

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS STUDENT CONFERENCE  
ON THE MEDIEVAL NORTH



Proceedings of the 13th  
Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North  
(Reykjavík, April 11-13, 2024)



## CALAMITY AND FATE

edited by  
andrea guttormsen wetzler - chris latham -  
colin fisher - fran ota - miguel andrade

Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands



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Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands 2024

Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North  
(Reykjavík, April 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2024): Calamity and Fate

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Colin Fisher  
Reykjavík, August 2024

## Preface

The Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North began in 2011 as an opportunity for postgraduate students studying northern Europe in the Middle Ages to present their research. As of this writing, it has continued this mission for thirteen conferences. The conference has welcomed student scholars from around the world, allowing them to take part in a display of research spanning the many subdisciplines of medieval studies. It has become a well-loved cornerstone event of the Viking and Medieval Norse and Medieval Icelandic Studies programs at Háskóli Íslands. We as committee members were honored to take part in this tradition.

The theme of this year's conference was *Calamity and Fate*. We began planning the 2024 conference in 2023, after what looked like the last major deprivations of the COVID-19 pandemic had faded into the rearview mirror. The ebb of that tragedy did not extend to the rest of the world: the idealistic equilibrium of what the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama calls "the end of history" seems a distant prospect in a time so convulsive. Having lived through one of the greatest calamities of modern history and aware that we were coming up on the conference's thirteenth edition (a rather ominous number), we the committee decided we should ask our presenters to consider the calamities of our subfield. Alongside that idea, we asked them to reflect on the notion of fate. The responses were fascinating. Attendees scrutinized the crises behind placenames and the inherent calamity of sailing between pilgrimage sites. They considered the fates of manuscripts in the clutches of private collectors and the fates faced by pagans as the saga-world turned towards Christianity. Even those who chose to work outside the theme deftly problematized topics in the field, whether they were discussing the implications of incongruity between Latin and Norse or the legacy of English antisemitic visual culture in Icelandic manuscripts. The thoughtful responses we received showed how expansive this theme could be, and how relevant it remains as we pursue study of the medieval North into the twenty-first century.

The 2024 conference brought together twenty-five scholars from fifteen different universities and seven countries. We aimed to keep the conference as accessible as possible for student-scholars and were able to host it in a hybrid format, allowing participation from around the world. This year's conference was a truly international affair on all sides, as for the first time the organizing committee expanded beyond the borders of Háskóli Íslands for volunteers. We deeply appreciate the fellow travelers who came to make this conference a success, and we cherish the expertise that they brought as medievalists and graduate students. Graduate school, whether as a fresh-faced first-semester master's student or a grizzled doctoral fellow running out the days until the last thesis defense, is itself a calamitous experience, hurtling towards a fate that can seem frightening or, if one is particularly distraught by the job market, unrealistic. Our aim as organizers was to

provide an island of support and affirmation in the choppy waters of academia. We are very happy that so many enjoyed the experience.

This conference would not have been possible without the assistance of our sponsors. Rimmugýgur, the Saga Museum, and Hið Íslenska Bókmenntafélagið were generous financial supporters, while Þjóðminjasafnið (The National Museum of Iceland) kindly donated their time and expertise for our attendees, and Háskólaprent assisted us with our printing needs. We were honored to have inaugural use of the Edda auditorium on the Háskóli Íslands campus, and to have the institutional support of Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands, Húgvísindastofnun, and the Árni Magnússon Institute.

We thank the indefatigable Haraldur Bernharðsson for his assistance and wisdom, and Beth Rogers for serving as our keynote speaker. We also thank the selection committee for this year's conference – Ela Sefcikova, Essi Nuutinen, Giulia Zorzan, Lea Debora Pokorny, Miguel Andrade, Miriam Conti, Piergiorgio Consagra, and myself – who donated their time to evaluate a historic number of submissions and guarantee that this year's program held up to the high standards that the conference has accustomed us to. Furthermore, we would like to thank every person who submitted an abstract in response to our call for papers – while we could only accept so many papers, it was truly a joy to read your abstracts, displaying incredible variety of topics and a finger on the pulse of relevant approaches in our field of studies. I would also be remiss to not extend a special thank you to committee member Alan Searles, who went above and beyond in his selfless determination to make sure the conference was, in his words, “groovy.”

We would like to extend our thanks to the organizers of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual conference – Adela Quero, Eirik Westcoat, Ermenegilda Müller, Felix Lummer, Giorgia Sottotetti, Giulia Zorzan, Katrín Líska van der Linde Mikaelisdóttir, Kristine Mærsk Werner, Lea Pokorny, Luca Panaro, and Maxmilian Jesiolowski – for having the patience to put together a conference proceedings volume in 2021. We were inspired by your work to produce a volume for our edition of the conference, and we hope that your example leads future committees to follow.

Cattle die, as the High One says, and kinsmen die, and you'll die just the same, but the word of one who has done well never dies. We publish this volume in that spirit. May our contributors live on.

**Organizing Committee**

Alan Searles  
Andrea Guttormsen Wetzler  
Caitríona Spratt  
Chris Latham  
Colin Fisher  
Fran Ota  
Miguel Andrade

**Selection Committee**

Colin Fisher  
Ela Sefcikova  
Essi Nuutinen  
Giulia Zorzan  
Lea Debora Pokorny  
Miguel Andrade  
Miriam Conti  
Piergiorgio Consagra

**Keynote Speaker**

Beth Rogers

**Participants**

Abigail Lloyd  
Askil Rolvsjord  
Brooklyn Arnot  
Caeli Athina Díaz Lluberes  
Carolina Mariani  
Edward McCarthy  
Ellie Wilson  
Erika Dell'Aquila  
Essi Harbord  
Francesca Squitieri  
Freya Alethe Schlaefer  
Hannah S. Evans  
Isabelle Maria Soares  
Jennifer Laura Stewart  
Joanne Machin  
Kayta Herring  
Maria Andreevna Zenkova  
Markus Aasen Heide  
Michele Roncarati  
Miles Lourenco  
Muriël de Kroon  
Nick Nuttall  
Pauline Pralle  
Sophie Kamhi

## Official Conference Programme

**THURSDAY, APRIL 11<sup>th</sup> (15:00-18:00)**

**15:00**

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

**15:05-16:35**

Session 1: Beasts and Bodies

Chair: Andrea Guttormsen Wetzler

15:05

**Freya Alethe Schlaefer, Háskóli Íslands**

*Mouthing Off: Egill's Aberrant Mouth in Egils saga*

15:35

**Michele Roncarati, University of Nottingham**

*Wolves, Dogs and Outlaws: Physical and Metaphorical Boundaries in Old Norse Law*

16:05

**Kayta Herring, University of Aberdeen**

*In The Murky Depths: the History of Sea Monsters in Olaus Magnus' Carta Marina*

**16:50-18:00**

Session 2: Material Culture

Chair: Alan Searles

16:50

**Hannah S. Evans, University of Liverpool**

*Comparing textiles in Irish and Icelandic literature*

17:20

**Pauline Pralle, Háskóli Íslands**

*Fortified bridges or the Lack Thereof: A Regional Comparison*

**FRIDAY, APRIL 12<sup>TH</sup> (15:00-18:00)**

**15:05-16:35**

Session 3: Words and Books

Chair: Miguel Andrade

15:05

**Nick Nuttall, University of Manchester**

*A frozen fate? Recontextualizing medieval manuscript collections and their early modern collectors*

15:35

**Abigail Lloyd, University of Nottingham**

*Life goes on? Landscape and language use following a linguistic “invasion” as revealed through place-names*

16:05

**Essi Harbord, University of Cambridge**

*Vikings, dialects, and dictionaries: an investigation into the lasting linguistic impact of medieval Anglo-Norse contact on English dialects*

**16:50-18:00**

Session 4: Love and Hate

Chair: Caitríona Spratt

16:50

**Sophie Kamhi, University of Oxford**

*‘Bleeding Makes a Wound’: Female Violence in Laxdæla saga and Grágás*

17:20

**Caeli Athina Díaz Lluberes, Háskóli Íslands**

*The disease of loving: lovesickness in Skírnismál*

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup> (09:00-18:00)**

**09:00**

Keynote Speech

Chair: Chris Latham

**Beth Rogers, Háskóli Íslands**

*Dairy, Destiny, and Disasters: Calamity and Community in Medieval Iceland*

**10:00-11:00**

Session 5: Archaeology and Ecocriticism

Chair: Miguel Andrade

10:00

**Isabelle Maria Soares, Federal University of Paraná**

*The Barnstokkr tree in William Morris and J.R.R Tolkien's Rewritings of the Old Norse Volsung Legend: An Ecocritical Approach*

\*10:30

**Anton Larsson, Stockholm University**

*Konungahella and the Landslide of 1249 AD: Reassessing the archaeological implications of a geological disaster*

**11:15-12:15**

Session 6: Encounters in Latin and Norse

Chair: Chris Latham

11:15

**Edward McCarthy, University of Oxford (he/him)**

*Letter writing in Trójumanna saga and Breta sögur: the merging of the Scandinavian and Latin literary traditions.*

11:45

**Markus Heide, University of Oslo**

*Lost in Translation, or gained? Barlaam and Josphat's saga between the Old Norse and Latin textual cultures*

**12:15-13:15 – Lunch Break**

**13:15-13:40**

Poster Session

Chair: Colin Fisher

**Brooklyn Arnot, Háskóli Íslands**

*The Fate of Female Honour: A Case Study of Signý in Vǫlsunga saga*

**Ellie Wilson, University of Cambridge**

*Textile Creation in Viking Age Scandinavia*

**13:40-15:40**

Session 7: Saints and Sinners

Chair: Alan Searles

13:40

**Askil Rolvsjord, Norwegian University of Science and Technology**

*The Reformulation of a Saint: A Quantitative Analysis of the Typological Connections for St. Olaf*

14:10

**Maria Andreevna Zenkova, National Research University Higher School of Economy**

*“at eigi taki kristnir men at gofga hann sem goð”*: the cults of saints and sainthood in the Old Norse Clemens saga

14:40

**Joanne Machin, University of the Highlands and Islands**

*In the hands of God: avoiding calamity and embracing fate from a maritime pilgrimage perspective*

15:10

**Jennifer Laura Stewart, Háskóli Íslands**

*Antisemitic Imagery in the Vatnsfjörður Psalter*

**15:55-17:55**

Session 8: Fate in Old Norse Literature

Chair: Colin Fisher

15:55

**Miles Lourenco, University of Aberdeen**

*Fate and Conversion in the deaths of Piðrandi Siðu-Hallsson and Gestr Bárðarson*

16:25

**Francesca Squitieri, University of Nottingham**

*The weaving of threads: towards a collectivist understanding of fate in Germanic heroic literature.*

16:55

**Erika Dell'Aquila and Carolina Mariani, University of Milano**

*Divine Parallels: Exploring Physical Similarity and Shared Destiny in translated medieval Scandinavian literature.*

17:25

**Muriël de Kroon, University of York**

*A Crisis of Fate: Paganism and Christianity in Eiríkssmál and Hákonarmál*

**17:55-18:00 – Ending Remarks**

**19:00 – Conference Dinner**

*\*Withdrew due to emergency*

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## **Dairy, Destiny, and Disasters: Calamity and Community in Medieval Iceland**

*Keynote Speech Presented at the 2024 Háskóli Íslands Student Conference on the Medieval North, Reykjavík, Iceland, April 13, 2024*

Medieval Iceland's cultural narrative is a multifaceted tapestry interwoven with historical, social, and mythical elements. One of the most significant threads in this tapestry is the role of dairy products such as milk, butter, and skyr, which were not merely dietary staples but symbols of survival and resilience. This work delves into the sociocultural importance of dairy production in medieval Iceland, the pivotal role women played in this domain, and the intriguing folklore surrounding the milk-stealing witch. By examining legal texts and folkloric remnants, we can uncover the societal values and fears related to dairy production, the magical threats perceived by the community, and the measures taken to protect against such supernatural threats.

### **The Foundational Role of Dairy in Medieval Iceland**

Dairy farming was central to the economy and daily life in medieval Iceland. The harsh climate and limited arable land meant that livestock farming, particularly dairy farming, was a primary source of sustenance. Cows, sheep, and goats provided milk, which was processed into butter, cheese, and skyr—a type of cultured dairy product unique to Iceland (Jón Árnason, 2004, 18).

These dairy products were not only essential for nutrition but also held significant economic value. Butter was a highly prized commodity, often used as a form of currency or payment for taxes and rents (Jochens, 1995, p. 87). The ability to produce and store dairy products, especially through the long winter months, was a testament to a household's resilience and resourcefulness.

The economic importance of dairy products cannot be overstated. The ability to produce and store dairy products, especially through the long winter months, was a testament to a household's resilience and resourcefulness. Dairy products like butter and skyr could be stored for long periods without spoiling, making them vital for survival during the harsh winters when fresh food was scarce. Thus, proficiency in dairy production was not only a marker of economic stability but also a matter of survival.

### **The Role of Women in Dairy Production**

Women were at the heart of dairy production in medieval Iceland. The domestic sphere, where dairy processing occurred, was managed by women. They were responsible for milking the livestock, making butter and skyr, and ensuring that

these products were properly stored and preserved (Jochens, 1995, p. 102). This labor-intensive work required skill and knowledge passed down through generations.

The importance of women's contributions to dairy production is evident in the social and legal structures of the time. Women's expertise in managing household resources, particularly in dairy farming, was crucial for the survival and prosperity of the family unit. This expertise gave women a certain degree of authority and respect within their households and communities (Jochens, 1995, 103).

In addition to their domestic responsibilities, women's roles extended to managing the economic aspects of dairy production. They oversaw the distribution and trade of dairy products, which were often used as barter goods or as payment for services. Women's involvement in these economic activities underscores their integral role in the medieval Icelandic economy (Jochens, 1995, 105). In the Christian Law section of *Grágás*, discussed in more detail below, the general division of labor is made clear in an entry specifying what work is permissible on Sundays: "Men may drive the livestock out and in again, women may do milking and may carry the milk wherever it is to be carried or take it by boat or by horse if there is water between the farm and the milking place, and women may begin to see to the milk" (Dennis, 1980, p. 56).

Furthermore, women's central role in dairy production had significant cultural implications. The meticulous processes involved in making skyr and butter were often imbued with rituals and traditions, many of which were passed down through the female line. This cultural transmission ensured the continuity of dairy production techniques and the preservation of culinary heritage.

