An Excuse for Violence

The Viking Image, Race, and Masculinity in U.S. Popular Culture

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the evolution of the Viking image in U.S. popular culture, from the publication of *Antiquitates Americanæ*, a scholarly work on the Vinland sagas, by Danish philologist Carl Christian Rafn in 1837, to the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, at which extremist groups gathered to protest the removal of a statue of a confederate soldier. Seen at the rally were banners, shields, and helmets that featured swastikas and the Ku Klux Klan insignia—but also medieval Norse runes and symbols. The broader aim is to investigate how white supremacy and violent masculinity became a part of the Viking image in the United States—what cultural factors may have been influential, as well as the prejudices and ideologies held by individual authors of Viking fiction or the films.

The study is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on three spheres of American culture during the nineteenth century that affected how middle class Americans understood and viewed the Vikings: a) American interest in and reception of Old Norse literature, which began in earnest after 1837 but also fit into an existing discourse of possible pre-Columbian civilizations in the U.S. b) the evolution of the American adventure literary genre and the archetypal frontier hero in particular, and c) significant changes to how many Americans understood gender. The writings on Old Norse literature during the nineteenth century were often influenced by these other spheres, as well as contemporary prejudices, beliefs, and cultural trends. Chapters 2 and 3 are case studies of twentieth-century American Viking adventures that demonstrate how these spheres intersect and how this collection of information on the Vikings from the nineteenth century—along with its inherent ideologies and prejudices—continued to function in American literature. *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902) by Ottilie Liljencrantz is one of the first novelized versions of the Vinland story written in the United States and features ideas such as manifest destiny and Victorian gender ideals. *The Viking* (1951) by Edison Marshall, on the other hand, contains explicit sexually violent episodes and masculine characters. Although the Vikings look different in these novels, they communicate in both instances ideas of white superiority, racial and gender hierarchies, levels of civilization, and ideal manliness. Chapter 4 analyzes several twentieth- and twenty-first-century fiction and films, most of which recycle motifs

developed by Liljencrantz and Marshall, as well as ideas that can be traced back to the nineteenth century.

This thesis is a study of the post-medieval reception of Old Norse literature. The study of reception has been a growing field over the last twenty to thirty years. While some earlier studies have discussed how race and gender have influenced this reception in the U.S., these issues have not been the main focus. Moreover, this is the first study to consider thoroughly the impact the American adventure genre has had on the American perception of the Vikings.

Útdráttur

Viðfangsefni ritgerðarinnar eru birtingarmyndir víkingsins í bandarískri dægurmenningu í sinni víðustu mynd. Til að gefa hugmynd um umfang ritgerðarinnar má nefna að fjallað er um *Antiquitates Americanæ* frá 1837 eftir Carl Christian Rafn sem er fræðirit um Vínlandssögurnar. Einnig eru óeirðirnar í Charlottesville í Virginíufylki árið 2017 (sem gengu undir nafninu Unite the Right Rally) ræddar, enda sáust óeirðaseggir bera allskyns hatursmerki, s.s. hakakrossa og tákn KKK, en á milli mátti sjá glitta í fornnorræn tákn og rúnir. Meginmarkmið ritgerðarinnar er að rannsaka hvernig kynþáttahyggja hvítra manna og ofbeldisfull karlmennskuímynd verða hluti af birtingarmynd víkingsins í Bandaríkjunum. Einnig er rannsakað hvaða menningarfyrirbæri, ásamt fordómum og hugmyndafræði einstakra höfunda, hafa haft áhrif á þessa birtingarmynd innan bæði skáldsagna og kvikmynda.

Rannsókninni er skipt niður í fjóra kafla. Í fyrsta kafla er fjallað um þrjú merkingarsvið sem höfðu mikil áhrif á skilning Bandaríkjamanna 19. aldar á víkingum. Það fyrsta er vaxandi áhugi vestanhafs á norrænum miðaldabókmenntum sem hófst um 1837 og rímaði vel við hugmyndir manna um menntað vestrænt samfélag í Bandaríkjunum fyrir komu Kristófers Kólumbus. Annað sviðið er saga bandarískra ævintýrabókmennta og þá sérstaklega þróunin á landkönnuðinum sem persónu innan bókmenntagreinarinnar. Þriðja sviðið er breytilegur skilningur Bandaríkjamanna á karlmennsku og kyngervi. Umræðan um norrænar miðaldabókmenntir á 19. öld vestra var löngum lituð af þessum merkingarsviðum en einnig fordómum og almenn menningarástandi. Annar og þriðji kafli eru tilviksrannsóknir á tveimur bandarískum ævintýrabókum frá 20. öld sem fjalla um víkinga og urðu grundvöllur tveggja áhrifaríkra kvikmynda. Í þessum verkum sést vel hvernig áðurnefnd þrjú svið skarast og hvernig staðalmyndir víkinga frá 19. öld, ásamt undirliggjandi fordómum, halda áfram að vera mótandi afl í bandarískum bókmenntum. Ottilie Liljencrantz er með fyrstu skáldsagnahöfundum í Bandaríkjunum til að nýta sér efnivið Vínlandssagnanna í sögulegu skáldsögunni *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902). Þar birtast m.a. rótgrónar hugmyndir um að landnám Evrópubúa í Bandaríkjunum hafi verið óhjákvæmilegt og íhaldssöm viðhorf Viktoríutímabilsins gagnvart konum. Í skáldsögunni *The Vikings* (1951) eftir Edison Marshall birtast hins vegar sláandi lýsingar á ofbeldi og karlrembu. Þó svo

að birtingarmyndir víkingsins séu ólíkar í þessum tveimur skáldsögum miðla þær báðar kynþáttahyggju, hugmyndum um yfirburði hvítra manna og kyn- og menningarbundið stigveldi innan samfélagsins, ásamt því að höfundar halda á lofti fastmótaðri karlmennskuímynd. Í fjórða kafla er fjallað um úrval skáldsagna og kvikmynda frá 20. og 21. öld sem eiga það flestar sameiginlegt að endurnýta sagnaminni sem rekja má til 19. aldar eða beint til skáldsagna Liljencrantz og Marshall.

Ritgerðin er viðtökufræðileg rannsókn á norrænum miðaldabókmenntum sem er rannsóknarsvið sem hefur verið í stöðugum vexti síðastliðna þrjá áratugi. Þó svo að fjallað hafi verið um kyn og kynþætti sem áhrifaþátt í viðtökum á norrænum miðaldabókmenntum í Bandaríkjunum hefur þetta viðfangsefni aldrei verið aðalviðfangsefnið fyrr en nú. Einnig er þetta fyrsta rannsóknin sem greinir og tekur afstöðu til þeirra áhrifa sem bandaríska ævintýraskáldsagan hafði á skilning Bandaríkjamanna á víkingum.

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Introduction

In August of 2017, around 300 protestors gathered around the statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, in an effort to stop the local government from taking it down. There had been a growing trend throughout the United States to remove statues honoring Confederate soldiers, which some Americans viewed as monuments to an era of Black slavery and white supremacy. Seen throughout the crowd of mostly white, male protesters in Charlottesville were indeed symbols associated with white supremacy, as well as flags and banners of well-known hate groups, including the Nazi swastika and the insignia of the Ku Klux Klan. The protest was the most emboldened public expression of white supremacy the U.S. had seen in decades, and it resulted in the death of counter-protestor Heather Danielle Heyer.

Symbols associated with the medieval period—notably Nordic runes and the Icelandic *ægishjálmur*—had also been painted on several of the protesters' shields, banners, and helmets.[1] Academics responded almost immediately by writing articles and blog posts on the problematic relationship between the Middle Ages and racism and white supremacy. Dorothy Kim (2017) and Andrew B. R. Elliott (2017), for example, wrote about the misconception of race in the Middle Ages and gave clues as to how to teach about this period without recycling or promoting these negative connotations. *The Public Medievalist* began a series titled "Race and the Middle Ages," through which several scholars attempted to dispel myths that had been a part of both academia and in popular culture.[2] Many of these authors would go on to

[1] The *ægishjálmur*, or Helm of Awe, is a popular symbol that has taken on a protective meaning and has often been attributed to the Viking Age. Although a mention of an *ægishjámur* is made in eddic poetry, the magic stave does not appear in print until around the seventeenth century. For more, see, "Magical Staves," Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft, accessed January 20, 2018, https://galdrasyning.is/en/galdrastafir/; Roberto Luigi Pagani, "Simboli magici islandesi 'galdrastafir,'" Un Italiano in Islanda, September 14, 2019, https://unitalianoinislanda.com/2019/09/14/simboli-magici-islandesi-i galdrastafir/?fbclid=IwAR3QZuH7fXoyQX_nvQFvJlNsaezHWFa3Ckxjdt3UurY9Xt9zFyPiON3Cdq4.

[2] "Race, Racism and the Middle Ages," Table of Contents, The Public Medievalist, accessed January 20, 2018, https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-toc/.

publish articles on similar topics in peer-reviewed journals and other academic publications. I found this simultaneous condemnation of racism and defense of medieval studies both necessary and intriguing, but what interested and bothered me the most was how this relationship between medievalism—and Vikings and Old Norse in particular—and racism appeared almost natural. I became interested in how these ideas became linked in the United States in the first place and how they evolved over time.

Interest in Old Norse literature increased in the U.S. after Danish philologist Carl Christian Rafn published his landmark work, *Antiquitates Americanæ*, in 1837 about the so-called Vinland sagas. Significantly, *Antiquitates Americanæ* and its reception were shaped by contemporary American ideas of not only race but also of gender, civilization, and destiny. This study traces these ideas through American literary history and analyzes how they shaped the popular understanding and perception of the Vikings, the Viking Age, and Vinland in an American context approximately between 1837 and 2017. Chapter 1 sets the stage for the main analysis. The first part of this chapter discusses an important cultural shift that took place around the turn of the twentieth century (1880–1920), during which many middle-class Americans began to think differently about gender and gender roles, particularly in regards to manhood and what it meant to be manly. The following sections explore the history of American adventures. With roots in the colonial-period captivity narrative, this literary genre became truly recognizable in the United States during the nineteenth century. The novels and films discussed in the following chapters retain elements of these early adventures, especially the characteristics of the early frontier adventure hero. The remaining sections in chapter 1 focus on how Rafn's work fits into the cultural milieu of the nineteenth century and how others adapted his ideas and shaped them with contemporary issues, anxieties, and ideologies.

In order to demonstrate how these separate spheres converge and influence popular perceptions of the Viking Age, I analyze two popular American novels about the Vikings. Chapter 2 focuses on *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902) by Ottilie Liljencrantz (1876–1910), while chapter 3 centers on *The Viking* (1951) by Edison Marshall (1894–1967). I chose to examine these books instead of other contemporary Viking-themed fiction for several reasons. Firstly, both novels are not only representative of Viking-age adventures in general but also unique because of their longevity and influence. Both books were quite popular among middle-class Americans in the years that followed their publication. Secondly, they both inspired

Hollywood films. *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* served as the basis for *The Viking* (1928), directed by Roy William Neill. Correspondingly, Marshall's novel was adapted for the screenplay of Richard Fleischer's *The Vikings* (1958). This latter film proved to be hugely successful and has left a discernable impression on the American imagination. Additionally, the books by Liljencrantz and Marshall were published during (1902) and after (1951) the culture shift described in chapter 1; thus, the Vikings in these novels highlight different ideals of manhood that reflect contemporary American values. Finally, the novels represent very different approaches to historical fiction. Liljencrantz, for instance, includes a list of authors and sources at the beginning of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. Marshall, on the other hand, does not provide any account of his source material. Both authors, however, rely upon what I will call the "Viking discourse"—a collection of ideas about the Vikings, Vinland, Old Norse literature and the Viking Age, blending historical fact, medieval literature, stereotypes and literary motifs, and creative invention.

The focus of Chapter 4 shifts toward film studies, as it discusses the films *The Norseman* (1978), *Severed Ways* (2007), and *Pathfinder* (2007), the novel *Black Viking* (1981), and the short story "The Ice-Hearts" (1992). These works contain elements of the "Viking discourse" that can be traced back to the nineteenth century, as well as to Liljencrantz's and Marshall's novels. Some authors and filmmakers, however, attempt to subvert and challenge the popular images of the Vikings. By tracing notions of race, gender, civilization and destiny through creative works about the Viking Age from the nineteenth century through the twenty-first century, we can see how ideas and prejudices become implicitly and explicitly, accidentally and intentionally, associated with the Vikings in U.S. popular culture. And when situated within American literary history, the image of the Viking and particularly the story of Vinland's relationship with violent masculinity and white supremacy becomes much clearer.

The Vinland Sagas

Many of the novels and films analyzed in this study feature Vikings in North America, which the medieval Norse named "Vinland." The concept of Vinland is what intrigued many nineteenth-century authors and what sparked an interest in Old Norse literature in the middle of that century. For this reason, I frequently refer to the Vinland sagas. Hence it is necessary at this stage to explain what these works are, to summarize their basic plots, and to highlight some of the important aspects that will factor into the analyses in the following chapters. The Vinland sagas refer to two medieval Icelandic narratives—*Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlendinga saga*—that describe, among other things, journeys the Norse took to North America around the turn of the eleventh century. These sagas are part of a large corpus of Old Norse literature, mostly produced in Iceland, which consists of works of history, genealogies, homilies, romances, legends, myths, poetry, laws, and more.[3]

Every surviving Old Norse manuscript was written down long after the people of Iceland converted to Christianity and adopted the Latin alphabet, which occurred, according to sources, around the year 1000.[4] Textual production began in Iceland during the twelfth century; however, most of these original copies are lost, and the oldest surviving manuscripts are generally dated to the thirteenth century, while many medieval sagas and narratives appear in much younger manuscripts. Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, for example, which was written as a textbook for aspiring poets, provides readers with a glimpse into the pre-Christian myths of the medieval Norse peoples. Snorri probably wrote this work around 1220, but the oldest surviving manuscript—Codex Regius (GKS 2367 4°)—dates from the middle of the fourteenth century.[5] One of the most important written works describing pre-

[3] For this study, I use the term Old Norse literature in reference to the corpus. For an overview of the different genres and the terminology related to the corpus, see *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

[4] Jenny Jochens, "Late and Peaceful: Iceland's Conversion Through Arbitration in 1000," *Speculum* 74, no. 3 (July 1999): 622–623. For more on the conversion of Iceland and of Scandinavia in general, see Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power, and Social Change, 1000–1030* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Stefan Brink, "Christianisation and the emergence of the early Church in Scandinavia," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 621–628.

[5] Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas: Iceland's Medieval Literature*, trans. Peter Foote (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1988), 175–178. For an analysis of the stemmatic history of Snorri's *Edda*, see Haukur Þorgeirsson, "A Stemmatic Analysis of the *Prose Edda*," *Saga-Book* 41 (2017): 49–70.

Christian beliefs in the Nordic region is, then, a copy of an original manuscript written by a Christian man about myths from hundreds of years before his time.[6]

The *Prose Edda* is not unique in this regard, and many medieval sagas survive in manuscripts that were produced decades and even centuries after they were first written down, including the Vinland sagas.[7] *Eiríks saga rauða*, for instance, describes events from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The saga is preserved in two vellum manuscripts: Hauksbók (AM 544 4t°), dated from the early fourteenth century, and Skálholtsbók (AM 557 4t°), dated from the early fifteenth century—and both variants are supposedly based on a narrative originally written sometime after 1263.[8] *Grænlendinga saga* appears to be the older of the Vinland sagas. It is based on an early thirteenth-century narrative and is preserved as part of a larger work about the life of Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvason found in the 1387 vellum manuscript Flateyjarbók.[9]

These two sagas tell different—and at times conflicting—versions of the story of the Norse settlement and occupation of Greenland and subsequent journeys to the North American continent.[10] *Eiríks saga rauða* explains how Erik Thorvaldsson, after having been outlawed from both Norway and Iceland for committing several murders, sails west and discovers Greenland, where he ultimately settles down.[11] One of Erik's sons, Leif, resides in Norway and is in the service of King Olaf Tryggvason. The king asks Leif to sail to Greenland and convert all who live there

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[6] Anthony Faulkes, introduction to Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 2nd ed (University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2005), xi–xxvii; Margaret Clunies Ross, "The conservation and reinterpretation of myth in medieval Icelandic writings," in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 124–135.

[7] Emily Lethbridge, "Some observations on Íslendingasögur manuscripts and the case of Njáls saga," *Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi* (January 2014): 71–75.

[8] Gísli Sigurðsson, introduction to *The Vinland Sagas*, trans. Keneva Kunz (London: Penguin Books, 2008), xi.

[9] Gísli Sigurðsson, introduction, x.

[10] Gísli Sigurðsson attributes the contradictions in the two sagas to the nature of oral histories that change and mutate over time. Gísli Sigurðsson, *Íslendingasögur and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method* (Reykjavík, 2001), 11–12.

[11] I have elected to use Anglicized spelling of the names of saga characters because most of the authors analyzed in this study wrote in English and spelled them similarly. Ottilie Liljencrantz, however, names her character Leif Ericsson, and I continue using this name in my analysis. Otherwise, he is referred to as Leif Eriksson.

to Christianity. While in route, the ship is blown off course, and the crew spots an unknown land full of "fields of self-sown wheat and vines," which the Norse will later name Vinland (*Vínland*).[12] He also chances upon shipwreck and rescues the survivors. The narrator subsequently tells us: "In doing so he showed his strong character and kindness. He converted the country to Christianity. Afterwards he became known as Leif the Lucky."[13] In this saga, Leif does not set foot on Vinland but returns to Greenland and disappears from the narrative. His brother, Thorsteinn, later attempts to find Vinland but gets lost and eventually returns to Greenland. The first voyage to reach the shores of Vinland in *Eiríks saga rauða* is led by Thorfinn Karlsefni, an Icelandic merchant from Skagafjörður.

In *Grænlendinga saga*, Vinland is discovered by Bjarni Herjolfsson, a Norseman who gets lost enroute to Greenland. Although this narrative was originally a part of a work about Olaf Tryggvason, it does not mention the king's mission of conversion in Greenland or the fact that Leif was in the king's service. In this saga, Leif leads an expedition in search of the land Bjarni saw and makes landfall. Leif and his crew come first to a land of glaciers and no grass, which he names Helluland (Stone-slab land) and decides not to explore it. They sail on to discover a second land that is forested and flat, which Leif names Markland (Forest land). They sail for another two days before discovering Vinland. The narrator gives specific directions: the company "sailed into a sound which lay between the island and the headland that stretched out northwards from the land. They rounded the headland and steered westward. Here there were extensive shallows at low tide and their ship was soon stranded."[14] Overwhelmed with curiosity, the group eventually sail up a river and into a lake. From there, they go ashore, build shelters and explore the land.

Most American writers have been intrigued with two aspects of the Vinland sagas: the precise location of Vinland and the encounter between the Norse and a

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[12] *Grænlendinga saga* in *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttr ǫrva, Eiríks saga rauða, Grænlendinga saga, Grænlendinga þáttr*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson, Íslensk fornrit, vol. IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka forritafélag, 1935), 252–253; Keneva Kunz, trans., *The Vinland Sagas* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 8.

[13] *Eiríks saga rauða* in *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttr ǫrva, Eiríks saga rauða, Grænlendinga saga, Grænlendinga þáttr*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson, Íslensk fornrit, vol. IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka forritafélag, 1935), 211–212; Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 35.

[14] *Grænlendinga saga*, 250; Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 7.

group of indigenous people of North America. Several nineteenth-century intellectuals and authors were determined to find evidence of Vinland in the United States. The sagas, however, do not give the exact location but provide clues as to where it could have been. The expeditions of Leif and Karlsefni, for instance, discover Vinland much further south than where they initially come ashore, but the landscape descriptions and sailing directions differ between the two sagas. However, the natural world provides some hints as to the general area: the lakes and rivers are fully stocked with large salmon, and there are so many birds on an island they named Straumsey that they could not avoid stepping on eggs.[15] In *Grænlendinga saga*, a "Southerner"—suggested by scholars to have been German—named Tyrkir sets out to explore the land and discovers wild grapevines growing.[16] This episode suggests that the location of Vinland, which supposedly derives its name from these vines, is somewhere grapes can grow in North America. This saga also gives one of the most discussed and tantalizing detail to suggest where in North America the Norse may have reached during this journey: "The temperature never dropped below freezing, and the grass only withered very slightly. The days and nights were much more equal in length than in Greenland or Iceland. In the depth of winter the sun was aloft by mid-morning and still visible at mid afternoon."[17] But, as Magnus Magnusson and Herman Pálsson point out, this could be "anywhere between the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and New Jersey."[18]

While nineteenth-century authors discussed and speculated about the natives of Vinland that the Norse encountered, the meeting between these groups of people became a central focus of many twentieth-century creative works about Vinland. Both sagas contain detailed description of these natives, whom the Norse call

[15] Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 7, 42.

[16] Sverrir Jakobsson, "Strangers in Icelandic Society," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007): 152; Halldór Hermansson, "Tyrkir, Leif Erikson's Foster-Father," *Modern Language Notes* 69, no. 6 (June 1954): 391–393. Other scholars, such as Jenö Pivány, however, have suggested that Tyrkir was actually Turkish or Hungaria. Jenö Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?" *Századok* 43, no. 7 (1903): 571–577; Csete Katona, "Co-operation between the Viking Rus' and the Turkish nomads of the steppe in the ninth-eleventh centuries," MA Thesis, Central European University, 2018, 87–91.

[17] *Grænlendinga saga*, 251; Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 7. For more on the history of the attempts to map Vinland in America, see Páll Bergþórsson, *The Wineland Millennium: Saga and Evidence*, trans. Anna Yates (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2000).

[18] Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, trans. *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 56.

skrælingjar, a term that will be discussed further in chapter 2. In *Eiríks saga rauða*, Karlsefni's crew at first has a peaceful relationship with the natives, with whom the Norse trade goods. For unknown reasons, the next encounter is not as peaceful, and the natives attack the Norse, which results in deaths from both sides. There is also something supernatural about the *skrælingjar*. For instance, during one of the trading episodes in *Grænlendinga saga*, a native woman appears in the hut of Gudrid Thorbjarnardottir, Thorfinn Karlsefni's wife. Gudrid attempts to communicate, but the woman merely repeats her words. A loud crash disrupts the meeting and the native woman disappears.[19]

This is not the only fantastic episode of the Norse's experiences in Vinland. In *Eiríks saga rauða*, for instance, Karlsefni and his crew discover a one-legged creature hopping around.[20] Other elements, such as a talking corpse in Greenland, a great sleep taking over some of the Vinland explorers, and the bellowing of a bull that frightens the natives, give these sagas a certain supernatural feeling that can be also found in some family sagas, e.g., *Eyrbyggja saga*, but especially in the legendary sagas, e.g. *Örvar-Odds saga*.[21] Remarkably, many of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century American authors dealing with Vinland would ignore these

[19] Bo Almqvist has suggested that this was actually a phenomenon experienced by other European explorers in the Americas, where natives would try to repeat what they heard in the language of the colonizers. Bo Almqvist, "My name is Guðríðr: An Enigmatic Episode in Grænlendinga Saga," in *Approaches to Vinland: A Conference on the Written and Archaeological Sources for the Norse Settlements in the North-Atlantic Region and Exploration of America*, eds. Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, Sigurdur Nordal Institute Studies, Vol. 4 (Reykjavík: Sigurdur Nordal Institute, 2001), 15–30.

[20] Scholars such as Kirsten A. Seaver and Carolyne Larrington have pointed out that many medieval intellectuals believed unipeds to have inhabited the far reaches of the world. Isidore of Seville, for instance, believed Ethiopia to have been home to such creatures. Kirsten A. Seaver, "'Pygmies' of the Far North," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 1 (March 2008): 69; Carolyne Larrington, "'Undruðusk þá, sem fyrir var': wonder, Vínland, and mediaeval travel narratives," *Medieval Scandinavia* 14 (2004): 111–114. For more on the supernatural episodes of the Vinland sagas, see Pernille Hermann, "The Horror of Vínland: Topographies and Otherness in the Vínland sagas," *Scandinavian Studies* 93, 1 (Spring 2021): 1–22.

[21] Family sagas, or *Íslendinga sögur*, comprise a genre of saga literature written about families that lived and operated in Iceland, from the time of the country's settlement (870) to around the time of conversion (1000). Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29.

aspects of the sagas and focus instead on sailing directions, landscape descriptions, and the other "historical" details.

There are also strong Christian messages, references, and symbolism present in these sagas, particularly in *Eiríks saga rauða*. While Karlsefni's crew starves in Vinland, a hunter named Thorhall prays to the Old Norse god Thor and soon afterwards discovers a beached whale. As he butchers and cooks the meat, he tells his companions that Thor has proven to be a better friend than Christ. But the meat causes everyone to get sick. When his companions realize that Thorhall had prayed to Thor, they "carried every particle of the whale to the sea and committed their cause to God."[22]

The few female characters that appear in the Vinland sagas also factor into the Christian rhetoric. Gudrid is described in both sagas as a pious and dutiful Christian woman.[23] When the corpse of her deceased first husband asks to speak with her, Gudrid remains unafraid, saying: "I trust that God's keeping will stand over me. And by the mercy of God I will risk going to see him."[24] At the end of *Grænlendinga saga*, she becomes a nun and makes a pilgrimage to Rome. Furthermore, the narrator of *Grænlendinga saga* traces the lineage of three important thirteenth-century bishops back to Gudrid and Karlsefni: Thorlak Runolfsson, who served the diocese at Skálholt, Bjorn Gislason, and Brand Sæmundarsson, both of whom served as bishops at Hólar.[25] This family connection has led scholars like Ólafur Halldórsson to suggest that a main purpose behind the writing of *Grænlendinga saga* was to bolster the lineage of these important religious figures and prepare for their canonization.[26] Gudrid's character has often been

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[22] *Eiríks saga rauða*, 224; Gwyn Jones, trans., *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 149.

[23] Claire Cavaleri, "The Vinland Sagas as Propaganda for the Christian Church: Freydis and Gudrid as Paradigms for Eve and the Virgin Mary," MA Thesis, University of Oslo, 2008, 47, https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26681/masteroppgaven.pdf?sequence=2.

[24] Jones, *Eirik the Red*, 143.

[25] Thorlak Runolfsson was the grandson of Snorri, the son of Thorfinn Karlsefni and Gudrid Thornbjarndottir. Gísli Sigurðsson, *Íslendingasögur and Oral Tradition*, 11.

[26] Ólafur Halldórsson, "The Vinland Sagas" in *Approaches to Vinland: A Conference on the Written and Archaeological Sources for the Norse Settlements in the North-Atlantic Region and Exploration of America*, eds. Andrew Wawn and

contrasted with Freydis, Leif's sister, who represents less desirable qualities in a woman. Described as domineering and greedy, Freydis Eiriksdottir is remembered for two incidents that took place in Vinland. In *Eiríks saga rauða*, she manages to frighten off the natives of Vinland by smacking a sword against her bare breast. In *Grænlendinga saga*, however, she manipulates her crew into killing several fellow Norsemen then killing five women on her own.[27]

Furthermore, there is a reference in *Eiríks saga rauða* to a strange place near Vinland in which the people living there either have white skin or they wear garments of white, depending on the translation.[28] This place is generally known as *Írland it mikla* (Ireland the Great) or *Hvítramannaland* (White Man's Land). Although it is not mentioned by name in the Vinland sagas, it matches the descriptions found in other Old Norse narratives like *Landnámabók*. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards explain that information about this mysterious land may have come from Irish legends and that a Land of White Men was not an uncommon place in medieval geography, though its exact location varied.[29] Nevertheless, the idea of white men operating in or near North America prior to even the medieval Norse exploration unsurprisingly piqued the interest of later American writers. It should be noted, however, that the only evidence of a Norse visitation to North America was discovered at the very tip of Newfoundland, at a site called L'Anse aux Meadows.[30] This has led scholars like Gísli Sigurðsson to suggest that the actual

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Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, Sigurdur Nordal Institute Studies, Vol. 4 (Reykjavík: Sigurdur Nordal Institute, 2001), 39–51.

[27] Judy Quinn, "Women in Old Norse Poetry and Sagas," in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 530-534; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020), 73–75, 117–119. Claire Cavaleri sees these female characters as inspired by biblical literature, relating Gudrid to Mary and Fredyis to Eve.

[28] Kristján Ahronsson, *Into the Ocean: Vikings, Irish, and Environmental Change in Iceland and the North* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: Toronto University Press, 2015), 206.

[29] Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, trans. *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók*. (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1972), 61, ff 48. Matthias Egeler agrees and lays out the similarities between White Man's Land in the Icelandic accounts and references found in the Irish tale, *Voyage of Brendan*. Matthias Egeler, *Islands in the West: classical myth and the medieval Norse and Irish geographical imagination* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 70–73, 245.

[30] For a summary of the discovery of the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadow, see Brigitta Wallace, "The Discovery of Vinland," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 606–611.

site of Vinland would most likely have been near the St. Lawrence River, which would place the Norsemen in Canada rather than in the U.S.[31]

As twentieth and twenty-first-century novelists and filmmakers adapted the story of Vinland to creative works of fiction, they would often pick and choose which elements from the sagas they wished to include: they might emphasize the religious elements, focus on the *exact* location of Vinland, or overlook the supernatural elements. Most writers, however, highlight the interaction between the Norse and the natives of Vinland. I believe that there are two reasons for this. First, as will be discussed more in chapter 1, a white hero interacting with indigenous people is a motif of the adventure story. Secondly, a story that features Europeans fighting against indigenous Americans is a familiar part of the American past and helps the Vinland story to *feel* more historical.[32]

State of the Research

This is a study of post-medieval reception of Old Norse literature, which has become a dynamic field of research over the past twenty to thirty years. In general, these studies analyze how post-medieval individuals and cultures recycle, understand, and interpret Old Norse literature and the Viking Age. The reception of Old Norse literature in North America is particularly fascinating for me as a U.S. citizen, but my research has unveiled troubling connotations and messages—particularly in regard to my being a white, cis, middle-class American male. But as the most authors discussed in this study are of a similar (if not identical) demographic, and as this demographic is also the target audience for both American adventure stories and many of the works on Old Norse literature written in the nineteenth century, I felt that I was in a good position to carefully analyze the more delicate aspects of the American reception.

The number of studies on the post-medieval reception of the eddas and sagas and the Viking period has increased significantly over the last thirty years. A considerable part of this research has focused on translations and artistic adaptations of individual works into English. Scholars such as Margaret Clunies Ross (1998), Andrew Wawn (1996, 2000), and Mathew Townend (2010) have written important monographs on the reception of Old Norse literature in Britain during the eighteenth

[31] Gísli Sigurðsson, *Íslendingasögur and Oral Tradition*, 12–14.

[32] I use the term "Vinland story" throughout this study in reference to the general discovery narrative as relayed through the Vinland sagas.

and nineteenth centuries. *Anglo-Scandinavian Cross-Currents* edited by Inga-Stina Ewbank, Olav Lausund and Bjorn Tysdahl (1999), *Old Norse Made New* edited by David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (2007), and *Pre-Christian Religions of the North. Research and Reception, Volume II: From c. 1830 to the Present* edited by Margaret Clunies Ross (2018) further explore the impact Old Norse literature has had in the Western world. More recent works, such as *Old Norse-Icelandic Philology and National Identity in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Gylfi Gunnlaugsson and Clarence E. Glad (2021), highlight how nationalism has been an important part of the post-medieval reception of Old Norse literature.

Many scholars have contributed to the growing field of general medievalism in the United States, including David Hiscoe (1980), Kathleen Verduin (1989), Kim Moreland (1996), David W. Marshall (2007), Paul Giles (2007), Andrew Galloway (2010), Tison Pugh (2013), Helen Young (2015), Louise D'Arcens (2016), and Thomas Royberghs (2017). The most important works on the reception of Old Norse literature in the United States are Geraldine Barnes's (2001) *Viking America*, as well as Annette Kolodny's (2012) *In Search of First Contact*, both of which highlight how Rafn's *Antiquitates Americanæ* had a substantial social and cultural impact. Erik Ingvar Thurin (1999) also deals with the American reception in his *The American Discovery of the Norse*, focusing on American Renaissance writers, such as Herman Melville, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Other scholarly works addressing Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and American reception of Old Norse include those by J. M. Mancini (2002) and Patricia Jane Roylance (2007) More recently, Gordon Campbell (2020) has explored the foundation myth associated with the story of Vinland in his *Norse America*. All of these works are relevant to the present study, in particular those by Barnes and Kolodny.

Heather O'Donoghue (2007), Matthew Arnold (2011), and Jón Karl Helgason (2017) have provided important studies on how Old Norse mythology and the sagas were appropriated into popular culture in both Europe and in America. Several authors, such as David Krueger (2015) and Douglas Hunter (2017), focus specifically on "artifacts" found in the United States that have been attributed to the Vikings. Other scholars have also focused on the presence of Old Norse literature and culture in specific mediums, including television (Young 2015, Larrington 2015) and video games (Young 2021).

Several books about medievalism in film have been published in the last two decades, including those by Kevin J. Harty (1999), Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh (2007), Nickolas Hayock (2008), Andrew B. R. Elliott (2010), and Robert Bartlett

(2022). A substantial part of this dissertation focuses on films about the Vikings. Harty's (2011) edited volume, *The Vikings on Film* is extremely helpful, particularly the essays by Roberta Davidson, Kathleen Coyne Kelly, and Laurie A. Fink and Martin B. Shichtman. I also rely on the work by Barnes, Helgason, and Arne Lunde (2010), who address the 1928 film *The Viking* in their research.

Many of these studies have addressed how race and racism have impacted the reception of Old Norse literature in the United States, but only a few have made this topic the focus of their study. Jennifer Snook (2015), a practicing heathen, addresses how racism has become a part of the pagan community in the first chapter of her book *American Heathens*. Stefanie Von Schnurbein (2016) traces German neo-pagan interest from the Nazi era to modern-day American religious sects that are explicitly or implicitly connected to white nationalism. Matthais Gardell (2003) focuses on American heathen groups that combine racism with Old Norse pagan beliefs. These topics have received renewed attention in the aftermath of the events of Charlottesville. In addition to the scholarship mentioned above, David Perry, (2017), Verena Höfig (2020), and Merrill Kaplan (2020) have highlighted the relationship between white supremacy, nationalism, and racial exclusion in the historiography of the Viking Age in the United States.

Gender has also become an increasingly discussed topic in the field of Old Norse studies in the last three decades. For instance, Michèle Hayeur-Smith (2013, 2020) has analyzed how gender factors into Viking Age archaeology, while scholars such as Richard North (2001) and David Clark (2009, 2013) have discussed how gender appears in saga literature. Judith Jesch (1991), Jenny Jochens (1995, 1996), Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (2001), and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, 2020) have published extensive research on women in the Viking Age. Bjørn Bandlien (2005), Siri Sinqvist (2012), and Gareth Lloyd Evans (2019, 2020) have shed light on the masculinities of the Viking world. In the last decade scholars have also investigated the concept of gender within American reception studies in the United States. Articles by Amy S. Kaufman (2009, 2016) and Erika Ruth Sigurdson (2014) have revealed the power of the image of the manly Viking in American popular culture.

These spheres of reception are interconnected. American literary history is bound up in ideas relating to race, white destiny, white supremacy and male supremacy. So, too, is the genre of American adventure. These issues and ideologies affected the post-medieval American reception of Old Norse literature. Kolodny and Barnes have situated this reception in nineteenth-century American literary history.

Although both scholars discuss in detail Liljencrantz's novels, neither addresses Marshall's impact or, indeed, most creative works about the Vikings produced in twentieth- or twenty-first-century America. This study aims to bridge this gap having a broader time frame and by highlighting the importance of the "Viking discourse," which was constructed and adopted by authors in both academia and in popular culture. Kolodny and Barnes discuss race, gender, or both, but this is not their primary focus. While Rafn, Liljencrantz, and Marshall are not solely responsible for the association Vikings have with racial superiority or masculinity in the United States, this study will demonstrate how these ideas became part of the "Viking discourse" and how they flourished, changed and sometimes hid in plain sight between the time of Rafn's publication to the events in Charlottesville.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This dissertation is, in essence, a comparative study. And while its central pillars comprise of the comparison and analyses of the Viking novels written by Ottilie Liljencrantz and Edison Marshall, the scope of this study is much broader. As stated above, my aim here is to trace ideas of race and masculinity through American literary history and to show how these ideas manifest themselves in Viking-Age "historical" fiction and film, as well as how these ideas shape the image of the Viking in the United States. Because I investigate how cultural ideals, prejudices, stereotypes, and beliefs impacted how people understood and viewed concepts like the Vikings and Vinland, this study is a contribution to cultural history.

For a blueprint of this type of approach, I am inspired by Felix Harcourt's *Ku Klux Kulture* (2017). He traces how the first incarnation of the hate group, the Ku Klux Klan, had died out by the late nineteenth century. However, several books published in the 1910s and 20s romanticized this movement and sparked renewed interest in it. Harcourt explains: "In celebrating the racial violence of Southern white men in the past, popular novelists shaped a contemporary white supremacist masculinity that welcomed the resurgent Klan movement of the 1920s."[33] Although the Viking-themed novels do not promote the same type of hate or violence as the novels Harcourt discusses, his analysis of how (historical) popular fiction can function as a vehicle for certain ideologies is applicable as this study examines how creative works of the twentieth and twenty-first century have recycled prejudices

[33] Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 83.

and racial stereotypes from the nineteenth century that perpetuates a contemporary racist affiliation with the Viking image.

Works of historical fiction have, in some cases, come to replace memory. In his article "Balanced Truth: Steven Spielberg's 'Schindler's List' among History, Memory and Popular Culture**,"** Christoph Classen explains how the concept of the Holocaust transitioned from primary memories—accounts from survivors who were actually there—to secondary or cultural memories, such as those developed in the critically acclaimed film, *Schindler's List* (1993). Based on a true story, *Schindler's List* "had not only enlarged popular knowledge" about the Holocaust but "also coined a set of stereotypes and visual *topoi*, and introduced a canon of continually recurring documentary pictures, including their associated aesthetics."[34] The same can be said of creative works about the Vikings produced in the United States.

Still, popular culture cannot accurately represent an *authentic* past. Classen argues that the claim of authenticity is

> an expression of the specific tension between mythical commemoration and distribution by popular culture. If it is accurate to say that cultural memory always aims at the need for transcendence by emphasizing the larger-than-life, the extraordinary, then one can say that products of popular culture in the 'age of mechanical reproduction' represent quite the opposite: the loss of the auratic, of the real, or, depending on one's own theoretical or ideological preference, the emergence of historical representations that are trivial, manipulative, commodified, and ephemeral.[35]

I agree with Classen's assessment that popular culture and cultural memory are oppositional ideas.[36] Typically, authentic cultural representation is watered down by

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[34] Christoph Classen, "Balanced Truth: Steven Spielberg's 'Schindler's List' among History, Memory and Popular Culture," trans. Kirsten Wächter, *History and Theory* 48, no. 2, Theme Issue 47: Historical Representation and Historical Truth (May 2009): 86.

[35] Classen, "Balanced Truth," 86–87.

[36] Cultural memory, according to Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, is "premised on the idea that memory can only become collective as part of a continuous process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and, in the process, create communality across both space and time." Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics," in *Media and Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Angsar Nünning (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 1.

market demands. Moreover, the novels and films analyzed in this study do not appear to be attempting to transmit *memory* per se.

Classen introduces an alternative to cultural memory: Jörn Rüsen's concept of *Geschichtskultur* (historical culture), which encompasses the way we approach the past and how we build a historical awareness; its focus is not simply on the academic and institutional perspective but rather on the perspective of daily life. *Geschichtskultur* considers all surroundings in which history is built and narrated, and especially how the environment deals with historical events.[37] Rüsen's model of historical culture is comprised of three dimensions: aesthetic, political, and cognitive. These are rather straightforward—a work of history must look and feel right, by obeying certain narrative or medium rules; it traditionally connects to a "political function related to the present"; and the cognitive dimension "involves the area of assuring knowledge."[38] Rüsen claims that none of these three dimensions can exist without the others, but very often they become imbalanced, resulting in poor art.[39] Creative works, like historical fiction, may lean too heavily toward one dimension. *Geschichtskultur* is a helpful concept when I am looking at the Vikings in American historical fiction because the works I will analyze are to some degree informed by scholarship but shaped by a collection of ideas that exist outside of academia. As hinted at above, however, even the term "historical" is problematic when looking a fiction based on the Viking Age or Vinland. But because the works analyzed in this study attempt to situate the characters and plots in a historical context, they fit into the genre of "historical" fiction.

In his introduction to *Reception Theory* (1984), Robert C. Holub calls on "the historian of literary reception" to rethink texts "in light of how they have affected and are affected by current conditions and events."[40] De Groot echoes this concern,

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[37] Information about Geschichtskultur was taken from *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, ed. Klaus Bergmann (Cornelsen Verlag GmbH + C, 1985), ix, translated for me by Alejandra Pineda de Avila. Marko Demantowsky warns that this approach has quite a few shortcomings. He argues that the three dimensions lie on separate levels of logic and "therefore fail to produce a coherent system." Furthermore, terms like "political" are vague and without fixed rules, so that nearly anything can turn into historical culture. Marko Demantowsky, "What is Public History," in *Public History and School: International Perspectives*, ed. Mark Demantowsky (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 8, ff. 20.

[38] Classen, "Balanced Truth," 81.

[39] Classen, "Balanced Truth," 81.

[40] Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), 58.

arguing that historical fiction "works to render history present and, hence, to flatten time, to make the past contemporary."[41] Like any work of history or historical fiction, the Viking novels and films analyzed in this study tell us more about the authors' view of the past than the past itself, just as the sagas tell us more about the times in which they were written than the Viking Age or the settlement period of Iceland. In other words, each text or film discussed in the following chapters reflects contemporary ideas about race, gender, and civilization. The focus of this study is not only placed on how these ideas are manifested in works about Vikings but also how, through so many cultural and societal changes in the United States, the Vikings still represent more or less similar concepts that appeal to a white American past. In order to trace these ideas through the literary history of Viking-themed fiction in the United States, I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a theoretical approach.

Michael Meyer sees discourses as representing "a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as 'texts'[…]"[42] Similarly, Nelson Phillips, Thomas B. Lawrence and Cynthia Hardy view discourses as "structured collections of meaningful texts."[43] Useful as these definitions are, I prefer to use Ian Parker's more straightforward definition. He sees discourses as a "system of statements which constructs on object."[44] For the purposes of this study, I will refer to the "Viking discourse" as a collection of texts and a system of statements that have

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[41] Jerome de Groot, *Remaking History: The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 19.

[42] Michael Meyer, "Between theory, method, and politics: positioning of the approaches to CDA," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 21–22. In CDA, the term "text" is used broadly to describe how information is structured, or "the instances of linguistic interaction in which people actually engage: whatever said, or written, in an operational context, as distinct from a citational context like that of words listed in a dictionary." Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, *Explorations in the Function of Language* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), 108. Quoted in Anwar El-Said El-Sharkawy, "What is Critical Discourse Analysis?" paper given at The Second Literary Linguistics Conference, October 4–6, 2017, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, 9, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311713796_What_is_Critical_Discourse_Analysis_CDA.

[43] Nelson Phillips, Thomas B. Lawrence and Cynthia Hardy, "Discourse and Institutions," *The Academy of Management Review* 29, no. 4 (October 2004): 636.

[44] Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 5.

constructed widespread modern ideas about Vikings and the Middle Ages. This discourse has certainly been informed by historical facts, Old Norse literature, and archaeology, but also popular perceptions and misconceptions, including pseudo-scientific and fictional works.

CDA is traditionally applied within the field of linguistics as a means to explore the connection between language and social reality or social practice, particularly to show how language expresses social inequality.[45] One of the leading scholars in the field, Ruth Wodak, claims that CDA "may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language."[46] For Wodak, a discourse "is structured by dominance; that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted, that is, it is situated in time and space; and that dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups."[47] Accordingly, the task of this study is to examine how the language, images, and messages associated with Vikings, Vinland, and Old Norse literature have been used to convey systems of dominance (i.e. violence), and how the "Viking discourse" changes through time, as it is "historically produced."

One of the most important aspects of CDA is what Wodak calls "interdiscursivity," referring to the way in which discourses cross fields and influence other discourses. She gives as an example of how someone can invoke a racist argument that relates to a discourse on immigration when discussing unemployment.[48] In her chapter "Discourse and Racism" in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2001), Wodak offers another analogy. Many times, people use images of natural disasters to discuss immigration: a "flood" of migrants, an "avalanche" of people, etc. These are "all persuasively representing 'immigration' or

[45] Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is about—a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 2.

[46] Wodak, "What CDA is about," 2.

[47] Wodak, "What CDA is about," 3.

[48] Ruth Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 66.

'migrants' as something that has to be 'dammed.'"[49] In some cases immigration has also been described as an "infestation" or immigrants have been likened to rodents.[50] This type of discourse, Wodak explains, relies on collective symbols that are "designated as 'cultural stereotypes' in the form of metaphorical and synecdochic symbols that are immediately understood by members of the same speech community."[51] Such cultural stereotypes can become so ingrained in the language that phrases like a "flood of immigrants" is used by a speech community without anyone recognizing the discriminatory implications.

These examples suggest that discourses are fluid, open and hybrid: "they cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other or are in some other way socio-functionally linked."[52] Authors may intentionally or unintentionally recycle ideas from other discourses. Norman Fairclough, one of the founding theorists of CDA, explains: "in human matters, interconnections and chains of cause and effect may be distorted out of vision. Hence 'critique' is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things."[53] This observation is helpful for this study because I am not arguing that Liljecrantz or Marshall or their novels are responsible for the associations of race, masculinity, or violence inherent within the Viking image. But by critiquing their important Viking novels, as well as several subsequent films, I aim to make visible the interconnectedness of American history, literature, cultural trends, prejudices and beliefs in order to, in the words of musicologist Jim Samson, "light up the ideology concealed in the corners" of Viking representations in U.S. popular culture.[54]

In their 2012 article "Critical Discourse Analysis of Popular Culture," Patricia A. Duff and Sandra Zappa-Hollman explain that CDA can also be used to examine

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[49] Ruth Wodak, "Discourse and Racism," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 381.

[50] For a recent example of this rhetoric in the United States, see Veronica Starcqualursi, "Trump re-ups 'infestation' rhetoric in immigration debate," CNN, last updated July 3, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/03/politics/trump-ms13-illegal-immigration-rhetoric/index.html.

[51] Wodak, "Discourse and Racism," 381.

[52] Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," 67.

[53] Norman Fairclough, "Critical and Descriptive Goals in Discourse Analysis," *Journal of Pragmatics* 9, no. 6 (1985): 747. Quoted in Wodak, "What CDA is about," 2.

[54] Jim Samson, "Reception," *Grove Music Online* (January 20, 2011): 2, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40600.

works of popular culture in order to find "evidence of unequal power relations among participants in discursive events."[55] Pop and pulp fiction have traditionally been deemed "low" art, and scholars have tended to overlook much of it. But millions of middle-class Americans read and continue to read popular fiction and watch popular films produced in Hollywood. What evidence of unequal power relations appear in these products? For the purposes of this study, I will explore whether unequal power relations are found in Viking-themed historical fiction. And more to the point, I will be looking for evidence in twentieth- and twenty-first century Viking fiction and films of nineteenth-century power relations. One of my major concerns is how the Vikings may have inspired or perpetuated the links to male and white supremacy.

Popular Culture

Jerome De Groot points out that most individuals do not encounter the past through academic works but rather through popular culture.[56] Indeed, television shows like *The Vikings* have brought in contact to the Viking Age an audience that may have never engaged with it otherwise. For instance, although I have studied the Viking Age for over seven years, it was not until my father watched this program that we could discuss the topic. Accordingly, I have chosen to analyze mostly how contemporary ideas shaped the "historical" idea of the Vikings in works of popular fiction and film. The term "popular culture" emerged in the late eighteenth century as a means to distinguish the upper class from the lower classes. Elizabeth G. Traube argues that it was coined by the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder to describe rural, uneducated cultural ideas: "Like the primitive, popular culture was associated with irrationality, emotionality, traditionalism, communality—everything that intellectuals who invented it thought they themselves were not."[57] Because of this association, popular culture has been linked with "folk" culture, but, as Traube points out, "folk" and "popular" are non-synonymous.[58] By the end of the nineteenth century, the emerging middle class in the United States also began to consume these mass-produced works, which all but eliminated any "folk" aspect.

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[55] Patricia A. Duff and Sandra Zappa-Hollman, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Popular Culture," *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* 2012, doi:10.1002/9781405198431.WBEAL0276.

[56] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 7.

[57] Elizabeth G. Traube, "'The Popular' in American Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 130.

[58] Traube, "'The Popular' in American Culture," 130.

In his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (1993), John Storey lays out the many different characteristics scholars have used in defining "popular culture": a work's sales numbers, whether or not it was mass produced, if there is a lower cultural standard, or other perceived inherent inferiorities.[59] While these may factor into an assessment of whether or not a work is "popular," most of the definitions are problematic. Holt N. Parker claims that popular culture "consists of products that require little cultural capital either to produce or else to consume."[60] This is a helpful definition, as it speaks to the perspective of both the author and the reader. Storey argues that popular culture is neither "of the people" nor imposed on people but rather "a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two: a terrain […] marked by resistance and incorporation."[61] In short, popular culture is, for the purposes of this thesis, a meeting ground of resistance and negotiation between producers and consumers that have access to little cultural capital.

