



The Retrospective Methods Network

RMIN

Newsletter

December 2010

RMIN

Edited by

Frog

Helen F. Leslie and Mathias Nordvig

Published by

Folklore Studies / Dept. of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies

University of Helsinki, Helsinki

ISSN/ISSN-L: 1799-4497

Table of Contents

Editor's Note	4
COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS	
Eldar Heide Why a Network for Retrospective Methods?	6
Helen F. Leslie and Mathias Nordvig Conference Report: New Focus on Retrospective Methods	7
Rudolf Simek The Vanir: An Obituary	10
Jill Bradley Visual Vocabulary, Visual Strategy	19
Frog Listening to Poetry in a Dead Language: Could <i>dróttkvætt</i> Have Been Trochaic?	23
Daniel Sävborg and Karen Bek-Pedersen Old Norse Folklorist Network	28
Riikka Nevalainen Conference Report: Jubilee Seminar for the Opening of the Runosong Academy	31
<hr/>	
PEOPLE	
<i>Presentations and Publications</i>	34
Stefan Brink Many Layers in the Medieval Laws of Scandinavia? – The Possibility of Using Retrospective Methods When Analysing Early Laws	34
Frog The Continuity, Evolution and Transformation of Myth: The Curious Case of <i>Þrymsqviða</i> Narratiiv kui ravi: Riituse-etendus ja narratiivi aktualiseerumine kogemusena [‘Narrative as the Cure: Rite Performance and Actualizing Narrative as Experience’]	34 36
Who the Devil is Phil? – The Problem of Baldr in the Second Merseburg Charm yet again	36
Terry Gunnell Folk Legends, Folk Traditions and Grave Mounds	37
Odd Einar Haugen The Text That Never Was: On Reconstruction in Textual Criticism	38
Eldar Heide Working on the Semantic Side of Etymology: The Culture-Etymological Approach	39
My Present Work with Retrospective Methods	40
Terje Planke Reconstructing the Pattern of a Vernacular Tradition	42
Jens Peter Schjødt Criteria for Evaluating Sources for Old Norse Religion	45

Eila Stepanova	
Reflections of Religion, Mythology and Worldview in Laments	45
Daniel Sävborg	
Scandinavian Folk Legends and Icelandic Sagas.....	46
Clive Tolley	
<i>Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic</i> , volumes I–II.....	47
<i>Völsa þátr</i> : Pagan Lore or Christian Lie?	48
Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir	
Retrospective Methods in Dating Post-Medieval Rigmorles from the North Atlantic	49
MA-Thesis Projects	51
Triin Laidoner	
The Flying Trickster of the North: The Legacy of Sámi <i>Noaidevuohta</i> Tradition Reflected in the Borderline Figure Loki Laufeyjarsón in Old Nordic Mythology.....	51
Luke John Murphy	
Holy Groves, Rocky Places, and Sacral Constructions: The Establishment of Sacred Social Space in Viking-Age Pre-Christian Scandinavia	51
Mathias Nordvig	
Heterogeneity in the Old Norse World Picture: Diversity and Uniformity in Mythological Genres.....	52
Izabella Wenska	
Sacrifices among Slavs.....	53
<hr/>	
FACULTIES; INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS	
The Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia	54
The Center for Viking and Medieval Studies, Aarhus University	55
Old Norse Studies at the Scandinavian Department, Aarhus University.....	56
CALLS FOR PAPERS	
Distant Cultural Differences? – Call for panel proposals for Dynamics of Cultural Differences: 32 nd Nordic Conference of Ethnology and Folkloristics.....	57

Editor's Note

This is the founding issue of *RMN Newsletter*, the newsletter of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN). This pilot issue is provided with a brief introduction because you as its readership are in a position to shape its form and emphasis through your interest, support and contributions. The RMN is intended to bring together scholars interested in using evidence from one period for developing an understanding of the same or a corresponding phenomenon in an earlier period. In other words, the network is united by an interest in the problems, approaches, strategies and limitations related to approaching some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. This includes assessments of continuity between historical periods, historical relationships between synchronic forms of a tradition in the same or diverse cultures, and also uses of analogical comparisons in which parallels are purely typological. Because the focus is on practical and constructive strategies, the network is multi-disciplinary. The majority of the network's members are presently in various fields related to medieval studies, folklore studies, linguistics, archaeology and history.

RMN Newsletter was organized at the first conference of the RMN in September of this year. The newsletter is intended to have two primary functions:

- 1) As a medium for maintaining contact among widely distributed members of the network
- 2) As a medium for keeping more generally abreast of activities, research and events which are relevant to the members and concerns of the network

Priority was given to the rapid organization and publication of the pilot of the newsletter. Thanks to the support of the many contributors, Folklore Studies / Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies, University of Helsinki, and its small editorial

staff, the first issue is appearing slightly more than two months after the conference. The intention is to present the emergent form of *RMN Newsletter* according to a basic organizational schema of five sections: "Comments and Communications", "People", "Faculties, Institutions and Organizations", "Reviews" (although no reviews are included in this issue), and "Calls for Papers". The orientation of the newsletter is *not* the publication of research articles, but rather information *about* events, people, activities, developments and technologies, and research which is ongoing or has been recently completed.

At this point, the heart of the newsletter is the *People* section, which is intended to help researchers keep track of what others with similar interests are doing. The section consists of abstracts of conference presentations, publications and ongoing projects. The emerging generation of scholars is extremely important across our diverse disciplines and it is important to both be aware of that generation and to open contact with it. We therefore include subsections on PhD dissertation projects and MA thesis projects which are ongoing or have recently been completed. The section *Faculties, Institutions and Organizations* is oriented to more general information about activities at the level of organizations. The *Comments and Communications* section promises to construct a venue for the presentation of news, information, discussions and brief contributions to the broader discourse of our many intersecting fields. This is intended as a venue introducing problems, questions, possibilities and approaches for dialogue rather than concluding examinations, analyses or interpretations, regarding which we hope to keep you informed through the publication of abstracts. Contributions of your own abstracts and engagement in this discourse space will both support the publication and reciprocally shape the form and emphases of a newsletter

that has been organized in response to the interests of RMN members.

The initial formation of the RMN took place in 2009 at the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala, Sweden. A large number of its members are therefore medievalists in Scandinavian Studies interested in how to relate 19th and 20th century folklore to traditions reflected in medieval manuscripts, runic inscriptions, and archaeological material of various periods, as well to what degree medieval sources from a Christian cultural milieu can offer insights into pre-Conversion cultures. This was where the RMN began. However, the use of 'late' folklore and cross-cultural comparisons were devalued in several fields across the mid-20th century because of shifts in paradigms in both medieval studies and folklore studies. Those paradigms appear to be shifting again, and the RMN has excited tremendous interest among a wide range of scholars in diverse disciplines.

By its first conference in September, the RMN had expanded to include a number of researchers addressing several cultures in the Circum-Baltic region, and membership has continued to increase among researchers of these cultures. Diachronic studies of post-medieval sources were subject to much more intensive development in these cultural areas because textual evidence from earlier periods was minimal or nonexistent. When diachronic study was devalued, strategies for approaching the folklore materials continued to develop, offering half a century of insights which can now be turned back to the possibilities and limitations of retrospective approaches. It is perhaps appropriate that *RMN Newsletter* is published by Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki, which is the oldest university department of folklore in the world. The RMN has also recently begun to spread among medievalists concerned with other cultures of Europe. These have

correspondingly moved into a new era of understanding which allows comparisons and diachronic approaches to be assessed with fresh eyes. *RMN Newsletter* is intended to open a discourse across these diverse fields united by common interests. Opening this discourse will not only benefit scholars focusing on different parts of the historical spectrum, but it also appears significant – if not essential – to directions of investigation which researchers across these disciplines wish to explore.

RMN Newsletter is primarily oriented to constructing an informational resource and discourse space for researchers on an individual basis, connecting them with the RMN as an open social network. However, researchers interested in these fields are very often affiliated with departments or faculties which have been marginalized or are struggling in their institutions. These issues are situated within the broader reality that studies in the humanities are under duress in the wake of increasing emphases on 'profit' by educational institutions, a graduate's income as an indication of an education's 'value', and changing ideas of 'usefulness' in education. These priorities appear increasingly inclined to push studies in the humanities, and their role in the maintenance of informed understandings of history, culture and heritage, outside the field of an educational institution's responsibility, with no consideration of the potential long-term social consequences which could follow. It is therefore very important for the widely scattered researchers in these fields to participate in broader social networks of scholars because where a large institution may not listen to a few voices from isolated offices in one of its remote buildings, an international chorus may succeed in being heard.

Frog
University of Helsinki

Comments and Communications

Why a Network for Retrospective Methods?

Eldar Heide, University of Bergen

The purpose of the Retrospective Methods Network is to promote and develop retrospective methods in historical studies in a wide sense. The starting-point is a desire to make use of folklore and other 19th and 20th century evidence as a supplement in studies of pre-Christian Scandinavian beliefs. This kind of material has widely been rejected in such studies since the inter-war period, which is regrettable, because many problems remain unsolved, mainly due to a lack of information. Accordingly, we are not in a position to neglect potentially valuable information. However, the rejection is no longer based upon knowledge of late material and its potentials and shortcomings (as the rejection inevitably has led to a low knowledge of these resources), and in recent years, there has been a growing interest in such material and a positive reception of this kind of studies among many scholars. Therefore, in 2009, I felt the time was ripe for an organized effort, and at the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala, I took an initiative to connect scholars with an interest in retrospective methods into a network. The idea is that if we work together, we will have more fun and we can support and encourage each other, and we will have better chances to develop appropriate methods. In addition, a network and its activities can make an issue out of this approach, make visible the renewed interest in late material and retrospective methods and thus make more scholars give these questions a second thought.

In my opinion, methodology should be given a high priority by the network. Going back from late material will always remain problematic, and we must not do it in the same naïve way as the scholars of the early 20th century. I gave some examples of how I

think we can reason in my “manifesto” from the Uppsala conference (Heide 2009, at <http://www.saga.nordiska.uu.se/preprint/>), but these are just examples; the bulk of the work on methods remains ahead. In connection with this, I think the network should span a variety of fields and research questions because looking at a problem from diverse angles makes it possible to see the issues more clearly. In my opinion, a higher level of methodological consciousness and a stronger demand for explicitness in claims, methods and reasoning is needed in Old Norse studies in general, and I hope that the work on retrospective methods can contribute to this.

Questions that could be addressed in connection with the network include the following:

- Under what circumstances are retrospective methods possible or preferable?
- What criteria can be utilized to make evidence valid for earlier periods?
- How can retrospective approaches be combined with other approaches, e.g. comparative approaches?
- What are the pitfalls and how can they be avoided?
- Do we have certain examples of cultural elements or memories that have survived for long periods of time?

Examples of topics may be:

- Interpretations based partly or wholly on retrospective reasoning.
- Discussions of how 19th and 20th century folklore can help us understand motifs in Old Norse literature.

- Discussions of how popular traditions from the 19th and 20th centuries can help us understand medieval archaeological evidence.
- Discussions of how such traditions can help us reconstruct pre-Christian beliefs.

Today, approaches like these are rejected as speculative by many scholars. Nonetheless, in the study of other problems retrospective approaches are accepted by most scholars, for example:

- Runic inscriptions from the Viking Age and earlier are interpreted in the light of 13th century Old Norse sources.
- So are bracteates and *guldgubber* from the Migration Period and Merovingian Age.
- Pre-Christian religious conditions are reconstructed on the basis of place names and landscapes.
- The religion and culture of the Viking Age are reconstructed on the basis of Old Norse literary sources which are (more than) two centuries younger.

On the latter question, a good deal of work has been done to establish a theoretical basis and reject the hypercriticism of the mid-20th century; nevertheless a lot of work remains before a philosophically watertight theory is formulated. In addition, most of the scholars who on principle reject 19th and 20th century evidence occasionally make use of it but without a methodological basis. This means that a discussion of retrospective methods is not just for a faction in the field; rather it is essential to a large part of Old Norse studies.

Time will show what the Retrospective Methods Network and the renewed effort to use late material can lead to. So far, I am very happy with what I have seen – the interest in the network and the conference in September, the spin-offs from it, and the papers at the conference. They illuminated retrospective methods from many angles, and some of them were clear demonstrations of how late material can increase our understanding of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. The future attitude towards late material and retrospective methods depends upon how well we are able to make such demonstrations.

Eldar Heide
15th November, 2010

Conference Report: New Focus on Retrospective Methods **13th–14th September, 2010, Bergen, Norway**

Helen F. Leslie, University of Bergen, and Mathias Nordvig, Aarhus University

In the cosy and historic premises of Bergen *kystlag*, the first conference and official event of the Retrospective Methods Network was held in a former warehouse from the 17th century. The conference was a great success: the high standard of papers and breadth of topics presented bode well for the future of the Network. The quality of the conference reflected the hard work of Eldar Heide, who founded the Network in August 2010 at the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala, and who was the primary organiser of the conference. The conference hosted 16

speakers and a total of almost 50 participants from a range of different disciplines and countries, both European and from further afield, all of which made for a large and responsive audience for the presentations.

The conference and Network has its emphasis on the methodology behind retrospective reasoning in historical studies in a wide sense, for example the exploration of strategies for using 19th century folklore as sources to understand motifs in Old Norse literature or investigations of Old Norse



Rudolf Simek piloting the *Den gode Hensigt* toward open water. Photo by Frog.

pagan religion, and the insights which these sources can offer. Emphasis was given to supporting and illustrating the methodological studies with well-chosen examples. It therefore seemed wholly in keeping with the priorities of these academic endeavours that Eldar Heide, an experienced sailor, led a boat-trip on the squaresail-rigged *småjekt* *Den gode Hensigt* on the day before the conference. *Den gode Hensigt* is one of the boats belonging to the *kystlag*, a society established to preserve traditional Norwegian coastal culture. Bergen's famous rain held off, and not a single participant was lost at sea on our voyage, secure in the company of porpoises. This adventure proved an excellent prelude to the conference, establishing the relaxed tone which was maintained in the atmosphere of the subsequent two days filled with presentations.

After a short walk along the coast to the premise of the *kystlag*, Eldar opened the first day of the conference with a short introduction, placing retrospective methods in a broad historical context, emphasizing the need for the employed methodologies to be rigorous and well thought through, stepping away from the naïve approaches to folklore

evidence which was common in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when there was little or no consideration of whether such evidence was even appropriate. The presentations were arranged alphabetically by presenter, hence Sirpa Aalto took the baton and gave the conference's opening paper on questions of using the *Kalevala* and the traditional poetry from which it derives as a vantage point for investigations into the Finnish Viking Age. Discussion was lively, to say the least, before moving on to the geographer Hans Antonson, who introduced the use of retrospective methods in landscape analysis. This field was entirely new to many people there. Maths Bertell followed with an argument for the importance of the comparative approach when dealing with sources from recent centuries. Bertell selected examples from Old Norse and Sámi cultures, addressing their associated conceptions. Stefan Brink's invigorating contribution peeled away various layers of early provincial Scandinavian laws. Brink's paper demonstrated how retrospective approaches can be used in a modern, analytical way which can offer deep insights into stratified changes in a cultural environment, an analysis which contrasts sharply with work from before the 1960's, when these laws were approached uncritically as sources for information on early Scandinavian societies – even societies from periods hundreds of years before the laws were written down. Terry Gunnell, true to form, maintained this energy and vigour with a paper on grave mounds and the folk traditions surrounding them. With a number of stories to keep the presentation lively, Gunnell explored the importance of relationships between people and the dead or other mythic beings inhabiting the landscape, wrapping up the morning sessions with a discussion that carried over into lunch.

Odd Einar Haugen presented an overview of the uses of reconstruction in textual criticism, and Eldar Heide further increased the range of approaches by introducing etymological studies into the debate. His

paper on the cultural-etymological approach provided solid examples of the areas and ways in which scholars from different fields could cooperate in order to utilize late material to further research into earlier historical periods. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir followed with an interesting consideration of post-medieval rímaroles and their relationship to Old Icelandic *þulur*. Helgadóttir argued convincingly that the medieval material could be reasonably used to anchor the post-medieval material, and the post-medieval material could then reciprocally offer insights into the traditions of the earlier period.

The second day of the conference was opened by Terje Planke, who gave a well-illustrated presentation of the use of twentieth century handicrafts in reconstructing boats and sailing techniques of the Germanic Iron Age. Margareta Regebro came next, outlining her ideas on a methodology for drawing motifs out of their context for study. This discussion was followed by the linguist Janne Saarikvi's learned paper on using cultural reconstruction in relation to proto-languages, focussing his discussion on Proto-Sámi and Proto-Uralic. Jens Peter Schjødt's paper suggested the need for new theoretical achievements to be brought to the fore in the study of Old Norse religion, a pertinent topic considering that many of the participants work closely with Old Norse sources. Rudolf Simek's lecture on *guldgubber* explored the semiotics of hand gestures and hand positions in iconography, arguing for a continuity between these tiny gold artefacts from the Migration Period and the manuscript illuminations of later religious and law texts which could offer insights into the meanings underlying different *guldgubber* image-types. Daniel Sävborg's paper then offered a convincing exposition of the use of 19th and 20th century folklore to explain supernatural episodes found in the medieval Icelandic *Íslendingasögur*. The positive and constructive discussion continued and the



The cosy interior of a remodelled warehouse lent to the intimate atmosphere of the sessions. From left: Jens Peter Schjødt and Terry Gunnell. Photo by Mathias Nordvig.

final paper of the conference was given by Frog, an enjoyable and detailed study of the narrative of *Þrymsqviða* and the continuity, evolution and transformation of its myth in cultures around the Baltic Sea.

The conference concluded with a meeting of the Retrospective Methods Network, chaired by Eldar Heide. The discussion was very active, benefitting from a number of suggestions and contributions from a large number of participants concerning the future activities of the network. It was decided that another Retrospective Methods Network conference should be held in three years time in 2013, of which Heide is the candidate organizer, with the suggestion of an interim meeting of members attending the 15th International Saga Conference to be held in Århus, Denmark, in 2012. The meeting had two additional immediate outcomes. One was the decision to establish the present newsletter, with Frog (University of Helsinki) as editor-in-chief, assisted by Helen Leslie (University of Bergen), and Mathias Nordvig (Aarhus University). The other was a plan for the publication of select papers from the conference, which will be organized by Heide.

Many thanks go out to the organizers of the conference, the administrative support provided by Elisabeth Akselvoll, and to the

small team of student helpers from the University of Bergen who did a marvellous job of seeing that coffee never ran short and that lunch was ready whenever we were, as well as to Bergen *kystlag* for having us. All in all, it was an interesting and lively display of research and ideas which the contributors were kind enough to provide, but which would not have truly come to fruition were it

not for the questions, discussions and debate of the many participants arriving from many different lands. This conference has helped kick-start and enrich the possibilities and use of retrospective reasoning, and the Network looks to be a productive and positive space for scholars from different disciplines and approaches to meet and exchange ideas.

The Vanir: An Obituary

Rudolf Simek, University of Bonn

Collective Terms for ‘Gods’ in Old Norse

In Old Norse, we can find a surprising number of collective nouns denoting the pantheon of heathen gods, indicating that the gods as a group were at least as much part of the heathen understanding of divine beings as the veneration of individual, named gods. These collectives, when found in the skaldic poems and possibly also in the older mythological poems of the Codex Regius (commonly known as Eddic lays) are therefore a valuable source for heathen concepts about the gods of ancient Scandinavia.

The various collectives for ‘gods’ have been dealt with in detail,¹ so that I can limit myself to a short summary of previous scholarship.

