women in the Middle Ages becomes a major theme in the Partonope story, and one that is approached from different angles in all the various versions discussed here," the author concludes.

Finally, Rikhardsdottir claims to elegantly close a circle: "Thus the final chapter, like Chapters 2 and 3, explored textual transmission in terms of the narrative content and its power to convey meaning, but it also brought the discussion back to the notion of trans-historical and international literary dialogue between and among cultures proposed in the first chapter." Irrespective of the legitimacy of this claim — in fact the overlapping structure of the four chapters inevitably leads to a considerable degree of repetition — this volume undeniably provides us with a far-reaching, quite fascinating survey of a rich spectrum of issues within literary and historical (to a lesser extent linguistic) theory, applied to some very interesting, partly little explored complexes of west European medieval literature. Rikhardsdottir helps us deepen and sharpen our understanding of some Old Norse texts in their adequate European context, contributing even to our proper understanding of the intrinsic relativity of the translation concept itself.

However, one fails to see why the third geographical area mobilized in the title of the book should not have been, correctly, "Western Scandinavia". Without this restrictive qualification the title is unwarranted. The idea implicitly suggested that medieval Danish and Swedish literature be irrelevant in a "Scandinavian cultural discourse" should, if maintained, at least have been explicitly supported by substantial argument. As mere implication it is unacceptable.

Besides, inexplicably neglecting even textual material of decisive relevance to her own discussion, Rikhardsdottir adopts an attitude that is more than generally regrettable. It lessens the outcome of an otherwise interesting and valuable research.

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Snorri Sturluson The Uppsala Edda DG 11 4to, ed. with introduction and notes by Heimir Pálsson, Translated by Anthony Faulkes. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2012. cxxxiv + 327 pp. and 9 illustrations.

This new edition of the Uppsala manuscript (DG 11 4to) containing a version of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* as well as several other texts is one of the products of a research project devoted to study of the manuscript, which has been carried out by scholars at Uppsala University between the years 2005–11. The editor, Heimir Pálsson, acknowledges the contribution of several of his co-researchers, as well as that of Anthony Faulkes, who translated Heimir's text into English. It is not clear from the book's Preface whether the facing-page English translation of the Old Icelandic text is solely attributable to Faulkes or to Faulkes in collaboration with Heimir.

The edition consists of a very lengthy Introduction (126 pages), an index of manuscripts cited, a bibliography, and an index of names, as well as the Icelandic text of the complete manuscript with facing English translation, and reproductions of a number of diagrams and illustrations contained in the manuscript, including the famous image of Gangleri/Gylfi interrogating the 'Trinity' of Æsir sitting on their thrones on folio 26 verso. Aside from a version of the *Edda* text, DG 11 4to also contains *Skáldatal*, a genealogy of the Sturlung family, a list of Icelandic lawspeakers down to Snorri Sturluson's second term in office, a version of the *Second Grammatical Treatise*, and a list of the verse-forms treated in *Háttatal*. In addition, there is a small number of late medieval or early modern verses on parts of leaves that were originally left blank.

Heimir Pálsson sets out to rehabilitate the value of DG 11 4to's version of Snorri's *Edda* and free it from earlier scholars' judgements that it frequently lacks cohesion (see p. ix) or that it is a severely shortened version of the text that we find in the Codex Regius (R) version (GkS 2367 4to), the latter having been the basis of most modern editions of the *Edda* since Rasmus Rask's in 1818. The whole question of the relationship between the various versions of the *Edda* has indeed been a major consideration for scholars, and is likely to continue to be so, even though Heimir's edition has made some very helpful observations to guide opinion.

Heimir's most important conclusion is that DG 11 4to cannot have been derived from the same archetype as the Codex Regius is derived

from. At one point he writes that 'Snorri himself made two versions of his *Edda* and so the two main versions that survive [U and R] are derived from different originals' (p. xliii). He has certainly provided some very detailed analyses to support this case, mainly through comparing passages from R and U, but I do not regard these analyses (pp. xliv–lv) as producing conclusive evidence to support his case. Indeed, he demonstrates himself that the redactor of the U version of the *Edda* took most of the mythological narratives from their original locations (presumably his exemplar had them in the *Skáldskaparmál* section, as they are in R) and placed them with the *Gylfaginning* material, so as to segregate the mythological narratives from the pedagogical material in *Skáldskaparmál*. This observation, which seems valid, demonstrates that the underlying exemplar of U, whether at first- or later-hand, was of the R type. Further, Heimir presents convincing evidence that the interesting rubrics of U derive from a version of the text more similar to R than to the present layout of U, which is why a number of the headings do not fit the chapter subjects they introduce (xcii–xcv).