### **The Milk-Stealing Witch: Folklore and Fear**

In the cultural landscape of medieval Iceland, dairy products were so valuable that their loss or theft was a serious concern. This anxiety is reflected in the folklore surrounding the milk-stealing witch, a supernatural figure believed to possess the power to steal milk and harm livestock through magical means (Simpson, 1971, 132).

The milk-stealing witch, or "mjólkstúlk" in Icelandic, was thought to employ various methods to carry out her nefarious deeds. One common belief was that she could send a magical creature, such as a "tilberi" or "snakkur," to suckle milk from cows and bring it back to her (Árnason, 2004, 57). These creatures were often described as grotesque and otherworldly, embodying the community's fears of the supernatural and the unknown. It is important to note that no woman was formally accused of stealing milk in medieval Iceland, according to remaining documentation; however, the evident fear of milk-stealing witches in Nordic folklore work led to lasting societal impacts, including heightened suspicion of women and an association between women and dairy food production.

The folkloric figure of the milk-stealing witch can instead be seen as a symbol of societal anxieties regarding the fragility of agricultural production and the ever-present threat of scarcity. The idea that a witch could magically deplete a family's dairy supply reflects deeper fears about the vulnerability of food resources and the precariousness of life in a harsh environment (Simpson, 1971, 134).

This folklore also illustrates the pervasive fear of witchcraft and its potential impact on daily life. The milk-stealing witch was not just a fantastical figure but a representation of real anxieties about economic stability and survival. In a society where dairy production was crucial, the threat of losing this valuable resource to supernatural forces was a source of significant concern.

Moreover, the milk-stealing witch narrative often targeted women, reflecting broader societal suspicions and anxieties about female power and autonomy. Women who were knowledgeable about herbal remedies or who were perceived as outsiders could easily become scapegoats in times of economic hardship or unexplained misfortune (Simpson, 1971, 136). The figure of the milk-stealing witch thus served as a cautionary tale about the dangers of deviating from social norms and the potential consequences of female agency.

### **Continuity of Calamity: Historical & Cultural Comparisons**

The threat of magical interference with dairy production was not taken lightly in medieval Iceland. Legal texts from the period reveal that accusations of witchcraft, particularly related to milk theft, were treated seriously. The *Grágás*, one of the oldest and most comprehensive collections of Icelandic laws, includes extensive provisions for dealing with sorcery and witchcraft (Dennis, 1980, 45).

According to the *Grágás*, those found guilty of practicing witchcraft or using magic to harm others' property could face severe penalties, including exile, forfeiture of all property or death. These legal measures underscore the gravity with which medieval Icelandic society viewed the threat of supernatural interference in everyday life (Dennis, 1980, 46).

In addition to legal recourse, various protective practices were employed to guard against milk theft and other forms of magical tampering. Folk remedies and rituals aimed at safeguarding livestock and dairy products were common. For instance, it was believed that certain herbs, charms, or incantations could ward off evil influences and protect the household's milk supply (Árnason, 2004, p. 62).

One notable practice involved the use of iron objects, which were thought to have protective properties against witchcraft. Placing an iron knife or nail in the cowshed or dairy storage area was a common precautionary measure. Additionally, the cross, a potent Christian symbol, was often invoked for protection. Crosses were carved into doors and walls, and prayers were recited to safeguard livestock from supernatural harm (Jón Árnason, 2004, 64). A much later manuscript, *Galdrakver* is a book of magic dated to 1780, and contains a number of sigils one might carve onto the wood of animal pens or sheds to ward off magical interference. Presumably, the general protection of making the sign of the Cross or passing a Bible over the backs of livestock, would also protect from milk theft.

These protective measures highlight the interplay between pagan and Christian beliefs in medieval Icelandic society. The use of iron and other folk remedies reflects pre-Christian traditions, while the invocation of the cross and Christian prayers illustrates the integration of Christian practices. This syncretism

underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of medieval Icelandic spirituality and its influence on daily life.

### **The Intersection of Law, Folklore, and Everyday Life**

The convergence of legal, folkloric, and practical elements in medieval Icelandic society highlights the complex interplay between belief and reality. The legal frameworks addressing witchcraft and the folkloric tales of milk-stealing witches reflect a society deeply concerned with maintaining control over its essential resources.

The role of women in this context is particularly significant. As the primary managers of dairy production, women were both the targets of suspicion and the practitioners of protective measures. According to Jenny Jochens, the association of women with both the production and potential magical theft of dairy products underscores the gendered dimensions of power and vulnerability in medieval Iceland (Jochens, 1995, 114).

Furthermore, the legal and social responses to the threat of milk theft and witchcraft reveal the importance of community cohesion and mutual support. In a society where survival depended on collective effort, protecting valuable resources like dairy products was a communal concern. The measures taken to guard against supernatural threats reflect a broader cultural emphasis on solidarity and cooperation (Dennis, 1980, 48).

Additionally, the narratives of the milk-stealing witch and the legal provisions against witchcraft illustrate the role of folklore in reinforcing social norms and values. Folktales served as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and moral lessons, warning against behaviors that could disrupt social harmony. The figure of the milk-stealing witch functioned as a cautionary tale about the dangers of envy, greed, and the misuse of power (Simpson, 1971, p. 140).

### **Discussion**

The cultural narrative surrounding dairy production and the milk-stealing witch also speaks to the resilience and adaptability of medieval Icelandic society. Faced with a harsh and unpredictable environment, the community developed a range of strategies to ensure survival. These strategies included both practical measures, such as the efficient production and storage of dairy products, and symbolic measures, such as the use of protective charms and legal sanctions against witchcraft (Jón Árnason, 2004, 66).

The adaptability of medieval Icelandic society is further reflected in its ability to integrate different cultural influences. The syncretism of pagan and Christian elements in protective practices and folklore demonstrates a flexible and pragmatic approach to spirituality. This ability to adapt and incorporate diverse beliefs and practices was crucial for the community's resilience in the face of external and internal challenges (Árnason, 2004, 68).

Moreover, the emphasis on community and mutual support in medieval Icelandic culture highlights the importance of social cohesion for survival. The

collective efforts to protect dairy production from both natural and supernatural threats illustrate a deep-seated commitment to communal well-being. This sense of solidarity was essential for navigating the uncertainties of life in a marginal and isolated environment (Dennis, 1980, 50).

Due to its importance in the history and culture of Iceland from the country's Settlement to the modern day, further research on this material can include a variety of avenues. Impacted fields of study include food history, emotion studies, folkloristics, anthropology, and more. By analysing the past, we gain insight into the present and the recurrent ways in which societies respond to, and seek to manage, the uncertainties of their existence, whether those anxieties manifest as a milk-stealing witch and her *tilburi* creeping in the night, or they take another form.

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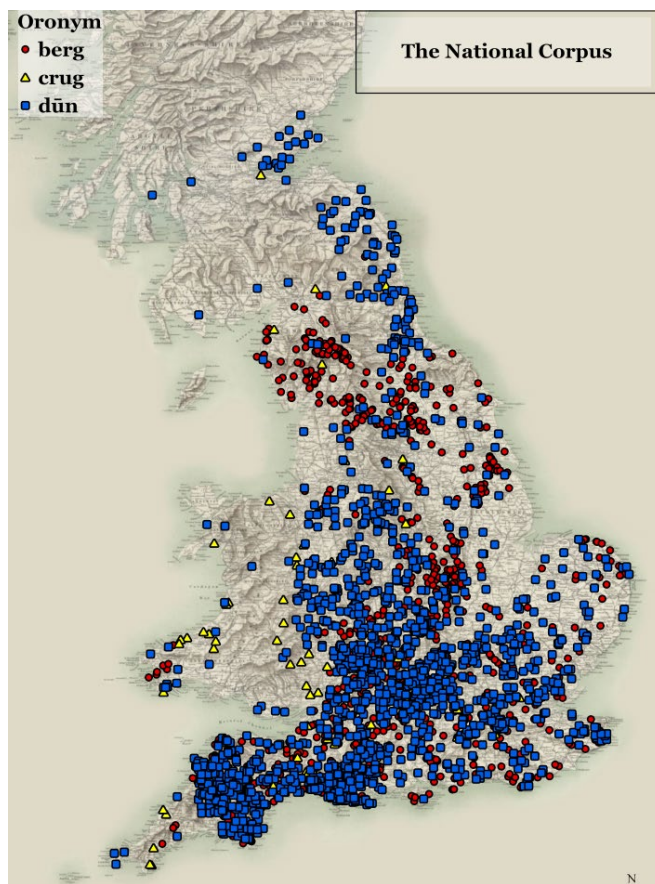
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## Life goes on? Landscape and land use following a linguistic “invasion,” as revealed through place-names.

Historic accounts chronicling interactions between England and Scandinavia in the early medieval period tend to focus on moments of conflict and high drama. Archaeological evidence can provide an alternative viewpoint to the documentary account. Archaeological investigation should go beyond merely seeking to flesh out what is written in historical records. Seventeen years of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (“PAS”), run in conjunction with the British Museum, has enabled greater light to be shed on Scandinavian migration into and influence upon England, via the recording of metal finds, and the emergence of distinctive geographical patterns from their mapped locations. Nevertheless, in using early medieval PAS data, the focus has often remained on trying to trace the activity of the *micel here* “great army,” known about from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, including the location of their *winterstetl* “sites of overwintering.”



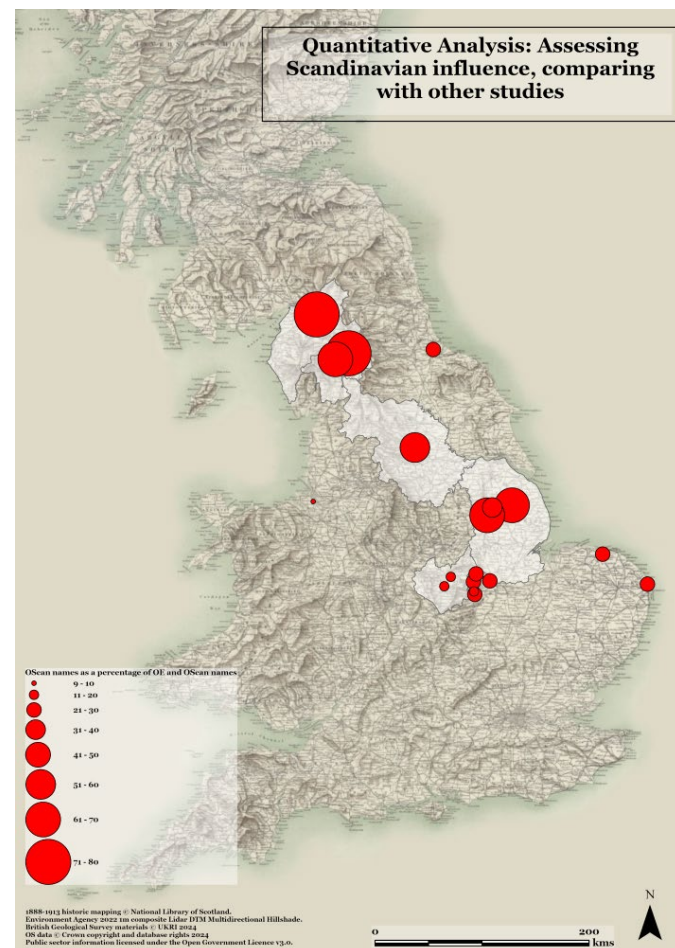
**Figure 1.** A still snapshot of the national corpus taken from the interactive web application created by Abigail Lloyd.

This paper arises out of research that was not initially intended to examine Scandinavian influence in England. Many English place-names arose from early medieval and medieval descriptive labels discussing the landscape: how it looked, how it was being used and how individuals identified with it. The landscape terminology captured in these names is rich, specialised and nuanced as Gelling and Cole (2000) rightly emphasised. Place-names are ubiquitous and often coined from the bottom up, reflecting the perceptions of those living in and moving through the landscape. They therefore offer a vital source of information into periods of change, as well as continuity. Through such names, patterns of Scandinavian influence emerge clearly. In fact, they paint an interesting and somewhat corrective

picture to that given by historical accounts and archaeology alone. Indeed, the disparity between the abundance of place-name evidence and the paucity of archaeological corroboration has caused problems of evidential reconciliation in the past.

Focusing in detail on three oronyms used in early medieval and medieval names, that is *berg* (OE/OScan), *crug* (OE/Brit) and *dūn* (OE but with possible influence from the Celtic etymon \**dūno-*), a national corpus of names, numbering just under three thousand, was assembled, together with large amounts of linguistic, historical and archaeological attribute data. It was entered into an online GIS-mapped database and web application created specifically for the purpose. Names included were first attested prior to AD 1500 in order to make sure that they were all medieval names. They could, of course, have been coined much earlier than their date of first written attestation. The initial purpose of this powerful research tool was to test, via fieldwork, various research questions arising out of the work of Gelling and Cole (2000) relating to the profile and topographic form of the features bearing these names.

However, names contain, embedded within them, much linguistic information that should not be overlooked. Names are typically compound, comprising a generic plus a qualifying adjective or noun. Paying close attention to which elements collocate with which oronym, where and when, has proved to be a highly fruitful seam of research to mine. In particular, distinctive patterns in *berg*-names have emerged in areas that are likely to have been subject to varying degrees of Scandinavian influence. These patterns are not seen in areas of dominant Old English influence. Indeed, the cut-off in patterning is in some cases stark and binary. The surviving name-stock in the “Great Scandinavian Belt” clearly attests to the incoming Scandinavian influence. Yet, it is an influence that persisted long after the crisis events of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. Measuring the depth of its influence produces some surprises. Areas that loom large in chronicle accounts are not necessarily those with a deep Scandinavian base in the surviving names. Equally, areas that are blank holes in the historical records are amongst the areas displaying the richest of Scandinavian influence. Names can be analysed to test the degree of variety and non-recurrence in name compounds or, in contrast, the adoption of



**Figure 2.** Symbolising the relative percentage of Old Scandinavian names compared to Old English names in various study areas.

repeat compounds as pre-packaged names that could be adopted without much Scandinavian influence in the underlying lexicon. Both possibilities tell us much about ongoing Scandinavian influence in the speech and dialect of the region under examination.