The most common nouns denoting ‘gods’ are, hardly surprisingly, the words *goð* (sing. *goð*), *tífar* (sing. *týr*/Týr) and *æsir* (sing. *ǫss/áss*). The singular *goð* is only preserved in three instances in skaldic verse (Egill: *Lausavísa* 39; Þórarinn svarti: *Máhlíðinga vísur* 1; Gísli Súrsson: *Lausavísa* 26), and none of these verses are with certainty older than the saga texts in which they are preserved (*Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*; *Eyrbyggja saga*; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*). In the many collective uses, the term *goð* is strongly linked with heathen gods (*heiðinn goð*) mainly in their function as defenders and rulers of mankind and their world. The term

heiðinn goð (*Hákonarmál* 21), or just *goð*, as a clear denomination for heathen gods as opposed to the Christian god (Hjalte Skeggjason), leads to the suspicion that it was already either necessary or useful to distinguish between the same term being used (in the singular) for the Christian god (*guð*, masculine) and (in the plural) for heathen deities. Even so, there are nearly two dozen examples in skaldic poetry and more than a dozen in Eddic poems (*Skírnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Alvissmál*) of the use of the term *goð* to refer to a plurality of heathen gods.

The word *tífar* presents more problems, as it is uncertain whether the singular *týr* could, besides denoting the old god Týr, also denote a single god. The instances from skaldic poetry, however, show that especially in composite *kenningar* the word *týr* seems quite obviously aimed at ‘a god’ (*týr*) rather than at ‘the god Týr’. Thus, although there are examples of Týr being mentioned as a single god (cf. *Týs ǫttungr* for the royal descendants of the god in *Ynglingatal* 17 and *Háleygjatal* 12), in the majority of cases we should accept that even in *kenningar* the likelihood is greater for *týr* being used as a singular of the collective, rather than for the god Týr.

The word *æsir* is the best known among the collectives for gods, and also the one where the singular is quite frequent, too. A closer look, however, reveals that the singular

is mainly used in younger mythographical Eddic poems (*Þrymskviða* 2 and 15; *Lokasenna* 11, 19, 33; *Grímnismál* 6 and 44; *Rigspula* 1). In the *Völuspá* and the skaldic poems, the term is, like the other collective nouns, only used in the plural (*Völuspá* 17, 24 and 32; *Hákonarmál* 16; *Vellekla* 32), but this usage is still to be found in the other Eddic poems, too (*Grímnismál* 30, 42; *Lokasenna* 3 and 27; *Alvíssmál* 16; *Þrymskviða* 5 and 9). In accordance with these poems, Snorri in his *Prose Edda* uses the term both in the singular and plural.

Three other terms are less common in the literary texts, but were obviously more frequently used in heathen times as collective terms for ‘gods’ more than in medieval literature, namely *regin*, *bönd* und *höpt*.

Of these, *regin* clearly had the greatest currency and is already attested on two pre-Viking runestones, namely on the Noleby rune-stone (from Västergötland in Sweden, dated to ca. 600)² and on the Sparlösa rune-stone (Västergötland in Sweden; ca. 800),³ which both talk of the runes as *raginakundo* ‘made known through the *regin* [the gods]’. The alliteration of “runar” and “regin” apparently led to a popular formula, as it can be found in stanza 80 of the Eddic poem *Hávamál*, again at least 300 years later. This term therefore can also claim the greatest age of all collective terms for gods, but still had wide currency in 10th century skaldic poetry (Bragi: *Ragnarsdrápa* 10; Einar: *Vellekla* 32; Holmgöngu-Bersi: *Lausavísa* 1; Ulfr: *Húsdrápa* 2; Glúmr: *Gráfeldardrápa* 3; Þjóðólfr: *Haustlǫng* 7, 10 and 13; Þjóðólfr: *Haleygjatal* 12 and 15; Harald Hárfagri: *Snæfríðardrápa*; whilst Egils *Lausavísa* 19 seems to be of a younger date on linguistic grounds)⁴ and both in mythological and heroic Eddic poetry (*Völuspá* 41 and 44, *Grímnismál* 4, 6, 37, 41; *Lokasenna* 4, 32, 39, 41; *Vafþrúðnismál* 13, 25, 39, 52, 55; *Hyndluljóð* 35; *Baldurs draumar* 14; *Atlamál* 22; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur* 40). Like in the two runic inscriptions from the 7th century about the origins of runes, the *Vellekla* talks

about a divine descendancy for Jarl Hákon. The term *regin* seems to carry connotations of the ruling, orderly powers and sees them on a mythological level throughout: these gods can lay claim to be the origin of the knowledge of runes as well as to be the ancestors of royal houses.

The collective term *bönd*, on the other hand, has often been interpreted as referring to the ‘binding gods’, whether they bind humans through their oaths or physically in cultic practices,⁵ but skaldic sources show them as gods defending the (Norwegian) realm against evil, and Edith Marold has pointed out that three out of the ten or so uses combine the term with the verb *reka* (Egill: *lausavísa* 19; Steinunn 2; and *nið* on Harald) and one with the verb *vesa* (anonymous *lausavísa* 8), both meaning ‘to chase away’ – averting evil kings as well as robbers and missionaries.⁶ The use of the term *bönd* shows a strong connotation of cult practices, too, and may point towards a concept of gods protecting the lands as part of the conservative heathen revival initiated by Hákon, Jarl of Hlaðir, in the 80’s and early 90’s of the 10th century against the Christian kings of Norway.⁷ If Hákon in his massive use of skalds against the Christian expansion actively favoured the term *bönd*, it may also denote gods ‘holding together’ the land in its heathen customs against the new and foreign influences. The *bönd* are found only a single time in Eddic poetry (*Hávamál* 109) and may thus have had only a very short period of usage towards the end of the 10th century.

The collective noun *höpt*, on the other hand, never addresses the gods as recipients of a cult, but rather as a general mythological group. In the few instances in which this term occurs (Þjóðólfr: *Haustlǫng* 3 and 11; Einar: *Vellekla* 16; Eilífr: *Þórdrápa* 3; Glúmr: *Gráfeldardrápa* 1; Kormákr: *Sigurðardrápa* 5), there is a tendency towards usage in *kenningar* for individual gods, although the etymology seems to point in the same direction as ‘binding gods’. Apart from the

Haustlǫng (9th century) all the sources may be dated to the years 960–1000.

Vanir as a Collective Term

One notable item missing from the list of eight collective terms dealt with by Marold is the term *vanir*, the supposed opponents of the *Æsir* gods in the so-called war of the *Æsir* and *Vanir*.⁸ The *Vanir* are well established both in research and popular opinion as the group of gods usually associated with fertility, because they include Freyr, Freyja and their father Njǫrðr. If scholars have speculated about Ullr as a member of this *Vanir* family, this has no basis in the sources whatsoever.

The wide modern popularity of the *Vanir* as a family of gods stands in stark contrast to the paucity of the sources about them. If Marold has not mentioned them, then with good reason, as there are only a total of three instances of the term in skaldic poetry, and two of those are from post-heathen times, namely the 11th century (Þórðr Særeksson:

Lausavísa 3) and the mid-12th century (Einar Skúlaason: *Øxnarflokkur* 5).

The third instance dates from the mid-10th century – *Eiríksmál* 2 – but unfortunately the context is most unclear here. Why, then, have the *Vanir* achieved such spectacular fame in modern times, when the sources are so scant? It is certainly not because other poetic sources are much more full: *vanir* are mentioned only seven times in Eddic poetry, and these instances are limited to five poems: *Vǫluspá* 24; *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 (twice), *Skírnismál* 17 and 18, *Sigrdrífumál* 19 and *Þrymskviða* 15. Moreover, in most of these cases the term turns up in an alliterative sequence of (*æsir* – *álfar* followed by)⁹ *vísir vanir*.¹⁰

Rather, the true reason for their popularity is that Snorri gives us, on the basis of these 10 earlier (or possibly earlier) sources, more detailed accounts of the role of the *vanir*, which have in the past mainly been taken at their face value and made into the family of gods commonly known today. In addition,

Table 1. The *vanir* in ON poetry

Term	Source	Context	Meaning
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Eiríksmál</i> 2	Es mér ór heimi hǫlða vánir gǫfugra nǫkkurra	?
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Vǫluspá</i> 24	knátto <i>vanir</i> vígspá vǫllo sporar	group of warriors
<i>vanir</i>	Þórðr: <i>Lausavísa</i> 3	goðbrúðr vani	Skaði ?
<i>vanir</i>	Einar: <i>Øxnarflokkur</i> 5	vana brúðr	Freyja
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Vafþrúðnismál</i> 39	heim með <u>vísom vǫnom</u>	collective gods ?
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Skírnismál</i> 17	Hvat er þat álfa, né ása sona, né <u>vísna vana</u> ?	group differentiated from <i>álfar</i> and <i>æsir</i>
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Skírnismál</i> 18	Emcat ec álfa, né ása sona, né <u>vísna vana</u>	group differentiated from <i>álfar</i> and <i>æsir</i>
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Sigrdrífumál</i> 18	Þær ro með ásom, þær ro með álfom, sumar með <u>vísom vǫnom</u> , sumir hafa menzeir menn.	group differentiated from men and <i>álfar</i>
<i>vanir</i>	<i>Þrymskviða</i> 15	hvítastr ása – vissi hann vel fram, sem <i>vanir</i> aðrir	Heimdall; synonymous with <i>æsir</i> ?
Vanlandi	Þjóðólfr: <i>Ynglingatal</i> 3	vitta véttr Vanlanda kom	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Vanaheimr	<i>Vafþrúðnismál</i> 39	Í Vanaheimi scópo hann vís regin	mythological home of <i>regin</i> and <i>vanir</i>

there are two composite names preserved with the element *van-* in ON poetry, namely the personal name Vanlandi mentioned in *Ynglingatal* 3 (9th century?) and the place name Vanaheimr in *Vafþrúðnismál* 39.

The Description of the Vanir in Old Norse Literature

The *vanir* are mentioned so rarely in the skaldic poetry of heathen times and even in Eddic poetry (see Table 1), that most of the information about them is actually found in the writings of Snorri Sturluson (see Table 2). There is, however, another way of approaching the Vanir/*vanir*, namely to ignore the collective term and look at those gods which are ascribed (by Snorri or otherwise) to this group of divinities. That is the type of study undertaken by Lotte Motz in her 1996 “study in Germanic Myth” called *The King, the Champion and the Sorcerer*, which dedicated a long chapter to a comparative study of the gods usually ascribed to the groups of Æsir and Vanir.¹¹ She looked at the evidence of poetry, prose and even place names concerned with the single deities from both assumed groups, and selected the categories of 1. Agricultural concerns, 2. Homage paid to the Gods, 3. Relation to Wealth, 4. Relation to War, 5. Sexuality, 6. Creativity and Regeneration, 7. Relation to Magic Skills, 8. Relation to Sea Travel, 9. Animals of Association and 10. Relation to Royal Rule. After studying the evidence, she arrived at the conclusion that:

The findings of this study do not support the generally accepted view in which the family of gods is divided into farmers’ gods – Vanir – and gods of warriors and kings – Æsir – into gods of fruitfulness and gods of war. The findings point instead to the close relation of the Vanir to the royal office and to the generative and creative powers held exclusively by the Æsir.¹²

She could show that, contrary to popular opinion, Odin was far more strongly associated with sexuality than Freyr, and that

Freyr on the other hand shows little sign of being an agricultural god, but rather the mighty protagonist of royal houses, his evident sexual connotations having more to do with the virility and the power of a ruler than with agricultural fertility. Motz’s findings can help to understand the obvious faults in the former division of Norse gods into Æsir and Vanir, as she was able to show that there is no inherent difference between the gods ascribed to both groups by Snorri.

Snorri and the Vanir

The largest number of individual pieces of information about Vanir in ON literature is, by far, to be found in the writings of Snorri Sturluson, namely his *Prose Edda* (especially in the second book on skaldic composition called *Skáldskaparmál*) and in the first chapters of his *Ynglinga saga*, which is the first part of *Heimskringla*. It is therefore somewhat of a surprise to see that Snorri is actually not overly explicit when dealing with the Vanir under this term: we only learn from *Skáldskaparmál* 1 that the Vanir are a mythological people (rather than family) in their own right, and it is fairly obvious that Snorri, who uses the term only twice in his whole *Edda*, has, in this instance, used *Völuspá* 24 as the basis for his literary embellishment of the war of gods.

When dealing with Njǫrðr, Snorri has nothing to say about him as being a member of a family or tribe called Vanir, and only when listing poetic terms for Njǫrðr (*Vanaguð*,¹³ *Vananið*, *Vanr*), Freyr (*Vanaguð*, *Vananið*, *Vanr*) and Freyja (*Vanagoð*, *Vanadís*) do the Vanir really come into the picture (*Skáldskaparmál* 6 and 7). None of Snorri’s quotations, however, serve to give the sources for these *heiti*; a likely reason for this is that Snorri had one or more stanzas in mind, but was not sure whether the *heiti* used referred to Njǫrðr, Freyr or even Freyja.

The most explicit passage in Snorri’s *Edda* dealing with the Vanir is also found in *Skáldskaparmál* (G57):

Þat vǫru uphøf til þess, at goðin høfðu ósætt við þatt fólk, er vanir heita, en þeir lögðu með sér friðstefnu ok settu grið á þá lund, at þeir gengu hváirtveggju til eins kers ok spýttu í hráka sínum.

This was the beginning of it, that the gods had a disagreement with the people called *vanir*, and they arranged a peace-meeting among them and made a truce between them

in that way that they both went to a kettle and spat their saliva into it.

Then he tells the story about the mead of poetry, which is made out of this divine saliva. The two lines tell us little about the Vanir, but it is at least obvious that Snorri here has used the term *vanir* as found in *Völuspá* 24, which mentions a war among the

Table 2. The Vanir and related names and terms in ON

Term	Source	Context	Meaning
Vanir	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 4	Óðinn fór með her á hendur Vönum	
Vanir	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 4	Fengu Vanir sína ina ágæztu menn	Njörðr, Freyr
Vanir	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 4	Þá grunaði Vanir	
Vanir	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 4	Þá er Njörðr var með Vönum	different mythological group
Vanir	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 20	þat folk er vanir heitir	
Vanakvísl	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 1	Tanakvísl eða Vanakvísl	river Tanais
Vanakvísl	<i>Sörla þáttur (Flateyjarbók)</i>	Fyrir austan Vanakvísl í Asía	river Tanais
Vanaland	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 1	Vanaland eða Vanaheimr	
Vanaheimr	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 1	Vanaland eða Vanaheimr	
Vanaheimr	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 4	En er Hœnir kom í Vanaheim	
Vanaheimr	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 12	út í Vanaheimi	
Vana	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 12	konu þá, er Vana hét, út í Vanaheimi	mother of Vanlandi
Vanlande	Ari: <i>Íslendingabók</i>	vi. Vanlandi	son of Sveigðir
Vallandi	<i>Langfeðgatal Nóregs konunga (AM 415, 4to)</i>	Fiolnir, Vallande, Visbvr	son of Fjölur (by mistake instead of Sveigðir ?)
Vanlandi	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 12	Var þeira sonr Vanlandi	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Vanlandi	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 13	Vanlandi hét sonr Sveigðis	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Vanlandi	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 13	hon skuldi síða Vanlanda til Finnlands	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Vanlandi	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 13	var Vanlandi at Uppsölum	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Vanlandi	Snorri: <i>Ynglingasaga</i> 14	Vísburrr tók arf eptir Vanlanda	son of Sveigðir and Vana
Wanlande	<i>Historia Norvegiae</i>	Iste genuit Wanlanda	son of Swegthir
Vanangi	<i>Skírnismál</i> 37	myndac aldregi unna vaningia vel	Freyr
Vanangi	<i>Þulur</i>	þröndr, vaningi	pig; boar
Vanadís	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 20	Vanagoð, Vanadís	Freyja
Vanagoð	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 20	Vanagoð, Vanadís	Freyja
Vanagoð	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 6	kalla hann Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Njörðr
Vanagoð	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 7	Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Freyr
Vananið	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 6	kalla hann Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Njörðr
Vananið	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 7	Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Freyr
Vanr	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 6	kalla hann Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Njörðr
Vanr	Snorri: <i>Skáldskaparmál</i> 7	Vanaguð eða Vananið eða Van	Freyr

gods, as a name rather than a collective noun for gods (which it seems to be in *Völuspá* 24).

It is only in his *Ynglinga saga*, and there only in chapter 4, that the Vanir are ever mentioned outside *Skáldskaparmál* as a people (again, as in *Skáldskaparmál*, called *folk*, ‘people’, not so much a family). And although it seems from chapter 1 of *Ynglinga saga* as if Snorri could refer back to a knowledge of the Vanir, this may only be a learned trick to connect Vanlandi, via Vanakvisl (= Tanais, the river Don), with a supposed people of Vanir. This section of the text belongs totally to the “learned prehistory” of Scandinavia that Snorri offers, and has to be seen against the background of these learned histories in the Middle Ages.

Vanaheimr and the Learned Pre-History of Scandinavia

The whole story given by Snorri in *Ynglinga saga* 4 is part of his version of the learned prehistory of Scandinavia. This medieval construction in general, with its aim to connect one’s own history with that of the people of Troy is, apart from the Romans, mainly known among the Franks and the British.¹⁴ The Scandinavian tradition in particular,¹⁵ which attempts to link the lineage of the Scandinavian kings both to Troy and to the heathen Gods – in their function as the traditional ancestors of Germanic tribes – has been studied repeatedly, both in the versions presented by Snorri and in other ON texts, of which Andreas Heusler in his still fundamental study from 1908 has listed thirteen.¹⁶ Despite Heusler’s damning verdict of Snorri’s most complete and elegant version of the learned prehistory of the Northern Peoples as an ostentatious learned concoction, it is still the basis of all investigation into the learned concepts of high Medieval Scandinavians about their own origins. The passages relevant to the Vanir and *their* origins or homeland given by Snorri are the following:

1. Kapítuli

[...] Ór norðri frá fjöllum þeim, er fyrir útan eru byggð alla, fellr á um Svíþjóð, sú er at réttu heitir Tanais. Hon var forðum kǫlluð Tanakvísil eða Vanakvísil. Hon kǫmr til sjávar inn í Svartahaf. Í Vanakvísilum var þá kallat Vanaland eða Vanaheimr. Sú á skilr heimsþriðjungana. Heitir fyrir austan Ásía, en fyrir vestan Európa.

2. Kapítuli

Fyrir austan Tanakvísil í Ásía var kallat Ásaland eða Ásaheimr, en höfuðborgin, er var í landinu, kǫlluðu þeir Ásgarð. [...]

4. Kapítuli

Óðinn fór með her á hendur Vǫnum, en þeir urðu vel við ok vǫrðu land sitt, ok höfðu ýmsir sigr. Herjuðu hvárir land annarra ok gerðu skaða. En er þat leiddisk hvárumtveggjum, lögðu þeir milli sín sættarstefnu ok gerðu frið ok seldusk gíslar. Fengu Vanir sína ina ágæztu menn, Njǫrð inn auðga ok son hans, Frey, en Æsir þar í mót þann, er Hoenir hét, ok kolluðu hann allvel til höfðingja fallinn. Hann var mikill maðr ok inn vænsti. Með honum sendu Æsir þann, er Mímir hét, inn vitrasti maðr, en Vanir fengu þar í mót þann, er spakastr var í þeira flokki. Sá hét Kvasir. En er Hoenir kom í Vanaheim, þa var hann þegar höfðingi gǫrr. Mímir kenndi honum ráð ǫll. En er Hoenir var staddr á þingum eða stefnum, svá at Mímir var eigi nær, ok koemi nokkur vandamál fyrir hann, þa svaraði hann æ inu sama: “ráði aðrir,” kvað hann. Þá grunaði Vani, at Æsir myndi hafa falsat þa í mannaskiptinu. Þá tóku þeir Mími ok hálshjoggu ok sendu höfuðit Ásum. Óðinn tók höfuðit ok smurði urtum þeim, er eigi mátti fúna, ok kvað þar yfir galdra ok magnaði svá, at þat mælti við hann ok sagði honum marga leynda hluti. Njǫrð ok Frey setti Óðinn blótgoða, ok vǫru þeir díar með Ásum. Dóttir Njarðar var Freyja. Hon var blótgyðja. Hon kenndi fyrst með Ásum seið, sem Vǫnum var títt. Þa er Njǫrðr var með Vǫnum, þa hafði hann átta systur sína, því at þat vǫru þar lög. Vǫru þeira börn Freyr ok Freyja. En þat var bannat með Ásum at byggva svá náit at frændsemi.¹⁷

Chapter 1

[...] Out of the north from the mountains which lie beyond all the inhabited lands, there is a river which runs through Greater Sweden which by its proper name is called Tanais. But before, it was called Tanakvisl or Vanakvisl. It flows into the Black Sea. The land on the Vanakvisl was called Vanaland or Vanaheim. This river divides the continents: to the East, it is called Asia, but to the west, Europe.