Thus Heimir has produced strong evidence that U was the product of major reworking of the *Edda* text on the part of a redactor or redactors, but not necessarily that U was based on a different version of the text from that which provided the basis for R. The area of the text that might offer up useful evidence one way or the other in this regard would be a systematic study of U's poetic citations compared with those of the other manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda*. An interesting, though somewhat perplexing feature of Heimir's edition and Faulkes' translation is their preservation of obvious scribal errors in the text of both prose and verse. These are often pointed out in notes, but, in the case of the poetry, the translator has to tie himself in (rather amusing) knots very often to make some sense of U's readings, which frequently differ markedly from those of the other manuscripts. Heimir alludes to this matter on p. lxxx of his Introduction, but does not pursue it and in general his comments on the poetry do not suggest great familiarity with scribal copying of verses. An example is his discussion of the U scribe's habit of marking the presence of stanzas with a marginal *v*, which is common in medieval Icelandic manuscripts and not specially significant; Heimir, however, sees this habit as part of the 'textbook character of the work' (xcv).

There are a number of other themes that he does pursue, however, sometimes repetitiously. One of these is his claim that the U manuscript was intended to form two books, the first including the Prologue, *Gylfa-*

ginning augmented with mythological stories found elsewhere in *Skáldskaparmál*, *Skáldatal*, the Sturlung genealogy and the list of lawspeakers plus the Gylfi and the Æsir illustration. The second book, a grammatical textbook, as Heimir presents it, comprised the rest of *Skáldskaparmál*, the abbreviated version of the *Second Grammatical Treatise* (so the students could learn some phonology) and the partial version of *Háttatal*, prefaced by a list of the verse- forms in *Háttatal*, not made from the same exemplar as *Háttatal* itself. Basically, Heimir sees the U compiler or compilers as hiving off the mythological and speculative material out of harm's way in a separate book where it would not interfere with the pedagogical intention of the second book. If so, why did he (or they) place the three lists, which are not mythological, at the end of the first book?

The edition itself, with its English translation, will be useful to scholars who already know the U manuscript and editions of other versions of Snorri's *Edda*. Unlike Grape's and Thorell's edition (1962–77), it is neither a facsimile nor a diplomatic representation of the text. It divides the text into five parts, where no such divisions are found in the manuscript. It has on the whole been normalised to an early thirteenth-century standard, but it does retain various spellings that are usually standardised (like *þuss* for *þurs*) and, as mentioned earlier, it does not emend readings that cannot make sense but instead retains them and usually explains what they may have been intended for in a note. This could be rather confusing for the non-expert reader, as could the practice of not expanding refrains (*stef*) or refrain-like strings of words in the poetry. For example, on page 24 it reproduces the first four lines of stanza 9 of *Völuspá* as *Þá gengu v.* | *A. s.* | *g. h. g.* | *ok um þat g'*. The reader is left to puzzle out the abbreviated words here and elsewhere.

The Introduction to *The Uppsala Edda* resembles the proverbial curate's egg. While it contains a great deal of interesting material and makes some very shrewd observations, there are parts that are rambling and diffuse, sometimes expressing the author's opinions unsupported by textual or other evidence. The section on the manuscript AM 157 8vo (pp. xxxiv–xli), which was apparently copied from U while the latter was still in Iceland, is very interesting; however, the author's suggestion that it be used to fill in gaps in the leaves where U is defective is perhaps slightly incautious. To judge by the examples given in the Introduction and the relevant parts of the text, 157 introduces a good many variant readings where U's text is perfectly legible, so its reliability might need to be assessed rather carefully.

Almost all of Section 8 of the Introduction on grammar and prosody is derived quite uncritically from previously published works of Anthony Faulkes, and Heimir Pálsson allows almost no space (and certainly few bibliographical references) to the views of other scholars on these subjects. One notices frequent reference to the writings of Icelandic scholars on the poetic treatises and their terminology, but very little to the works of non-Icelanders. The section on the *Second Grammatical Treatise* is perfunctory, the treatment of Göransson's 1746 edition of U unsympathetic to issues of reception. I cannot recommend this edition wholeheartedly, but I acknowledge that it is good in parts. The text and translation of U will certainly be useful to scholars of the *Edda* and the grammatical treatises.