Marilyn C. Wesley claims in her book *Violent Adventure: Contemporary Fiction by American Men* (2003) that popular fiction "works to establish reassuring familiarity."[62] This point should be added to Parker's definitions. Whether it is the captivity narrative, American Westerns, or even the superhero films of the twenty-first century, consumers expect familiarity with plots, stories, characters, and messages. The writers and filmmakers in question provide it by recycling the same narratives, character types, and motifs. One can see this familiarity in the fiction on the Vikings produced in the United States. For instance, the horned-helmeted Viking aesthetic, which has appeared in paintings, comics, films, and many other mediums, has been traced back to the costume and art designs of Hans Thoma and Carl Emil

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[59] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 5th ed (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), 6–9.

[60] Holt N. Parker, "Toward a Definition of Popular Culture," *History and Theory* 50, no. 2 (May 2011): 161. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote about this concept in the 1970s as a way to describe how power was transferred within a society. Michele Lamont and Annette Lareua define the term as more or less "institutionalized, i.e. widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion." Michele Lamont and Annette Lareua, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *Sociological Theory* 6 (1988): 156; Paul W. Kingston, "The Unfulfilled Promise of Cultural Capital Theory," *Sociology of Education* 74. Current of Thought: Sociology of Education at the Dawn of the 21st Century (2001): 89.

[61] Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 10.

[62] Marilyn C. Wesley, *Violent Adventure: Contemporary Fiction by American Men* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 23.

Doepler for Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.[63] The horned helmet has persisted into the twenty-first century, even though it was clearly a nineteenth-century invention and not historically inspired by the Viking Age. Marcus Nispel, the director of *Pathfinder*, said about the Vikings in his film: "I didn't want them to look like Hagar the Horrible, and yet I also didn't want to show them without the horns, even though that is most likely how they really looked."[64] Nispel recycled the horned helmet because that is what the audience *expected* a Viking to wear.

De Groot argues that the past is unknowable, but historical fiction can provide for us "modes of knowing the past."[65] Most historical fiction, according to de Groot, cannot represent the past in any authentic way but rather engage in "tropes of pastness and, in doing so, articulate a historiographical sensibility."[66] Robert Rosenstone agrees, suggesting that all we can do with history is to "continually play with it, reconfigure, and try to make meaning out of the traces it has left behind."[67] From this perspective, historical fiction can be a valuable tool in recreating a past that is largely unknowable and out of reach.

De Groot and Rosenstone, however, have an optimistic standard for historical fiction. De Groot takes Hilary Mantel's novel *Wolf Hall* (2009) as an example of a "responsible" historical novel. Mantel includes in her novel several historical notes in which she reflects on her decisions and her approach to the past. De Groot says that that it would be "unethical" for a work of historical fiction not to have such notes.[68] As noted above, Marshall does not include any historical notes in *The Viking* and therefore does not meet de Groot's criteria—does this make his novel "unethical"? Both Liljencrantz and Marshall employ "tropes of pastness," such as

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[63] For more on the Wagnerian influence on the reception of the Vikings and Old Norse literature, see for instance Árni Björnsson, *Wagner and the Volsungs: Icelandic Sources of* Der Ring Des Nibelungen (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003), Patrick Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), Edward Haymes, "Richard Wagner, *The Ring*, and its Influence" in *The Pre-Christian Religions of the North: Research and Reception, Volume II: From c. 1830–the Present*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 151–180.

[64] Mark Olsen, "How to Build a Viking," *The New York Times*, May 7, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/07/movies/07olse.html.

[65] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 3.

[66] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 3.

[67] Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 163–164.

[68] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 42.

recycled heroic characters, clashes between Europeans and Native Americans, and other common features of American literary history. This makes the unknowable medieval past more familiar to an American audience.

Gender and Race

This study began as an investigation into how white supremacy and the Viking image became linked in American literary history; however, it quickly became clear to me that American reception of Old Norse literature and particularly Viking adventures featured noticeable instances of male supremacy as well as white supremacy, and it became difficult to discuss one topic without inferring the other. Because of this association, gender factors heavily into this research, but it is a notoriously difficult concept to define. It is a social construct and an important part of social relationships based on perceptions of sexual differences.[69] R. W. Connell explains: "gender is a social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do," but also underlines that it is not reduced to the body; definitions of gender often confuse gender with biological sex, but "biology does not determine the social" aspect of life.[70] Gender fills this gap. Because gender is social, and society and social norms change, it follows accordingly that gender is rather multi-faceted and fluid, evolving and changing alongside social structures.[71] Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) that the term gender should not be a noun but rather a verb: "an incessant and repeated action of some sort […] a kind of action that can potentially proliferate beyond the binary limits imposed by the apparent binary of sex."[72] Different societies and cultures experience different social changes and hold differing values in terms of sexual differences; these actions thus vary and are numerous.

R. W. Connell describes several ways one can discuss masculinity: a). an essentialist approach, which picks out a group of characteristics, such as risk-taking or aggression, b). a positivist approach, which is more attached the male body, c).

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[69] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History,* Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 41–42.

[70] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 71.

[71] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 47–49; Connell, *Masculinities*, 119.

[72] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 112.

and a normative approach, which is more or less a standard of how men *ought* to be.[73] Each of these approaches has its own merits and pitfalls; most problematic is that definitions, bodies, and standards vary not only from culture to culture but also within a single society, as well as through time, necessitating the study of *plural* masculinities.[74] For the purposes of this study, I will be taking normative approach to masculinity—not because this is the best way to define masculinities but because of the way in which masculinity (and manliness) appears in the frontier literature described in chapter 1, as well as in the Viking-themed novels of chapters 2 and 3. The heroes of these works represent a manly ideal—often unattainable for "lesser" men—that others are meant to admire, and in many cases, attempt to imitate. This ideal—or hegemonic—masculinity represents the most dominant system of ideas or values in a society.

On the other end of the gender spectrum is femininity. One might assume that femininity would represent all things female, but this is not necessarily the case. Simone de Beauvoir argued that because men had largely written human history, humanity was male, while the female came to represent the Other, which was often thought to be in opposition to the male: "passivity confronting activity, diversity breaking down unity, matter opposing form, disorder resisting order."[75] From this perspective, the feminine is not simply female but primarily something outside of the masculine norm.

The perception of femininity went through an interesting transition in the Western world during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the help of influential figures in the growing field of psychoanalysis—Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler—the feminine became increasingly associated with weakness, passivity, stagnation, and immanence.[76] At the same time, more and more females were joining the workforce in Western industrial societies, which caused some anxiety for Anglo-American men who feared that the United States would become "feminized" and therefore weak. However, these same men valued the "civilizing" aspect of the feminine, believing that American men needed the "good nature" of females in order to keep their basic instincts at bay.[77] These contradictory

[73] Connell, *Masculinities*, 68–71.

[74] Laura A. Herbert, "Taking 'Difference' Seriously: Feminism and the 'Man Question,'" *Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 37.

[75] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 91.

[76] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 5, 50–62; Connell, *Masculinities*, 13–16.

[77] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity in the*

views of femininity were present in the United States during the time when Americans were becoming increasingly interested in Old Norse literature.

Butler argues that because gender is a social construct, it intersects with other social constructs, such as race and class.[78] Connell also claims that one cannot understand concepts such as class, race or global inequality without understanding gender.[79] The first scholars to suggest that these social constructs were intertwined in systems of oppression published their works in the 1970s and 80s. These included Black female scholars, such as Toni Cade (1970), bell hooks (1981), and Bonnie Thornton Dill (1983).[80] The intersection of gender, race, and class continued to be an important topic in the scholarship of the 1990s—during what many call "third wave feminism"—through the publications of scholars such as Judith Butler (1990), R. W. Connell (1993), E. Anthony Rotundo (1993), Gail Bederman (1995), Robyn Wiegman (1995), and Joan Wallach Scott (1999). These authors indicated that class supremacy, male supremacy, and white supremacy had been for a long time interwoven in United States culture, society, and history.

In her 1995 book, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917*, Gail Bederman explores how the concepts of race and gender intersected within the discourse of "civilization" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She claims that the term "civilization" had in this time no concrete definition but was rather used in multiple ways "to legitimize different sorts of claims to power" in the United States.[81] Many white, Western intellectuals saw civilization through the lens of Social Darwinism: it was a process from savagery to becoming civilized. This allowed white people in Western cultures to view themselves as the "fittest" race and to see other races as primitive and barbaric.

Modern Era (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 104, 252; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 161–162.

[78] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 3; Lynn Weber, "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1998): 16.

[79] Connell, *Masculinities*, 75.

[80] Weber, "A Conceptual Framework," 15.

[81] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 23.

Social Darwinism, which will be discussed further in chapter 1, was variously applied to gender, sex, and class, as well as race.[82] Through Darwinian politics, "white" and "man" were being merged with "power." Bederman explains:

> Manliness was the highest form of manhood, so civilization was the achievement of a perfect race. […] By harnessing male supremacy to white supremacy and celebrating both as essential to human perfection, hegemonic versions of civilizations maintained the power of Victorian gender ideologies by presenting male power as natural and inevitable.[83]

Because these ideas were so interwoven in this period, when someone discussed "civilization," ideas of white and male supremacy were often implicit. Bederman also claims: "Civilization thus constructed manliness as simultaneously cultural and racial. White men were able to achieve perfect manliness because they had inherited that capacity from their racial forebears."[84] This is an important aspect of the present study. The medieval Norse typically represented the white and manly ancestor that instilled in contemporary white Americans their positions of power and privilege. As will be discussed in chapter 1, some believed that they inherited certain characteristics from the Vikings and even from the Old Norse god Odin. And because the story of Vinland placed Northern European men on North America centuries before Christopher Columbus's "discovery," it became a convenient part of the white narrative in American history.

More generally, this study examines ideas of manliness and masculinity that even still affect many middle-class American men who are white or of European descent. One of the main reasons behind this focus is because this is the demographic for whom adventure stories were written. It also happens to be the demographic to which I belong. The changes to ideas of gender described in this study did not necessarily affect every American man in the same way. For this reason, I will be using the abbreviation MCWAM for middle-class white American men to avoid overgeneralizations; however, it should be noted that these were general trends that affected the hegemonic ideas of manhood. Some MCWAM may have rejected these ideals. Other demographics experienced different changes and ideals.[85]

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[82] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 239.

[83] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 27, 26.

[84] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 29.

[85] For a study on Black masculinity in the United States, see for instance Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African*

Violence

On November 7, 2008, British comedian Ricky Gervais appeared on the television show, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. Discussing his recent performances in Scandinavia, Gervais told the host that he told several jokes about how the audience was descended from rapists. He used the term "raping and pillaging" and even described the stereotypical Viking horned helmets as "raping hats."[86] The studio audience laughed, probably because the Vikings have had a reputation for violence in popular culture for over a century—but also for a good reason. European sources like *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* details some of the mayhem the medieval Norsemen caused in the British Isles, and the Old Norse sagas also contain rather gruesome descriptions of violence, such as the infamous blood-eagle. The violent Viking image has been romanticized, exaggerated, and even glamorized in popular culture; however, there are several different types of violence. The image of the Viking brings to mind direct physical violence; but there are also aspects of symbolic violence found in the creative American works about the Vikings. Beate Krais and Jennifer Marston William claim that symbolic violence is "a subtle euphemized, invisible mode of dominating, a concealed form of violence—the realization of a world view or a social order anchored in the habitus of a dominating as well as the dominated."[87] It is for the most part unrecognizable, unspoken and used in place of direct violence as a means to control others.[88]

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu worked with the term "symbolic violence" in the 1960s, and he pointed to racism and sexism as examples. References to race, sex, and other social differences have been used to create an imbalance of power that severely limits the freedoms, movements, and opportunities of women and

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American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775–1995 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For some insight into indigenous American ideas of masculinity, see for instance Tyler Boulware, "'We Are Men': Native American and Euroamerican Projections of Masculinities During the Seven Years War," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 51–70.

[86] "Ricky Gervais on His Scandinavian Comedy Tour," YouTube, accessed June 24, 2022, video, 2:59. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZOZqIJ7BQw.

[87] Beate Krais and Jennifer Marston William, "The Gender Relationship in Bourdieu's Sociology," *Substance* 29, no. 3, issue 93: Special Issue: Pierre Bourdieu (2000): 58.

[88] Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22, no. 4. Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change (Autumn 1991): 1023.

minorities.[89] For example, sexism does not physically harm women. But, as Krais and William underline, the apparently harmless, every day, face-to-face acts "converge into a steady stream of symbolically violent acts that push women back again and again in the prevailing division of labor between the sexes, without this violence being recognized as such."[90]

Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung breaks symbolic violence into two distinct categories: structural and cultural. He explains: "direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process with ups and downs; cultural violence is an invariant, a 'permanence,' remaining essentially the same for long periods, given the slow transformations of basic culture." [91] The laws of racial segregation—known generally as Jim Crow laws—put in place in the southern United States after the American Civil War are clear examples of structural violence. While physical violence continued against Black Americans in the form of lynching and other hate crimes, the purpose of segregation was to keep the Black population at such a disadvantage that the white majority could maintain control in the South.

Cultural violence, in Galtung's opinion, is the ways in which religion, ideology, language, art and science are used to "legitimize violence in its direct or structural form."[92] To continue with the example of Jim Crow, we can refer to the religious publications from the nineteenth century that argued that the racial dynamic of the southern United States was put in place by God and should be maintained for the benefit of the Black population.[93] These works may not have promoted physical violence or any type of policy; however, they were used as ways to legitimize the structural and physical violence of the ruling whites. Galtung and Toril Moi warn that symbolic violence often gives the illusion of being "natural" and therefore not questioned.[94] It can also lead to direct physical violence. It is clear that many white Americans understood segregation as a "natural" and beneficial system. And when Black Americans attempted to challenge it during the Civil Rights Movement, they

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[89] Pierre Bourdieu, "La Domination masculine," *Actes de la recherché en sciences sociales* 84 (Sept. 1990): 12. Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu," 1030.

[90] Krais and William, "The Gender Relationship in Bourdieu's Sociology," 59.

[91] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 294.

[92] Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 291.

[93] For the discourse on race and Christianity in nineteenth-century America, see for instance Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century America: Race, Heathens, and the People of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[94] Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu," 1030; Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 291.

were met with direct and physical violence, such as the events that took place in Alabama on "Bloody Sunday," March 7, 1965. It is these types of "unspoken" and "natural" structures of dominance that Wodak argues are a part of historical discourses. I will shed light on this aspect of the "Viking discourse" throughout the study.

Violence, both direct and symbolic, is an essential element in historical fiction, where it has come to represent the past itself.[95] De Groot argues: "this is an aesthetics that depends upon the authenticity of violence, in the diegesis and in the prose itself. Violence somehow equates to an authentic, something transhistorical and comprehensible."[96] Accordingly, historical novels and films may excuse excess violence as a means to transmit a more "accurate" portrayal of pastness. Sexual and physical violence can, in other words, provide an "authentic" and "natural" aspect. Scholars, such as Erika Ruth Sigurdson, have analyzed how physical or direct violence has been portrayed in fictional works about the Vikings, but very few have examined the types of symbolic violence that may have accompanied these works, which will be highlighted in this study.

Finally, violence often functions in literature as a means for a male character to establish his manhood.[97] This is especially true in American adventures, which often feature a male character trying to establish his identity by fighting oppression or finding his destiny. This concept will be explored in more detail in chapter 1. Marilyn Wesley refers to this literary motif as constructive violence, and she warns:

> the most important effect of narrative violence derives from its ability to pattern our expectations, and […] constructive violence, however 'bloodless,' structures the racial hierarchies, the evaluation of work, the construction of gender roles, and the political values endorsed by the hero's affiliations.[98]

In other words, male characters that attempt to establish their manhood or masculinity through direct violence often underline the systems of symbolic violence that is in place. The application to Viking-themed historical fiction is rather straightforward: when the male characters in these works commit acts of physical

[95] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 37.

[96] De Groot, *Remaking History*, 39.

[97] Maggie McKinley, *Masculinity and the Paradox of Violence in American Fiction, 1950–75* (New York & London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4.

[98] Wesley, *Violent Adventure*, 23.

violence, it is important to explore what systems of symbolic violence are they fighting against or reifying with their actions. More importantly, how do these systems affect ideas of race and gender? The physical violence found in the novels and films discussed in this dissertation has been excused because it underlines the heroes' passage into manhood and provides an authentic feeling of "pastness." But by tracing ideas of race, gender, civilization, and destiny through these works of historical fiction, one can see the lingering systems of structural and symbolic violence from the nineteenth century in the image of the Viking with consequences that can be felt in our present time.

Chapter 1
Manliness, Adventure & the Vikings

The medieval Norsemen that appear in Ottilie Liljencrantz's *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902) have very different qualities from those in Edison Marshall's *The Viking* (1951); though, in both cases, these characters are recognized as "Vikings."[99] This is in part because both authors appear to have drawn some of their information from the "Viking discourse," which had been constructed in the nineteenth century by men who wrote about Old Norse literature and the Viking Age but borrowed language from discourses on race, gender, civilization, and white destiny. Although contemporary values, prejudices, and beliefs changed during the respective lifetimes of Liljencrantz and Marshall, affecting their presentation of the Viking Age, these themes continued to be a part of the Viking image.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how ideas of race, gender, civilization and white destiny in the United States became a part of the "Viking discourse." I focus on three aspects or spheres of American cultural and literary history from the long nineteenth century that shaped the twentieth-century historical adventure novels of Liljencrantz and Marshall: evolving notions of manhood, the American adventure genre, and the introduction and reception of Old Norse literature in the United States. I also explore some of the personal biographical circumstances of some of the authors that also factor into the construction of the "Viking discourse." While these spheres may appear unrelated, the chapter will highlight how certain aspects overlapped and were intertwined.

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[99] I use the term "Viking" because this is how the medieval Norse are known in popular culture. But the term is not without controversy. For a brief summary of the debate over the term "Viking," see Caitlin Ellis, "Remembering the Vikings: Violence, institutional memory and the instruments of history," *History Compass* 19, no. 1 (January 2021), https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hic3.12644. The concept of chivalry is a massive topic that can be traced back to the Middle Ages. In this study, I am referring to the behavior of chivalry that was part of the reimagined medievalism during the early modern era. It embodies "truth, honor, courtesy, courage, generosity, Christianity, and devotion to women." Clare Simmons, "Chivalric Medievalism," in *A Companion to Chivalry*, eds. Robert W. Jones and Peter Cross (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 306.

A Shift from Manliness to Masculinity

Ideas of manhood are a large part of Old Norse literature. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen claims that medieval Icelandic society was "to a very great extent based on an aggressive masculine ethic," and an insult to one's manhood is the catalyst for the plots of several sagas.[100] Gareth Lloyd Evans also acknowledges that the "pressures exerted by masculinity are common in the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders)."[101] It is therefore unsurprising that manhood would continue to be a part of the Viking image in post-medieval works, including Liljencrantz's and Marshall's novels. Yet, the model of manhood appears differently in each work. This can be partially explained by a cultural shift that occurred in the United States near the end of the nineteenth century during which the identifying factors of what made a man "manly" changed. According to cultural historians and sociologists such as R. W. Connell, Gail Bederman, E. Anthony Rotundo, and Michael Kimmel, the most important manly virtues that were important during the middle of the nineteenth century, such as self-restraint, self-reliance, and chivalry, began roughly between the years 1880-1920 to be replaced by the ideals of "masculinity"—a word that reflects *anything* associated with being a man, especially action, dominance and strength.[102]

Prior to the Victorian era, generally dated from the 1830s through the early 1900s, American women of European descent were generally viewed in the United States as "incomplete" versions of the same stuff as men. But over the course of the nineteenth century, a belief dominant in the upper- and middle-class white communities in both Europe and the United States held that women were qualitatively different from men—equally important but created by God for different purposes.[103] A schism developed between the sexes, MCWAM increasingly felt that their rightful place was in the public realm, in places of politics or in business. This public domain was deemed unsuitable for women, who were charged with taking

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[100] Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of sexual defamation in early Northern society*, translated by Joan Turville-Petre, The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization, Vol. 1 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983), 15–21.

[101] Gareth Lloyd Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of the Icelanders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1, 49–52.

[102] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 18.

[103] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 68.

care of home and family matters. As a result, two separate cultural and gendered "spheres" emerged.[104]

In the early 1800s, manliness was measured according to how one took care of his family and what he could bring to the community. Victorian virtues began to change this ideal, and self-reliance, foresight, chivalry, and the ability to control one's emotions became desirable manly behavior. Gail Bederman argues: "By gaining the manly strength to control himself, a man gained the strength, as well as the duty, to protect and direct those weaker than himself."[105] Indeed, self-control became such an important aspect of manliness that, according to Leland S. Person, it was the "badge of middle class identity" during the Victorian era in the United States.[106] MCWAM sought to control not only their emotions but also their temper and sexual desire. This, they believed, made them truly manly. In short, manliness resided in the mind.[107]

Significant economic changes in the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century affected how manliness was measured. Factories, mills, and plants were built in and around major cities, creating new and different employment opportunities. The U.S. developed quickly from small-scale capitalism, based on agriculture of independent farmers, to a large market economy. Work became the focus for many MCWAM, who increasingly began to view their roles in the

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[104] Kay Boardman, "The Ideology of Domesticity: The Regulation of the Household Economy in Victorian Women's Magazines," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 150; R. W. Connell, "The History of Masculinity," in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, eds. David Savran and Rachel Adams (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 252. Some scholars, however, have questioned this idea of separate spheres, whether it existed and whether it hinders the study of gender in the Victorian era. For more, see Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Catherine Lemmer, "Victorian Respectability: The Gendering of Domestic Space," MA Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007.

[105] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 11–12.

[106] Leland S. Person, "The Historical Paradoxes of Manhood in Cooper's *The Deerslayer*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 32, no. 1, Reading Gender After Feminism (Autumn 1998): 88; Elizabeth G. Traube, "'The Popular' in American Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 138.

[107] Josh Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop* 38 (1994): 182.

workplace, rather than their role as the head of the household, as an essential component of their identity.[108]

E. Anthony Rotundo points out that in order to survive the growing competition and demands of large-market business, many MCWAM became highly ambitious and began to showcase characteristics that previous generations had seen as vices.[109] By the end of the century, someone was considered *manly* not because of his ability to control his passions but rather his ability to channel them effectively.[110] According to Rotundo,

> ambition and combativeness became virtues; competitiveness and aggression were exalted as ends in themselves. Toughness was admired, while tenderness was a cause for scorn. The body itself became a vital component of manhood: strength, appearance, and athletic skill mattered more than in previous centuries.[111]

For example, in the early 1800s, a boy who got into a fight would be reprimanded for misbehaving; by the end of the century, however, fighting, according to Rotundo, was considered "an emblem of developing character, a means to manliness."[112] The admiration of aggression and physical strength instead of strength of character had come to equate manliness with domination and violence. Manliness was becoming less associated with the moral and intelligent characteristics and more with the physical world.[113]

Paul Hoch points out that there is "a close interrelation between the predominant Western conception of manhood and that of racial (and species) domination."[114] Thus, ideal manliness has also been a means to signify racial superiority. In the Victorian era, white intellectuals like psychologist G. Stanley Hall believed that the men of "primitive" races lacked the ability for the manly virtue of self-control, whereas Anglo-American men had mastered it.[115] According to this thinking, Black

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[108] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity to the Modern Era* (New York: Basicbooks, 1993), 3.

[109] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3–6.

[110] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3.

[111] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 5–6.

[112] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 255–256.

[113] Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity?" 182.

[114] Paul Hoch, *White Hero, Black Beast: Racism, Sexism, and the Mask of Masculinity* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), 10.

[115] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 84–85.

and Native Americans could not be *as* manly as white men. The men in power during the first half of the nineteenth century—primarily Anglo-Americans but also members of some other white immigrant groups—attempted to exclude women, Native Americans, African Americans and certain immigrant communities from the public sphere by limiting their liberties. Michael Kimmel argues that American manhood in this period was "built on the exclusion of others from equal opportunity."[116] By keeping these groups outside of the *male* sphere, they were keeping them from being fully a *man*.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, several of these marginalized groups had achieved some social advancements and gained access to the public sphere by accepting lower-paying or menial jobs the economic changes had created. This produced a certain amount of anxiety in Anglo-American men, who, according to Gail Bederman, began "casting about for new ways to explain the source and nature of male power and authority."[117] One solution was Social Darwinism, which commutes the concept of "survival of the fittest" from the animal kingdom onto humans. The implication here is that the more advanced a nation or race is, the more "fit" or superior are its occupants. According to this thinking, white, Western men could justify their place at the top of the power hierarchy on the premise that males were biologically superior to females, and superior to other races and nationalities because they belonged to the most "advanced" civilization. Bederman explains that around the turn of the twentieth century, many MCWAM

> who felt the loss of older ideas of male authority—who feared that Victorian manliness was no longer enough to explain the source and workings of male power—turned to ideas of white supremacy. *Men's* power was growing murky. But *the white man's* power, the power of civilization, was crystal clear. And as race became interwoven with manhood through discourses of civilization, Americans' assumptions

[116] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. 3rd ed (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33; Connell, *Masculinities*, 75. It should be noted that in the wake of the #metoo movement in higher education, Bethany M. Coston accused Michael Kimmel of inappropriate behavior, homophobic comments, and favoritism. See Colleen Flaherty, "More Than Rumors," Inside Higher Ed, August 10, 2018, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/08/10/michael-kimmels-former-student-putting-name-and-details-those-harassment-rumors.

[117] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 19–20.

> about manhood moved ever closer to what twentieth-century men would recognize as 'masculinity.'[118]

From this perspective, masculinity not only represented male strength and force but also ideas of racial superiority and levels of civilization. This shift from manliness to masculinity occurred during the lifetimes of Liljencrantz and Marshall and is reflected in their respective novels. Many of Liljencrantz's male Viking characters reflect a Victorian notion of Christian chivalry and self-restraint, while most of Marshall's male Vikings represent the extreme end of the spectrum and are aggressively masculine; they are extremely violent, particularly toward Christians. And interwoven in their representations of manhood are indeed suggestions of racial superiority.

The Frontier Hero

The transition from Victorian manliness to twentieth-century masculinity, as well as its accompanying assumptions about race and civilization, can be seen clearly in the evolution of American adventure literature. This genre has its roots in British fiction of the eighteenth century, though it often contains older French and German philosophical ideas.[119] Literary scholar Martin Green argues in *The Great American Adventure* (1993) that most adventure stories follow one of two threads that can be traced back to two of the most influential British adventure novels: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Walter Scott's *Waverly* (1814).[120] The stories modeled on the former usually focus on one man, an isolated setting, and autobiographical-type of narrative, while those that follow Scott's model normally have multiple characters and a romantic pair. They also have a more historical "flavor" and a more elaborate narrative than the former.[121]

A significant number of American adventures are also rooted in the Indian captivity narrative—the first distinctly American literary form to be written by European settlers in North America.[122] The captivity narrative, as the name suggests, details the experiences of white settlers who were kidnapped and held hostage by

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[118] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 214.

[119] Martin Green, *The Adventurous Male: Chapters in the History of the White Male Mind* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 31.

[120] Martin Green, *The Great American Adventure* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 3.

[121] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 3.

[122] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: the mythology of the American frontier, 1600–1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 56.

Native Americans. Though similar types of literary narratives exist in other cultures, this genre came to represent the American experience for many European settlers. It became quite popular in North America during the many wars and conflicts between the indigenous population and the European colonizers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[123]

A standard captivity narrative is the account of Mary Rowlandson, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together, with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, originally published in 1692. Denise MacNeil explains in her study, The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero (2009), that Rowlandson's book became America's first bestseller and one of the most important captivity narratives from this time period.[124] In Sovereignty, Rowlandson details how she had been kidnapped from her hometown of Lancaster, Massachusetts, by an Algonquin tribe. They hold her captive for approximately eleven weeks, during which she learns from their way of life and is allegedly treated better than some members of the indigenous community.[125] In some narratives, the captives escape, while in others they need rescuing. Rowlandson, however, remarkably orchestrates her own release and returns to her village where she shares the knowledge and skills she learned while prisoner for the benefit of the white, European community—an essential component for the narrative.[126]

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[123] Mary MacNeil, *The Emergence of the American Hero, 1682–1826: Gender, Action and Emotion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 11. June Namias adds that the popularity of these narratives had to do with one's self and the Other: "One's own culture, one's own family, one's own gender, that whole complex of Anglo-American culture one inherited by being raised on the American continent, was brought into relief. All that was otherwise understood as given, true, and 'natural' required reexamination of the ethnic—that is, cultural—origins of society." June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 11.

[124] MacNeil, *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero*, 1-5. MacNeil is not alone in this opinion. Quite a few scholarly works and anthologies on the captivity narrative feature Rowlandson's narrative as representative of the genre. See Gordon M. Sayre, ed., *American Captivity Narratives: Selected Narratives with Introduction* (New York: Houghton Mifflin/Riverside, 2000) and Richard VanDerBeets, ed. *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642–1836* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973).

[125] MacNeil, *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero*, 63. The time of imprisonment varies between narratives.

[126] MacNeil, *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero*, 3.

Rowlandson's story inspired several fictional accounts, including *The Female American*, originally published in 1767 under the pseudonym Unca Eliza Winkfield, the titular character who is taken captive. In Stephen Wolfe's opinion, *The Female American* unfolds into a mediocre imitation of a Robinson Crusoe adventure when Winkfield is shipwrecked on an island inhabited by a mysterious indigenous people.[127] Although Winkfield's narrative is clearly based on Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty*, the unknown author made several significant changes. For instance, she is presented as the daughter of an Indian princess and an English settler. Such a union was unusual at the time and may have been considered taboo in Puritan circles.[128] This hybridity allows Winkfield to adapt to the habits and customs of her Native American captors more easily than Rowlandson. It also appears to make her more comfortable with the American wilderness because at the end of the novel, Winkfield decides to stay with her captors rather than returning to "civilization."

The captivity narrative began to change regarding gender over the course of the eighteenth century, despite the success of the accounts about Rowlandson, Winkfield, and several other women. Pauline Turner Strong considers Cotton Mather's 1699 historical work, *Decennium Luctuosum*, as a major turning point. Mather, a Puritan priest whose sermons and literary output helped to shape the early American mindset and culture, believed that a vulnerable female captive accurately represented the weakness of the English colonies, while the male captor reflected the strength of the Native Americans.[129] Mather wanted to inject a sense of English manliness into the narrative. In the wake of *Decennium Luctuosum*, the female characters in captivity narratives increasingly became passive victims who needed to be rescued by a white male who could overcome or out-think the natives. Framing the stories in this way suggested a stronger, manlier European presence and a weaker (and in Mather's opinion, effeminate) Native American characterization.

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[127] Stephen Wolfe, "Unifying Misnomers: Unca Eliza Winkfield's *The Female American*," *American Studies in Scandinavian* 36, no. 2 (2004): 26. *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719 by British author Daniel Defoe and is, according to Martin Green, the supreme example of freedom in a novel. The titular character finds himself alone on an island, free from personal relationships, competition and confrontation. This type of desired freedom would become a part of later adventures, including many American adventures. Green, *The Adventurous Male*, 7.

[128] Namias, *White Captives*, 87.

[129] Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial Captivity Narratives* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1999), 133.

Over time, the white male character that rescued the captives in these narratives morphed into the frontier hero. Early on, settlers had looked upon the real frontiersmen—the trappers, pioneers, hunters, and scouts of European descent who made their living in the unsettled land in North America—in fear and suspicion. Slotkin points out that Cotton Mather and others equated the "physical wilderness with the (presumably depraved) soul of mankind. The Puritans viewed the Indians as projections of evil within themselves, as well as agents of external malice."[130] Accordingly, the men who lived upon the frontier were bringing themselves dangerously close to this darkness.[131] Later authors of these types of narratives explored the heroic potential in these men who lived in this liminal space, who had more direct contact with Native American culture than those living in the settlements, and who could safely navigate the wilderness because of their experiences.[132] The captivity narrative as such became less popular in the nineteenth century, but many authors of that period used it as a foundation for their adventure stories. These would feature strong male heroes who would rescue vulnerable women, fight against the Native Americans, and have some kind of hybridity like

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[130] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 178.

[131] The American frontier was never a fixed place but a moving boundary that separated the European settlements in North American from the vast wilderness of the continent, as well as from their indigenous neighbors. Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 6th ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 3–8.

[132] It should be noted that the concept of the "wilderness" is much older than captivity narratives and has historically had many connotations and meanings, from the ancient world into modern times. It contains religious symbolism and is often informed by the landscape. For the purposes of this study, I will focus solely on the idea of the wilderness in relation to the American frontier. For further reading about the meaning and history of the wilderness, see, for example, John Copeland Nagle, "The Spiritual Values of Wilderness," *Environmental Law* 35, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 955–1003; Matthew Adam Gray, "The Traditional Wilderness Conception, Postmodern Cultural Constructionism and the Importance of Physical Environments," MA Thesis, University of Montana, 2008; Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); Angela Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries: Genre, Geography, and the Growth of Torah* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2011); Max Oeschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); Laura Feldt, ed. *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion: Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012). Surely, the "wilderness" has been a major part of American literature since colonial times. For a survey of its function and meaning through American literary history, see Jonah Raskin, *A Terrible Beauty: The Wilderness of American Literature* (Berkeley: Regent Press, 2014).

Winkfield—either parents of two cultures or being born to white parents and raised by Indians. These characters would neither return to civilization like Rowland nor stay in the wilderness like Winkfield but rather travel between these two spheres.

The Boone/Bumppo Narrative

Two of the most important examples from American literature of frontier heroes framed in this manner are the semi-biographical personality of Col. Daniel Boone and James Fenimore Cooper's fictional character Natty Bumppo. Col. Daniel Boone is a historical figure who was born in Pennsylvania in 1734 and raised in a Quaker community. His family moved to North Carolina when he was a teenager, and he grew up hunting in the surrounding forests. As an adult, Boone got married, joined the British military, and worked later as a hunter, guide, and a fur trader. In 1769, he left his wife and children to lead an exploration party into the Kentucky wilderness. While there, he assisted in building settlements and was involved in several skirmishes with local Native Americans. He would later go on to fight in the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and eventually live out the remainder of his days in Missouri.

While stationed in Kentucky, Boone served briefly as a guide for a schoolteacher named John Filson who had acquired some land in the state but wanted to sell it. Kentucky had at that time a reputation for being exceedingly dangerous, and Filson struggled to attract buyers. In 1784 he published a short tract, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*, which describes the state's rivers and wildlife, recounts the early European pioneers who settled there, and shares some speculations about Kentucky's history; Slotkin calls it an "elaborate real-estate promotion" meant to convince settlers to purchase some of Filson's land.[133] *Discovery* has an appendix that appears to have been written by Col. Daniel Boone and details some of his experiences in the Kentucky wilderness.134 At one point, the Shawnee capture Boone. He impresses them with his skill as a hunter and a marksman and in many ways becomes a part of the tribe. Filson (as Boone) writes: "I spent my time as comfortably as I could expect; was adopted, according to their

[133] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 268.

[134] Filson certainly had interviewed Boone about his experiences in Kentucky, but Filson's biographer, Reuben T. Durrett, reveals that Filson took the liberty to write in the place of his former guide. Reuben Thomas Durrett, *John Filson, the First Historian of Kentucky: An Account of His Life and Writings* (Louisville: John. P. Morton & Co., 1884), 36–37.

custom, into a family where I became a son, and had a great share in the affection of my new parents, brothers."[135] True to the captivity narrative, Boone embraces Native American customs, habits and even dress. He eventually escapes and claims his friendly relationship had been an act to avoid a worse punishment from his captors. For much of the rest of his life, he would continue to oscillate between expeditions into the wilderness and his home in a "civilized" settlement.

Filson's account of Boone grew so popular that authors began to recycle, alter, and exaggerate it in subsequent years.[136] Many different versions of Boone's life story—some "biographical," some fictional, and others combination of both—appeared in print over the next century and a half, which resulted in his becoming America's "first mass culture hero."[137] Authors from different geographic locations in the United States modified Boone's narrative to reflect regional preferences and local tastes. For instance, in his 1845 essay "Daniel Boone–The First Hunter of Kentucky," novelist William Gilmore Simms—sometimes referred to as the Southern James Fenimore Cooper—altered Boone's personality to appeal specifically to Southern readers, who cherished ideas like chivalry, aristocratic love, and romance.[138] These various accounts in turn inspired dime novels that either feature Daniel Boone as the hero, such as Burke Brentford's *The Thunderbolt of the Border; Or, Daniel Boone on the Warpath* (1891), or an adventure hero of another name that closely resembles him.[139]

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[135] John Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* (Wilmington: James Adams, 1784), 41.

[136] Boone's narrative became popular in Europe before its success in the United States, which developed over a few decades: Robert V. Remini, Review of *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer*, by John Mack Faragher, *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1992, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1992-11-22-9204170039-story.html; For an outline of the evolution of the Boone narrative, see Michael A. Lofaro, "Tracking Daniel Boone: The Changing Frontier in American Life," *The Register of Kentucky Historical Society* 82, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 321–333.

[137] Daniel J. Herman, "The Other Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter Hero, 1784–1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 432.

[138] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 461; Annette Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact: The Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of Dawnland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 126.

[139] Lofaro, "Tracking Daniel Boone," 330.

Despite the many alterations, certain characteristics of Filson's Boone narrative—one of the few accounts reportedly endorsed by Boone himself—remained the same.[140] For instance, Boone is almost always depicted as a skilled and solitary hunter who adopts Native American traits. He is typically patient, courageous, and indifferent to danger.[141] However, as Henry Nash Smith has pointed out, Boone's motive for entering the wilderness developed into two oppositional archetypes that would greatly influence how later authors, including Liljencrantz and Marshall, framed their adventures. The first is the "the standard-bearer of civilization" in which Boone is portrayed as an "empire builder" and a trailblazer whose main purpose was to neutralize the threat of Native Americans so that "civilization" could safely replace the wilderness.[142] The second archetype posed Boone as "the child of nature who fled into the wilderness before the advance of settlement."[143] Authors using this model romanticized Boone's move to Kentucky not as opportunistic but as a means to escape the modernity and the social restrictions of civilization. In this version, Boone is troubled by European immigrant settlements encroaching upon his beloved wilderness, which represents, for him, man's freedom.[144] Instead of helping to build the empire, he runs away from it.

The basic properties of Boone's story and character served as a template for the first "great American adventure hero in literature," Natty Bumppo.[145] James Fenimore Cooper introduced Bumppo in his 1823 novel *The Pioneers*, a fictionalized story about the founding of Cooperstown, New York, in the late eighteenth century. A prolific writer who covered a variety of topics, Cooper did not intend to write other books about Natty Bumppo; but the popularity of this first novel eventually changed his mind. *The Pioneers* became the first of five books known as *The Leatherstocking Tales*. The others are *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841).[146]

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[140] Lofaro, "Tracking Daniel Boone," 325.

[141] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 284.

[142] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 55.

[143] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 55.

[144] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 54.

[145] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 23.

[146] *The Leatherstocking Tales* tells Natty Bumppo's life story out of chronological order. He appears in *The Pioneers* as a seasoned seventy-year-old frontiersman; *The Deerslayer*, shows him as a young man who has not yet killed a man; and the

Natty Bumppo's origins, as described in these novels, are vague. He is clearly a white man of European background but has been educated by Moravian missionaries and raised by members of the Delaware indigenous tribe alongside his foster-brother Chingachgook.[147] Bumppo adopts Delaware and Mohican habits, from the way they dress to their respect for nature. As a young man, he becomes a skillful hunter, and he and his rifle, Killdeer, develop a reputation in the area as a sure shot.

While Bumppo loves the solitude of the vast forests of New York, he is loyal to the British military and often ventures into British forts, towns, or settlements to serve and assist white settlers. In *The Pathfinder* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, he guides European colonists who wish to pass safely through the wilderness, while *The Prairie*, he rescues white men and women who have been kidnapped by Native Americans.[148] But Bumppo never stays in these "civilized" spheres for very long, in part because he sees these as the antithesis to the purity of the natural wilderness. He, like Boone, sees nature as divine.[149] Ibrahim Jasim Al-Ali explains:

> There is a sort of spiritual affinity and understanding between Natty and the wilderness. Thus in the forest he finds his abode and shrine; he finds the overwhelming glory and beauty of his Master. He worships God in the trees, in the rivers, in the clouds, and in His creatures.[150]

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third novel, *The Prairie*, shows him in the final year of his life far-removed from New York.

[147] R. W. B. Lewis argues that Natty Bumppo is the quintessential Adamic hero: "a self-reliant young man who does seem to have sprung up from nowhere and whose characteristic pose […] was the solitary stance in the presence of Nature and God." R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 91.

[148] Indeed, many scholars have argued that Cooper borrowed the captivity narrative formula for *The Last of the Mohicans*. See Franklin Hillson, "The Captivity Narrative and *The Last of the Mohicans*: Foundation and Modification," in *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His Art*, Papers from the 2011 Cooper Conference and Seminar (No. 18), eds. Steven Harthorn and Hugh MacDougall (Oneonta, NY: The University of New York College at Oneonta, 2013), 50–55, https://jfcoopersociety.org/articles/SUNY/2011suny-hillson.html.

[149] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 279, 499.

[150] Ibrahim Jasim Al-Ali, "The Sources of Morality in Natty Bumppo," MA Thesis, American University of Beirute, 1963, 9, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33363277.pdf.

Cooper molds Bumppo after the romantic Boone archetype. Bumppo continually moves westward throughout his life as he tries to outrun the progress of European colonization and contemporary society.[151] By the end of his life, he has settled west of the Mississippi River. But even there, the trappings of civilization find him. *The Pioneers* features an eighty-three-year-old Natty Bumppo shooting a deer out of season, which is against the law of a nearby settlement. Feeling that these types of laws are unnatural and impinge upon his liberty, he once again leaves for "freer country to the west."[152]

The Boone/Bumppo narrative—the characteristics that Natty Bumppo shares with his "historical cousin" Daniel Boone—became a foundational archetype upon which many later adventure heroes are built.[153] Both figures are skilled hunters and solitary frontiersman who routinely rescue white captives from Native American kidnappers. Both men were at one point "adopted" by Native Americans, from whom they acquire special knowledge and skills. They both "love the freedom of the forest" and distinguish themselves by following their own paths instead of pursuing the lives and joys of "civilized" men.[154] Boone has a family while Bumppo remains a bachelor, but they both cycle between civilization and wilderness, never fully belonging to either place.

Although both literary figures pre-date the Victorian era, they represent an ideal manliness that was popular through much of the nineteenth century. In the opening pages of *The Deerslayer*, Cooper compares a young Natty Bumppo with another frontiersman, Hurry Harry (Harry March), who is muscular, handsome, and generally good-natured, but Cooper repeatedly highlights his recklessness and aggression as vices. Bumppo, though lean and inexperienced, is thoughtful and patient. He "possessed every disposition to hear reason, a strong innate desire to do justice, and an ingenuousness that was singularly indisposed to have recourse to sophisms to maintain an argument or to defend a prejudice."[155] His attitude toward young women, such as the sisters Judith and Hetty Hutter, is chivalrous and respectful in comparison to Hurry's shallow sexual desire for them. Filson's version

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[151] Peter Vasile, "Cooper's 'The Deerslayer': The Apotheosis of Man and Nature," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43, no. 4 (September 1975): 501.

[152] Lewis, *The American Adam*, 100.

[153] Lewis, *The American Adam*, 100.

[154] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 60.

[155] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2005), 41.

of Boone, though written near the end of the eighteenth century, also reflects some of the Victorian manly ideals; however, it was Boone's literary persona that evolved throughout the nineteenth century that came to represent a Victorian code of chivalry, composure, enterprise, and self-reliance.[156]

More importantly, both figures exude the virtue of self-control. Boone and Bumppo never take the lives of women and children, and they only kill other men out of necessity. They can control their passions even in the most extreme of circumstances. On the other hand, most narratives about both Boone and Bumppo depict the Native Americans as uncontrollably violent. In Timothy Flint's 1833 biography of Daniel Boone, for instance, a band of Native Americans attack women and children and enjoy torture and causing torment.[157] The Delaware tribe that raised Natty Bumppo similarly does not hesitate to scalp and kill the young, old, women, or children throughout *The Leatherstocking Tales*.[158] According to the Victorian definitions of manhood, this inability to control their passions made these "Indians" of frontier adventures *unmanly*, while the heroes' self-control marked them as manlier than the indigenous men, tying together male and white supremacy.[159]

Boone and Bumppo display these manly virtues during adventures of escape and battle in the wilderness. Many of the men who read these stories believed that this type of manliness could only be obtained through similar experiences in the wild and tried to create their own adventures.[160] Martin Green explains that the experience of adventure also functioned as rite of passage of young men and boys into manhood, while

> adventure (in books) has been the ritual of the religion of manliness, which was the unofficial religion of the nineteenth century, if not the twentieth. In mainstream books it quite displaced the Christian values. Adventure experience was the sacramental ceremony of the cult of manhood.[161]

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[156] Herman, "The Other Boone," 440.

[157] Timothy Flint, *The First White Man of the West, or the Exploits of Col. Daniel Boone, the First Settler of Kentucky* (Cincinnati: Applegate & Company, 1856), 129–130.

[158] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder; Or, the Inland Sea* (New York: The Modern Library, 1952), 283.

[159] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 275; Smith, *Virgin Land*, 107.

[160] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 506.

[161] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 6.

Green, George L. Mosse, and many other scholars have pointed out that adventures were written "almost exclusively" for a male audience, thus the genre has "always been uncompromisingly masculine." [162] The readers would look to Boone and Bumppo as examples of ideal manhood; however, that ideal began to significantly change during and after the cultural shift at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Masculine Frontier

Newly settled European-Americans of the young United States desired to control the vast wilderness of the continent's interior, but they did not want to represent the same British imperial tyranny that they fought against during the Revolutionary War. In order to differentiate themselves, American pioneers, politicians, and policy makers cloaked their imperial ambitions by calling this westward expansion "manifest destiny"[163] Just as the European empires had sent forth all-male sailors, militaries, and merchants to the American colonies, male scouts, hunters, guides, trappers, and soldiers—men like Daniel Boone—spread outward from the early settlements in the eastern parts of North America, exploring and preparing the land for agricultural use, and pushing the frontier ever westward.[164] Typically, when the indigenous population had been controlled, removed, or annihilated, women, children, churches, schools, farms, and towns—what the settlers deemed to represent "civilization"—would move into what had previously been "wilderness"; though, as Elliott West points out, white settlers were *creating* this empty wilderness by decimating the existing population that had lived there.[165] But although the purpose

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[162] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 1; George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 113.

[163] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 3–4. The phrase "Manifest Destiny" has been attributed to the Texas politician John L. O'Sullivan who supposedly coined it in the 1840s. As a way to side-step outright violent racism, O'Sullivan argued that it was the right of Anglo-Americans to possess the entire continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Any violence was therefore justified in his mind because it was their destiny to control the land. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 219–220. For more on O'Sullivan, see Julius W. Pratt, "John O'Sullivan and Manifest Destiny," *New York History* 14, no. 3 (July 1933): 213–234.

[164] Connell, *Masculinities*, 187.

[165] Elliott West, "The American Frontier: Romance and Reality," in *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier*, eds. John Caldwell Guilds and Caroline Collins (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 34.

of this expansion was to settle families, male pioneers would continue to push westward, making the American frontier a gendered enterprise.

Two important and related events that occurred during the latter half of the century altered the popular perception of the frontier and its link with male-ness: the perceived fulfillment of manifest destiny and the cultural shift from manliness and masculinity described in section 1.1. In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered a lecture titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" to the American Historical Society in Chicago in which he claimed that the frontier had officially closed and the U.S. had run out of free land. This was certainly a cause for some concern not only from an economic and ideological standpoint but also with regard to space necessary for the development and expression of manliness.[166] Turner himself was reportedly anxious because he believed that the frontier was a "natural factory for producing American manhood," and without it, American manliness was in peril.[167] And because he viewed the male pioneers and frontiersman as representative of the American character, it too was in jeopardy as the frontier came to an end.[168]

The physical frontier had been for Turner and many others the site upon which a man could establish his manhood by facing dangers and hardships. As M. Isabel Santaularia i Capdevila has underlined, "the American frontier was constructed as a masculine arena where men could pursue their exploits unencumbered by domestic codes of conduct or by feminine interference."[169] Many MCWAM romanticized not only the frontier but also the manliness that would no longer be attainable because it was closing. The mythical frontier in adventure stories became increasingly important in this regard. Readers longed to escape the pressures of contemporary society just as the romantic archetype of Boone and his successor Bumppo had done.

Because of the male association with the frontier, "civilization"—that is organized society in the form of settlements, towns, villages, and cities—developed

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[166] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 250–260; David M. Krueger, *Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking Martyrs and the Birthplace of America* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 49.

[167] David Leverenz, "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bummpo to Batman," *American Literary History* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 762.

[168] M. Isabel Santaularia i Capdevila, "The Frontier as Masculine Territory: Sam Hawken's *The Dead Women of Juárez*," *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 2016): 18.