Chapter 2

East of the Tanakvisl the land was called Asaland or Asaheim, but they called the capital city of this land Asgard. [...]

Chapter 4

Odin attacked the Vanir with an army, but they resisted him well and defended their country, and they both achieved victories. They harried each other's land and caused damage. When they both became tired of this they arranged a peace meeting, made peace and exchanged hostages. The Vanir took their most outstanding men, Njörd the Rich and his son Freyr, but the Aesir gave in exchange the one called Hoenir, whom they called well suited to be a chieftain, a big man and very handsome. With him the Aesir sent Mimir, the wisest of men, and in exchange the Vanir gave the wisest one of their group who was called Kvasir. But when Hoenir got to the Vanir, he was immediately made a chieftain, and Mimir gave him all advice. But when Hoenir was at a Thing or a meeting where Mimir was not near, and a difficult decision came up before him, he always answered the same: "Let others advise", he said. The Vanir then suspected that the Aesir had cheated them in the exchange of men. Then they took Mimir, decapitated him and sent the head to the Aesir. Odin took the head and anointed it with herbs to prevent it from decomposing, and spoke magic charms over it and possessed it with magic so that it could talk to him and it told him many hidden things. Odin made Njörd and Freyr temple priests and they were gods/priests among the Aesir. The daughter of Njörd was Freyja, she was a priestess. She first made magic (*seiðr*) known among the Aesir which the Vanir

were used to. When Njörd had been with the Vanir, he had married his own sister, for this was lawful among them. Their children were Freyr and Freyja. But among the Aesir it was forbidden to marry so near with one's family.

A census of the other numerous sources for the learned prehistory of Scandinavia in ON sources reveals that the Vanir are not part of the tradition, but are peculiar to Snorri's version.¹⁸ It has been also noted before that Snorri follows a known type of medieval etymology, in which paronymasy can replace a genuine etymological relationship.¹⁹ He was thus able to establish the typically medieval etymology of *Tana-is* [= Don] > *Tana-kvisl* > *Vana-kvisl*. In the *Vana-kvisl* (the river-arms or Delta of the Don) there is *Vanaland* (borrowed from the genealogical, but misleading name *Vanlandi*), which may also be called *Vanaheimr*, says Snorri.

If we were to make the mistake of investigating the historical background for this fictitious construction – as was (albeit reluctantly) discussed by Heusler in 1909,²⁰ as well as, quite recently and without any scholarly restraints, by Thor Heyerdal and his Swedish co-writer,²¹ we might arrive at the Hungarians as the inhabitants of Vanakvisl. This is, at least, where Regino of Prüm, the careful chronicler of the 9th century, sees the origins of the Ungari, who from the middle of the 9th century onward started to become a threat to the Carolingian empire (and thus a competition for the Vikings as main threat to the empire).²² He very exactly locates their origins in the boggy delta of the Don (*a paludibus, quas Thanais sua refusione in immensum orrigit*), which makes them identical with the *Maeotides paludes* ['Maeotian bogs'] of medieval Latin tradition. But shortly afterwards in the same section, Regino also names the Tanais as the eastern limit of Germanic habitation. Thus, Snorri's Vanir would, like Regino's Ungari or Adam's Alani (see below), be the closest neighbours of the Scandinavians in the direction of Asia.

Such a historical-geographic location was, however, not the main aim of Snorri's writing alone, but rather the homogenisation of all names and terms connected with *van-*: Vanlandi, which predates Snorri, and the *vanir* as a collective term for deities, were brought together by two main philological constructions:

- a) The etymology of *Vana-heimr* (> *Vanlandi*) and *Vana-kvisl* (> *Tana-kvisl* > *Tana-is* = Don) to give the cryptic term *vanir*, 'deities', a geographical setting, making them into the *Van-ir*, 'Don-people'
- b) The genealogy concocted around Sveigðir (grandson of Yngvi-Freyr) and his wife Vana ['Don-woman'] of Vanaheimr as parents of Vanlandi.

Apart from Vanlandi as great-grandson of Yngvi-Freyr and the term *vanir*, 'deities', all of this is, in my opinion, Snorri's invention, although the traditional dating of *Vafþrúðnismál* makes it possible that the name Vanaheimr was also known to Snorri. What Snorri had as the basis for the part of the *vanir* in his exposition of the learned prehistory of Scandinavia is easy to reconstruct: the (personal) name Vanlandi in *Ynglingatal* may have served as the trigger, but the medieval etymology of the ON *Vanakvisl* = ON *Tanakvisl*, 'delta of the Tanais', from Latin *T(h)anais*, 'Don', gave Snorri the possibility to construct *Vanaheimr* as the home of the Vanir. The name Vanaheimr could possibly have already been in existence (and known to Snorri), having been constructed by the author of *Vafþrúðnismál* (at the latest) as the home of *regin* and *vanir* (here both used as general collective terms for 'gods'), and could thus serve as the home of a people ('folk') called *vanir*. It is worth noting that Snorri never uses the word 'family' in connection with the gods, but only once calls them *flokk*, 'group', in the text quoted, and otherwise seems to see them as a people in a distinct country

(Vanaland or Vanheim, set up by him to match Asaland and Asaheim).

The remaining elements of Snorri's concept of the Vanir may be divided into three different parts:

- 1) As Heusler pointed out, the Latin story in Gregory's *Gesta Francorum* (II, 7) about a war between the Franks and the Alans (who lived, according to early medieval historiography,²³ exactly where Snorri placed the Vanir, namely near the mouth of the Don in the Maeotidan Swamps) may have served as a model for the war between the Æsir and the Vanir. The use of the rare term *vanir* in stanza 24 of *Völuspá*, which deals with a cryptic war the Æsir had to fight, helped him to identify the Alans with these *vanir* and thus make them into the Vanir.

- 2) If we follow Snorri's hypothesis of where the Vanir lived, namely in the northeastern corner of Europe, it follows – as every medieval Scandinavian would know – they were close to Finns and Sami, whose outstanding skill was in magic. If Snorri thus claims that the Vanir brought *seiðr* into the world, he is but using the geographical connection which he himself had created.

- 3) To identify the members of the Vanir family, Snorri could, for all we know, only use a single kenning, namely *vana brúðr* for Freyja in Einars *Øxnarflokk* 5. The other *kenningar* he lists for Freyja, Freyr and Njörðr, namely *Vanaguð*, *Vanadís*, and *Vananið*, are not recorded in any skaldic poetry still preserved. However, we need not assume that he made them all up himself: the fact that he ascribes them, in different sections of *Skáldskaparmál*, to any of the three gods, shows that he was uncertain about the exact meaning of the *kenningar*. The known relationship between the three gods, namely of Njörðr as father of Freyr and Freyja, allowed him

to make these three the protagonists of a group of gods (*vanir*), who lived in the Northeast (Vanaheimr) and practised *seiðr*. All other elements in his stories about the so-called Vanir family of gods can be explained by this origin.

The Vanir as Snorri's Creation.

The necessities of the learned prehistory as expanded by Snorri for the Scandinavians as well as the laws (and possibilities) of medieval etymology allowed Snorri to develop a family of gods from quite meagre sources: the collective noun *vanir* became, with the help of the names Vanlandi und Vanaheimr, a tribe placed within the mythological prehistory of Scandinavia, which gained its standing as equal to the *Æsir* (with their home in Asgarðr/Ásíaaland) through these (supposed) place names.

The kenning *vana brúðr* for Freyja alone allowed him to create the members of this family: if Freyja was *Vana brúðr* – a fact which, if the Vanir were placed in the Northeast, could be supported by her supposed knowledge of *seiðr* – so Freyr and Njörðr must belong to them as well. The relationship between Njörðr, Freyr and Freyja as well as the tradition about their incestuous marriages is most likely much older than Snorri's invention of the family of the Vanir. The fact that Freyr is called *vaningi* (whatever that really means) in *Skírnismál* may have helped Snorri's identification of the Vanir along the way, but this presupposes that

Skírnismál is older than Snorri's Edda, which is by no means certain.

Whatever Snorri's reason may have been apart from to create a second tribe parallel to the mythological-historical tribe of the *Æsir*, his literary invention was a success. Although in the Middle Ages his creation was not taken up by other authors as far as we know, modern scholarship has accepted the name Vanir for Njörðr's family with such dedication that I cannot find any criticism of this identification before Lotte Motz pointed out the obvious faults in Snorri's assumptions. However, I believe that these are not Snorri's mistakes that we are dealing with here, but rather his deliberate creation. As a literary name in medieval ON literature, we shall have to live with the Vanir, because Snorri has made them immortal. As an element of heathen Scandinavian religion however, we should accept the *vanir* as a rare collective term, but bury the Vanir as a family of gods. No Viking Age heathen Scandinavian, apart from a handful of skalds interested in arcane terminology, would have known what is meant by *vanir*, and even these would not have known which gods to ascribe to a group of them called Vanir. Whatever the connecting link between the important gods Njörðr, Freyr and Freyja was, it was not the name Vanir. The Vanir were not alive in heathen days, and as a figment of imagination from the 13th to the 20th centuries, it is high time to bury them now: May they rest in peace.

Notes

1. Marold, Edith: 'Die Skaldendichtung als Quelle der Religionsgeschichte', *Germanische Religionsgeschichte. Quellen und Quellenprobleme*. Ed. Heinrich Beck, Detlev Ellmers and Kurt Schier), Berlin, New York 1992, 685–719 (= Ergänzungsbände zum RGA. Bd. 5).
2. Vg 63; Wolfgang Krause: *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark*. Mit Beiträgen v. Herbert Jankuhn. I. Text; II. Tafeln. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philolog.-Histor. Klasse, 3. Folge, Nr. 65). Göttingen 1966, Nr. 67; Klaus Düwel: *Runenkunde*. 3rd ed., Stuttgart / Weimar 2001, 42.
3. Vg 119; Düwel, *Runenkunde*, 42.
4. Cf. Marold, 'Skaldendichtung', 714–717.
5. Cf. Jan de Vries: *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* Vol. 2, 3rd ed. Berlin 1970, 2f; cf. Marold, 'Skaldendichtung', 705.
6. Marold, 'Skaldendichtung', 705.
7. Marold, 'Skaldendichtung'; Folke Ström: 'Poetry as an instrument of propaganda', *Speculum Norroenum*. Odense 1981, 440–458.
8. Throughout this article, I shall distinguish the term *vanir* 'gods' and the name Vanir for Snorri's "separate group or tribe of gods from the *Æsir*".
9. It should be noted that a study of the *alfar* in the context of *æsir* and *vanir* is still missing – but this is not the place to go into the role of the *alfar* as well.
10. See also the guarded remarks in Klaus von See et. al.: *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Vol. 2, Heidelberg

1997, 96f., where this is simply seen as a literary alliterative formula of no religious consequence.

11. Lotte Motz: *The King, The Champion and The Sorcerer*. Vienna 1996 (= SMS 1), 103–124.
12. Motz, *The King*, 123f.
13. Anthony Faulkes (ed.): *Snorri Sturluson. Edda. Skáldskaparmá* London 1998, 1, 18, gives the mss readings *vagna* (*vanga* W), but in view of the repetition under Freyr's name only a few lines down, this seems to be a scribal error only.
14. The rich literature on this subject cannot be listed in the space of a short article, but for further reading, see: František Graus: 'Troja und trojanische Herkunftssage im Mittelalter', *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter. Veröffentlichung der Kongreßakten zum Freiburger Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Willi Erzgräber, Sigmaringen 1989, 25–43; Michael Borgolte: 'Europas Geschichten und Troia. Der Mythos im Mittelalter', *Die deutsche Trojaliteratur des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. Materialien und Untersuchungen*, ed. Horst Brunner, Wiesbaden 1990 (Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter. Schriften des Sonderforschungsbereichs 226 Würzburg Eichstätt 3), 190–203; Hartmut Kugler: 'Das Eigene aus der Fremde. Über Herkunftssagen der Franken, Sachsen und Bayern', *Interregionalität der deutschen Literatur im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Hartmut Kugler, Berlin / New York 1995, 175–193; and, most recently, Beate Keller: *Ursprung und Kontinuität. Studien zum genealogischen Wissen im Mittelalter*. München 2004. Most of these works, however, do not even mention the interesting Scandinavian variation of the theme, which links Trojan descendancy with heathen divine genealogies.
15. Andreas Heusler: *Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im altisländischen Schrifttum*. Berlin 1908, 6–12.
16. Heusler, *Gelehrte Urgeschichte*, 13–27.
17. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson: *Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 1*, Reykjavík 1941 (= Íslenzk Fornrit 26), 10–13.
18. Heinz Klingenberg: 'Trór Thórr (Thor) wie Trös Aeneas. Snorra Edda Prolog, Vergil Rezeption und Altisländische Gelehrte Urgeschichte'. *Alvíssmál* 1 (1992), 17–54 [= Klingenberg, part 1]; Heinz Klingenberg: 'Odin und die Seinen. Altisländischer Gelehrter Urgeschichte anderer Teil'. *Alvíssmál* 2 (1993), 31–80 [= Klingenberg, part 2]; Heinz Klingenberg: 'Odins Wanderzug nach Schweden. Altisländische Gelehrte Urgeschichte und mittelalterliche Geographie', *Alvíssmál* 3 (1994), 19–42 [= Klingenberg, part 3]; Klingenberg [part 3]: § 28: "Gelehrte Wanen-Etymologie – eine Eigenleistung Snorris, soweit ich sehe" (Odins Wanderzug nach Schweden, 33).
19. Klingenberg [part 2]: 'Odin und die Seinen', 48.
20. Heusler, *Gelehrte Urgeschichte*, 96–101.
21. Thor Heyerdal and Per Lillieström: *Jakten på Odin. På sporet av vår fortid*. Oslo 2001.
22. Regino von Prüm: *Chronicon*, s.a. 889.
23. E.g. Adam of Bremen: *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* IV, 20: "[...] paludes Scithicas vel Meoticas, sive deserta Getharum, aut litus Scithicum, quod Martianus ait confertum esse multiplici diversitate barbarorum. Illic, inquit, Gethae, Daci, Sarmatae, Alani, [...]".

Visual Vocabulary, Visual Strategy

Jill Bradley, Radboud University, Nijmegen

Societies and cultures are held together by forms of communication – spoken, written, pictorial and performative – that are used in a group's everyday life, social, commercial, personal and ritual. The form of a cooking pot, the mode of dress and address, a thousand and one aspects of life reflect attitudes and ideas that we rarely think about. More abstract are those areas that deal with group identity, the shared past, shared views, beliefs, aims and objectives, values and norms. These are often embedded in the religion and/or myths of the group – the tradition, the 'history', the sacred. It is in this area that the most basic and essential ideas are expressed and usually given the patina of age – 'the unalterable and fundamental truth'. There is often an assumption that this is unchanging, 'it has always been so', but these

embodiments of values and identities change with circumstances. It not a question of historical basis for these beliefs, or even whether they are truly believed, but it is the reciprocal relationship between society and its myths and metaphors that is of essence. The myths are both the product and reflection of a society, but also shapers of that society: while changing circumstances and new generations shape the metaphors to suit the society in which they live, the myths and metaphors have also contributed to making the society what it is.

It has been frequently remarked that the myths and religions of many societies have the same elements, for example the sacrificed god/king, the slaying of the monster/dragon, the visit to the realm of the dead, to mention just a few. This is hardly surprising since

these are metaphors for good and evil, life and death, renewal, reward and punishment. However, leaving aside the ethical and philosophical discussions on whether such abstractions have a 'real' or absolute character, it is clear that various societies at various times have their own interpretations of what constitutes good and evil, who should be rewarded and who punished, and what their relationship with a divine entity or entities should be. In trying to understand how people of another age felt, what they believed and experienced, it is less the basic elements of the stories than how they are handled and where the emphases lie that tells us something of the mentality of the times.

Traditionally written sources have been used in historical research and are still regarded by many as the most reliable – indeed the common usage of 'history' and 'prehistory' is based on the availability of written sources. Archeology, aided by the resources of modern physical and chemical research, has reached a degree of acceptance, but visual and oral sources are still regarded by many as suspect and unreliable, far too dependent on interpretation and mutability. In fact it is this that can make a very valuable contribution to our understanding of the past. It is often forgotten that written sources change – we have only to look at the various versions we have of an enormous number of texts, including that most essential work for medievalists, the Bible. It is true that oral and visual sources can make more overt use of emotive aspects, but written sources are equally, if not more, open to manipulation: for any source we need to bear in mind the purpose for and circumstances under which it came into being, for whom it was intended and who brought it about.

My own concern is the use of visual sources while not denying the value of other sources, for certainly in trying to understand the medieval mentalities – and I use the plural emphatically – we need every source we can find, especially if we are trying to understand general ideas and not an elite culture. Visual

sources have been either the province of the art historian or used, sometimes inaccurately, to 'illustrate' a point made in written sources, or simply inserted to make a book more attractive. Historians have warned that images cannot be regarded as reliable reflections of the past because they often have symbolic content. This is to deny their intrinsic value as conveyers of ideas: it is precisely this aspect that has so much value. It has often been said that there is no such thing as 'medieval art', and rightly, if by this we mean 'art' in the modern romantic sense as the expression of individual ideas and emotions and as something highly personal. Medieval paintings, carvings, miniatures and sculptures are not the result of a 'genius' giving form to his innermost thoughts and feelings, but rather they are the expressions of communal ideas, thoughts and experience. How far into society such ideas reached and were accepted varies, and we can see different treatments of a subject for different publics. Likewise, the same subject can be treated differently according to the effect that the makers wanted to have on a particular group.

— Trying to enter the 'medieval mind' – in itself a gross oversimplification – can never be achieved; we carry with us too much of our own cultural and social baggage. Even if we deliberately set aside, as far as possible, our own methods of thought, our own values and ideals, and indeed our own hubris in trying to think we can recreate the mind of another, we are still driven in our research questions by the preoccupations of our own times. Our concern for the quotidian past is a reflection of the interests of today, as is the attention given to gender, marginality and mentality. This is not to say that these are just academic fashions, but more that each generation of researchers into the past spotlights a different aspect, approaches the past in a different way and, perhaps through these approaches and aspects and their historiography, we can hope to gain a little more insight. We cannot hope to experience what someone from a thousand or so years ago experienced, nor even to see

what, and certainly not how, he saw. However, we can try to understand a little of what he thought, or what he was intended to think, and in this images can give us valuable clues. Images, however, are more than simply representations: they are the conveyers of ideas. They have their own vocabulary and validity that is frequently complementary to texts, sometimes confirming or contradicting them, but independent of them. Nor is the vocabulary static or absolute, but varying with society and changing through time. Just like words, images are used to broadcast a message and must take into account the visual vocabulary of the intended audience.