Moreover, indistinguishable elements which cannot be allocated to Old English or Old Scandinavian on formal linguistic grounds, can be better analysed by bringing to bear the wider context of the data from the rest of the national corpus. Old Scandinavian influence, which has been discounted in previous studies, is then properly able to be seen, counted and assessed. Finally, important semantic themes emerge in compound names. Collocations relating to farming and the exploitation of vegetation are particularly to the fore. The emerging picture is not so much one of conflict, more of settlement and enduring land use. In this way, place-names supplement in an invaluable way what we learn about the legacy of crisis moments from other sources. The results are rich in the changing landscape they describe.

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks are due to my supervisors, Professor Jayne Carroll, Dr John Baker and Dr Richard Jones, for all their help in the research that underpins this paper. Thanks are also due to M4C AHRC for funding my research and enabling me to travel to speak in Iceland. I am hugely grateful to all the organisers of the Háskóli Íslands Conference 2024 for making the event happen. Finally, to my husband, Michael Lloyd, for climbing any and every berg we can find, whatever the weather!

### **Abbreviations**

Brit	Brittonic
OE	Old English
OScan	Old Scandinavian

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1888-1913 Ordnance Survey historic mapping for Great Britain © National Library of Scotland.

2022 1m composite Lidar Digital Terrain Model with multidirectional hillshade © Environment Agency: Public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence 13.0.

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## **Digitally Mapping the Reformulation of a Saint**

This paper explores how the narrative of king Olaf Haraldsson as a saint and the eternal king of Norway (*rex perpetuus Norvegiae*) was reformulated in the 12th century, through a typological framework in the historiographical and liturgical traditions of the era. The texts in question are the (*Historia*) *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (HA) by Theodoricus, as well as the *Passio sancti Olavi* (PO), the *Miracula sancti Olavi* (MO), and the *Historia Olavi* (HO), probably completed under Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson or his successor Eirik Ivarsson.

By creating a digital mapping of the typologies present, I aim to show how they use the same typological foundation for the reformulation, even though they are created for two different functions. The biblical typology usually connected one element from the Old Testament with another in the New Testament through the relationship between a type and an antitype, and gave an exegetical effect to the ones who had the knowledge to interpret them (Kretschmer 2014, 1ff, Sønnesyn 2014, 79ff). With the typological foundation, the text connected St. Olaf to the already established martyrs and projected their qualities through him (Hankeln 2009, 2016, 2020).

The reformulation of the saint's image was multifaceted and included literary, political, musical, and liturgical elements. This paper looks at one of the literary and exegetical elements, the typologies in the texts, and how the narrative of St. Olaf was reformulated within the framework of these typological connections.

Though there is much research on the connections between this milieu and Theodoricus, a digital map of the typologies of these texts, to show the thematic similarities between them, has not been explored before (Mortensen 2000, 2012). These texts were made by the clergy for the clergy, either to be read in quiet readings or to be recited or sung in the liturgy (Hiley 1993, 1-2; Hughes 1995, 40-43). The digital tool *Pajek* allows the quantification of a multitude of datapoints (vertices) and calculates the connections between them (arcs and edges), showing the similarities and dissimilarities. The datapoints in this analysis consist of the typological themes and references used in the texts. The aim is to show clearly how typological themes in the texts coincide with each other and illuminate the motive of the cults: How they imagined their relationship to their saint, and how they projected their image of the saint in the way they formulated his or her image.<sup>1</sup>



attention on the types of miracles Olaf performs, for the most part healing miracles, but it is also where he is shown most clearly as directly involved in warfare. PO tells the passion of a martyr and saint – not a warrior king. Theodoricus follows much the same path as PO, though he spends a much greater effort in connecting Norway to not only the universal, ecclesiastical history, but also to Roman history. HO combines and crystallises many of these elements. Thus, they contribute each to the multifaceted expression of the image of St. Olaf.

## Notes

1. Pajek is available as a free-to-download program on [mrvar.fdv.uni-lj.si/pajek/](http://mrvar.fdv.uni-lj.si/pajek/).
2. Ps. 2.2: **2** *adstiterunt reges terrae et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus christum eius.* – The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers gathered as one against the Lord and against his anointed one.

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## **The Fate of Female Honour: A Case Study of Signý in *Völsunga Saga***

Throughout saga literature, both men and women ardently pursue honour. However, while male characters often emerge as admirable heroes who have gained great reputation and riches, women often face calamity. The tragic fate of Signý from *Völsunga saga* illuminates the multifaceted nature of female saga characters and how they, even more than their male counterparts, pursue honour above all else. The following discussion will elucidate the types of honour Signý pursues as well as the means by which she pursues it, ultimately leading to her doom.

In *Völsunga saga*, Signý, daughter of King Völsungr, is promised to King Siggeir against her will. He betrays her natal family, killing them all except her brother, Sigmundr. For the rest of her life, she works towards avenging her father and brothers, ultimately killing the sons she has conceived with Siggeir and sleeping with Sigmundr to beget a son worthy of avenging her father, King Völsungr. After her husband, King Siggeir, is engulfed in flames, Signý too steps into the fire, stating that she can no longer live.

### **Words and Whetting**

Whetting is a process by which women exert power in the Icelandic sagas. Jenny Jochens identifies the whetting woman as one of the main archetypes of Scandinavian women throughout Old Norse literature. The whetting woman goads her husband to kill another man on her behalf, often by mocking his masculinity. Signý falls into the category of a whetting woman as she incites her brother to kill her children. When her son fails the test of courage in avenging Völsungr, she says to Sigmundr “Then take him and kill him. He no longer needs to live.” Later, when her other sons betray her revenge plot to the king, Signý tells her other son Sinfjötli, “I advise that you two kill them.” Both men follow through with Signý’s request.

### **Supernatural Power**

Yet Signý’s words not only provoke violence, but also attempt to preserve her family. Signý warns her father that he will “fall into a trap” if he does not return to his kingdom to gather troops. Völsungr is indeed killed in battle as he does not heed Signý’s warning. Signý also begs her father to “speedily deviate from this marriage agreement”, appealing to her “second sight.” Because magic and prophecy were considered female activities, women were able to utilise these behaviours to affect the public sphere without transgressing social sanctions.

### **The Domestic Sphere**

Signý’s actions to preserve the Völsungr lineage are done in a private, domestic sphere. She uses her female role as a child bearer to attempt to continue

her family's lineage. She also attempts to raise her children to be worthy of the Vǫlsungr lineage. Moreover, she uses the female craft of textiles to enact her plan to bring honour to the Vǫlsungr plan, sewing the hands of their tunics, "with flesh and skin. They endured it badly and complained about it. And she did the same with Sinfjǫtli. He did not struggle against it." When Signý tells him that he should be in pain, he replies, "little shall such wounds seem to a Vǫlsungr." Here sewing, usually a sedentary and feminine activity in Old Norse society, is transformed into a vivid and gruesome corporeal image. This episode allows Signý to participate in and affect the masculine sphere of blood feuds, through raising a strong son who can enact violence for her.

### **Military Honour**

William Ian Miller states that, "Honor was thus, as a matter of social mathematics, acquired at someone else's expense. When yours went up, someone else's went down. This proposition is self-evident in the pure case of one-on-one combat, where the honour acquired by the victor is funded almost entirely by the loser." The male family members of the Vǫlsungr clan pursue this sort of honour. King Vǫlsungr achieves military honour through being a "great warrior" (*mesti hermaðr*) and winning battles. Signý, on the other hand, tries to avert military defeat through her two prophecies: first, that she should not marry King Siggeir or her family will be ruined, and second that they should reinforce their army or else fall into a military trap. Signý's male family members do not listen to her as they are only considering immediate honour of reputation and bravery, not long-term military honour. This leads to their military defeat.

### **Family Honour and Personal Honour**

After Signý marries King Siggeir and her family is defeated, her main priority is to preserve the Vǫlsungr family line, yet her methods of achieving this are questionable. In order to ensure that the Vǫlsungr line is strong, she has her brother, Sigurðr, put her sons through a number of tests, and when they fail, she has her brother kill them. Following this, she seduces her brother in the guise of a witch in order to breed a pureblood Vǫlsungr. Each of these acts violates personal honour, yet it works towards achieving long-term family honour through continuing the Vǫlsungr line.

Signý transcends the categorisation of any single archetype. She is a paradoxical woman who both preserves her family and destroys it. She is violent, but uses this violence within a sanctioned female sphere. She pursues honour above all else, to the point that her personal honour has no value to her. Ultimately, she sacrifices more for honour than her male counterparts do in ensuring the Vǫlsungr line is maintained. Because she sacrifices everything, including her personal honour, for this family honour, she is ultimately doomed to die a death of shame.

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## **Divine Parallels: Exploring Physical Similarity and Shared Destiny in Translated Medieval Scandinavian Literature**

*Amicus et Amelius* (first redaction in Latin, tenth century) and *Floire et Blancheflor* (first redaction in Old French, twelfth century) are two very popular medieval legends that have been translated and readapted in many European languages. The theme of divine twins and their symbolic significance is central in both plots. This paper examines the Scandinavian adaptations of the legends, emphasizing the use of the Indo-European topos of the divine twins and the interplay between pagan elements and Christian themes, revealing how these narratives served both as literary entertainment and as tools for religious conversion.

*Amicus et Amelius* and *Floire et Blancheflor* share a common narrative core: the two protagonists are linked by destiny from the very first day of their life. In fact, they are born on the same day and resemble each other physically, like twins, and experience separation and trials striving for a reunion. Such narratives echo the ancient Indo-European motif of the divine twins, which has developed in various cultural pantheons, like the Indo-Iranian one, with the Ásvin couple, the Greek one with the Dióskouroi or the Latvian one with dainas. Concerning Norse mythology, a perfect corresponding couple to this archetype has not been identified yet, even if the majority of scholars concentrate on the Vanir gods, discussing the possibility of Freyr/Freyja or Freyr/Njörðr. Actually, the motif symbolizes dual aspects of existence such as day and night, or earthly and divine, embodied by the couples, whose members are conceived as identical and complementary to each other at the same time (Walker 2015).

This study deviates from mythology and traces these motifs through the adaptations of these two legends in Scandinavia, where they are infused with Christian hagiographic elements, thereby assisting in the cultural and religious conversion processes.

The analysis begins with *Amicus et Amelius*, a tale of two knights who have to undergo severe trials, including a miraculous healing through a sacrificial act. This blends pagan tradition and Christian motifs, such as that of the resurrection. The narrative follows their life from birth, marked by celestial signs, through their adventures and trials, culminating in their death and the mystical reunion of the bodies in the same tomb. This legend, particularly in its Scandinavian versions (*Amicus saga ok Amilius* and *Amicus ok Amilius rímur* in the West Norse context, *Amicus och Amelius* in the East Norse, all from the fourteenth century), highlights themes of sacrifice, redemption, and divine justice, paving the way to an alignment with Christian values, while retaining its folkloric roots (Krappe 1923, Hamer 1925).

*Floire et Blancheflor* presents a romantic adventure between a Christian maiden and a Saracen prince, encapsulating the theme of lovers destined to be together despite cultural and religious divides. Their story, too, is marked by birth under auspicious signs, separation, and a quest that ends in a union and conversion. In the Scandinavian context (*Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, *Rímur af Reinald ok Rosu* for the West Norse context, *Flores och Blanzefflor* for the East Norse) this narrative is particularly poignant, emphasizing the triumph of Christian virtues such as faith, fidelity, and the redemptive power of love (for example, the fact that the saga opens on the raid of King Felix on the pilgrims, and there is no reference to the theme of romantic love until very late in the text, unlike the French version. Then there are a few passages where the narrator explains some passages to put extra highlight on the Christian elements, like the name of the main characters, when they are born and then again during the baptism. The way the text focuses on the infancy of the characters also reminds of a hagiography, and of course the ending in a *moniage*, present only in the Scandinavian versions. Barnes 1977).

The paper discusses how these tales, while rooted in pagan traditions, are transformed into Christian narratives in their Scandinavian renditions. The adaptations are not merely translations but reinterpretations that align the stories with Christian doctrines, showcasing the adaptability and enduring appeal of these legends. The Norse renditions focus on moral and ethical lessons, aligned with Christian teachings, facilitating the narratives' role in conversion efforts.

Furthermore, the study explores the symbolic resonance of the twin motif, suggesting that these characters represent more than historical or mythological figures; in fact, they embody universal themes of human experience – conflict, love, sacrifice, and redemption. These themes resonate across cultures, and they are the key to the success, translations, and adaptations of legends like *Amicus et Amelius* and *Floire et Blancheflor*. The stories became very popular and served as effective conduits for religious and cultural transmission, which guaranteed their survival and reproduction.

The research also highlights how these legends, especially in their Norse adaptations, prioritize the integration of local religious sensibilities with broader Christian narratives. This synthesis illustrates the dynamic nature of mythmaking and the strategic use of folklore in promoting religious and cultural cohesion. *Amicus et Amelius* and *Floire et Blancheflor* serve as case studies to illustrate how ancient themes are reinterpreted across time to resonate within new cultural and religious contexts and how they can be reused for new aims. Their study reveals the deep-rooted psychological and symbolic dimensions of the divine twin archetype and its role in the cultural integration and religious conversion within Scandinavian societies. By examining these narratives, we gain insights into the complex processes of cultural adaptation and the enduring human fascination with destiny, duality, and divine intervention. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how mythological and folkloric materials are repurposed within different historical and cultural frameworks to address evolving societal needs and values.

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## **Letter Writing in *Trójumanna Saga* and *Breta Sögur*: Rewriting Ovid in Medieval Iceland**

The  $\beta$ -redaction of *Trójumanna saga* preserves four letters written from classical heroines to the male heroes who have spurned them, which are loosely based on Ovid's *Heroides*. The 'longer version' of *Breta sögur* also contains a letter from Dido to Aeneas, which is based upon *Heroides* VII. All the letters have received scant attention in scholarship. In the only published study of these letters to date, Randi Eldevik suggests that these letters represent a radical new direction in letter-writing, drawing upon 'native Scandinavian cultural traditions' (Eldevik, 2002: 58). This paper argues that the letters are instead grounded in the medieval tradition of the *ars dictaminis*, and as such comprise highly Latinate compositions. I also argue that these epistles carry out a similar function in the sagas to that of verse quotation in prosimetrum, where they allow for a voice and perspective which is not expressed in the terse saga narrative.