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Morkinskinna I–II. Ármann Jakobsson og Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson gáfu út. (Íslenzk fornrit, 23–24.) Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2011. ISBN: 978-9979-893-97-4 (band I: 978-9979-893-22-6, band 2: 978-9979-893-23-3).

The Nordic Apocalypse. Approaches to *Vǫluspá* and Nordic Days of Judgement. Edited by Terry Gunnell and Anette Lassen. (Acta Scandinavica – Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World, 2.) Turnhout: Brepols 2013. ISBN: 978-2-503-54182-2.

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Snorri Sturluson. Heimskringla. Volume I. The Beginnings to Óláfr Tryggvason. Translated by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research / University College London 2011. ISBN: 978-0-903521-86-4.

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Berättelse om verksamheten under 2011

Heimir Pálsson & Lasse Mårtensson

Isländska sällskapets styrelse hade under 2011 följande sammansättning:

ordförande: Heimir Pálsson
vice ordförande: Veturliði Óskarsson (redaktör för *Scripta Islandica*)
sekreterare: Lasse Mårtensson
skattmästare: Mathias Strandberg
klubbmästare: Maja Bäckvall
övriga ledamöter: Anna Bredin, Ulla Börestam och Agneta Ney

Ordförande för Isländska sällskapets Umeå-avdelning är universitetslektor Susanne Haugen. Avdelningen i Umeå har inte haft någon verksamhet under 2011.

Vid årets slut hade sällskapet ca 220 medlemmar. Sällskapets inkomster under året uppgick till 73 405,59 kronor, och utgifterna till 86 971 kronor.

Vid sällskapets årsmöte den 3 maj 2011 höll professor Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, Islands universitet, ett föredrag med titeln ”Jämförbara storheter: Kan Islands utveckling jämföras med Sveriges eller Gotlands?”. På årsmötet framlagdes förslag till stadgeändringar för sällskapet. Den 30 maj hölls ett extramöte för genomförandet av dessa. Från och med året 2012 kommer Isländska sällskapet enbart att bestå av ständiga medlemmar. Beslut om inträdesavgift sköts upp till höstmötet. Bland annat bestämdes att *Scripta Islandica* fr.o.m. årgång 63/2012 skulle göras om till en digital tidskrift med möjlighet till beställning av tryckta exemplar.

Under hösten hade sällskapet tre sammankomster, som behandlade olika aspekter på nutida isländsk kultur. Den första var den 27 september, och hade temat modern isländsk litteratur. Där höll universitetslektor Lasse Mårtensson och docent Heimir Pálsson anföranden om Arnaldur Indriðason respektive Gyrðir Elíasson. Den andra sammankomsten var den 25 oktober, och hade temat isländsk film. Efter en inledning av docent Heimir Pálsson visades filmen *Stella í orlofi*. Den tredje sammankomsten

var den 22 november, och hade temat modern isländsk musik. Docent Veturliði Óskarsson berättade om den isländska musiken under 1900- och 2000-talen, och spelade upp valda delar.

Den sextioandra årgången av *Scripta Islandica*, Isländska sällskapets årsbok 62/2011, har utkommit och innehåller följande referentgranskade uppsatser: ”Who is ’I’? Translation of riddarasögur as a collective performance” av Ingvil Brügger Budal, ”Modern Icelandic: Stable or in a state of flux?” av Finnur Friðriksson och ”The Icelandic calendar” av Svante Jansson. Årgången innehåller även en bokanmälning av ”Kormaks saga. Historik och översättning av Ingegerd Fries” anmäld av Susanne Haugen, samt recensioner av ”Ætt og saga: Um frásagnarfræði Sturlungu eða Íslendinga sögu hinnar miklu” av Úlfar Bragason, anmäld av Heimir Pálsson, ”Vikingernes syn på militær og samfund: Belyst gennem skjaldenes fyrstedigtning” av Rikke Malmros, anmäld av Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, ”Vår eldste bok. Skrift, miljø og biletbruk i den norske homilieboka”, red. Odd Einar Haugen och Åslaug Ommundsen, anmäld av Lasse Mårtensson, ”Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2. From c. 1035–1300”, red. Kari Ellen Gade, anmäld av Rune Palm och slutligen ”The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga” av Margaret Clunies Ross, anmäld av Úlfar Bragason. Vidare innehåller årsboken en berättelse om verksamheten under 2009 av Henrik Williams och Agneta Ney.