There are several reasons for using images as an historical source: the first of these is that depictions almost always give an accepted view. Written sources, especially those of an educated elite, can give a limited or personal viewpoint or deal with matters that were felt unsuitable for, or not the concern of, the more general public. Illuminations were seen by the literate, but not necessarily very learned, while the paintings and statues in churches, or at least some of these, were seen by the public at large. It could be argued that such 'public' works represent what the Church, or other patron, wanted to be seen (and believed), but such things are some of the few sources for popular piety and belief. A great deal can be learned about popular belief and custom by such things as statues of saints, frescos, reliefs, pilgrims' badges and other religious souvenirs, and these indicate an acceptance of what the Church taught. While it is true that much had been suppressed, I think we can get an idea of belief, popular and elite, from a careful and close examination of the various visual sources available to us.

A second important advantage of visual sources is they can reveal attitudes, ideas and customs that were taken for granted and receive little or no mention in learned written sources, just as today looking at advertisements, posters, and government issued pamphlets can reveal a great deal about society and its attitudes. If, as I believe, in the

Middle Ages visual means were aimed at making Bible stories, hagiography and doctrine real and immediate, they had to reflect not only the ideas that the Church wished to propagate but also to make those ideas comprehensible by giving them a form that could be recognised. In many cases this involved building on an existing visual vocabulary, but by giving visual and concrete form to ideas and stories they acquired a reality and a consequent validity. People saw with their own eyes the personages of sermons and tales; they also saw the horrors of hell and the wonders of heaven. To see such things, to identify with the figures shown, was a powerful factor in belief. Abstractions were translated into concrete forms and in the process of translation the idiom of the time had to be used. The depictions of not only demons and devils but also of Jews, demonstrates that the idea of physical deformity was thought to reflect inner defects and can also give us an idea of how the physically deformed were regarded. In visual representations not only do particular attributes define the role of a figure, but also the situation depicted, the angle of a head, a gesture and the arrangement of the composition all add to a particular expression of attitude and the relationships as they were perceived.

If we regard medieval painting and sculpture as a form of semiotics, we have to acknowledge that the normal relationship between sender, message and receiver is asymmetrical. Usually little is known of the immediate sender and often even less of the receiver, the message itself is frequently altered, damaged, incomplete or out of context, while the connection between signifier and signified might have been lost or obscured over time. Context is of vital importance, both the wider context of the political, social, economic, religious and intellectual worlds in which an image was made, but also the more immediate context of an iconographic programme and the way in which it is placed. In the Beau Dieu portal of

Notre Dame d'Amiens, we see there are three depictions of Christ, one above the other, each giving a different aspect. The closest to the church-goer, both physically and psychologically, is Christ the teacher, with Christ the sacrifice coming to judge above, and finally Christ pronouncing sentence on mankind. The divinity and the masculinity of each image increases with distance, from the human aspect of God as a caring and loving teacher, to the sacrifice both human and divine, to the all-divine Judge. The skill in placing the images, from identification to the divinely incomprehensible power tells us much about the message the Church was trying to put across here – a message that would be enormously impaired if we regard the three images in isolation. This is something that is frequently forgotten today when we have excellent close-up photographs, spotlighting and reproductions. What was the total effect? How much could the man or woman hundreds of years ago have seen? What was close and what was distant? What was invisible, but known to be there? Only when we consider these questions can we begin to try to understand what was being said, and in what terms.

Using images as historical sources means letting go of ideas of aesthetic value and looking at them as means of communication, of propaganda even. We need to consider who was responsible for the array of images, in what circumstances they were made and who was the intended audience. The simplicity or complexity of a message was often dependent on for whom it was intended. There was no point in trying to convince the illiterate and/or poorly educated with images that referred to concepts of which they had no knowledge; if they could not recognise the elements of the visual vocabulary then the message was wasted. Obviously people gradually became aware of new elements and in this way images can also show how ideas spread and were accepted, how they were adapted for a particular public and how they changed when the metaphor was no longer appropriate.

When the metaphor changes, then a change of ideas is signalled. It is again only when we consider a wide range of works that we can see these aspects. Individual works can be idiosyncratic, not reflecting a generally held idea – the more often we come across an idea expressed in a particular way, the more we can glimpse what people thought and how those thoughts took expression. If we consider the crucifixions of the Sacramentary of Gellone and the Eisenheim altarpiece we can see there is an enormous difference in the way the same subject is handled: one shows a very masculine, triumphant and living Christ, the other the twisted, tortured dead body and the grief of the bystanders; in one the viewer is invited to share the triumph of God, in the other he is asked to share Christ's suffering. However it is only when we consider other works of the same period – and the intervening periods – and see whether these differences are found in them and how they grow and develop, that we can say the relationship between the Christian and Christ has altered. In looking for clues we need to acknowledge the strange, the odd, those things that do not make (immediate) sense to the twenty-first century mind, search for what meaning they had for the people for whom and by whom they were made, and to consider the enormous body of apocryphal, pseudographical, hagiographical works and exempla, now known only to scholars but which in former times were the stuff of tales, legends and sermons. This is reciprocal: not only can these texts sometimes explain the images, but the images show how people visualised these things, what they found important in the stories – and this can vary from place to place and period to period. In a time when literacy rates were generally low, and for a period for which we have so few sources for popular culture and beliefs, images are an invaluable source as indicators of what people were deemed to know and believe.

These ideas are dealt with in more detail in the monograph *You Shall Surely Not Die. The*

Concepts of Sin and Death as Expressed in the Manuscript Art of Northwestern Europe, c.800–1200 (Brill, Boston and Leiden, 2008, ISBN 978 90 04 16910 4). For those who want a shorter example of the use of visual sources there is “Fraternal Rivalry and Moral Patronage” (in *De Amicitia. Friendship and Social Networks in the Antiquity and the*

Middle Ages, Katariina Mustakallio and Christian Krotzl (eds), *Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae*, vol. 36, Rome 2010 pp. 195–214), and a briefer discussion of the accessibility of works to a medieval audience can be found in “The Eye of the Beholder. Religious Art and its Medieval Audience” (*Desipientia* 14 [November 2007]: 28–33).

Listening to Poetry in a Dead Language: Could *dróttkvætt* Have Been Trochaic?

Frog, University of Helsinki

The title of this contribution will probably be provocative to many of my contemporaries, raising a question which seems to have been largely forgotten. The intuitive and automatic negative response which the question probably provokes is symptomatic of what we *think* we know about a performance tradition in a dead language – a tradition which we can only access through the silence of texts embodied in manuscripts. This is a problem characteristic of the degree to which the documented verbal facade of extant Old Norse poetry dominates our field of vision, veiling the fact that these poetries were orally performed, and we must look beyond the individual verbal elements that we parse and interpret if we hope to hear these poetries even as they may have been heard. My purpose here is not to answer the (probably irresolvable) question posed in the title, but rather to approach it from a new perspective. My strategy is a simple one: to approach *dróttkvætt* with an analogical comparison to Finnic (or Balto-Finnic) tetrameters recorded predominantly in the 19th and 20th centuries, then to briefly frame that comparison in the evolution of Old Norse poetics. Finally I will return momentarily to the Finnic analogy and the possibility that the quantity-based distribution of stressed syllables could have been an areal feature. This overview is both swift and brief owing to limitations of space, passing over many issues which merit detailed discussion.

Sources for early Germanic poetry – and skaldic poetry in particular – offer little or no indication for their voicing and exactly how metrical stress interacted with lexical stress and phrasal stress (cf. Gade 1994), thus we naturally approach them through the poetries and poetics of modern languages with which we are familiar. Jaan Ross and Ilse Lehiste (2001) found that modern native speakers of Finnish and Estonian approached traditional vernacular oral poetry according to this principle: they invariably asserted lexical stress as metrical stress. However, in this case the readings can be compared to documentations of performance in 19th and 20th century oral cultures from which they were collected. These reveal that the poetry was sung according to a consistent trochaic rhythm, with rules governing the placement of stressed syllables within a trochee according to their quantity, long syllables occurring on the (metrically stressed) lift and short syllables on the (metrically unstressed) fall, with a flexible opening position. Thus in example (1), lexical stress corresponds to metrical stress because the first metrical position is not governed by quantity constraints and the stressed syllables of *vanha Väinämöinen* are long, whereas in example (2) lexical stress contrasts with metrical stress because the stressed syllables of *iän ikuinen* are short, although the ‘sense’ of lexical stress clearly remained relevant for the accomplishment of alliteration (metrically stressed positions underlined):

(1) 'Va-ka 'van-ha 'Väi-nä-möi-nen,
'Steady old Väinämöinen'

(2) 'Tie-tä-jä 'i-än 'i-kui-nen
'Sage, of age eternal'

Ross and Lehiste (2001: 116) suggest that, “[i]f we did not have authentic sung folksongs in the Kalevala metre, we might not be able to reconstruct the position of metrical stress.” This suggestion should give us pause when considering poetries in dead languages: the range of assumptions which we import into a reading of a written text may not accord with the sensitivities of the original poets and their audiences, and although Modern Icelandic, for example, is very close to Old Norse, a quantity shift in the language eventually nullified differentiations of quantity in stressed syllables essential to *dróttkvætt* and related meters (Kristján Árnason 1991: 171–172). In other words, it was based on a sensitivity foreign to the later language, and as such is difficult or unlikely to be ‘heard’ by a later speaker – outside of the analysis of unvoiced written forms or as an intellectual exercise.

The identification of lexical stress with metrical stress provided the foundation for Sievers’ (1893) scansion of Germanic four-footed meters (such as the Old Norse eddic meter *fornyrðislag*). Sievers’ typologies have drawn increasing criticism across recent years, and the relevance of his analysis of Germanic tetrameters to *dróttkvætt*, with its six-syllable lines, is highly questionable. Kristján Árnason has drawn attention to evidence of ‘cohesion’ in *dróttkvætt* and other skaldic meters but not found in eddic meters. ‘Cohesion’ describes the phenomenon by which adjacent syllables of separate words could effectively share phonemes, allowing a light syllable to function as a heavy syllable by assimilating the onset of the following word. Cohesion could only be realized in the articulation of performance and is indicative of a different manner of voicing and articulating *dróttkvætt* poetry. (Kristján

Árnason 1991: 169–172.) It implies a fluid continuity in articulating syllables in performance, according to which transitions between syllables of adjacent words were not articulated more clearly than transitions between syllables within a single word, much as Matti Sadeniemi observed that the rhythmic-melodic performance template, according to which the Finnic trochaic tetrameter was conditioned and performed, leveled the stress patterns of spoken language and the relative significance of syllables within a line:

[...] for a listener who does not know the language, it is impossible to observe the difference between the line-types *vaka vanha Väinämöinen* and *tietäjä iänikuinen*; both are sung with the same ictus positions. However, it is precisely the use of alliteration which indicates that the root words play an important role in the formulation of the sung line. (Sadeniemi 1951: 95.)

Like *dróttkvætt*, this is essentially syllabic verse, and Sadeniemi’s observation should be recognized as a warning against the overhasty assumption that the lexical or sentence stress of spoken language will correlate with the distribution of stressed positions in performance, and especially the assumption that e.g. alliterating syllables *necessarily* receive metrical stress in performance. It should also be pointed out that the rhythmic-melodic template holds centrality in the Finnic alliterative tetrameters, and the primacy of that template in performance results in a regular statistical deviation from the ideal, rule-governed distribution of the quantity of stressed syllables in relation to metrical position, even in the most conservative regions and among the most skilled poets – e.g. the famed 19th century Arhippa Perttunen exhibits deviation in ca. 2.7% of the thousands of lines of verse recorded from him (Sadeniemi 1951). The Finnic traditions were also widely recorded, revealing that conventions are localized and

exhibit clear regional patterns rather than being unified. The meter is most rigorously syllabic in the northern regions of Karelia (close to the White Sea), with flexibility constrained to the opening metrical position of the line, and, passing through regions to the south, the number of positions exhibiting flexibility in the number of syllables increases, penetrating from the second trochee even into the third in Estonian *regivärss*, and reaching a degree of flexibility among the Setu that leaves its relationship to northern forms of the common meter difficult to recognize. (Frog & Stepanova in press.) However the conventional degrees of flexibility and ranges of variation are explained, the essential tetrametric rhythmic template, with four metrical feet to a line, nonetheless remains recognizable across these singing traditions.

Dróttkvætt is not a tetrameter; most probably it was a triameter, with three metrical feet to a line. A line is comprised of six syllables, and following Kristján Árnason's (1991) analysis, it can be described as consisting of three (quantitatively) 'strong' and three 'weak' positions. Each of these is characteristically filled by a heavy or a light syllable, respectively, with certain rule-governed ranges of variation (e.g. 'resolution', which allows two light syllables to function metrically as a heavy syllable in a strong position). Lines are characterized by a heavy penultimate syllable followed by a light syllable, which gives the impression of a trochee. This is consistently preceded by a weak as the fourth position in the line, which resonates with formulae in *dróttkvætt* which I have outlined elsewhere (Frog 2009: 233–236). The majority of *dróttkvætt* lines can be described according to the following types (S=strong position, W=weak position):

(3) 1 2 3 4 5 6
S W S W S W

(4) 1 2 3 4 5 6
S S W W S W

The most common type is presented in (3) and seems to have a naturally trochaic trimetric rhythm, whereas the strengths of the second and third positions are inverted in (4), making a trimetric reading problematic. A third, infrequent line type is:

(5) 1 2 3 4 5 6
W S S W S W

Lines of this type give the impression of being trimetric, but consisting of an iamb followed by two trochees. Tomas Riad (2009) has argued that a characteristic of Germanic poetry is flexibility in where stress falls within a metrical foot. This would justify the inversion of a trochee to an iamb in an otherwise regular tetrametric meter if such a rule were relevant to *dróttkvætt*. However, this explanation is not satisfying for (4) in which an identification of a lexically strong position with metrical stress presents an opening foot of one syllable followed by a dactyl and a trochee – which might not seem significant in light of other early Germanic stress-based meters were it not for the fact that the six-position structure is consistently maintained as essentially syllabic. The maintenance of the six-position structure characterizes the rhythm of *dróttkvætt* with very limited flexibility, much as in the Finnic tetrameter, and variation related to, for example, syllabic quantity, appear subordinated to the six-position structure. This implies that lines were composed and performed according to a consistent rhythmic-melodic structure of six-positions (or set thereof), suggesting that the rhythmic-melodic template associated with oral performance could take precedence over the patterning of strong and weak positions in a line. If this were the case, it presents the possibility that not every line should be statistically expected to easily resolve into a distribution of six strong and weak positions, as in the Finnic tetrameter – i.e. a certain degree of metrical irregularity may have been normal rather than evidence of 'corrupt' texts.

The statistical predominance of the alternating pattern of strong and weak positions in (3) implies that this pattern was most well-suited to the rhythmic-melodic template. As in Finnic poetries, the syllabic constraints increase further into the line, insofar as the final three positions are regular, after which the first position in the line appears the least likely to vary. This implies that the first position was weighted with corresponding metrical stress – which would not be surprising in a language with initial stress. The second metrical position appears the most flexible, as the ‘strength’ of this position can be exchanged with either the following position (4) or the one preceding it (5) (cf. Frog 2009: 238–242). If, as in the Finnic tradition, lines of different types could be performed according to common rhythmic-melodic templates similar to (3), it implies that a strong in the initial position of the line allowed a strong immediately following it in rhythmic-melodic position to be metrically unstressed, balanced by a weak in the third, stressed position (4). Similarly, an opening ‘weak’ position would assume (dramatic or rhetorically compelling) exceptional weight, but the redistribution of strong and weak in (5) does not appear explicable according to a simple sequential relationship to the preceding position, but rather to maintaining a balanced distribution of strong and weak positions in the line, as discussed by Kristján Árnason. This balancing of strong and weak positions indicates a sensitivity to the differentiation and deployment of syllabic quantities within the rhythmic-melodic template which also maintained relevance and currency for stress-based eddic meters. However, this does not necessarily mean that a balanced deployment of these positions necessarily corresponded to the stress-patterns of the rhythmic-melodic template – it only indicates their significance to the poetic aesthetic. In other words, the general significance of distributions of strong and weak positions in Germanic poetry may have established this as a centrally valued aesthetic

feature to which poets and audiences remained sensitive even where the mode of performance blurred the boundaries between syllables, making it necessary to integrate it into an (essentially) syllabic *dróttkvætt* meter. This would correspond to the phenomenon discussed by Kristján Árnason (in press) of the continued integration of alliteration into assimilated and emerging meters throughout the history of Icelandic poetics.

This hypothesis is highly speculative. However, a trochaic rhythm emerges quite clearly in the tetrametric *hrynhent* (also exhibiting cohesion) which appears to have been made up in part as an alternative to the (presumably) trimetric *dróttkvætt* (Kristján Árnason 1991: 84–86). Kristján Árnason (1991: 149–150) points out that *hrynhent* exhibits (less frequently) the same inversion of strong and weak in the second and third positions in the line as in (4). If *hrynhent* was performed according to a trochaic rhythmic-melodic template, that template and the sensitivity to balancing strong and weak positions within it would seem to have been anticipated by *dróttkvætt* (whatever other models are proposed for it). Similarly, Kari Gade’s (1995: 244) observation that the poet of *Pétrsdrápa* aspired to a fully trochaic rhythm in *dróttkvætt* “oblivious” to conventions of syllabic quantity may not reflect changes in the rhythmic-melodic templates of performance, but rather a waning significance of or sensitivity to the metricality of syllabic quantity within the meter subordinated to that template. Potential signs of corresponding quantity-based phenomena are also in early *rímur* poetry, implying that it did retain relevance and continued to be integrated into new meters, but the quantity shift in the language nullified the relevant differentiations of quantity (Kristján Árnason 1991: 171–172), following which such rhythms could no longer be maintained.

Comparison with the Finnic tetrameters above have been considered as merely analogical – as informative of the potentialities of a poetic system in the

rhythms of performance. However, it may not be wholly accidental that two adjacent linguistic-cultural groups exhibit trochaic meters with rules governing the quantity-based distribution of stressed syllables, even if the rules themselves are not identical. The long history of cultural contact in the Circum-Baltic is reflected in a broad range of patterns of linguistic interference, such as the isogloss of initial stress, which emerged in the Germanic languages while probably going back to the Finno-Ugric cultural heritage in Finnic languages (Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Wälchli 2001: 638–640), as well as the corresponding aesthetic priority of alliteration in Finnic and Germanic poetics, which does not appear attributable to either a Finno-Ugric or Indo-European heritage (Roper 2009: 90–93; Frog & Stepanova in press). Such isoglosses can potentially be extended to the traditions of short, terse epic narrative strategies resulting in the roughly corresponding length of epics in Norse, Finnic and Slavic traditions – in contrast to Homeric epic, *Beowulf* or *Heliand* (cf. Frog 2010: 235) – as well as evidence of exchange of mythological conceptions and narrative material. Such general patterns of stimulation, interference and exchange appear to be a function of a protracted history of ongoing contact between adjacent cultures and should not be over-simplified to ‘borrowing’. (Frog forthcoming.) Although the scope is very different when considering thousands of years of contact and interaction between cultures, and the types of interference which could underlie these patterns are rarely explored, they might be considered akin to the kind of interference suggested for balancing strong and weak positions in *dróttkvætt* or the integration of alliteration into different meters across the history of Icelandic poetics – because the aesthetics were assessed in relation to other poetry and poetics with which individuals naturally brought them into comparison. In this case, of course, the similarities could be wholly coincidental, but they would fall into the same basket with

parallels in four-footed meters, alliteration, and basic principles of epic presentation. Whether or not this hypothesis can be proven, it raises interesting questions concerning the presuppositions we import into a medieval text, and the rich, dynamic cultural history to which it may belong.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Debbie Potts for her comments in preparing this contribution for publication.