[169] Capdevila, "The Frontier as Masculine Territory," 18–21.

for many a "feminine" connotation. Thus, Bumppo's flight from civilized society was viewed as running from femininity toward manliness.[170] This movement can be seen in the adventure stories—particularly in cowboy Westerns that were published near the end of the nineteenth century. Western adventures were the natural successors of the early American adventure, as the physical frontier had moved steadily westward. Kit Carson, Davy Crockett, Buffalo Bill Cody, and Deadwood Dick were popular heroes of this genre and were clearly modeled after the Boone/Bumppo narrative.[171] In their respective narratives, they are fiercely independent men and solitary hunters who escape civilization to live on the frontier. Like Boone, some of these characters had been historical figures whose lives and experiences had been altered by fiction writers.[172] Davy Crockett famously wore buckskin like his predecessors, reflecting the Native American aesthetic, while Kit Carson spoke with a dialect that reminded readers of Natty Bumppo.

Certain aspects of these Western adventure heroes differed greatly from their predecessors. For instance, they slowly lost their ability to commune with the divinity of nature—perhaps because the frontier had moved westward out of the lush forests of the East, and towards the grassy, open plains of Middle America and the rocky and mountainous western territories of California or Wyoming. The symbols of the wilderness went from the solitary sublime, such as Lake Glimmerglass in *The Deerslayer*, to dangerous wolves and prairie fires.[173] The Western adventure slowly departed from the captivity narrative and featured more adventure tropes. Deadwood Dick, for instance, became famous for performing "reckless deeds of daring" that foiled robberies by outlaws rather than rescuing captives.[174] In short, the frontiersman of the early American adventure had evolved into the contemporary cowboy.

These cowboys and western heroes reflected the growing trend of masculine self-indulgence and violence that had become more acceptable over the course of the

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[170] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 184–185.

[171] Lofaro, "Tracking Boone," 321; Smith, *Virgin Land*, 81–85.

[172] The exception here is Deadwood Dick who was a fictional character created by novelist Edward Lytton Wheeler. Douglas B. Holt and Craig J. Thompson, "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 2 (September 2004): 427.

[173] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 89.

[174] Edward L. Wheeler, *The Phantom Miner; Or, Deadwood Dick's Bonanza* vol. 1, no. 7, April 26, 1899 (New York: Beadle and Adams), 3.

nineteenth century. While physical violence had been an essential part of *The Leatherstocking Tales*, it served a specific purpose. Cooper, along with other early American novelists like Charles Brockden Brown and Robert Montgomery Bird, utilized the "convention of Indian-killing as a rite of passage" for young men.[175] For instance, Natty Bumppo officially enters manhood after killing his first Indian—an act he certainly does not relish—and receives a new name to mark the occasion: Hawkeye.[176] But Bumppo regrets this act and talks at length about what a shame it was to have to kill his enemy. In fact, Bumppo typically regrets any type of violence.[177] Early in the nineteenth century, the literary figure of Daniel Boone likewise killed only out of necessity and resisted over-indulgence. The Daniel Boone featured in the dime novel *The Thunderbolt of the Border* (1891), however, decapitates Indians.[178] Carson and Crockett kill hundreds, even thousands, of Indians in their various stories.[179] This appears to have been a recipe for success. As Henry Nash Smith notes, stalwarts Beadle Publishers "merely had to kill a few more Indians" in order for their books to outsell their competitors, which meant "in practice, exaggerating violence and bloodshed for their own sakes, to the point of an overt sadism."[180]

As hinted at above, adventure as an experience and adventure in books has had a reciprocal relationship. Western adventure heroes still represented ideal manhood, although it had become more masculine. Young, male readers therefore wanted to demonstrate their manhood on the Western frontier, which was viewed as a place where one could "regain a sense of manliness through violence."[181] A telling example of this relationship from the turn of the century is the life and literature of Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), the twenty-sixth president of the United States.

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[175] David Brion Davis, "Violence in American Literature," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 364, Patterns of Violence (March 1966): 31–32.

[176] Cooper, *The Deerslayer*, 110–111.

[177] Leland S. Person, "The Historical Paradoxes of Manhood in Cooper's *The Deerslayer*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 32, no. 1, Reading Gender After Feminism (Autumn 1998): 82–83; Forrest K. Lehman, "Cooper, James Fenimore (1789–1851)," in *Men and Masculinities: A-J: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: ABC Clio, 2004), 182.

[178] Lofaro, "Tracking Daniel Boone," 330.

[179] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 103.

[180] Smith, *Virgin Land*, 92.

[181] Capdevila, "The Frontier as Masculine Territory," 18–21.

Born to a wealthy, upper class family in New York, Roosevelt grew up reading frontier and Western adventures, including Mayne Reid's *The Boy Hunters* (1853).[182] As a result, Roosevelt—both before and after his presidency—tried to reenact adventure in order to publicly prove his masculinity. He enlisted in the military and fought in the Battle of San Juan Hill. He hunted big game, both at home and on African safari.[183] He even professed to be a cowboy on the American frontier by living on a cattle ranch in South Dakota. Roosevelt published several books that recounted these experiences, including *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trails* (1888), *The Rough Riders* (1889), *African Game Trails* (1909), and *The Winning of the West* (1889), which is a "historical" account of the Anglo-American expansion westward.

Roosevelt's view of the frontier was clearly affected by the developing ideals of masculinity—particularly its implications of race. In *The Winning of the West*, he portrays Native Americans as brutal creatures, little better than beasts, and argues that civilization could only advance by conquering these indigenous people.[184] Gail Bederman argues that throughout his book, Roosevelt

> depicts the American West as a crucible in which the white American race was forged through masculine racial conflict. By applying Darwinistic principles to the Western tradition, Roosevelt constructed the frontier as a site of origins of the American race, whose manhood and national worth were proven by their ability to stamp out competing, savage races.[185]

Roosevelt accordingly was worried how the closing of the frontier might affect American manliness and, by extension, the national character. Moreover, Anglo-Americans had successfully decimated the indigenous population. Without them and the frontier, how could white American men prove their masculinity? As president,

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[182] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 173.

[183] Working with the Smithsonian in 1909, Roosevelt's hunting party in Africa allegedly captured and killed over 1,000 large animals to send back to Washington. Roosevelt claimed to have been responsible for over 250 creatures, though, according to his journals, he could have killed more if he had wanted to. Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 211–212, 252; see also the Roosevelt African Expedition Collection in the History of the Smithsonian Catalog, https://siris-sihistory.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?&profile=all&source=~!sichronology&uri=full=3100001~!193~!0#focus.

[184] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* in *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* vol. 3 (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1905), 264.

[185] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 178.

Roosevelt tried to extend the frontier by attempting to colonize perceived "inferior" countries so that Americans could continue to demonstrate a masculine and racial superiority by dominating a different group of people.[186] In one of his most (in)famous speeches titled, "The Strenuous Life," given in Chicago in 1889, he praised England for bringing civilization to India and suggested that it was the responsibility of the United States to "lift up" in a similar way countries like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. This could only be achieved when local resistance had been "stamped out" by the American military. Roosevelt warns Americans that if they do not act soon, "then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world."[187]

Roosevelt represents several intersecting spheres of late-nineteenth-century American culture. Green calls him the "locus of adventure."[188] Inspired by adventure stories, he tailored his image to reflect the frontiersman image. He then wrote accounts of his experiences, framing himself as a Western adventure hero. More importantly, he clearly represents the masculine ideals that became popular around the turn of the century. His determination to dominate others, the competition he felt between nations, and the link he saw between race and levels of manliness reflect the changing gender ideals pointed out by Bederman, Rotundo, and Kimmel. At the heart of his ideology, in both his literature and in his politics, is concern for the masculine image of the United States, which, for him, means being physically or symbolically violent towards another group of people. And this would continue to be a part of the adventure genre as it grew and developed.

The Search for Pre-Columbian Civilization

Following the appendix that features the adventures of Daniel Boone in John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* is a section titled "Of the Indians." At the outset, Filson describes the different indigenous tribes living in the Ohio River Valley. He goes on to describe several artifacts and ancient remains found in Kentucky, "which seem to prove, that this country was formerly inhabited by a nation farther advanced in the arts of life than the Indians."[189] Filson speculates about the different possible "nations," such as the Welsh, the Chinese,

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[186] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 184.

[187] Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1902), 20.

[188] Green, *The Great American Adventure*, 16.

[189] Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*, 56.

and the Phoenicians, that could have left behind these items. The implication here is that the Native American tribes could not have created these artifacts or remains—commonly referred to as "American antiquities"—and that some other, more advanced civilization *must* have been present prior to the indigenous people with whom Filson had come into contact. Slotkin explains that in this way of thinking, "the Indians represent the remnants of a fallen or degenerated race […] Filson implies that the Indians, because of their defective racial character, failed to learn from the Carthaginians and the Welsh the improved customs and institutions of civilization."[190] The discourse around "American antiquities," reflected a prejudice against the indigenous Americans and supposed that whoever had created them had been of a racially superior civilization.

Filson was not alone in concentrating on "ancient remains" in speculating about the civilizations that may have inhabited North America before its "aborigines." Since its discovery in the Taunton River in Massachusetts around 1680, the Dighton Rock—a boulder featuring a mysterious inscription—captivated the European-American imagination. Early settlers, such as the reverends John Danforth and the aforementioned Cotton Mather, believed the writing to have been Hebrew and speculated that the inscription had been left by one of the Tribes of Israel. Subsequent generations of enthusiasts attempted to decipher the message on the stone and attributed it to every imaginable culture that had ties to pre-Columbian America, regardless of how vague.

In his study, *The Place of the Stone: Dighton Rock and the Erasure of America's Indigenous Past* (2015), Douglas Hunter points out that inherent in these speculations were assumptions about the origins and nature of the Native Americans.[191] For instance, Cotton Mather's protégé Isaac Greenwood suggested in the 1730s that the Native Americans could not have created the inscriptions on the Dighton Rock because they lacked the proper tools and were furthermore too lazy and stupid for any type of artistry.[192] This prejudice came more into prominence in the speculations about the Ohio burial mounds.

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[190] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 275.

[191] Douglas Hunter, *The Place of the Stone: Dighton Rock and the Erasure of America's Indigenous Past* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 33–40.

[192] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 40–43.

In the seventeenth century, French, Spanish, and English explorers had discovered several burial mounds throughout the Ohio River and Mississippi River valleys. It was generally assumed that these structures had been built by a culture older and more advanced than the contemporary Native Americans cultures. Accordingly, the written accounts from these explorers make a clear distinction between the "Mound Builders" and the "Indians," refusing to entertain the possibility these two groups could be one and the same.[193] As speculations about the Ohio burial mounds grew increasingly widespread throughout the eighteenth century, a growing number of Anglo-Americans began to suspect that the Native Americans had destroyed a civilization that preceded their own in North America.[194] This perception would have real and destructive consequences for the living indigenous population as the nineteenth century unfolded.[195]

An example of this prejudice can be found in the popular work *American Antiquitie*s *and Discoveries of the West* (1833) by Josiah Priest, a writer from Unadilla, New York. Priest describes, among other remains, the Ohio mounds, a nearby "Roman" fortification, and a supposedly "Egyptian" catacomb in Kentucky. He then explores the many different ancient civilizations that could have been in North America that may have produced these artifacts. Left out of the equation are the Native Americans. Indeed, the book highlights the underlying racial implications associated with the "American antiquities" discourse. Priest subscribes to the belief, made popular by Greenwood, that Native Americans did not have the faculties to produce these artifacts and that they were in fact responsible for the elimination of the Mound Builders:

> We are very far from believing the Indians of the present time to be the most ancient aborigines of America; but, on the contrary, are

[193] Terry A. Barnhart, *American Antiquities: Revisiting the Origins of American Archaeology* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 40–45. It is now generally accepted that the people responsible for creating these mounds belonged to the Hopewell culture of the Middle Woodland Period (100BC–500 AD). Elliot M. Abrams. "Hopewell Archaeology: A View from the Northern Woods," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 17, no. 2 (June 2009): 169–204.

[194] Angela Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and the Debate Over Cultural Origins," *American Art* 8, no. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn, 1994): 9–10. Hunter claims that by the second half of the eighteenth century, many people assumed the "American antiquities" had been produced by a singular culture that lived in North America before the Native Americans arrived. Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 76–80.

[195] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 114.

> usurpers; have, by force of blood warfare, exterminated the original inhabitants taking possession of their country, property, and, in some instances, retaining arts, learned of those very nations.[196]

Priest is arguing not only that the land in North America never truly belonged to the "common Indian of the west," as he called them, but also that the Anglo-Americans were validated in taking indigenous people's land by reclaiming it in the name of "civilization."[197]

Although critics scoffed at some of Priest's claims—one publisher called him "greatest inventor of ancient history"—the book was not just popular but consequential.[198] De Villo Sloan goes as far as to argue that *American Antiquities and Discoveries of the West* carries with it a "subtle justification of genocide."[199] In actuality, Priest published his book during an ongoing expulsion and massacre of the Native American population. The United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in May of 1830, which resulted in the forced relocation of thousands of Native Americans from the South-Eastern United States to federal land west of the Mississippi.[200] President Andrew Jackson gave a speech in support of this bill in December of that year in which he suggests that the aforementioned "American antiquities" indeed belonged to an older civilization:

> In the monuments and fortifications of an unknown people, spread over the extensive regions of the West, we behold the memorials of a

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[196] Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries of the West* (Albany: Hoffman and White, 1835), 97; quoted in Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America,'" 14.

[197] Priest, *American Antiquities*, 41.

[198] Stephen Williams, *Fantastic Archaeology: The Wild Side of North American Prehistory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 52, ff. 13. *American Antiquities* was popular among American readers and sold 22,000 copies in its first 30 months. De Villo Sloan, "*The Crimsoned Hills of Onodaga*: Josiah Priest's Hallucinatory Epic," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 1 (August 2002): 89.

[199] Sloan, "*The Crimsoned Hills of Onodaga*," 97.

[200] As John P. Bowes points out, the Indian Removal Act is a clear example of structural and cultural violence meeting physical violence. He even calls the histories of and scholarship on the removal that appeared over the following century violent. John P. Bowes, "American Indian Removal beyond the Removal Act," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 66.

> once powerful race, which was exterminated or has disappeared to make room for the existing savage tribes.[201]

By framing them as usurpers, authors like Priest helped Jackson to justify the forced removal and the subsequent deaths of thousands of Native Americans during their journey westward during the 1830s and 40s.[202] These writers used "American antiquities" like the Ohio mounds and the Dighton Rock to remove the indigenous people from America's past while the U.S. government correspondingly removed them violently from the present.[203] In other words, the symbolic violence found in works like Priest's helped to excuse the physical violence committed by Jackson against the indigenous Americans.

Carl Christian Rafn

Speculations about a Norse presence in pre-historic America began as early as the eighteenth century, possibly in response to Thomas Percy's 1770 English translation of *Northern Antiquities* written by the Swiss scholar Paul Henri Mallet.[204] One of the earliest mentions of Vinland in relation to "American antiquities" appears in John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*. Filson cites Mallet, claiming that Vinland had most likely been on the large island of Labrador. But he also suggests that these medieval "adventurers" could have built a civilization in North America that had been destroyed by Native American tribes.[205] Another early reference came in the 1787 book, *Observations on Some Parts of Natural History* written by botanist and naturalist Benjamin Smith Barton, who suggested a Norse presence much further inland: "as widely noticed, the Viking

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[201] Andrew Jackson, "Second Annual Message," December 6, 1830, *Digital History*, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=666. Quoted in Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 129.

[202] This trek has become known as the Trail of Tears, one of the worst tragedies in U.S. history. For more, see John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988); Gloria Jahoda, *The Trail of Tears: The Story of American Indian Removals: 1813–1855* (New York: Wings Books, 1995); and Carolyn Ross Johnston, *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1837–1907* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003).

[203] Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America,'" 14.

[204] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 113.

[205] Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke*, 71–72.

lords had been interred in burial mounds not much different from those of Ohio."[206] Hence, by the time Priest wrote *American Antiquities*, the medieval Norse were already included in the many speculations concerning the pre-Columbian civilizations in America.[207]

Still, few Americans had at this point any extensive knowledge regarding the medieval Icelandic sagas about Vinland, which indeed place Norsemen in North America prior to Columbus's "discovery." This changed in 1837 when Danish philologist Carl Christian Rafn published *Antiquitates Americanæ*, an in-depth study of *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga*, and the medieval "discovery" of North America. Rafn was considered to be an expert in the field of Old Norse studies, having worked on a number of saga editions and Danish saga translations throughout the 1820s, as well as coining the term *fornaldarsögur* for his edited collection of legendary sagas, *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* (1829–1830). *Antiquitates Americanæ* conveyed a certain authority in scholarly circles, and many American intellectuals accepted it as proof of a Norse "discovery" of America. Several twenty-first century scholars, in particular Geraldine Barnes, Annette Kolodny, and Patricia Jane Roylance, have identified Rafn's work as the genesis of wide-spread interest in Old Norse literature in the United States.[208] Douglas Hunter, however, calls Rafn's *Antiquitates Americanæ* "one of the most important scholarly works on American antiquity in the nineteenth century."[209] While Rafn's work did certainly help spark interest in Old Norse literature, it also functioned as a puzzle piece for those trying to use objects like the Dighton Rock, the Ohio Mounds, and the Newport Tower to assemble together America's pre-Columbian—that is, non-indigenous—past.

Antiquitates Americanæ features sections written in Old Icelandic, Danish, and Latin, and it also has some parts in English. Rafn provides the narratives of the Vinland sagas, information about saga literature, the medieval Norse culture, and

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[206] Quoted in Robert Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America: Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich: New York, 1968), 32; Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 81–83.

[207] Priest suggests that the Scandinavians made it as far south as Central America, arguing that some family names in Guatemala are somehow connected to the Norse god Odin. Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries of the West*, 238.

[208] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's review of the epic *Frithiofs saga* by Swedish poet Esias Tegnér in *The North American Review*, also published in 1837, was another catalyst for interest in Old Norse literature: Barnes, *Viking America*, 117.

[209] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 133.

other related topics. He also presents excerpts from other Old Norse narratives—including *Heimskringla*, *Landnámabók*, *Eyrbyggia saga* and select Icelandic annals—that mention characters featured in the Vinland sagas or contain references to Vinland. For the most part, Rafn's scholarship is sound. However, when he tries to establish Vinland as a real and historical place in the United States, his argument becomes shaky. Specific details in the saga narratives regarding sailing distances and directions, landscape descriptions, the grapevines growing in the wild and the length of the days in winter, lead him to conclude that Vinland had been in present-day New England, most likely near the Boston area.[210] He also argues that local placenames share properties with Old Norse words. For instance, he claims that *Kjalarnes*—one of the few place names in Vinland mentioned in the Vinland sagas—"must consequently be Cape Cod."[211] Rafn continued to analyze place-names in the United States after the publication of *Antiquitates Americanæ*. He believed there were so many similarities between them and words in the Old Norse language that some of the medieval explorers must have stayed in Vinland and intermarried with indigenous peoples.[212]

The path that led Rafn to the conclusion that Vinland must have been in New England can be traced back for almost a decade before he published *Antiquitates Americanæ*. In 1829, he wrote a letter to the secretary of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Dr. Thomas H. Webb, asking for information about the Dighton Rock. As a consequence, Webb visited the famous stone in 1830. After recording information about its inscription and the surrounding wildlife and landscapes, he sent his findings back to Rafn, who believed that all the pieces fit into the story of Vinland, except one: the indigenous people. In a letter from Webb in 1830, Rafn received the

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[210] Much has been made about the passage that claims: "The sun rose at 9:00 A.M. and set at 3:30 P.M. on the shortest day of winter." *Grœnlendinga saga* in *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttr ǫrva, Eiríks saga rauða, Grœnlendinga saga, Grœnlendinga þáttr*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson, Íslensk fornrit, vol. IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka forritafélag, 1935), 251; Barnes, *Viking America*, 46; Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 105–111.

[211] Carl Christian Rafn, "The Discovery of America in the Tenth Century," in *Antiquitates Americanæ, sive Scriptores Septentrionales Rerum Ante-Columbianarum in America. Samling af de i Nordens Oldskrifter indeholdte Efterretninger om de gamle Nordboers Opdagelsereisier til America fra det 10de til det 14de Aarhundrede, Edidit Societas Regia Antiquariorum Septentrionalium* (Copenhagen: Societas Regia Antiquariorum Septentrionalium, 1837), XXXIV.

[212] Rafn discusses and posits several connections between indigenous place-names and Old Norse words in a letter to Webb in 1839. Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 147.

confirmation he had been hoping for, as the secretary argued against a Native American origin, echoing earlier prejudices associated with "American antiquities":

> In the Western parts of our Country may still be seen numerous and extensive mounds, similar to the tumuli met with in Scandinavia, Tartary, and Russia; also the remains of Fortifications, that must have required for their construction, a degree of industry, labour and skill, as well as an advancement in the Arts, that never characterized any of the Indian tribes.[213]

By 1834, Rafn was confident that he had deciphered most of the Dighton Rock's message. He claimed the inscription was a combination of Latin letters and Nordic runes, and he could make out at least one word for certain: "Thorfins," a reference to Thorfinn Karlsefni of the Vinland sagas.[214] Webb responded to these speculations with more enthusiasm than critical discernment, and together they fashioned the Dighton Rock into "irrefutable" proof of a Norse presence in New England.

As a listed member of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Webb's name certainly lent additional credibility to *Antiquitates Americanæ*. Moreover, he and Rafn used a familiar technique in speculating about the origins of a well-known artifact. Indeed, Webb would add two pieces of evidence to the Norse "discovery" that had a similarly debated history—a crumbling tower in Newport, Rhode Island, and a skeleton that had been unearthed in the Fall River in Massachusetts in 1832—in the 1841 follow-up, *Supplement to Antiquitates Americanæ*.[215] By presenting the "evidence" in this manner, Webb and Rafn effectively brought Old Norse literature into the discourse of "American antiquities," which, as discussed above, carried implications about race and destiny in the United States.

"American antiquities" is in itself an innocuous term. But Andrew Galloway has argued that artifacts like the Dighton Rock and the Ohio mounds provided white Americans with a "point for identification with ancient white or at least not nonwhite people" that they could use as a means to push back against claims of land

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[213] Thomas H. Webb to Carl Christian Rafn, September 22, 1830, in *Antiquitates Americanæ*, 356.

[214] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 140; Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 106.

[215] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 153–154; Dr. Thomas H. Webb, "Account of an Ancient Structure in Newport, Rhode Island, the Vinland of the Scandinavians," in Carl Christian Rafn, *Supplement to the Antiquitates Americanæ* (Copenhagen: Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, 1841), 3–27.

ownership held by indigenous people.[216] The conversation surrounding most "American antiquities" overlooks Native Americans entirely, even though the skeleton in the Fall River and the Dighton Rock are most likely evidence of an extinct indigenous tribe.[217] And while scholars like Einar Haugen consider Rafn's application of the "American antiquities" discourse and methodology to the Vinland sagas as overenthusiasm or "childlike delight," it appears the Danish scholar was at least aware of how other American writers like Josiah Priest had utilized these ancient remains.[218] In *American Antiquities*, Priest recounts the Norse "discovery" and locates "Vineland" near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River—closer, incidentally, to the area where later scholars like Gísli Sigurðsson would suggest Vinland had been—and Priest even references Rafn's forthcoming work on the Vinland sagas: "A distinguished writer of Copenhagen [...] was not long since engaged in the composition of a work on the early voyages of discovery to this continent, as undertaken by the inhabitants of the north of Europe, more than eight hundred and thirty years ago."[219] Geraldine Barnes has confirmed that American historian and linguist John Russell Bartlett—another member of the Rhode Island Historical Society who accompanied Webb on research trips on Rafn's behalf—sent a copy of Priest's book to Rafn in Copenhagen.[220]

The following year, Rafn published an English summary of *Antiquitates Americanæ* titled *America Discovered in the Tenth Century*. In this more accessible publication, Rafn streamlined *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga* into one

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[216] Andrew Galloway, "William Cullen Bryant's American Antiquities: Medievalism, Miscegenation and Race in *The Prairies*," *American Literary History* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 8–9.

[217] The Newport Tower is a seventeenth-century construction, though it continued to inspire a Viking connection well into the twentieth century.

[218] Einar Haugen, *Voyages to Vinland* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 147.

[219] Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries of the West*, 237. This quote is almost copied verbatim from an 1828 article in *Niles' Weekly Register* that was itself a reprint found in Philadelphia's *National Gazette and Literary Register*. Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 132; Kevin J. Harty, The 'Viking Tower' in Newport, Rhode Island: fact, fiction and film," in *From Iceland to Americas*, eds. Tim Machan and Jón Karl Helgason (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 50.

[220] Barnes, *Viking America*, 48 ff. 61. Bartlett provided Rafn with some sketches of other rock inscriptions found in New England, one of which appears in *Antiquitates Americanae* on Table XIII. Bartlett was slightly less involved than Webb, and he eventually distanced himself from Rafn's conclusions about the Dighton Rock. Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 144.

coherent narrative, and, as Annette Kolodny points out, removed some of the fantastic elements so that the work would read more like straightforward and reliable history.[221] By altering the sagas in this way, Rafn was appealing to the ongoing search for a non-Indian ancient civilization in the United States. He offered something to those who were speculating about America's past, something the Welsh or Phoenician narratives lacked: textual *and* physical evidence.[222] In the years following the publication of *Antiquitates Americanæ*, influential historians like Benjamin Franklin De Costa, Joshua Toulmin Smith, and North Ludlow Beamish understood Vinland in these terms and helped to popularize it as a historical fact on both sides of the Atlantic.[223]

In his study of the mounting international interest in Scandinavian culture and literature during the nineteenth century, Kim Simonsen points out: "Figures like Rafn are interesting, since he engaged in the dissemination and transfer of cultural and political ideas and cultural capital. Persons like Rafn were 'cultural brokers' acting as the 'go-between' agents between nations and fields."[224] Rafn's role as a

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[221] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 108.

[222] Many of the Welsh speculations were based on a medieval myth about Prince Madoc of Wales, who supposedly sailed to North America around 1170 and stayed to build a civilization by intermarrying with Native Americans. No physical evidence has ever been found to support this narrative; however, it gained prominence in North America when European settlers started exploring the interior of what is now the United States and stories began circulating about Native American tribes that could understand and speak the Welsh language. Tribes, such as the Mandan, were described as having lighter skin and lighter hair than other tribes and were thus deemed to be part of the descendants of Madoc. This legend is mentioned by Filson and Priest in their discussions of pre-Columbian civilizations. For more on Prince Madoc and the Welsh Indians, see for instance Marshall T. Newman, "The Blonde Mandan: A Critical Review of an Old Problem," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 187, no. 6 (Dec. 1952): 255–272; Derrick Spradlin, "'God ne'er Brings to pass Such Things for Nought': Empire and Prince Madoc of Wales in Eighteenth-Century America," *Early American Literature* 44, no. 1 (2009): 39–70.

[223] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 144.

[224] Kim Simonsen, "The Cultivation of Scandinavism: The royal Society of Northern Antiquaries' International Network, Seen Through the Letters of Carl Christian Rafn," in *Skandinavismen. Vision og virkning*, eds. Ruth Hemstad, Jes Fabricius Møller og Dag Thorkildsen, University of Southern Denmark Studies in History and Sciences; Vol. 556 (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2018), https://www.academia.edu/35415800/The_Cultivation_of_Scandinavism_The_Royal_Society_of_Northern_Antiquaries_International_Network_Seen_Through_the_Letters_of_Carl_Christian_Rafn.

"cultural broker" to American intellectuals can be seen in the way he uses the format of "American antiquities" to promote Old Norse culture and literature. Just as other American writers speculated about the Ohio Mounds, the Dighton Rock, or Welsh Indians, Rafn's argument hinges on a widely known and long-debated object that would have certainly appealed to antiquarians, historians, and others searching for America's ancient past. Hunter argues that one American antiquity actually drove the research behind *Antiquitates Americanæ*: "Once Rafn had decided southern New England and Dighton Rock presented his best hope of offering definitive physical proof for a historical Vinland, he focused on producing evidence that fit the theory, and where need be, on making that evidence fit."[225] Indeed, the Danish scholar asked Finnur Magnússon, an Icelander who helped with translations of the Old Norse material, to connect the passage in the sagas that describes the length of days in Vinland with the latitude of New England.[226] Hunter also suggests that Rafn's

> determination to prove a Norse presence in eastern North America extended to the object-based epistemology of archaeology. The discipline was sufficiently established through the Mound Builders that Americans were accustomed to excavating literal mounds of buried evidence for mysterious peoples of the pre-Columbian era.[227]

By tapping into the "American antiquities" discourse, Rafn continued in his work the tradition of displacement and erasure of Native Americans from America's past.[228] Whether or not he intended for his work to be read in this way, the discourse that evolved in the wake of *Antiquitates Americanæ* displays clearly how the Vinland sagas were contextualized within the racial (and gender) hierarchies of power in the nineteenth-century United States.

Vinland After Rafn

Carl Christian Rafn's success as a "cultural broker" can be attested by the appearance of his ideas in American popular culture, histories, and other writings in the years following his publication. Scholars like Barnes, Kolodny, and Hunter have discussed the impact Rafn's work had on other American writers. My purpose here is not to repeat their findings but rather to highlight patterns and recycled ideas in

[225] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 140.
[226] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 140.
[227] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 148.
[228] Hunter, *The Place of the Stone*, 137.

these later nineteenth-century works that underline the themes of civilization, race, and gender—in other words, how these authors "Americanized" the story of Vinland. One of the most important figures in this regard is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Rafn had been Longfellow's Icelandic language tutor during the poet's trip to Scandinavia in 1835, which inspired the latter to teach Danish and Swedish language and literature at Harvard after his return to the U.S. In 1838, Longfellow visited the Fall River skeleton, later claiming that it inspired him to write an epic poem that would connect it and the Newport Tower to the potential Norse presence in New England.[229] In 1841, the same year Rafn and Webb published *Supplements*, Longfellow published a poem titled "The Skeleton in Armor" in *Knickerbocker Magazine*. It was a romantic reminiscence of a Viking who had fled from his home with his lover and sailed across the sea to live in a foreign land near a tower. On the adjacent page there was a sketch of the infamous Newport Tower. Longfellow's poetry was extremely popular at this time, and he was able to present Rafn's version of the Vinland story to an American readership that might not have had access to or been interested in *Antiquitates Americanæ*. Longfellow was therefore instrumental in solidifying both the Newport Tower and the Fall River Skeleton as "undoubtedly" Norse in the American popular conscience.

Around the same time that Longfellow and Rafn met, several authors—including Longfellow himself, James Fenimore Cooper, and Herman Melville—were searching for the "starting point for a new, uniquely American mythology" and attempting to write *the* American epic.[230] As a relatively young nation, the United States lacked a symbolic past comparable to the past of older countries that gave them their identity. In order to create one, the writers turned to the most American experience: life on the frontier. According to Richard Slotkin, a successful American myth needed to combine assumptions about life, America, Indian, God, and the wilderness.[231] The Vinland sagas come remarkably close to meeting these criteria: they contain strong Christian elements, encounters of Europeans with Native Americans, and descriptions of the North American wilderness lying beyond what Kolodny calls "the shadowy pre-Columbian frontier."[232]

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[229] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 154–155. For more on the relationship between Longfellow and Rafn, see Allen Wilson Porterfield, "Eight Unpublished Letters of Longfellow," *Scandinavian Studies* 5, no. 5 (February 1919): 169–180.

[230] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 4.

[231] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 23.

[232] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 153.

Longfellow and several of the other "fireside poets" appear to have recognized this aspect of the Vinland sagas.[233] John Greenleaf Whittier and James Russell Lowell joined Longfellow in committing to poetry pieces of the Vinland story as communicated through Rafn. According to Barnes, some of these poets "validated the Viking landfall in America as an integral part of the poetic history of the nation."[234] While "The Skeleton in Armor" can hardly be seen as an attempt to create an American myth, Longfellow was clearly intrigued by the Nordic aspect of American pre-history, as evident in *The Song of Hiawatha*. For this epic poem, he combined Native American legend with what he perceived to be the style of the Norse sagas. He also borrowed heavily from the Finnish epic, *Kalevala*.[235] A review in *The New York Times* called it an "Indian saga," and it is indeed a striking combination of ideas of the frontier, Old Norse narrative style and assumptions about Native Americans.[236]

Rafn had gone to great lengths to establish the historicity of the Vinland sagas and did so by appealing to specifically American interests and perhaps even American prejudices. But by the end of the century, many of Rafn's conclusions were questioned and challenged, most notably in the 1880s when Norwegian scholar Gustav Storm published several articles about the Vinland narratives.[237] But in the popular imagination this was of little consequence. Longfellow's use of the Newport Tower and the Fall River skeleton laid the foundation for various later writers to

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[233] The name "fireside poets" supposedly comes from the group's popularity, as they were some of the first American poets to rival the popularity of British poets. This group included William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendall Holmes, and James Russell Lowell. For more information about the Fireside poets, see the first chapter of John Timberman Newcomb, *Would Poetry Disappear?: American Verse and the Crisis of Modernity* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004).

[234] Barnes, *Viking America*, 117–118. Barnes discusses in particular Whittier's poem, "The Norsemen" (1841) and Lowell's "The Voyage to Vinland" (1869).

[235] Waino Nyland, "*Kalevala* as a Reputed Source of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*," *American Literature* 22, no. 1 (March 1950): 1–20; Douglas Hardy, "Influence of Finish *Kalevala* in the Composition of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*," *Brigham Young University Studies* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1962): 140–147; Ernest J. Moyne, *Hiawatha and Kalevala: A study of the relationship between Longfellow's 'Indian Edda' and the Finnish epic* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1963); Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 364.

[236] "Longfellow's Poem," *The New York Times*, December 28, 1855.

[237] See for instance Gustav Storm, *Studier over Vinlandsreiserne. Vinlands geografi og ethnografi* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1888).

creatively mold Rafn's work and the Vinland sagas into a convenient myth about Vinland that suited interests of white Americans. Indeed, Robin Fleming argues that "the purveyors of the medieval in America sought to stir the heart and mind and to recall a Romantic and idealized version of the medieval past, not present in the Middle Ages, but in popular poetry, paintings, and novels of the age."[238] The result, as we shall see, is a Vinland that is repeatedly used in a way that excludes other groups of people.

The impact of Rafn's ideas about Vinland and Longfellow's idealized American past can be seen in the works of two men in particular: Norwegian-American professor of literature at the University of Wisconsin, Rasmus B. Anderson (1846–1936), and Eben Norton Horsford (1818–1893), a retired chemist known for his reformulation of baking powder.[239] Anderson began his teaching career in 1869 at the University of Wisconsin, where he soon established the first American department of Scandinavian Studies.[240] He had had a lifelong interest in Old Norse literature and grew increasingly fascinated with the medieval Norse "discovery" of North America. He began what Bergur Þorgeirsson calls a "mission of education": a lifelong endeavor to cultivate in his fellow countrymen an appreciation for medieval Norse sagas, myths, history, and culture.[241] Because he believed that Americans and Scandinavians shared a common ancestry, he thought that Old Norse literature ought to be required reading for every white American in the United States.

In 1874, Anderson published *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, which served the purpose of elevating Leif Eriksson over Christopher Columbus as the *true* discoverer of America. In fact, Anderson argues that not only did the Norse "discover" America 500 years before Columbus; he also lays out "evidence" to

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[238] Robin Fleming, "Picturesque History and the Medieval in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 1072.

[239] For Horsford's contribution to the scientific world, see Samuel Rezneck, "The European Education of an American Chemist and Its Influence on 19-th Century America: Eben Norton Horsford," *Technology and Culture* 11, no. 3 (July 1970): 366–388.

[240] Bergur Þorgeirsson, "Norwegian-American 'missions of education' and Old Norse literature," in *From Iceland to the Americas: Vinland and historical imagination*, eds. Jón Karl Helgason and Tim William Machan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 126.

[241] Bergur Þorgeirsson, "Norwegian-American 'missions of education' and Old Norse literature," 125.

suggest that Columbus had only learned of the existence of America because of the Norse through a supposed visit to Iceland around 1477.[242] Framed this way, the Norse were doubly responsible for the discovery of North America.

Early in his book, Anderson describes some of the theories regarding ancient civilizations that supposedly operated in pre-Columbian America, including the Welsh, the Phoenicians, and the Irish. He dismisses these accounts as mere speculations and then summarizes the plot of the Vinland sagas in his own words. He supports Rafn's conclusions, arguing that the Newport Tower "undoubtedly was built by the Norsemen" and that the skeleton in the Fall River had actually been that of Thorvald Eriksson, Leif's Eriksson's brother.[243] Anderson therefore expands upon Rafn's information and Longfellow's romantic outlook, and he adds more unfounded "facts" to the Vinland story.

The 1877 reprint of *America Not Discovered by Columbus* featured a new preface that included some correspondence between Anderson and a man named Elisha Slade, who appears to have filled the role of Dr. Webb in Rafn's case as a local expert. Slade writes to Anderson about the inscriptions on the Dighton Rock: "I cannot believe they were made by the lazy Indian of Schoolcraft."[244] Anderson's "mission of education" is expressed through a familiar discourse on "American

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[242] The penultimate chapter of *America Not Discovered by Columbus* lists several reasons why Columbus is indebted to the Norse for the discovery of America: a) a letter from Columbus to his son suggesting he visited Iceland in 1477, b) Gudrid Thorbjarnardottir's pilgrimage to Rome, accounted for in *Grænlendinga saga*, c) letters from clergymen that mention Vinland as a real place, d) an alleged map of Vinland held at the Vatican, e) other medieval texts that contain references to Vinland. Rasmus B. Anderson, *America Not Discovered by Columbus: A Historical Sketch of the Discovery of America by the Norsemen in the Tenth Century* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Company, 1874), 85–87. For further reading on the letter that attests to Columbus's alleged visit to Iceland, see Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Christopher Columbus: The Grand Design* (London: Orbis Publishing Limited, 1985), 319–326 and Annette Kolodny, "Gudrid Thorbjornsdottir: First Foremother of the American Empire," in *Women's Narratives of the Early Americas and the Formation of the Empire*, eds. Mary McAleer Baulkun and Susan C. Imbarrato (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 28.

[243] Anderson, *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, 76.

[244] Anderson, *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, 23. This is a reference to Henry Schoolcraft, a nineteenth-century explorer who had written several works about Native Americans, including a collection of Indian legends that Longfellow used in his composition of *Hiawatha*. Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 364.

antiquities" and as a consequence appropriated Native American facts to suit the needs of European settlers.

Near the turn of the century, Horsford—a former Rumsford Professor of Chemistry at Harvard University and neighbor to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow—presented additional "evidence" for a pre-Columbian Norse presence in New England. After his retirement, Horsford became consumed with interest in the Vikings.[245] He was convinced that the Norse had stayed in New England after their eleventh-century "discovery," and he began to search for remains in his hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He discovered, in his own words, "monuments of the presence of the Northmen on every square mile of the basin of the Charles [River]," which included various artifacts, the remains of Leif Eriksson's house, and an entire Norse city that he called Norumbega, the ruins of which lay under the Cambridge hospital.[246]

Horsford published several volumes about his findings, including *The Problem of the Northmen* (1889), *The Discovery of the Ancient City of Norumbega* (1890), *The Defenses of Norumbega* (1891), and *The Landfall Leif Erikson, A.D. 1000, and the Site of his Houses in Vineland* (1892). In these works, he employs a similar approach as Rafn by gathering "artifacts," presumably of colonial or Native American origin, and using them to produce a theory about the Norse movements on the continent. Horsford, also like Rafn, ignores Native American culture and history or appropriates it to the Norse. He argues that the language of Algonquin tribes featured some elements of Old Norse, cherry-picking comparable phonetic or spelling features in the same way earlier writers had claimed some Native American languages had been influenced by Welsh.[247] In his study of local place names, he argues that several local place names can be traced back to a Norse origin. For instance, he claims that the island Martha's Vineyard, south of Cape Cod, had

[245] Williams, *Fantastic Archaeology*, 207.

[246] Eben Norton Horsford, *The Discovery of the Ancient City of Norumbega: A Communication to the President and Council of the American Geographical Society at their special session in Watertown, November 21, 1889* (Cambridge: Privately Printed, 1890), 24; Eben Norton Horsford, *The Landfall Leif Erikson, A.D. 1000, and the Site of his Houses in Vineland* (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1892), 109.

[247] This theory prevailed into the twentieth century and can be seen in the publication of Reider T. Sherwin's *The Viking and the Red Man: The Old Norse Origin of the Algonquin Language* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1940). Horsford, *Discovery of America by Northmen*, 47–54, ff. 26.

retained for centuries part of its original name of Vinland or "Vineland." He adds that Nomans Land, a nearby uninhabited island, had originally been named "Northman's Land" and over the years had been abridged by Native Americans and English settlers.[248] His 1893 book *Leif's House in Vineland* contains a section written by his daughter, Cornelia Horsford, titled "The Graves of the Northmen," in which she compares medieval burial mounds in Scandinavia with the burial mounds found in North America. In a rebuttal to Dr. Cyrus Thomas, who argued that the Shawnee might have constructed the Ohio mounds, Cornelia writes: "The Shawnees, then, are probably descended from natives who had come in contact with the Northmen."[249]

Perhaps more than any other nineteenth-century American, Horsford romanticized and Americanized the story of Vinland by connecting the Norse to landmarks and place names that were familiar to those living in Massachusetts. He viewed the figure of Leif Eriksson in the light of local history: "His ancestry were of the early pilgrims, or puritans, who, to escape oppression, emigrated 50,000 of them in sixty years, from Norway to Iceland, as the early Pilgrims came to Plymouth."[250] He even created his own "American antiquity" in 1889 by building the Norumbega Tower, a monument to the lost Norse city.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a pattern has emerged of American writers discussing Vinland through this type of "American antiquities" and pre-Columbian civilization discourse. Certainly, Anderson and Horsford were not the only Americans who developed their ideas about Vinland based on Rafn's presentation in *Antiquitates Americanæ*, but they have been highlighted here because of how they framed their discussion of Vinland and Old Norse literature. They followed in Rafn's footsteps in appropriating artifacts and coming to even wilder conclusions than the Dane. Moreover, the writings of these men had significant impact on Ottilie Liljencrantz, who will be discussed in chapter 2. She acknowledges Anderson as one of the writers who inspired her novel *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902). Furthermore, in her 1906 novel, *Randvar the Songsmith: A Romance of Norumbega*, she uses Horsford's lost Norse city as the principal setting. While some could argue

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[248] Eben Norton Horsford, *Discovery of America by Northmen: Address at the Unveiling of the Statue of Leif Eriksen, delivered in Faneuil Hall, Oct. 29, 1887* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1888), 47–54.

[249] Cornelia Horsford, "The Graves of the Northmen," in Eben Norton Horsford, *Leif's House in Vineland* (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1893), 29.

[250] Horsford, *Discovery of America by Northmen*, 54.

that Rafn, Anderson, and Horsford were merely fringe personalities who had little overall impact on American culture, the presence of their ideas in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, as well as in the film it inspired, is a testament to the power of the Vinland story that had been molded by Rafn's hands.

White Vikings and American Antiquities

Inherent in the "American antiquities" discourse, as discussed above, are ideas of racial superiority. Race was also an important and dominant topic during the middle of the nineteenth century. In fact, Rafn's scholarship was released during the 1830s, a period in the United States when, according to Rosemary Radford Ruether, "there emerged a more exclusivist claim to racial uniqueness that negated the assimilation of other people."[251] Unsurprisingly, this mindset became a part of the reception of *Antiquitates Americanæ* almost from the beginning. In 1841, William Gilmore Simms demonstrated this American exclusivism in an article titled "The Discoveries of the Northmen," in which he summarized many of Rafn's main points. Simms was particularly intrigued by *Hvítramannaland*—translated as "White Man's Land," but sometimes called Ireland the Great—that Rafn had located south of the Chesapeake Bay, near Simms's home state of South Carolina.[252] The novelist, who was of Irish descent, took this to mean that there had been a pre-Columbian—even pre-Norse—Irish (i.e., white) presence in America. In his article, Simms explains what he believes happened to White Man's Land:

> Suddenly, the fierce red men of the south-west came down upon them in howling thousands, captured their women, slaughtered their men, and drove them to their fortresses—how they fought to the last, and perished to a man! And, in this history, you have the history of the Tumuli, the works of defence [*sic*] and worship—the thousand proofs with which our land is covered, of a genius and an industry immeasurably superior to any thing that the Indian inhabitants of this country ever attempted.[253]

It should be noted that Matthias Egeler sees White Man's Land as deriving from Irish monastic narratives, and the 'white' aspect most likely refers to their clothing

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[251] Rosemary Radford Ruether. *America, Amerikkka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence* (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2007), 74.

[252] For more on White Man's Land, see the Introduction to this study.

[253] William Gilmore Simms, "The Discoveries of the Northmen," *Magnolia: or Southern Monthly* no. 1–2 (1841): 421.

rather than their skin color.[254] But Simms sees 'white' through his contemporary American lens and fits this aspect of the Vinland story into the ongoing and widespread anti-Indian rhetoric of the period. He uses the same argument as Priest and Jackson by framing the Native Americans as usurpers, and this article is an early example of how Old Norse literature is used explicitly for racial exclusion in the United States.

Racial prejudices and general exclusivity were a part of many nineteenth-century works produced in the United States about Old Norse literature and Vinland, though the messages were most often subtler than Simms's. Rasmus B. Anderson, for example, emphasizes how much the Teutonic race had benefited from its Scandinavian roots, arguing in *America Not Discovered by Columbus* that the Norse

> spirit found its way into the Magna Charta of England and into the Declaration of Independence in America. The spirit of the Vikings still survives in the bosoms of Englishmen, Americans and Norsemen, extending their commerce, taking bold positions against tyranny, and producing wonderful internal improvements in these countries.[255]

Anderson paints the medieval Scandinavians as proto-Americans for a specific reason. Although Scandinavian immigration to the United States had increased in the middle of the nineteenth century, his fellow Norwegians were being treated like any other immigrant communities—that is to say, excluded from certain cultural spheres dominated and controlled by mostly Anglo-Americans, such as politics. This dismayed Anderson, as he clearly believed Norwegians and Anglo-Americans to be from the same racial background. He refers to this shared heritage in *America Not Discovered by Columbus* and his other writings to encourage the better treatment of Norwegian immigrants, who, in his mind, were not only responsible for the "discovery" of the country but also for instilling in Americans their love of freedom.[256]

In his writings, Anderson often contrasts the valor and achievements of the Northern Germanic people against what he clearly sees as less desirable races—

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[254] Matthias Egeler, *Islands in the West: Classical myth and the medieval Norse and Irish geographical imagination* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 71.

[255] Anderson, *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, 63.

[256] J. M. Mancini, "Discovering Viking America," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 881.

Romans, Spanish, and Southern Europeans.[257] Anderson claimed the Catholic Church had known about Vinland for centuries but had hidden the information so that Christopher Columbus could retain the title of *true* discoverer of America. But Anderson's efforts to promote Leif Eriksson over Columbus were often expressed through anti-Catholic language. In his 1876 book, *Norse Mythology*, he argues that the Romans were cultural thieves, and he envisions that a "time must come when Greek and Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse and Gothic and German will shake hands over the bloody chasm of Roman vandalism."[258] Anti-Catholicism has a long history in the United States, and it is quite possible that Anderson's argument for better treatment for Norwegian immigrants appealed to this commonly held prejudice.[259]

Horsford's refusal to acknowledge indigenous history leads Robin Fleming to argue that Horsford's writings "were bound up with Brahmin identity and mass immigration."[260] The Brahmins, a name for upper-class white men in New England in the mid-nineteenth century, "believed that settling New England had enhanced the racial characteristics of their ancestors—the most pure-blooded, independent, inventive, and self-governing Anglo-Saxons, not just in America, but on earth."[261] Horsford uses alleged longevity of Norumbega to exclude other groups from claims of authority over the territory in New England. He suggests that Scandinavians had

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[257] According to Edward J. Blum, anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century often took "a decidedly anti-Spanish form." Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865–1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 224

[258] Rasmus B. Anderson, *Norse Mythology: Myths of the Eddas* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003, reprinted from the 1879 edition), 79.

[259] Malcolm Clark, Jr. states that Anti-Catholicism "immigrated early" to America, and many Catholics were harassed and discriminated against in the colonial period. Jenny Franchot points out that Cotton Mather's Anti-Catholic rhetoric was probably seen as patriotic and "a staple of early Americanism." Thus, Anderson's use of anti-Catholic ideology was not new or innovative but simply a way to appeal to more mainstream—that is Anglo-American prejudices. Malcolm Clark, Jr., "The Bigot Disclosed: 90 Years of Nativism," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (June 1974): 109–190; Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3. For a survey of scholarship on anti-Catholicism in the United States, see Kyle E. Haden, "Anti-Catholicism in U.S. History: A Proposal for a New Methodology," *American Catholic Studies* 124, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 27–45.

[260] Robin Fleming, "Nineteenth-Century New England's Memory of the Middle Ages," in *Memory in the Middle*, eds. Nancy Netzer and Virginia Reinburg (Chestnutt Hill: Boston College Museum of Art, 1995), 88. Fleming later underlines that Horsford was "deeply invested in the race-drive theories of Aryan supremacy." (89)

[261] Bluford Adams, "World Conquerors or a Dying People? Racial Theory, Regional Anxiety and Brahmin Anglo-Saxonists," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8, no. 2 (April 2009): 191.

inhabited the settlement for centuries before the English and French, again excluding others through the Vinland story.