Uppsala den 16 maj 2012

Heimir Pálsson

Lasse Mårtensson

Berättelse om verksamheten under 2012

Heimir Pálsson & Marco Bianchi

Isländska sällskapets styrelse hade under 2012 följande sammansättning:

ordförande: Heimir Pálsson
vice ordförande: Veturliði Óskarsson (redaktör för *Scripta Islandica*)
sekreterare: Marco Bianchi
skattmästare: Eva Aniansson
vice sekreterare: Maja Bäckvall
övriga ledamöter: Anna Bredin, Rasmus Lund, Lasse Mårtensson (redaktör för *Scripta Islandica*), Agneta Ney och Mathias Strandberg

Ordförande för Isländska sällskapets Umeå-avdelning är universitetslektor Susanne Haugen. Avdelningen i Umeå har inte haft någon verksamhet under 2012.

2012 var det första verksamhetsåret med sällskapets nya stadgar. Isländska sällskapet består numera endast av ständiga medlemmar som inte erlägger någon årlig avgift. Stadgeändringen gjordes mot bakgrund av de nya distributionsrutinerna för föreningens årsskrift *Scripta Islandica*. Från och med årgång 63/2012 erbjuds tidskriften som fritt tillgänglig nätpublikation med möjlighet till beställning av tryckta exemplar.

Den sextiotredje årgången av *Scripta Islandica*, Isländska sällskapets årsbok 63/2012, utkom i november 2012 som fulltextpublikation i Digitala vetenskapliga arkivet (DiVA). På grund av en rad olyckliga omständigheter fördröjdes tryckningen av volymen, men vi har goda förhoppningar om att kunna börja sälja den tryckta boken under våren 2012.

Scripta Islandica 63/2012 innehåller följande referentgranskade uppsatser: ”Icelandic society and subscribers to Rafn’s *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda*” av Silvia Hufnagel, ”*Nucleus latinitatis* og biskop Jón Árnasons orddannelse” av Guðrún Kvaran, ”Om källor och källbehandling i Snorris *Edda*. Tankar kring berättelser om skapelsen” av Heimir Pálsson, ”The Flying *Noaidi* of the North: Sámi Tradition Reflected in the Figure

Loki Laufeyjarson in Old Norse Mythology" av Triin Laidoner, "*Kringla heimsins—Jordennes krets—Orbis terrarum*. The translation of Snorri Sturluson's work in Caroline Sweden" av Lars Wollin och "Implicit ideology and the king's image in *Sverris saga*" av Þorleifur Hauksson. Årgången innehåller även recensioner av "Odin på kristent pergament. En teksthistorisk studie", av Annette Lassen, anmäld av Olof Sundqvist och "Rómverja saga", utg. av Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, anmäld av Kirsten Wolf. Vidare innehåller årsboken en berättelse om verksamheten under 2010 av Heimir Pálsson och Lasse Mårtensson.

Vid årsmötet den 24 maj 2012 höll Gunnar Gunnarsson, isländsk ambassadör i Stockholm, ett föredrag över ämnet "Situationen på Island efter 'krisen'". Torsdagen den 27 september bjöd Isländska sällskapet in till ett samtal om nordisk mytologi med utgångspunkt i gotländska och danska bildstenar. Diskussionsledare var docent Heimir Pálsson. Sällskapets höstmöte hölls torsdagen den 29 november och handlade om isländsk julmat och jultraditioner. Professor Veturliði Óskarsson och docent Heimir Pálsson delade med sig av sina barndomsminnen.