Works Cited

- Frog. 2009. “Speech-Acts in Skaldic Verse: Genre, Formula and Improvisation”. In *Versatility in Versification: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Metrics*. Ed. Tonya Kim Dewey & Frog. Berkeley Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics 74. New York: Peter Lang. Pp. 223–246.
- Frog. 2010. *Baldr and Lemminkäinen: Approaching the Evolution of Mythological Narrative through the Activating Power of Expression; A Case Study in Germanic and Finno-Karelian Cultural Contact and Exchange*. PhD dissertation, London: University College London.
- Frog. Forthcoming. “Circum-Baltic Mythology? – The Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148B)”. In *Baltic Worldview: From Mythology to Folklore*. Ed. Joseph Harris & Emily Lyle. Vilnius.
- Frog & Eila Stepanova. In press. “Alliteration in (Balto-) Fennic Languages”. In *Alliteration and Culture*. Ed. Jonathan Roper. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Gade, Kari Ellen. 1994. “On the Recitation of Old Norse Skaldic Poetry”. *Studien zum Altgermanischen: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*. Ed. Heiko Uecker. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 11. Berlin: de Gruyter. Pp. 126–51.
- Gade, Kari Ellen. 1995. *The Structure of Old Norse dróttkvætt Poetry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kristján Árnason. 1991. *The Rhythms of dróttkvætt and Other Old Icelandic Metres*. Reykjavík: University of Iceland, Institute of Linguistics.
- Kristján Árnason. In press. “Alliteration in Iceland: From the *Edda* to Modern Verse and Pop Lyrics”. In *Alliteration and Culture*. Ed. Jonathan Roper. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Riad, Tomas. 2009. “Accents Left and Right”. In *Versatility in Versification: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Metrics*. Ed. Tonya Kim Dewey & Frog. Berkeley Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics 74. New York: Peter Lang. Pp. 123–146.

Ross, Jaan, & Ilse Lehiste. 2001. *The Temporal Structure of Estonian Runic Songs*. Phonology and Phonetics 1. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Sadeniemi, Matti. 1951. *Die Metrik des Kalevala-Verses*. FF Communications 139. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Sievers, Eduard. 1893. *Altgermanische Metrik*. Halle: Niemeyer.

Old Norse Folklorist Network

Daniel Sävborg, University of Tartu, and Karen Bek-Pedersen, University of Aberdeen

The Purpose of the Network

The network aims to bring together scholars:

- who are interested in using folklore theories and methods in their Old Norse research.
- who want to use the late recorded legends, folktales, poems and other folklore to interpret and illuminate the Old Norse texts and conditions.
- who want to use the Old Norse source material in studies of later-day folklore.
- who want to examine traditions, stories, poems and beliefs in Northern Europe over a long period and take into account both the Old Norse material and later traditions and records.

Background

During the 20th Century Old Norse philology has been strongly textually oriented. This is especially evident in saga scholarship, where the book-prose ideology of “The Icelandic School” made the issue of the origin of individual sagas into an issue of direct influences from other written works. The focus has had methodological advantages by reducing the scope for unwarranted assumptions and speculative reconstruction. But, it has also meant that folkloristic knowledge and methods have been neglected. Scholars have generally failed to take account of the extensive material of later records of folk belief and folklore. An important purpose of the network is to emphasize the relevance of these methods and sources for Old Norse studies and through discussion try to solve the problems inherent in this. In the aim of

solving problems concerned with the use of late sources in Old Norse studies, the purpose of the network partly coincides with the purpose of the Retrospective Methods Network. The conference in Bergen in 2010 also gave rise to the idea of this network. The precursor is more generally focused on the issue of retrospective studies, not specifically folklore, and its emphasis is heavily on developing methodology, rather than on specific issues. The Old Norse Folkloristic Network is not a competitor but a complement to its precursor.

The network comprises both scholars who have their fundamental roots in Old Norse philology and scholars with their basic roots in folkloristics. The only essential condition is that the scholar has an interest in combining the fields. Both post-doctoral scholars and doctoral students are welcome.

Suggestions for Some Themes for the Activities of the Network

I. Meeting the Other World in the saga literature.

- Are there at this point general patterns and homogenous tendencies in the alleged saga genres *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*? Are there differences between these groups, as several scholars claim? If so, what sort of differences are there and how can they be explained? Are there at this point chronological differences in Norse literature, e.g. between (presumably old) Eddic poetry and High Medieval saga literature or

between the classical and the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*?

- Are *Sage* and *Märchen* useful concepts here, and is the distinction between them (as Max Lüthi has described it), relevant for the understanding of tendencies and differences in the saga literature, as some scholars recently have claimed?
- How much of the supernatural elements did the authors and audiences of the sagas believe in? Cf. Ármann Jakobsson's and Vésteinn Ólason's different opinions on this point in the case of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*. Is this question of importance at all for the interpretation of the saga literature? Is it of importance for the standard distinctions between classical and post-classical sagas? In precisely this case the issue of belief contra non-belief in the supernatural elements has been seen as a demarcation criterion by e.g. Vésteinn Ólason. How strong are the arguments for this opinion?

II. How much continuity is there between the Icelandic sagas and later folklore?

- An example could be the conception of trolls. A starting point for discussion can be Ármann Jakobsson's article in *Saga och sed*, which examines the relevant cases of the sagas but doesn't take the folkloristic aspect into account. The article raises several critical and fundamentally important issues.
- Can we interpret the beliefs and conceptions about trolls of the medieval saga authors from later traditions (in folk tales and folk legends) about trolls?
- How are the concepts of trolls and giants related to each other? In Old Norse tradition and in later folklore? How are the wise giants of the Edda, whose women were the most beautiful and became the wives of the gods, related to the giants of the folktales and folk legends? How are the giants of these traditions related to the trolls and giants

of the *fornaldarsögur*? Is there as a distinction at all between trolls and giants in the saga literature and in later tradition (legends and folktales)?

- The conception of the *haugbúar*? Is the terrible and evil *haugbúi* of the sagas and the farm-protecting *haugbúi* (mostly related to the *gårdstomte*) in later Norwegian and Orkney (*hogboon*) tradition the same thing at all? Or is only the term the same? How are the *haugbúar* that are mentioned in the Norwegian laws related to these (possibly different) types?
- The conception of elves? In the Edda elves are a kind of god, but in modern Icelandic folklore they are small invisible beings in the hills, and elves in Swedish folklore are even more different. Do they have the same origin at all? How could the change be explained? Is it possible to reconstruct the conception of elves using later traditions?
- Wolves, witches and werewolves in Old Norse literature, courtly poetry and later folklore – how are these traditions related? Which is the origin of the tales about these creatures and to what extent have the different traditions and genres influenced each other?

III. Are “saga-like” phenomena in later recorded folk tradition independent of the contemporary learned literature with its knowledge about the medieval saga literature? Or are folk legends and folk belief, on the contrary, strongly influenced by the learned literature and by written versions of the Icelandic sagas? Are the elements connecting the Old Norse tradition with the late recorded folklore in fact fakelore? How can we distinguish them from each other? Is it at all legitimate to make such a distinction? Even folklore of a learned origin lives on, after all, in folk tradition.

- Is the tradition of Grotti Finnie and Lucky Minni in Orkney folklore an old tradition of the same roots as the tradition

of the mill Grotti and giantess Fenja and Menja? In that case these legends and the Old Norse *Grottasöngur* would be entirely independent versions of the same old Grotti tale. Or have legends about Grotti Finnie and Lucky Minni arisen under the influence of translations of the Edda and the learned literature on Grotti, Fenja and Menja?

- The *Ætternisstapi* in *Gautreks saga*, which was translated into Swedish in 1664, is usually claimed to have given rise to all the Swedish folk legends and local traditions of *ättestupor*. At least the term has almost certainly come from the translation of *Gautreks saga*, a fact that in turn gives interesting information about how quickly a motif in learned literature can be spread far and wide and go deep into the oral folk tradition. But is the motif of the *ättestupa* (apart from the word itself) in the Swedish folk legends also borrowed from the learned literature or may it have old roots, independent of the learned literature?
- Are local legends and traditions in Iceland on certain sites about saga heroes genuine unbroken oral tradition from the Middle Ages, or are the traditions/legends influenced by the late saga editions? And if so: to what extent?

IV. Can late recorded folklore give us information about ancient myths and traditions of pagan gods and of the supernatural / fantastic beings that are not mentioned in the sagas and otherwise would be lost to us? Or are we dealing with traditions of late origin?

- An example is the extensive folk legend complex in Scandinavia about Odin's wild hunt and Odin as a *skogsrå* hunter. Is there a tradition that goes back to medieval / ancient time and to genuine Odin traditions, even though the ancient/medieval literature doesn't mention anything like this in connection

with Odin? Or is this legend created entirely in late, Christian times, when gods become pure 'fairy tale'-characters?

- Is this a parallel to those mythological tales of the Norse literature which cannot be found elsewhere, such as the story of *Brymskviða* or as Snorri's description of Thor's trip to *Útgarðaloki*?

These are only proposals to begin with. We look forward to comments and more proposals! When the plans for the first meeting have become more concrete the topics will be more specified on the basis of other ideas and comments.

The Activity of the Network

It seems natural to begin the activities as soon as possible. Right now, we are preparing a number of applications to primarily Nordic, Swedish and Estonian funds. Ideas about funding from e.g. Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, British, American or EU funds will be received with gratitude!

Several foundations are generous with funding for initiating research, international networking and "exploratory workshops". These funds also have the purpose of cooperation between scholars from several countries, why we are not as bound by national funds. Therefore we have put emphasis on this initially. This activity will mean a fairly intensive discussion in a smaller group, rather than traditional lectures to a wider audience with the accompanying question and answer session. Since our network, and in a sense our approach, is fairly new, it seems to be an advantage to give priority to the discussion between active scholars rather than to individual presentations and a more passive listening to the presentations of completed projects. It should be possible to get funds for these kinds of workshops or networking meetings already during the spring. We hope to welcome you all to Tartu in 2011! It usually takes more time to get funds for conferences, and the foundations are often nationally oriented. It

requires more planning, but it is likely that we may have a conference in 2012. That conference can also invite people from outside the network and be open to a wider audience to attend. Again, the Department of Scandinavian Studies will be happy to host this event. Folklore studies has a strong position at Tartu University and there are good opportunities to make new contacts and collaborations.

In the first phase we are applying for funding from the Riksbankens jubileumsfond, Nordforsk, Nordiska ministerrådet, NOS-HS, Eesti Teadusfond / Estonian Science Foundation and European Science

Foundation. For more information on this network, please contact:

Daniel Sävborg
Professor of Scandinavian Studies
University of Tartu
daniel.savborg@ut.ee

or

Karen Bek-Pedersen
Lecturer in Early Scandinavian Studies
University of Aberdeen
k.bek-pedersen@abdn.ac.uk

Conference Report: Jubilee Seminar for the Opening of the Runosong Academy 8.–10.10.2010, Kuhmo, Finland

Riikka Nevalainen, Runosong Academy

The Juminkeko Foundation established a folk music research center, the Runosong Academy (Runolaulu-Akatemia), on the 10th of October 2010. The International Jubilee Seminar for the opening of the new center was held on 8.–10.10 in Kuhmo, Finland.

The founding of the Runosong Academy is a direct continuation of the work and collection-oriented research which the Juminkeko Foundation has undertaken in the Kainuu region and Viena Karelia for more than two decades. Juminkeko's objectives include the preservation of Kalevalaic traditions and culture, and international cultural exchange on these subjects, especially between Finland and the Republic of Karelia. The Runosong Academy's main interest is focused on the oldest regional singing tradition, runosong, which lies at the foundation of the kalevalaic tradition and forms a common root of Finnish and Karelian cultural heritage.

The Runosong Academy's activities can be divided into three main categories; research, preservation and revitalization. Research into the Balto-Finnic song and singing traditions in general and runosong in particular is

directed towards methodological development and raising the level of research. Preservation work of the endangered tradition includes collecting materials and developing and maintaining archives. In connection with this, revitalization of the runosong culture is carried out in villages of Viena Karelia, Russia, and in the region of Kainuu, Finland.



Runosong Academy Director Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen giving the opening words. Photo by Klaus von Matt.



Seminar audience. From front: Director Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen, Professor Pekka Suutari, Andreas Kalkun, Mari Sarv. Photo by Klaus von Matt.

Revitalization also entails the development of pedagogical materials and methods, including the training of doctoral students.

The themes of the seminar were “Song and Singing as a Cultural Communication” and “Ontrei Malinen’s *kantele*” (the traditional harp). The first title also refers to the Runosong Academy’s new research project, funded by the Academy of Finland, which will be implemented in collaboration with the University of Tampere (Department of Music Anthropology).

The twenty-four speakers and numerous participants of the seminar were researchers and specialists from the diverse universities and research institutes of seven countries. Keynote presentations were given by Dr. John Shaw from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom, with the paper, “What do Songs and Singing Reveal in the Gaelic Culture?”, Professor Tamara Krasnopolskaja from Petrozavodsk State Conservatory, Republic of Karelia, Russian Federation, speaking on “Laments as a Form of Cultural Communication”, Professor Jarkko Niemi from University of Tampere, Finland, discussing “Narrative Singing Traditions of the Nenets”, and Professor emeritus Heikki Laitinen from Sibelius Academy, Finland, who presented his paper entitled “*Kantele*” with great energy.

Presentations were in Finnish, Russian and English, with the simultaneous translation of all papers (as well as the questions and comments of the following discussion) into the other languages in order to insure mutual understanding across such a wide range of scholars. Approaches to the topics were interdisciplinary. Runosong and singing as well as the *kantele* were tackled from several subject areas and research traditions, including ethnomusicology, cultural studies and linguistics.

The first part of the seminar was dedicated to analyzing the communicativeness and content of different song and singing traditions in Finno-Ugric and Gaelic traditions, and in more recent Nordic history. Approaches included the analysis of the compositional units in poetry and metrics in folklore, analyses of different types of improvisation, the singer’s role in performance and the role of the performance context, the interconnectedness of story, remembrance, and melody as well as two addresses of wedding traditions of different cultures from the perspective of communicative functions. Concepts and methodological questions related to the analysis of narrative material and to the archaic content in Finno-Ugric traditions were tackled in the keynote presentations of Professor Jarkko Niemi and Professor Tamara Krasnopolskaya in particular. Critical approaches to the archive materials and the history of runosong research in Setumaa and Karelia were offered by Janika Oras, Andreas Kalkun, Liudmila Ivanova and Maari Kallberg. Elina Niiranen offered a cultural approach to the change of song repertory in Viena Karelia in a historical context, and Professor Pekka Suutari focused on the contemporary musical scene of Petrozavodsk and the questions of identity and possession related to cultural heritage. The possibilities opened by applying analytic methods with new technologies to songs and interpretations of communicative characteristics were introduced by Svetlana Kosyрева. Three

presentations focused on Karelian yoik traditions, and two on folklore and song genres in Karelian Pomor'e.

Professor emeritus Heikki Laitinen's keynote speech on the *kantele* opened the second half of the seminar and its second theme. His approach to the *kantele* was cultural-historical, while Timo Väänänen's presentation introduced a new cross-cultural project focusing on manifestations of the family of instruments related to the *kantele* in different cultures. Rauno Nieminen also offered perspectives on researching the instrument through construction and reconstruction.

Treating and discussing the seminar's topics as multifaceted cultural phenomena was a good reflection of the Runosong Academy's extensive research field, and its promotion of interdisciplinary approaches and the further development of methods and analytical tools. Both themes of the jubilee seminar will find their continuation in the international research projects that begin early next year.

Central in the Runosong Academy's research work and methodological



Professor emeritus Heikki Laitinen discussing the kantele (the traditional harp) as an object in material culture and as an image in both traditional and modern culture. Photo by Klaus von Matt.

development work are collaboration between educational institutions and international meetings of specialists that are put into practice in seminars arranged once or twice each year.

The program seminar program is available at: www.runolaulu.fi/perustamisseminaari. Papers from the seminar will be published early in 2011 in the Runosong Academy's seminar publication series.

People

Presentations and Publications

Many Layers in the Medieval Laws of Scandinavia? The Possibility of Using Retrospective Methods When Analysing Early Laws

Stefan Brink, University of Aberdeen

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

Before ca. 1960 the Scandinavian provincial laws were uncritically used as sources for an early Scandinavian society, even a Viking Age – sometimes even older! – society. After this, with the settlement of romantic and uncritical approaches to sagas and laws, peaking in the 1950's and 60's, first by German then Scandinavian scholars, a common stance became that the laws mirrored society at the time when they were written down (hence mainly the 13th and 14th centuries). The new focus in research was to find common features with continental laws, to see the Scandinavian laws in a European context. To analyze the laws retrospectively, to use the laws looking back, and to discuss them within a Germanic context, became very unfashionable, especially since you then could be accused of subscribing to, or at least

flirting with, the paradigm called the *Urgermanische Recht*, and thus the idea of a common *Urrecht* for Germanic peoples. This 'cleansing' of the research field has been a necessity and has had a great impact. It is now time to go forward, and to ask diachronic questions again about the laws. I have been working with a couple of Scandinavian provincial laws for some time, and found interesting aspects in them that I assume represent different layers in the laws and that may be the result of older and newer laws edited together. I will in my paper present some cases where it may be discussed whether we can suppose layers of different age in some medieval Scandinavian provincial laws, and thus approach them using retrospective methods.

The Continuity, Evolution and Transformation of Myth: The Curious Case of *Þrymsqviða*

Frog, University of Helsinki

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

This paper investigates what types of insights certain traditions which are recorded as late as the 19th and 20th centuries can offer into the curious eddic poem *Þrymsqviða*. *Þrymsqviða* has long been the center of debate owing to a number of peculiarities variously on the levels of poetic form, narrative strategy and

narrative content. There is a striking discontinuity in its verbal and potentially intertextually referential relationships to other poems and to *Þórr*-traditions recorded in medieval Iceland, as opposed to the complete lack of references to the poem or its narrative 'events' in other early sources. This paper

offers an overview of these peculiarities, drawing particular attention to indications that the poem exhibits a broad range of strategies that appear to be unconventional for other eddic poetry, such as poetic features which are nearer later poetic traditions, or strategies unconventional for early presentations of mythology, such as referring to the god Heimdallr as both one of the Æsir and (uniquely) one of the Vanir in parallel lines (stanza 15), or the peculiar description of the necklace of the mythic Brísings bursting as no more than a vivid expression of Freyja's anger – a motif which in the vital mythological system would have constituted a cosmological event. Although individual elements of the narrative are broadly traditional, their uses often contrast with conventional expectations, such as expressions of Þórr's power and might with his appearance in a wedding dress.

The lack of early evidence for this narrative contrasts sharply with its later popularity in a Christian cultural milieu, where it was translated into the *rímur* tradition (one of three known mythological narratives, all burlesques) and into the only mythological ballad. At the same time, *Þrymsqviða* belongs to the tradition known as tale-type ATU 1148b, 'The Theft of the Thunder-Instrument', found across both Finno-Ugric (Finnic, Sámic) and Indo-European (Germanic, Baltic) cultures. ATU 1148b was otherwise recorded in the Circum-Baltic across the 19th and 20th centuries (and one example from 5th century Greece). It clearly forms a coherent system in the Circum-Baltic, of which *Þrymsqviða* forms an independent branch. Comparison reveals a high probability that there was another tradition of ATU 1148b current in Germanic culture, associated with Þórr's visit to the giant Geirrøðr. Other traditions of ATU

1148b are associated with aetiologies and belief traditions related to rain, drought, the adversary's fear of thunder, and/or the hostility between thunder and the adversary. *Þrymsqviða* is the only of these traditions in which the god's role remains subordinated to other figures and it exhibits no connection between Þórr's hammer and thunder, rain, lightning, or as an object feared by giants (who do not fear the thunder of Þórr's chariot and agree to return the hammer after the wedding). When *Þrymsqviða* is situated between the Circum-Baltic tradition of ATU 1148b and the later popularity which the *Þrymsqviða* narrative found in a Christian cultural milieu, it appears that *Þrymsqviða* was a burlesque of traditional mythological material oriented to a Christian audience and most probably composed in Iceland in a period very near to that when it was written down.