### **The merging of Ovid and the *ars dictaminis***

Whilst Eldevik is right to note that much of the content of the letters contains features of Old Norse literary traditions, I argue that the structure of the letters is firmly Latinate. In the medieval world, the practice of letter writing revolved around the principles of the *ars dictaminis*, a tradition which had arisen in the eleventh century at the monastic school of Monte Cassino in southern Italy. Alberic of Monte Cassino, the pioneer of the *ars dictaminis*, composed manuals which applied the principles of rhetoric to letter writing and provided strict and formulaic models for the structure of letters (Murphy, 2001: 203). This structure consisted of:

- *Salutatio*: a greeting which illustrates to whom and from whom the letter is sent.
- *Exordium*: a section designed to render the recipient attentive, docile, and well-disposed to the contents of the letter.
- *Narratio*: an account of the subject of the letter, narrating a brief statement of facts.
- *Petitio*: a request which may be supplicatory, didactic, exhortative, or reproving.
- *Conclusio*: this may take the form of a valediction, or a summary of the contents of the letter.

The few letters that are preserved in Icelandic sagas follow the structure of the *ars dictaminis*, such as the ecclesiastical correspondence in *Sturlunga saga* which, though written in Old Norse, is highly Latinate in its style and structure. Through an analysis of the letters contained in *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur*, I suggest that

these letters – particularly the pair of letters sent between Helen and Alexander, as well as the letter from Dido to Aeneas (which Eldevik appears not to be aware of at all) – closely adhere to the rigid structure of the *ars dictaminis*, and that the letters are essentially rhetorical exercises in persuasion and communication. This accords with the role of Ovid and his love poetry in the Middle Ages, which was used in the medieval classroom from the twelfth century onwards to teach grammar and rhetoric (Desmond, 2014: 162).

### **The letters and prosimetrum**

The letters of the  $\beta$ -redaction of *Trójumanna saga* and the ‘longer version’ of *Breta sögur* all display heightened emotion and rhetoric which is at odds with the tone and content of the rest of the sagas. In her analysis of the letters in *Íslendinga saga*, Lena Rohrbach argues that they could serve similar functions to skaldic stanzas and dialogues, which allow ‘for dialogic dimensions of the texts and serve the dramatic staging of events’ (Rohrbach, 2017: 99). In the second part of the paper, I suggest that the epistles in *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur* share a similar function to verse quotation in saga prosimetrum. The redactors of these texts make little attempt to contextualise the letters in the narrative and they do not record how the letters are transported, received, or acted upon. Like verse quotation in saga prosimetrum, the letters differ from the main saga narrative in medium, tone, and voice. Just as Vésteinn Ólason has suggested that saga-authors needed to incorporate verses in their texts to express emotions that were inaccessible in the style of saga narrative, the heroines of *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur* can only express their indignance and hatred for their male lovers in letter writing, in a different narrative form (Vesteinn Ólason, 1998: 125). In direct speech, these female characters struggle to express their own emotions and, where they can, they can only express faith and love for the men who have wronged them. This leads to a disjunction in the voices of the heroines within the saga, in the same way that prosimetrum allows for the coexistence of different voices within the saga narrative.

Overall, my analysis of these neglected letters hopes to illustrate just how creative these adaptations are in their fusion of Old Norse and Latin literary traditions, and how they may even comprise some of the most creative and original renderings of the *Heroides* that have come down to us.

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## **The Weaving of Threads: Towards a Collectivist Understanding of Fate in Germanic Heroic Literature**

Fate in heroic literature has predominantly been explored by analysing the agency of individual heroes, but it is worth examining and appreciating the multiplicity of forces of fate in heroic narratives as well (Weil, 1989: 100). This paper considers a nuanced perception of fate in heroic literature by examining *Saga af Hrólfr Konungi Kraka* (*Hrólfs Saga Kraka*). The forms of many Old Norse words for fate which are used in the saga – such as *sköp* and *ørlög* – are grammatically plural, which implies a plurality to fate that is integral to the very language of fate’s expression in the saga. From the words themselves to the comments of the saga writer and the characters, fate takes many forms in *Hrólfs Saga Kraka*, which hints at a more collective understanding of its workings. Even the very structure of the narrative embodies multiplicity through its deviation from the apparently eponymous hero, Hrólfr. Building on the works of Karen Bek-Pedersen (Bek-Pedersen, 2009: 28) and Nicolas Meylan, the following analysis applies these plural and dialogic interpretations of fate to the heroic context of *Hrólfs Saga Kraka* to appreciate the inherent collectivism of the warrior destiny. (Meylan, 2014:167) The ensuing exploration will present ideas which destabilise the individual from conceptions of fate, to consider how our understandings of medieval heroic texts would benefit from a more holistic understanding of fate.

The decisions of individuals which shape their own fate also impact the circumstances of the lives of others and control their destinies. The origins of *Böðvarr* or *Svipdag* in *Hrólfs Saga Kraka* are just as crucial to establishing the heroic themes, as the lineage of Hrólfr himself is in the narrative, while the destiny of the eponymous hero signifies the greater fate of the fictional kingdom and society. The culmination of the narrative does not just focus on the singular death of an individual king or hero, but on the many forces working towards the collective demise of King Hrólfr and his warriors together. Those who are deprived of this unified, martial demise – such as Prince Björn who is instead hunted by his father and warriors – suffer the unravelling of their thread of fate from the collective, heroic weave of the legendary narrative. Furthermore, even the reader or audience are included in the narrative forces of fate through the flexibility of the narrative retelling which would have been intensified in the retelling of these sagas as oral narratives (McMahon, 2020: 143).

This paper takes Bek-Pedersen’s description of fate being ‘akin to an inescapable outline that emerges during the course of an individual’s life’ a step further by considering it not just as one individual’s separate weave of fate, but as part of a larger weave where each individual is a thread contributing to a greater pattern creating a narrative, or universe. Whether individuals deliberately try to

discover their fate, or if they only realise a significant turn in their fortune has occurred based on an uninformed decision, the result is always the same: they come a step closer to fulfilling theirs, their companions', and their enemies' destinies. Fate was not presented as an immutable, supernatural or divine force, nor even as an individual power, but a pluralistic manifestation of a collective's actions and beliefs driving towards a collective destination.

The pervasive plurality of fate is an important realisation to consider in the study of heroic Germanic texts like *Hrólfs Saga Kraka*. This paper argues that our scholarly attention ought not always to limit itself to individual heroes or events in isolation to reach new understandings of heroic literature. Overlooking the importance of multiple forces of fate in literary study precludes us from accessing an important aspect in the crafting of medieval heroic narratives. It is not the hero's solitary death in battle which makes them a hero, but their role in unifying a collective force which, as in the case of *Hrólfr's* warriors, drives the hero to their demise and the text to its final weave of fate.

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### **Mouthing Off: Egill's Aberrant Mouth**

The aberrance of Egill Skallagrímsson's body in *Egils saga* has been treated in scholarship, notably by Jesse Byock, Tarrin Willis, and Ármann Jakobsson. This scholarship has thus far not focused specifically on Egill's mouth, despite its prominence in both prose and verse. In this paper, I investigate the role of the mouth in *Egils saga* as a mechanism of negotiating human and inhuman, primarily through the character of Egill Skallagrímsson.

Descriptions of Egill's body in prose, which occur often (Willis 2012, 280), usually highlight his mouth, either its unusual capacity or appearance (Nordal 1933, 143). Egill often speaks of his mouth in verse. It is a focal point in his *Hofuðlausn* (Nordal 1933, 185–192) and *Arinbjarnarkviða* (Nordal 1933, 258–267). Such a focus is not necessarily unusual. Kevin Wanner suggests that a preoccupation with mouths in Norse verse may be the natural effect of court poets making a living with their mouths (Wanner 2012, 18).

In *Egils saga*, the mouth has three primary functions: eating, drinking, and speaking. The first, eating, is a function of both human and animal mouths, and thus has a high potential for slippage between beast and man. Although the role of animals in *Egils saga* is limited, when they do appear the context is usually alimentary. Particularly prominent are references to animals eating the flesh of men killed in battle. Carrion-eating animals are a common, usually positive motif in Old Norse poetry (Jesch 2008, 247). Wanner suggests a correspondence between bestial and skaldic mouths - as ravens, eagles and wolves eat warrior corpses, so the skald's mouth composes poetry about the battle (Wanner 2012, 21–22). If such bestial mouths are incapacitated, the image is a dour one, suggesting a halting of skaldic poetry (Wanner 2012, 22). The invocation of these beasts of battle is normative in *Egils saga*, except for the singular instance they are mentioned in prose. After Egill kills Berg-Önundr and his companions in the guise of a bear, he instructs some local boys to ensure that animals do not eat their bodies (Nordal 1933, 168–169). Egill produces three verses in the aftermath of the incident (Nordal 1933, 169–173). Although Egill has prevented the beasts of battle from exercising their mouths and taken on a bestial disguise in this scene, his mouth is not hindered in its production of poetry, suggesting that Egill's poetry resists or lies outside the dynamic observed by Wanner.

Another significant function of the mouth in *Egils saga* is drinking. Egill has a high tolerance for alcohol and has an unusual amount of control over himself even when he drinks to the point of vomiting (Nordal 1933, 225–227). His high tolerance could be simply due to his massive size, but it is also possible that his familiarity with poetic mead corresponds aesthetically to a high tolerance for real alcohol. Egill is certainly aware of the connection between alcohol and poetry, and he notes this

correspondence in terms of mouths. In his *Berudrápa*, he calls his poetry “arnar kjapta/qrð gqð” (Nordal 1933, 276). That he sources his poetry straight from the eagle’s mouth ascribes much agency to mouths in the production of poetry.

The final major function of the mouth in Egils saga is speech, which is limited to humans alone. Beastly men, where they appear, speak very little. Ljótr, for instance, snaps out some simple prose sentences, but his speech is animalistic in comparison to the five verses Egill composes during and after their skirmish (Nordal 1933, 202–206). The other berserkr-figures in the saga, Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr, compose verses, but when in their bestial state, they seem unable to speak well. Kveld-Úlfr, known for his advice, becomes unapproachable when he grows wolfish in the evenings, (Nordal 1933, 4) and Skalla-Grímr never speaks in verse again after he kills Egill’s friend Þórðr and his nurse Þorgerðr brák in a berserkr rage (Nordal 1933, 101–102). Egill, on the other hand, composes verses often after flying into bestial rages, as when he kills the child Grímr over knattleikr (Nordal 1933, 100–101) and when he rips out Atli’s throat with his teeth (Nordal 1933, 210). The key quality of Egill’s mouth here is its adaptability - he is capable of speech in cases where his forefathers were silent. The adaptability of his mouth is reminiscent of the adaptability Wanner identifies in the mouths of the victors of Ragnarøk, especially Víðarr, who is silent until after the final battle, when his first speech act is to reminisce about the action as a skald would (Wanner 2012, 24). Víðarr and his compatriots thus represent an ultimate victory of the adaptable mouth over even the cleverest and most devastating of mouths, for example the mouths of the Fenrisúlfr, and Loki (Wanner 2012, 17–24).

The adaptability of Egill’s mouth ultimately concurs with Ármann Jakobsson’s argument that “Egill is both troll and not troll.” (Jakobsson 2011, 43). His mouth allows him both to deviate from and conform to models of monstrosity and humanity from one moment to the next. He can rip out a throat, a decidedly trollish behavior, and in the next moment produce a poem, a decidedly human behavior, and his mouth sits at the center in both cases.

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### **The *Barnstokkr* Tree in William Morris's and J. R. R. Tolkien's Rewritings of the Old Norse Volsung Legend: an Ecocritical Approach**

By focusing on the *Barnstokkr* tree, I propose to analyze William Morris's and J. R. R. Tolkien's versions of the Volsung Legend from an ecocritical perspective (Garrard 2006), observing how the recovery of this pre-modern legend undertaken by Morris and Tolkien resonates with an (eco)critical viewpoint regarding the industrial acceleration and modernization of their historical and geographical context. Felix Guattari ([1989]2012) claims that Ecology should be understood as a complex phenomenon that includes not only the environment, or what we call nature, but also human subjectivity and social relations, which he called the 'three ecologies': the mental, the social and the environmental ecologies.

In Morris's poem, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* ([1876]1904), it is remarkable how intrinsically connected the tree is to the dwelling. In the second stanza of the poem, in which the first verse implicitly states "Thus was the dwelling of Volsung", we can already see how Morris is concerned with emphasizing the relationship between the Volsung lineage and the tree. In the middle of the stanza, the tree linked to the king's house and family is introduced as "a mighty tree", in all its glory, supporting the Volsung's house up to the ceiling ("That reared its blessings roofward"). The stanza ends by mentioning this tree again, announcing its name: Branstock. Not only the dwelling, but all the events of this first part of the poem seem to be connected to the tree.

Still in this first part of the poem, when Sigmund - the only son of King Volsung who survived Siggeir's treacherous attack - dies years later wounded in battle, Morris dedicates a few verses to questioning the distance between this Volsung descendant and his origins. It is remarkable how Morris delineates the imbalance of what he calls "the three due necessities" ([1884] 2000) (similarly to "the three ecologies", as proposed by Guattari), caused, especially, by greed for power and gold. By claiming that the gods shaped a folk who shaped a house in vain, the narrative voice of the poem reverberates how environmental, social and mental ecologies are not dissociated. In the beginning of the poem, the Volsung folk, surrounded by the Branstock tree, enjoyed a perfect environmental, social and mental balance in their dwelling. However, they had to leave that environment to face betrayal and violence, victims of a mind (represented by Siggeir) and a social environment (the Goths) corrupted by envy and the desire for power and gold. Sigmund died far from the bloomy branches of Branstock and the house where he was born. It is interesting how both are taken up in the same verse ("Are the blossomed boughs of the Branstock, and the house where he was born"), reinforcing the connection between the tree and the family.

Trees are also very significant in Tolkien's work. Patrick Curry (2000) states that in Tolkien's literature, the tree is not a mere symbol, but conveys the particularities and experiences of real trees that were part of the writer's life. In *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* (2009), in the second poem, "Signý", Tolkien describes King Volsung's dwelling. The fourth stanza is entirely dedicated to describing a tree, which, despite not being named, we know it is *Barnstokkr*. By using the verb "towered" to describe the tree, Tolkien highlighted the tree's high and superior aspect. Like Morris, Tolkien reinforced the tree's role as a support of Volsung's house ("that house upholding"). In this first part, we can see harmony and balance between Volsung society and environment.