Uppsala den 25 april 2013

Heimir Pálsson

Marco Bianchi

Författarna i denna årgång

Ulla Börestam, professor, Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet

Margaret Clunies Ross, Emeritus Professor of English and Honorary Professor in the Medieval and Early Modern Centre at the University of Sydney

Lennart Elmevik, professor emeritus, Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet

Terry Gunnell, professor, Háskóli Íslands

Agneta Ney, docent, senast verksam vid Högskolan i Gävle

Judy Quinn, Senior Lecturer, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic, Cambridge University

Brittany Schorn, Research Associate, St John's College, University of Oxford

Daniel Sävborg, Professor, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, University of Tartu

Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen, førsteamanuensis, Institutt for lærerutdanningsfag, Høgskolen i Telemark

Vésteinn Ólason, professor emeritus, Háskóli Íslands

Kirsten Wolf, Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Lars Wollin, professor emeritus, Åbo Akademi

Scripta Islandica ISLÄNDSKA SÄLLSKAPETS ÅRSBOK

ÅRGÅNG 1 · 1950: *Einar Ól. Sveinsson*, Njáls saga.
ÅRGÅNG 2 · 1951: *Chr. Matras*, Det færøske skriftsprog af 1846.—*Gösta Franzén*, Isländska studier i Förenta staterna.
ÅRGÅNG 3 · 1952: *Jón Aðalsteinn Jónsson*, Biskop Jón Arason.—*Stefan Einarsson*, Halldór Kiljan Laxness.
ÅRGÅNG 4 · 1953: *Alexander Jóhannesson*, Om det isländske sprog.—*Anna Z. Osterman*, En studie över landskapet i Vǫluspá.—*Sven B. F. Jansson*, Snorre.
ÅRGÅNG 5 · 1954: *Sigurður Nordal*, Tid och kalvskinn.—*Gun Nilsson*, Den isländska litteraturen i stormaktstidens Sverige.
ÅRGÅNG 6 · 1955: *Davíð Stefánsson*, Prologus till »Den gyllene porten».—*Jakob Benediktsson*, Det islandske ordbogsarbejde ved Islands universitet.—*Rolf Nordenstreng*,Vǫlundarkviða v. 2.—*Ivar Modéer*, Över hed och sand till Bæjarstaðarskogur.
ÅRGÅNG 7 · 1956: *Einar Ól. Sveinsson*, Läs-och skrivkunnighet på Island under fristatstiden.—*Fr. le Sage de Fontenay*, Jonas Hallgrimssons lyrik.
ÅRGÅNG 8 · 1917: *Þorgils Gjallandi* (*Jón Stefánsson*), Hemlängtan.—*Gösta Holm*, I fågelberg och valfjära. Glimtar från Färöarna.—*Ivar Modéer*, Ur det isländska allmogespråkets skattkammare.
ÅRGÅNG 9 · 1958: *K.-H. Dahlstedt*, Isländsk dialektgeografi. Några synpunkter.—*Peter Hallberg*, Kormáks saga.
ÅRGÅNG 10 · 1959: *Ivar Modéer*, Isländska sällskapet 1949–1959.—*Sigurður Nordal*, The Historical Element in the Icelandic Family Sagas.—*Ivar Modéer*, Johannes S. Kjarval.
ÅRGÅNG 11 · 1960: *Sigurd Fries*, Ivar Modéer 3.11.1904–31.1.1960.—*Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson*, Matthías Jochumsson och Einar Benediktsson.—*Ingegerd Fries*, Genom Ódáðahraun och Vonarskarð—färder under tusen år.
ÅRGÅNG 12 · 1961: *Einar Ól. Sveinsson*, Njáls saga.
ÅRGÅNG 13 · 1962: *Halldór Halldórsson*, Kring språkliga nybildningar i nutida isländska.—*Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt*, Gudruns sorg. Stilstudier över ett eddamotiv.—*Tor Hultman*, Rec. av Jacobsen, M. A.—Matras, Chr., Föroysk-donsk orðabók. Færøsk-dansk ordbog.
ÅRGÅNG 14 · 1963: *Peter Hallberg*, Laxness som dramatiker.—*Roland Otterbjörk*, Moderna isländska förnamn.—*Einar Ól. Sveinsson*, Från Mýrdalur.
ÅRGÅNG 15 · 1964: *Lars Lönnroth*, Tesen om de två kulturerna. Kritiska studier i den isländska sagaskrivningens sociala förutsättningar.—*Valter Jansson*, Bortgångna hedersledamöter.
ÅRGÅNG 16 · 1965: *Tryggve Sköld*, Isländska väderstreck.