It is hard to determine whether Rafn, Anderson, and Horsford consciously intended to incorporate these ideas of race into their works about Vinland and Old Norse literature or whether this exclusive outlook was so much a part of the American worldview that it simply became a part of this facet of American literary history. Priest and Simms, on the other hand, held fast to racist ideologies and used Rafn's information to further elevate white Americans over contemporary racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups.[262] Regardless of individual authors' intention, race and civilization became a part an integral part of the "Viking discourse" in the nineteenth century. More importantly, the erasure of Native Americans from America's past implicit in the majority of the nineteenth-century writing on Vinland conveys different levels of violence; these authors frame the pre-history *and* the discovery in terms of a white narrative, excusing the symbolic and the physical violence the indigenous people endured.

Conclusion

Intersecting each of the spheres or topics discussed so far—civilization, race, American adventures, the frontier, empire, and manifest destiny—are ideas of manhood. It is not, therefore, surprising that in the nineteenth-century United States ideas of manliness would also become a part of the "Viking discourse." For instance, as the "discovery" narrative evolved into a debate between a nominally Protestant Leif Eriksson and a Catholic Christopher Columbus, many Protestant Americans expressed their anti-Catholic sentiment in terms of gender, relating Catholicism with femininity.[263] In an 1840 lecture, the reverend Asahel Davis

[262] Simms infamously defended the institution of slavery. See for instance his *History of South Carolina*, revised by Mary C. Simms Oliphant (Columbia: The State Company, 1917), 225. About twenty years after his work on "American antiquities," Priest attempted to justify Black slavery in his work, *Bible Defense of Slavery; and Origin, Fortunes, and History of the Negro Race* (Glasgow, KY: Rev. W. S. Brown, 1853).

[263] Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir, "Leifr Eiriksson versus Christopher Columbus: The Use of Leif Eriksson in American Political and Cultural Discourse," in *Approaches to Vínland: A Conference on the Written and Archaeological Sources for the Norse Settlements in the North-Atlantic Region and Exploration of America*, eds. Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, Sigurdur Nordal Institute Studies, Vol. 4. (Reykjavík: Sigurdur Nordal Institute, 2001), 220–226. Clearly, Leif Eriksson lived long before the Reformation, thus he could not have been Protestant. However, because most Scandinavians belonged to the Lutheran denomination,

compares the Icelandic discoverers, who found "happiness in the pursuit of knowledge," to the "effeminate inhabitants" of Italy, home of Columbus.[264]

The interjection of manliness into the "Viking discourse" can best be seen in the works of two British intellectuals—Scottish philosopher, historian, essayist, and teacher, Thomas Carlyle, and the clergyman and "popular but second-rate novelist," Charles Kingsley.[265] These men were certainly not the only figures to discuss Old Norse literature through terms of manliness. However, Carlyle was one of the earliest Western writers to highlight the manliness of Old Norse literary characters. He was also an extremely popular and influential writer during the Victorian era, both in England and in the United States.[266] Kingsley's influence lay more in Britain than in the U.S. Still, Ottilie Liljencrantz acknowledges his influence at the beginning of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, and, as Geraldine Barnes has pointed out, his ideas certainly appear within the novel.[267]

Leif and the medieval Norse had been fashioned into "proto-Protestant moralists" by ignoring their Catholic religion and contrasting him with the Catholic Christopher Columbus. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 159; Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 14.

[264] Quoted in Fleming, "Nineteenth-Century New England's Memory of the Middle Ages," 88. Davis's lectures were republished in a volume titled *Antiquities of America, The First Inhabitants of Central America and the Discovery of New England by the Northmen*. In this text, he recycles much of Rafn's material. The inside cover even features a sketch of the Newport Tower. Davis also links the Norse with the racist component of the "American antiquities" discourse when he says: "There are evidences that New England and this country were inhabited by a race superior to those found by our forefathers in 1620." Asahel Davis, *Antiquities of America, The First Inhabitants of Central America and the Discovery of New England by the Northmen*, 19th ed (New York: Daniel Adee Printer, 1847), 20.

[265] Stanwood S. Walker, "'Backwards and backwards ever': Charles Kingsley's Racial-Historical Allegory and the Liberal Anglican Revisioning of Britain," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62, no. 3 (Dec. 2007): 339–340. For an in-depth analysis of how ideas of race, nationalism, anti-Catholicism and gender impacted the British reception of Old Norse literature, see Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

[266] Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 42. Carlyle served a conduit of sorts, feeding German transcendental ideas to members of the American literary elite, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller, both of whom held him in great esteem. Fred Manning Smith, "Whitman's Poet-Prophet and Carlyle's Hero," *PMLA* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 1940): 1146–1147.

[267] Barnes, *Viking America*, 135.

In 1840, Carlyle gave a lecture series titled *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, in which he discussed several great men from different periods in history.[268] Five of the lectures focus on historical personalities, including William Shakespeare and Napoleon Bonaparte; but his first lecture, "The Hero as Divinity," is devoted to the person Carlyle believed to be the "first Great Man": the Norse god Odin. According to Carlyle, Odin's many manly characteristics, such as courage, valor, and honor, caused his followers and admirers to unintentionally make him into a god.[269]

Carlyle also believed that because the Scandinavians and the British had a shared heritage as members of the Teutonic race, Odin's attributes still flowed in the veins of the British people.[270] He saw Odin as the pioneer of Teutonic manly achievement and the British Empire, which consisted of so many Great Men and True Thinkers, as its zenith.[271] He writes:

> We will fancy [Odin] to be the Type Norseman; the finest Teuton whom that race has yet produced […] He is a root of so many great things; the fruit of him is found growing, from deep thousands of years, over the whole field of Teutonic Life […] Odin grew into England too.[272]

While most of his contemporary scholars dismiss much of what Carlyle says in his lectures, Anne Varty argues that "The Hero as Divinity" still established "a set of stereotypes that would govern British thinking about Norse culture for a good fifty

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[268] These were published together the following year as *One Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

[269] Carlyle claims that to worship is to "admire without limit"; therefore, "worship of a Hero is transcendent admiration of a Great Man." Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as Divinity. Odin. Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology," in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. Henry David Gray (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1906), 11.

[270] Carlyle, "The Hero as Divinity," 33.

[271] Anne Varty, "Carlyle and Odin," in *Anglo-Scandinavian Cross Currents*, eds. Inga-Stina Ewbank, Olav Lausund, and Bjørn Tysdahl (Norwich: Norvik Press, 1999), 62; Carlyle, "The Hero as Divinity," 15. For more about Carlyle's fervent support of the British Empire, see Sheila McIntosh, "Carlyle and the Caribbean" in *The Carlyle Society: Session 2008–2009*, Occasional Papers (Edinburgh, 2008), 17–33, https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/carlyle_papers_no._21.pdf.

[272] Carlyle, "The Hero as Divinity," 33.

years to come."[273] Indeed, many fictional Viking characters would be presented as white, manly warriors who worshipped Odin, the god of war.

One of the British writers impacted by Carlyle's writings was Charles Kingsley, who became well known in England and in the United States in the nineteenth century particularly for his brand of Social Christianity, which is often referred to as "muscular Christianity" because of his belief that good health, athleticism, and being active were forms of worship.[274] Malcom Tozer argues: "The man who in the years from 1848 to 1859 did most to bring the Romantic, Christian and Chivalric ideal of manliness to the attention of his countrymen was undoubtedly Charles Kingsley."[275] In 1866, Kingsley published a novel titled *Hereward the Wake: The Last of the English*, which relates the story of the English nobleman Hereward (c.1035–c.1072), who led the resistance against the Norman invasion in 1066. In the novel, Kingsley writes: "The Norse trader of those days, it must be remembered, was none of the cringing effeminate chapmen who figure in the stories of the middle ages. A free Norse, or Dane, himself often of noble blood, he fought as willingly as he bought."[276] The assumption is that the English knight of the Middle Ages was less manly than the "free Norse" trader. It was, according to Kingsley, fortunate that the Norse invaded England in the early Middle Ages as the intermarriage of the two "races" provided the English with the "masculine vigour of the Danes."[277]

The occupation Carlyle and Kingsley had with manliness filtered into popular British and American works about the medieval Norse. Moreover, both men—who

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[273] Varty, "Carlyle and Odin," 66.

[274] Henry R. Harrington, "Charles Kingsley's Fallen Athlete," *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 1: Victorian Leisure (Autumn 1977): 73; Walker, "'Backwards and backwards ever,' 339–340. Charles Kingsley did not approve of the name "Muscular Christianity" given to his particular theology. He believed that to be a good Christian, a man had to be healthy, both in body and soul. The male body then served as a metaphor for social, national, and religious bodies that likewise needed to practice healthy and *manly* habits. While the upkeep of the male body was sanitation and exercise, racial purity was hinted at as a means to maintain the health of the national body. See the essays in Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[275] Malcom Tozer, "Charles Kingsley and the 'muscular Christian' ideal of manliness," *Physical Education Review* 8, no. 1 (1985): 35

[276] Charles Kingsley, *Hereward the Wake* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874. 3rd ed, 73.

[277] Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit*, 102.

later revealed racist views—helped to outfit the Vikings with Victorian notions of manhood, contemporary views on race, and imperial ideals—all of which had been previously intertwined in nineteenth-century discourses.[278] Coupled with the already-masculine reputation of Vikings in popular culture as discussed in the Introduction, authors who relied on the "Viking discourse" would continue to create Viking figures reflecting contemporary views on manliness.

Moreover, as discussed in previous sections of this chapter, American adventures that feature the Boone/Bumppo narrative also tended to relay ideas of racial superiority, manliness, and ideas of empire. Already in the middle of the nineteenth century, these spheres appeared to fit together and complement each other. Thomas Carlyle's biographer James Anthony Froude, for instance, published an article in 1854 titled "The Odin-Religion" in which he asserted that the "ancient Teutonic man" had in the past been "roaming over sea and land in pursuit of manly adventure, knew no fear of death."[279] British and American historians likewise looked back on the Viking Age in terms of adventure. As Martin Green explains, "the story of the Teutonic race became a world-history adventure tale. Bancroft and Motley were keen readers of primitive epic and saga, as were Kingsley and his friends in England."[280] Ottilie Liljencrantz would be one of the first novelists in the U.S. to attempt to fit all these pieces together.

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[278] In 1849, Carlyle wrote an article in response to the emancipated slaves of the West Indies titled "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," in which he clearly sees Black people as inferior. The anti-democratic nature of his lectures led Heather O'Donoghue to argue that Carlyle was a frontrunner of fascism. Heather O'Donoghue, *From Asgard to Valhalla: The Remarkable History of Norse Myths* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 156. Norman Vance, meanwhile, claims that Kingsley "never really liked the negro," but "largely avoided the racist hysteria of his former master Carlyle." Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit*, 95. For more on Kingsley's views on race, see Walker, "'Backwards and backwards ever,'" 339–379, and C. J. W. L. Wee, "Christian manliness and national identity," in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66–90.

[279] Quoted in Varty, "Carlyle and Odin," 66; Heather O'Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 147.

[280] Green, *The Adventurous Male*, 152. Green here is referring to the celebrated American historians George Bancroft (1800–1891) and John Lothrop Motley (1814–1871).

Chapter 2
The Victorian Vikings in America

Viking-themed fiction had already become a genre in Victorian England by the time Liljencrantz began to write. In *The Vikings and the Victorians* (2000), Andrew Wawn discusses how Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Harold* (1848), Charles Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* (1866), and H. Rider Haggard's *Eric Brighteyes* (1889) were immensely popular in Britain. And like *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, these novels included "questions of heritage, ethnicity, nationality, colonialism."[281] While the Vikings and Vinland had been popular topics in histories and poetry in the United States, it wasn't until the turn of the century when Liljencrantz, along with a few other contemporary authors such as Allen French, began to novelize Old Norse material.[282] And like their British predecessors, these American Viking adventures also included similar ideals.

The Thrall of Leif the Lucky, Liljencrantz's first Viking novel, is a creative retelling of Leif Eriksson's "discovery" of Vinland and centers on an English nobleman named Alwin who is enslaved by Vikings during a raid on his castle in Northumbria. After being purchased by a "shield maiden" named Helga, Alwin ends up accompanying Leif to Greenland and from there, to Vinland. Along the way, Alwin and Helga fall in love and the Englishman struggles with his place among the Vikings. Published in 1902, the novel came on the heels of the public advocacy for recognition for Leif Eriksson as the "discoverer" of America by figures like Rasmus B. Anderson and Eben Norton Horsford. Moreover, Liljencrantz acknowledges that she created her Viking Age fiction based on information found in the works written

[281] Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in 19th-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 313.

[282] Geraldine Barnes, *Viking America: The First Millennium* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 135. Allen French wrote several Viking-themed novels around the turn of the century, including *Heroes of Iceland* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1905), which is an abridged version of *Njáls saga*. Jón Karl Helgason has pointed out that French was also concerned with ideas of race and destiny in the United States and traced the strength of the "native-born American" back to the Norseman. *The Rewriting of Njáls Saga: Translation, Politics and Icelandic Sagas*, Topics in Translation 16 (Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto, and Sydney: Multilingual Matters LTD, 1999), 76–79.

by Anderson, Carl Christian Rafn, and Kingsley—each of whom had, as discussed in chapter 1, helped to shape the popular perception of the Vikings.

Liljencrantz would go on to publish three more Viking-themed novels before her untimely death in 1910: *The Ward of King Canute: A Romance of the Danish Conquest* (1903), *The Vinland Champions* (1904), and *Randvar the Songsmith: A Romance of Norumbega* (1906).[283] She was clearly familiar with Old Norse saga material, but she also included in her fiction contemporary American ideas on race, gender, and civilization. As Liljencrantz is one of the few female writers discussed in this study, it is particularly interesting to note that ideals of manliness are still a prominent theme in her Viking-themed literature. In this chapter, I analyze how these themes factored into Liljencrantz's personal life, how they and her personal life may have affected her creative output, and what impact her literature may have had had on the "Viking discourse."

Old Swede Town

The Thrall of Leif the Lucky was commercially successful and had gone to its eighth printing by late 1904.[284] Part of its success was attributed to Liljencrantz's Swedish heritage. A reviewer for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* believed that her ethnic background afforded her credibility, arguing that the Vikings' "tale should be told by one who has the blood of the north in her veins, and who has been born with a love of the traditions, the achievements, and the sagas of Norsemen."[285] Still, Liljencrantz's ancestral roots did not appear directly connected to any Viking-Age figures, as she admitted in an interview: "I wish […] that I could trace my descent from some renowned Viking, and I will not relinquish the pleasant belief that I have some valiant ancestor on Valhalla's benches […]."[286]

Ancestry, ethnicity, and race appear to have played a large part in her literature, as well as in her life—perhaps from growing up in the swiftly changing

[283] A collection of Viking-themed short stories titled *A Viking's Love* was also published posthumously by McClurg in 1911.

[284] Barnes, *Viking America*, 135, ff. 51.

[285] "In the Viking Days," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 18, 1902. This was a common trend in the reviews of her novels. See also "Books and Men," *New York Times*, February 22, 1902; "Chicago Young Woman Becomes a Novelist," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1902; and Jeannette L. Gilder, "Jeannette L. Gilder's Literary Reviews," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 15, 1902.

[286] "Miss Liljencrantz," *The Indianapolis News*, March 24, 1906.

multicultural city of Chicago.[287] Ottilie's mother, Adeline Charlotte Hall, was a woman of "old colonial stock" who could trace her lineage back to the seventeenth-century Puritans in New England, making her in the mind of one journalist, "one of the most American of Americans."[288] Her father was a Swedish immigrant named Gustav Liljencrantz. He, too, had an impressive ancestry. Born to Baron Johan Carl Liljencrantz, he was purportedly descended from Laurentius Petri, a sixteenth-century "disciple of Martin Luther" who helped bring Lutheranism to Sweden.[289] Gustav studied engineering at the Royal Technological School in Stockholm and took part in building the Dalsland canal near Lake Vänern in Sweden before emigrating in 1869 to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.[290] He soon moved to Chicago where he began working as an engineer. One of his most important contributions to the city's infrastructure was working on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which began construction in 1892 and was, according to *Scientific American*, regarded as one of the greatest engineering feats undertaken by man.[291] Gustav had become a prominent figure among the Swedes in Chicago in the 1870s; he was a member of the Masonic order, the Western Society of Engineers and the Swedish Engineer's Society of Chicago and was in fact elected as the latter group's president in 1910.[292]

Chicago had had a strong Swedish presence since the 1840s, and Gustav was one of the many working-class Swedish immigrants that moved to the city in the following decades. Many of them settled in a district just north of the Chicago River that would become known as Old Swede Town.[293] Several newspapers appeared in Swedish in the city during the 1850s and 60s, and workers established their own

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[287] Kevin J. Harty, "The 'Viking Tower' in Newport, Rhode Island: fact, fiction and film," in *From Iceland to Americas*, eds. Tim Machan and Jón Karl Helgason (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 46–48.

[288] Ernst W. Olson and Martin J. Engberg, eds., *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company, 1908), 35; "Miss Ottilie A Liljencrantz," *Detroit Free Press*, April 14, 1906.

[289] Olson and Engberg, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 227.

[290] Olson and Engberg, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 35–36.

[291] "The Chicago Drainage Canal," *Scientific American* 72, no. 24 (June 1895): 369.

[292] Olson and Engberg, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 35; Clarence S. Ongman, *A History of the Swedish Engineer's Society of Chicago 1908–1948* (Chicago: The Swedish Engineers Society of Chicago, 1948), 17, 64, http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/ref/collection/npu_sahbc/id/4557.

[293] Ulf Beijbom, "Olof Gottfrid Lange—Chicago's First Swede," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991), 25.

societies and orders, such as the Independent Order of Svithiod.[294] By 1870, more Swedish immigrants lived in Chicago than anywhere else in the United States, and their population increased within the city by 233% in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.[295]

While a uniquely Swedish-American community was being established in Chicago, many of these same immigrants began to assimilate into Anglo-American culture, even adopting prejudices against other racial and immigrant communities.[296] Many Swedish-American residents abandoned Old Swede Town because they were upset when an increasing number of Italians and Black Americans settled in the area.[297] Dag Blanck argues that by the end of the century, "an awareness of the white privileges also seems to have existed among Swedish immigrants in the North."[298] They saw the benefits of being considered "white" rather than as immigrants. This awareness can be seen in the work of Johan Enander, an influential figure in the early Swedish-American community and, according to H. Arnold Barton, "Rasmus B. Anderson's worthy counterpart among the Swedes."[299] Enander published a booklet about Vinland in anticipation of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair in which he

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[294] Timothy J. Johnson, "The Independent Order of Svithiod: A Swedish-American Lodge in Chicago," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991), 344.

[295] Ulf Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846–1880 Immigration*, trans. Donald Brown, Studia Historica Upsaliensia XXXVIII (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 1971), 112; "Swedes," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed February 18, 2022, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1222.html.

[296] Odd S. Lovoll, "A Scandinavian Melting Pot in Chicago," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991), 65.

[297] Harald Runblom, "Chicago Compared: Swedes and Other Ethnic Groups in American Cities," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991), 75; Anita R. Olson, "The Community Created: Chicago Swedes 1880–1920," in *Swedish-American Life in Chicago*, eds. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 9 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991), 56; Dag Blanck, "'A Mixture of People with Different Roots': Swedish Immigrants in the American Ethno-Racial Hierarchies," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 3 (March 2014): 42.

[298] Blanck, "'A Mixture of People," 44.

[299] H. Arnold Barton, "Historians of the Scandinavians in North America," in *Scandinavians in America: Literary Life*, ed. J. R. Christianson (Decorah, IA: Symra Literary Society, 1985), 45.

carefully uses broad terms like "Northman" so that Swedes could be included in the "discovery" story. In this tract, Enander suggests that the Swedish-Americans had inherited "our forefathers' self-control, contempt for death, independence of spirit, and sense of dignity" and that they "lived up to essential American ideals more fully than the Anglo-Americans themselves."[300]

Gustav Liljencrantz appears to have been one of the Swedes in Chicago attempting to escape the stigma of an immigrant identity and to establish his family as undeniably "American." Firstly, he married an Anglo-American woman, which was uncommon for the time period, as the vast majority of Swedes in the U.S. married other Scandinavians.[301] Secondly, he wrote a booklet in English in 1877 about the Swedish sculptor Johan Peter Molin and two of his most famous works: *The Fountain* and *Bälte-Spännarne*.[302] Because the Swedish-American community published mostly in Swedish prior to the 1880s, Gustav's decision to write in English makes this book unusual.[303] Finally, Gustav sent his daughter to Dearborn Seminary, a private school for girls. According to the *Inter Ocean* newspaper, the long-serving principal Zuingluis Grover had an elitist and exclusive vision for the school that "began with the idea of appealing only to the highest class of students, the children of the rich."[304] Dearborn was a symbol of wealth and prestige, things

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[300] H. Arnold Barton, *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840–1940* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 65–66. See also Johann Enander, *Nordmännen i Amerika aller Amerikas upptäckt; historisk afhandling med Anlending af Columberfestina i Chicago 1892–1893* (Chicago: Lutheran Augusta Book Concern, 1893).

[301] Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago*, 137–139.

[302] G. A. M. Liljencrantz, *Swedish Sculpture. Biography of Professor Johan Peter Molin* (Chicago, 1877).

[303] Alan Swanson, *Literature and the Immigrant Community: The Case of Arthur Landfors* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 9.

[304] Alumnae Association of Dearborn Seminary, *In Memory of Zuingluis Grover: Our Beloved Principal* (Chicago: Alumnae Association of Dearborn Seminary, 1893), 25. "Where Your Mother Went to School—A Golden Jubilee," *Inter Ocean Magazine*, May 15, 1904; The article goes on to list a number of Dearborn's more notable alumnae: Bertha (Honoré) Palmer, wife of the millionaire merchant Potter Palmer; her sister Ida, who married General Frederick Grant, the son of former president Ulysses S. Grant; author Martha Foote Crow who had taught at Dearborn for a year while living in Chicago; and Ottilie Liljencrantz, who is noted for her "famous Norse stories." Interestingly, Grover's memorial text describes him as having the "clean, fresh, uncontaminated blood" of a "true" American (41).

that were not typically part of the common immigrant experience but were a part of the "American dream."

Ottilie Adeline Liljencrantz was born in Chicago in 1876 during this transitional period for Swedish immigrants. Indeed, nearly a century later E. Gustav Johnson, member of the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, counted Liljencrantz as one of the first and most successful Swedish-American authors to write in English and to be published through an American press after this period.[305] She appears to have used her place of privilege for the benefit of her community. As a child, she began writing and producing her own plays in her family's Chicago home, inviting neighborhood children and giving the proceeds to charities.[306] Whether through the influence of her father, the Swedish-American community, or her own volition, Ottilie grew up reading Old Norse sagas, which would lead her on to consume American works about Old Norse literature, like those written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Rasmus B. Anderson, and others. It is likely that her childhood experience in Chicago and the ideals inherent in these authors' works shaped her view of the medieval past, as her novels feature a clear racial hierarchy. Different races are made to represent different levels of human evolution but at the same time they appear to be striving toward "civilization." And this can be seen clearly in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*.

The Skraellings

In the "Note of Acknowledgement" at the start of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, Liljencrantz lists and thanks the many authors who inspired her: "to the works of these eminent writers, first and foremost, I owe also the love that I have come to bear the heroic Viking-age,—rough and brutal, if you will, yet instinct with such purity and truth and power as befits the boyhood of the mighty Anglo-Saxon race."[307] She strikes a similar chord in the "Foreword":

> The Anglo-Saxon race was in its boyhood in the days when the Vikings lived. Youth's fresh fires burned in men's blood; the

[305] E. Gustav Johnson, "E. Gustav Johnson: A Scholarly Testament," *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (April 1975): 120–121.

[306] "Turned to Fairies and Goblins," *Chicago Tribune*, January 20, 1894; "Play with Marionettes," *Chicago Tribune*, April 27, 1894.

[307] Ottilie Liljencrantz, *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky: A Tale of Viking Days* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1902). For the remainder of this chapter, I will provide in-text references with page numbers in parentheses.

> unchastened turbulence of youth prompted their crimes, and their good deeds were inspired by the purity and whole-heartedness and divine simplicity of youth. (10)

Liljencrantz is here hinting at what Gail Bederman calls "millennial assumptions about human evolutionary progress."[308] Inspired by Social Darwinism, many Western intellectuals of the nineteenth century believed that humans began as savages, evolved into violent barbarians, and eventually grew into "civilized" human beings, which entailed having a permanent residence and adopting agrarian culture.[309]

In her "Foreword," Liljencrantz also suggests that the lowest race is in its "infancy" and the most advance races are in their adulthood. Implied in her above comments is the expectation that the "Anglo-Saxon race" and even the Vikings would by and by grow into the adulthood of civilization.[310] She uses Christianity to measure this progress in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. Alwin, for instance, was raised a Christian and has therefore reached the maturity of "civilized" human nature. Leif Ericsson, a recent convert, is attempting to leave the barbaric second tier, which is occupied by his fellow Vikings. At the bottom of this evolutionary ladder are the natives of Vinland, and it becomes clear that Liljencrantz does not expect them to advance from their lowly position.

Liljencrantz calls the Vinland natives "Skraellings," a reference to the Old Norse *skrælingr* (plural: *skrælingjar*), which was a general term for the indigenous

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[308] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25. Incidentally, William Gilmore Simms instilled similar assumptions about human progress in his literature, which helped to shape a Southern identity in nineteenth-century America. David Moltke-Hansen, "Between Plantation and Frontier: The South of William Gilmore Simms," in *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier*, eds. John Caldwell Guilds and Caroline Collins (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 10–15.

[309] Thomas C. Patterson, *Inventing Western Civilization* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), 100.

[310] Liljencrantz, Kingsley, and many others use the term "Anglo-Saxon" to describe not only the Middle Ages in England but also the English "race" during this period. Over the past few years, several scholars have urged others to abandon this term, as it retains ideas of racism—as is evident in this thesis. See, for instance, Mary Rambaran-Olm, "Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting 'Anglo-Saxon' Studies," History Workshop, November 4, 2019, https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/misnaming-the-medieval-rejecting-anglo-saxon-studies/.

people of America and Greenland.[311] Scholars have different opinions on the precise origin and meaning of the word. Some translate it as "weakling," while others have suggested it comes from the Old Norse word *skrækr*, meaning to yell or screech; however, most agree that the saga authors use the word pejoratively and that it is meant to relay some sense of inferiority, whether in terms of physical size or mental capabilities.[312] The saga authors generally paint the *skrælingjar* as small and rather simple—a people whose culture the Norse do not quite understand and therefore do not value.[313] In *Eiríks saga rauða*, for example, the *skrælingjar* are described as "short in height with threatening features and tangled hair on their heads. Their eyes were large and their cheeks broad."[314] The native that appears in Gudrid's hut in *Grænlendinga saga* is similarly described as short, with auburn hair and unnaturally large eyes. The *skrælingjar* are also portrayed in the sagas as skittish when a bull frightens them and somewhat ignorant as they trade valuable animal pelts for small pieces of colored cloth.

The Skraellings in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* echo these descriptions. They appear only in the final pages of the novel when Alwin and his Viking companion Rolf the Wrestler discover them swimming in a nearby river. The two men climb up into a tree to observe their activities. The Skraellings appear unimposing, lean, and

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[311] The general assumption is that the Norse encountered a group or groups of Inuit peoples, possibly the Thule or the Dorset. Patricia Sutherland, "Norse and Natives in the Eastern Arctic," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 613–617; T. Max Friesen and Charles D. Arnold, "The Timing of the Thule Migration: New Dates from the Western Canadian Arctic," *American Antiquity* 73, no. 3 (July 2008): 527–538; Hans Christian Gulløv, "The Nature of Contact between Native Greenlanders and Norse," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 1 (2008): 16–24.

[312] Annette Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact: The Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of Dawnland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 3; Kirsten A. Seaver, *The Last Vikings: The Epic Story of the Great Norse Voyagers* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2010), 63. Simon Halink has also recently suggested that the term is derogatory and was meant to indicate the natives' "primitive" or "uncivilized" nature. Simon Halink, "The good sense to lose America: Vinland as remembered by Icelanders," in *From Iceland to Americas*, eds. Tim Machan and Jón Karl Helgason (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 164.

[313] Seaver, *The Last Vikings*, 63. One of the native male leaders, however, is described as "tall and handsome." This is an intriguing exception to how the *skrælingjar* are dealt with in saga literature. Keneva Kunz, trans., *The Vinland Sagas* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 16–17.

[314] Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 45.

dwarfed in the eyes of the visiting Europeans—as in the Vinland sagas. Liljencrantz, however, exaggerates the demeaning language found in the saga narratives and repeatedly emphasizes the inhuman nature of the Skraellings. When they emerge from the water like "dripping spaniels," they are immediately put on the same level as animals or otherworldly creatures. Rolf asks: "Are these ghosts or devils?" (330) They are later described as having "the fierce beast-mouth and the small tricky eyes" of an animal, and their coarse hair "could have been equaled only in the mane of a wild horse" (322–323). In Rolf's opinion, they spoke in "grunts and growls and guttural sounds that bore more resemblance to animal noises than to human speech" (322). When a different tribe of natives arrives along the river and scares off the first Skraellings, Rolf likens these to insects: "It is more of the same Nest! They are coming from the other bank, swarms of them" (329).

While Alwin and Rolf are watching from the tree, a Norse servant named Kark walks into the crowd of Skraellings and surprises them. The natives "offered him no harm; they did not even touch him; yet, apparition of their shriveled bodies in their animal-skin hides, their beast-faces looking out from under their bristling black locks was enough to try stouter nerves than Kark's" (325). The Norseman begins to scream and reacts violently towards the Skraellings who then beat him to death. Alwin longs to rescue Kark, but Rolf holds him back. He reminds Alwin that Kark had previously betrayed him, but the Englishman responds: "I do not deny that Kark is a cur; yet he is white, as we are" (325). Despite Kark's duplicitousness, Alwin believes he is worth saving because "he is a human being," (327), i.e., white.

The presentation of the Native Americans as beasts or creatures reflects a specifically American immigrant perspective on how the indigenous people in North America were racially different from white European settlers. While the Vinland sagas certainly suggest the Norse saw the *skrælingjar* as different from and inferior to themselves, race seems to be less of a distinguishing factor. Liljencrantz, on the other hand, uses symbolic language that reflects later European contact with Native Americans. Race, as Andrew Galloway explains, is a central part of the American "discovery" myth:

> the further back one goes, the less the focus is on 'race' as an essential element of identity, and the more it is on religion, language, and

> family. The 'racial' focus in fact first becomes clear with stories connecting medieval culture to the New World at its discovery.[315]

Dr. Diego Alvarez Chanca, a physician that accompanied Christopher Columbus on his second voyage, wrote a letter to Spain, explaining that the natives they encountered were animals with no intelligence.[316] Pilgrims like William Bradford likewise saw the inhabitants of America as nothing more than beasts, while the Puritans compared them to devils.[317]

The narration describing Kark's death resembles the racial distinctions found in *The Leatherstocking Tales*, which, as discussed in chapter 1, take place during the colonial period. Natty Bumppo uses similarly de-humanizing language when he calls the Iroquois "reptiles" and "devils."[318] But he also repeatedly separates the "white" and "red" races according to their skills, abilities and "gifts." Bumppo argues in *The Deerslayer*: "A white man's gifts are Christianized, while a redskin's are more for the wilderness."[319] Part of the white man's gift is "the duty of the strong to take care of the weak, especially when the last belong to them that natur' intended man to protect."[320] Bumppo's relentless desire to protect those weaker than himself anticipates the Victorian ideal of manliness and sets him apart from the other male characters in the *Leatherstocking* novels. Alwin feels a similar urge and indeed an obligation to protect Kark in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* not only because he is weak but also because he is white. In this one telling scene, Liljencrantz places Alwin at the top of the human evolutionary hierarchy because of his manly Christian

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[315] Andrew Galloway, "William Cullen Bryant's American Antiquities: Medievalism, Miscegenation and Race in *The Prairies*," *American Literary History* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 13.

[316] Catherin Yao, "Gothic Monstrosity: Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* and the Trope of the Bestial Indian," in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, eds. Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 27–28.

[317] Yao, "Gothic Monstrosity," 28. Indigenous historian Vine Deloria explains how white Americans viewed Black and Native Americans in bestial terms: "Because the Negro labored, he was considered a draft animal. Because the Indian occupied large areas of land, he was considered a wild animal." Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 8.

[318] Yao, "Gothic Monstrosity," 35; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder; Or, the Inland Sea* (New York: The Modern Library, 1952), 58–62.

[319] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2005), 42.

[320] Cooper, *The Deerslayer*, 76.

instincts, while she simultaneously reinforces long-standing stereotypes of indigenous Americans that put them at the bottom.

By using language from the period of European colonization rather than the saga narratives, Liljencrantz situates Vinland in a truly American context—the Norse "discovery" becomes to a certain degree interchangeable with later discoveries, making the Vinland story more familiar and more "historic" for American readers. The Skraellings in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* are not the people the Norse encounter in the Vinland sagas; they are the wild Indians from early American adventures. And their ideological purpose in Liljencrantz's tale is to underline Alwin's "civilized" and Leif's semi-"civilized" nature.

Leif's Mission

Just as in *Eiríks saga rauða,* King Olaf Tryggvason asks Leif Ericsson in Liljencrantz's novel to sail to Greenland in order to convert the Norse living there. The saga expresses Leif's "mission" in these terms: "He soon began to advocate Christianity and the true catholic faith throughout the country, revealing the messages of King Olaf Tryggvason to the people, and telling them how excellent and glorious this faith was."[321] Liljencrantz amplifies these Christian messages and particularly increases Leif's religious convictions in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*.[322] For instance, while listening to Alwin read from a Saxon book of saints, Leif's "great chest heaved with passion, and his strong hand gripped his sword-hilt; now he crossed himself and sighed, and again his eyes flashed like smitten steel" (108). Later, when his crewmembers praise him for leading the voyage to Vinland, Leif humbles himself, saying: "But I think it right to remind you that I am not one of those men who trust in their strength alone. What I have done I have been able to do by the help of my God […]. To Him I give the thanks and the glory" (353).

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[321] Leif also receives his nickname "the Lucky" in the saga because people felt that God had directed him to rescue the survivors of a shipwreck. *Eiríks saga rauða* in *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttr ǫrva, Eiríks saga rauða, Grœnlendinga saga, Grœnlendinga þáttr*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson, Íslensk fornrit, vol. IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka forritafélag, 1935), 212; Kunz, *The Vinland Sagas*, 35.

[322] Liljencrantz was not the only person to romanticize Leif's mission. In his 1940 book, *Westward from Vinland*, Hjalmar R. Holand suggests that the western Norse expansion was motivated by "love and hope of saving human souls." Hjalmar R. Holand, *Westward from Vinland: An Account of Norse Discoveries and Explorations in America 982–1362* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940), v.

In the novel, Leif takes King Olaf's request to convert the Greenlanders very seriously: "foremost in his heart, before any consideration for himself, was the success of his mission" (149). Leif arrives in Greenland determined to win converts—but not in a conventional way. Instead of preaching openly, he tries to conceal his true mission in order to first gain the trust and friendship of the Norse living there so that they might be more accepting of his Christian message. Kark, however, reveals Leif's true mission in the hall of Eric the Red, who is a stubbornly proud pagan. Eric explodes with anger at this news and throws an axe at his son; but Leif keeps calm and talks his way out from under his father's wrath. His crewmembers are amazed and assume: "'It is because he is the Lucky One,' they whispered to each other. 'His God helps him in everything. It is a faith to live and die for'" (149).[323] Leif explains:

> It was a good thing that I was present last summer when King Olaf converted Kjartan the Icelander. It was then that I learned that those who cannot be dealt with by force may often be led by the nose without their knowing it […]. So, because I have kept my promise to speak no more concerning Christianity, men have become curious about, and yesterday two chiefs came of their own will and asked me questions concerning it. (167)[324]

This patient approach to spreading the message of Christianity is not found in medieval texts but rather reflects contemporary ideas of evangelical missionary work. English missionary Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) revolutionized the field by integrating into local culture. Stationed in China, Taylor learned Mandarin and began to dress like his Chinese neighbors—much to the disapproval of many church

[323] This appears to have been a popular perception of the time. Contemporary author Fridtjof Nansen also suggests that the medieval Icelanders would have also seen Leif and Vinland in a similar light: "Leif […] must have been regarded by the Christians of Iceland as the favorite of God or of destiny, to whom it was ordained to see the land of fortune." Fridtjof Nansen, *Northern Mists: Arctic Exploration in Early Times*, vol. 2, trans. Arther G. Chater (1911, reis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 380.

[324] This mentioning of Kjartan is a reference to chapter 40 in *Laxdæla saga*. Snorri Sturluson suggests in *Heimskringla* that King Olaf Tryggvason did indeed force some medieval Norse to convert by force or threat of violence. See, for instance, the fate of Eyvind Kinnrifa in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, trans. Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 211.

leaders.[325] The Evangelic Church was slow to accept Taylor's method, but it eventually became the standard for missionaries around the globe to integrate into their host society and adopt local customs and habits.

Missionary work of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also built upon millennial assumptions about human evolutionary progress, levels of "civilization," and a racial hierarchy.[326] For example, the minister Josiah Strong writes in *Our Country* (1885), which would become one of the most popular missionary "textbooks" of that period, that the "great civilizing instrumentalities of the age, moral, mental, and material, are Christianity."[327] He sees the "Anglo-Saxon race" as responsible for spreading these tools of civilization, as well as being responsible for two of the most important ideals: civil liberty and spiritual Christianity. Strong writes:

> Without controversy, these are the forces, which, in the past, have contributed most to the elevation of the human race, and they must continue to be, in the future, the most efficient ministers to its progress. It follows, then, that the Anglo-Saxon, as the great representative of these two ideas, the depositary of these two greatest blessings, sustains peculiar relations to the world's future, is divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper.[328]

Strong is hinting at the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century idea of "the white man's burden." This phrase became popularized by a poem of the same name published by Rudyard Kipling in 1899 as an ode to U.S. imperial ambitions in the Philippines and in Puerto Rico—a campaign in which future president Theodore

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[325] Inbal Livne, "The many Purposes of Missionary Work: Annie Royle Taylor as Missionary, Travel Writer, Collector and Empire Builder," in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Unto the Ends of the World*, eds. Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie, Studies in Christian Missions vol. 40 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 49–50.

[326] For an overview of the issues of race within the field of Christian missions, see Derek Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[327] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1885), 69.

[328] Strong, *Our Country*, 161.

Roosevelt would fight.[329] But whereas Roosevelt sought to dominate others to demonstrate American strength, men like Strong believed that because the white races were so advanced and sat atop of the human evolutionary hierarchy, it was their duty to help the perceived "lower" races find their way to "civilization." For Strong—and indeed many others during this period—the only way to civilization was through Christianity, and Liljencrantz subscribes to this thinking in her novel.

Alwin embraces the "white man's burden" in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, although he struggles with his low status as a slave. The Vikings, particularly Egil the Black, mock and beat him when he first arrives at Leif's camp in Norway. Despite being treated poorly by his captors, Alwin wants to elevate the barbaric Vikings to the top tier of civilization via Christianity. For instance, Rolf the Wrestler tricks him into fighting against another slave. Alwin beats his opponent and wins a book of Saxon saints as a prize. Rolf cannot read, but he understands the value of the book. When Rolf sees it, he exclaims: "Nothing have I seen which I think so fine. I must admit that you men of England are more skillful than we of the North in such matters. […] You are in great luck to come into possession of such property" (75). Despite Rolf's trick, Alwin wants to share this gift with the Vikings. He begins to read the book aloud, translating the words into the Norse language as he goes. Leif Ericsson understands how valuable Alwin is for the Vikings who, like him, are trying climb to the top tier of the civilization hierarchy. Leif sees Alwin's captivity, in fact, as divine intervention: "It was the hand of God that led you hither, to be an instrument in a great work" (109).

Geraldine Barnes has argued that the evangelical zeal in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* is "strongly influenced by the Aryan supremacist views of Charles Kingsley," whom Liljencrantz acknowledges at the start of the novel.[330] As mentioned at the end of chapter 1, Kingsley believed the British people to be manlier and more advanced than other races and nations. Still, he strongly advocated for the British Empire to assist "inferior" people on the path towards civilization. As scholars like C. J. L. Wee, Rhee Suk Koo, and Piers J. Hale have highlighted, Kingsley's historical fiction, sermons, and even his popular children's book, *The Water Babies*, prescribes a racial hierarchy with the English at the top and aboriginal peoples at the

[329] For more on this term and its history, see Winthrop P. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[330] Barnes, *Viking America*, 135.

bottom, almost indistinguishable from animals.[331] In a sermon given in Westminster in 1871, Kingsley expressed his opinion that it was the British people's duty to civilize those at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder:

> We shall ask Him to make us and our countrymen wiser and better, in order that we may make other human beings wiser and better […] they should be converted—that is, change their ways—and live […] as God has not taught these poor wretches to improve themselves […]. He therefore means their improvement to be brought about, as moral improvements are usually brought about, by the influence of their fellow-men, and specially by us who have put ourselves in contact with them […]. And as we find from experience that our missionaries, wherever they are brought into contact with these savages, do make them wiser and happier, we ask God to inspire more persons with the desire of improving the heathen.[332]

Kingsley and Strong saw missionary work as complementary to colonialism. In *Our Country*, for instance, Strong writes: "Another marked characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon […] is what may be called an instinct or genius for colonizing. His unequaled energy, his indomitable perseverance, and his personal independence, made him a pioneer."[333] The statement echoes the ideas of the philosopher John Fiske—yet another writer "acknowledged" by Liljencrantz at the beginning of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. In 1880, Fiske delivered a speech titled "Manifest Destiny" in which he claimed

> the work which the English race began when it colonized North America is *destined* to go until every land on the earth's surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization shall become English in its language, in its political habits and traditions, and to a predominant extent in the blood of its people.[334]

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[331] Piers J. Hale, "Monkeys into Men and Men into Monkeys: Chance and Contingency in the Evolution of Man, Mind and Morals in Charles Kingsley's 'Water Babies,'" *Journal of the History of Biology* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 577.

[332] Charles Kingsley, "Prayer," in *Westminster Sermons* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1881) 33–34.

[333] Strong, *Our Country*, 221.

[334] John Fiske, "Manifest Destiny," in *American Political Ideals* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1902), 143. Italics are my own. For more on manifest destiny and race, see Bluford Adams, "World Conquerors or a Dying People? Racial Theory, Regional Anxiety and Brahmin Anglo-Saxonists." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8, no. 2 (April 2009): 204.

Alwin in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* is performing the "white man's burden" by elevating his Viking comrades, and he and Leif are Christian pioneers leading a mission of civilization to the New World. This leads Barnes to claim: "religious imperialism is the governing ethos of Liljencrantz's Vinland fiction."[335] In the spirit of manifest destiny, Leif Ericcson and his crew believe that their "discovery" of North America is God ordained and that Vinland is the reward for Leif's faith: "All was pure and bright and fresh from the hand of God" (262). Sigurd, Helga's foster brother, explains that the self-sown wheat and the wild grapevines they find in Vinland are "nothing less than tokens of divine favor" (294). Helga makes a similar remark: "I have a feeling that this land has always been watching for us; and that now that we are come, it is glad [….] Is it not a wonderful thought, Sigurd, that it was in God's mind so long ago that we should some day want to come here?" (273) Liljencrantz thus suggests that American had been waiting for European immigrants and is delighted to finally receive its "true" inhabitants.

Furthermore, the discovery of Vinland seems to offset Leif's failure to convert most of the Greenlanders. Sigurd remarks: "This discovery makes his mission as sure of success as though it were already accomplished" (294). This remark is particularly interesting because Leif does not attempt to convert the Skraellings in the novel. The question, at least in Sigurd's eyes, is not how successful they are with converting believers. The mission is a success for him because the Vikings found what God wanted them to find—a paradise that, according to the novel, was only occupied by beasts.

The "religious imperialism" in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* is not so much about preaching Christianity in the distant corners of the world but rather about fulfilling a destiny. Liljencrantz adheres to the same type of racial hierarchy as described by Fiske, Kingsley, and Strong. And like these men, she equates colonialism with the spread of both Christianity and civilization. In *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, the Vikings—particularly Alwin and Leif, who emit a Christian zeal—are harbingers of both. Although they do not evangelize to the natives nor even stay on the continent, their "discovery" represents the first steps in bringing "civilization" to North America.

[335] Barnes, *Viking America*, 135.

Several of the Vikings do not understand Leif's patient and slow approach in Greenland, and they grow concerned when their leader appears to be making little progress with his mission. Sigurd reassures them by saying: "I have heard King Olaf Trygvasson read out of the Holy Book that a man who controls his own passions is more to be admired than a man who conquers a city" (228). As a Christian king, Olaf represents the height of both manliness and civilization—he is the ideal of manhood in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. Incidentally, Sigurd's comment reveals the two most important traits a man can have in this medieval world: the ability to read and the virtue of self-control.

There is a long history of certain cultures believing that textual production is evidence of an elevated level of civilization. Cultures with a long textual history have considered themselves to be advanced, while many eighteenth-century scientists and philosophers pointed to the lack of textual production in order to discount, for example, Africans from being "civilized."[336] Robyn Wiegman argues that part of this view comes from Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1822–1830), in which the German philosopher claims that "without writing, there could exist no repeatable signs of workings of reason, of mind; without memory or mind, there could exist no history; without history, there could exist no humanity."[337]

Alwin's ability to read, as previously discussed, distinguishes him from the Vikings. When Rolf the Wrestler learns that Alwin has this ability, he exclaims: "Now I have still more regard for you when I see that you have also the trick of reading English runes" (72). When Leif learns of this skill, he similarly remarks: "It is likely that you are a high-born captive. That you can read is an unusual accomplishment" (79). Reading's association with civilization thus places Alwin above the Vikings in the human evolutionary hierarchy.

In due course, Alwin nevertheless begins to admire the Viking ways of life. He falls in love with a Norse woman and pledges his friendship to several Vikings. As he assimilates to life in their camp in Norway, he muses: "It seems that Northmen are something more than pirates" (91–92). But this admiration gradually takes a toll on his "civilized" nature. Alwin soon recognizes "the roughness and coarseness of

[336] Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 62–64.

[337] George Wilhelm Friederich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 21; quoted in Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 64.

the life about him, and realized how it had roughened and coarsened him" (107). He even sees himself becoming too much like a Northman because of his affection for Helga:

> See how the North has conquered me! First it was only my body that was bound; and I was sure that, if ever I got freedom, I should enter the service of some English lord and die fighting against the Danes. And now a Norse maiden has conquered my heart, so that I would not take my liberty if it were offered me! (221)

After Kark betrays him, Alwin re-enters Leif's service disguised as a Frenchman named Robert Sans-Peur. He is still in disguise when the company of Vikings sails west from Greenland and discovers Helluland, Markland, and Vinland. While in Markland, Alwin attempts to abandon his civilized nature and to behave more like his Viking comrades who are still on the second tier of human evolutionary progress. The explorers come across a bear, and Alwin believes that killing it would impress Leif and might improve his standing in the group. Alwin fails when Leif pushes him aside and kills the bear instead. Downhearted, the Englishman falls into a stupor for several days. Helga tries to snap him out of his depression by reminding him of his intellectual "gifts": "Was it by a feat of arms that you won your first honour with the chief? It was nothing more heroic than the ability to read runes, which, in five days, got you more favour than Rolf Erlingsson's strength had gained him in five years" (286). Helga's words prove true, as Alwin (Robert) once again impresses Leif with his writing:

> "Runes!" [Leif] cried, in a voice that brought every man to his feet, even those who had fallen asleep over their drinking. "Runes? Is it possible that you have the accomplishment of writing them?" […] "I tell you frankly that it is of more value to me than any warrior's skill in the world, and I am not too stingy to pay what it is worth." (306–307)

In this fictional Viking world, strength of character is valued over physical strength and civilization over violence. Accordingly, King Olaf Trygvasson, Leif Ericsson, and Alwin reflect a Victorian mindset and set of values.

Indeed, Alwin's other distinguishing virtue is self-control, which he demonstrates early in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* when Egil the Black provokes him into a sword fight. Alwin disarms his Norse challenger but does not strike him. Instead, he tosses his own sword away and claims: "I do no murder" (58). The men continue to grapple without weapons until Alwin grabs a knife from his belt and

holds it against Egil's throat; but again, "it came back to him what it meant to take a human life,—to change a living breathing body like his own into a heap of still, dead clay" (59). Alwin's ability to collect and control himself is not only a major attribute of Victorian values but also of the classic Boone/Bumppo narrative as described in chapter 1.

Leif Ericcson demonstrates a similar ability of self-control while in Greenland. After Eric throws an axe at him, Leif demands peace, surprising even his crew. When Alwin understands that Leif will not preach to his father or force the pagans to convert by force, he is "overcome with wonder and admiration" (163). Liljencrantz then inserts a historical signpost that clearly reflects her contemporary values: "In those days, nine men out of every ten could draw their swords and rave and die for their principles; it was only the tenth man that was strong enough to keep his hand off his weapon, or control his tongue and live to serve his cause" (163).