Eddic poetry is conventionally considered to have gone largely or wholly extinct as an oral tradition by the end of the 13th century, whereas *rímur* poetry is considered to have emerged in the 14th century. When these two hypotheses are juxtaposed, it implies that there was a period of a few decades to several centuries during which there was no tradition of oral narrative poetry in Iceland – for the only time in over 1,000 years of its history. Unusual compositional features of *Þrymsqviða*, which set it apart from the eddic corpus, anticipate the later *rímur* tradition and in some cases might even be described as 'experimental'. Rather than assuming the death of eddic poetry, *Þrymsqviða* may be an example of a 'new' poetry, a song of an emerging or transitional genre, and evidence of the evolution of the cultural activity of poetry in Iceland in the mid- to late-13th century.

Narratiiv kui ravi: Riituse-etendus ja narratiivi aktualiseerumine kogemusena [‘Narrative as the Cure: Rite Performance and Actualizing Narrative as Experience’]

Frog, University of Helsinki

*Paper published in Mäetagused 45 (2010): 7–38 (<http://www.folklore.ee/tagused/nr45/frog.pdf>).
[Estonian with summary in English]*

This paper addresses theoretical issues of narrative in an attempt to approach the semantics of understanding underlying the performance of certain healing rites. The first section of the paper introduces the term *narrative power* to refer to the cultural load developed by narratives and narrative strategies and develops a framework for approaching healing rite performance as the application of strategies which actualize narrative as experience. The Finno-Karelian *tietäjä* tradition is discussed in relation to shamanic rite performance and memorized traditions of incantations, particularly those which incorporate *historiolae*. The traditions

of the *tietäjä* are approached as a synthesis of an early cultural stratum, which can be described as ‘shamanistic’, and models which appear to have been introduced predominantly through Germanic culture in which incantation performance (rather than soul journeys) provided a primary means of interacting with the unseen world. The paper approaches conceptual foundations for how these various magical practices were understood to work by the ritual specialists who employed them. These comparisons offer the possibility of insights into how *narrative power* may play a role in shaping the evolution of a tradition over time.

Who the Devil is Phil? – The Problem of Baldr in the Second Merseburg Charm yet again

Frog, University of Helsinki

Paper presented at the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies organized by the Medieval Institute of Western Michigan University May 13–16, 2010, Kalamazoo, Michigan, U.S.A.

The typographical error of “Phil” for “Phol” in the conference program led me to uncover the “Phil” of the Second Merseburg Charm (SMC), giving rise to a slightly more complex paper than originally proposed. The SMC has been a nexus of academic activity resulting in a veritable library of scholarship – first and foremost because the SMC is one of the most significant sources for Old High German mythology (which are decidedly few), while the term or name *balder* occurs in the second line. This paper offers a survey of *balder*-cognates in Germanic languages to show that it functioned as a common noun and survived only in poetry and ritual contexts (and certain proper names). In Scandinavia, this nominal use of *baldr* developed sufficient exclusivity that it could function as a proper name for a

god. No other name for *Baldr* has been preserved. The first half-line of the SMC, to which *balder* refers back, is ‘Phol and Wodan’. If this development toward exclusivity were widespread, it is probable that ‘Phol’ was a name for the Baldr-equivalent in Old High German. In the SMC, Phol (*Vol) appears to be the masculine counterpart of Volla, sister of Friia. Volla is equivalent to Old Norse Fulla, and Friia to Frigg. In medieval Scandinavia, Frigg was the wife of Odin, their son was Baldr, and Fulla was Frigg’s handmaiden. Wodan–Friia–Volla form a set of figures associated by definable relationships and participating in a system of narrative activity with Phol. This paper argues that the etymological cognates of these three figures, Óðinn–Frigg–Fulla form a

corresponding set with similar associations in definable relationships and participating in a common system of narrative activity. Baldr can be situated in the relationships and system of narrative activity corresponding to Phol's (in contrast to other figures – e.g. Freyr).

This paper argues that Óðinn's role in the systems of narrative material associated with Baldr's death constitutes a development in the mythological system. This process is associated with Óðinn's rise to a central position in the mythology. It argues that Phol was a significant figure in the mythological system and was subordinated to Óðinn, shifting his relationship from companion to 'son'. The exclusive use of *Baldr* rather than a Phol-cognate broke down the association of Baldr[Phol]–Fulla as a divine pair in Iceland. The process of subordinating status extended to the shift of Fulla from sister to servant of

Frigg. If the SMC accurately reflects conceptions in the vernacular tradition, that tradition may have been markedly different from traditions reflected in medieval Scandinavian sources. Phil ('Fylle'), cognate with Phol, appears in a Swedish charm of the SMC-type recorded in the 19th century. Correlation with Phol presents the possibility of continuity in the tradition of both the mythic figure and the association of that mythic figure with the SMC charm-type. Óðinn was not as significant in medieval Sweden. There is the possibility that the vernacular mythology in Sweden may not have undergone the same processes of evolution as in West Norse. Fylle presents the possibility that traditions of mythology may have varied much more across Germanic Scandinavia than is generally assumed.

Folk Legends, Folk Traditions and Grave Mounds

Terry Gunnell, University of Iceland

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

As is well known, the Grimm brothers and others directly inspired by them, such as Wilhelm Mannhardt, saw folklore as something that often contained "survivals" of pagan mythology and pagan rituals. With the growth of understanding in the field of folkloristics over the two centuries that followed, scholars have come to be more wary of blindly accepting such approaches. This especially applies to literary scholars and historians who have questioned the possibility that pagan material could survive so long in a Christian world. The latter approach nonetheless also has its drawbacks, not least because it contains a comparatively superficial understanding of the time it takes for Christian attitudes to take root, and of how commonly Christianity has tended to blend with existing mindsets, rather than replace them. Furthermore, it is clear that some

deeply-rooted folklore – both traditions and legends – can survive for a very long time indeed. One of the questions is how we decide the age and origin of such traditions that have only been recorded in potentially recent times. In the following paper, I mean to follow up on earlier work carried out by Håkon Schetelig and examine those legends and traditions concerning grave mounds from later times, and especially traditions concerning offerings of ale and bread made to gravemounds on holy days (something that continued until comparatively recently), and legends which deal with the sacrality of gravemounds and bad luck that can befall anyone who does not respect them. If nothing else, this material provides us with a useful insight into the way the construction of grave mounds changed the local landscape and the way it was understood by people.

The Text That Never Was: On Reconstruction in Textual Criticism

Odd Einar Haugen, University of Bergen

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

The editing of classical and medieval texts has often taken the form of a reconstructive enterprise, in which the editor tries to trace the text back to its original, removing errors and innovations in the manuscript transmission as he goes through the preserved material. This program is what Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) succinctly formulated in 1817:

Wir sollen und wollen aus einer hinreichenden Menge von guten Handschriften einen allen diesen zum Grunde liegenden Text darstellen, der entweder der ursprüngliche selbst seyn, oder ihm doch sehr nahe kommen muss (ed. Müllenhoff 1876: 82).

On the basis of a sufficient number of good manuscripts, we should and we must build a text which reflects all of these, a text which either would be the original text or a text which would come very close to the original.

In this approach, the copying of manuscripts is understood in a biological sense, as a filiation in which the process of copying the text is modelled on a tree turned upside-down, a *stemma codicum*, with the original on top and the preserved manuscripts on the branches below.

Lachmann's programme, which was more or less unchallenged in the 19th century, met with increasing criticism in the 20th century, notably by the romanist Joseph Bédier (1864–1938), who published an important article in the journal *Romania* (1928). In the last couple of decades, this criticism has been renewed by scholars within the so-called New Philology, introduced around 1990 in the U.S. and in France. In an oft-cited volume of *Speculum*, Stephen G. Nichols recommends that each manuscript should be studied on its own terms (1990), and in France, Bernard Cerquiglini

addressed the same issues in his *Éloge de la variante* (1989).

Some scholars among the new philologists seem to believe that a reconstructive approach to texts is either inadvisable or impossible. Nobody will contest that it can be difficult, in some cases virtually impossible, to reconstruct the filiation of a classical or medieval text, nor that some editors have been too optimistic in their reconstructions. However, this should not be taken to mean that a reconstruction *per se* is inadvisable.

In this talk, I will discuss what rôle reconstruction has – and should have – in textual criticism, as I most recently did in a talk held in Trento (Haugen 2009). Should textual critics limit their investigation to a single, preserved manuscript, or should they aim at trying to put the text into context? The latter position, among other things, entails placing the text in a diachronic context of manuscript transmission.

Works Cited

- Bédier, Joseph. 1928. "La tradition manuscrite du *Lai de l'ombre*: Réflexions sur l'art d'éditer les anciens textes." *Romania* 54: 161–96, 321–56. (Rpt., Paris: Champion, 1929, 1970.)
- Cerquiglini, Bernard. 1989. *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie*. Paris: Seuil. – *In praise of the variant: A critical history of philology*, translated by Betsy Wing, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Haugen, Odd Einar. 2009. "A quarrel of the ancients and the moderns: On the merits of Old and New Philology in the editing of Old Norse texts." *On Editing Old Scandinavian texts: Problems and Perspectives*, eds. Fulvio Ferrari og Massimiliano Bampi, 9–37. *Labirinti* 119. Università degli Studi di Trento: Dipartimento di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Filologici.
- Müllenhoff, Karl, ed. 1876 [1969]. *Kleinere Schriften zur deutschen Philologie von Karl Lachmann*. Kleinere Schriften von Karl Lachmann, 1. Berlin.
- Nichols, Stephen G. 1990. "Introduction. Philology in a manuscript culture." *Speculum* 65: 1–10.

Working on the Semantic Side of Etymology: The Culture-Etymological Approach

Eldar Heide, University of Bergen

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

In this paper, I will try to put forward a better explanation of an approach that has been vital to my use of late material in historical reconstruction but that has proven difficult to understand for many.

When an etymologist studies an inherited word, he or she seeks to answer two questions:

- 1) What was the original form of the word, or the root from which it is derived?
- 2) What was the original meaning?

Etymologists generally are very competent at answering the first question – the formal part – because the basis of etymology is the knowledge of the regular sound changes that are identified in comparative / historical linguistics. However, they cannot possibly be equally competent on the semantic part, because, in principle, knowledge of all semantic fields is required: techniques of crafts, house construction, ship building, fishing, farming, religious life and superstitions, judicial systems, weather, the cosmos, cooking, child care, etc., etc. – from ancient times until modern times. This, of course, is beyond the reach of any single scholar.

This means that etymologists should work in larger groups than is customary, and seek more advice from non-etymologist specialists. But it also means that there is an unexploited “space of research” for scholars who are not first and foremost etymologists but who have basic knowledge of etymology and are experts on certain semantic fields. I am thinking of cases where:

- 1) The same word or root indisputably is present in several languages (usually

because it happened to change little in the development of the different languages).

- 2) The relationship between the different meanings (in the different languages) is hard to understand.

In such cases, experts on the semantic field(s) in question – like us – rather than specialist etymologists have the best chance to increase our understanding. However, in such cases, we should reason in the etymological way. We should insist that:

- All the attested forms be seen as input in the calculations, even the late ones, because
- All the forms must be derived from a common origin because they are attestations of the same word or root.

These principles are not controversial in cases where the semantics are easy – i.e. when specialist etymologists can handle the questions alone – so why should they be in other cases? Either the principles are reasonable or they are not. The common origin does not have to be a single, clear-cut meaning; a cluster of notions may be good enough. Of course, some attestations sometimes have developed a long way from the origin but still they have to be taken into consideration and explained. We should not allow ourselves simply to ignore the evidence that appears not to fit in, as is often done.

In my opinion, this approach is essential to the utilisation of late material in historical reconstruction because it provides a way of reasoning in which even late attestations have a place. In my work, late attestations of the root found in the Old Norse word *gandr* have been decisive in this kind of reasoning.

Another candidate may be the *nīð* complex, whose origin and essence is poorly understood. A systematic comparison of all the information we have of Gothic *neip* and modern German *Neid* ‘envy’, Old Norse *nīð* ‘disdain, insult’, and Old High German *nīd* ‘hostility, grudge, anger’ can probably increase our understanding of this. The same

is probably the case with *Óðinn* in Old Norse sources, *Odens jagt* in southern Scandinavian late traditions, and *Das wütende Heer* ‘the Wild Hunt’ in late German traditions; and the *alfar* / elves etc. in northern European Medieval sources and folklore – and with many other topics.

My Present Work with Retrospective Methods

Eldar Heide, University of Bergen

I believe that we can develop more innovative ideas and arguments if we alternate between a variety of questions and materials. In that way we can try out more perspectives and get more diverse input into our hermeneutic circles. One of my articles that includes retrospective reasoning will appear any time now, with the title “Holy Islands and the Otherworld: Places beyond Water”, in a book with papers from a seminar organized by the CMS at the University of Bergen. In this article, I attempt to demonstrate that there is a connection between holy islands and notions of the otherworld beyond water. I believe that the essence of holy islands is their location on the other side of water. One has to cross water to get there and in this respect holy islands are parallel to the otherworld, which very often is placed beyond water, horizontally or vertically. The liminality of certain islands seems to be related to this. They resemble the otherworld in the mentioned way but are located in this world. Thus they have an intermediate position and are ideal as points of contact with the otherworld. I also suggest that some islands are “super-liminal”: Those that either are reachable on foot and thus in a way belong to the mainland although they are islands, and those that sometimes are submerged or only occasionally surface. I support Holmberg’s [Harva’s] theory that the main source of the idea that there is an otherworld underneath us is derived from the experience of seeing an inverted reflection of this world in calm water. To this explanation I

add the specification that dry ground is included in the reflection image, which can explain why one (in most accounts) reaches the same kind of dry land no matter whether one accesses the otherworld through gaps in the ground or by jumping into water. I also discuss islands that seem to have their liminality mostly from being off-shore; i.e. far away from the society, and the relationship between this and the otherworld entrances in the middle of the society (e.g. grave mounds, wells etc.). I argue that in both cases going to the otherworld is going beyond the realm that we usually (can) access. Our horizontal range is long, so therefore we have to go a long way horizontally to reach the otherworld. Downwards, however, our range is very limited, so even when the downward entrances to the otherworld are next to us, the otherworld is very far away. The article is an attempt at understanding some of the logic behind the major interfaces between this world and the otherworld and in particular behind the watery interfaces. It seems that going across water – horizontally or vertically – was a more common passage to the Scandinavian gods, especially *Óðinn*, than has hitherto been realized. The material for the discussion is the Old Norse corpus, including the legendary sagas, supplemented by a considerable amount of folklore and other late material.

Most of my recent work with retrospective methods has been on the god *Loki*. He remains one of the riddles of Old

Scandinavian religion but still the rich late tradition about him has been ignored for a century, with very few exceptions. I have been examining and increasing this material with information from folklore and dialect archives throughout northern Europe since 2006. I intend to write a monograph covering the total corpus of Loki but that is years into the future. Before that, I will publish a series of articles. The first will be ready for submission this year (probably to *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*), with the title “Loki, the *Vätte* and the Ash Lad: A Study Combining Old Scandinavian and Late Material”. Then an article on the etymology of Loki and an article about the connection between Loki and spiders or spider-like creatures will follow. In the first article, I attempt to:

- Discern a coherent pattern in the late evidence of the Old Scandinavian god Loki.
- Demonstrate that this pattern must reflect ancient, common Scandinavian ideas.
- Find a model of understanding that can overcome the discrepancy between this material and that of the Old Norse Loki, one in which both are integral parts, illuminating each other.
- Demonstrate that this model can increase our understanding of the Old Norse Loki, regarding problematic details and passages as well as the overall character.

In the late Scandinavian traditions, Loki seems to be mostly a *vätte* ‘domestic spirit’ living under or by the fireplace, helping the farmers with the farm work and attracting wealth to the farm. There are strong reasons to believe that such notions of Loki also existed in the Middle Ages. Factors within the late corpus and its relation to other late material point in that direction, and essential parts of it can be anchored to medieval material. But this *vätte* Loki is not consistent with the impression that we get from the Old Norse myths and therefore it is hard to accept the late material. However, in the late

traditions we also find Loki as a name of the fairytale character the Ash Lad, who has a lot in common with the mythological Loki. There is no reason to believe that Loki ever was identical with the Ash Lad but they overlap a lot, and probably did even in the middle ages. The Ash Lad may help us understand the discrepancy between the two Lokis because the same surprising dualism can be found within the Ash Lad as within the combined evidence of Loki. The most common term for the Ash Lad – *Oskefis(en)* / *Ask(e)fis(en)* – also refers to a *vätte* under the fireplace, similar to Loki in late traditions. Hence, neither Loki nor the Ash Lad is only a narrative character; both are a *vätte* under the fireplace, too. This parallelism makes it very problematic to reject the *vätte* Loki of late traditions. There must be a model of understanding that can contain both forms of Loki and both forms of the Ash Lad. I propose that the narrative characters are derived from *Vätten*, in this way:

- 1) There was a notion of a luck-bringing *vätte* living under the fireplace, tending the fire and receiving sacrifices, called Loki, *Oskefis(en)*, or other.
- 2) *Vätten*’s designation could be given to a human who would often sit by the fire, especially the youngest boy in the family.
- 3) This mummy’s boy provided material for overlapping myth and fairytale characters who turn everything upside-down: Loki of the myths and the Ash Lad of the fairytales.

Accordingly, the interface between the *vätte* Loki and the myth Loki may be found in the myth Loki’s childhood, at the fireside. Unfortunately, we have very limited information of the early days of the mythological Loki. But it seems that all three “stages” of Loki can be discerned in both the late and the medieval material when we look for them, and not only for a member of Óðinn’s court. Thus, this multi-layer understanding may increase our

understanding of Loki in the Old Norse sources. The parallel between Loki and the Ash Lad and the abundant information of the latter may be a key to the understanding of Loki's role in the mythology. For both characters, it seems that there is not really a contradiction between their beneficial and damaging sides because both sides derive from the characters being essentially "semi-otherworlders". Because of this, letting them into the establishment amounts to opening it to the otherworld powers and thus implies its downfall. But, this is inescapable because they, for the same reason, are the only ones capable of bringing absolutely necessary objects and persons from the otherworld. – Both characters' connection with *Vätten* under the fireplace make them ideal as links to the otherworld.

In addition, in a recently published article ("Tjukk 1 – Retroflektert tydeleggjering av kort kvantitet. Om kvalitetskløyvinga av det gamle kvantitetssystemet." *Maal og minne* 1/2010, pp. 3–44), I attempt to explain the retroflex flap ("thick *l*") of the central

Scandinavian dialects. The Medieval manuscripts do provide some information about the emergence of this sound but in order to understand how and why it arose, it seems that the only way is to combine this information with what can be reconstructed from comparisons of the modern dialects.

Right now, I am working on the terms for Viking ships. Very few of those terms have plausibly been connected with actual ship types or depictions of ship types from the Middle Ages. A major reason for this seems to be that the scholars have failed to sort the terms into periods. I assume that if we sift out the terms that only occur in poetry not in prose, we are left with the terms that belong to the early Viking age, and that only they should be connected with ships and depictions from that period. Thus, I am departing from the 13th century written record and going back 2–4 centuries from there. But I supply this approach with contemporary runic evidence.