Later, in the poem "Gudrún", Sigurd, son of Sigmund, and the main hero of the legend, along with the folk of King Gjúki's court (the Niflungs), sets out to the land of his ancestors seeking revenge. Even though the verses state that Sigurd regained the land of his ancestors, becoming a "Völsung lord" in a "Völsung land", there is the conjunction "but" signaling the decline of his lineage, whose house was now "hollow" and "roofless" along with the limbs of the tree, which were now "rotten". The tree is described in its decay and weakness, along with the society it once supported, demonstrating the intimate connection between the tree and the family, the environment and the society.

The Volsung Legend is composed of episodes filled with violence. Characters' minds and social relationships are constantly being harmed, from generation to generation. It is interesting to note that although this legend, rewritten by Morris and Tolkien, presents a past without the environmental problems impacted by modern causes, it presents a society in which social and mental ecologies are harmed, demonstrating how this also affects the environment. In short, Morris's and Tolkien's verses present a critique of the disequilibrium of the mental, social and environmental ecologies in an ancient society that is cyclically corrupted by human greed, the same motif that impacted the authors' (and our own) modern societies.

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### **Antisemitic Imagery in the *Vatnsfjörður Psalter***

The anti-Jewish, racialised figures typically seen in medieval artwork throughout Northern Europe are likewise found in the surviving manuscripts from Iceland. Crucial examples of these images are found within the *Vatnsfjörður Psalter* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar: AM 241 a I). This medieval psalter is a parchment manuscript that was created in Iceland between 1315 and 1335. In this work, liturgical hymns are accompanied by illustrations following biblical themes. The many small paintings found in the psalter depict scenes that visually narrate the story of Christ's crucifixion. Each of these images include racialised representations of Jewish men inflicting violence upon Christ and mocking his position in this narrative. Since there is no evidence that any Jewish individual visited Iceland prior to the 17th century, it may be assumed that these anti-Jewish, racialised representations were adopted from abroad (Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson 2020, 72). The Icelanders therefore possessed antisemitic attitudes despite never coming into contact with an actual Jewish person. The extensive research on the visual representations of Jews and the reception of Jewish people in medieval England can serve as a basis for the interpretation of the materials that remain from Iceland's medieval period. Richard Cole states that studies of antisemitism in medieval Iceland and medieval England are highly comparable, yet little scholarly work has been published on the former. Cole argues that while the concept of the Jew was crafted in England, it was shaped in medieval Iceland to satisfy the role of a model for misbehaviour (Cole 2014, 348). Examples of racialised Jewish figures found in early medieval English works such as the *Exchequer Roll*, the *Harley Bestiary*, and the *Hereford World Map* exhibit undeniable similarity to those found in Iceland (Strickland 2018, 420). When the Jews were expelled from England in 1290, the visual works produced post-expulsion did not focus on the Jews who once lived in England before they were driven out. Rather, the imagery remained centred on the theoretical concept of the Jew and the constructed historical past of the Exodus (Cole 2020, 49). The work that survives from Iceland focuses on similar themes.

The anti-Jewish caricatures may be easily identified because they follow a strict list of bodily characteristics that were used to depict Jewish characters in artwork across medieval Northern Europe. For example, the Jewish figures are commonly illustrated in profile so that they may bear large, hooked noses, protuberant eyes, and exaggerated lips (Adams 2023, 80). They are often also represented as dark-skinned (Rowe 2011, 7). In contrast, Christian figures are front facing, displaying small features and fair skin. Jewish characters are usually depicted wearing conical hats as a symbol for the Christian viewership to pinpoint not only a Jew, but also an antagonist in the scene (Adams 2023, 131). The Jewish figures are usually represented as smaller in size when compared to Christian figures as a way to

highlight the spiritual superiority of Christianity to the viewer. These characteristics are likewise found in medieval images of demons and contribute to the perpetuation of the idea that the medieval Jews exist as a massed body that aims to oppose Christianity (Cole 2014, 348).

The medieval Northern European concept of the Jew as the “Other” is clearly represented in the racialised, anti-Jewish imagery exhibited in this manuscript. The “Othering” of the Jews aided in the shaping of the newfound Christian identity in Iceland (Rowe 2011, 9-13). In each scene of the pictorial narrative in the *Vatnsfjörður Psalter*, the Jewish figures are articulated as Christ’s enemies. Their malicious appearance contrasts sharply against the richly coloured fabrics and fair complexions of Christ and the other Christian figures in the imagery. For example, in the image titled “The Betrayal” (fig. 1) a racialised Jewish figure grasps his own conical hat with one hand, drawing attention to his status as the “Other.” In “The Scourging” (fig. 2), a Jewish figure holds his hand over Christ’s mouth, mocking Christ’s messianic claim. The Jewish characters are frequently seen pointing their fingers aggressively in Christ’s face in this manuscript. In “The Bearing of the Cross” (fig. 3), Christ condemns a Jewish man for mocking him. This scene references the narrative of the Wandering Jew (Cole 2015, 219-220). When Christ is crucified, the Jewish figures use weapons to further maim his corpse. The Jews are made to be clear enemies to Christ in both their actions and physical appearance throughout the imagery found in the *Vatnsfjörður Psalter*. At the time of conducting this research, no other authors have yet considered the anti-Jewish illustrations in the *Vatnsfjörður Psalter*. An examination of the medieval Icelandic visual culture suggests that the antisemitic attitudes that were introduced to Iceland from abroad became firmly rooted in the medieval Christian worldview of the Icelanders.



**Figure 1.** Detail of AM. 241a, fol. 85v., “The Betrayal.” 14th century. Photo: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík.



**Figure 2.** Detail of AM. 241a, fol. 85v., “The Scourging.” 14th century. Photo: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík.



**Figure 3.** Detail of AM. 241a, fol. 86v., “The Bearing of the Cross.” 14th century. Photo: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík.

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### **In the hands of God: Avoiding calamity and embracing fate from a maritime pilgrimage perspective**

The Irish Sea corridor of the early medieval period, or the Age of Saints (AD 400-1200), was a physical and Christian spiritual margin, giving pilgrims access to holy sites as well as allowing links to settlements and economic opportunity. Traversing the sea as a pilgrim affirmed belief, accentuated religious ritual, and facilitated social and cultural contact by acting as a conduit linking disparate communities. This research evinces how early medieval pilgrims would avoid calamity and embrace fate from a maritime perspective, utilising a historical-archaeology multi-disciplinary approach.

The case study area is the Rhins and Machars in southwest Scotland (*fig.1*) within the Irish Sea. This area was chosen for being the home of Scottish Christianity through the early medieval ecclesiastical pilgrimage centre of Whithorn and its sister house Kirkmadrine (Simpson 1965, 106-107). The area also boasts connectivity across the Irish Sea to Anglesey in Wales, Cumbria and Mercia in England, the Isle of Man and Ireland.

Understanding the trials of medieval sea travel and its importance in the early medieval world can, to an extent, be garnered from the contemporary literature. These include the Old English poems *Beowulf* and *The Seafarer*, the Irish navigational story *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*, Latin equivalents such as *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (Barraclough 2012, 1), and also Old Norse texts such as the *Grænlandinga þáttr*, the *Íslendingasögur*, and the *Konungs skuggsjá* (6-9). Examples within the latter texts, although not contemporary, show how the cultural and political world is entwined with the natural world (Glauser 2007).

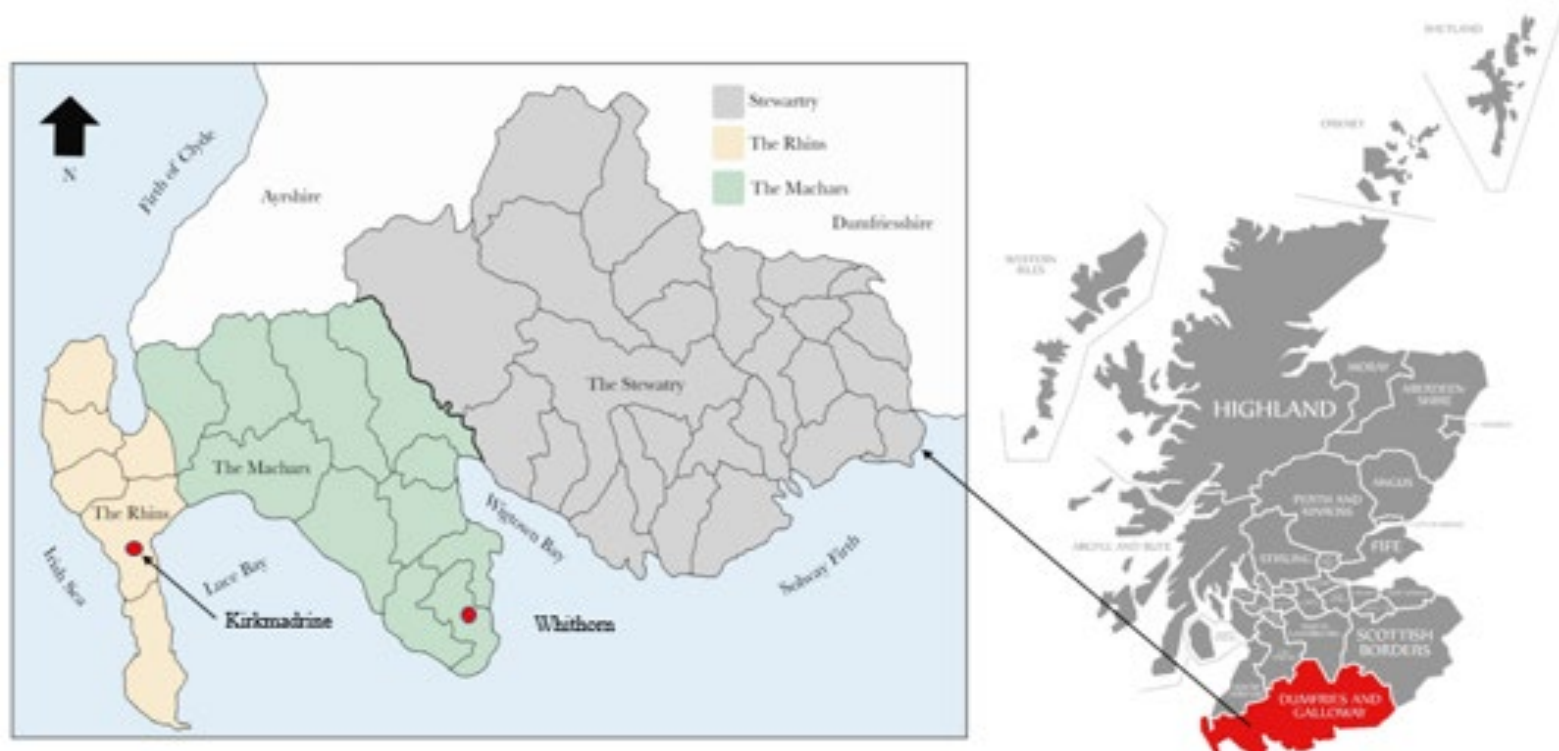
This research suggests that the reality is not far from the fictional descriptions illustrated by these medieval pundits. However, it is through the completion of phenomenological “marinimity” or sea (field) work that shows the true extent of how the land and sea work together to dictate ecclesiastical monumentality on the land and, by default, pilgrimage routes.

This research concerns 84 early medieval ecclesiastical sites along 110 miles of coastline. Additionally, through sailing the coast and collating data of identified sea scape characteristics (*fig.2*), 147 early medieval landing places can be determined. Furthermore, the results suggest an interaction or symbiotic relationship between a landing site and coastal placed ecclesiastical monumentality based on location, accessibility and visibility of the aforementioned sites from the sea. Terrestrial and maritime topographical restraints of accessibility, combined with meteorological events, are also important to the placement of these ecclesiastical sites and landing places, with differing accessibility throughout the seasons and in different weather conditions such as high and low wind, sea haars and tidal considerations, as well as

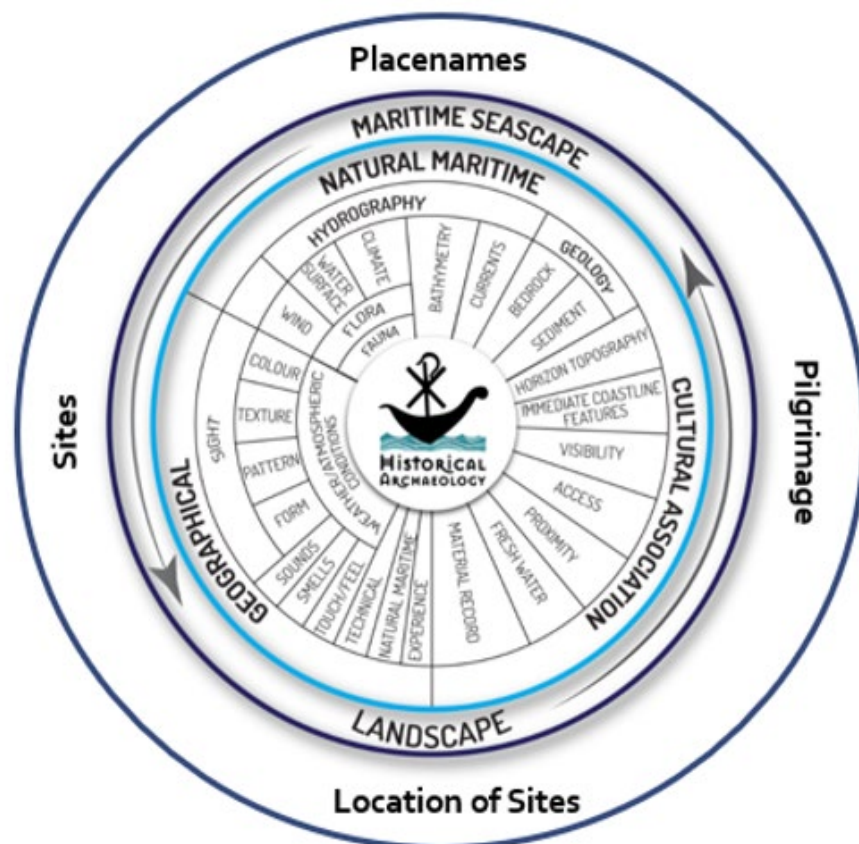
night or day sailing. All of these contribute to and impact sea conditions and behaviour, such as waves and currents, the topography of the seabed and the sea's interaction with the coast itself. Due to these sea-based behaviours and the topography of the coast, it can be hypothesized that this coast can be divided into ten landing place zones (fig.3).