It gradually becomes evident, however, that Leif is not one of these few. While in Greenland, he prohibits his crewmembers from visiting a pagan seer named Skroppa.[338] Desperate to know if he and Helga have a future together, Alwin disobeys this order and visits the witch to have his fortune read. When Leif finds out, he becomes furious and attacks Alwin with a sword, despite the calls for mercy from the surrounding Vikings, and leaves the Englishman for dead. Leif loses control again when Sigurd admits that he had helped smuggle Helga onto the ship before it set sail for Vinland. On this occasion, Leif does not physically attack Sigurd but resorts to a verbal tirade:

> Those who had hoped that Leif's love for his foster-son might outweigh his anger, gauged but poorly the force of the resentment he had been holding back […] his anger could no more be restrained than an unchained torrent. It burst out in a stream of denunciation […] Coward and traitor were the mildest of its reproaches; contempt and eternal displeasure were the least of its dooms. Though Helga besought with eyes and hands, the torrent thundered on with a fury that even the ire of Eric had never surpassed. (248)

Leif's anger gets the better of him, Liljencrantz explains, because the "fire of Eric burned in the veins of his son" (203). This is significant because Eric the Red, Leif's father, is the best representative of the second state of the human evolutionary

[338] The name Skroppa appears to have been borrowed from chapter 26 of *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*.

hierarchy—barbaric, pagan, and uncivilized, but not quite a savage. There is, in other words, a clear distinction between him and the inhuman Skraellings of Vinland. Leif appears to be in a transitional space as he attempts to climb up to the top tier of "civilization." Only a short time has passed since his conversion to Christianity, which may explain why he struggles to control his passion. He is, in Liljencrantz's words, in the "boyhood" of civilization.

In this hierarchy, different races possess different levels of manliness. The ability to read and write—"civilized" skills—and the ability of self-control—one of the most ideal manly virtues—separate the Norse and English "races" in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. This division appears to be inspired by the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writings of intellectuals like Louis Agassiz, G. Stanley Hall, and Theodore Roosevelt, who viewed certain races and ethnicities as belonging to lower forms of manhood. At the same time, they believed that these same races could access a "primitive" masculinity that Western men had all but lost.[339] This paradox manifests itself in Leif Ericsson in the novel. He attempts to mimic the manly ideal demonstrated by Alwin, but his aptitude for violence and his inability to control his passion prevent him from reaching the top tier of the evolutionary hierarchy.

In fact, Leif's Christian beliefs become entangled in a gendered discourse. He urges Alwin: "Put my commands ahead of your desires, as I put King Olaf's wish before my pride, and as he sets the will of God before his will" (159). Several of Leif's crewmembers, however, do not appreciate their leader's humility. When Leif's mission drags on in Greenland with no signs of progress, Egil says that his "behavior was weak-kneed" (164). Rolf the Wrestler echoes this later when Leif decides to invite his father on the journey west: "I believe the Saxon Saints' Book has bewitched his reason. From that, I have heard the Englishman read of men who gave up honor lest it might make them vain. I believe Leif Ericsson is humbling his pride, like some beaten monk" (227). As a consequence, several of Leif's crewmembers express their disgust in gendered terms. One states: "If he has become such a woman as that—!" Another Viking mutters: "Christianity is a religion for women" (228). Liljencrantz explains in her "Foreword" that when the Vikings stopped worshipping Odin, they turned "[n]ot to the God who forgives, nor to the God who suffered" but rather to "the God who makes men strong, the God who is never-dying and all-powerful Lord to those who follow him" (10). This image of a

[339] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3rd ed (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68–69.

powerful God who strengthens men also mirrors Charles Kingsley's muscular Christianity.

Concern for the gendered nature of Christianity and the Church had been present in the United States for over a century. In his study of nineteenth-century American fraternal orders, Michael C. Carnes observes that by the early 1800s, women already outnumbered men two-to-one in various Protestant denominations, leading many middle-class American males to see the Church as "feminine."[340] Throughout the century, thousands of MCWAM flocked to fraternities, such as the Masonic Order, as a "manly" replacement for what they saw as the effeminate Church.

By the early twentieth century, pastors like Billy Sunday responded to this development by channeling some ideas of Charles Kingsley's muscular Christianity into their sermons, preaching about manly attributes of Jesus Christ, his physical abilities, and his strength. Devotionals, such as Harry Emerson Fosdick's *The Manhood of the Master* (1913) and Bruce Barton's *The Man Who Nobody Knows* (1924), highlighted the manliness of Jesus. In his book, Barton complains, for example: "The same theology which has painted the son as soft and gentle to the point of weakness, has exalted the feminine influence in its worship, and denied any large place to masculine."[341] These kind of writers—most of whom were active after the cultural shift—wanted their readers to see a God of might and power and not one of humility and forgiveness, which they believed were feminine values.

Liljencrantz's references to these contemporary issues clearly place Leif Ericsson in a difficult position. He struggles to adhere to Victorian modes of manliness because of the temper he inherited from his father—a remnant of not only his pagan past but also of his place in the evolutionary hierarchy. He additionally must contend with the gendered nature of Christianity. Submissiveness and humility appear as central pillars to the Christian lifestyle, but by adhering to them, Leif loses the trust of his crewmembers, who view these characteristics as weak and effeminate.

The character of Leif mirrors the contradiction found in Charles Kingsley's muscular Christianity: a belief in the necessity of force and violence while still

[340] Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 77.

[341] Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924), 40–41.

attempting to maintain some level of self-control. Norman Vance claims that many men who followed Kingsley's way of thinking were "caught on the fence between the church and the world while trying to deny that the fence existed."[342] Leif also seems to live on a fence, stranded between barbarity and civilization, manliness and masculinity, and even between a feminine and masculine Christianity.[343] Despite these complications, Liljencrantz presents Leif as heroic and manly. She excuses Leif's struggles at the beginning of the novel by claiming that, during the Viking Age, the Norse and English were simply in the boyhood of their races and therefore did not know any better.

The Shield-Maiden

Helga in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* is the daughter of a Norwegian merchant named Gilli the Wealthy and a woman from England, "where women are taught to bear themselves gently" (62).[344] She went to live in Greenland at a young age and was raised by her formidable foster-mother, Thorhild, the mother of Leif Ericcson. She ran away at a young age to Leif's camp in Norway where she lived like the other male Vikings: she sailed, rode horses, and sought adventure. She was "the best comrade in the camp, whether one wished to go hawking, or wanted a hand at fencing, or only asked for a game of chess by the leaping firelight" (64–65). She tells Sigurd: "'For two years now I have lived almost like the shield-maidens we were wont to talk of. Oh, Sigurd, I have been so happy!' She threw back her head and lifted her beautiful face to the sunlit sky and the fresh wind. 'So free and so happy!'" (32)

Throughout the novel, Liljencrantz refers to Helga as a "shield-maiden," a term that, according to Carol Clover, typically refers to a woman who fights with a sword

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[342] Norman Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 28.

[343] Indeed, Leland S. Person addresses the latter in his article "The Historical Paradox of Manhood in Cooper's *The Deerslayer*" when he mentions Natty Bumppo's decision to look after the Hutter sisters rather than search for scalps with his male companions is contradictory: "Caring for the females associates Natty with a chivalrous ideal of manhood at the same time that it remands him to a woman's place that, because of his identification with the Delaware 'women' for the past ten years, Natty would feel the special acuteness." Person, "The Historical Paradoxes," 86.

[344] This may have been inspired by Ottilie Liljencrantz's own parentage—a Scandinavian father and an Anglo-American mother.

or who behaves in unfeminine ways.[345] Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir underlines that shield maidens in medieval literature were designed to "undermine the very idea that gender roles are natural," in spite the fact that these females typically end up in a submissive role with a man.[346]

Liljencrantz stresses the idea that Helga is "unlike other maidens," which seems to refer to her more masculine qualities (38). When Helga first sees Alwin after learning he survived Leif's attack, she breaks down in tears but then

> stiffened herself to the iron composure of a shield-maiden […] Alwin recalled the weeping and fainting of his mother's waiting women, in that far-off time of trouble, and pressed her hand gratefully as he took his seat by her side upon the bench. 'You are my brave comrade as well as my best friend. I can talk with you as I would with Sigurd.' (218)

Alwin is at first shocked at the amount of independence Helga has, but he gradually attributes this to "her Norse blood crying out for adventure and open air and freedom" and confesses that it was "a stranger thing that all maidens did not feel so,—that there were any who kept at spinning, like prisoners fettered in trailing gowns" (33).

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[345] Carol J. Clover, "Maiden Warriors and Their Sons," *The Journal of English and German Philology* 85, no. 1 (Jan. 1986): 36 ff. 4.

[346] Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11. A scholarly debate over the nature of "shield maidens" and their role in Viking Age society has raged in the field of Old Norse studies following an article published in 2017 by Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, et.al., titled "A female Viking warrior confirmed by genomics," which argued that a female "Viking" had been discovered in a grave in Sweden. The article was (uncritically) summarized and sensationalized in popular media. Some scholars—most notably Judith Jesch—found the article to be problematic and challenged Hedenstierna-Jonson and her colleagues. For a brief summary of this debate, see for instance Simon Trafford, "Hyper-masculinity vs. Viking warrior women: pop culture Vikings and gender," Just Nu Och För Hemskt Länge Sedan, January 11, 2019, https://blogg.mah.se/historiskastudier/2019/01/11/hyper-masculinity-vs-viking-warrior-women-pop-culture-vikings-and-gender/; Oren Falk, "La hace de guerre d'Occam: Quelques réflexions sur l'archéologie responsable inspirées par Bj 581," in *L'archéologie du genre: méthodes et controverses*, eds. Anne Augereau and Christophe Darmangeat (forthcoming, 2022). Thank you Liška Adèle for translating.

These examples give the sense that Liljencrantz may have wanted to challenge the gender expectations of her time and suggest that Helga could be the standard bearer for female independence. However, the activities Helga claims to love—sailing, hawking, and riding horses—mostly take place in the past before she is introduced in the novel, or else when she is away from the action and the narrative focuses on Alwin. The reader never sees her *doing* these "masculine" things. The only exception is at the beginning of the novel when Helga rides a horse in Trondheim on the way to the slave market where Alwin is being held. However, she loses control of the horse, topples over the side and hurts herself. And although Liljencrantz continues to call her "shield-maiden," this event is like a metaphor for Helga's troublesome life. As the novel progresses, she experiences a swift fall from the freedoms of her happy life in the "male sphere" and moves steadily toward a restrictive, "feminine" world of domestication.

This transformation begins when the crew learns that Leif intends to sail to Greenland to undertake King Olaf's mission. While the men cheer at this news, Helga has a look of despair on her face. One of the Vikings yells: "Look at the shield-maiden, comrades,—look at the shield-maiden! It has come into her mind she is going back to Thorhild" (88). The men understand that Helga's foster-mother will force the girl to give up the manly lifestyle and to attend to more "feminine" activities, such as sewing and washing. Helga laments that "rides over the green country" are over and she may never again "feel of the deck bounding under me" (89). This is clearly understood as a joke by her comrades, who exclaim:

> "Back to Thorhild the Iron-Handed!"—"No more short kirtles!"—"She has speared her last boar!"—"After this she will embroider boar-hunts on tapestry!"—"Embroider? Is it likely that she knows which end of the needle to put the thread through?"—"It will be like yoking a wild steer!"—"Taming a shield-maiden!"—"There will be dagger-holes in Thorhild's back!"—They crowded around her, bandying the jest back and forth, and roaring with laughter. (88)[347]

Indeed, Thorhild begins to criticize Helga's appearance almost as soon as Leif and his crew arrive in Greenland. She tells the "shield-maiden": "It is time you had a woman to look after you" (134). The narrator then remarks: "But Helga was no longer repelled by [Thorhild's] severity; she could appreciate now what lay beneath it. She said, 'Yes, kinswoman,' with proper submissiveness, and then looked over at

[347] This type of group quote is common in Liljencrantz's novels. It is meant to convey a collection of people talking over one another in a crowd.

Alwin with laughing eyes" (134). The phrase "proper submissiveness," is telling. For Liljencrantz, women in this medieval setting were *supposed* to be submissive and to perform gender-specific tasks. And from this moment on, Helga is only seen in Greenland washing the linen or doing the dishes. This does not change after she arrives in Vinland. Helga does not explore, hunt, sail, or participate in any of the activities she supposedly liked to do before going to Greenland, despite being far away from Thorhild and the expectations of Norse "society." When Leif asks her whether she is enjoying the new world, she replies, "I have entertained myself very poorly so far, kinsman, for I have been doing such woman's work as Thorhild commands" (283).

Helga was "happy and free" before falling in love with Alwin. After Leif's attack on the slave, however, she would sit in "dreamy idleness" and submit easily to tears (208–212). The qualities that made her a shield maiden seems to have disappeared. When she learns that Alwin has survived, she dedicates herself solely to being a supportive lover. She helps plan his escape so that he can safely return to Greenland as Robert Sans-Peur. But as the story continues, Helga's passivity increases. When the Vikings discover her hiding on the ship enroute to Vinland, she emerges "tumbled and disheveled, paling and flushing, short-kirtled and desperate-eyed"—giving the allusion of a helpless maid and not the "power of a mean-minded brute" that one might expect from a shield maiden (246). When Leif asks how she managed to get onto his ship, Helga tells her story in a passive voice: "a horse brought me to Nidaros; gold bought me a passage with Arnor Gunnarsson, and his ship brought me into Eric's Fiord" (247). She claims to have swum from a merchant ship to Leif's ship. Once again, this action is not seen but only recalled. She does not *do* anything. Instead, horses and ships take her places and men ultimately decide her fate.

In her groundbreaking study, *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir argues that women have historically been "condemned to immanence," which means existing not only in a stagnant state but living in domestic repetition; the traditional female role is to be a nourisher and supporter, incarnating "only the static aspect of society."[348] Men, she claims, represent action and movement—they transcend their environment and make important advancements for humanity.[349] According to Katherine Cooper and Emma Short, feminine inaction and passivity is a typical

[348] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 85.

[349] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 75–77.

component of historical fiction that began with the captivity narrative and became a hallmark of American adventure. Female characters, they explain, often appear in

> narratives featuring male agency and female passivity, and in many of these texts men were lauded as great explorers, heroes and adventurers, while female figures, real or imagined, were marginalized, and featured solely as romantic interests.[350]

Helga trades her chainmail for a dress and submits to a male lover, which fits the shield maiden/maiden king motif in Old Norse literature, as described by Clover and Friðriksdóttir.[351] But her fate is also part of a bigger picture, which includes Victorian ideas of gendered spheres as well as gender expectations in American adventures—a fate of immanence.

Helga initially runs away from the expected domestication of women in the Viking Age to experience the freedoms afforded males. She ultimately returns without fighting against it, and she readily accepts her new passive role. This is a common theme in all Liljencrantz's Viking-themed fiction. In *The Vinland Champions*, for instance, Gudrid, Thorfinn Karlsefni's wife, unintentionally enters "the heart of a wood," where some Vikings are wrestling. The men pause at the sight of Gudrid, but she tells them that she is "well versed in the Viking laws about keeping women out," and promptly leaves.[352] Brynhild, the lover of Randvar in *Randvar the Songsmith*, holds a high position of leadership in the Norse colony in Vinland. After falling in love with Randvar, however, she abandons her place of authority to submit to her lover. Brynhild claims: "Never did woman so stoop to a man since the Valkyria came down to Sigurd!"[353]

This motif is especially noticeable in *The Ward of King Canute*. The main female character, Randalin, dresses up like a male and actually fights in a battle—a common aspect of the maiden king narrative from Old Norse literature.[354] Initially,

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[350] Katherine Cooper and Emma Short, "Introduction" to *The Female Figure in Contemporary Historical Fiction*, eds. Katherine Cooper and Emma Short (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

[351] Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir provides an analysis of the maiden-king trope in *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 108–133.

[352] Ottilie A. Liljencrantz, *The Vinland Champions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 138–140.

[353] Ottilie A. Liljencrantz, *Randvar the Songsmith: A Romance of Norumbega* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1906), 291.

[354] Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, 113.

Randalin revels in the freedom she discovers in the "masculine realm." Early on she cries: "Away with woman's fears! The world was a grand brave place, and men a race of heroes. To ride by their sides, and share their mighty deeds, and see their glory,—what keener joy had life to offer?"[355] She changes her mind, however, once she experiences the horror and violence of war: "I was brave in the battle. It is not death I fear; but I cannot kill! Odin, have mercy on me! I cannot kill. I have tried to be brave, but I am really a woman; it is not possible for me to have a man's heart."[356] In the end she becomes a submissive lover and supporter of a certain Lord Sebert. She laments: "Odin forgive me that I thought I had courage enough to be a man!"[357]

The main female characters of each of Liljencrantz's novels experience the same fate: a taste of the "masculine realm"—however brief—that leads them to decide for themselves to return to the feminine world as a supportive lover and domestic partner. This is where Liljencrantz's fiction departs from the maiden king trope. Typically, the female characters are forced to give up their role in the "masculine realm" by male characters. Helga, Gudrid, Brynhild and Randalin have just enough agency to leave this sphere for the "feminine" domain. Helga all but disappears from the narrative while the Vikings are in Greenland, appearing only as Leif debates who she should marry and when she assists and supports Alwin. Despite Liljencrantz's continued use of the phrase "shield-maiden" and the assertion that Helga is not like the other maidens, she epitomizes Simone de Beauvoir's description of the helpless literary female: weak, futile, passive, and docile.[358]

Liljencrantz's treatment of Helga in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* reflects the fate of female characters in both Old Norse literature and in American adventures; but it also fits into the power hierarchy she includes in her fiction. She has positioned white male Christians at the top of this power structure, and they clearly dominate not only the other races that occupy lower levels of "civilization" but also the females of the Viking world. Near the end of the crew's time in Vinland, Alwin's identity is revealed, and Leif forgives the deceit and offers the slave his freedom and friendship with one caveat: he cannot allow Alwin to marry Helga. That decision lies with her father, Gilli the Wealthy. Once Gilli disowns her, Leif gives his

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[355] Ottilie A. Liljencrantz, *The Ward of King Canute*: *A Romance of the Danish Conquest* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 244.

[356] Liljencrantz, *The Ward of King Canute*, 261.

[357] Liljencrantz, *The Ward of King Canute*, 316.

[358] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 359.

permission for Helga to marry whomever she likes. Her fate passes from the hands of one man to another throughout the entire novel. And while she endures no physical or sexual violence, unlike the females in the fictional Viking Ages of the later twentieth century, she appears to be a victim of structural violence—a male dominated world in which she is doomed to immanence.

The Vikings in Hollywood

In 1928, scriptwriter Jack Cunningham and director Roy William Neill adapted *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* into a feature-length film titled *The Viking*. Its production came at a critical time as technology was rapidly changing in the film industry. Incidentally, *The Viking* was one of the last silent films made but also the first produced with a new Technicolor process, which involved dye transfer printing.[359] Cunningham and Neill altered much in Liljencrantz's story but kept its basic plot and characters names. More importantly, they clearly utilized ideas and concepts of the nineteenth-century "Viking discourse"—many of which had been reinforced in Liljencrantz's fiction—including aspects of Rafn's Vinland myth, images of white destiny in America, and discriminatory ideas regarding race and gender.

The film begins with a series of intertitles that are meant to set the stage for the adventure but also introduce several of the themes mentioned above. The first title card brings race into the foreground: "A thousand years ago, long before any white man set foot on the American shore, Viking sea rovers sailed out of the north and down the waterways of the world." [360] The second intertitle emphasizes the manliness of the Vikings: "These were men of might, who laughed in the teeth of the tempest, and leaped into battle with a song."[361] The third card underlines the violence expected from the Vikings: "Plundering—ravaging—they raided the coast of Europe—until the whole world trembled at the very name—THE VIKING."[362] Thus, in the first few minutes, the film establishes the Vikings as fearless and violent white men who would discover America (long before Christopher Columbus).

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[359] Richard W. Haines, *Technicolor Movies: The History of Dye Transfer Printing* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 8–11.

[360] *The Viking*, directed by Roy William Neill (Technicolor, 1928), 1:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCwpA7NxK7A&t=3893s.

[361] *The Viking*, 1:46.

[362] *The Viking*, 2:04.

The Viking opens with a group of Vikings attacking a castle in Northumbria in which Alwin (LeRoy Mason) lives. Before they come crashing through the gates, a woman prays solemnly over a Bible in the corner, foreshadowing the forthcoming action: "From the sword and the chains of the Viking, O Lord, deliver us."[363] An intertitle explains that the Vikings took many people captive and brought them back to a trading post in Norway. While Alwin waits in chains, Helga (Pauline Stark) arrives at the slave market, tumbling off her horse just as she did in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. The film version of Helga appears to have far more agency than her literary namesake. She is seen riding a horse, sailing the seas, and even disguising herself as a male and sneaking onto Leif's ship. The winged helmet and armored breastplate she wears at the start of the film resemble costumes from Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* that had become associated with Valkyries and shield maidens in popular culture.[364] As the film continues, however, Helga "ultimately becomes domesticated," as Arne Lund has pointed out in his *Nordic Exposure: Scandinavian Identities in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (2010).[365] Lunde explains that this transition is indicated by Helga's wardrobe changes:

> The steady softening of her costuming from metallic Valkyrian warrior-tomboy to white-gowned object of matrimony seems inversely related to Alwin's own transformations from a pampered lord to rebellious slave-servant to new world Adam.[366]

The plot of the film revolves around what Kevin Harty calls a love "quadrangle."[367] Early on, we learn that Leif's sailing master Egil the Black (Harry Woods) is deeply in love with Helga. As the story progresses, she begins to fall in love with Alwin, just as in the novel. When the company sails to Greenland, however, Leif (Donald Crisp) reveals that he intends to marry Helga after he returns from his journey west in search of land. Without consulting her, Leif's father, Eric the Red (Anders Randolf), says that he will announce the betrothal at an upcoming feast. But when Helga is discovered aboard his ship, Leif decides to marry her right

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[363] *The Viking*, 3:44.

[364] See the discussion of Wagner in the Introduction of this thesis.

[365] Arne Lunde, *Nordic Exposure: Scandinavian Identities in Classical Hollywood Cinema*, New Directions in Scandinavian Studies (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2010), 30.

[366] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 30.

[367] Kevin J. Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!—The Vikings in North America," in *The Vikings on Film: Essays on Depictions of the Nordic Middle Ages*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 108.

there. During the wedding ceremony, Egil attempts to kill Leif but Alwin takes the brunt of the blow, saving Leif's life. Helga then publicly reveals her love for Alwin instead of the Viking leader.

When the Vikings finally sight Vinland, she does not celebrate with the crew nor is she present in the dramatic landing; instead, she stays below deck on the ship tending to an injured Alwin. She only reappears in the final scene, again at Alwin's side, wearing a revealing outfit and a feathered Bandeau headband. The same female immanence Helga experiences in the book appears to find its way into the film. This marginalization was not only a staple of the American adventure genre but would also continue to be a part of medieval Hollywood films.[368]

There are hints in the film that suggest Cunningham and Neill were uncertain whether to showcase a nineteenth-century sense of manliness or to highlight more contemporary ideals of masculinity that had become popular in westerns and other adventure films. When Alwin first comes to Leif's camp, Egil the Black immediately challenges the slave and the two men engage in a sword fight. Just as in the novel, Alwin beats his opponent but spares his life. But it is this skill with a sword that earns Leif's respect, rather than his ability to read and write. Indeed, this "gift," which is so important in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, is watered down into an ability to read maps. As the crew sails to Greenland, Leif asks if Alwin believes the edge of the world to be guarded by monsters and dragons. The slave, who is looking over navigation routes and maps, shakes his head. This pleases Leif, who responds: "You are indeed a rare man to come upon in these days—and I shall keep you at my right hand."[369] The filmmakers are perhaps trying to highlight Alwin's inner strength and intelligence in this scene, but nothing more is made of the Englishman's opinions on the sea or his ability to read maps.

Leif's ability for self-control increases through the film. When his Christian faith is revealed in his father's hall in Greenland, Eric the Red responds by throwing an axe at his son. Leif at first asks for peace but then demands that Eric provide he and his crew supplies for the journey west. When Eric refuses, Leif draws his sword and orders his men to break into the granaries. A full battle breaks out, and Leif's men rob Eric's stores before jumping in their ship to flee. On the way to Vinland,

[368] For a history of this type of marginalization, see for instance Valerie B. Johnson, "Maid Marian: Neomedievalism and the Misogyny in the Reel," in *Medieval Women on Film: Essays on Gender, Cinema and History*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2020), 68–85.

[369] *The Viking*, 38:06.

Leif begins to lose his crew's trust and faith—not because of his careful approach to converting believers but since they believe the ship might plummet over the edge of the world at any moment. One of the crewmembers, Odd (Torben Meyer), is so frightened that he throws out to sea a crucifix that has been hanging above the cabin entrance and begs Leif to turn the ship around. Leif calls his men cowards and explains that Vikings do not fear the unknown: "We are bound on the greatest adventure man has ever known—and we do not turn back!"[370]

During the dramatic wedding scene on the ship, Leif manages to control his anger. After killing Egil, he intends to kill Alwin. He raises his sword, but, at this point, catches a glimpse of the crucifix he made to replace the one tossed to sea, supposedly reminding himself of the Christian tenements of mercy and forgiveness. With a great effort, it seems, Leif lowers his sword. In many ways, he is struggling with the paradoxical manliness found in the Boone/Bumppo narrative—a self-restraint inspired by Christian tenements but an ability to be violent when necessary.

Lunde argues that *The Viking* contains "imperialist tropes of pagan-to-Christian conversion," echoing Barnes's remarks about the religious imperialism found in Liljencrantz's Vinland novels.[371] However, the filmmakers omit Leif's Christian mission in Greenland, making the spread of Christianity less central to the plot of the film than of the novel. King Olaf (Roy Steward) does not charge Leif with converting the Greenlanders; instead, Leif asks for permission to sail west in search of land, and the king gives him a crucifix and a royal blessing: "Glory and success to your voyage!"[372]

The crew eventually spots land and rows to shore. Leif fashions two oars into a crucifix, and when he steps foot onto the beach in America, a title card claims: "And the first white man set foot on the shores of the New World."[373] He stakes the cross into the sand and then kneels with his hands stretched to the heavens. This scene is clearly modeled after other arrival myths, relating to Columbus's 1492 "discovery"

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[370] *The Viking*, 1:17:40.

[371] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 16; Barnes, *Viking America*, 135.

[372] *The Viking*, 22:37. Roy Stewart coincidentally played the part of Daniel Boone in *Daniel Boone Thru the Wilderness* (1926), Buffalo Bill in *With Buffalo Bill on the U.P. Trail* (1926), and even had a main role in *Kit Carson Over the Great Divide* (1925). In addition to acting in these films, both based on famous adventure heroes, Stewart also had one of the leading roles in *The Snowshoe Trail* (1922), which was based on an early novel written by Edison Marshall.

[373] *The Viking*, 1:27:02.

and the Puritans landing at Plymouth.[374] Another intertitle explains: "As his Viking fathers had done in other lands, Leif built a watch tower of stone."[375] The scene cuts to a gathering between the Vikings and a group of Native Americans clustered in front of the infamous Newport Tower. Leif places a crucifix around the neck of one of the natives and his words appear on the next title card: "Let this cross and the tower I have built be the signs of peace and friendship between us."[376] The final intertitle reads: "What became of this little Viking colony, no one knows. But the watch tower they built stands today in Newport, Rhode Island."[377] The film then fades into shot of modern-day Newport, with cars passing the tower, while the music changes from Edvard Grieg's "The Triumphal March" to the "Star Spangled Banner."[378]

Intertitles bookending *The Viking* emphasize the whiteness of the Vikings. Moreover, the film suggests that the Vikings stayed in the New World and built a community there. Lunde points out that because Alwin is English and Helga is Nordic, they establish the "whitest of the white" American nationhood that predates Christopher Columbus by 500 years.[379] Cunningham and Neill also insert a contemporary shot of the Newport Tower to tie the Vikings more convincingly to the United States, relying on the impact the tower had on the American imagination. As discussed in chapter 1, this "American antiquity" had by 1928 been convincingly debunked as a Norse construction and was acknowledged to be a much younger construction.[380] The filmmakers may not have known who Carl Christian Rafn was or been aware of the ideological implications the tower had had in American history, but their use of this "artifact" reinstates ideas made popular by nineteenth-century writers like Horsford, as discussed in chapter 1: a white narrative of discovery and authority that erases indigenous populations, cultures, and histories.

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[374] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure* 16; Jón Karl Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla: The Afterlife of the Eddas and Sagas* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 167.

[375] *The Viking*, 1:27:51.

[376] *The Viking*, 1:28:17

[377] *The Viking*, 1:29:06

[378] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 35.

[379] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 37.

[380] Kevin J. Harty, "The 'Viking Tower' in Newport, Rhode Island: fact, fiction and film," in *From Iceland to Americas*, ed. Tim Machan and Jón Karl Helgason (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 49–50.

The interaction between the Norse and Native Americans is extremely brief in the film and lacks the type of derogatory language found in Liljencrantz's novels. It is significant, however, that indigenous people do not give any gifts in return on screen when Leif places the crucifix around the neck of a native. This one-way exchange is symbolic. The imperial expansion depicted in the film is, in my view, less about spreading Christianity than it is about the "white man's burden." The Norse are a perceived "civilized" group of people introducing an "inferior" group of people to civilization via Christianity and hypothetically helping them move up in the human evolutionary hierarchy.

The film itself, according to Lunde, was a "conversion project" that had the primary purpose of selling Hollywood studios on the "glories of an improved and affordable color reproduction and exhibition process" that Technicolor could provide.[381] But because silent movies had grown out of fashion by this time, tickets did not sell as well as anticipated.[382] Still, *The Viking* has proven to be an important part of the "Viking discourse." For instance, several later films—most notably the satirical comedy *Erik the Viking* (1989)—continued to feature the Vikings' fear of falling off the edge of the world. More importantly, *The Viking* brought many nineteenth-century ideas, such as the Newport Tower as evidence of a Norse discovery, into twentieth-century popular culture.

Conclusion

The Thrall of Leif the Lucky is an American adventure built upon the captivity narrative. By situating the medieval Icelandic story of Vinland within this genre, Ottilie Liljencrantz Americanized the Vikings in a new way. The story features heroic men demonstrating their manhood as they expand a frontier. Martin Green claims that one stipulation for an American adventure is the meeting of two

[381] Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 33.

[382] Mordaunt Hall, "The Screen; A Picture in Colors," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1928. As Jón Karl Helgason, Kevin J. Harty, and other scholars have pointed out, Technicolor president Herbert T. Kalmus claimed there were two major problems with *The Viking*: "First it came out among the very last of the silent pictures in 1929, and second, whiskers. Leif Ericson, the viking hero true to character had a long curling mustache, whereas American audiences prefer their lovers smooth-shaven." Herbert T. Kalmus, "Technicolor Adventures in Cinemaland," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* (December 1938), http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/oldcolor/kalmus.htm; Jón Karl Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla*, 163–164; Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!," 118.

cultures.[383] And while some might expect this meeting to be between the Norse and the indigenous peoples of Vinland—which would fit the motif that follows the *Robinson Crusoe* branch of adventure—the confrontation in the novel is really between the English and the Norse. Alwin, like Boone and Bumppo, comes from a white, "Anglo-Saxon" background but finds himself amid a barbaric people. And, just like those early American adventure heroes, Alwin's self-control sets him apart from other races—in this case, the Norse. He learns to live *like* the Vikings, adopting their ways of life and their thinking—though he never fully belongs with them. The religious imperialism found in the novel—and particularly in the film when Helga and Alwin stay to build a community in the "wilderness"—also recalls the Boone archetype that builds empires. Moreover, the gender discrepancies between Alwin's emerging transcendence and Helga's impending immanence echo the treatment of male and female characters in most American adventures up to that period.

Liljencrantz's fiction was in many respects bringing nineteenth-century beliefs, ideas, associations, and assumptions about the Vikings into the modern era. She was clearly influenced by Kingsley, Rafn, Anderson, Horsford, and other (male) authors who described the Vikings and Old Norse literature through contemporary language borrowed from the discourses on race, gender, human evolution and civilization, and white destiny. As a female author at the turn of the twentieth century, Liljencrantz could have imposed some emerging progressive and feminist perspectives upon the Viking Age. Instead, her characters reflected nineteenth-century ideals that were going out of style in the U.S. The filmmakers of *The Viking* recycled many of these ideas without much caution, bringing the prejudices of the nineteenth century to an even broader audience. One can easily see how ideas like manifest destiny, for example, infiltrated both *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* and *The Viking* in the presentation of Native Americans.

Both novel and film paint Alwin and Leif as harbingers of "civilization" and even peace in North America, recreating what David M. Krueger calls a "narrative of innocence." By positioning the Norse as good-natured adventurers and lovers of freedom, white Americans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries believed they could wipe their hands clean of the atrocities committed against

[383] Martin Green, *The Great American Adventure* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 5.

indigenous people and point the finger of blame at Columbus.[384] Indeed, both mediums worked to advance a Viking "discovery" and a white presence in medieval America, providing an alternative narrative for Anglo-Americans that preferred something different to a Catholic, Southern European "discovery" myth.

It is important to note two aspects of the Viking image in Liljencrantz's literature, as they change over the course of the twentieth century. Firstly, Liljencrantz did not see the Vikings and Christianity as incompatible. On the contrary, most Norse characters in her Viking-themed novels are either already Christian or prepared to embrace Christianity. Secondly, and consequently, her Vikings are, for the most part, peaceful. Apart from Leif's and Eric the Red's harsh reactions, there is very little bloodshed in her stories. But while there is little physical violence, there is an abundance of symbolic violence: racism, strict gender roles, and human evolutionary hierarchies. As masculine ideals of domination became more popular in the twentieth century, these instances of symbolic violence escalated into physical violence. Liljencrantz's name and fiction faded into obscurity in the next few decades, and even the film *The Viking* was all but forgotten. But Liljencrantz's contribution to the "Viking discourse" was significant. Hence, a review of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* from 1954 also characterizes the Viking-themed fiction that was appearing during that decade: "the novelty of her folk and the attractive colored illustrations did not cover the hackneyed plots."[385]

[384] David M. Krueger, *Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking Martyrs and the Birthplace of America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 43, 65; Lunde, *Nordic Exposure*, 34–35.

[385] Grace C. Knight, *The Strenuous Age in American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 63–64.

Chapter 3
The Vikings in Mid-Century Pulp Fiction

The 1958 film *The Vikings*, directed by Richard Fleischer, is arguably one of the most impactful representations of the Vikings in U.S. popular culture during the twentieth century. Many Americans would come to associate Kirk Douglas's eye-patched face as the image of the Viking; fewer, however, remember the novel that inspired this groundbreaking film: Edison Marshall's *The Viking* (1951). The book has been mostly forgotten in the world of adventure stories and overlooked in contemporary scholarship. However, Marshall's name often appeared on the *New York Times* Best Seller List in the 1940s and 50s and his novels reached thousands of readers.[386] For these reasons, his contribution to the "Viking discourse" deserves investigation.

It should be noted that the action of *The Viking* takes place during the early Viking Age, long before the events described in the Vinland sagas, which occur near the turn of the first millennium. Accordingly, many of the people, places and concepts that have been discussed thus far—Rafn, the Dighton Rock, *skrælingjar*—do not factor into this representation of the Viking Age. Furthermore, Marshall lived for much of his life in the segregated southern United States and wrote *The Viking* long after the cultural shift described in chapter 1. Accordingly, his writings are influenced by different contemporary prejudices and ideals from those that affected Liljencrantz. And yet, many of the themes that appear in her fiction resurface in Marshall's—adventure, race, civilization, gender, and a white male-dominant hierarchy.

In this chapter I analyze Marshall's construction of the Viking World and discuss how he used the above-mentioned themes to different ends. Just as Liljencrantz's ancestral background and her life in Chicago affected her literature, Marshall's personal life, his writing style and habits, and his being a "popular" fiction writer influenced his approach to the Viking Age. Considerably more of Marshall's letters, manuscripts and literature survive, and I piece together a fuller

[386] Marshall had several best-selling novels in previous years. See, for instance, the NYT Best Seller List from 1950: http://www.hawes.com/1950/1950.htm.

picture of his life than of Liljencrantz's. I then explore how themes of race, gender, and civilization factor into *The Viking* and why they appear so different from their use in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. I end by discussing how Marshall tapped into and impacted the "Viking discourse"—what he unknowingly built upon from the nineteenth century and even Liljencrantz's fiction, what he added, and how his ideas appeared in the 1958 film *The Vikings*, had a part in shaping the American perception of the Vikings in the second half of the twentieth century.

Tessie

Edison Tesla Marshall was born in 1894 in Rensselaer, Indiana, to a schoolteacher named Lilly Bartoo and her husband George Marshall, who ran a local newspaper.[387] Similar to Liljencrantz, Marshall romanticized his family roots. He described his father as being "of Illinois frontier stock," and claimed that he could trace his mother's family to the early history of New England.[388] His ancestors were, in his own words, "a humble but virtuous breed with Scriptural first names that […] were more distinctive than foreign titles."[389] They fought Indians, served in every war, and were present at the "opening of every new frontier."[390] And like Liljencrantz's supposed Viking ancestry, this alleged pedigree lent Marshall some credibility in his mind to write adventure stories about the American frontier.

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[387] His parents named him after two of the most innovative scientific minds of the period, Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla.

[388] Indeed, he once argued that his ancestor, Col. Major Simon Williard, had founded the town of Concord, Massachusetts. Edison Marshall Sr. and Edison Marshall Jr., "Autobiography," 5, box 13, Edison Marshall Papers Mss. 280, Reese Library Archives, Augusta University; Martin Seymour-Smith and Andrew C. Klimmens, eds., *World Authors 1900–1950, Volume Three: Lee-Saintsbury*, Revised Edition (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1996), 1706. An explanation of this "autobiography" is needed. Before his death in 1967, Edison Marshall Sr. began to write an autobiography. This amounted to no more than around seven pages of disjointed musings about his life. His son, Edison Jr., however, finished this text by writing in his father's place. Very little of the autobiography, therefore, is trustworthy, as father and son appear to have had a troubled relationship, particularly in Edison Sr.'s final years. However, some of Edison Jr.'s comments provide some insight into the family dynamics or support claims from other sources. Whenever using this text, I endeavor to frame it as Edison Jr.'s opinion.

[389] Little, Brown and Company, *Edison Marshall: The Man and His Books* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, c. 1920).

[390] Little, Brown and Company, *Edison Marshall*; Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 5.

In 1907, George Marshall sold his newspaper and moved the family west to Medford, Oregon, where he had purchased a large orchard.[391] Unfortunately, the land never produced much, and Edison spent his childhood trying to stay out of "the cold wind of poverty."[392] He enrolled at the University of Oregon in 1913—the same year he published his first story in *Argosy* magazine. He left school briefly when he enlisted in the U.S. military at the onset of the First World War, serving for one year as a public relations officer at Camp Hancock, Georgia.[393] While there, Marshall met his future wife, Agnes Sharp Flythe. After the wedding, they returned to Oregon where he resumed writing.

Two of Marshall's earliest short stories gained critical attention. "The Elephant Remembers" (1919) received high praise and later appeared in many U.S. school textbooks, while "The Heart of Little Shikara" (1921) won him the prestigious O. Henry Award.[394] However, his career plateaued during the 1920s and 30s, a period when he published stories in magazines like *Good Housekeeping* and *Reader's Digest* that resulted in only modest earnings. He finally achieved some commercial success in the 1940s when his novel *Benjamin Blake* (1941) became a Literary Guild choice, and he sold the rights to Twentieth Century Fox for its 1942 production *Son of Fury*, starring Tyrone Power. Soon after, the U.S. military purchased Marshall's fictional biography of Captain John Smith, *Great Smith* (1943), to be mass-produced and included in the portable libraries sent to troops overseas during the Second World War.[395]

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[391] George Marshall was one of many Americans who moved west to cash in on the orchard boom of Southern Oregon during the early part of the century: "The Down Side of the Orchard Boom," *Southern Oregon History, Revised*, last updated September 7, 2018, http://truwe.sohs.org/files/orchardboom.html.

[392] Seymour-Smith and Klimmens, *World Authors*, 1706.

[393] Vicki Bryden, "Edison Marshall (1894–1967)," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/marshall_edison_1894_1967_/#.XjmDR1P7Qcg. Marshall served just for one year and never saw battle. In fact, his most violent encounter while in the military was supposedly being struck by lightning while inside his own tent.

[394] Bryden, "Edison Marshall (1894–1967)." Marshall would later declare that "The Elephant Remembers" was the most widely read short story of the century. Seymour-Smith and Klimmens, *World Authors*, 1706.

[395] Frederick Parks, "Edison Marshall: Indiana's Big Game Hunter," *The Indianapolis Star Magazine*, September 7, 1947, 7; John Jamieson, "Books and the Soldier," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1945): 329.

Around this time, Marshall moved his family—which now included his son Edison Jr. and daughter Nancy Silence—to Augusta, Georgia, near where Agnes had grown up. Using the money generated from *Benjamin Blake*, he purchased a mansion and christened it "Breetholm," a name taken from the novel.[396] Marshall quickly became a central figure in Augusta. He joined the local Elk and Mason lodges and would often entertain prominent guests either at his home or at "Seven Gables," an old hunting lodge located just across the state line in South Carolina that Marshall used as a retreat for him and his male companions.[397] He occasionally wrote for the local newspaper and was one of the earliest and most successful members of the Author's Club of Augusta.[398] Marshall had finally escaped the "cold wind of poverty," elevated himself to a higher tier of society, and looked to his literature as a means to maintain his well-to-do lifestyle.

One of Marshall's greatest passions was hunting. As a young boy, he would track rabbits on the Indiana prairie and deer in the woods of Oregon, but he "yearned to hunt tigers in India."[399] Inspired by his favorite adventures from childhood, the adult Marshall began travelling around the world to hunt, including grizzly bears in Alaska and leopards in Africa. Big game hunting would come to define him. These trips would serve as inspirations for his stories and novels, and his only work of non-fiction—*The Heart of the Hunter* (1956)—detailed some of his personal hunting experiences. Many of his biographies highlight his love of big game hunting, and some of his most circulated press photos are of him posing next to a dead leopard or tiger. More importantly, hunting became a part of almost every story he wrote, even the historical romances he penned in the autumn of his career.

Marshall had been teased in his youth, and his peers reportedly called him "sissy" and "Tessie." Marshall's son, Edison Jr., as well as journalist Frederick Parks, believed that these nicknames brought to Marshall's mind "all kinds of effeminate connotations" and spurred him on to pursue big game hunting as a means to create a manlier image.[400] Many American men from this period, including Theodore Roosevelt, discussed in chapter 1, took a similar path by hunting large

[396] Vicki Bryden, "Edison Marshall, 1894–1967," YouTube.com, filmed March 8, 2017, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6xVD-Rx4gA&t=34s, 34:00.

[397] Bryden, "Edison Marshall, 1894–1967," 26:25, 34:52.

[398] Tom Sutherland and Nancy Sutherland, "Starkey Flythe and the Authors," *Augusta: Richmond County History* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 6–8.

[399] Parks, "Edison Marshall," 7.

[400] Parks, "Edison Marshall," 7.

animals in order to overcome their perceived femininity and weakness.[401] In their study of the consumption of heroic masculine products in the post-war United States, Douglas B. Holt and Craig J. Thompson argue:

> the mythological cowboy (along with other historical contemporaneous masculine icons such as the adventurer and the big game hunter) exemplified masculine ideals that appeared to be under threat as middle-class men assumed the mantle of a more domesticated bread-winner: rugged individualism, an adventurous spirit, risk-taking, displays of physical prowess, and most of all, a high degree of personal autonomy.[402]

Marshall, like Roosevelt, appears to have had a reciprocal relationship with adventure: both men were concerned with their masculine image, reenacted adventure stories by venturing to frontiers, jungles, and forests, and then wrote about these adventures. And both men enjoyed big game hunting—an activity also tied to Daniel Boone, who reportedly killed 155 bears in a three-week period and once killed eleven in one morning before breakfast.[403] Other aspects of Marshall's personal life also reflect the Boone/Bumppo narrative. He chose to live in Augusta rather than the literary centers of New York or Los Angeles in part to be closer to nature.[404] He also oscillated between the "wilderness" of his hunting excursions and the "civilization" of his high-class parties at Breetholm. Yet, the impact of the cultural shift described in chapter 1 is apparent in Marshall's life. Tapping into the idea of "primitive masculinity," he claimed that his wife's "civilized" nature was necessary for taming his wild spirit: "I did not know enough about civilized settings to employ them well—I was still an unbelievable rustic, in spite of marrying a civilized girl."[405] Furthermore, rumors circulated throughout Augusta about Marshall's extra-marital affairs with other women.[406] Whether or not these rumors

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[401] R. W. Connell, "The History of Masculinity," in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, eds. Rachel Adams and David Savran, reprinted from *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 252.

[402] Douglas B. Holt and Craig J. Thompson, "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 2 (September 2004): 425–426.

[403] John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 271.

[404] Sutherland and Sutherland, "Starkey Flythe and the Authors," 9.

[405] Seymour-Smith and Klimmens, *World Authors*, 1706.

[406] Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 106–241. Edison Jr. claimed his father had numerous affairs, including some with extremely young women and even one

were true, they probably added to the masculine reputation Marshall was trying to create.

These aspects of Marshall's personal life filtered into his literature. Many characters are skilled hunters who appear to be escaping the threat of civilization. They typically have sexual affairs or rendezvous with the female characters, which often fit into one of two roles: tools of civilization or objects of sexual conquest. It is difficult to draw a line between characteristic adventure elements and Marshall's personal perspective because he lived much of his life *as* an adventure. Regardless, the frequency in which these ideas appear in his novels are indicative of the author's habit of recycling motifs.

Endogamy in the Deep South

Marshall lived in Augusta during the Jim Crow era of the Southern United States, and the uneasy and often-violent dynamic between the segregated Black and white races seems to have intrigued and troubled him.[407] Race factors into several of his stories and novels, such as *The Far Call* (1928), *The Light in the Jungle* (1933), and *Castle in the Swamp* (1948), each of which contains racial slurs that are used as historicizing details. *Castle in the Swamp*, for instance, is set on a plantation, and the slave masters use derogatory language toward their Black slaves.[408] In the late 1940s, Marshall wrote a novel titled *Jim Crow* that explores the fraught relationship between races in the South. The story tells of an illicit love affair between a white female and her family's Black male servant—a common theme at the time.[409]

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allegedly occurring during Edison's honeymoon with Agnes. Several journalists and people who knew the family in Augusta confirmed that these rumors existed and were more than likely true.

[407] Jim Crow is the name given for the laws of racial segregation that were forced on the Black population in the Southern United States, c. 1877–1965.

[408] Modern-day readers have debated the necessity of such language. Some excuse the racial slurs as being a part of the cultural landscape and language of the South during Marshall's lifetime, while others write off the racist terms because of the stories' time period and the setting. See especially reviews of *The Light in the Jungle* (1933), *The Far Call* (1928), *The Sleeper of the Moonlit Ranges* (1928), *Castle in the Swamp* (1948), and *Diane of the Lost Land* (1935) on Goodreads.com. Reviewers on Amazon.com similarly found racist content in *Yankee Pascha* (1947).

[409] For a list of mid-century pulp fiction on this topic and the colorful cover art, see "Black and White in Color: Mid-Century Paperback Art and the Race to Judgment," Pulp International, November 25, 2015,

Marshall's publishers at Farrar, Straus, & Co. were reluctant to put out the book. In one memo, an editor acknowledged that the story and the characters were well constructed, but there were some glaring issues:

> My only reservation is that, although the author seems sympathetic to the Negro, the main part of the story has to do with the usual retort used by most narrow-minded persons in discussing this problem, namely "Would you like your daughter, sister, etc., to marry a Negro." His conclusion is not a hopeful one, and there is no solution to the problem, although the book makes you feel that he thinks some improvement is possible.[410]

Another executive at the publishing house argued that the novel "does nothing but add fuel to already flaming fire" and that "it is hard to believe that the author has ever really listened to the speech of Negroes."[411]

Farrar, Straus, & Co. ultimately decided against printing the novel, so Marshall took the manuscript to Pyramid Books, where he published it under the pseudonym Walton Fairbanks. It was published in paperback in 1953 under the title *Houseboy*. Wini Breines takes *Houseboy* and Adam Rebel's *Stable Boy* (1954) as examples of how popular it was at the time to write controversial racial topics, such as the white female desire for Black men:

> *Houseboy* is about a young white girl who gives herself to a black 'house-boy,' is fascinated and 'strangely excited' by him, but feels that her passion makes her so 'bad' that she kills herself. Both [*Houseboy and Stable Boy*] take place in the South; the women are very white and are tormented or killed by their desire; the men too are destroyed. These pulp novels confront heterosexual racial themes that retrospective accounts explore more gingerly […] the women know

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https://www.pulpinternational.com/pulp/entry/A-collection-of-vintage-paperback-cover-with-black-white-interracial-focus.html.