ÅRGÅNG 17 · 1966: *Gun Widmark*, Om nordisk replikkonst i och utanför den isländska sagan.—*Bo Almqvist*, Den fulaste foten. Folkligt och litterärt i en Snorri-anekdot.
ÅRGÅNG 18 · 1967: *Ole Widding*, Jónsbóks to ikke-interpolerede håndskrifter. Et bidrag til den isländske lovbogs historie.—*Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson*, Jóhann Sigurjónsson och Fjalla-Eyvindur.
ÅRGÅNG 19 · 1968: *Einar Ól. Sveinsson*, Eyrbyggja sagas kilder.—*Svávar Sigmundsson*, Ortnamnsforskning på Island.—Lennart Elmevik, Glömskans häger. Till tolkningen av en Hávamálstrof.—Berättelsen om Audun, översatt av Björn Collinder.
ÅRGÅNG 20 · 1969: *Sveinn Höskuldsson*, Skaldekongressen på Parnassen—en isländsk studentpjäs.—*Evert Salberger*, Cesurer i Atlakviða.
ÅRGÅNG 21 · 1970: *Davíð Erlingsson*, Etiken i Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða.—*Bo Almqvist*, Isländska ordspråk och talesätt.
ÅRGÅNG 22 · 1971: *Valter Jansson*, Jöran Sahlgren. Minnesord.—*Lennart Elmevik*, Ett eddaställe och några svenska dialektord.—*Bjarne Beckman*, Hur gammal är Hervararsagans svenska kungakrönika?—*Baldur Jónsson*, Några anmärkningar till Blöndals ordbok.—*Evert Salberger*, Vel glýioð eller velglýioð. En textdetalj i Vǫluspá 35.—*Anna Mörner*, Isafjord.
ÅRGÅNG 23 · 1972: *Bo Ralph*, Jon Hreggviðsson—en sagagestalt i en modern isländsk roman.—*Staffan Hellberg*, Slaget vid Nesjar och »Sven jarl Håkonsson».—*Thorsten Carlsson*, Norrön legendforskning—en kort presentation.
ÅRGÅNG 24 · 1973: *Peter Hallberg*, Njáls saga—en medeltida moralitet?—Evert Salberger, Elfaraskáld—ett tillnamn i Njáls saga.—*Richard L. Harris*, The Deaths of Grettir and Grendel: A New Parallel.—*Peter A. Jorgensen*, Grendel, Grettir, and Two Skaldic Stanzas.
ÅRGÅNG 25 · 1974: *Valter Jansson*, Isländska sällskapet 25 år.—*Ove Moberg*, Bröderna Weibull och den isländska traditionen.—*Evert Salberger*, Heill þú farir! Ett textproblem i Vafþrúðnismál 4.—*Bjarne Beckman*, Mysing.—*Hreinn Steingrímsson*, »Að kveða rímur».—*Lennart Elmevik*, Två eddaställen och en västnordisk ordgrupp.
ÅRGÅNG 26 · 1975: *Björn Hagström*, Att särskilja anonyma skrivare. Några synpunkter på ett paleografiskt-ortografiskt problem i medeltida isländska handskrifter, särskilt Isländska Homilieboken.—*Gustaf Lindblad*, Den rätta läsningen av Isländska Homilieboken.—*Bo Ralph*, En dikt av Steinþórr, islänning.—*Kristinn Jóhannesson*, Från Värmland till Borgarfjörður. Om Gustaf Frödings diktning i isländsk tolkning.
ÅRGÅNG 27 · 1976: *Alan J. Berger*, Old Law, New Law, and Hœnsa-Þóris saga.—*Heimir Pálsson*, En översättares funderingar. Kring en opublicerad översättning av Sven Delblancs Åminne.—*Kunishiro Sugawara*, A Report on Japanese Translations of Old Icelandic Literature.—*Evert Salberger*, Ask Burlefot. En romanhjältes namn.—Lennart Elmevik, Fisl. giǫgurr.