Each zone hosts a plethora of landing and ecclesiastical sites which allow alternative landing in each area depending on the severity of the sea's behaviour, thus avoiding calamity and disaster and ensuring safe passage. For example, if one landing place in one zone is inaccessible due to wind direction endangering landing attempts, then using the next landing zone avoids potential disaster. This does require a level of maritime acumen and suggests that the inshore water highways of this period were similar to contemporary motorways. These maritime super-highways, with service stations placed at pertinent intervals, allowed for rest, recuperation, restocking of fresh water and supplies, and to tend to the religious salvation and sustenance of souls. Sailors were able to pick and choose which landing place allowed for the safest destination from a sea perspective, and the church was able to capture the interaction with pilgrims through the purposeful placement of ecclesiastical sites within the landscape.

Being *on* the sea and part of this dynamic environment allows reconsideration of the sea as being *as* compliant within the early medieval human story to that of the land. It is apparent that the sea, by its physical force, shapes not only the landscape but also identities, and creates a sense of place. Through traversing the coast within these landing zones and maritime superhighways on a seasonal basis, and by having options to land, meant that control of fate, normally at the hands of God, was instead attributed to sailors and their acumen, combined with clerics' decisive strategies of where to place the monumentality on the land. This changes the medieval seascape from a calamitous periphery within the kingdom of God to a great expanse that has a tremendous impact on dictating the activity and culture of the medieval terrestrial story.



**Figure 1.** Rhins and Machars in Galloway, southwest Scotland.



**Figure 2.** Seascape characteristics.



**Figure 3.** Landing sites, ecclesiastical sites and landing zones in the Rhins and Machars.

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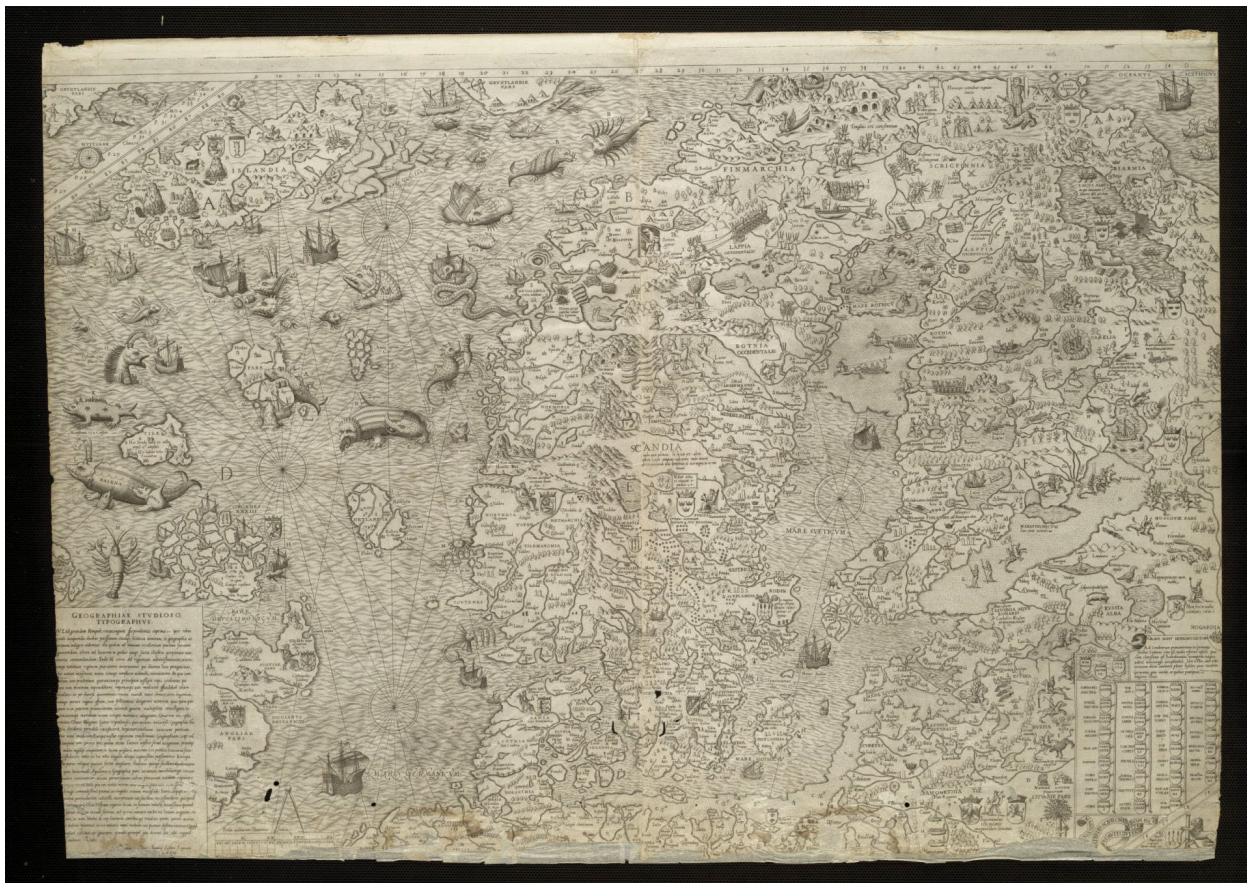
## **In The Murky Depths: the History of Sea Monsters in Olaus Magnus' *Carta Marina***

This paper explores the intersection between folklore and history through the sea monsters depicted on Olaf's Magnus's *Carta Marina et Descriptio Septemtrionalium Terrarum*, a nine-block woodcut map originally published in Venice in 1539. Magnus, born in Sweden, spent a majority of his life working for the Catholic church, and during his employ published the *Carta Marina* and its follow-up *The Description of Northern Peoples*. His connection not only with religion, but to the culture and people around him allowed for the creation of these ethnographic works. Due to the lack of scholarly attention surrounding the *Carta Marina*, a nuanced approach combining history and folklore is needed to examine the history and symbols of the *Carta Marina* and its reception. I will employ an interdisciplinary approach to explore the cultural and mythological context of five prominent sea monsters on this map: the Leviathan, the Sea Serpent, the Island Whale, Charybdis, and the Kraken.

These sea creatures not only possess deep folkloric roots from a variety of cultures but also share an overarching connection to the Leviathan. The Leviathan acts as an accumulation of different mythologies and has the most significance through Abrahamic religions, where it is seen to be a sign of the apocalypse. Since its conception, the Leviathan has also been used as an obscure symbol that reflects the chaotic nature of the ocean, embodying the traditional beliefs associated with water as a harbinger of calamity. The *Carta Marina* further convolutes the definition, mythology, and reality of the Leviathan by displaying varied understandings of what the creature is. The map and supplemental does specifically label the Sea Serpent as a Leviathan despite the popular understanding at the time that Leviathans were more closely associated with whales. However, the five prominent creatures on the map all share common aspects of the Leviathan, all of them creatures that are large and formidable. The Sea Serpent on the map is detailed in the supplementary material by way of parallel to the world serpent of Norse mythology, Jörmungandr, and can be seen to resemble creatures from Greek myths as well. The Island Whale holds more of a religious connection as it is described in hagiographies like the Journey of St. Brendan. Brendan's crew thought they landed on an island, but discovered the island to be a living whale. Charybdis takes the form of a whirlpool on the *Carta Marina*, and supports the more scientific side of Magnus's work alongside the charting of ocean currents and ice flows in the North Sea, but the label on the map links it to the literary-folkloric world by referencing Charybdis from the *Odyssey*. Finally, the Kraken presents itself as the youngest sea monsters, as the name does not appear until after the publication of Magnus's map, but does share the same historical background coming from Pliny's *polypus*, while carrying a similar

legacy as the Leviathan throughout early modern and modern culture. Overall, all of these monsters hold elements of size, shape, or power similar to the Leviathan and act as different facets of the entity that is the Leviathan.

The fantastical and ethnographical nature of the *Carta Marina* meant that it could not be used as a navigation tool like the portolan charts or other contemporary maps, but more as a form of escapism. While Magnus did not develop the monsters on the *Carta Marina*, his map leaves a lasting legacy which many cartographers during the age of exploration expanded on. Maps like Abraham Ortelius's *Islandia* pull directly from the *Carta Marina* to use sea monsters as decoration across the ocean's surface. Other cartographers like Münster and Mercator also use these methods, though less frequently. All of these mapmakers tried to encompass a new understanding of the vastness of the world. They had room for these fantastical creatures until more was known about the unknown portions of the globe, minimizing the need for even metaphorical sea monsters. The fear of the unknown that the Leviathan symbolized was replaced by new information from exploration. The ocean of the *Carta Marina* was no longer filled, but a blank space, with the monsters explained away. However, the modern world still has a place for sea monsters lurking on maps and other fantastical drawings. Maps like Magnus's are moved from sources of science and information to being sold in fiction. Maps with sea monsters have become a predominant feature in fiction literature throughout the centuries after Mercator's science of cartography took over, and the creatures in the sea were explained and placed onto maps like *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and other such books which all pay homage to the Olaus Magnus, the *Carta Marina*, and harken back to the mystery of the Leviathan.



**Figure 1.**  
*Carta Marina*  
(Full).  
Magnus,  
Olaus.  
Cartographer.  
*Carta Marina*.  
1572. Map.  
2nd edition.  
54 x 79 cm.  
Courtesy of  
the James  
Ford Bell  
Library,  
University of  
Minnesota.



**Figure 2.**  
 Close up  
 single sheet of  
 the 1539  
*Carta  
 Marina.  
 Magnus,  
 Olaus.  
 Cartographer.  
 Carta Marina  
 et Description  
 Septemtrional  
 um Terrarum  
 ac  
 Mirabilium.*  
 1539. Map. 9  
 sheets (in  
 portfolio), 50  
 x 66 cm.  
 Courtesy of  
 the James  
 Ford Bell  
 Library,  
 University of  
 Minnesota.

**Figure 3.**  
 Close up  
 single sheet of  
 the 1539  
*Carta  
 Marina.  
 Magnus,  
 Olaus.  
 Cartographer.  
 Carta Marina  
 et Description  
 Septemtrional  
 um Terrarum  
 ac  
 Mirabilium.*  
 1539. Map. 9  
 sheets (in  
 portfolio), 50  
 x 66 cm.  
 Courtesy of  
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### **«...at eigi taki kristnir menn at göfga hann sem gob»: The Cult of Saints and Sainthood in the Old Norse *Clemens saga***

The Old Norse *Clemens saga* is a story about Pope St. Clement I (second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> c.) that describes Clement's discipleship with the apostle Peter, his episcopacy in Rome, and his martyrdom. The saga itself is a translation from two Latin hagiographies about St. Clement – *Recognitiones* and *Passio Sancti Clementis* (both from the 4<sup>th</sup> c.). *Clemens saga* is a part of the earliest surviving codex of saints' sagas AM 645 4to, compiled in 1220–1250 at Skálholt. Most likely, the manuscript was intended for reading by clergy. As is well known, Scandinavian versions of Latin saint's lives differ greatly from their originals in style and sometimes in content (Grønlie 2017, 10-19), but they remain religious writings that serve to reinforce Christian values, in which saints are presented as moral ideals for the education of the audience (Haraldur Hreinsson 2021, 67). My paper focuses on comparing and contrasting the Christian discourses in *Clemens saga* with its Latin sources, particularly on the issue of understanding sainthood and conveying the saint's image.

First of all, we should note the preservation in the saga of the Latin concept of *imitatio Christi*, which is manifested in the interpretation of Clement's holiness in his exploit for the faith. The life of a righteous Christian consists of following God's word and commandments, as well as suffering trials and hardships, as Christ did, for the sake of Salvation after death (Arnautova 2014, 99-102). In this respect, the description of Clement's life is an enumeration of his virtues from youth, especially when he became a bishop. The culmination of his life's journey is his voluntary acceptance of martyrdom for the Faith, because he believed that God's grace would always be with him in every trial and labour (Carron 2005, 47). The compiler, similarly to the *Passio*, preserves the image of Clement as a virtuous and humble Christian, a bishop confronting paganism through sermons and baptisms, and a miracle worker, but these episodes are more detailed than in the Latin originals. The examples of moral and humble behaviour are evidence not only of the *imitatio Christi*, but also of the religious-didactic message of the saga, which is to demonstrate a model of behaviour of a virtuous Christian and an ideal bishop, to explain in more detail the fundamentals of Christianity, and to remind that for the sake of salvation (*hjálp, heilsa*) one must endure the hardships of life.

*Clemens saga* repeatedly attempts to clarify the dogma of the dual nature of Christ, caused by the misunderstanding of how God can be a dead man and at the same time the eternally living God, as well as the correlation of God the Father and God the Son. Usually, these clarifications are done in the form of narratorial additional comments that are absent in the Latin originals. An episode of the philosophical dispute between Faustinianus and the young Clement from *Recognitiones* should be cited here as an example. In the Latin original, Faustinianus

was convinced of astrological fatalism; he also denied the existence of God and God's will, which gave rise to a philosophical dispute. In *Clemens saga*, Faustinianus does not understand how one can worship a mortal man and call him an almighty and living God. The apostle Peter debunks this prejudice: "... at sá inn sami maþr es þú kallar dauban, ok vér trúum á, es bæþi maþr daubligr ok Guþ lifandi omnipotens ok óbrigþligr" ("This same man whom you call dead, and we believe in, is both a mortal man and the living almighty and immutable God") (Carron 2005, 22-23). The question of worshipping a dead man as a god is reminiscent of the early Christian disputes over the dual nature of Jesus Christ.

The problem of interpreting the veneration of the dead as part of the cult of the saints occurs in the saga when describing the martyrdom of Clement. In *Passio* the drowning of the bishop is explained by the fact that in this way Christians will not be able to honour his remains in the service of God. This comment can be interpreted as the impossibility of observing all forms of liturgical veneration of the saint because he could not be properly buried. In *Clemens saga* the martyrdom is accompanied by the words: "at eigi taki kristnir menn at göfga hann sem goþ" ("so that Christians should not begin to worship him as a god") (Carron 2005, 50-51). The veneration of the deceased in this addendum is presented as worshipping him directly as a divinity rather than hindering the establishment of a saints' cult.