[410] AHK to JK, August 6, 1948, box 803, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

[411] PJ to JK, August 2, 1948, box 803, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

> they are breaking taboos but cannot help themselves. They always pay (as do the men).[412]

Through *Houseboy*, Marshall appeals to a specifically Southern anxiety about miscegenation—an issue that many have argued was a primary reason for segregation in the South.[413] Marshall's use of a pseudonym may have been a means to get around legal problems with Farrar, Straus, & Co. or to distance himself from the controversial topic[414] Indeed, many writers in this genre, such as Tom Roan (Adam Rebel), author of *Stableboy*, also used pseudonyms when writing about interracial love affairs and miscegenation.

Marshall also wrote several articles and editorials in local Augusta newspapers during the 1930s and 40s about the relationship between whites and Blacks in the South. These writings indicate that Marshall believed that segregation was both natural and beneficial. For instance, in a 1940 article titled "Georgia Servants Are the Best," he boasted: "The south has more gracious living than anywhere else in the world, and Negro servants are the prime factor in our pleasant southern way of life."[415] His views on race are even more explicit in an unpublished and undated article titled "Augusta, Georgia, and Endogamy in the Deep South," which serves to highlight the uniqueness of Augusta. Marshall had engaged in this type of tourism-boosting before, writing articles that emphasized the local fishing and wildlife of the area in order to attract visitors. This piece, however, calls attention to the "pleasant" relationship between races that exists there:

> white men in all walks of life 'sir' one another punctiliously; for most inquiries and requests, the address is 'please sir.' Colored people are scrupulously courteous not only to white people—vastly more often than Northerners know it springs from the heart—but with one another.[416]

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[412] Wini Breines, "Postwar White Girls' Dark Others," in *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons*, ed. Joel Foreman (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 64. *Stable Boy* (1954) told a similar story of interracial romance.

[413] Nikki L. M. Brown and Barry M. Stentiford, eds., *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia*, Volumes 1–2 (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2008), 526.

[414] "Houseboy," Grapefruit Moon Gallery, accessed June 17, 2022, https://grapefruitmoongallery.com/44315.

[415] "Georgia Servants Are the Best," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 21, 1940.

[416] Edison Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia, and Endogamy in the Deep South," 3, box 7, Edison Marshall Papers, Mss. 280, Reese Library Archives, Augusta University.

Marshall believes that other Southern cities had failed to reconcile their past of racism and slavery, resulting in a loss of grandeur and charm. He argues that for Augusta to avoid a similar fate, it must look to the future of the "white man's relations with his black brother."[417] He clearly detests outright racism, especially physical violence, and criticizes those in the South that adhere to a racial superiority "akin to Hitler's" which is an "unscientific if not sacrilegious excuse for segregation."[418] While this stance may seem empathetic, it is the reasoning behind segregation with which Marshall has an issue, not racial segregation itself. He writes:

> I do not believe that civilized people could be so long and completely united on say one undertaking unless it were rooted in fundamental need. Jim Crow laws reflect the ideals of the white South *plus* its common sense, its sober judgment arrived at by experience.[419]

In Marshall's mind, segregation works to the advantage of members of each race. He believes his Black neighbors in Augusta thrive under the "Southern system." They own businesses, have steady jobs, and enjoy plenty of leisure activities; more importantly, however,

> they obey the rules and stay out of trouble with the law. They do have to 'stay in their place.' Despite its mouthing by ignoramuses and bigots, this expression has a positive meaning that every intelligent white man and Negro understands, and which must be understood by every student of Negro problems. It means the place that the at-present dominate white race has appointed them. It means segregation – obeying the white man's rules.[420]

Marshall ends his article by arguing that segregation is "the most practical and most merciful method by which a dominant tribe may protect its tribal integrity and peculiar civilization from an adjacent, diverse tribe."[421] According to him, only when African Americans shed their "tribal mores" and adopt white, Western culture can they achieve equal status. Echoing the discourse about the "white man's burden" of the nineteenth century, he sees it as the duty of the white Southerner to provide

[417] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 5.
[418] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 10.
[419] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 10.
[420] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 8.
[421] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 12.

their African American brothers with "all the education that they can take" in order to speed up their assimilation into white, "civilized" society.[422]

While this article suggests that Marshall viewed white culture as superior to Black culture, it should be noted that he never published it. Nevertheless, the prejudice in it clarifies race dynamics in Marshall's literature. Only a handful of his books explicitly target the relationship between Anglo- and Black Americans, but his approach to racial others—whether they are indigenous peoples in a jungle, native guides on a tiger hunt, or, as we shall see, a Sámi servant during the Viking Age—is shaped by this experience in the South. Regardless of where they are in the world or what color their skin is, Marshall tends to employ an empathetic yet condescending attitude. The main white characters are almost always superior in some way to the people of color they encounter—and this is also the case in his fictional Viking Age.

The Two Big Prizes

Despite his early literary merits, Marshall had found his niche as a "popular" fiction writer who did not garner the same respect as some of the more critically acclaimed adventure writers of his time, such as Jack London.[423] His short stories were published in pulp magazines alongside westerns and hard-boiled detective tales, which have historically been considered lower literary forms.[424] In a study undertaken in the late 1950s by Robert Underbrink and Lester Asheim, Marshall's writing was deemed to be of "dubious quality."[425] But this criticism did not seem to bother Marshall. In an interview in *Grit* magazine in 1965, just two years before his death, he claimed that throughout his entire career he had sought after the "two big

[422] Marshall, "Augusta, Georgia," 14.

[423] Bruce Eder, "Edison Marshall Biography," Fandango, https://www.fandango.com/people/edison-marshall-427012/biography.

[424] Jopi Nyman, *Men Alone: Masculinity, Individualism and Hard-Boiled Fiction* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997), 16–20; Elizabeth G. Traube, "'The Popular' in American Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 131–132. "Pulp" fiction magazines got this name because of the cheap wood-pulp paper on which they were printed.

[425] Lester Asheim and Robert Underbrink, "A Hard Look at Soft Covers," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 28, no. 1 (Jan. 1958): 22.

prizes": fame and fortune.[426] He explained that he had achieved both during his lifetime by writing exciting stories—and by writing a lot of them.[427]

Marshall used mass-market techniques and recycled motifs to keep his readers engaged, and, by the 1950s, his writing had become noticeably formulaic and predictable. Critics like Eric Allen Jr. at the *Medford Mail Tribune* accused Marshall of carelessly repeating himself in different novels: "The locales are different but the characters and events have a strange similarity."[428] Allen Jr. additionally charges Marshall of plagiarism in his romance about Marco Polo, *Caravan of Xanadu* (1953), which appears to have taken material directly from Thomas Costain's *The Black Rose* (1945).[429]

Three motifs appear in most of Marshall's historical romances written from the late 1940s into the 1960s: hunting, sex, and a male rivalry. Similar to how hunting functioned in his own life, Marshall uses this activity as a means to prove a male character's manhood—a common theme in adventure stories and popular fiction targeted toward young males.[430] Graphic sexual encounters, sexual violence, and sexual tension between an adult male and underage female also appear in many of Marshall's novels in this period, including *The Viking, Benjamin Blake, Yankee Pascha* (1947), *The Bengal Tiger/Rogue Gentleman* (1952), *American Captain* (1954) and *West with the Vikings* (1961). In a 1951 letter to John Beecroft of the Literary Guild, publisher Roger Straus Jr. voices his anticipation for Marshall's forthcoming novel *The Viking*: "I think the book will sell like hell and not this time on the sex level, but on the straight story level."[431] This statement reveals the

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[426] Betsy Fancer, "Edison Marshall, Great Story Teller," *Grit*, May 23, 1965. Quoted in Bryden, "Edison Marshall, 1894–1967," 5:18.

[427] Paul Hemphill, "I have not regretted one minute," *Augusta Chronicle Herald*, September 6, 1963.

[428] Eric Allen, Jr., "New Edison Marshall Novel Story of Young Marco Polo," *Medford Mail Tribune*, May 8, 1953.

[429] Allen, Jr., "New Edison Marshall Novel." This could very well have been the result of Marshall's ignorance, as he boasted that he read only poetry and biographies, suggesting that reading fiction might sully or corrupt his own work. Seymour-Smith and Klimmens, *World Authors*, 1706; Byrden, "Edison Marshall, 1894–1967," 39:15.

[430] Marilyn C. Wesley, *Violent Adventure: Contemporary Fiction by American Men* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 56.

[431] Roger W. Straus, Jr., to John Beecroft, May 23, 1951, box 803, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

important role sex generally played in Marshall's writing, as well as in the marketing for his books. *Great Smith*, for instance, had been included in the WWII portable libraries *because* of its sexual content. In his study of soldier's libraries, John Jamieson explains: "the principal favorites are novels that deal frankly with sexual relations (regardless of tone, literary merit and point of view, no matter whether the book is serious or humorous, romantically exciting or drably pedestrian)."[432] Marshall's use of this tactic in *The Viking* was noticed by at least one critic who wrote: "It is a rewarding story made better by the sex."[433]

The male rivalry is perhaps Marshall's most conspicuous recycled motifs. Two males, usually relatives—father and son (*Caravan to Xanadu*), half-brothers (*The Vikings, West with the Vikings, The Pagan King*) or cousins (*Castle in the Swamp*)—engage in a life-long competition, attempting to win some sort of power over the other. Typically, the protagonist has suffered at the hands of the antagonist and tries to establish himself as a worthy rival. In several novels, such as Marshall's take on the Arthurian legend, *The Pagan King* and his version of the Vinland story, *West with the Vikings*, these characters often have the opportunity to kill or harm each other but refrain because they value the rivalry. In fact, they may assist one another until the end when they engage in a final duel, as seen in *Castle in the Swamp* and *The Viking*.

The reliance upon these motifs highlights two important facts for this study. Firstly, as already noted, Marshall tended to recycle ideas and even his own writing. His two Viking novels demonstrate some level of research, but for the most part he constructed his fictional Viking Age out of elements taken from the general "Viking discourse," as well as tried and trusted pulp fiction motifs, such as explicit sexual episodes. Secondly, Marshall clearly adheres to the masculine ideal that emerged in the twentieth-century United States. Indeed, Michael Herzfeld's definition of masculinity reflects Marshall's writing: "stressing domination of women, competition between men, aggressive display, predatory sexuality and a double

[432] Jamieson, "Books and Soldiers," 331. David Abrams describes Captain Smith as a "colonial porn star." David Abrams, "Paperback Flashback: *The Great Smith*," The Quivering Pen, June 30, 2011, http://davidabramsbooks.blogspot.com/2011/06/paperback-flashback-great-smith-by.html.

[433] Charles Collins, "Tall, Rewarding Tale of Furious Vikings," review of *The Viking*, by Edison Marshall, *The Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 1951.

standard."[434] The Victorian values in American adventure had not completely disappeared by Marshall's time, but they were no longer the standard in the genre. Manhood in *The Viking* reflects cultural norms and ideals from after the cultural shift, creating a very different picture of the Viking Age to the one found in Liljencrantz's fiction.

While criticism of Marshall's writing is merited, he was nevertheless developing a successful formula. His novels sold extremely well, and, by the 1950s, he had achieved his goal of finding fame and fortune. That decade was particularly kind to him. He published almost one book per year, and three Hollywood films were released based on his stories: *The Treasure of the Golden Condor* (1953), a re-make of *Son of Fury*; *Yankee Pasha* (1954), based on the 1947 novel of the same name; and *The Vikings* (1958) based on *The Viking* (1951). The success of the 1958 film has overshadowed most of Marshall's work so that today he is best remembered as the author who wrote the book that inspired the most recognizable Viking film of the twentieth century.

The Viking

The Viking was Marshall's twentieth published novel.[435] Publishers Farrar, Straus and Young viewed it as a monetary success, despite the fact that it did not sell as well as the author's earlier works.[436] According to Edison Jr., his father considered it to be the greatest book of his career.[437] Many critics disagreed, and one reviewer complained that it read like "a schoolboy's translation of 'Beowulf.'"[438] Several found *The Viking* less appealing than Marshall's earlier adventures and felt that his talents were waning.[439] *New York Times* critic John Cournos was astonished that an

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[434] Michael Herzfield, *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Quoted in Connell, *Masculinities*, 31

[435] The number of books Edison Marshall published has been debated, so this is an approximate estimation.

[436] Henry E. Coe to Edison Marshall, October 10, 1951; Roger W. Straus, Jr., to Edison Marshall, March 28, 1952, box 232-233, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

[437] Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 781.

[438] Frank Little, "Novel Shows Clash of Faiths in Modern and Medieval Periods," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 28, 1951.

[439] John Falcon, review of *The Viking*, *The Saturday Review*, November 24, 1951, 33.

author of his caliber could produce "so dull and labored an effort as this."[440] Indeed, *The Viking* at times reads like a compilation of some of his other works. The plot mirrors that of *The Pagan King*, and he recycles many of the relationships and characters again in *West with the Vikings*.

The Viking features many of Marshall's characteristic writing habits, and it is these—and not the inspiration of Old Norse literature—that dominates how he presents the Vikings in the novel. Marshall did not keep a record of the sources he consulted while writing *The Viking*, nor does the novel contain any historical notes revealing where he drew inspiration. According to Edison Jr., his father wrote to the Library of Congress and requested any material they may have had on the Vikings, but no evidence exists to support this claim.[441] However, we can be sure of at least one source and a possible second. *The Viking* is loosely based the plot of *Ragnar saga loðbrókar*, so it can be assumed that Marshall had a copy of this legendary saga—quite possibly Margaret Schlauch's translation, which had been reprinted in 1949.[442] The saga features a fearsome warrior named Ragnar, who raids England, fathers several sons, and meets his death at the court of King Aella of Northumbria. It also contains several fantastic elements, such as a giant serpent that guards a tower of Ragnar's first lover, Thora. As Ragnar dies in a pit of snakes, he delivers a colorful and wonderfully composed poem, *Krákumál*, which tells of his greatest deeds. *The Viking* retains several names and storylines from the saga, but Marshall omits the magic, fantasy, and poetry.

Other details suggest that Marshall may have also turned to the first-century work *Germania* by Tacitus as a source. The Roman historian idealizes the Germanic people, painting them as "freedom-loving but savage natives" who take what they want and who battle fiercely against the imperialism of Rome.[443] As will be shown

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[440] John Cournos, "Sea Rover," review of *The Viking* by Edison Marshall, *The New York Times*, October 21, 1951. *West with the Vikings* (1961) received similar criticism. See, for instance, Henry Cavendish, Grandiose Tapestry of Adventure and Passion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 22, 1961.

[441] Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 779. Librarian Patrick Kerwin was neither able to find any records of this letter, nor of any books being checked out to Edison Marshall around this time period.

[442] Donald K. Fry, *Norse Sagas Translated into English: A Bibliography* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 80.

[443] Martha Malamud, "Tacitus and the twentieth-century novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, ed. A. J. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 300.

below, Marshall borrows this dynamic, positioning the Vikings as a dying breed of "free" people who wage war against their ancient enemy—Rome. In the novel, the Vikings bang their shields and shout to Odin in a form of worship. Tacitus mentions this phenomenon in the third chapter of his book. He also remarks that the Germanic women could be seen shamelessly "thrusting forth their bare bosoms."[444] As the main character of *The Viking*, Ogier makes a daring escape from pursuing Vikings, his love interest, Morgana, does precisely this. However, this scene could also possibly be a reference to a passage in *Grœnlendinga saga* in which Freydis, Leif's sister, bares her chest and beats it with a sword in order to frighten off the natives of Vinland.[445] Furthermore, the reception of Tacitus, particularly in the nineteenth century, had an anti-Christian element—something that also appears in *The Viking* and will be discussed in more detail below.[446]

A more significant clue suggesting that Marshall used *Germania* as one of his main sources is when the main character Ogier tells the Welsh princess Morgana about the Norse goddess Freya.[447] He explains that Freya lives in a tower on an isolated island. Several slaves visit her, gather water from a nearby river and boil it in a giant kettle. Afterwards they bathe the goddess, and she sleeps with them and subsequently kills them. These details are not found in Old Norse mythology but

[444] Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, trans. H. Mattingly. Translation revised by S. A. Handford (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), 108.

[445] It is unclear when exactly Marshall became familiar with the Vinland sagas. Unlike *The Viking*, Marshall's retelling of the Vinland story in *West with the Vikings* contains some historical notes. He credits several associates of the University of Miami, such as J. Riis Owre, Dr. Jose Balseiro, and Dr. Carlos P. Lamar for inspiring him to research and write this novel. Edison Jr. enrolled at the University of Miami in 1947, which appears to have brought his father into contact with these men. While Owre and Balseiro held the university positions mentioned in this note prior to when Edison Jr. started there, Dr. Lamar did not hold an official title at the university until 1954, suggesting that Edison Sr.'s interest in and knowledge of Vinland did not come until after he published *The Viking*. I want to thank archivist Nicholas Grant Iwanicki for helping me pin down the dates of these professors' careers.

[446] Martin A. Ruehl, "German Horror Stories: Teutomania and the Ghosts of Tacitus," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 157.

[447] Marshall, *The Viking*, 114, 169. Marshall actually repeats this myth later on in the novel. For the remainder of this chapter, I will use the page numbers in text whenever quoting from the novel.

appear to be an adaptation of a myth about the goddess Nerthus as described by Tacitus.[448]

Marshall was not the first to use early Roman accounts as inspiration for a work of fiction about the Viking Age. An early example is Paul du Chaillu's 1893 novel, *Ivar the Viking: A Romantic History Based Upon Authentic Facts of the Third and Fourth Centuries*. Du Chaillu, yet another author Liljencrantz acknowledges at the beginning of *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, believed that the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes that migrated to Britain in the fifth century were Nordic rather than Germanic, suggesting that the English people of the nineteenth century should refer to themselves as Norse rather than Anglo-Saxon.[449]

Marshall does not appear to have put quite as much thought into his Roman resources as du Chaillu, who was in fact an academic—though a disgraced one.[450] According to his son, Marshall relied mostly on his own ingenuity in constructing the Vikings in his book. Edison Jr. claims that his father questioned: "Was this not the opportunity that I have always wanted? To write on a subject which required little research and I would be the self appointed minstrel to sing of their great

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[448] Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, 134–135. Thank you to Felix Lummer for helping me locate this "myth" in *Germania*. Peter Orton has pointed out that many scholars believe there was a close association between Nerthus and the Old Norse god Njörðr, the father of Freyr and Freyja. Peter Orton, "Pagan Myth and Religion," in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 304.

[449] Paul du Chaillu, *Ivar the Viking: A Romantic History Based Upon Authentic Facts of the Third and Fourth Centuries* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), x; Daniel Kilham Dodge, "Scandinavian Antiquity: Review of *The Viking Age* by Paul du Chaillu," *Modern Language Notes* 6, no. 2 (Feb. 1891): 55.

[450] Paul du Chaillu spent time Gabon as an amateur "observer," collecting different species of plants and animals for the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia. In 1861, he published his observations in *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*. Critics questioned the "facts" that appeared in the book, and Stuart McCook admits, "Du Chaillu had clearly faked parts of his book or allowed them to be faked." Du Chaillu was not the only amateur producing pseudo-scientific work at this time, but the issues with his book underlined some of the major problems with this structure and actually caused nineteenth-century scientists to disallow amateurs from going into the field on behalf of the scientists. After he was ostracized from the scientific community, du Chaillu decided to write a comprehensive history of medieval Scandinavia, *The Viking Age*, which was published in two volumes in 1889. Stuart McCook, "'It May Be Truth but It Is Not Evidence': Paul du Chaillu and the Legitimation of Evidence in the Field Sciences," *Osiris* 11, Science in the Field (1996): 178–190.

deeds."[451] While this quote cannot be verified, it seems to capture Edison Marshall's outlook on the Vikings. He pieced together stereotypes inspired by a first-century work with some saga material but presented them in his own adventurous style that included sexual encounters, a male rivalry, and hunting. And these motifs would have a considerable impact on how many middle-class Americans pictured the Vikings for decades to come.

A Viking Adventure

At its core, *The Viking* is a captivity narrative. It tells the story of Ogier, who, like Eliza Winkfield, is the product of two different cultures. His mother is Queen Enid of Northumbria, a "civilized" and royal English woman. His father is the uncivilized, barbaric Viking Ragnar. Because Ogier is the result of Ragnar's rape of the queen, his mother sends him into hiding. He is kidnapped by a group of Vikings, made a slave, and purchased by his own father, who does not recognize him. Ogier grows up among this "uncivilized" group of people and becomes *like* them, even adopting Odin as his main deity.

Marshall inserts into his work a hierarchy of civilization not unlike the one found in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*. The English bard Alan keeps a running commentary that reinforces these ideas. Like Tacitus, Alan romanticizes the "barbarian" Vikings. He becomes disenchanted with the English court and leaves Northumbria to join Ogier. He says: "no Northman has any real idea of evil. He's not civilized enough—he is stupidly loyal to his own kind, and what he thinks is his Fate" (315), and "The Northmen aren't civilized enough to use poison. In fact, I've never known them to kill by treachery" (325). There is, according to Alan's comments, something barbaric and yet honorable in the Viking way of life.

The story begins during a hunting expedition, bringing one of Marshall's familiar motifs to the forefront. While out hawking, Ogier has a hunting falcon attack Ragnar's son, Hasting. This act sets in motion the male rivalry—another of Marshall's recycled motifs—that will continue through the novel. Despite their mutual hatred, Ogier and Hasting help each other several times, waiting for the right time to settle their personal animosity. Ragnar underlines this relationship when he tells Ogier: "Hasting honors you with his hate" (160). Ragnar sentences Ogier to death for the attack on Hasting, but the slave survives and enters the service of an English exile named Lord Egbert who has been living in Ragnar's camp.

[451] Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 779.

Marshall's third motif, sex, is introduced when Ragnar and Hasting kidnap Princess Morgana. The Vikings hope to receive a ransom from her betrothed, King Aella of Northumbria, the son of Queen Enid and half-brother of Ogier.[452] When he sees the princess, Ogier falls in love with her and decides to help her, thus taking the place of the solitary hunter who rescues a helpless white woman and leads her through the "wilderness" to safety. He seeks the help of a Laplander woman named Kitti, her nephew Kuola, and a deaf and mute man of Moorish origin named Sandpiper to free Morgana and her serving woman, Bertha.[453] Ogier plans to deliver the princess to King Aella, but while sailing to England, he and Morgana fall in love. The two struggle in reconciling their class and religious differences—he is a pagan slave and she is a Christian princess. However, they cannot control their passions and become lovers. During one stop on the coast, Morgana and Ogier bathe each other and engage in sexual intercourse:

> Her new-ripe breasts were formed to fit a little princess, the loveliest in the world I knew, but as I clumsily spread the cloth, they burst out like a hoyden's boobies in my greedy hands […] When my rash hands went searching deep within her smock, past the arch of her ribs and down her belly, touching at last its first silken joining with her thigh, her modesty made war with her breathless joy. (141–142)

This explicit scene stands in stark contrast to the occasional kiss Alwin and Helga exchange in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*.

The Vikings have problems sailing through the dense fog that sits between Denmark and England. Sandpiper reveals that he owns a mysterious metallic fish on a string that works as rudimentary compass, which allows Ogier's vessel to navigate through the fog. During their escape, Ogier captures his former master, Ragnar. He decides to hand the Viking over to King Aella in exchange for Morgana. Aella—

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[452] Aella, the King of Northumbria, appears in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a man "not of royal birth," who was killed by Vikings around the year 867. Alan Lupack, "Valiant and Villainous Vikings," in *The Vikings on Film*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 46; G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972) 68–69.

[453] Laplander is the term that Marshall uses for these characters that are presumably Sámi. For more on the "othering" of this cultural group, see Linda Andersson Burnett, "Translating Swedish Colonization: Johannes Schefferus's *Lapponia* in Britain, c. 1674–1800," *Scandinavian Studies* 91, no. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2019): 134–162.

who wants Ragnar dead, both for raiding in Northumbria for years and for the rape of Queen Enid—agrees to these terms. He sentences Ragnar to death, and Ogier pushes his father into a shallow pool of stingrays. But the king then goes back on his word and cuts off Ogier's hand instead of handing over the princess. Ogier returns to Denmark and solicits the help of his rival, Hasting, to invade Northumbria. Once there, Ogier kills Aella in single combat, then turns to face Hasting at last, killing him as well. Subsequently, it is revealed that Ogier is the son of Ragnar and Enid and that he has killed his father and two half-brothers.

While the revelation of Ogier's royal background solves the class difference between him and Morgana, the princess still refuses to marry a pagan and their irreconcilable religious beliefs hang over them. They decide to sail westward into unknown waters toward the mythical land of Avalon where they can live without adhering to social expectations. The novel ends with the English bard Alan explaining that when they reached Avalon, they discovered a presence of "reddish" men and plentiful animals, suggesting that the lovers ended up in North America. Hence, Marshall closes the narrative by tying the Vikings to the United States.

Marshall clearly relied heavily on the Boone/Bumppo narrative when writing *The Viking*. Ogier in particular has several of the hallmark adventure hero characteristics. While serving under Lord Egbert, Ogier explores the lonesome black forests on his own: "Both my body and brain were schooled in the dim, desperate silence […] I learned to stalk any kind of game on almost any ground, and find its hiding places in almost any cover. If it were too big for Egbert's hawks, not even a red-deer stag was safe from my Yew Falcon and her long claws" (38–39). Ogier becomes a skillful and solitary hunter—a hallmark trait of the early American adventure hero.[454] He also spends a lot of time on the ocean, which Cooper himself viewed as a type of frontier that had a "quality of boundlessness."[455] Lastly, Ogier does not belong in "civilized" England or in barbaric Denmark. Instead of settling in either place, Ogier flees to the mythological Avalon, which also reflects the liminal nature of the adventure hero that escapes from civilization.[456]

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[454] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3rd ed (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 49.

[455] R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 99.

[456] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through violence: the mythology of the American frontier, 1600–1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 279, 310–316.

As already discussed, male characters in adventures often turn to acts of violence such as hunting to prove their manliness. Martin Green explains where this idea originated:

> The mythical history of our kind of manhood […] begins with the German invaders of Rome, whose descendants became the knights of the Middle Ages (this is what nineteenth-century adventure writers, such as [Charles] Kingsley and [H. Rider] Haggard, taught). Medieval Europe's maleness was therefore class-based or caste-based and was associated mainly with war and hunting.[457]

Old Norse literature itself contains sparse details about Viking Age hunting methods, but it is typically presented as a leisure activity enjoyed by the royal court or the aristocracy.[458] Still, hunting was clearly an important part of how medieval Norse people got their food. The Gulathing law code, for instance, contains a few stipulations on acquiring permission to use hunting grounds and which animals could be hunted.[459] In *Finnboga saga* and *Vilmundar saga*, warriors test their courage and acquire a certain amount of prestige by hunting or fighting bears.[460] Both Liljencrantz and Marshall assume that these acts are connected to proving one's manhood. As discussed in chapter 2, Alwin in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* longs to kill a bear he and the Vikings encounter in Markland with the hopes of establishing his manliness in the sight of Leif Ericsson. Ogier, too, embarks on a bear hunt with several Vikings. While his intentions are to direct the beast to attack Ragnar, Ogier ends up killing the bear with a spear. Egbert responds: "Ogier is no

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[457] Martin Green, *The Adventurous Male: Chapters in the History of the White Male Mind* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 146–147.

[458] Lydia Carstens, "On the hunt in Old Norse sources," in *Hunting in northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old traditions and regional developments, continental sources and continental influences*, eds. Oliver Grimm and Ulrich Schmölcke. Papers presented at a workshop organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA). Shleswig, June 16–17, 2011 (Neumünster: Wachholts Verlag, 2013), 397–402.

[459] Sigmund Oehrl, "Hunting in the West Norwegian Gulathing Law," in *Hunting in northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old traditions and regional developments, continental sources and continental influences*, eds. Oliver Grimm and Ulrich Schmölcke. Papers presented at a workshop organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA). Shleswig, June 16–17, 2011 (Neumünster: Wachholts Verlag, 2013), 508.

[460] Sigmund Oehrl, "Bear hunting and its ideological context," 307; May Danielli, "Initiation Ceremonial in Norse Literature," *Folklore* 56, no. 2 (June 1945): 231.

longer my slave. The instant the spear left his hand, I set him free" (47). Through this act, Ogier gains his freedom; but earlier in the novel, a similar act of violence established his manhood in accordance with the typical American adventure story.

When Natty Bumppo kills his first Indian while out hunting in *The Deerslayer*, he is "witnessing his own birth" as a new *man*.[461] The dying native recognizes Natty's transformation into manhood and gives him a new name to mark the occasion: Hawkeye. David Leverenz argues that Natty's transformation into a hawk—a beautiful, soaring bird who is also capable of brutal violence—establishes a new myth of American manhood: "to be civilized and savage in one composite, self-divided transformation. The myth dramatizes a potential for downward mobility on the liminal frontier, to save manhood of upwardly mobile men in the settlements."[462] In *The Viking*, Ogier similarly receives the nickname "Gyrfalcon" after his violent attack on Hasting with his hunting hawk. He is sentenced to death but miraculously survives the ordeal: "instead of death-doomed, I was life-promised" (39). But not until he kills the bear does Ogier finally have the agency of a free *man*.

Like how Bumppo is born to white Christian parents but raised by indigenous Delaware, Ogier is raised by the Laplander Kitti. Throughout history, the "Laplanders"—the Sámi, or *Finnar* in Old Norse literature—have been discriminated against in the Nordic countries.[463] Hence, many Sámi characters appear in Old Norse sagas as sorcerers and villains and are, as Jeremy DeAngelo explains, often looked upon in suspicion and derision because of "their pastoralism, their opposition to the Norse, and their pagan sorcery," all of which stems from their living so far North—an area long associated with the supernatural.[464] In many ways, Marshall treats Kitti and her nephew Kuola much like Liljencrantz treats the Skraellings in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*: they occupy the bottom tier of the evolutionary hierarchy, and their racial differences are pointed out.

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[461] Lewis, *The American Adam*, 104–105.

[462] David Leverenz, "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bummpo to Batman," *American Literary History* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 760.

[463] Roger Kvist, "Swedish Saami policy, 1550–1990," in *Readings in Saami History, Culture, and Language III*, ed. Roger Kvist (Umeå: Center for Arctic Cultural Research, 1992), 69; Jeremy DeAngelo, "The North and the Depiction of the 'Finnar' in the Icelandic Sagas," *Scandinavian Studies* 82, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 258.

[464] DeAngelo, "The North and the Depiction of the 'Finnar,'" 270.

The *Finnar* are not typically noted for their skin color in saga literature, but Kitti's is emphasized throughout *The Viking*. Ragnar complains early on that Kitti is "an old, yellow reindeer-herder of scant wit" (15–16). Ogier refers to her as "yellow woman," "yellow Lap," and once, "yellow bitch-hound from Hel" (291). A Viking using derogatory language toward the Sámi has the ring of authenticity, as the sagas contain insults of a similar nature. However, the application of skin color as a defining characteristic appears to be an anachronism from twentieth-century America.

Possibly, Marshall is channeling his experience in the segregated South by using race to depict inferiority. Indeed, one can find in the novel the same curiosity about racial and sexual taboos that he explored earlier in *Houseboy*. While enroute to England, Ogier wonders why Kuola and Morgana's serving woman, Bertha, do not become lovers: "The main obstacle seemed to be that he was yellow-skinned and black-eyed while she was white as snow and blue-eyed. I wondered what difference that made, out here on the barren sea" (183). This observation presupposes that this relationship would not be socially acceptable but could possibly pass without criticism while the characters are away from "civilization."

As mentioned above, Morgana resembles the stereotype of the helpless female in early American adventures. Like Helga, she is passed from male to male who ultimately decide her fate. However, instead of assuming the role of nurturer and helper like Helga, Morgana primarily serves as an object of desire for Ogier, whose instincts are to rape her. After he performs the "knightly deed" of rescuing her from captivity, Ogier believes that he "deserves […] to bed Morgana" (167). She tells him at one point that she views him more as a father figure than a potential lover, but Ogier responds: "Then can I kiss you as much as I please?" (126) When Morgana offends him by refusing his advances, he threatens her: "I ought to hit you in the mouth" (119).

Morgana eventually falls in love with Ogier, but he continues to be threatening. Janice A. Radway points out that this demonstration of power over a female is one of the hallmarks of popular romance:

> Romance, which is never simply a love story, is also an exploration of the meaning of patriarchy for women. As a result it is concerned with

> the fact that men possess and regularly exercise power over them in all sorts of circumstances.[465]

Furthermore, Ogier also threatens Kitti, his surrogate mother, with violence: "Do as I bid you, or I'll cut off the breast I lay on, with my sword" (293). Although Ogier never rapes Morgana or mutilates Kitti, this attitude is emblematic of Marshall's view of the gendered nature of the Viking Age.

A Deathless Hate

The relationship between the pagan Ogier and Christian Morgana is representative of how Marshall treats gender in *The Viking*. Each of the prominent white women of the novel—Morgana, Lady Enid, Bertha (Morgana's servant), and Judith (Ragnar's first wife)—is Christian and comes from a "civilized" country or province, such as Wales, England, and Saxony.[466] Furthermore, each of these women is subject to some form of sexual or physical assault, (threats of) sexual violence, or structural violence. They are framed as weak and suffer at the hands of men.

Most of the major white male characters in the novel are heathen Vikings. The primary exceptions are Lord Egbert and King Aella. Throughout the novel, Egbert tries to distance himself from Christianity, claiming to be "only a skin-deep Christian" (13) who dislikes the priests "Amen-ing like bleating sheep" (50). When Ragnar and his band of Vikings debate Ogier's fate in the wake of his attack on Hasting, Egbert wants to ask for mercy for the slave but is afraid to be perceived as weak by the other Vikings. He asks Ragnar instead to consider what Judith would have wanted: "Before Judith could get to Heaven, she had to be purged of all base passions, such as revenge. She'd look down and weep at Hasting's hurts, but would want you to show mercy to his hurter, for mercy's a thing they set much store by, up in Heaven" (18). Egbert saves face with the Vikings by asking for leniency in the name of a female. The Christian king Aella, on the other hand, is portrayed as being rather effeminate. During their duel, Ogier says the king: "would make a poor bedmate for any lusty lass," and "if this were a bed instead of a battle ground, and he was a maiden lying there with outstretched arms, I would know that her only itch was in her palm" (328).

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[465] Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 75.

[466] The two outliers are Meera, who is Jewish, and Kitti the Laplander. The reader never encounters a female pagan from Scandinavia.

A distinct binary develops throughout the novel, with masculine paganism on one end and weak, effeminate Christianity on the other. Marshall may have been influenced by the discourse over the gendered nature of Christianity described in chapter 2, but it seems that this type of binary division had been a part of his worldview from childhood. In the final pages of his autobiography written in his own hand—before Edison Jr. took over—he describes growing up in Rensselaer, Indiana: "The hunting and the fishing was wonderful, for us boys. The girls had their ancient occupations such as sewing, churchwork, and games."[467]

This association of the Church and femininity also appears in in *West with the Vikings*. Perhaps influenced by the passage in *Eiríks saga rauða* in which Erik's wife refuses to sleep with him when he rejects Christ, Marshall writes: "The few great folk who had renounced Odin were usually women."[468] In the novel, Leif Eriksson has an uncertain status in Marshall's gendered binary. A family servant explains to him that his father, Erik, "scorns what he calls the weak side of you that you took from your mother. The side that came out when you put the splint on an old ewe's broke leg instead of slaughter her as Eric bade you."[469] Leif responds: "That weakness you spoke of, that I sucked in with my mother's milk, would keep me from being a good Viking."[470] Leif later complains: "I was neither heathen nor Christian, perhaps because I had inherited too much from Eric the Red to follow gentle Kris [Christ], and too much from lovely Thorhild to be a whole-souled heathen."[471] Whereas in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, the Vikings are expected to adopt Christianity, Marshall suggests that being a Viking and being a Christian are incompatible.

Throughout both novels, but particularly in *The Viking*, the Norse foster a true hatred for Christianity and value killing Christians above glory or treasure.[472]

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[467] Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 9.

[468] Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 222.

[469] Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 12.

[470] Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 12.

[471] Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 153.

[472] Some comments suggest that Marshall is simply pointing out some of the hypocrisy found in medieval Christianity. For instance, in *The Viking*, Bertha remarks that "only last year an illustrious prince of the oldest house in Europe sold his little daughter of nine to a chattering madman for a mere courtship" (166). This story is repeated in *West with the Vikings*. Leif hears rumors that Christians "arrange all marriages of their sons and daughters, to their own advantage. It is said that a princess only ten years old was married to a half-mad gaffer of seventy."

Hasting makes this sound natural, arguing that Vikings "kill Christian priests as a dog kills cats" (261). At one point Ragnar proudly refers to himself as "the greatest Christian-killer since Attila the Hun" (162). He recalls that his grandfather took part in an attack on Lindisfarne, but the memories are ones of death and destruction rather than of gain: "My own grandsire slew the abbot and burned the abbey three score years ago. Dead priests covered the ground like rabbits after a drive" (190). The city of Rome is also made to represent Christianity for the Vikings, thus men like Ragnar and Ogier "yearned to lay low the mighty monument to the Christian God that seemed to cast a shadow on our souls" (297). Ogier suggest that the Vikings "burned with an ancient hate" they inherited from their German ancestors and that their "war with Rome was not yet over" (266). This reference to the tribes that attacked Rome beginning in the last century BC is further evidence that Marshall was looking at the distant past through works like Tacitus's *Germania*.

The spread of Christianity was certainly a contested and important event in Northern Europe during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Old Norse literature—particularly *Heimskringla*—contains several episodes in which Norse farmers and warriors resist forced conversions and Christian kings who abuse or ignore ancient laws. But the Viking reputation for hating Christianity mostly originates from their raids on churches, monasteries, and other religious institutions on the European continent.[473] According to Sarah Foot, this stereotype developed partially due to confusion from translators and editors attempting to make sense of the dramatic medieval English and continental chronicles that describe the Viking attacks.[474] The medieval Norse invaders certainly destroyed abbeys and churches but not, Foot explains, out of any religious hatred. They were after slaves and riches, and, in the Christian kingdoms of the British Isles during the early medieval period, these were mostly—and perhaps easily—found at religious institutions.[475]

Helga, Leif's betrothed, confirms it is true, that the child's father "gained a province" and that the union was approved by the bishop. Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 299.

[473] The historiography of these events is complex and prone to overstatements and exaggerations. See for instance Matthias Bley, "Domum immundam a perversis violate mundavit: Viking Defilement in Early Medieval Francia," in *Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective (300–1600),* eds. Matthias Bley, Nikolas Jaspert, and Stefan Köck (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 203–239.

[474] Sarah Foot, "Violence Against Christians? Vikings and the Church in Ninth-Century England," *Medieval History* 1, no. 3 (1991): 3–4.

[475] Foot, "Violence Against Christians?," 10–14.

Marshall amplifies this stereotype in *The Viking*. One clear example is when the Vikings are raiding a Saracen town in the Mediterranean, and Ogier wishes they were killing Christians instead of Muslims (267). But this hatred has more serious consequences because of Marshall's religious gendered binary: because Christianity is associated with weakness and femininity, the Vikings appear to foster animosity towards all things female. In the most emblematic passage of the novel, Ogier explains through an internal dialogue how the Vikings would continue the war with Christian Rome:

> We hated her with a deathless hate. Wherever her light shone, we would put it out. Most of our own blond race had acknowledged her at last—the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, and many more of our greatest tribes—so we Northmen must go on burning their palaces so much finer than we could build, and must rape their women and steal their gold, and most of all—most of all, as we shouted unto Odin—slay their priests. (266)

While the phrase "must rape their women" is particularly egregious, the most telling part of this passage is the use of feminine pronouns in referring to Rome and Christianity: "we hated *her*."

Ogier also appears to suggest here that the Vikings are a dying breed. Most of the "blond" race—i.e., white Europeans—has converted, and only the Vikings have managed to remain pagan. Indeed, Alan tells Ogier that he and his people are "the last of the heathens. And you will soon be gone" (275). This was a familiar part of Viking fiction. Andrew Wawn claims that Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* (1866) and Haggard's *Eric Brighteyes* (1889) are "last of the race" novels that also romanticize the Vikings.[476] Marshall's gendered binary, however, adds a new dimension to this theme. The masculinity that the Vikings represent is being threatened by the spread of Christianity—i.e., femininity. In the final pages of the book, when Ogier thinks he may die, he laments that Christians "rule almost all the land. I'd like to hear our keels still clefting the waves, and the long oars stroking or the wind romping with our sails, proof that the Northmen still rule the sea" (327).

Marshall is here tapping into a longstanding feature of American adventure inspired by one of the Boone archetypes: the fear of impending (feminine) civilization and the loss of (masculine) freedom. As discussed in chapter 1, Boone

[476] Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in 19th-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 318.

and Natty Bumppo equate the wilderness with freedom and freedom with manliness. Anxious that their independence was in jeopardy because of the encroaching settlements, they undertake what David Leverenz calls the "white flight from civilized unmanliness."[477] Holt and Thompson explain that these heroes "enacted a mythic masculinity" that held that men should be "free, in nature, unshackled from binding institutional authority or the constrictures of social judgments." [478] Liljencrantz equated civilization with Christianity; Marshall adds a gendered aspect by associating both with femininity. But while Liljencrantz presents the spread of Christianity as a good and necessary step towards civilization, Marshall frames the advancement of the Christian religion as cultural imperialism that destroys the Viking way of life—just as the advancement of civilization ruined the pristine wilderness in early American adventures. This casts the Vikings as threatened underdogs, which provides some justification to their desire for violence against Rome and all that it stands for.

Such Sons of Bitches

In the 1928 film, the Vikings laugh in the face of danger, which bolsters their courageous image. In Marshall's novel, however, the Vikings laugh at physical violence. They delight in seeing Hasting bleed from Ogier's attack with the falcon (10), laugh when Ogier nearly dies at the hands of Ragnar (55), and even laugh at the performance of the Red Eagle—Marshall's name for the alleged infamous torture known as the blood eagle.[479] But Marshall did more than transform courage into masochism; he made the Vikings noticeably more violent than those in Liljencrantz's fiction. More importantly, Marshall's Vikings are particularly violent towards women—the opposite of the chivalry displayed in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*.

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[477] Leverenz, "The Last Real Man in America," 754.

[478] Holt and Thompson, "Man-of-Action Heroes," 427–428.

[479] This supposedly refers to a torture when a man's lungs were pulled out through his rib cage and placed on his shoulders like the wings of an eagle. Roberta Frank has written extensively on this supposed torture device used by the Vikings. See for instance "Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse: The Rite of the Blood-Eagle," *The English Historical Review* 99, no. 391 (April 1984): 332–343 and "The Blood-Eagle Again," *Saga-Book* 22 (1986–1989): 287–289. See also Luke John Murphy et. al., "An Anatomy of the Blood Eagle: The Practicalities of Viking Torture," *Speculum* 97, no. 1 (2022): 1–39.

Several critics of the novel noticed this exaggerated violence but pointed to the culture of the Middle Ages as an explanation. For instance, a reviewer for *The Birmingham News* writes: "Blood ran freely in those days, and if at times 'The Viking' seems coarse, one must blame the period."[480] But Marshall's inclusion of so much violence probably had less to do with any historical representation and more to do with his desire for popularity. As discussed in the previous sections, the literary merit of his novels appears to have been secondary to achieving the two "great prizes." Violence in literature has historically been a relatively easy way to sell novels, and Marshall simply needed to "kill more Indians," so to speak.[481]

The violence found in *Ragnar saga loðbrókar* may have also inspired Marshall. At one point in the saga, Ragnar's sons laid siege to a town and eventually "burned everything in front of them, they killed every mother's son, and even more: they killed every living thing."[482] This event is preceded by a townsperson saying that town will not surrender because the sons were not worthy: "You must first be tested, and show us your valor and eagerness."[483] The Vikings pass the test by overcoming the town's defenders, so there is a sense of purpose to the violence: young, inexperienced warriors needed to prove themselves in order to acquire both wealth and fame. Marshall's Vikings, on the other hand, appear to be violent for violence's sake. While in the Mediterranean, Ogier and his band often attack towns simply to murder. Ogier explains: "Sometimes we scared the people of our town with our great shield-shout ringing to the sky, taking not a penny's worth of their belongings; sometimes we laid waste and left uninhabitable a whole countryside" (278). Ultimately, Ogier does gather enough wealth and glory to raise an army and invade Northumbria; but he, Ragnar and Hasting clearly value killing and destruction over riches.

Lord Egbert says early in the novel that a Dane is "a byword for treachery, murder and rape" (35). This last characteristic becomes one of the most central components of the Viking lifestyle in Marshall's novel. In her 2015 study, Erika Ruth Sigurdson argues that rape has two functions in historical fiction about the Viking Age: it works as a historicizing detail, and it underlines the masculinity of

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[480] A. Thomason, "Adventure with love and wars," *The Birmingham News*, October 16, 1951.

[481] Davis, "Violence in American Literature," 30.

[482] Ben Waggoner, trans., *The Sagas of Ragnar Lodbrok* (New Haven: Troth Publications, 2009), 27.

[483] *The Sagas of Ragnar Lodbrok*, 26.

the Vikings.[484] A popular perception is that rape was more commonplace in the distant past because men did not know any better or that it was socially acceptable.[485] Amy Burges explains:

> The creation of a distance between the medieval and the modern also works to segregate sexual violence from modern romance, locating it solely within the created medieval world […] this violence is safely confined to the Middle Ages, obscuring the extent to which submission and dominance can be rooted in modernity. Furthermore, defining the medieval as a period characterized by sexual violence works oppositionaly to suggest that modern sexuality is not violent and that modern female gender roles do not require submission.[486]

Sexual violence in *The Viking* works as a historicizing detail because it convinces the reader that this really *is* the Viking Age—when rape was allegedly common. In reality, however, rape was generally treated harshly in medieval societies.[487] Scholars such as Jenny Jochens and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir have pointed out that although sexual violence against women occurs in Old Norse sagas and certainly happened in Northern Europe during the Viking Age, it was taboo and often had serious social and legal consequences.[488]

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[484] Erika Ruth Sigurdson, "Violence and Historical Authenticity: Rape (and Pillage) in Popular Viking Fiction," *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 252.

[485] Sigurdson, "Violence and Historical Authenticity," 254. For more on rape in the Middle Ages, see Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

[486] Amy Burge, "Do knights still rescue damsels in distress?: Reimagining the medieval in Mills & Boon historical romance," in *The Female Figure in Contemporary Historical Fiction*, ed. Katherine Cooper and Emma Short (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 109.

[487] Albrecht Classen, *Sexual Violence and Rape in the Middle Ages: A Critical Discourse in Premodern German and European Literature*, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, Vol. 7 (KG, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 5.

[488] Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 32; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 124–125. Rape was in Old Norse literature often viewed as a crime against the family rather than against the woman herself. Jenny Jochens, "The Illicit Love Visit: An Archaeology of Old Norse Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 3 (January 1991): 359.

Part of Ragnar's reputation as the "archetype of the Northland Race" is because his domination over women (262).[489] It is revealed that he has raped several women and serves as the model of masculinity for the other Vikings, who indeed try to emulate him by raping and pillaging. Two of Ragnar's victims underscore how Marshall uses rape to emphasize the masculine image of the Vikings. Judith's rape holds special significance for Ragnar because she fought back, which is a quality the Vikings in the novel prize in their women. Hasting, who was the result of this rape, is thrilled that his mother

> didn't fall swooning on her back when Ragnar laid hand on her, and she died calling on her Christian God, but did she fight him like a Breton vixen as long as she lived? By the Nine Runes, I hope so! I'd have more faith in myself if I knew I was forged in white-hot flame! (94)

Hasting hopes to emulate his father and longs to find a woman who similarly tries to resist him. He sexually assaults Morgana when he "slipped his hand into the collar of her dress," and "it moved downward and cupped over her breast" (93). The princess retaliates by biting Hasting's arm, but this only increases his desire for her: "I couldn't give my passion to a slut who can look at me without horror. When I know on top of that, that she'll fight me tooth and nail the first time I take her and the last—why I'll have something to live for besides ruling Europe" (94). Similarly, during one of Ogier's raids, the Vikings enter a convent with the hopes of sexually assaulting the nuns living there but refrain because the women have no desire to fight back. Instead, the Vikings rob the convent of its riches and burn it to the ground (301–302). The message here is that any man can rape a woman, but a Viking—a masculine man—prefers to rape a woman who defends herself. This takes more strength, more power, and more domination.

Enid's rape, however, illustrates a theme, which Kelly Oliver calls a "pornutopic fantasy," that in fact appears throughout the novel—that women enjoy being raped.[490] According to Ragnar, Lady Enid "didn't greatly object to the

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[489] Marshall reuses this phrase in *West with the Vikings* in reference to King Olaf Tryggvason: "Olaf was himself the archetype of the Norse race." Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 294.

[490] Kelly Oliver, *Hunting Girls: Sexual Violence from The Hunger Games to Campus Rape* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 61. Oliver argues that pornography that fetishizes rape causes some rapists to believe their victims enjoy being assaulted.

entertainment. In fact she may have even allowed herself to be captured" (89). Ogier later asks Ragnar about this, saying that he heard Enid "didn't fight you very long or yell very loud, when you would take pleasure with her," to which Ragnar replies: "But she fell down when I first cupped hand on her, and although she moved aplenty ere the morning, it was not to try to run" (163).