ÅRGÅNG 28 · 1977: *Gustaf Lindblad*, Centrala eddaproblem i 1970-talets forskningsläge.—Bo Ralph, Ett ställe i Skáldskaparmál 18.
ÅRGÅNG 29 · 1978: *John Lindow*, Old Icelandic *þáttr*: Early Usage and Semantic History.—*Finn Hansen*, Naturbeskrivende indslag i Gísla saga Súrssonar.—Karl Axel Holmberg, Uppsala-Eddan i utgåva.
ÅRGÅNG 30 · 1979: *Valter Jansson*, Dag Strömbäck. Minnesord.—*Finn Hansen*, Benbrud og bane i blåt.—*Andrea van Arkel*, Scribes and Statistics. An evaluation of the statistical methods used to determine the number of scribes of the Stockholm Homily Book.—*Eva Rode*, Svar på artiklen »Scribes and Statistics».—Börje Westlund, Skrivare och statistik. Ett genmäle.
ÅRGÅNG 31 · 1980: *Björn Högström*, Fvn. bakkakolfr och skotbakki. Några glimtar från redigeringen av en norrön ordbok.—*Alan J. Berger*, The Sagas of Harald Fairhair.—*Ilkka Hirvonen*, Om bruket av slutartikel i de äldsta norröna homilieböckerna IsIH och GNH.—*Sigurgeir Steingrímsson*, Tusen och en dag. En sagosamlings vandring från Orienten till Island.—*Jan Terje Faarlund*, Subject and nominative in Oid Norse.—*Lars-Erik Edlund*, Askraka—ett engångsord i Egilssagan.
ÅRGÅNG 32 · 1981: *Staffan Hellberg*, Kungarna i Sigvats diktning. Till studiet av skaldedikternas språk och stil.—*Finn Hansen*, Hrafnkels saga: del og helhed.—Ingegerd Fries, Njals saga 700 år senare.
ÅRGÅNG 33 · 1982: *Jan Paul Strid*, Veiðar námo—ett omdiskuterat ställe i Hymiskviða.—*Madeleine G. Randquist*, Om den (text)syntaktiska och semantiska strukturen i tre välkända isländska sagor. En skiss.—*Sigurgeir Steingrímsson*, Árni Magnusson och hans handskriftsamling.
ÅRGÅNG 34 · 1983: *Peter Hallberg*, Sturlunga saga—en isländsk tidsspegel.—*Þorleifur Hauksson*, Anteckningar om Hallgrímur Pétursson.—*Inger Larsson*, Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða. En bibliografi.
ÅRGÅNG 35 · 1984: *Lennart Elmevik*, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson. Minnesord.—*Alfred Jakobsen*, Noen merknader til Gísls þáttr Illugasonar.—*Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt*, Bygden under Vatnajökull. En minnesvärd resa till Island 1954.—*Michael Barnes*, Norn.—*Barbro Söderberg*, Till tolkningen av några dunkla passager i Lokasenna.
ÅRGÅNG 36 · 1985: *Staffan Hellberg*, Nesjavísur än en gång.—*George S. Tate*, Eldorado and the Garden in Laxness' *Paradisarheimt*.– *Þorleifur Hauksson*, Vildvittror och Mattisrövare i isländsk dräkt. Ett kåseri kring en översättning av Ronja rövardotter.—Michael Barnes, A note on Faroese /θ/>/ h/.—*Björn Hagström*, En färöisk-svensk ordbok. Rec. av Ebba Lindberg & Birgitta Hylin, Färöord. Liten färöisk-svensk ordbok med kortfattad grammatik jämte upplysningar om språkets historiska bakgrund.—*Claes Åneman*, Rec. av Bjarne Fidjestøl, Det norrøne fyrstediktet.
ÅRGÅNG 37 · 1986: *Alfred Jakobsen*, Om forfatteren av Sturlu saga.—*Michael P. Barnes*, Subject, Nominative and Oblique Case in Faroese.—*Marianne E.*

Kalinke, The Misogamous Maiden Kings of Icelandic Romance.—*Carl-Otto von Sydow*, Jon Helgasons dikt I Árnasafni. Den isländska texten med svensk översättning och kort kommentar.

ÅRGÅNG 38 · 1987: *Michael P. Barnes*, Some Remarks on Subordinate Clause Word-order in Faroese.—*Jan Ragnar Hagland*, Njåls saga i 1970-og 1980-åra. Eit översyn över nyare forskning.—*Per-Axel Wiktorsson*, Om Torleiftåten.—*Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt*, Davíð Stefánssons dikt Konan, sem kyndir ofninn minn. Den isländska texten med svensk översättning och kort kommentar.