Thus, *Clemens saga* retains many aspects of Christian discourse from the *Recognitiones* and the *Passio*, especially in understanding the concept of *imitatio Christi* and in translating the images of Clement as a holy bishop, a baptizer, and a humble Christian. The compiler's intentions specifically concern the explanation of who the saint is, what his cult consists of, and what the difference is between the veneration of relics and the worship of deities. In addition, the compiler sought to explain the fundamental dogmas of Christianity, which can be expressed in the needs of religious instruction of the Icelanders of the beginning of the 13th century.

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### **Lost in Translation, or gained? *Barlaam and Josphat's Saga* between the Old Norse and Latin textual cultures.**

This paper explores the translation of *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* and how we can understand the differences between it and the Latin text it was based on. Rather than viewing these differences as misunderstandings, I propose that it is more fruitful to regard them as part of the process where the work was adapted to the Old Norse textual culture. This is more in line with the current academic discourse on the nature of the medieval translating process and it fits better within our contextual knowledge of *Barlaams saga* as a product of the ON learned milieu.

Scholars have not always viewed the ON *Barlaams saga* favorably. Finnur Jónsson has described the ON translation as “an utterly boring book... whose frequent misunderstandings of the original ... does not make it any more enjoyable to get through.” (Finnur Jónsson 1923, 972). The standing of this work in the academic discourse has improved since then with recent works such as *Barlaam i Nord* in the Bibliotheca Nordica series (Johansson and Arvidsson, 2009). Nonetheless, since the first modern edition of this saga was published by Keyser and Unger in 1851, little work has been done on the translating process into ON. A noteworthy and recent exception is Johanterwage, but her thesis focused more on how the translator reworked the text into a courtly style rather than giving a detailed analysis of semantic alterations in the translation process (Johanterwage 2019).

Medieval translations were generally more concerned with conveying the meaning of the work rather than giving a word-for-word rendition. This approach, favoured already by Cicero, received patristic endorsement by Jerome, who remained the ultimate authority on matters relating to language and philology throughout the Middle Ages. Rita Copeland has, in her research, built on these contemporary medieval conceptions and generally described medieval translation as an active process where, through both hermeneutics and exegesis, medieval translators could even seek to supplant the original text (Copeland 1991). Changes, therefore, do not have to be viewed as mistakes. Rather, when there is reason to suspect intentionality instead of misunderstanding, we are better served by exploring what purpose these changes could have served.

Numerous alterations were made during the translation process, but in this paper, I draw attention to three examples that highlight the different manners in which these could be made.

The first example is from the story's opening words. The Latin version talks about the origin of monasticism and its subsequent spread to India, and in a way lays down the setting and background for the story. In the ON translation, we can see that the introduction has been expanded, going further into the origins and development of monasticism, and linking them to the early rise and spread of Christianity. In the

part that corresponds to the Latin original, we can see that the ON text has reworked the passage and rather presents a more standard conversion story. The expanded introduction and reworking could add to the didactic nature of this work and would fit well with the work's overall function of teaching Christian theology (de la Cruz Palma 2001, 108; Rindal 1981, 199).

The second example is from Barlaam's remarks on martyrdom. In the Latin version martyrdom is undertaken to preserve the purity that one achieved in baptism, which is then referred to as another baptism. It is also called laudable and valuable to undergo martyrdom as afterwards, one is free from the risk of being subsequently corrupted by sin. In the ON translation, however, it is stated that some people converted so quickly that they were martyred before they could be baptized in water, and this was both a faster and more secure baptism as one need not fear that they would sin again afterward. The ON version also lost a reference linking this to "the divine and God bearing fathers and the Apostle". In this example, some of the context and some auxiliary theological references are lost, and what is left is more focused on the central aspect of the passage (de la Cruz Palma 2001, 234-236; Rindal 1981, 41).

The last example is from a dialogue early in the saga between King Avennir and one of his servants who had converted to Christianity and escaped to the desert to live as a monk. There, the translator altered some aspects of how the forces of wrath and desire operate in a person. The Latin version discusses how these two forces have fallen out of balance with the king. In the ON version however, the problem is the presence of these forces in itself. Here, we are dealing with a more noticeable semantic reworking of the source text (de la Cruz Palma 2001, 116; Rindal 1981, 204).

From these examples, we can observe three different ways in which the Translator altered the source text. The examples shown here are significantly reworked, and since they are not unique, viewing them as mere anomalies or misunderstandings seems reductive.

These alterations provide concrete examples of how a text could change when being conveyed to a new audience across textual cultures. Here, we can see which considerations the ON translator took to convey this work, where they focused on providing further explanations when necessary and simplifying the text where they deemed fit.

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## **Wolves, dogs, and outlaws: physical and metaphorical boundaries in Old Norse law**

As species descending from a common ancestor, wolves (*Canis Lupus*) and dogs (*Canis Lupus Familiaris*) share various similarities, and Old Norse culture demonstrated a certain awareness of these similarities. These animals appeared in a variety of genres and sources, and on some occasions, they were employed interchangeably. Arguably, the most famous examples of dogs and wolves can be found in supernatural settings (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2007, Kuusela 2012, Su 2023), but they do not comprise the only representations of these animals. On this matter, Old Norse law offers several instances regarding wolves, dogs, and their impact on human society. While legal sources do not comprise a fully objective and detailed observation of these animals, they may provide a more mundane and reliable medium to scrutinise the manner in which medieval Scandinavians regulated their own interactions with these species in their everyday life. Hence, this paper focused on addressing some of the characteristics of wolves and dogs and their relationship with humans in Old Norse law.

Additionally, Old Norse culture is characterised by a significant correlation between the concept of ‘wolfishness’ and transgressive behaviour. Different sources present some of the most dangerous individuals as inherently connected with wolves due to their violent and socially disruptive actions (Breen 1999). In the legal context, only a minority of individuals guilty of the most heinous crimes were linked to wolves and wolf-like characteristics through the employment of a very specific terminology (Guðrún Nordal 1998, Riisøy 2014). These criminals followed a process of estrangement that forced them to retreat into the wilderness, a place that is iconically associated with wolves. This is also a process of dehumanisation that had severe implications for these individuals, who were stripped of every right and could find themselves in life-threatening situations for the rest of their lives.

In general, the outlook towards dogs was more positive, but if kept unchecked, these animals could pose a serious threat to social stability to the point they could resemble wolves. At the same time, dogs’ capability to be violent was a valuable and needed quality to protect their owners and their households. In this regard, Old Norse laws present a developed understanding of how these animals functioned and how humans should control them. Therefore, it is possible to analyse a variety of laws regarding not only the proper way of dealing with dogs, but also the degree of human responsibility for their actions depending on the context.

Finally, this paper addressed a key detail for the investigation of the concept of ‘wolfishness’. Wolves were among the most represented animals in Old Norse culture, and the majority of sources that described wolves or wolf-like characters had their origin in Iceland. Despite this, it should be noted that wolves were never

indigenous to Iceland, and it is reasonable to think that most medieval Icelanders did not have any experience with this species. Therefore, in order to understand why these animals achieved such an impact on Old Norse culture, my work also investigates their presence in the rest of medieval Scandinavia. In particular, this paper focused on comparing the Icelandic and Norwegian legal systems since these two geographical areas shared significant cultural and historical ties that influenced the creation of a common frame of reference. Through a selection of laws from *Grágás*, *Gulatingssloven*, and *Frostatingsloven*, I discussed how ‘wolfishness’ was a multifaceted concept that was applicable to both humans and animals depending on the context. This analysis kept into account the relevance of physical and metaphorical boundaries in order to explore how medieval Scandinavians perceived and understood these animals and their actions. While wolves belonged to the wilderness, and farm animals to the farm; dogs could be located somewhere in the middle due to their potential for being agents of violence and disruptors of society. In this sense, dogs could be considered belonging to the overall concept of ‘wolfishness’ because of their close relationship and similarities with wolves. At the same time, their ability to resemble wolfish violence is a valuable characteristic that humans tried to incorporate within human society. The key point of this analysis was that, while violence could be beneficial, it also must be carefully controlled, which could happen only within a specific context. Otherwise, it could lead to unbound chaos and loss of human lives and wealth.

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### **Retiring an Archetype: Fate and Conversion in the Deaths of Þiðrandi Síðu-Hallsson and Gestr Bárðarson**

The authors of medieval Icelandic saga literature, Christians writing at least two centuries after the conversion of the country to Christianity in 999 or 1000 C.E., often wrote stories which centered around their pre-conversion ancestors. Authors varied in how they described or framed Norse pre-Christian religion and its adherents in the texts. Pre-Christian beliefs, if they were remarked on at all, were simply described by the authors as the way people did things during that period. This markedly changes as soon as Christianity enters the picture in saga literature. Good men and women convert in time, ideally quick time, and those who make the active choice to resist conversion generally begin to be portrayed in a more negative light. Those people become pariahs, members of crews and expeditions who bring bad luck, prone to quick anger, and generally bad actors within saga society. The sagas are always quick to point out that once Christianity becomes an option it is the only option. Despite this, there are so many pre-Christian Icelanders who the sagas seemed all too eager to praise and who lived lifestyles that would have been seen as the pinnacle of Viking Age conduct. So, medieval Christian Icelanders, living in a time when that long gone warlike raiding culture was all the rage, had to distance themselves from those characters, ostensibly their own real ancestors, while still idealizing or respecting them as figures in the past. To do this they needed to retire them in the literature with the end of the old religion.

The deaths of Þiðrandi Síðu-Hallsson and Gestr Bárðarson provide two excellent examples of the retirement of those pre-Christian archetypes. Gestr's fate, at the very end of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, and the death of Þiðrandi in *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls* differ in the details but mirror each other in theme. Þiðrandi is an extremely promising young man, and the archetypal Norse first-born son. He is well regarded by all, and the tale continually emphasizes this. Gestr, like Þiðrandi, is a widely respected warrior and man, though far more proven as a warrior than Þiðrandi by the end of his life. Neither man is Christian, and Gestr is even more inextricably connected to the pre-Christian culture by his giant and troll blood. He is committed to his faith, and unlike Þiðrandi, who is killed before he has any opportunity to convert, Gestr is alive as Iceland begins to go through its conversion to Christianity and is directly faced with it. He is reluctant to pledge himself to Olaf Tryggvason because the king is in the process of attempting to convert Norway, and to some extent Icelanders, to Christianity. Gestr describes him as "so overbearing that he wants to control everything, even what people believe in" (O'Connor 2006, 233).<sup>1</sup>

When Þiðrandi is killed, by what are implied to be spirits fleeing the onset of Christianity, the narrator remarks “He defended himself well and bravely” (O’Connor 2006: 182).<sup>2</sup> He is given a traditional pre-Christian burial, to mirror his classically pre-Christian warrior end, in a mound. His family friend Þórhallr even remarks that he could have been saved by Christianity had it been more entrenched in the country at that time. Gestr dies after a harsh judgement from his father Bárðr. He pledges to convert to Christianity in order to save his own life in combat, seemingly with no other choice but to die, while fighting the supernatural entity Raknarr in Raknarr’s burial mound. Bárðr comes to Gestr in a dream, angry, and says, “A poor deed you have done - abandoning your beliefs, which your forefathers have held, and letting yourself be forced to change your faith because of your feebleness of character - and for that you shall lose both your eyes” (O’Connor 2006, 231).<sup>3</sup> He then grasps both of Gestr’s eyes and vanishes. Gestr awakens to a terrible pain in his eyes and that day they burst out, killing him while he is still in his baptismal robes.

Both Gestr and Þiðrandi are used as examples in the literature of the retirement of the archetypal ideal pre-Christian Norse man. Each dies of different circumstances, but thematically their fates are clearly intertwined. They represent a part of Old Norse culture that was lost with the conversion from pre-Christian religion, and their place and careful treatment in the literature shows an acknowledgement of that loss by their medieval Christian descendants. Furthermore, it seems that medieval Icelanders, at the very least the authors, felt some sort of a sadness about that loss that is reflected in their writing. The stories, though certainly not literally true, represent an attempt by those writers to come to terms with what the conversion to Christianity meant to their ancestors and to explain why that ideal Norse warrior archetype was something that could and should be admired in the sagas but not emulated in every way in the real world.

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#### Notes

1. This from the original Old Norse: “Svá ráðgjarn, at hann vill öllu ráða, jafnvel því, á hvern menn trúa” (O’Connor 2006: 233).
2. From the original Old Norse: “hann varðist drengiliga” (O’Connor 2006: 182).
3. From the original Old Norse: “Illa hefir þú gert, er þú hefir látit trú þína, þá er langfeðgar þínir hafa haft, ok látit kúga þik til siðaskiptis sakir lítilmennsku, ok fyrir þat skaltu missa bæði augu þín” (O’Connor 2006: 231).

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### **A Crisis of Fate: Paganism and Christianity in *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál***

Praise poetry is one of the most prevalent types of skaldic poetry in tenth and eleventh century Old Norse sources. Two such poems are *Eiríksmál*, written anonymously, and *Hákonarmál*, written by Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnson. These are often discussed together. However, close examination of these poems shows that religion is used differently in each. In particular, while both poems use Christian imagery in concurrence with pagan traditions, the undertone of each poem is distinct. This paper aims to explore these differences in the perception of religion, and argues that *Eiríksmál* is ultimately more Christian, while *Hákonarmál* reclaims paganism.

Pagan traditions are clear in both poems, using pagan imagery such as the Æsir, Valhöll, and Ragnarøk. However, there are clear differences. For example, in *Eiríksmál*, Óðinn dispatches Sigmundur and Sinfjötli to invite Eiríkr in. In *Hákonarmál*, Óðinn sends valkyries Gøndul and Skøgul to choose a king to join his army. Seeing heroes in *Eiríksmál* versus valkyries in *Hákonarmál* is a strong example of how *Hákonarmál* tries to go one step further than *Eiríksmál*.

Stanza eighteen of *Hákonarmál* notes praise of Hákon, and his respect for “véum” (st.18 l.2: “sanctuaries”). This is a reference to pagan sanctuaries, and how Hákon honoured them well. Stanza four describes an interesting scene: Hákon is taking his armour off again after having earlier put it on, save for the helmet, and celebrating with his men. Why would Hákon put his armour on, only to take it off again two stanzas later? Nordberg suggests this is a description of Hákon performing a weapon dance, a Germanic martial ritual seen throughout the Germanic Migration period and into the Viking Age.