Marshall emphasizes this theme in one of the most sexually violent episodes of the novel. Possibly inspired by a scene from *Ragnar saga loðbrókar* in which the sons of Ragnar camp outside of a seemingly impenetrable city, the Vikings, led by Ogier and Hasting, lay siege to the Saracen city of Sarkosta. While debating about how to move forward, Hasting admits that the amount of riches they could get from the city would not justify the risk of losing men in an ensuing battle. Ogier responds that there is "one kind of loot that the men love that won't weigh down their backs" (270). He intends to allow the Vikings to sexually assault the female inhabitants of Sarkosta not only as "a remedy for the men's restlessness" but also because it would be a great "sport to us all" (270). Hasting agrees but reminds the Vikings that the atrocities they are about to commit are meant to be a joke, so there is no need to use swords: "let it be sport, not war. It's a joke to be played on those black-bearded fools to laugh at all our days, and the less bloodshed, the better" (271).

The Vikings lure the male defenders of Sarkosta out of the city, sneak in through the gates, and shut the Saracen men out behind them: "Roaring with laughter, the Vikings chased the comelier [women], and thus began a day of larking the like of which no Northland scald had ever sung" (272). Though some men wanted to be rough with the women, Hasting and Ogier made it clear that for it be a sport or a joke, the Vikings were to rape only those women who were easy to catch:

> Only the young and buxom wenches must run to save their honors, and if they ran with enough will or fought with enough fury, their chasers let them go. For the sake of the sport, they behaved with a semblance of rough and ribald chivalry […]. The other wonder was how many fled to snug retreats before they were overtaken. The number increased as the sport went on, including some of the most virtuous catching the fever, and a great many already captured once, emerging from their hiding places to be caught again. What amazed us at first was the easiest captives were not swarthy Moorish girls but bright-skinned Europeans […]. Perhaps they were getting back at their Saracen masters! If so, what bishop could blame them, or at least refuse to absolve them of their sin? As for us Vikings, we honored their vim in every way we could. (272)

This scene not only paints a mass rape as a casual sport but also includes the "pornutopic fantasy" as a means for white slaves to get revenge against their masters. Even more surprising is Marshall's inclusion of a rough chivalry, which indicates that the Vikings were somehow respectful to the women they were sexually assaulting. And, once again, the Vikings' masculinity is highlighted as sexually potent barbarians—a theme that is also present in sentimental romance novels targeted toward female readers.[491]

Although Morgana is never raped, the threat of rape hangs over her head through much of the novel.[492] Ogier repeatedly tries to force Morgana to sleep with him on their journey to England, and the hint of rape saturates several of their conversations. At one point Ogier asks: "If you lost your virginity on this voyage, would Aella cast you forth?" Morgana replies: "Perhaps not if it were taken from me without consent" (146). When Ogier finally gets frustrated with her rejections, he muses: "if I were a better Viking I would use her for my needs" (319). Although it is his instinct to rape her, Ogier refrains, perhaps understanding the dire consequences if the princess should lose her virginity or simply echoing the virtue of self-control that had been a part of the adventure hero motif for more than a century.[493]

Rape also appears to function as a passage into manhood in the novel, further underlining its connection to the masculine image. Ogier journeys to a site where young men have gathered to prove themselves worthy of becoming warriors by running through gauntlets and battling one another. All around him, he sees "beardless grandsons who had not yet brought flame to a Christian temple or caught flame from a Christian girl" (54). This suggests that raping a Christian woman or burning down a church could provide a Viking rite of passage into manhood.

The number of females who suffer from sexual violence in *The Viking*, combined with the "deathless hate" targeted at the feminized Christian religion, seems to suggest that the Vikings despise all things feminine. Peggy Reeves Sanday

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[491] For a discussion of the Viking figure in these types of romances, see María José Gómez Calderón, "Romancing the Dark Ages: The Viking Hero in Sentimental Narrative," *Boletín Millares Carlo* 26 (2007): 287–297 (294–295).

[492] According to Radway, the rape of the main female character would break the unspoken rules of the romance genre. Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 75.

[493] Susan Brownmiller points out that prior to the thirteenth century, only virginal rapes were considered serious crimes, while sexual assaulters of older or married women suffered few consequences. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 21.

argues that sexual violence correlates with "contempt for female qualities."[494] Susan Brownmiller, however, argues that "a female victim of rape in war is chosen not because she is a representative of the enemy, but precisely because she is a woman, and *therefore* an enemy."[495] As it turns out, the enemy in *The Viking*, as well as in several of Marshall's other novels from this time period, is indeed female.

Meera, a mysterious servant of Ragnar's, is the true villain of the story. It was she who had encouraged Ragnar to unknowingly purchase his own son as a slave, suggested Ogier's punishment after the attack on Hasting, and planned for Ogier to kill his own father and his half-brothers, Hasting and Aella. When Ogier commits these horrendous acts, Meera says: "So ends the game that was to destroy Ragnar root and branch," and adds that this game was "all I had to live for" (373–374). Ogier muses: "We were aghast not at her, but at her springing from human seed, and at her dwelling on our world" (372). Her role in the story ends when she jumps off the side of a longship in an apparent suicide.

Choosing Meera, a relatively small and unimportant character, as the main villain of the story may be seen as an interesting "twist," but Marshall not only reuses this motif in some of his other novels but also repeats the same language, suggesting these females are playing some evil game that caused the male characters to question their humanity. In *The Pagan King*, for instance, a young King Arthur enters into a sexual relationship with a witch named Vivain only to cast her aside when he pursues a marriage to a woman of a higher class.[496] While Arthur is distracted by an ongoing rivalry with his cousin, the witch bides her time and causes the action of the story to unfold, resulting in Arthur committing fratricide. At the end of the novel, she reveals that she is behind these events and explains that her "games are done."[497] When asked what caused her to do these evil deeds, she simply says she "fell in love with evil" at a young age.[498] In *West with the Vikings*, Leif has a similar lifelong rivalry with his brother, Thorstein. Leif takes several sexual

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[494] Quoted in Diana Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*, Perspectives on Gender vol. 3 (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 47.

[495] Scully, "Understanding Sexual Violence," 47; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 62.

[496] It is also interesting to note that this character's name is Vivain. Morgana's character in some of the early drafts of *The Viking*—or, *The Heathen*, as it was originally named—was also named Vivian.

[497] Edison Marshall, *The Pagan King* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959), 307.

[498] Marshall, *The Pagan King*, 307.

partners, including an Irish woman named Ellen and her young daughter, Swanhild, whom he later impregnates. When he learns that Swanhild is really his half-sister, Leif violently murders the child and flees to marry a princess.[499] Described as a "she-wolf"—another inhuman characterization—Swanhild exacts revenge by following Leif to Vinland and murdering several men—resembling the actions of Freydis in *Eiríks saga rauða*.[500]

The male rivalries in each of these "medieval" novels are presented as almost distractions from the greater enemy: women. One might argue that women are often the cause of calamity and the driving force behind the violence in Old Norse literature. However, David Clark points out that female characters in Old Norse sagas verbally incite the male characters in front of others; they act publicly, rather than working in the shadows and surprising people with their malice, as is the case with Meera, Vivain, and Swanhild.[501] The evil actions of Meera combined with the gendered binary in *The Viking* imply that the feminine does indeed appear to be the enemy.

Marshall did not design the "rape and pillage" stereotype of the Viking, but his fiction helped to substantiate this image, as evident in both the 1958 film and in subsequent novels and films that draw upon this image. In fact, his influence becomes particularly clear when *The Viking* is compared to two other Viking-themed novels published in 1951: Elizabeth Janeway's *The Vikings* and Henry Myers's *The Utmost Island*. Both authors tell creative versions of the Leif Eriksson and Vinland discovery story. They acknowledge in their books that the Viking Age was indeed a time of violence, but their respective Vikings are far less violent than Marshall's. Janeway's book was targeted toward juveniles, which explains why her Vikings were more peaceful. Myers, however, attempts to rebuff the "rape and pillage" image in an historical note in *The Utmost Island*:

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[499] When he realizes he has committed incest, Leif punches Swanhild and murders their child in a horrific scene: "And then at the very brink I gave the babe a little swing in my arms, whereby the back of his head struck the stone, and I had glimpsed only the beginning of a slow seepage of blood into the scalp when I threw it, past all pain or fright or punishment or shame, into the sea." Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 355.

[500] Marshall, *West with the Vikings*, 419. For more on Freydis see Kristin Wolf, "Amazons in Vínland," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 95, no. 4 (Oct. 1996): 469–485.

[501] David Clark, *Gender, Violence and the Past in Edda and Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 142–143.

> We pretend that [the Stone Age] has been so named because its men stunned their sweethearts with stone clubs and dragged them by their hair to their stone caves. Now why should a man do that, when a willing sweetheart under the stars is so much more satisfactory? There is a theory that women liked it, but it is held only by men.[502]

These two authors tell stories about the Viking Age without including rape or using violence as a historicizing detail. It is significant, however, that Marshall's novel was adapted into a film while Myers and Janeway's books were not: violence sells. And Marshall sold his audience on an extremely violent Viking image. When his publishers suggested that he should write a juvenile book about the Vikings akin to Janeway's, Marshall responded: "I am very doubtful if I could write juveniles about Vikings because they were such sons of bitches."[503] Instead, Marshall presented the Vikings as an "adult" topic. They were sexually dominant and violent. This image translated easily to the silver screen.

The Vikings Return to Hollywood

The 1958 film *The Vikings*, as hinted at above, surpassed the 1951 novel in popularity and in cultural impact: it grossed approximately $15 million in its first year, Richard Fleischer was nominated for Best Director for the Director's Guild of America awards, and it spawned both a comic book and a short-lived television show, *Tales of the Vikings* (1959–1960).[504] Scholars such as Kathleen Conway Kelly and Jón Karl Helgason have analyzed the film from different perspectives, which is helpful for this study. Kelly does not refer to Marshall or his novel in her article, and Helgason only briefly mentions *The Viking* as a transitional space where *Ragnar saga loðbrókar* and the film meet.[505] The main purpose of this section is to analyze

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[502] Henry Myers, *The Utmost Island* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1951), 165.

[503] Edison Marshall to Roger W. Straus, Jr., 1951, box 233, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

[504] "Some of the Top UA Grossers." Marshall remained a relevant adventure writer, but his novel, *The Viking*, did not receive any nominations for awards. In fact, according to several letters between Edison Marshall and his publishers, the sales of *The Viking* were pretty meager after 1954, and they looked forward to reissuing a version in the wake of the 1958 film in the hopes that they might "make a buck." Roger W. Straus, Jr. to John T. Sargent, 1957, box 233, MssCol979, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., Records, The Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room for Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library.

[505] Jón Karl Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla: The Afterlife of the Eddas and Sagas* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 172–175.

directly how Marshall and the "Viking discourse" impacted the film. Clearly, Marshall's ideas bleed through the script—the Vikings are in both cases violent, masculine, and sexually dominant. Moreover, the same issues of gender, race, and civilization that have appeared in the works discussed so far continue to function as part of the "Viking discourse" in *The Vikings*.

The movie's origins can be traced back to 1949 when actor Kirk Douglas started Byrna Productions so that he could have more of a say in the creative process of the films he starred in.[506] Following the success of *The Indian Fighter* (1955) and *Paths of Glory* (1957), Douglas decided that the next Byrna project would be a film about Vikings, based on Marshall's novel. He hired Richard Fleischer as the director and screenwriters Calder Willingham and Dale Wasserman to turn Marshall's novel into usable script.[507] These filmmakers boasted that they set out to make the most authentic Viking movie ever produced.[508] However, this did not quite go as planned. Douglas explains in his autobiography, *The Ragman's Son* (1988):

> I employed experts from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to give me an exact historical feeling about the period of the Vikings, the exact dimensions of the boats that they used, how the houses and the mead hall were built, etc. The experts disagreed, and I finally had to make the decisions myself.[509]

The filmmakers added some scenes that were not only independent from the novel but also creative inventions. The most famous of these is Odin's test, in which a man throws an axe at his wife who is suspected of infidelity. They also left out several memorable parts of the novel, including the raids in the Mediterranean Sea, the bear hunt, Meera's character, and the gauntlet on the beach. They changed several characters' names—Hasting became Einar and Ogier became Erik—and changed small details, such as Ragnar dying in a pit of hungry dogs rather than stingrays. The basic plot of the film, however, remains fairly true to that of *The Viking*.

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[506] Kirk Douglas, *The Ragman's Son: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 257.

[507] Willingham had worked with Douglas on *Paths of Glory*. He later received an Oscar nomination for his screenplay for *The Graduate* (1967).

[508] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic: in *The Vikings*," in *The Vikings on Film*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 13.

[509] Douglas, *The Ragman's Son*, 283.

The film, according to Helgason, "picked up where Roy William Neill's *The Viking* left off."[510] Instead of using intertitles at the opening of the film, *The Vikings* features an Orson Welles voiceover on top of a Bayeux tapestry-type of animation. The content is indeed reminiscent of the 1928 film. For example, the Vikings in Neill's film "leaped into battle with a song."[511] The Vikings' love of battle is similarly underlined in the 1958 film when Welles claims: "the greatest wish of every Viking is to die sword in hand, to enter Valhalla."[512] This idea, as will be discussed more in chapter 4, continued to be a part of the "Viking discourse" and is prominent in several Viking films of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Both the 1928 intertitles and Welles voiceover mention the sea prowess of the Vikings. The target of the Viking attacks in both films is the kingdom of Northumbria in England. And just as a woman prays to be delivered from "sword and the chains of the Vikings" in the opening scene of the 1928 film, Orson Welles's voice echoes in 1958: "It is no accident that the English Book of Prayer contained this sentence: 'Protect us Oh Lord from the wrath of the Northmen.'"[513]

The filmmakers of *The Vikings* also included a hierarchy that resembles that found in Liljencrantz's novels and the 1928 film: the Christianized English are "civilized" while the pagan Vikings are "uncivilized." In fact, Kirk Douglas casted the film according to this hierarchy: "I felt that the English characters should be played by English actors, to give it a certain elegance, and the Vikings should be played Americans, who would give it a rougher quality."[514] This dynamic is most noticeable when Lord Egbert, exiled from Northumbria for assisting Ragnar on his raids, arrives at the Viking camp in Norway. Einar (Kirk Douglas) greets him by guzzling down some ale and throwing the cask at the newcomer's feet. The Vikings

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[510] Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla*, 178.

[511] *The Viking*, directed by Roy William Neill (Technicolor, 1928), 1:46, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCwpA7NxK7A&t=3893s.

[512] *The Vikings*, directed by Richard Fleischer (Bryna Productions, 1958), 0:58.

[513] Marshall also made use of this infamous prayer in both his Viking novels: "Deliver us, O Lord, from the fury of the Northmen." As Magnus Magnusson has pointed out, there were many prayers during the ninth and tenth centuries asking Heaven to deliver Christians from their enemies, but this could have applied to Vikings, Hungarians, Saracens, or anyone else. This particular prayer did not exist as such but rather seems to have been cobbled together from an antiphony dedicated to St. Vaast or St. Medard in the ninth century and more modern litanies that asked for general deliverance from foreign invaders. Magnus Magnusson, *Vikings!* (London: BBC, 1980), 61.

[514] Douglas, *The Ragman's Son*, 283.

roar with laughter, leaving Egbert clearly offended. During the scenes of revelry and celebration in Ragnar's hall, the Vikings slop ale down their fronts, grab and fondle women, and participate in wild games like Odin's test. Egbert sits stiffly at the top of the hall and is a contrast to the relaxed and bad-mannered Ragnar. But when Egbert describes a particularly violent punishment used in England for a misbehaving slave, Ragnar responds jokingly: "See?! The English *are* civilized."[515]

Race is not a big factor of *The Vikings*. The cast is almost entirely white—even Kitala (based on Kitti's character) is played by white British actress Eileen Way. Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis, who plays Eric (the Ogier character), were actually of Jewish origin. Caribbean singer and actor Edric Connor plays Sandpiper and is the lone actor of color. Sandpiper's role in the film mirrors that of the novel: he never speaks but possesses the metallic fish on a chain that works as a compass and allows him, Eric, Kitala, Morgana (Janet Leigh) and Morgana's serving woman to sail through the fog from Norway to England. Sandpiper first appears in the hunting scene in which Eric's falcon disfigures Einar, who loses and eye and wears an eye patch through most of the film. Sandpiper and Eric both sport iron rings around their necks, a mark of their positions as slaves. This is a subtle but significant change from Marshall's novel. In *The Viking*, Sandpiper was not a slave; Ragnar's "kicks and blows soon drove the castaway to a life lower than a scullion around the kitchens," but he was still a free man (108). The filmmakers made this change perhaps to underline Eric's predicament, but the racial consequences of this alteration will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

In the official trailer for *The Vikings*, a voiceover claims: "There were no women except women taken in battle."[516] The roles of most of the female characters are significantly limited in the film compared to the novel. Although Queen Enid is given a somewhat larger role, Kitala is less prominent and does not have the same rapport with Eric as Kitti does with Ogier. The leading female character, Morgana, has even less agency that her literary namesake. She passes from Einar who kidnaps her, to Eric who rescues her, to her betrothed Aella (Frank Thring), and back to Eric without having much say. However, her role as a sexual object for the Vikings—particularly for Einar—is noticeably increased.[517] Einar at one point sails out drunk

[515] *The Vikings*, 22:07.

[516] "The Vikings Official Trailer #1," YouTube.com, October 5, 2012, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hyk9UScz4_8, 2:10.

[517] Other contemporary Viking films similarly presented female characters as sexual objects with little to no agency. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman,

to the ship where Morgana is being held, fully prepared to rape her. But Eric arrives in the nick of time, knocks Einar unconscious, and rescues the princess. Although Eric never rapes Morgana, he literally rips open her bodice during their escape so she can help row the ship, which brings the threat of rape back into the forefront.[518]

More generally, the threat of rape is a dominant theme throughout the film, from the opening scene when Ragnar tears into the King of Northumbria's bed chamber, kills him, and seizes Queen Enid (Maxine Audley) with the intention of raping her. Willingham's original script contained, according to Kelly, "illicit sex, and a great deal of excessive and unacceptable violence." [519] The Production Code Administration (PCA) demanded that the film be edited down and forbade the filmmakers from showing Enid's rape on screen. Instead, the film shows Queen Enid weeping alone at the foot of a bed following Ragnar's assault, clearly implying she had been raped.

Einar surpasses Ragnar from the novel as the sexually violent archetype. When he first appears in the film, his face is obscured by the blonde hair of a woman who is straddling and kissing him, which indicates that he is a womanizer. As the film goes on, he becomes increasingly aggressive toward women. In one scene, he throws a young woman onto a table, pours beer down her throat, and then kisses her passionately as she squeals with laughter. Einar's character also exposes the motif that Vikings desire the women they rape to fight back. When he tries to grope Morgana, she bites him, which only arouses the Viking more. In a conversation that is based on a dialogue Hasting and Ragnar in the novel, Ragnar and Einar bond over their desire for raping "spirited" women:

> Einar: [Princess Morgana] said she'd kill herself if I touched her.
>
> Ragnar: They all say that! What they really mean is that they will kill themselves if you *don't*. […]
>
> Einar: Tell me, did my mother fight you?

"Between Exploitation and Liberation: Viking Women and the Sexual Revolution," in *The Vikings on Film*, ed. by Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 161.

[518] Edison Marshall's nephew, writer Starkey Flythe, claimed that because of this scene, *The Vikings* should be considered the first "bodice-ripper" movie. Sutherland and Sutherland, "Starkey Flythe and Authors," 9.

[519] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 13. According to Edison Jr., his father had similar "battles" with the publishers over the amount of sex found in his novels, including in *The Viking*. Marshall & Marshall, "Autobiography," 787.

> Ragnar: Ah, did she fight me? I have the scars of her scratches and bites all over me. Ha! What a woman!
>
> Einar: That's how I feel about Morgana. Look at me. You think with this face I want the kind of wife that would let me touch her? I want her to fight me, tooth and nail, the first time I take her and the last!
>
> Ragnar: You are my son![520]

The filmmakers also included implications of sexual violence in what Helgason calls "penetrating scenes."[521] The Vikings, led by Eric and Einar, arrive at Aella's castle wheeling a large battering ram and begin to pound the gates. The camera takes an angle from beneath and to the side of the action so that the battering ram, according to Kelly, "appears to be the shaft of a huge penis (the tree trunk) and two equally huge testicles (the wheels) crashing into the gate."[522] A less explicit example comes when Einar climbs one of the castle towers to the chapel where Morgana is hiding. The camera goes from the outside to inside the room when Einar comes crashing through the stained-glass window, again giving the impression of unwanted and violent penetration.[523]

While Kelly and Helgason have their own respective opinions on the inspiration behind these violent innuendos, neither scholar takes the influence of Marshall's gendered binary into account.[524] The filmmakers clearly present the Vikings as more barbaric, more violent, more sexually dominant and therefore more masculine than the English. Ragnar comments on Einar's clean-shaven face, which stands out among the bearded Vikings, saying that his son is "so vain of his beauty he won't let a man's beard hide it. He scrapes his face like an Englishman."[525] Aella's long fingernails and eloquent demeanor also seem to indicate something vaguely effeminate. These comments and imagery, coupled with the levels of "civilization"

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[520] *The Vikings*, 50:45, 52:54–53:35. In Marshall's novel, Hasting remarks: "Do you think I'd want a wench who could gaze without shuddering at my maidenface, or could stand to have me touch her? […] When I know on top of that that she'll fight me tooth and nail the first time I take her and the last" (93–94).

[521] Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla*, 177.

[522] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 17.

[523] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 17.

[524] Kelly argues that Fleischer, Douglas and Bresler included these scenes as a means to "get one over" on the PCA, whereas Helgason suggests that they may have been inspired by scenes found in medieval literature. Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 15; Helgason, *Echoes of Valhalla*, 177–181.

[525] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 20.

that separate the Vikings and the English, indicate that Douglas, Fleischer, Willingham, and Wasserman, adopted a significant amount of Marshall's novel, including his binary. The image of Vikings forcefully penetrating Christian buildings can also be seen as a metaphor for masculine men sexually dominating women.

Producer Jerry Bresler fought hard against PCA censorship to include these scenes because they were, according to him, "historically accurate."[526] As Kelly points out: "Being faithful to the Age of the Vikings collaterally and conveniently licenses representations of violence and sex, for such representations, are, as the Code allows Bresler to argue, 'essential for the plot.'"[527] Just as Marshall used violence to sell his novels, Bresler and the filmmakers used this "historical" theme as a selling point. One movie poster, for instance, featured Douglas and Curtis squaring off with swords and grimaces with the exclamation: "Nothing ever matched its violence." Several critics remarked upon this aspect of the film. A reviewer for *Variety* complained in an article titled "Vikings too Violent?" that the "overdose" of egregious violence left the audience "sorta shook."[528] Will Jones, writing for the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, similarly pointed out how this aspect of the film overshadows the story and the plot:

> It's a brutal movie, full of blood, sex, and sadism, and I can think of a present-day Viking or two who might not be able to sit all the way through it without turning green. […] Lest I give the impression the picture is 100 per cent violence, I suppose I should mention the magnificent views of the fjord country, and the occasional scenes of Viking charm.[529]

Conclusion

Marshall's approach to the Viking Age is both representative of a wider trend and unique in how much influence it had on the popular American imagination. He was certainly not the first author of "dubious quality" to write about the Vikings, but many more would follow in his footsteps and model their ideas after his. *The Viking* was arguably one of the most widely read American Viking novels in the mid-

[526] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 15.
[527] Kelly, "The Trope of the Scopic," 15.
[528] "Vikings too Violent?" *Variety* 212, no. 5 (October 1958): 12.
[529] Will Jones, "Those Vikings are Rough," *Star Tribune*, June 18, 1958.

twentieth century, but it was also criticized for its recycled motifs and for being inferior to Marshall's earlier works. Whereas many of the Vikings in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* were chivalrous Christians moving steadily towards "civilization," the Vikings in Marshall's novel hate Christianity, hate women, and are clinging to a primitive masculinity that is in jeopardy as the Church expands and grows. This Viking image would reappear throughout the twentieth century in different works and is indeed still topical.

Most of Marshall's novels reissued by Doubleday Publishing contain a list of his complete works organized into categories such as "Historical Novel," and "Gothic Romance." *The Viking* is listed under the "Hero Novels" heading, which seems to suggest that Marshall—or at least his publishers—did not view his take on the Vikings as historical but rather heroic and mythical. But *The Vikings*, which clearly retains many of Marshall's ideas, motifs, and inventions, was marketed as a "historical" film, and it would go on to have a lasting impact on the perception of the Vikings in U.S. popular culture. The film also cemented in various ways the image of a (sexually) violent Viking that seemed to reflect an ideal masculinity. The historicity of the film is largely based on the information found in Marshall's novel. Regardless of how accurate the ship measurements, costumes, or battle formations were, the attitude of the Vikings, the presentation of levels of civilization, and the masculine and sexually dominant aesthetic can all be linked to Edison Marshall's book from 1951.

Chapter 4
"That's What Valhallamongering is All About"

Four years after the release of Fleischer's film, British historian Peter Sawyer published a scholarly book titled *The Age of the Vikings* (1962) in which he suggests that there was nothing exceptional about the violence committed by the Vikings. They were, in his view, no more violent or savage than the Franks, the Saxons, or any other group during the Middle Ages.[530] He presents a much more peaceful Viking image than that depicted by Marshall and Fleischer by highlighting the craftsmanship and navigation skills of the Norsemen, as well as their domestic, agricultural, and technological achievements. Instead of violent marauders, the Vikings were, according to Sawyer, explorers and farmers who were simply living in a violent period. Scholars and authors such as Sarah Foot, Erika Ruth Sigurdson, and Franz Lidz have pointed to Sawyer's work as a turning point in the "Viking discourse."[531] His argument, though not necessarily new, presented an alternative approach to the Viking image of peaceful farmers, explorers, and merchants who happened to be skilled warriors. As this approach gained support, authors and filmmakers had to confront this debate and decide whether to repeat the popular violent stereotype or try to show a different side of the Viking Age.

An early example of this alternative approach in popular culture appears in Terry Jones's 1989 comedy film *Erik the Viking*. During a raid, Erik (Tim Robbins) discovers a woman alone in a hut and halfheartedly attempts to rape her. When she chastises him for a lack of effort, he admits that the required raping part of his role as a Viking feels "a little bit crude."[532] By 2014, the pendulum had swung so far in the "peaceful" direction that an exhibition on the Viking Age opened at the British museum that highlighted the weaponry, war ships, and general violence of the period. Writing for *Smithsonian Magazine*, Lidz explains that by "focusing on the violence of Viking society, the new exhibition revives the traditional image of the

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[530] P. H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (London: Edward Arnold, 1962), 193–196.

[531] Sarah Foot uses the terms "Before Sawyer" and "After Sawyer" in her historiography of Viking violence. Sarah Foot, "Confronting Violence: A Medieval Perspective on the Ethics of Historiography," *Storia della Storiographia* 42 (2002): 23–41.

[532] *Erik the Viking*, directed by Terry Jones (Prominent Features, 1989), 2:31.

Vikings as Dark Age bad boys."[533] Even though the pendulum swung back and forth in scholarship, this "bad boy" image remained constant in Viking popular media.

The purpose of this final chapter is twofold. Firstly, I demonstrate how the ideas that Liljencrantz and Marshall included in their books—and particularly the ideas that found their way into the 1928 and 1958 films—impacted the popular perception of the Vikings throughout the rest of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Their contributions to the "Viking discourse" did not simply linger; in some instances, it became canon. *Erik the Viking*, for example, recycles the fear that the Vikings might sail over the edge of the world, which appeared in the 1928 film. Secondly, I explore how ideas of civilization, race, and gender continue to function in these later Viking-themed works. I analyze a selection of literature and films that repeat, echo, mimic, subvert, or challenge many of the stereotypes and images that can often be traced back to the nineteenth-century works described in chapter 1. In particular, I demonstrate how these books and films either repeat the image of the "Dark Age bad boys" or reflect Sawyer's alternative approach.

The Norseman and Severed Ways

In the 1970s, American actor Lee Majors gained considerable popularity through his role as Steve Austin in the television show *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1973–1978). He wanted to act in feature films and, like Kirk Douglas, founded his own production company so that he would have more control of this transition. With the help of his then-wife Farrah Fawcett, he created Fawcett-Majors Productions, and they decided, like Douglas, to set one of their company's earliest films in the Viking Age. *The Norseman*, which depicted Vikings sailing to Vinland during the Middle Ages, was released in 1978. Majors hired as the director Charles B. Pierce, who had made a name for himself through his pseudo-documentary "regionals"—horror films aimed at Southern or rural audiences, the most notable being *The Legend of Boggy Creek* (1972).[534] Pierce filmed almost exclusively in the Southern United States and often cast friends and relatives in his movies. While *The Norseman* had a bigger budget than Pierce was used to, it followed the same pattern: Pierce cast his son,

[533] Franz Lidz, "The Vikings' Bad Boy Reputation is Back with a Vengeance," *Smithsonian Magazine* (March 2014), https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/The-Vikings-Bad-Boy-Reputation-Is-Back-With-a-Vengeance-180949814/?page=1.

[534] Scott Von Doviak, *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 174.

Charles Pierce Jr., and Jimmy Clem—an actor who appeared in nearly all of Pierce's movies. The film was shot mostly on location in Florida, giving it a tropical aesthetic despite the action supposedly taking place in Vinland.

The Norseman follows Thorvald (Majors) as he sails to from Northern Europe to North America in search of his father, King Eurich (Mel Ferrer), who had led a "voyage of discovery" westward the previous year but not returned. As soon as the Vikings reach Vinland, a band of Native Americans attacks them without provocation. As it turns out, these warriors are part of a tribe that is holding King Eurich and his crew captive. An indigenous female, Winetta (Susie Coehlo), takes pity on the old king and helps Thorvald discover their whereabouts. Thorvald and his crew manage to rescue King Eurich, fend off the native warriors, and sail with Winetta back to Scandinavia.

Several familiar tropes stand out with *The Norseman*. Firstly, Thorvald and his crew look like exaggerated versions of the Vikings in Fleischer's film. They wear similar furs and horned helmets. Majors, however, wears a Zorro-type mask, along with helmet and armor that more closely resembles a Roman centurion outfit than medieval attire. Secondly, the film is a variation of the traditional captivity narrative in which white Europeans are kidnapped by Native Americans and need to be rescued by a white male hero. Untypically, in this story, the captives do not learn anything useful from the indigenous people. Instead, King Eurich and his crew are blinded and forced to work in an underground flourmill. Lastly, the filmmakers exhibit a hierarchy of human civilization that places the Norse above the Native Americans, similar to what we see in Liljencrantz's Vinland fiction. Thorvald, like Leif Eriksson in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, is stoic, measured, and chivalric. Indeed, because the Vikings occupy a higher tier of civilization in the film, they do not commit any acts of sexual violence. But Kevin J. Harty remarks that Thorvald's nobility is contrasted with "savagery, a hallmark of the new world, home to an other whose lifestyle is clearly antithetical to that of the civilized Vikings from northern Europe."[535] Furthermore, the Native Americans in *The Norseman* barely speak but rather scream and holler in the stereotypical manner associated with many Hollywood westerns.[536]

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[535] Kevin J. Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!—The Vikings in North America," in *The Vikings on Film: Essays on Depictions of the Nordic Middle Ages*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 112.

[536] Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!, 115. Pierce cast as Vikings several actors who had become familiar faces in these cowboy westerns, including Jesse Pearson, Sandy

This is not the only problematic presentation of race in *The Norseman*. As the narrator (Jesse Pearson) introduces Thorvald's Viking crew near the beginning of the film, he points out that Olif (Clem) cannot speak because he had his tongue removed. The camera shifts to a muscular Black man sitting on the rowing bench behind Olif, and the narrator explains: "This is the man who cut it out."[537] Although this Black Viking—played by American football player Deacon Jones—remains unnamed throughout *The Norseman*, the character appears in the credits simply as "Thrall."[538] In a 2014 interview, Seamon Glass, an actor who played one of the Vikings, explained how Deacon Jones received this name in *The Norseman*. Glass told the director: "'Charlie, you can't have a black Norseman. They didn't have them!' He said, 'Okay, we'll make him a slave.' So he did."[539]

Jones's character seems to be a recycled version of the character Sandpiper as presented by Marshall. In *The Viking*, Sandpiper had his tongue cut out and his eardrums popped by a mysterious group of people after he discovered the function of the metallic fish that worked as a compass. Fleischer decided to make him a slave, though the character's backstory is not provided in the film. Pierce recycles these themes so that Thrall cuts out someone else's tongue but remains a slave. This is one of several examples of Pierce borrowing from both the 1958 film and Marshall's novel. The Vikings in *The Norseman* regularly raise their swords and shout to Odin in celebration, just like the Vikings do in Fleischer's film. When a Viking named Bjorn is killed, the narrator explains that his body "was sent to sea to Valhalla, for he had died with his sword in his hand."[540] This trope reappears in several films and has become a mainstay in the "Viking discourse," and it can be

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Sanders, and character actor Jack Elam, who was known for his role in *Once Upon Time in the West* (1968).

[537] *The Norseman*, directed by Charles B. Pierce (Fawcett-Majors Productions, 1978), 4:07, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J-OYxfcPhI&t=4449s.

[538] Jones was not the only American football player to appear in *The Norseman*. According to Majors, Pierce had recruited members of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to play several characters on Thorvald's crew. Will Harris, "Lee Majors on *Ash Vs. Evil Dead*, Elvis Presley, *The Six Million Dollar Man*," AV Club, November 28, 2016, https://tv.avclub.com/lee-majors-on-ash-vs-evil-dead-elvis-presley-and-the-1798255030.

[539] Glass also said that *The Norseman* was "One of the worst pictures that was ever made. It was horrible." Stephen Bowie, "An Interview with Seamon Glass," The Classic TV History Blog, June 26, 2014, https://classictvhistory.wordpress.com/tag/boxers/.

[540] *The Norseman*, 14:44.

traced back to the 1958 film. During the final battle, Death Dreamer, a wizard that accompanies Thorvald on his mission, attacks a native warrior with his pet hawk in a close replication of the falcon attack penned by Marshall. And the main antagonist, a Native American medicine woman (Kathleen Freeman), who is responsible for drugging and blinding King Eurich and his men and forcing them to labor all day, recalls the reprehensible actions of Marshall's female villains as described in chapter 3.

The only other female in Pierce's film, Winetta, appears to be a mixture of the Helga trope—helpful advisor—and the Morgana trope—sexual object with almost no agency. Winetta wears a tight-fitting deerskin dress, but she rarely speaks. Still, she assists Thorvald in locating his father and rescuing him. The romance that develops between these two characters resembles the love story in Neill's 1928 film. They communicate mostly through looks and gestures. Pierce, Majors, and company omit the sexually violent Viking stereotype, and no threat of rape hangs over Winetta. Thorvald's chivalric attitude appears almost Victorian; yet, the film's focus, it seems, it not on the love story but rather on the Vikings' violence against the Native Americans. Despite their higher position in the civilization hierarchy, the Vikings in *The Norseman* reflect a modern masculine ideal. Played by American football players, they are huge and muscley, and indigenous warriors fly through the air after being struck by Viking axes and arrows. However, the violence in the film is "excused," as the Native Americans are holding King Eurich captive and are always the instigators in the battles that take place.

The Norseman was, in every sense, a failure. It performed dismally at the box office and did little to further the career of Lee Majors, who later admitted that he found the entire experience embarrassing.[541] Anthropologist Virgil E. Noble calls it a "forgettable film" that combines "the most hackneyed images of both Vikings and Native Americans."[542] However, *The Norseman* is also a telling example of how late twentieth-century filmmakers utilized stereotypes, motifs, and themes that Liljencrantz and Marshall either introduced into the "Viking discourse" or reinforced. The film continues the tradition of modeling a Viking story on the captivity narrative, framing the Viking experience in America through contemporary

[541] Harris, "Lee Majors."

[542] Virgil E. Noble, "When Legend Becomes Fact," in *Box Office Archaeology: Refining Hollywood's Portrayal of the Past*, ed. Julie M. Schablitsky (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 227.

ideas of human evolution, and displaying both physical and symbolic violence against women and people that belong to non-white races.

According to several websites, the independent film *Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America* (2007), directed by Tony Stone, is a remake of *The Norseman*. The two movies certainly share several similarities. *Severed Ways* is a low-budget production in which Stone cast himself and several friends. It is filmed through a shaky, hand-held camera on location at the farm of Stone's father in Vermont. *The Norseman* begins with an opening scroll that claims the "motion picture is based on fact."[543] *Severed Ways* begins with a quote from the "Vinland sagas."[544] However, it seems unlikely that the two films are related because director Tony Stone openly criticized the Viking aesthetic found in films like *The Vikings* and *The Norseman* in an interview:

> The usual Vikings are depicted as either chain-mailed chieftains or horn-helmeted barbarians. However, the Vikings were way more sophisticated and progressive than people realize. While they did fight when need be, they weren't all the murdering raiders they're made out to be. They're highly skilled carpenters and farmers, who I think we can learn a thing or two from.[545]

Stone challenges the way in which his predecessors presented the Vikings by showing them in a similar light as Sawyer: "just dudes, stuck living in their time."[546] The two main characters in *Severed Ways*—Orn (Stone) and Volnard (Fiore Tedesco)—are Vikings who have been left behind in Vinland. They are shown wandering aimlessly through a forest and perform rather mundane, every-day tasks with the explicit purpose of showing them in a non-violent light. In an attempt to be more "historically accurate," Stone presents the Vikings in hornless helmets and in costumes that are more representative of eleventh-century clothing worn in Northern Europe than the wardrobe featured in *The Vikings* or *The Norseman*.

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[543] *The Norseman*, 0:53.

[544] Stone does not clarify which of the two Vinland sagas this quote comes from, but it seems to refer to Thorfinn Karlsefni's experience in Vinland.

[545] Gabe Toro, "Interview: Tony Stone, 'Severed Ways,'" The Playlist, September 17, 2009, https://theplaylist.net/interview-tony-stone-severed-ways-20090917/. Tony Stone demonstrably refuted the claim that his film was a remake of *The Norseman*. Tony Stone, email to the director, April 20, 2022.

[546] Toro, "Interview: Tony Stone."

The most innovative aspect of *Severed Ways* is its soundtrack. Distancing himself from the brass-heavy sounds of Mario Nascimbene's score in *The Vikings*—which had come to be an industry standard—Stone elected instead to feature heavy metal music.[547] He claimed in an interview: "Heavy metal and vikings have always had this sort of connection—the warrior spirit, the harshness, the visuals of battle, the pagan side."[548] For him, this music made the film more authentic:

> A piece of classical score over Vikings pillaging, there is no connection. Basically there is a subtext in all that music. With black metal, people were listening to it and burning down churches the same way their ancestors were a thousand years ago.[549]

In the film, the Vikings eventually discover two Irish monks and their chapel in the woods of Vinland. Volnard not only burns this church down while heavy metal plays in the background, but the Vikings also headbang to the beat, breaking the fourth wall. Stone's perspective here is shaped by the Norwegian black metal scene of the 1990s in which several musicians and fans burned or attempted to burn down numerous churches around Norway to emulate what they imagined their Viking Age ancestors might have done.[550]

Heavy metal, however, is not the only music genre featured in the film. Stone uses different sounds to signify different groups of people, arguing:

> The tonalities and sentimentality of the Brian Eno theme works as a heathen to Christianity conversion theme. The prog rock of Popul Vuh, which is very beautiful and psychedelic, represented as the Native American, and very pure, Pagan earth sides of things entering the frey [sic].[551]

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[547] For an analysis of music in Viking films, see Emilie Christina Colliar, "'Viking' musical soundtracks: A timeline and questions of authenticity, 2010–2022," MA Thesis, University of Iceland, 2022.

[548] Jeff Reichert, "Tony Stone," Reverse Shot, March 13, 2009, http://www.reverseshot.org/interviews/entry/425/tony-stone.

[549] Jason Guerrasio, "Tony Stone on *Severed Ways*," *Filmmaker Magazine*, March 12, 2009, https://filmmakermagazine.com/4743-severed-ways-by-mike-plante/#.Xyr4khP7TaY.

[550] Justin Davisson, "Extreme Politics and Extreme Metal: Strange Bedfellows or Fellow Travelers?" in *The Metal Void: First Gatherings*, eds. Niall W. R. Scott and Imke Von Helden (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010), 185–186.

[551] Guerrasio, "Tony Stone on *Severed Ways*."

Similar to how Kirk Douglas cast Americans rather than English actors as Vikings, because of their supposed roughness, Stone uses heavier music to underline the Vikings' barbarity and more ethereal, melodic music to denote the Native Americans' "civilized" nature. Through this use of music, he attempts to subvert the portrayal of Native Americans as "savages" found in works like *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* and *The Norseman*. As "barbarians," Orn and Volnard are covered in dirt and leaves, and they slop food and drink down their fronts, resembling the scenes in Ragnar's hall in the 1958 film and leading Harty to describe them as "simply uncouth boors."[552] Desperately hungry, Orn finds a chicken and rips its head off. To demonstrate authenticity, Stone performed this act without the help of special effects. In another uncomfortable scene, Orn squats and defecates; in fact, the camera zooms in on the feces coming out of his anus.

Despite Stone's intentions of showing the more peaceful side of the Vikings in *Severed Ways*, they nevertheless become entangled in the established violent stereotype. It is revealed in a flashback that Volnard has killed at least one person before, while on screen Orn kills a Native American, an Irish monk, and even his companion Volnard. When this last murder is committed, Orn places a sword in Volnard's hand so that he can enter Valhalla, repeating the motif from Fleischer's film. As Orn stumbles hungrily through the woods, a Native American woman (Noelle Bailey) watches him and leaves out food where he can find it. At one point, he eats a pile of berries that paralyzes him. The woman then drags him back to her tent where she ties him up and rapes him. Stone here seems to be attempting to subvert the typical Viking rape motif; yet, the result still links a non-Norse female of the Viking Age to rape.

Only two other female characters appear in flashbacks throughout the film—Volnard's sister and Orn's wife. In one of the few scenes that contains dialogue, Volnard says half-sneering: "You know my sister wanted to be a Christian?"[553] A flashback shows Volnard ripping a crucifix from around his sister's neck before he violently shoves her. He then kills her Christian partner. In this one scene, Stone recycles several tropes: the Vikings hate Christianity, women are associated with Christianity, and Norse men are violent towards women. Stone's attempt to challenge the "Viking discourse" results in female characters either ending up a victim or a villain—just as in Marshall's novels.

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[552] Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!", 116.

[553] *Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America*, directed by Tony Stone (Heathen Films, 2007), 22:38.

Because of its independent release, *Severed Ways* reached a limited audience, and it by no means had the same cultural impact as *The Viking* (1928) and *The Vikings* (1958). But like *The Norseman*, Stone's film provides a window into how filmmakers make use of the "Viking discourse" in their creative works. The presence of the Irish monks in Vinland is particularly illuminating. Was Stone familiar with the "White Man's Land" aspect of the Vinland story, or was he simply recycling the popular belief that the Irish had been in North America during medieval times? Regardless of the intention, through this Irish presence, he ties *Severed Ways* to the "American antiquities" discourse of the nineteenth century that was built on speculations about the United States' white past and its destiny. It should be noted, however, that both Orn and Volnard die in the film, and no Norse "civilization" survives in North America.

Stone clearly tried some alternative approaches to the Viking image; however, he ends up recycling many of the motifs he attempts to avoid. This is less of an accusation against Stone's vision and more of a testament to the power of these associations with the "Viking discourse." A heavy metal soundtrack, human feces, and headless chickens may seem original or even unique, but *Severed Ways* still features issues of race, rape, violence against women, levels of civilization, and white destiny—strengthening the connection between the Vikings and these ideas.

Pathfinder

The same year that *Severed Ways* premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival, Twentieth Century Fox released *Pathfinder* (2007), another Viking-themed film set in North America but with a much bigger budget of around $45 million.[554] Directed by Marcus Nispel, *Pathfinder* begins with written text across the screen that functions as a historical note—emulating *The Viking*, *The Vikings*, *The Norseman*, and *Severed Ways*. But whereas *The Norseman*'s opening scroll claims the film is based on facts, *Pathfinder* begins with the words "What follows is legend."[555] In this way, Nispel and scriptwriter Laeta Kalogridis distanced themselves from "historical accuracy," which, they admitted, they were interested in only "up to a certain

[554] *Pathfinder* was one of the most expensive Viking film made up to that point: "Pathfinder," Internet Movie Data Base, accessed June 12, 2019, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0446013/.

[555] *Pathfinder*, directed by Marcus Nispel (Twentieth Century Fox, 2007), 01:54.

point."[556] The name "Vinland" is never used and the filmmakers shy away from using names or plots from the Vinland sagas. And yet, the film focuses on the interaction between Vikings and indigenous people in medieval North America.[557]

Pathfinder follows the life of Ghost (Karl Urban), who was left in North America as a child by his Viking father after refusing to participate in a Viking raid against the indigenous people. Raised by these same natives, Ghost never fully fits in. He longs to be the next Pathfinder, or shaman. But the current Pathfinder (Russell Means) tells him that he needs first to know who he is and to face the demons of his past. Ghost is forced to confront his background when a group of Vikings returns and attacks the Native Americans. After watching the Vikings kill his father, Ghost kills several Vikings before he is wounded during the fight. He flees gravely injured to the next village where Starfire (Moon Bloodgood), the daughter of Pathfinder, heals him. Once recovered, Ghost doubles back and hides in a forest, using his natural surroundings as camouflage. He sets several booby traps and consequently kills off the Vikings, one by one, in increasingly creative ways.

The Vikings eventually capture Ghost, along with Starfire and Pathfinder. After they torture the latter, Ghost agrees to show the Vikings to where the villagers are hiding but instead take them into the highlands and convinces them to tie themselves together with a rope in case one slips off the path. He manages to push them off the side of a mountain, and, after a dramatic cliff-side battle with the lead Viking Gunnar (Clancy Brown), he creates an avalanche that kills the remaining Vikings. The film ends with Starfire, not Ghost, becoming the next Pathfinder. She is holding what is presumably Ghost's baby, while he is away patrolling the coasts of North America in case more Vikings return.

One of the most noticeable aspects of *Pathfinder* is the physical size of the Vikings.[558] Art director Geoff Wallace and costume designer Renee April placed shoulder pads underneath long black cloaks to increase the actors' bulk, added full cow skulls to the helmets (instead of horns), and adorned their accessories with

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[556] Mark Olsen, "How to Build a Viking. A Very, Very Big Viking," *The New York Times*, May 7, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/07/movies/07olse.html.

[557] There appears to be some discrepancy about whether the film is set "500 years" or "600 years." Five hundred years makes more sense, as it would be closer to the first millennium, when the Vikings would have actually reached the shores of North America. In the Director's Cut, at least, it gives the time as "600 years," which would place the Vikings in Vinland closer to the year 900.

[558] Harty, "Who's Savage Now?!" 115.

sinister-looking spikes.[559] The Vikings ride enormous horses that they bring in their ship, which looks more like a seventeenth-century galley than a Viking Age longship. Nispel and Wallace wanted their Vikings to look big in order to be recognizable. Wallace explained in an interview:

> You don't want to see someone and have an audience member wondering whether it's a Viking, so you have to meld a bit with the common perception of what a Viking should look like. If people these days looked at Vikings the way they were, they'd almost be a little quaint.[560]

Nispel echoes Wallace, worrying that the audience might laugh at how small the Vikings *really* were.[561] The "common perception" here is the popular image created with the help of works of nineteenth-century writers like Anderson, Kingsley, and Horsford, novelists like Liljencrantz and Marshall, and filmmakers like Fleischer. Each of these works positions the Vikings as a dominant group, perhaps not *bigger* but certainly more powerful than others. Furthermore, the Vinland sagas mention that the Norse found the *skrælingjar* to be small. Nispel and his crew seem to combine these ideas and fashion their Vikings into enormous figures capable of genocidal domination.

Nispel wanted *Pathfinder* to give the impression of a graphic novel, so Kalogridis created one with artist Christopher Shy. Intended as promotional material for the film, it was published soon after the movie debuted. The graphic novel also had a "profound impact on the way in which Nispel envisioned the film."[562] Nispel utilizes a monochromatic color scheme that not only gives the movie more of a comic book feel but also highlights the bright crimson color of the blood on screen, of which there is a lot.[563]

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[559] Olsen, "How to Build a Viking."

[560] Olsen, "How to Build a Viking."

[561] Fred Schurers, "Vikings on the Warpath," *American Cinematographer* 87, no. 9 (September 2006): 66.

[562] Roberta Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," in *Vikings on Film*, ed. by Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014), 100.