ÅRGÅNG 39 · 1988: *Alfred Jakobsen*, Snorre og geografien.—*Joan Turville-Petre*, A Tree Dream in Old Icelandic.—*Agneta Breisch*, Fredlöshetsbegreppet i saga och samhälle.—*Tommy Danielsson*, Magnús berfættrs sista strid.—*Ola Larsmo*, Att tala i röret. En orättvis betraktelse av modern isländsk skönlitteratur.

ÅRGÅNG 40 · 1989: *Alv Kragerud*, Helgdiktningen og reinkarnasjonen.—*Jan Nilsson*, Guðmundr Ólafsson och hans Lexicon Islandicum—några kommentarer.

ÅRGÅNG 41 · 1990: *Jan Ragnar Hagland*, Slaget på Pezinavellir i nordisk og bysantinsk tradisjon.—*William Sayers*, An Irish Descriptive Topos in Laxdœla Saga.—*Carl-Otto von Sydow*, Nyisländsk skönlitteratur i svensk översättning. En förteckning. Del 1.—*Karl Axel Holmberg*, Rec. av Else Nordahl, Reykjavík from the Archaeological Point of View.

ÅRGÅNG 42 · 1991: *Stefan Brink*, Den norröna bosättningen på Grönland. En kortfattad forskningsöversikt jämte några nya forskningsbidrag.—*Carl-Otto von Sydo*w, Två dikter av Jón Helgason i original och svensk dräkt med kommentar.—*Carl-Otto von Sydow*, Nyisländsk skönlitteratur i svensk översättning. En förteckning. Del 2.—*Nils Österholm*, Torleiftåten i handskriften Add 4867 fol.—*Lennart Elmevik*, Rec. av Esbjörn Rosenblad, Island i saga och nutid.

ÅRGÅNG 43 · 1992: *Anne Lidén*, St Olav in the Beatus Initial of the Carrow Psalter.—*Michael P. Barnes*, Faroese Syntax—Achievements, Goals and Problems.—*Carl-Otto von Sydow*, Nyisländsk skönlitteratur i svensk översättning. En förteckning. Del 3.

ÅRGÅNG 44 · 1993: *Karl Axel Holmberg*, Isländsk språkvård nu och förr. Med en sidoblick på svenskan.—*Páll Valsson*, Islands älsklingsson sedd i ett nytt ljus. Några problem omkring den nya textkritiska utgåvan av Jónas Hallgrímssons samlade verk: Ritverk Jónasar Hallgrímssonar I–IV, 1989.—*William Sayers*, Spiritual Navigation in the Western Sea: Sturlunga saga and Adomnán's Hinba.—*Carl-Otto von Sydow*, Nyisländsk skönlitteratur i svensk översättning. En förteckning. Del 4.

ÅRGÅNG 45 · 1994: *Kristín Bragadóttir*, Skalden och redaktören Jón Þorkelsson.—*Ingegerd Fries*, När skrevs sagan? Om datering av isländska sagor, särskilt Heiðarvígasagan.—*Sigurður A. Magnússon*, Sigurbjörn Einarsson som student i Uppsala på 1930-talet. Översättning, noter och efterskrift av Carl-Otto von Sydow.

ÅRGÅNG 46 · 1995: *Ingegerd Fries*, Biskop Gissur Einarsson och reformationen.—*François-Xavier Dillmann*, Runorna i den fornisländska litteraturen.

En översikt.—*William Sayers*, Poetry and Social Agency in Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar.

ÅRGÅNG 47 · 1996: *Lennart Elmevik*, Valter Jansson. Minnesord.—*Jón Hnefill* Aðalsteinsson, Blot i forna skrifter.—*Gísli Pálsson*, Språk, text och identitet i det isländska samhället.

ÅRGÅNG 48 · 1997: *Lennart Elmevik*, Anna Larsson. Minnesord.—*Lennart Moberg*, ”Stóð und árhjalmi”. Kring Hákonarmál 3:8.—*Henric Bagerius*, Vita vikingar och svarta sköldmör. Föreställningar om sexualitet i Snorre Sturlassons kungasagor.—*Páll Valsson*, En runologs uppgång och fall.—*Björn Hagström*, Något om färöisk lyrik—mest om Christian Matras.

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i *Sverris saga*? Svar til Fredrik Ljungqvist og Lars Lönnroth.—*Heimir Pálsson*, Tungviktare i litteraturhistorien. En krönika.

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