PDF files of my articles appear on my website, <http://eldar-heide.net>, as soon as they come out.

Reconstructing the Pattern of a Vernacular Tradition

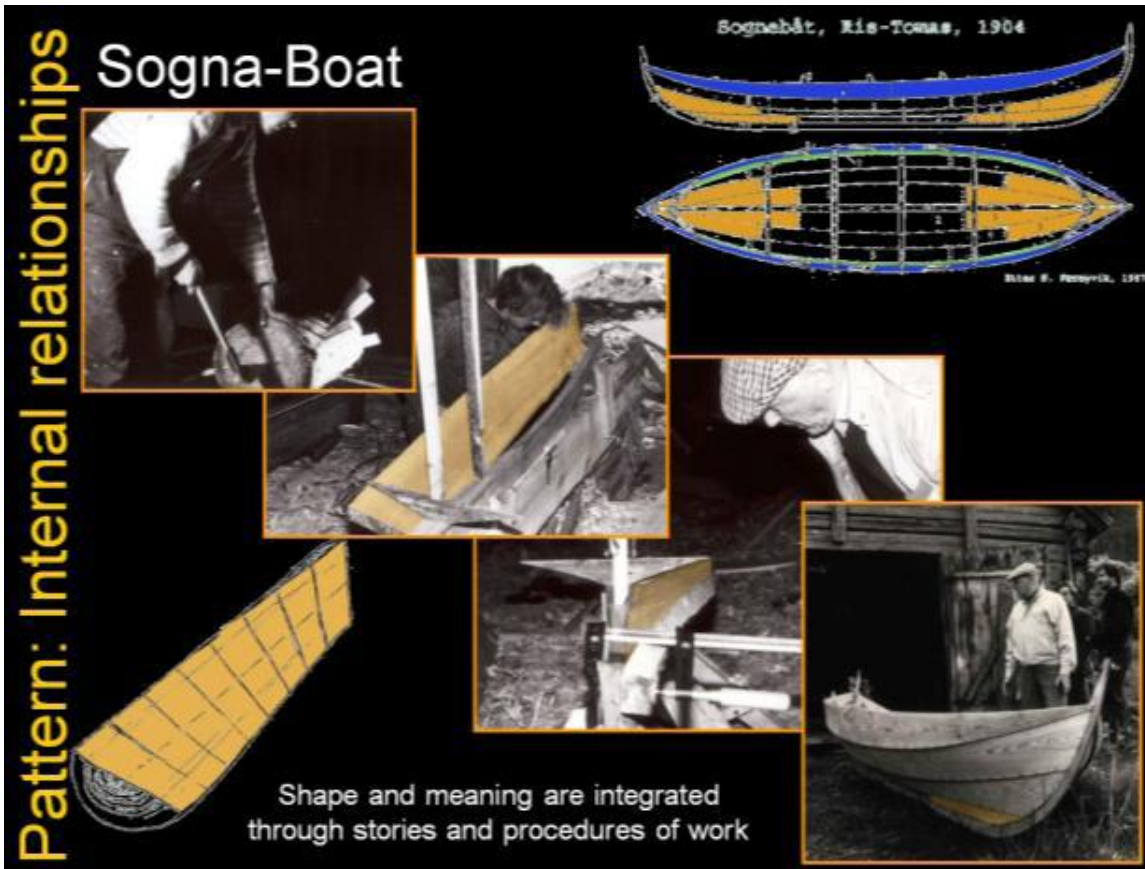
Terje Planke, Norwegian Maritime Museum

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

My main approach to the reconstruction of boats and sailing techniques from the Iron Age has been through the studying of handcraft traditions of the 20th century. I have done this in two ways. First of all, I am studying traits from younger traditions to understand the traditions from the Iron Age. My preconception has been that there is a continuous thread over this long period of time, but this has not always proven to be the case. This approach must therefore be conducted with care. My other method has been to investigate the broader pattern of new traditions to understand how different elements or traits within a tradition are

connected to each other. Using younger traditions as a methodological inspiration, I have reconstructed the patterns from Iron Age traditions. In this paper, I will compare these two methods through empirical examples taken from traditional boatbuilding from the 8th and the 20th centuries.

In understanding the Scandinavian Iron Age, we lean on several categories of sources: artefacts, rock art or texts from different periods of time. In addition, there are the vernacular traditions of recent times. However, is there a factual *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or a history of effect



The pattern of an object is often not recognized by the craftsman, but might be studied and analyzed. Here, the pattern of the Sogna-boat is illustrated to show how each part becomes a manifestation of the other parts and fits together through the procedures of the boat builder. Photo by Planke (1994 / 2010).

(Gadamer 2000), which connects *us* with *them*? Is it possible for us to reconstruct their knowledge, as long as it is in conflict with our own preconceptions?

My broader aim is to discuss the possibility and extent of a connection between excavated boats from the Iron Age and the late vernacular traditions of boat building. The discussion is empirically based on both my doctoral and my post-doctoral projects where I studied traditional boatbuilding and reconstructed the third small boat from the Gokstad Viking ship find (Planke 1994, 2001, 2004). The aim of the latter study was not only to reconstruct the structure and shape of the hull, but also the perspectives and procedures of the boat builder who made the boat in the late 800's AD.

Theoretical Approach

By studying different vernacular 19th and 20th century traditions of boat building, I have discovered that the sum of traits within each tradition makes out a distinct pattern. The different traits, such as the use of raw material, tool technology, and the shape and physical structure of the boats, are strongly interwoven. These traits are also connected with the intentions of the boat builder and his work procedures. When one trait within the pattern changes, I have documented how other traits change as well. But is it also possible to reconstruct such patterns for Iron Age ships? The theory is under development. It might be seen as a form for introspective functionalism, or maybe as a form of hermeneutics focused on objects where the



The remains of the third Gokstad boat from the late 800's AD look like a mess. I am trying to reconstruct a meaningful pattern based on the relationship between the fragments. Photo by Planke (2003).

pattern defines the whole to be something more than just the sum of its parts.

I believe that the vernacular traditions and the application of these indeed is a good starting point for interpreting archaeological evidence, but that it must be conducted with care. When I introduce the concept of *pattern*, it is as a means to help understand past cultures on their own terms, reducing the weight of my own preconceptions. The concept of pattern helps me reconstruct the shape, the material technology and physical structure as well as the procedures of work that all together make up the boat. The aim is to understand each trait, material or functional, in relationship to the other traits, rather than judging them from my

own tradition. To understand what's *beyond the horizon* of living, vernacular traditions today, I am investigating relationship between different traits that make up the pattern. In this way of reasoning, the answer to Iron Age technology is not to be found within the different vernacular traditions today. The vernacular traditions may rather help us ask good questions that provide the answers themselves.

Works Cited

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg 2000: Sandhed og metode. Gruntræk af en filosofisk hermeneutik. Systime Academic, Århus.
- Planke, Terje 1994: Sognebåten. Bygging, formforståelse og kunnskap. Hovedfagsoppgave i Etnologi, UiO, Oslo (upublisert).
- Planke, Terje 2001: Tradisjonsanalyse. En studie av kunnskap og båter. Doktorgradsavhandling, UiO, Oslo
- Planke, Terje 2007: Historisk rekonstruksjon av mønstre. In: Festskrift 2007. Årbok. Maihaugen.
- Planke, Terje 2008: Bygningens mønster – om sammenhenger i et kulturminne. In: By og Bygd XLI. Årbok for Norsk Folkemuseum
- Rolf, Bertil 1991: Profession, tradition och tyst kunnskap. Nya doxa.



The third Gokstad boat has been reconstructed and rigged through reconstructing the pattern. Tradition has been crucial to interpreting the sources through asking questions rather than answering them. Photo by Planke (2010).

Criteria for Evaluating Sources for Old Norse Religion

Jens Peter Schjødt, Aarhus University

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

All scholars concerned with Old Norse religion know that by far the largest part of the written sources used for reconstructing pre-Christian religion is composed two or three centuries after the official Christianisation. A prerequisite for using these sources is then that we can assume some sort of continuity from pagan to Christian times. Such a claim seems to be uncontroversial since there is general agreement that a change of religion does not happen overnight. On the other hand, in terms of the medieval sources, it has been objected that Christian ideas and notions have ‘polluted’ the pagan myths and the descriptions of pagan rituals. This seems to be true, as there is no doubt that Christianity influenced at least the higher social strata of the Nordic societies long before the official conversion.

If it thus seems to be certain that both continuity and ‘break’ are at stake, it will be an important task of the historian to decide what is what and what are the means available to us to make qualified decisions. In my paper I will discuss, from the point of view of a

historian of religion, some of the possibilities that we need to consider. In order to do this, however, it will be relevant first to discuss the notion of religion in the two cultural settings involved. Having done that, it will be possible to get a clearer understanding of the reason why some pagan elements, apparently in a relatively easy way, could continue to exist, not only far into the high Middle Ages but right up to modern times. In order to decide what is due to pagan tradition and Christian influence, we cannot, as I have argued in earlier articles, avoid the notion of comparativism. But, we also have to consider the ‘context’: to what extent is it meaningful to interpret rituals, proverbs, legends etc. as part of the pre-Christian context?

My conference paper will address these and other questions, and even if no definite answers can be given, it seems to be necessary to approach the whole problem of folkloristic material in connection with pre-Christian Scandinavian religion from a new perspective, using some of the more recent theoretical achievements.

Reflections of Religion, Mythology and Worldview in Laments

Eila Stepanova, University of Helsinki

Paper presented at Baltic Worldview: From Mythology to Folklore, organized by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in collaboration with the Center of Research in Imagination at Grenoble’s Stendhal University, July 8–10, 2009, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Known the world over, laments are one of the oldest genres of oral ritual poetry and are still found in some cultures of the present day. They are usually performed by women during a ritual – e.g. funerals, weddings, and departure ceremonies for men conscripted into military service. In traditions addressed in this paper, laments could also be performed

‘occasionally’, or outside of ritual contexts, although funeral laments will be the focus. The objective of this paper is to open a discussion of relationships between Karelian and Lithuanian lament traditions as representative examples of Finnic (otherwise known as ‘Balto-Finnic’) and Baltic traditions, respectively. It will focus on

representations of vernacular religion or “belief systems” as these are reflected through the poetic features, images and motifs of both Karelian and Lithuanian laments.

This paper introduces the tradition of Karelian laments in the broader context of Finnic and Baltic lament traditions. All Finnic lament traditions utilized special kinds of improvisation. They were not learned by heart, but rather were created during the process of oral performance. Laments were created anew in each concrete situation, but within the conventions of the traditional lament register (i.e. language of the poetry) and motifs. Lithuanian laments were correspondingly improvised.

As a consequence, representations and reflections of religion, mythology and worldview in these laments are not static, but rather retain vitality for the people who use them, even if that validity is to varying degrees (according to the individual) bound up with the poetic system and its applications.

This paper will examine common mythological and religious features which may be found in Baltic and Finnic lament traditions, offering an overview of relevant aspects of both traditions. Karelian and Lithuanian lament traditions share numerous

similar features. These features occur on all levels, from the elementary aspects of poetic language – their stylistic and grammatical features, poetic images and metaphors, building up to larger motifs and more comprehensive aspects of ritual activities. This shows that although the language of the tradition was different in each culture, they were utilizing remarkably similar systems of traditional referentiality necessarily rooted in the history of each tradition. Moreover, these traditions reflect common conceptions of death and the otherworld, where the ancestors of the community meet the newly deceased. These traditions appear to share certain significant features of mythology, worldview and beliefs, which are unlikely to be accidental, and within a broader Circum-Baltic context of comparison, they may be two poles forming an axis on the vast historical plane of Finnic-Slavic-Germanic-Baltic contacts.

[An expanded version of this paper will be published under the title “Reflections of Belief Systems in Karelian and Lithuanian Laments: Shared Systems of Traditional Referentiality?” in the proceedings from the conference.]

Scandinavian Folk Legends and Icelandic Sagas

Daniel Sävborg, University of Tartu

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

My paper argues that Scandinavian legends (*sägner*) recorded in the 20th and 19th centuries often explain supernatural episodes in *Íslendingasögur* better than comparison with other medieval sagas. Saga scholars have in many cases come to wrong conclusions from the narrow focus on literature contemporary with the *Íslendingasögur*. The interest in supernatural motifs is a characteristic feature of the “post-classical” *Íslendingasögur*. This is an important reason

why they are usually seen as very different from the “classical” *Íslendingasögur*, whose realism is linked to an origin in an oral tradition that was perceived as essentially historical. The post-classical sagas, with their many fantastic motifs, are in contrast seen as unhistorical, pure fiction, influenced primarily by written literature like *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. Sometimes this is certainly correct. But, in most post-classical

Íslendingasögur, such parallels are very few and superficial.

A concrete example is *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*. It is full of trolls and giants, and the standard explanation has been an influence from the *fornaldarsögur*. But an episode like the one where a female troll recites a stanza with a list of the landmarks which shall show the fisherman Ingjaldr the best fishing-ground, cannot be explained by such literary influences. But there are Norwegian legends, recorded in the 20th century, where a fisherman meets a supernatural being, who in a stanza lists the landmarks which will show him the best fishing-ground. There are many other supernatural saga episodes which have close parallels in later Scandinavian legends. In my

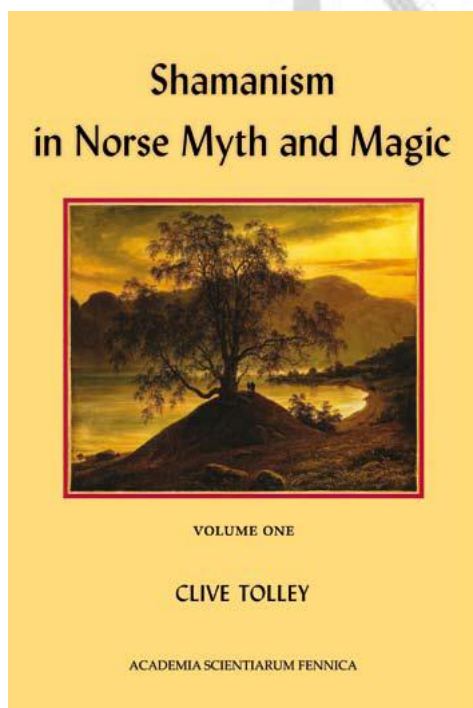
paper I give examples of such cases and show how my perspective leads to an interpretation that differs from the traditional one.

Such an interpretation of the parallels may also have an impact on the perception of *Íslendingasögur* in general. The view of the post-classical saga as bookish fiction which emerged under the influence of the written *fornaldarsaga* and *riddarasaga* is hardly sustainable. Nor is the contrast between the supernatural orientation and the realism of the classical saga evident. The stories in the later legends about encounters with the supernatural were also seen as basically true, and these stories were a part of the image people had of a real past. There is reason to believe that this also applied to many of the motifs of the post-classical sagas as well.

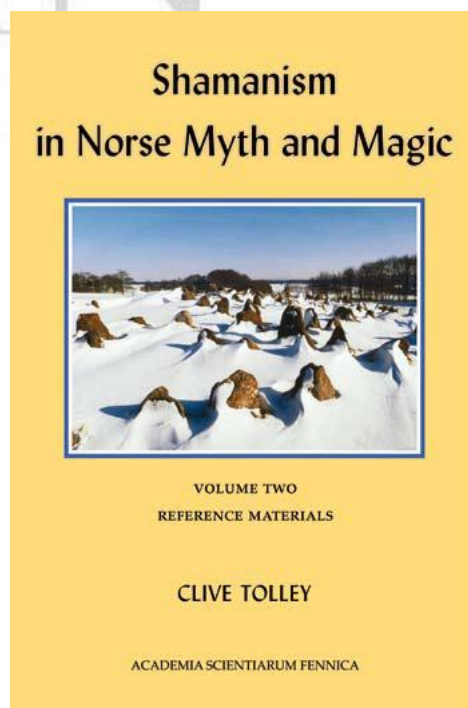
Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic, volumes I–II

Clive Tolley

Monograph published in 2009 in the series Folklore Fellows Communications, volumes 296–297, Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.



Volume I: xxvi + 590 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1027-6 (hard) and 978-951-41-1028-3 (soft).



Volume II: xiv + 288 + xvi pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1029-0 (hard) and 978-951-41-1030-6 (soft).

Medieval Norse written sources present acts of magic and initiation, performed both by humans and by gods. The summoning of spirits, journeys to the otherworld, the taking of animal shape, and drumming are some of the features of these rites that suggest some form of shamanism was practised in pre-Christian Scandinavia. But what exactly are the features of shamanism that are being compared? And how reliable are the Norse

sources in revealing the true nature of pre-Christian practices? In this study, Clive Tolley presents the main features of Siberian shamanism and examines the Norse texts in detail to determine how far it is reasonable to assign a label of “shamanism” to the human and divine magical practices of pre-Christian Scandinavia. Norse “shamanism”, it is argued, in many cases resides mainly in the imaginative tradition of the poets.

***Vǫlsa þátrr*: Pagan Lore or Christian Lie?**

Clive Tolley

Paper published in Analecta Septentrionalia: Beiträge zur nordgermanischen Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte, Wilhelm Heizmann, Klaus Bödl & Heinrich Beck (eds.), Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 65 (2009), 680–700. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Vǫlsa þátrr has been seen by a number of scholars – but not all – as exhibiting a rare survival from pagan times, preserved in a remote corner of Norway. There are analogues from antiquity, such as Dionysiac rites, but a close examination of these shows many discrepancies, particularly in the fundamental area of what, from a pagan religious perspective, the purpose of the rite would be. Some folklore parallels are also to be found, but these prove scantier than might be expected. On the other hand, literary parallels appear stronger: a generally similar pattern of ‘benighted yokels’ is found in *Gautreks saga*, and the theme of Óláfr as the strong suppressor of paganism is found widely in other sources. The *þátrr* is remarkably well constructed, which itself appears the result of artifice, not of being a representation of genuine folk custom. The verses might be viewed as ancient, but there is nothing to actually indicate that they are, as a detailed look at some of the expressions shows.

Vǫlsa þátrr presents an interesting methodological problem: the very same

evidence, regarded as significant by proponents arguing both for and against the presence of genuine pagan tradition, may be interpreted as indicating the presence either of such genuine pagan tradition, or of antiquarian artifice on the part of the author. It is, in the main, the wider context, including factors such as the date of composition and the literary type of the tale, that incline me to regard the *þátrr* as the product of a time much closer to Flateyjarbók than to paganism (I am far from seeking to argue against the survival of genuine pagan traditions in Norse literature in general). The investigation I have attempted here suggests that we should exercise great caution in using this text as evidence for any form of genuine paganism, or indeed wholly refrain from doing so. The author of the piece is, in my view, to be congratulated for pulling off such a finely crafted piece of literary artifice with its verisimilitude of Norse paganism that it has kept scholars wondering if it might, against all the odds, be a record of genuine pagan rites.

Retrospective Methods in Dating Post-Medieval Rigmaroles from the North Atlantic

Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir, University of Iceland

Paper presented at New Focus on Retrospective Methods, organized by the Retrospective Methods Network in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 13–14 September 2010.

A number of post-medieval Icelandic *pulur* and Faroese *skjaldur* (and occasional Shetland verses), which were mainly written down in the 19th–20th centuries, have Old Icelandic parallels, found chiefly in the *pulur* of *Snorra Edda*, but also in verses in some sagas. It is tempting to use these Old Icelandic texts to anchor the rigmaroles¹ in question in Old Icelandic literature and thus postulate their old roots, as suggested by Jón Samsonarson (1979, 1991) and Terry Gunnell (2001, 2007).² Questions concerning applications of retrospective methods in this context include:

- How close should these Old Icelandic parallels stand to the post-medieval rigmaroles to be used as anchors?
- How far back is it possible – and sensible – to bring in other rigmaroles, which belong to the same tradition as the rigmaroles mentioned above but which do not have Old Icelandic parallels preserved into our day, to be used as anchors?
- Some rigmaroles mainly contain lists of *heiti* (names or poetic synonyms), others have narrative elements. To what extent is it possible to reconstruct narratives?