[563] Several reviewers likened *Pathfinder* to the film *300* (2006), which is filmed with a similar aesthetic and is also based on a graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller. Michael Ordona, "This is Sparta…oh, wait, no it's not," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2007, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-apr-13-et-pathfinder13-story.html; Peter DeBruge, review of *Pathfinder*, directed by Marcus

Nispel borrows heavily from the "Viking discourse," and we can see glimpses of the works by Liljencrantz, Marshall, and Fleischer throughout the film. For instance, when Starfire and Pathfinder track the injured Ghost into a cave, a bear attacks them. But just like Alwin in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* and Ogier in *The Viking*, Ghost misses his chance to prove his worth by killing the beast. Instead, Pathfinder distracts the bear and kills it himself. Later in the film, when the Vikings are deciding whether to trust Ghost's directions to the next village, one of their number sits down and pulls out of his cloak an instrument that appears to be a metallic fish on a chain. It dangles for a moment then points the way north, and the Vikings decide to follow Ghost. This metallic fish, invented by Marshall and used in *The Vikings*, had become part of the "Viking discourse" and is inserted as a tool of the Viking Age, despite it having no real links to Old Norse literature or archaeological discoveries.[564]

Kevin Harty calls *Pathfinder* "little more than testosterone gone wild" because of the amount of graphic violence and its action sequences. Roberta Davidson, who discusses *Pathfinder* in Harty's volume *The Vikings on Film*, agrees, arguing that the film resembles the Rambo franchise of the 1980s.[565] In *Rambo: First Blood: Part Two* (1985), for instance, John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) enters the Vietnamese jungle to rescue several prisoners of war. Near the end of the film, he begins to kill the pursuing Russian and Vietnamese soldiers by using his natural surroundings as camouflage. Shirtless, he hides behind waterfalls, jumps out from behind trees, and covers himself in mud to surprise his enemies. Ghost follows the same pattern in *Pathfinder*. He, too, remains shirtless through much of the film, even though it is set in the mountains of presumably northern North America during the end of winter. He surprises the Vikings by jumping out of a shallow pool of water with a sword, hitting them with spiked logs on vines, and luring them into a cave where he stalks them from the shadows. The result is typically bloody and gruesome.

Starfire demonstrates a surprising amount of agency in comparison to the other female characters analyzed in this study. But even though she helps Ghost kill several Vikings and ends up with the title of Pathfinder, her role in the film is primarily to be the main character's helper and a sexual object—a familiar

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Nispel, *Variety*, April 13, 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/markets-festivals/pathfinder-1200560166/.

[564] According to Edison Jr., the magic fish was his invention. Marshall and Marshall, "Autobiography," 787.

[565] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 99.

stereotype in Viking-themed fiction. Like Helga in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, Starfire nurses the injured hero back to health, but she also gives herself to Ghost, and the two have sexual intercourse in a cave, bringing to mind the sex scenes penned by Marshall. But Starfire also suffers under the threat of rape after she is captured. In one scene resembling Einar's assault on Princess Morgana in *The Vikings*, one of the Vikings licks Starfire's face and then begins to rip off her clothes with the intention of raping. Ghost intervenes just in time to stop this from happening.

Davidson complains that *Pathfinder* "appears to be a non-Native American director's commercial exploitation of Native American history."[566] The filmmakers portray the indigenous tribe that raised Ghost not as the stereotypical "wild" Indians from Hollywood westerns but rather as a simple and ignorant people living in a peaceful utopia.[567] Indeed, Blackwing, Starfire, and Pathfinder are all variations of familiar "Indian" characters of the warrior, the lover, and the medicine man. The filmmakers also present the Vikings as genocidal colonizers intent on settling in the New World—foreshadowing the later European arrivals in America. Discussing the indigenous Americans, a Viking tells his comrade in Old Norse: "Wipe them out and cleanse this land before we settle here."[568] In one scene, a Viking uses the term *skrælingjar* to refer to the Native Americans, just as the Norse do in the Vinland sagas. The word is translated in the subtitles as "savages" rather than the suggested definitions of "weaklings" or "screamers."[569] Near the end of the film, Gunnar yells angrily at Ghost: "You chose savages over your own kind!"[570]

An additional detail about race in *Pathfinder* should be mentioned, as it recycles a common theme found in several earlier Viking films, such as *The Norseman*. At the outset, a native woman—who would go on to adopt Ghost—explores the Viking ships and discovers several bodies in chains in the hull. The camera zooms in on the body of a Black man. It is on screen for only a moment, but this body deserves

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[566] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 100.

[567] This stereotype appeared early on in *Little Big Man* (1970). For an analysis of this film and the portrayal of natives as innocent and peaceful, see Margo Kasdan and Susan Tavernetti, "Native Americans in a Revisionist Western: *Little Big Man* (1970)," in *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 121–136.

[568] *Pathfinder*, 35:31.

[569] For more on the definitions of this term, see chapter 2.

[570] *Pathfinder*, 1:33:42.

further investigation, as it communicates salient issues regarding race and slavery. While archaeological and literary evidence suggests that the medieval Norse did in fact sail to parts of Africa, most scholars agree that they primarily took captives in Eastern Europe or the British Isles and sold them into slavery to the Muslim Caliphates in Africa and the Mediterranean.[571] The Vikings may have taken slaves in Africa, though it seems unlikely that they would have brought them on a journey to North America. First and foremost, this image of a Black body in chains below deck of a large ship recalls the transatlantic slave trade of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.[572]

This detail underlines the Vikings' colonizing efforts by giving them an aesthetic context from a much later historical period. But it also resonates with how Black people have been represented in earlier films taking place in the Viking Age. Thrall in *The Norseman* and Sandpiper in *The Vikings* are enslaved people. In the 1928 *The Viking*, there is even a Black man sitting near Alwin at the slave market. A Black body in chains seems to serve as a visual aid for the idea of slavery in the United States. Moreover, this motif also suggests that the only way in which a Black person could participate in the Viking Age was to be a slave, sealing the period and the concept of the "Vikings" as exclusively white.

The Legacy of the Frontier Viking

Roberta Davidson's observation on the portrayal of the Native Americans in *Pathfinder* was not the first criticism Nispel received regarding racial stereotypes.[573] A similar complaint came up again when he directed the remake of *Friday the 13th* (2009), which some reviewers claimed features "token" Black and Asian

[571] Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000* (London: MacMillan, 1983), 194–196; Clare Downham, "The Viking Slave Trade," *History Ireland* (May/June 2009): 15–17.

[572] On the Viking slave trade and race, see Ben Raffield, "The slave markets of the Viking world: comparative perspectives on an 'invisible archaeology," *Slavery and Abolition* 40, no. 4 (2019), 682–705, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0144039X.2019.1592976; David Pelteret, "The Image of the Slave in Some Anglo-Saxon and Norse Sources," *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no. 2 (July 2002): 75–88; For a discussion on race and slavery in medieval Iceland, see Basil Arnould Price, "Búi and the *blámaðr:* Comprehending racial others in *Kjalnesing saga*," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 11, no. 4 (2020): 442–450.

[573] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 100.

characters.[574] In fact, Nispel has been criticized throughout most of his career for recycling motifs and stereotypes in his movies, most of which are remakes of earlier films. In a review of *Friday the 13th* in *Variety*, Rob Nelson claimed that Nispel lifted ideas and imagery from *Jaws* (1975), *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), and even from his own version of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003).[575] Nispel's only original film was the 2015 horror flick *Exeter*, and even this was criticized for its familiar plot and rehashed clichés.[576] In 2011, *Metacritic.com* listed him as one of the ten worst film directors of the twenty-first century.[577]

Critics like Manhola Davis had similar issues with *Pathfinder*, arguing that Nispel "plagiarizes" *The New World* (2005), which tells the fictionalized love story between Captain John Smith and Pocahontas.[578] Rashid Irani similarly suggested that the Vikings in *Pathfinder* "could be any batch of bad guys hatched by the Hollywood factory."[579] Other critics pointed out the similarities between *Pathfinder* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Michael Ordona commented: "These Vikings are apparently not from North Atlantic regions but the darkest depths of Mordor."[580] Peter DeBruge, who called *Pathfinder* "historical balder-dash," thought the Vikings resembled the orcs found in Ralph Bakshi's cartoon version of *The Lord of the Rings*

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[574] Edward Champion, review of *Friday the 13th*, directed by Marcus Nispel, Reluctant Habits, February 13, 2009, http://www.edrants.com/review-friday-the-13th-2009/.

[575] Rob Nelson, review of *Friday the 13th*, *Variety*, February 12, 2009, https://variety.com/2009/film/markets-festivals/friday-the-13th-2-1200473675/.

[576] Nicholaus Kanute, "Exeter Horror Film Review: A Fast Paced, Seemingly Similar Movie," MediaMilwaukee, July 13, 2018, https://mediamilwaukee.com/opinion/exeter-horror-film-review-a-fast-paced-seemingly-similar-movie; Review of *Exeter*, directed by Marcus Nispel, Culturecrypt, September 3, 2015, https://culturecrypt.com/movie-reviews/exeter-the-asylum-2015; Mike Wilson, "Low Expectations and Dumb Fun is found in 'The Asylum,'" Bloody Disgusting, May 12, 2015, https://bloody-disgusting.com/news/3344163/review-low-expectations-dumb-fun-found-asylum/.

[577] Jason Dietz, "Ranked: The Worst Film Directors of the 21st Century (So Far)," Metacritic, October 13, 2011, https://www.metacritic.com/feature/worst-film-directors-since-2000.

[578] Manhola Davis, "Norsemen of the Apocalypse," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/12/movies/13path.html.

[579] Rashid Irani, review of *Pathfinder*, directed by Marcus Nispel, DNA, April 27, 2007, https://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-movie-review-pathfinder-1093294.

[580] Ordona, "This is Sparta."

(1978).[581] Indeed, one of the Vikings sports a helmet that resembles the helm worn by the Witch King in *The Return of the King* (2003). Furthermore, Starfire treats Ghost's wounds in a majestic-looking tree house that similarly recalls the elf houses in Lothlórien seen in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001).

Pathfinder was also a remake of an earlier movie. Instead of putting a new spin on a horror film classic, Nispel "remade" the celebrated 1987 Norwegian film, *Ofelaš* (translated as *Pathfinder*), written and directed by Nils Gaup. Nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign film, *Ofelaš*, according to Davidson, "has been identified as a part of the Sami revitalization movement […] it celebrates […] the survival of the Sami themselves and their resistance to the linguistic and cultural hegemony of Norway."[582] Indeed, Davidson argues that one would hardly recognize Nispel's *Pathfinder* as a remake if he hadn't chosen the same name.[583] It is difficult to gauge how accurate this is, as these two films were targeted toward very different audiences. The plots of both movies, however, are rather similar.

Ofelaš, based on a Sámi folktale, follows a boy named Aigin (Mikkel Gaup) who returns from a hunting trip to discover that the Tchude, a group of marauders from the far North who allegedly descend from the Vikings, have killed the people of his village. Wounded, Aigin escapes to a neighboring village where the local shaman, or Pathfinder, heals him. Together, they return to stop the Tchude from advancing. After the invaders capture and torture the Pathfinder, Aigin agrees to show them the way. He leads them into the mountains where he convinces them to tie themselves together with a rope. Aigin then throws his torch off a cliff and the Tchude stumble down after it. As they try to climb over one another, an avalanche buries them. Aigin comes down the mountain and meets the villagers who anoint him the next Pathfinder.

We can see the similarities in the storylines: an invading force that demands to go to the next village, a local shaman, and a passage into the mountains where the villains are tied together with a rope. But the messages of the two films are extremely different. *Ofelaš* is a story of belonging and inclusion in the face of adversity and danger, as the Sámi boy saves his people and finds his place in the community. The Pathfinder in Gaup's film teaches Aigin that everything is part of a whole and that every person is a child of the great family. The Tchude, he says, have

[581] DeBruge, review of *Pathfinder*.
[582] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 98.
[583] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 99.

lost their way and forgotten that they are tied to a greater whole.[584] Nispel's *Pathfinder* is, on the other hand, told from the perspective of an outsider rather from the point of view of the indigenous community. The Vikings, who are clearly the villains, speak in Old Norse. Instead of speaking in Algonquin or a similar North-East indigenous American language, the Native Americans speak in English, the language of their eventual colonizers.[585] Ghost struggles to find his place in the community and does not become the Pathfinder. The focus of the 2007 film is on violence, both perpetrated by the Vikings against the Native Americans and by Ghost against the Vikings. Critic Scott A. Gray remarks: "What the viewer is left with instead of an actual movie is essentially one man's sick vision of sanctified gore porn. The loosely stitched together plot is just an excuse for hellish Vikings to gruesomely slaughter villages full of natives."[586]

Davidson suggests that "if it hadn't been for Ghost [a European] conquest would have happened a lot earlier."[587] Ghost buys the Native Americans more time and continues to patrol the coasts in case of further invasions. Because he is a white outsider that works to protect the Native Americans, he fits the profile of the "white savior." In his 2014 book, *The White Savior on Film*, Matthew W. Hughey claims that the white savior trope is

> so widespread that varied intercultural and interracial relations are often guided by a logic that racializes and separates people into those who are redeemers (whites) and those who are redeemed or in need of redemption (nonwhites). Such imposing patronage enables an interpretation of nonwhite characters and culture as essentially broken, marginalized, and pathological, while whites can emerge as messianic characters that easily fix the nonwhite pariah with their superior moral and mental abilities.[588]

The trope, Hughey explains, typically shows a white character becoming immersed in a nonwhite culture that appears threatened, learning their way of life, and eventually turning his back his former culture to defend the perceived weaker non-

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[584] *Ofelaš*, directed by Nils Gaup (Filmkameratene A/S, 1987), 40:18.

[585] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 100.

[586] Scott A. Gray, review of *Pathfinder*, directed by Marcus Nispel, exclaim!, July 19, 2007, http://exclaim.ca/film/article/pathfinder-marcus_nispel.

[587] Davidson, "Different Pathfinders, Different Destinations," 101.

[588] Matthew W. Hughey, *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 2.

white group.[589] *Pathfinder* appears on Hughey's list of the hundreds of films that use this trope. Ghost becomes "like" the Native Americans, who are seemingly helpless against the Vikings—Ghost's former cultural group. When some of the native warriors wish to defend themselves, Ghost demonstrates the futility of their arrows against the armor and swords of the Vikings. The warriors ignore his advice and inadvertently stumble into one of his booby traps, resulting in the gruesome deaths of many—further emphasizing their ignorance and vulnerability in the film.

Ghost is, in many ways, undertaking the "white man's burden" by rescuing what appear to be helpless natives. Hughey claims that terms like "noble savage," "manifest destiny," and indeed "white man's burden" "refer to previous iterations of the complex relationship between the tropes of the white savior and the dysfunctional and dark "other" in need of saving."[590] One of the most recognizable "previous iterations" of the white savior trope is Natty Bumppo. Ghost, like Bumppo, is born to white parents but raised by Native Americans. He grows up to become one of the community's best hunters. But Ghost never fully belongs with the tribe. He is, much like Bumppo, of "two peoples, he was neither, yet he was both."[591]

Coincidentally, James Fenimore Cooper's fourth installment of *The Leatherstocking Tales* is also named *The Pathfinder; Or, the Inland Sea* (1840). In this story, Bumppo once again leads a white female—this time Mabel Dunham—through the dangerous wilderness. The plots of these two *Pathfinders* have little in common; yet some aspects of this chapter of Bumppo's life appear in Nispel's film. For instance, Bumppo uses his natural surroundings as camouflage as he makes his way toward a British fort on Lake Ontario just as Ghost disguises himself by hiding in caves, bogs, and in trees. For the first time in his life, Bumppo considers settling down because of his affection for the young Mabel. However, she chooses to marry another man, leaving Bumppo to continue his life on the frontier, where he can flit back and forth between "civilized" society and the wilderness. We get the impression that this is also Ghosts's fate. Although he has a family, he appears to leave them for lengths of time as he penetrates the wilderness.

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[589] Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, 28.

[590] Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, 8. For more on the history and use of the term "noble savage," see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

[591] *Pathfinder*, 1:42:06.

James E. Swearingen and Joanne Cutting-Gray argue that Cooper's novel "represents neither an actual past nor a transition within such a past. […] By means of such historical reflection the narrative rewrites history and puts the reader in a different time, a different span of history."[592] Cooper "restructures the historical narrative" of colonial America in order to make its history more appealing to white readers.[593] The same is true of the white savior films, which, according to Hughey, "subtly rewrite historical events so that white colonizers, paternalistic controllers, and meddling interlopers seem necessary, relevant, and moral."[594]

Each of the films discuss in this chapter is based in some degree on the narrative details found in Vinland sagas. The evidence for the brief moment in history when the medieval Norse walked on the North American continent is limited and invites speculation and fantasy from authors and filmmakers. Pierce, Stone, and Nispel create a space that is not historical but *feels* historical; in essence, they create a different historical timeline by stitching together pieces of the "Viking discourse" with familiar ideas of America's past, such as Black slavery, Indian wars, and colonization—a past that was written by and for white Americans.

These filmmakers also tap into distinctly American stereotypes and discourses and indeed make the Vinland story more appealing to a white North American audience. These films are built upon, deliberately or unconsciously (or even a combination of both), the structural racism that is endemic in modern American society and furthered a white narrative that had been cultivated in the United States during the nineteenth century and continued to linger in the corners of American literature. In *The Norseman*, Pierce uses the captivity narrative formula, presenting Thorvald as a cowboy who fights off violent Indians. Elements of the "American antiquities" discourse appear in *Severed Ways* when Orn and Volnard encounter the Irish monks. Ghost in *Pathfinder* is a Viking frontiersman. His character is arguably more like the Boone/Bumppo narrative than any discussed so far. He is both a skilled and solitary hunter, a white savior, and a man born to white parents but raised by Native Americans. And it is no coincidence that he is captured and manages to escape. As long as filmmakers like Nispel continue to use the captivity narrative structure and model their heroes after Boone and Bumppo, the Vikings will

[592] James E. Swearingen and Joanne Cutting-Gray, "Cooper's Pathfinder: Revising Historical Understanding," *New Literary History* 23, no. 2, Revising Historical Understanding (Spring 1992): 276.

[593] Swearingen and Cutting-Gray, "Cooper's Pathfinder," 269.

[594] Hughey, *White Savior Films,* 65.

continue to reflect the ideals that shaped not the physical American frontier but the one that was romanticized, racialized and politicized in American fiction.

The Black Viking and the Ice-Hearts

As discussed already, people of color—particularly Native Americans and Black people—have been routinely relegated to specific stereotypes in Viking-themed fiction and films produced in the United States. Some prejudices do not appear on screen. In an attempt to save some money on *Pathfinder*, for instance, costume designer Renee April reused indigenous costumes from *Black Robe* (1991), which focuses on the seventeenth-century Iroquois—quite possibly a very different tribe from the one encountered six hundred years before.[595] Black bodies, as I have noted, have been routinely used to represent slavery in U.S. popular culture. But in 1981, journalist Bill Downey attempted to provide a different perspective. Known for *Uncle Sam Must Be Losing the War* (1982), one of the first autobiographies of a Black marine's experience fighting in World War II, Downey spent most of his life teaching and writing for newspapers around Santa Barbara, California.[596] His only novel, *Black Viking*, is mostly forgotten, but it was one of the first attempts by an American to write a Black man into the Viking Age as a warrior rather than a thrall.

Black Viking is a story of revenge centered on Gunnar Hasteinsson, a Viking born to a Moorish Muslim named Bila who had been captured by a Norwegian jarl. As an adult, Gunnar goes on a Viking expedition and returns to find his wife brutally murdered by Rognvald, the Earl of Moer. The rest of the story details Gunnar's relentless pursuit of his wife's killer across Europe. In France, Gunnar kidnaps a nun named Guinelle, and the two fall in love. After Gunnar kills Rognvald, the lovers return to Norway where Guinelle wishes to continue a life of Christian missionary work, despite marrying a pagan Viking.

Black skin does not signify slavery in the novel but is rather heralded as good fortune. Mingus, the shipmaster who hires Gunnar as an apprentice, tells Bila: "Your dark skin is the color of Odin and most of their magic as well. We skalds tell of good luck that comes from a distant black tribe in the north, and seeing you here is

[595] Olsen, "How to Build a Viking."

[596] Alex Haley, "Uncle Sam Must Be Losing the War (1981)," Alex Haley, accessed January 12, 2019, https://alexhaley.com/2019/01/31/uncle-sam-must-be-losing-the-war-1981/.

enough to make them believe one of their Viking myths has come true."[597] Downey also hints that the Vikings in his novel occupy a lower tier in a hierarchy of civilization, while the Muslim Moors are near the top: "Bila thought privately that the vikings were merely a higher form of animal, but Mingus explained that they were accomplished in their own primitive manner" (23).

It is unclear how well-acquainted Downey was with the "Viking discourse" and its roots in the racist rhetoric of the nineteenth century. He rarely addresses, challenges, or subverts racial connotations associated with the Viking image, which suggests that he was unaware of the reception history of Old Norse literature in the United States. Instead, Downey includes Black stereotypes in *Black Viking*—most notably the white fear of the "overly endowed" black rapist.[598] When the archbishop of France first sees Gunnar, the "darkness of Gunnar's skin, his unusual gray eyes, and his insolent manner increased the bishop's fear that his niece had surely been ravished" (237). Elsewhere in the novel, Downey directs the readers' attention to Gunnar's "heavy black balls" (189) and his penis, "which appeared as large as a stallion's" (111). By channeling white fears of black masculinization, Downey presents Gunnar as more (primitively) masculine than the other (white) Vikings.

Downey's perspective on violence in the Viking Age resembles Sawyer's viewpoint when he writes: "There was little malice or vengeance in [the Vikings'] methodical sacking of the city. For them it was a harvest and no more deadly than one of the Frankish forces taking a Viking city" (193). However, Downey picks up where Marshall left off and includes an egregious amount of sexual violence in his novel. Early on, Gunnar's father, Hastein, "inspects" a teenage girl who had been captured during a Viking raid: "Wetting his heavy middle finger with saliva, he parted her youthful pubic hair and forced his finger into her vagina" (17).[599] Surprisingly, the captain of Gunnar's ship uses this same tactic on a young male he

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[597] Bill Downey, *Black Viking* (New York: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1981), 24. Hereafter, the page numbers of the novel will appear in the text.

[598] Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 14–15, 95–107. For reading on the myth of the black rapist, see for instance George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); David Pilgrim, "The Brute Caricature," *Jim Crow Museum*, accessed February 12, 2022, https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/brute/homepage.htm.

[599] This imagery is repeated when one of Rognvald's sons sexually assaults Guinelle. He "indulged his perversity with lecherous pryings of dirt-roughened fingers into her private parts" (307).

finds at a slave market. He "felt with a finger to determine how harshly the youth had been used. This done, he was especially pleased and his harsh face was creased with one of his very rare smiles" (172).

Sexual violence thus appears commonplace in this fictional Viking Age, and Downey, like Marshall, suggests that some women enjoy being raped. Recalling his sexual conquests abroad, Hastein says: "in the Hebrides, I kept only the young wives [who] pretended to themselves that I was their husband when I took them, thus denying that they enjoyed what I gave them" (29–30). After a battle, Gunnar attempts to rape a woman, but he proves impotent. Charmed by his gentleness, she becomes disappointed when he stops. And when he first sleeps with Guinelle, the nun "begged him to stop, but her pleas merely drove him on. Slowly, the tempo of desire expanded until he became a Viking ship invading a helpless shore" (267).

Downey introduces a facet of the rape stereotype that had not been seen very much in the "Viking discourse" up to that point: the threat of male-on-male rape. Gunnar keeps in his entourage a man named Gorp, who has an enormous penis. At one point, the Vikings capture a man named Rama who refuses to give Gunnar certain information. Gorp gives himself an erection while "cold seal oil was generously painted over Rama's anus" (139). Before Gorp can anally rape the captive, Rama tells the Vikings what they want, proving this to be an effective form of persuasion.

Downey's Viking image departs from Marshall's when it comes to religion, however. Gunnar and his crew appear to harbor no "deathless hate" toward Christianity. On the contrary, Gunnar and Guinelle have little trouble reconciling their religious differences. He finds Christianity to be similar to his mother's Muslim faith and does not seem troubled that she is intent on continuing her Christian ministries in Scandinavia. The novel ends with Guinelle saying to her lover: "God is good." Gunnar responds: "Yes, Guinelle, God is good. Thor does truly smile" (316).

Black Viking in many ways follows the pattern of a typical Viking adventure that came before it. The hero, Gunnar, comes from two different cultures. He demonstrates the ability for self-control when he ceases raping the female victim but particularly in his relationship with Guinelle. When she asks to sleep with him for warmth, Gunnar asks: "What about your faith?" and Guinelle responds: "You will not touch me" (256–257). Indeed, the night passes without incident. More striking is his Bumppo-like demeanor in which he condemns violent actions but understands

that those of a different "nature" might want to commit them. Gunnar commands his crew not to murder the vulnerable and weak: "'I make no judgment of those who have this lust for the blood of women and children,' Gunnar shouted. 'But for those of you who stay with this hird, let it be known that my rules will not be broken'" (190–191). *Black Viking* also features a white female taken captive—in this case by the hero—and the two fall in love, not unlike Alwin who falls in love with Helga, who has purchased him as a slave, or Morgana, who is kidnapped by Ogier but eventually falls in love with him.

Downey is clearly familiar with some aspects of the Viking Age. He leaves historical signposts throughout *Black Viking*, such as repeating a widely held belief that one of the reasons for Viking expansion stemmed from the lack of opportunities in Scandinavia for younger sons after the eldest brother inherited the family land.[600] But *Black Viking* more generally gives the impression that it is stitched together from pieces of the "Viking discourse," particularly the sexually violent stereotype that Marshall had favored. *Black Viking* failed to gain the attention of either critics or consumers. In one of the few reviews that I could find, literary critic Don Strachan questions the way the Vikings talk in the novel—but his criticism is more indicative of some of the overarching issues of the "Viking discourse":

> Do Vikings talk like stage Indians? Actually, we are more likely to choke in the dust of their bombast. But don't blame Downey: That's what Valhallamongering is all about. Vikings are less Indians than cowboys of the icy fjords, and they hold the same adolescent appeal.[601]

By the time Downey wrote *Black Viking*, the Vikings had indeed turned into medieval cowboys, and his reliance on the "Viking discourse"—particularly using many of the same ideas as Marshall—overshadows the research he put into the novel.

A very different approach to the Viking image appeared nearly a decade later when Joseph Bruchac, an indigenous American of Abenaki descent, recreated a part of the Vinland saga in his short story "The Ice-Hearts"—a tale based on oral

[600] At the start of the book, Downey gives credit to the work of Erik Wahlgren, a respected scholar who wrote extensively on the Vikings in America and who disputed the veracity of the Kensington Rune Stone.

[601] Don Strachan, review of *Black Viking*, by Bill Downey, *The Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 1981.

material the author gathered from Abenaki elders.[602] The story is narrated by an indigenous man named Fox Looking Around whose unnamed tribe is attacked by a group of foreign men he calls Ice-Hearts:

> Ice was frozen to their faces, frozen in the hair that covered their faces. Their clothing was grey and hard, the color of flint. They carried long knives and big axes shiny as ice. And their hearts, it seemed, were made of ice, too, for they came down on our peaceful village and killed, the coldness of ice in their sky-colored eyes. They killed and stole food and then vanished back into the storm which seemed to have given them birth.[603]

Bruchac's story is one of few, or perhaps the only, written narratives from an indigenous American about the Norse encounter.[604] And although Bruchac never explicitly says the Ice-Hearts are Vikings, he leaves several clues. For instance, they call the indigenous tribe "Sgah-lay-leens," which is a mishearing of the Old Norse word for the Native Americans, *skrælingjar*.[605]

At first it appears as though Bruchac reverses the colonial language used by Liljencrantz and that found in *Pathfinder*. When he hears the Ice-Hearts speak, Fox Looking Around says: "It was hard to believe a human being could make such sounds. These sounds made some of our people wonder if these strange men were from the world of spirits."[606] After they manage to capture two Ice-Hearts, the tribe debates what to do next. Many think the Ice-Hearts should be put to death for the murders they committed. But Fox Looking Around sees the potential of their captives. He argues that maybe "they can learn to talk like real human beings."[607] Indeed, the shared humanity is underlined earlier in the story when the natives surround the two Ice-Hearts. A warrior named Big Duck farts, which makes both the

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[602] "The Ice-Hearts" was part of a collection of short stories published in 1992 titled *Turtle Meat and Other Stories.* As Kolodny points out, this date of the publication is significant as it marks the 500-year anniversary of Columbus's "discovery." Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 324.

[603] Joseph Bruchac, "The Ice-Hearts," in *Turtle Meat and Other Stories* (Duluth: Holy Cow! Press, 1992), 3.

[604] Kolodny suggests that this is because the trauma of the later European encounters were far more significant for Native Americans than this brief, medieval meeting. Kolodny, 318–325.

[605] Bruchac, "The Ice-Hearts," 7; Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 316–317.

[606] Bruchac, "The Ice-Hearts," 4.

[607] Bruchac, "The Ice-Hearts," 7.

Ice-Hearts and natives laugh, and for a moment, they forget their differences and grievances. Fox Looking Around eventually convinces the tribe that these men could be valuable to the community. The two captives are set free, receive new names—Woodpecker and Bear Chest—and eventually marry native women. The traditional civilization hierarchy found in these adventures is thus subverted, as people from different cultures appear to occupy the same tier.

"The Ice-Hearts" is yet another captivity narrative, in a sense. Native Americans have captured white Europeans; however, Woodpecker and Bear Chest never escape to bring knowledge from the tribe to a white colony, nor do they become characters molded after Boone or Bumppo that live between the wilderness and civilization. Annette Kolodny argues that Bruchac successfully subverts this motif because in "*this* captivity narrative, there is valuable knowledge to be gained from *both* cultures."[608] Woodpecker and Bear Chest contribute to the community, which in turns provides the outsiders with a new life and a home.

Bruchac avoids several of the typical adventure elements: there is no frontier hero, no suggestion of ideal masculinity, and no indication of race. He tells the story from the perspective of an indigenous character so that themes like the white savior trope do not appear in the story. Moreover, Bruchac does not apply later colonial language to the medieval encounter. Woodpecker in fact makes an ominous prophecy about the forthcoming colonization: "I think more people will die next time. You will have to fight and keep on fighting for a long time."[609] The Ice-Hearts are not heroic discoverers or explorers but rather desperate and hungry travelers who should be responded to with understanding rather than violence. By presenting the Norse and Native American confrontation in this way, "The Ice-Hearts" successfully challenges the typical Viking image that had been molded by the American adventure story. It conveys a message of inclusiveness, of survival, of acceptance, and mercy—ideas that have, over the centuries, become antithetical to the Viking image.[610]

[608] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 318–321.
[609] Bruchac, "The Ice-Hearts," 8.
[610] Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact*, 325.

Conclusion

There has been an uptick in the amount of Viking films, television series, and fiction in the past fifteen years, as Norse figures and their exploits in the Middle Ages continue to fascinate contemporary audiences. Any of these could be analyzed in relation to the authors' treatment of race, gender, and civilization, and each work would have varying degrees of historical accuracy, authenticity, literary accuracy, and creative invention. I chose the films and pieces of fiction for analysis in this chapter in order to underline how these same ideas—such as the hierarchies of human civilization—are recycled and how they at times appear different. But most often these works send the same message: the Vikings must be white, masculine, and dominant, but the Viking Age can be pieced together by borrowing from other discourses or genres. Just as nineteenth-century American writers discussed Vinland through the "American antiquities" discourse, twenty-first century filmmakers and authors have presented the Vikings as cowboys (*The Norseman*), as church-burning metal heads (*Severed Ways*), or as a Rambo-type hero (*Pathfinder*).

Even the recent 2022 film *The Northman*, directed by Robert Eggers, falls into certain stereotypes and traps associated with the "Viking discourse." Eggers and his crew claimed that this was the most "historically accurate" Viking film made to date—echoing a claim made by Kirk Douglas and Robert Fleischer some fifty years before.[611] Departing from many previous Viking films, both the protagonist and the antagonist are Norse; however, the Vikings can be seen early in the film attacking a Slavic village, carrying off women, burning children alive, and taking many villagers as slaves. And while the Vikings' longships, costumes, set design, and other details are more realistic than other Viking films and the Norse aspect has been clearly well-researched, the Slavic group in *The Northman* receive far less attention. Even before becoming slaves, they are all dressed in white—a nondescript and uniform other. The language they speak is a clutter of modern and pre-modern Slavic languages. Costume designer Linda Muir admitted to watching a video from a Russian museum's website and having one of the film's producers translate it in order to fashion some of the Slavic costumes—rather than consulting Eastern

[611] Shannon Connellan, "How accurate is 'The Northman' to Viking history? Well, it's a Robert Eggers film," Mashable, April 20, 2022, https://mashable.com/article/the-northman-viking-history-alexander-skarsgard-robert-eggers#:~:text=%22It's%20a%20Robert%20Eggers%20film,was%20surprisingly%20easy%20to%20row.

European scholars and archaeologists.[612] With all the focus on the accuracy of the Vikings, *The Northman*, like many of its predecessors, introduces a structure of dominance that highlights the Vikings' physical and cultural superiority over others.

More importantly, the filmmakers made a subtle change to the medieval story of Amleth—the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Instead of pretending to be mad to escape from his murderous uncle, Amleth of the movie puts on iron chains and becomes a slave to hide his identity.[613] While this is most likely the easiest means of getting an outlaw into the inner circle of his uncle's household, Amleth is a slave to the Vikings—just like Ogier and Alwin. He is set on revenge, just like Gunnar, the Black Viking. And his acts are extremely violent, like Ghost's. But just as in *The Viking*, Amleth's violence is excused because he fights for freedom, against injustice, and for the love of yet another non-Scandinavian woman.

[612] Liam Hess, "How *The Northman*'s Costume Designer Brought the Viking World to Bold, Breathtaking Life," *Vogue*, April 25, 2022, https://www.vogue.com/article/the-northman-costume-designer-linda-muir-interview.

[613] For a discussion of the relationship between the medieval saga, Shakespeare's play, and the film, see David Crow, "The Northman, Hamlet, and the Story Both Are Based On," Den of Geek, May 13, 2022, https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/the-northman-hamlet-story-both-based-on/.

Epilogue

On January 6, 2021, a group of extremists stormed the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. in protest of the 2020 presidential election results, and the riot resulted in smashed out windows, stolen property, and the tragic deaths of five people. Standing out amid the heavily armed, masked protestors was a shirtless man waving an American flag and wearing a hat made of fur that featured large bull horns and what appeared to be buckskin pants. Several reporters, such as Alexander Mallin and Olivia Rubin for ABC News, saw these horns and commented that the man—identified later as Jake Angeli, alias the QAnon Shaman—resembled a Viking. [614] In fact, Angeli's bare skin features three Norse-themed tattoos: Yggdrasill, the World Tree from Norse mythology; Mjölnir, Thor's hammer; and the Valknut, an Old Norse symbol that has been associated with Odin but has been appropriated by racist pagans.[615]

But Angeli's outfit did not so much resemble a stereotypical Viking costume as a frontiersman. Davy Crockett famously wore a similar-looking coonskin hat during his adventures, while he, Natty Bumppo and Daniel Boone donned the same type of buckskin-style trousers. The impact of the frontier hero, the western cowboy, and the adventure genre in general on the "Viking discourse" had, over the years, made these figures interchangeable with the Viking. The groundwork for these associations began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as writers and intellectuals like John Filson and Josiah Priest began to weave the Vinland story into the search for America's non-native past. As I have shown, Carl Christian Rafn presented his research in a way that would specifically appeal to this narrative of a white U.S. pre-history. The responses by Rasmus B. Anderson and William Gilmore Simms are evidence that the Vinland story was received in this way.

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[614] Alexander Mallin and Olivia Rubin, "'QAnon Shaman' pleads guilty to felony charge for role in Jan. 6 Capitol riot," ABC News, September 3, 2021, https://abcnews.go.com/US/qanon-shaman-pleads-guilty-felony-charge-role-jan/story?id=79821976.

[615] The ADL lists both Mjölnir and the Valknut as possible hate symbols. See for instance "Thor's Hammer," ADL, May 30, 2016, https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/thors-hammer.

By the time Ottilie Liljencrantz began writing *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, the Vikings had already become associated with adventure, heroism, and independence. But by presenting the Vikings through the American adventure genre—and particularly by utilizing the Boone/Bumppo narrative to construct her characters—Liljencrantz strengthened the link between the image of the Viking and the characteristics and the ideology that the frontier hero represented: manifest destiny, empire building, levels of civilization, white superiority, and ideas of manliness. By the middle of the twentieth century, Edison Marshall not only presented the Vikings through the adventure genre but also constructed them out of popular knowledge—the ideas that people like Rafn, Anderson, and Liljencrantz had helped to create. Accordingly, many of the same elements were present in *The Viking* as in *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*: ideas of racial superiority, manliness, a lack of female agency, and a civilization hierarchy.

But writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Edison Marshall's Vikings also reflect contemporary masculine ideals; they are more violent and more promiscuous than those that appeared in Liljencrantz's fiction or the 1928 film. This can be partially attributed to the values that arose after the cultural shift. Masculinity became a part of the adventure hero's aesthetic; however, we can still see remnants of the nineteenth-century model in Ogier's ability to abstain from raping Morgana in *The Viking* or their "rough and ribald chivalry" when his Vikings sexually assault the Saracen women. This change in perceptions of manhood at the end of the nineteenth century allowed the Viking image to grow increasingly violent, dominant, and masculine. Whereas Liljencrantz's Vikings are indeed mostly peaceful Christian explorers, Marshall would come to see Christianity and the Vikings as oppositional. Even his treatment of Leif Eriksson, who was in fact a Christian, reflects this binary.

Although the costumes and demeanor of the Vikings change over the years, two factors remain consistent in Viking-themed fiction and film during the twentieth and twenty-first century: dominance over others and a justification or excuse for their domination. Liljencrantz and Marshall both use slavery or captivity as a means to justify the main characters' violence. Philosopher Eric Reitan claims: "it is morally permissible to do violence to another human being only if that person is an unjust aggressor—where an 'unjust aggressor' is understood to be someone who is presently inflicting or preparing to inflict injuries unjustly."[616] Both Alwin and Ogier

[616] Eric Reitan, "The Moral Justification of Violence: Epistemic Considerations," *Social Theory and Practice* 28, no. 3 (July 2002): 447.

lose their freedom to an unjust aggressor; thus, any acts of violence against their captors would be justified.[617]

In *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky*, the Vikings are physically superior to the English and culturally superior to the Skraellings. But Liljencrantz excuses the physical or symbolic violence of the Vikings at the beginning of the novel by pointing out that the "Anglo-Saxon race" and the Vikings were still in their "boyhood"—meaning, they did not know any better. Marshall's Vikings physically dominate the English, the Saracens, and women in general. But the "last of the heathens" motif allows Marshall to justify the Vikings' physical violence: the inevitable spread of Christianity, which threatens the traditional Viking way of life.

This trend continues in the later films. Thorvald and his Viking crew in *The Norseman* appears as physically and culturally superior to the Native Americans. Moreover, the Vikings' violence is justified because they are rescuing white captives. Orn and Volnard in *Severed Ways* are quite literally the last of the heathen Vikings left in North America. Ghost is presented in *Pathfinder* as superior to his native community, while simultaneously dominating the Vikings. While he is briefly held captive, his violence is excused because he is protecting a perceived less able group of people. Gunnar dominates every opponent and group he comes up against in *Black Viking*, and his revenge is justified because of the atrocities committed against his wife.

In every work of fiction and film considered in this thesis, the Vikings are white—with the lone exception of Thrall in *The Norseman*. In some cases, they are civilized while most authors and filmmakers present them as barbarians, and this mostly corresponds with the period of the cultural shift in the United States. In each of the works discussed here, with the exception of "The Ice-Hearts," the Vikings dominate other groups of people, either through direct or symbolic violence. Indeed, every account of rape described in these works involves a Viking male and a female of a different culture. Positioning the Vikings as white saviors or "last of the heathens," therefore, creates an image of the Vikings as necessary heroes or tragic underdogs. And, as these aspects became cemented into the "Viking discourse,"

[617] Bernard Gert, "Justifying Violence," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 19, Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division (Oct. 1969): 617–618.

those who borrow (un)knowingly include, as Ruth Wodak would argue, structures of dominance.[618]

Romanticizing them in this way has had real-life consequences. I would like to revisit the quote by Felix Harcourt about the Ku Klux Klan: "In celebrating the racial violence of Southern white men in the past, popular novelists shaped a contemporary white supremacist masculinity that welcomed the resurgent Klan movement of the 1920s."[619] One can see the same trend with the "Viking discourse" throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. For instance, Stephen McNallen, the founding father of Norse paganism and the Asatru religious group in the U.S., has had a history of instilling racist ideology into his belief system, believing that only those of Northern Germanic descent has the right to worship the Norse gods.[620] He even allegedly attended the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.[621] McNallen adheres to the "last of the heathens" motif, believing that his ancestors were "colonized and exploited" by Christianity.[622] But the spark that ignited McNallen's interest in the Old Norse religion wasn't scholarship, racism, or even a Northern Germanic ancestry; it was Edison Marshall's *The Viking*.[623] This is not to say that Marshall is responsible for McNallen's

[618] Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is about—a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 3.

[619] Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 83.

[620] Jennifer Snook, *American Heathens: The Politics of Identity in a Pagan Religious Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 149–150; Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 269–273.

[621] It is unclear whether McNallen actually went to the rally. Some sources place him on the scene, such as Sarah Lyons, "Racists Are Threatening to Take Over Paganism," Vice, April 2, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en/article/59kq93/racists-are-threatening-to-take-over-paganism; and Ryan Sabalow, "The Racists Next Door: Inside a California Church That Preaches a Whites-Only Gospel," Pulitzer Center, November 9, 2021, https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/racists-next-door-inside-california-church-preaches-whites-only-gospel. Other sources suggest he merely supported the rally through social media.

[622] Stephen A. McNallen, *Asatru: A Native European Spirituality* (Nevada City: Runestone Press, 2015), 183–184.

[623] Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions," in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 197.

ideology but rather to highlight, in Norman Fairclough's words, "the interconnectedness of things."[624] Marshall taps into certain aspects of the "Viking discourse" that would appeal to someone like McNallen—hints of manifest destiny, white superiority, and the threat of "effeminate" civilization.

Another figure in the Norse neo-pagan scene who has ties to white separatism is Jack Donovan, a leader of the heathen group The Wolves of Vinland.[625] While he shares some of the same convictions as McNallen, Donovan is more concerned with tribal living and a return to a primitive masculinity. Printed on the back of his 2015 book, *Becoming a Barbarian*, is the phrase: "Civilization is Overrated." Indeed, the focus of the book is how, in Donovan's opinion, modern Western civilization has made men "soft" and effeminate. Scattered throughout the book are runes, quotes from Old Norse literature, and a romantic vision of the Old North past. Members of the Wolves of Vinland adopt Old Norse names, recreate presumed Viking-Age rituals, and dress in medieval garb. They wrestle and participate in medieval games and sports.[626]

In the same way that Martin Green sees Theodore Roosevelt as the "locus of adventure," Donovan is, in my opinion, the locus of the contemporary "Viking discourse" in the United States. Indeed, if one replaces his pagan beliefs with Christianity, the result would be akin to Kingsley's muscular Christianity. Kingsley believed that men belonged in teams and that violence "becomes a sanctified force of male behavior, a definitive quality of 'real' men."[627] In his book, *The Way of Men* (2012), Donovan asks: "What are men supposed to do when there's no land to settle and no one to fight?"[628] The question echoes Roosevelt's and Frederick Jackson Turner's concerns as the frontier disappeared. Donovan worries over the modern

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[624] Norman Fairclough, "Critical and Descriptive Goals in Discourse Analysis," *Journal of Pragmatics* 9, no. 6 (1985): 747.

[625] "A Chorus of Violence: Jack Donovan and the Organizing Power of Male Superiority," SPLC, March 27, 2017, https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/03/27/chorus-violence-jack-donovan-and-organizing-power-male-supremacy.

[626] Verena Höfnig, "Vinland and White Nationalism," in *From Iceland to the Americas,* eds. Tim Machan and Jón Karl Helgason (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 81.

[627] David Rosen, "The volcano and the cathedral: muscular Christianity and the origins of primal manliness," in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22–26.

[628] Jack Donovan, *The Way of Men* (Milwaukee, OR: Dissonant Hum, 2012), 93.

state of manhood. And like Carlyle and Kingsley, he looks to Old Norse literature as a means to "rediscover" what manhood was *meant* to look like. The Wolves of Vinland live off the grid in a pseudo-tribal community far from the "domestication of women" where "manliness and honor matter again."[629] This removal from society has a certain Bumppo-esque "white flight from civilized unmanliness."[630]

I have shown in this study that in these works of historical fiction and film, the Vikings have committed acts of physical violence against other groups of people that are perceived as inferior. Whether they are women, Black slaves, Native Americans, or the English, the Vikings have been presented as dominant—physically or culturally. This has created forms of structural violence in the fictional Viking Age. But because the story of Vinland has become so entangled to the American discovery narrative, this structural violence and hierarchy has been supplanted from the pages of fiction, scholarship, or speculation to represent a dominant American past. Viking-themed fiction and film continue to excuse both physical and structural violence without considering the real-life consequences, which were seen, for instance, at the Unite the Right Rally in 2017. The Old Norse runes and medieval Norse aesthetic were not prominent—but still they were present. The "Viking discourse" had been built upon ideas of white superiority, manifest destiny, and levels of manliness and civilization. It is therefore unsurprising that references to the Vikings would appear at a rally supporting the same ideas.

In a response to the Unite the Right Rally, activist and scholar Dorothy Kim published an article titled "Teaching Medieval Studies in a Time of White Supremacy."[631] She encourages instructors and professors to explicitly challenge racist worldviews and urges them not to stay neutral or objective when the subject matter could embolden a white supremacist agenda. While this approach is useful and necessary, the full picture is more complicated. Medieval literature includes ideas of race, levels of civilization, violence, and ideal manliness. Old Norse literature is no exception. At the end of The Saga of Erik the Red, for instance, Karlsefni and his men discover five natives sleeping on a beach, assume them to be

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[629] Quoted in Höfnig, "Vinland and White Nationalism," 81.

[630] David Leverenz, "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bummpo to Batman," *American Literary History* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 754.

[631] Dorothy Kim, "Teaching Medieval Studies in a Time of White Supremacy," In the Middle, August 28, 2017, https://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2017/08/teaching-medieval-studies-in-time-of.html.

outlaws, and kill them.[632] Moreover, the term *skrælingjar*, though not indicative of race, certainly conveys a sense of inferiority, and Arngrímur Vídalín points out that Old Norse literature contains several instances of de-humanization and discrimination against people of other racial groups.[633] But Jenny Jochens argues that the medieval Norse were, in fact, racist. [634] Furthermore, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir has highlighted occurances of graphic violence against women in the sagas, including rape.[635] The challenge for scholars is to acknowledge that these issues exist in Old Norse literature while still teaching the topic in a more careful manner to avoid adding more elements to the "Viking discourse" that might appeal to the exclusivist ideologies of men like Priest, Simms, McNallen, and Donovan.

The path from Vinland to Charlottesville lies through Viking adventures, both fiction and film. That is not to say that Rafn, Anderson, Liljencrantz or Marshall are directly responsible for the racial connotations associated with the Vikings; but by recycling the same motifs, tropes, and stereotypes found in both adventures and in the early American literature that discusses Old Norse literature, they certainly contributed to the contemporary popular image of the Viking. Moreover, several of the works described in this study are, like Marshall's writings, of "dubious quality." *The Norseman* was a box office failure; Marcus Nispel was considered one of the worst directors of the previous decade; and the critics that celebrated Bill Downey's memoir of his time in the military ignored his attempt at recreated the Viking Age. A trend of carelessness can be found in these works that use the "Viking discourse," and this, too, allows extremists to create their own narratives and for the nineteenth-century prejudices to continue.

By presenting the Vikings as heroes, authors and filmmakers have indeed been celebrating the racial violence of a white supremacist masculinity. This Viking

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[632] *The Vinland Sagas*, translated by Keneva Kruz (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 47.

[633] Arngrímur Vídalín, "The Man Who Seemed Like a Troll: Racism in Old Norse Literature," in *Margins, Monsters, Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture*, eds. Rebecca Merkelbach and Gwendolyne Knight (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 225–232.

[634] Jenny Jochens, "Vikings Westward to Vinland: The Problem of Women," in *The Cold Counsel: The Women in Old Norse Literature and Myth*, eds. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 147.

[635] Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, "'How Do You Know if it is Love or Lust?': On Gender, Status, and Violence in Old Norse Literature," *Interfaces* No. 2 (2016): 192–202.

image has been mostly unchallenged in popular culture for over a century. Male supremacy and white supremacy are fundamental aspects of U.S. history and culture, the American adventure genre, and, accordingly, medievalism. The Viking image became a perfect vehicle for these ideas—not only had they been presented as the true discoverers of America but they also already in the nineteenth century been associated with a love of freedom, manliness, and heroism—ideas that greatly appealed to a white, male audience. And as the country in general grew increasingly diverse, white men, according to Bederman, were "casting about for new ways to explain the source and nature of male power and authority."[636] They found evidence for both in America's medieval past. To return to Don Strachan's review of *Black Viking*, I would argue that *this* is what Valhallamongering is all about. The fictional Vikings became frontiersmen, cowboys, hunters, and explorers and generally representations of a golden age when white men had a more secure place at the top of the power hierarchy.

[636] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 19–20.

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