Meanwhile, *Eiríksmál* seems more superficial with its pagan portrayal. This can be seen in stanza three, where Eiríkr’s arrival is likened to the god Baldr. A second example can be found in stanza six. Eiríkr’s violence as described in the poem makes him a successful warrior, and it is celebrated by Óðinn, rather than criticised as it might have been in Christianity.

When it comes to the portrayal of Christianity however, the roles seem to be reversed. Stanza seven of *Eiríksmál* describes Óðinn being asked why he has taken Eiríkr’s victory away. While this seems to be pagan at first, as it mentions Fenrir and the home of the gods, the Christian meaning goes beyond that. It is a criticism of Óðinn, asking why Óðinn would take away Eiríkr’s great victory, one of the worst things you can do to a warrior? It alludes to Christianity in the sense that a Christian god would potentially not have done this. Also, Óðinn’s response can be read in a Christian light. While it appears as a clear reference to *Ragnarøk*, it also can be

interpreted as a reference to the Christian end of the world, with Fenrir serving as the antichrist.

The last line of *Eiríksmál* is also significant, and it is particularly the numbers “five” and “six” in the poem to which I wish to draw your attention. The number five in Christianity symbolises the grace God shows towards humans. This fits within the poem as the kings to whom Eiríkr refers are said to be important kings who serve people, calling them good servants of God. What makes this interesting is that Eiríkr refers to himself as the sixth, a number associated with men and human weakness. Eiríkr here reflects on his mortal life and his role within it, going back to many failed kingships and the loss of honour in the process.

*Hákonarmál* has a similar opposing of Óðinn. In stanza fifteen, Hákon opposes Óðinn, and notes that his anger is to be feared. First, this is a reference to the loss of Hákon’s victory on earth, similar to Eiríkr’s loss of his victory in *Eiríksmál*. Second, it is reminiscent of a more Christian idea of fearing God. This, however, is the only clear connection between Christianity and *Hákonarmál*. The last potential reference to Christianity can be seen in the last stanza where Eyvindr uses the words “heiðin goð” (st.21 l.3: “heathen gods”). While this initially seems to be a negative sentiment towards paganism, it can be read as the opposite. This is not a rejection of paganism, but rather a reclaiming of this term as part of the pagan resurgence.

To return to the title of this paper, “A Crisis of Fate”, what does this say about the fate of these two kings? I believe these kings’ religious convictions influenced the eventual fate they suffered. While dying in battle was seen as an honourable death, this can also be twisted: both Eiríkr and Hákon are defeated. The poems influence this reading by twisting the narrative. The kings become heroes chosen by Óðinn, and it was their fate to lose their life in mortal battle. The religious context takes this new interpretation even further. By criticising Óðinn and calling himself the sixth king, Eiríkr reflects on his eventual fate, noting himself closer to men and human weakness, aiming for divine good, and separating himself from the pagan gods. Meanwhile, Hákon criticises Óðinn as well, but simultaneously reclaims his role amongst the “heathen gods”, as seen in his respect for pagan sanctuaries and his weapon dancing. To conclude, while paganism rings strongly in both poems, *Eiríksmál* uses this pagan heroic praise poetry to reinforce Eiríkr’s conversion to Christianity, while *Hákonarmál* reclaims Hákon’s paganism by falling back in these heroic traditions.

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## **Fortified Bridges or the lack thereof: A Regional Comparison**

This paper developed out of the BA thesis *Defending the Empire: Carolingian Defences against Viking Attacks, c.800-900* (University of Stirling, 2023, unpublished). The research on water defences revealed a discrepancy between West Frankia and East and Middle Frankia regarding the use of bridges as river defence. Thus, this comparative study emerged, additionally encompassing Anglo-Saxon England, since some defensive strategies employed there have been likened to those of West Frankia. Middle and East Frankia are grouped together in the comparison, since the research revealed no relevant differences in the two kingdoms' approaches to water defences.

This study builds on extensive analysis of Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian written sources. Among others, it draws on chronicles, annals, charters, and capitularies, as well as recent scholarship on Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian defences and medieval bridges.

This paper concerns itself only with the use of bridges to block and defend river passages against Vikings travelling on the rivers and disregards alternative military uses of bridges. This form of river defence is a 'strategy' attributed to Charles the Bald who first implemented it in 862 with the intention of blocking the passage of Vikings on the Marne (Boyer 1976, 21; Nelson 1991, 98, 100, 118).

The nature of the defences and fortifications mentioned remains uncertain. Several scholars have proposed their theories. Pointing to the asymmetrical nature of medieval bridges, Majorie Nice Boyer suggests that often only one arch was navigable and consequently needed to be blocked (1976, 168). David Harrison (2004, 41) and Simon Coupland (1991, 1, 3, 5) argue that wooden beams could be placed horizontally or vertically to temporarily block the passage under bridges. In a few cases, efforts were made to permanently fortify them. These fortifications might have included stone and wooden (Coupland 1991, 5) structures at the bridge heads paired with ditches and ramparts.

Following the perceived success on the Marne in 862, the same 'strategy' was implemented on the Oise and Marne in 865 (Nelson 1991, 127). Between 861 and 870, Seine bridges at Paris also received repairs (Boyer 1976, 22-23). Moreover, Charles the Bald ordered the fortification of a bridge near Pîtres in 862 (MacLean 2020, 31; Nelson 1991, 100). The Capitulary of Querzy of 887 refers to another fortified bridge on the Loire. Its construction date is unclear, however, Coupland (1991, 9-10) argues it was constructed in or after 873. The previously mentioned bridges at Paris might also have received fortifications, but the sources remain unclear. The success of these defensive measures is mostly either not known or debatable (Coupland 1991, 1,3,4). Some defensive bridges successfully blocked the river passage but did not prevent Vikings from portaging their ships around them

(Gillmor 1988, 88). In a number of cases, the bridges did not affect the Vikings' river passages (Boyer 1976, 22; Coupland 1991, 8; Nelson 1991, 127) and in some it is not clear whether Viking raiders ever reached the newly defended bridges (Coupland 1991, 7).

The construction of a few bridges in Middle and East Frankia is attested in the sources (Böhmer 1908, 215; Boyer 1976, 3), but the analysis revealed they were not built to defend the river passages. Notably, the bridge crossing the Rhine at Mainz burned down in 813 (Einhard 1998, 36), long before Vikings used the Carolingian river network to raid further inland. After 814 there are no mentions of the reconstruction of the bridge, nor evidence pointing to it. On the Elbe, a bridge was built in 808, however, the sources report that this was done to facilitate troop movements (Böhmer 1908, 196; Rau 1968, 89). The study of Middle and East Frankia thus revealed no evidence for the use of defensive bridges. Nevertheless, it indicated the long construction time of bridges and that they faced many risks.

A close look at the Anglo-Saxon tactics likened to those of Charles the Bald reveals that the comparison applies less to the river defences and more to the establishment of burghs in strategic locations (Whitelock 1961, 62, 64, 66). As in Middle and East Frankia, the sources mention relatively few bridges (Harrison 2004, 39-43). Yet, there are three notable instances relevant to this study. Firstly, in 895 King Alfred had fortifications built on the shores of the Lea in order to stop Vikings from using their ships on the river (Whitelock 1961, 57). While there is no indication of a bridge being involved, the venture was successful. Harrison (2004, 43) suggests the Anglo-Saxons might have used ropes or chains spanned between the fortifications to obstruct the river. Secondly, in 920 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports the construction of a bridge at Nottingham to connect two burghs (Whitelock 1961, 67). Considering this together with Nottingham's location inland and far upriver of the Trent, and the lack of mention of a river raid connected to Nottingham, makes it unlikely that the bridge was built or used to defend the river. Lastly, an account by Snorri Sturluson, who wrote in the 13th century, suggests that a Thames bridge at London was able to block the passage of Norse ships in the early 11th century (Harrison 2004, 41) which corresponds to a bridge mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Whitelock 1961, 83, 95). This might refer to the bridge which Cnut found impassable in 1016 (Boyer 1976, 26). Yet, like in West Frankia, despite blocking the river, the bridge and its defenders did not prevent the portage of ships to circumvent the obstacle (Whitelock 1961, 95).

The author proposes that the defensive use of bridges was not adopted in Middle and East Frankia due to the imbalance between the time and effort necessary for bridge construction and the limited potential of their success as defence. The kingdoms had too many waterways which would have needed bridges and too few troops were able and willing to defend them. In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, the author argues that bridges were superfluous for river defence since the Anglo-Saxons successfully employed ships to guard the coast and because they were able to defend the rivers without bridges when Viking raiders managed to enter them, as seen with the river Lea.

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### **‘Bleeding Makes a Wound’: Female Violence in *Laxdæla saga* and *Grágás***

Written around 1245, *Laxdæla saga* has received significant critical attention for its interest in its striking female characters and their emotional interiority, to the extent that scholars such as Loren Auerbach and Helga Kress suggest female authorship. Nonetheless, existing *Laxdæla* scholarship lacks in-depth analyses comparing the three episodes presenting female violence in the saga. These episodes feature four women: Jórunn and Melkorka, wife and concubine to Høskuldr Dalla-Kollsson respectively, Vigdís, former wife of Þórðr *goddi*, and Auðr, former wife of Þórðr Ingunnarson. Female violence in *Laxdæla saga* is highly unusual both in its mere existence, and because the women who trespass on this typically male domain of action are rewarded, or at the very least, escape consequences. So, why is female violence permissible in *Laxdæla saga*? By analyzing these episodes intertextually with *Grágás*, a compilation of Icelandic law code, I will demonstrate how a marginal social consideration of female violence in the law informs its permissibility in the saga.

Early in *Laxdæla saga*, Høskuldr Dalla-Kollsson purchases Melkorka, an Irish concubine who is secretly a princess, while abroad. When he returns home with Melkorka, Høskuldr’s wife Jórunn is understandably displeased with the situation. One evening, as Melkorka is helping Jórunn to remove her stockings, Jórunn erupts, beating Melkorka with her stockings. Not to be outdone, Melkorka “*reiddisk ok setti hnefann á nasar henni, svá at blóð varð laust*” (“flew into a rage and struck her on the nose with her fist, drawing blood”) (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934, 26; Magnus Magnússon and Hermann Pálsson 1969, 67). This episode is an unusual incident of violence between women, violence being a course of action typically reserved for men against other men.

But what does the law say about this fight? The law codes compiled as *Grágás* survive primarily in two manuscripts: *Konungsbók* (GKS 1157 fol., circa 1260) and *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 334 fol., circa 1280). Both *Konungsbók* and *Staðarhólsbók* contain *Vígslóði*, or sections on “Treatment of Homicide,” which detail punishments for various violent acts. Significantly, each manuscript emphasizes the relationship of blood to the injury class, *særir*, or “wounds,” for which the punishment was full outlawry. *Konungsbók* states, “*Þa særir maðr anan ef þar bløþir er a com*” (“A man wounds another if it bleeds where the blow lands”) (Vilhjálmur Finsen 1852, 148; Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 1980, 141). *Staðarhólsbók* likewise indicates that blood is a fundamental requirement for categorizing a strike to the face or nose as a wound. Regarding Jórunn and Melkorka’s fight, Melkorka’s blow has three features in common with descriptions of a major wound in the *Grágás* manuscripts: a fist, a nose, and blood. The close parallel between these features and *Grágás*’s language

demonstrates the legal severity of her actions – punishable by outlawry under other circumstances. However, *Laxdæla saga* declines to follow the route of consequences to a punitive conclusion, so these women are left having benefitted from their violence.

Directly after the Jórunn and Melkorka episode, the text presents another instance of female violence. Vigdís agrees to shelter her distant relative Þórólfr, who is being pursued by Ingjaldr Sauðeyjargoði for murder. Þórðr, her husband, attempts to sell Þórólfr’s location to Ingjaldr in exchange for a purse of silver, but Vigdís foils his plan. Denouncing Þórðr’s dishonorable conduct, Vigdís then strikes Ingjaldr on the nose, drawing blood. Like Melkorka, Vigdís inflicts a major wound that would carry a penalty of full outlawry, but as with Jórunn and Melkorka, she suffers no consequences for her actions.

*Laxdæla saga*’s third and final instance of female violence is Auðr’s attack on her ex-husband, Þórðr Ingunnarson. Auðr rides to Þórðr’s farm and after waking him, slashes him violently across the chest with a sword, but Þórðr declines to have her apprehended. Despite this wound’s obvious result in blood loss, *Laxdæla saga* nonetheless underscores the same marker of legal severity as the other two episodes: bleeding. For *Laxdæla saga*, then, bleeding truly makes a wound, and a wound brings its female perpetrators into the same sphere of severity as male violence.

Comparing *Grágás* with *Laxdæla saga* highlights the severity of the saga’s female violence, but *Grágás* also offers insight into the permissibility of such violence. *Konungsbók’s Víglóði* does not mention female violence. In contrast, a short section of *Staðarhólsbók’s Víglóði* explicitly addresses women who commit violent acts: “*Jafn sek verðr kona sem karl maðr ef hon veðr karl man. eða cono. eða vinnr á. oc sva er um öll laga afbrigði mælt.*” (“A woman is under the same penalty as a man if she kills man or woman or injures them, and so it is prescribed for all departures from the law.”) (Vilhjálmur Finsen 1879, 350; Dennis, Foote, and Perkins 1980, 220). This critical difference between *Staðarhólsbók* and *Konungsbók* reveals the slight consideration female violence received in *Grágás*’ reconstruction of the most probable Viking Age legal scenarios. Moving from *Konungsbók* to *Staðarhólsbók*, we might surmise a growing interest in women’s legal violations – or women as legal entities outside of marriage. The fact that conceptions of female violence rested at the margins of only one version of *Grágás* can help us understand the paradox of why female violence in *Laxdæla saga* was so closely linked to legal language, but not legal consequences. At the very least, *Grágás* elucidates the minimal extent to which female violence was contemplated as possible and punishable. *Laxdæla saga* shares with *Grágás* this reluctance to entirely contemplate the rightful punishment for violent women, but like *Staðarhólsbók*, *Laxdæla saga* conveys a growing awareness that female violence may need to be confronted at last.

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