The enumeration of *heiti* and/or short narrative elements, organized by semantic and phonic similarity, is an identifying feature of the rigmaroles under consideration. This same compositional principle is distinctive of Old Icelandic *pulur*; the post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles, also named *pulur*, have supposedly developed out of them.³ However, the *heiti* in the post-medieval *pulur* (and closely related Faroese *skjaldur*) are different

from those in Old Icelandic *pulur*, and textual parallels between the old and post-medieval *pulur* are only occasional. My claim is that similarity of genre and compositional principle, together with occasional – though not numerous – textual parallels, provides a clear analogy, which is sufficient for using Old Icelandic *pulur* as anchors.

Textual connections between most Icelandic post-medieval rigmaroles (along with many Faroese and some Shetland ones) form a dense net, which is another distinctive feature of the post-medieval rigmarole tradition in the North Atlantic.⁴ On the basis of this net, and combining comparative and retrospective methods, it should be possible to postulate old roots even for the rigmaroles that do not have direct Old Icelandic parallels. I discuss the pro and contra of dating these rigmaroles back to the pre-Reformation period or all the way back to the Icelandic Commonwealth – or even earlier times.

“One should only try to reconstruct notions not narratives”, claims Eldar Heide (2009).⁵ Each folk singer and his audience has, however, a *notion of the narrative* performed, which is passed from generation to generation. This notion could be used to reconstruct essential characteristics of the narrative in question. My experience of reconstructing a short narrative on the basis of the Fair Isle / Orcadian Grýla-verse and kindred verses from old and modern Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland and Swedish Lapland, can serve as example. I suggest the existence of a narrative with a male counterpart of Grýla, at least as early as prior to the Reformation – and likely to the time of Old Icelandic literature.

Notes

1. The word *rigmarole(s)* is not used specifically to denote poetry in modern English. Here I follow Jakob Jakobsen who uses it both about a post-medieval Icelandic *þula* and some comparable Shetland verses in his “Introduction” (see his *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland*, Lerwick 1985, vol. I, pp. xcvi, ci).
2. Jón Samsonarson, 1979, “Jólasveinar komnir í leikinn” (*Íslenskt mál* 1: 150-174) and 1991, “Marghala Grýla í gördum vesturnorrænna eyþjóða” (*Lygisögur*. [Ed. Gísli Sigurðsson, Örnólfur Thorsson]. Reykjavík. Pp. 48–54). Terry Gunnell, 2001, “Grýla, Grýtur, “Grøleks” and Skeklers: Medieval Disguise Traditions in the North Atlantic?” (*Arv* 57: 33–54) and 2007, “Masks and Mumming Traditions in the North Atlantic” (*Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*. Ed. Terry Gunnell. Uppsala. Pp. 275–326).
3. As I showed in: Yelena Yershova, 2003, “Postmedieval Icelandic *þulur*: Evolution of the Genre” [in Russian] (*Atlantica* 5: 158–178).
4. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir, 2008, “Íslenskar þulur og færeysk skjaldur: er allt sama tóbakið?” (*Frændafundur* 6. Ed. Turið Sigurðardóttir, Magnús Snædal. Tórshavn. Pp. 175–199) and forthcoming, “Shetland Rhymes from the Collection of Dr. Jakob Jakobsen” (in the papers of the Faroese-Shetlandic Conference on Dr. Jakob Jakobsen, Scalloway, May 12–13, 2006).
5. Eldar Heide, 2009, “More Inroads to Pre-Christian Notions, after All? The Potential of Late Evidence” (*Á austrvega*. Ed. Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams, Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist. Gävle. Pp. 361–368, here 366).

RMIN

People

MA-Thesis Projects

The Flying Trickster of the North: The Legacy of Sámi *Noaidevuohta* Tradition Reflected in the Borderline Figure Loki Laufeyjarson in Old Nordic Mythology

Triin Laidoner, University of Iceland

Supervisor: Terry Gunnell.

This study is a final assignment towards an MA-degree in the field of Old Nordic Religion at the University of Iceland (Háskóli Íslands), completed in the summer semester of 2009.

The purpose of the thesis is to discuss the possible Sámi influences on Old Norse mythology, substantially revolving around the different aspects of the Sámi shamanic practice of *noaidevuohta* and its possible connections with the complex mythological figure of Loki Laufeyjarson as he appears in Old Nordic sources. What will primarily be focused on is the duality and liminality of this figure, something which has always made it impossible for him to be placed in a clear-cut framework, and which in spite of several attempts has meant that academic discussions about his character have still not found a satisfactory denouement. The present thesis carefully re-examines all of the primary literary sources concerning Loki, as well as all the possibly Loki-connected archaeological finds and place-names, these providing us with additional clues as to the areas in which this figure may have been known. This is followed up with an overview of the development of approaches taken to

Loki in previous academic research, and a chapter which discusses research into Sámi religious attitudes, the Sámi way of life, and Sámi relations with the Norsemen. The study culminates with a detailed analysis of those typically Sámi-like features which seem to be inherent in Loki's character, and these are explained in the light of the *noaidevuohta* tradition. A further perspective into the Sámi magic arts is taken through Loki's apparent role as a trickster, since similar figures seem to exist in the parallel world of the *noaidi* (the Sámi witch/sorcerer) and appear in the folktales of the Sámi. The suggested perspective that Loki might be better understood in the context of *noaidi*-like figures or tricksters, both of which are found in Finno-Ugric (Sámi) tradition, but rather rarely occur in Germanic culture, makes it possible to approach Loki from a new angle and draw several tentative conclusions about his dualistic nature and possible development in the northern parts of Scandinavia.

Holy Groves, Rocky Places, and Sacral Constructions: The Establishment of Sacred Social Space in Viking-Age Pre-Christian Scandinavia

Luke John Murphy, University of Iceland

Supervisor: Steve Ashby.

This thesis was submitted for the M.A. in Medieval Studies at the Centre of Medieval Studies, University of York (U.K.) on the 2nd of October 2009.

This thesis seeks to examine the constitutive factors for the establishment of sacred social

space in pre-Christian Viking-Age Scandinavia. This is to be achieved by the

examination of worship-ritual places, which, it will be argued, certainly constitute sacred social space. As such, evidence for different classes of worship-ritual place from archaeological, textual, and toponymic corpuses will be examined, and a selection of types of worship-ritual place are to be selected to serve as an illustration of sacred social space.

The investigation of these worship-ritual sites will then be conducted, and the primary conclusions can be summarised as follows: two primary types of worship-ritual place can be distinguished, as categorised according to the methods by which their sacred social

space is established. The first are open-air, 'natural' places, whose sacral value was invested on the basis of spatial liminality. The second type of worship-ritual place is cosmologically central: buildings located within farmsteads, where space was engendered with sacral value by the action of sacred acts. Sacral value was invested in these places only for the duration of such acts, and was therefore imbued on the basis of temporal liminality. It will therefore be concluded that sacred social space in pre-Christian Viking-Age Scandinavian was based on a sense of spatial liminality, a detachment from the human centre of the cosmos.

Heterogeneity in the Old Norse World Picture: Diversity and Uniformity in Mythological Genres

Mathias Nordvig, Aarhus University

Supervisor: Pernille Hermann.

This research project is a 3/5 year graduate to post-graduate program of study for the acquisition of a degree of MA/PhD at the Aarhus Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University. The PhD dissertation is scheduled for submission in June 2013; the MA-thesis will be submitted in June 2011.

My research project is based on literary analyses of the primary sources to Old Norse mythology: *Snorra Edda*, Eddic poetry and *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*. It is an investigation of notions of heterogeneity in Old Norse cosmology in these quite different types of medieval texts. The question of heterogeneity in Old Norse cosmology is relative to the text that relays information about the mythology. The *world picture* that one may deduce from reading such texts as the Eddic poems, *Snorra Edda* and *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla* is not a homogenous one. One can hardly say that, even though there are many commonalities in the different texts, the *world picture* of Old Norse cosmology in one text corresponds directly to that in another. As such, the overall *world picture* is more heterogeneous than homogeneous. The purpose of this project is to examine the primary circumstance that I see as instrumental in the writing down of Old Norse mythology: genre. As recording and use of the mythology and the pagan past

gradually became an important issue during the 12th century and particularly in the 13th century, Christian interpretation and consciousness about the heathen material permeated different genres with which to treat this potentially troublesome subject in medieval Icelandic literature, and eventually resulted in the kind of Old Norse mythology that is accessible in the literature as we know it. The movement, as I see it, goes from the historiographic treatment of Old Norse mythological material in *Ynglinga saga*, compressing the cosmology into a completely Christian *world picture*, over retro-fitted heathenry and quasi-historical renderings in the *ars poetica* of *Snorra Edda*, to the *fabulae* of Eddic poetry – stories which were perhaps considered more fantastic than real in the 13th century. My work so far has resulted in one article which I hope to have published next year: "Lord and Monster: Snorri's explanation of heathenry in *Ynglinga saga* in connection with Óðinn, Njǫrðr and Freyr as the 'founding fathers' of the Ynglings". This article makes

up one fourth of my up-coming MA-thesis, while the rest is divided into two sections, one on *Snorra Edda* and one on Eddic poetry, respectively: “Cosmology in *Snorra Edda*: From Eschatological Space in *Gylfaginning* to

the World of the ‘Lesser Narratives’ in *Skáldskaparmál*”, and “Unfolding Myth and Space: Between Cosmology and Narrated Space in Eddic Poetry”.

Sacrifices among Slavs

Izabella Wenska, Adam Mickiewicz University

Supervisor: Grzegorz Pełczyński.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of June 2011 at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the idea of sacrifices among Slavs by comparing archaeological evidence from the Early Middle Ages with folkloric material from the 19th century. The first chapter will refer to folk culture and its aim will be to provide some preliminary suggestions as to why it may have been possible to maintain archaic practices and anachronisms. Throughout my discussion I will refer to a number theoretical perspectives employed in fields such as anthropology, folkloristics, psychology, archeology, and philosophy. One of my inspirations for this work is W.J. Ong’s theory of orality and literacy. In the second chapter I will describe alleged sacrificial practices among the pagan Slavs by conducting an analysis of archaeological deposits found in the Western Slavic world. Although most of my case studies will be drawn from the area inhabited by the Western Slavs, I will also seek parallels elsewhere in the Slavic world. My aim is not to make a comprehensive catalogue of all known Slavic sacrificial deposits from the Early Medieval times but rather to provide some key examples. The third chapter will refer to sacrifices that are

known from the folkloristic sources. I will pay special attention to small, everyday sacrifices (for example those dedicated to demons or ancestors). I will argue that sacrifices were an inherent part of everyday life (the anthropology of everyday life), conducted on a daily basis during, for example, the preparation of food, consumption etc. Sacrifices perceived as phenomena can be divided in various ways. I decided to divide them into sacrifices made within the house, farm property, or village (orbis interior), and sacrifices made outside of these areas, such as in forests, by lakes, etc. (orbis exterior). My main points of reference here will be the interpretations of such rituals put forward by a Russian scholar B.A. Uspienski in his book *Kult św. Mikołaja na Rusi* [‘The Cult of St. Nicholas in Rus’]. Ultimately, the thesis will seek to answer the following question: Is there any continuity in the sacrificial rituals among Slavs from Medieval times to 19th century folk culture? It is my hope that this M.A. thesis will be another step towards the reconstruction of ancient Slavic beliefs and that it will shed new light on the problem of Slavic sacrifices.

Faculties, Institutions and Organizations

The Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia

Revitalization of a department

The Department of Scandinavian Studies has been without a professor since 2005. There has been very little research activity and concentration has been almost exclusively on teaching. In September of this year, I took up the post as professor of the department. It was clearly stated that my main task was to improve the research situation. A lot has happened since then, and even more is going on now. Most of it is of importance for Old Norse scholars.

The Department will have a distinct profile from now on, focussing on two main fields:

- 1) “Sweden in Estonia”, that is: Swedish Livonia in the 17th Century (with a lot of important Swedish poets in Tartu, for example) and the Estonian Swedes;
- 2) Old Norse Literature, Language, Culture and History.

The second field is, of course, the most important for the members of the Retrospective Methods Network. Several people at the department are already working in this field: I, Daniel Sävborg, the new professor of Scandinavian Studies; PhD student Andres Mutso, working with skaldic poetry and runic inscriptions; Dr. Kristel Zilmer, presently doing post-doc research in Bergen, but still part of the Department of Scandinavian Studies in Tartu; PhD student Mart Kuldkepp, writing his dissertation in the field of “Sweden in Estonia” but also translating numerous *fornaldarsögur* into Estonian and participating in a smaller project on *byskupasögur*; while PhD student Siiri Tomingas-Joandi has a relevant folkloristic theme for her doctoral dissertation (though not in the Old Norse field *per se*) on

changelings in Swedish legends. As part of the plan to have more Old Norse scholars in the coming years, we now offer an MA course (also open to BA students) in Icelandic language and literature of which Old Norse philology is an important part. Hopefully this means that in the years to come, more students will choose Old Norse topics for their theses.

For the first time in five years, the Department now has an active Research Seminar. A version of my own paper from the RMN conference in Bergen was presented there, and another folkloristic paper will be presented in January by Siiri Tomingas-Joandi. The discussion has involved the whole academic staff of the department as well as the MA students. The department has also started a series of scientific guest lectures, something that has been missing for several years. Here, too, the focus is on medieval topics. In November, a guest lecturer from Centrum för medeltidsstudier, Stockholm University, will give a lecture on Norse Medieval Greenland.

An activity which is also going on now and of importance for RMN members is the founding of an interdisciplinary seminar/network for pre-modern studies at Tartu University, which includes participants such as, for example, Ülo Valk and Jonathan Roper from the Department of folklore. The initiative for this seminar was taken by the Department of Scandinavian Studies and the meetings take place in the library of the department. The seminar has received a lot of interest: there has never been anything like it in Tartu before. The group meets 1–2 times per month, and at each meeting one of the members gives a talk which is discussed.

Although this may not seem to be very much compared with the activities in the Medieval Centres and Scandinavian departments in Scandinavia or England, we have a lot of plans for expanding our activities here in Tartu. The establishment of the Old Norse Folklorist network is of course an important part of these plans, and I am glad that Tartu is the coordination centre of this network. Plans for workshop meetings and conferences of this network are outlined in the “manifesto”, published elsewhere in this issue of *RMN Newsletter*. In collaboration with the Department of Folklore Studies, the Department of Scandinavian Studies in Tartu is also planning a conference in 2012, and also a common course for the degree of PhD,

which we hope also to found in 2012. In addition, there are plans for a project on the copying and revision of Old Norse manuscripts and an examination of what sorts of changes are taking place there.

The Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Tartu hopes to become a hub of activity for the investigation, research and analysis of Old Norse materials, their relationships to later folklore, and the diachronic processes which underlie the relationships between them.

Daniel Sävborg
Professor of Scandinavian Studies
University of Tartu

The Center for Viking and Medieval Studies, Aarhus University

Aarhus University is the second largest university in Denmark. It has strong academic traditions in science, health and social science, theology, humanities and the arts. Aarhus University is as an organization oriented towards international cooperation which actively seeks to develop bonds to other international academic institutions. Since Aarhus is an old Viking town, it is only natural that Aarhus University is also a major center for Viking and Old Norse studies, with a vibrant interdisciplinary environment and events directed at both students and scholars. The Center for Viking and Medieval Studies

at Aarhus University is a collaboration between different departments at the university. At the moment it involves the Department of History, the departments of Pre-Historic, Medieval and Renaissance Archaeology, the Department of Studies of Religion and the Scandinavian Department. Together, these departments offer an array of English language MA-courses in Viking Age history and archaeology, Old Norse literature and the history of religion, as well as summer schools, seminars, conferences and PhD-courses. For more information and contact, please visit: <http://viking-oldnorse.au.dk/en>



Old Norse Studies at the Scandinavian Department, Aarhus University

Old Norse research in the Scandinavian Department at Aarhus University is primarily literary and cultural-historical. Our faculty's research covers a broad range of Old Norse genres – sagas, myths, history, Eddic and skaldic poetry – and is centered on methodological and theoretical issues, such as genre, discourse, orality/literacy, memory culture, as well as critical text editing and translating. Our research is interdisciplinary and often carried out in cooperation with historians, historians of religion, archaeologists and linguists on both a national and international basis. Old Norse studies in the Scandinavian Department encourages international cooperation between researchers and students through visiting Professorships, teaching exchange, frequent seminars and conferences. Over the last few years several international scholars have been affiliated with the Department. The Scandinavian Department offers regular BA and MA semester courses on Old Norse subjects, as well as annual summer schools. All teaching in Old Norse subjects is in English, and includes international guest lecturers. Our

staff is currently made up of one associate professor (Lektor), one post-doc and two PhD-students:

Bergdís Prastardóttir (MA, PhD-student).
Research interests: *Þættir*, Icelandic sagas, saga genres, oral tradition and oral narratives.

Pernille Hermann (MA, PhD, Assoc. Prof.)
Research interests: Old Norse prose literature, memory culture, orality and literacy.

Mathias Nordvig (BA, grad/ PhD-student).
Research interests: Old Norse literature, Eddic poetry, the *Prose Edda*, myths and mythology, orality and literacy.

Rolf Stavnem (MA, PhD, Post-doc).
Research interests: Skaldic poetry, orality, narrativity, text-edition, translation.

For more information, please visit:
<http://nordisk.au.dk/forskning/forskningscentret/oldnorsestudiesinthescandinaviandepartment>

Calls for Papers

Distant Cultural Differences?

Call for panel proposals for Dynamics of Cultural Differences: 32nd Nordic Conference of Ethnology and Folkloristics, June 18–21, 2012, Bergen, Norway

The 32nd Nordic Conference of Ethnology and Folkloristics is to be arranged in Bergen, Norway in June 2012. The theme for the conference is *Dynamics of Cultural Differences*. They have just made a *Call for panels*, and I think it would be appropriate if someone within the Retrospective Methods Network did something to make a panel within our common field of interest. One effect would be to challenge the Folkloristic (and Ethnological) absence from retrospective use of the sources of tradition. Another benefit could be to recruit new members to our network; Ethnologists and Folklorists that share our interests, but have no one to play with.

The key is to make a good proposal for a panel that fits with the main-theme; “Dynamics of Cultural Differences” and one that at the same time captures our more-or-less common field of interest. One suggestion might be to do something on the theme “How to understand cultural differences in a distant

past?” thereby making it into a methodological section (which could be based on empirical cases). Another possible theme could be to discuss or question the existence of “History of effect” or actual tradition through long time spans, where the continuity is to be questioned because of radical cultural change, as the case is between Iron Age society and later, different kinds of Christianity. But these are only some instant thoughts or suggestions. Maybe we could pool ideas together and organize different suggestions within the network, and make one or more group proposals?

It is normal that these conferences have some Scandinavian language panels and some panels in English. See: <http://bergen2012.no/> for more information.

Call for panels submitted by Terje Planke, Norwegian Maritime Museum
Terje.Planke@marmuseum.no

RMN Newsletter is oriented to constructing an informational resource and discourse space for researchers of diverse and intersecting disciplines. It welcomes and encourages its readership to engage in that discourse space and also promotes an awareness that participation will support, maintain and also shape this emergent venue.

Please submit contributions to *RMN Newsletter* electronically in *.doc, *.docx or *.rtf formats.

Frog
University of Helsinki
editor.rmnewsletter@gmail.com