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Edited by

Frog

Helen F. Leslie and Mathias Nordvig

CONTENTS

PEOPLE

Research Reports

PLACES

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Editor's Note

The pilot issue of *RMN Newsletter* was published in December of 2010. *RMN Newsletter* was formed as a medium of contact and communication for members of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN), an open network established under the initiative of Eldar Heide and which can include anyone who wishes to share in its focus and the discourse surrounding it. The result was the construction of an informational resource and emergent discourse space.

The first issue of *RMN Newsletter* incited a surprising amount of interest, inquiries and responses from scholars around the world – from places as diverse as India, Australia, North America and South Africa. As a consequence, *RMN Newsletter* has taken on a life of its own, and both the newsletter and the network are being defined through participation. That participation has provided *RMN Newsletter* with both breadth and quality, for which we are indebted to the contributors, and which we hope to see continue into the future.

The RMN is united by an interest in the problems, approaches, strategies and limitations related to considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. *RMN Newsletter* was created as a medium for maintaining contact among widely distributed members of this expanding network and for keeping more generally abreast of activities, research and events relevant to the members and concerns of the network. It has become an emergent discourse space in which individual scholars present reports and announcements of their own current activities, and information about events, projects and institutions is made available. It has also become a venue for discussion and engaging in cross-disciplinary dialogue as scholars contribute responses to pieces published in the first issue – a pattern of engagement and discussion which we hope to see continue.

The central theme in *RMN Newsletter* has thus far been 'retrospective' treatments of material and cultural phenomena. This has been both fruitful and appreciated, and we look forward to it flourishing in the future. Methods and methodology, however, have thus far received very little focused attention. Methods tend to be more implicit than explicit, and scholars generally tend to emphasize results rather than means. We hope that the vibrant discourse which has been initiated here will continue to flourish and grow. We would also like to augment this discourse by stimulating discussion on methods and methodology. We have therefore planned a special issue of *RMN Newsletter* to appear in № 4, May 2012. The special issue will incorporate a collection of short, discussion-oriented papers on method – *Approaching Methodology* – for which Pauliina Latvala will join us as a guest editor. The deadline for *Approaching Methodology* will be earlier than for other contributions to *RMN Newsletter* in order to allow the review of contributions and coordination between them. (See the call for papers on page 103.) This is something new for *RMN Newsletter*, and we hope that it will be met with the same enthusiasm as *RMN Newsletter* itself. However, we will not allow *Approaching Methodology* to eclipse the broader functions of *RMN Newsletter* as an informational resource and cross-disciplinary discourse space, for which we will continue to look forward to your contributions.

Frog
University of Helsinki

COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Distinguishing Continuities: Textual Entities, Extra-Textual Entities and Conceptual Schemas

Frog, University of Helsinki

Comparative research on narrative traditions often appears challenged by how to distinguish different types of continuities. This is particularly observable in research focusing on earlier cultural periods where sources are extremely limited. Continuities are always continuities *of* – continuities of meter, language, motif-complexes, cultural figures, etc. – with the implication that there are also historical discontinuities. The present discussion sets out to distinguish *textual entities*, *extra-textual entities*, and *conceptual schemas* in relation to narrative traditions. These might be simply described as 'levels' of text, roughly the surface level of a text, the content level of what a text communicates, and the more abstract conceptual models on which that content relies in order to be interpretable.

For example, the Gosforth Fishing Stone (Figure 1) presents a textual entity of the myth of Thor fishing for the world serpent: it activated this myth (and also/later presumably Jesus fishing for Leviathan) as a socially communicated extra-textual entity, more dynamic than the text itself, through which the image became meaningful. The meaningfulness of the image was also dependent on current conceptual schemas, at an intersection between "the hostility between 'thunder' and 'trolls' or 'devils'" and "the heroic monster-slayer". The former has reflexes in the present day, although it is displaced when the hero is identified as Jesus, whereas the latter underwent a significant semantic shift with the rise of Christianity.

Figure 1. The so-called Gosforth Fishing Stone, 10th (?) century, Cumbria, England. Thor on left with hammer and fishing line; giant with axe on right, who will cut the fishing line; the world-encircling serpent's face (?) in lower right, with its tail in lower left.

A textual entity and extra-textual entity are inevitably integrated in any individual realization (or interpretation), and as a consequence often become conflated in discussion, as can narrative traditions (folktale- or legend-types) with the conceptual schemas underlying them. The purpose here is simply to outline the distinctions between these, with a few examples that will hopefully elucidate some reasons why these distinctions

can be interesting or useful. Although this discussion focuses on narrative, these distinctions are relevant to a much broader range of cultural phenomena.

A Definition of 'Text'

The use of 'text' employed here is developed from the very broad sense proposed by M.M. Bakhtin (1986: 103) as "any coherent complex of signs". However, a 'text' will be qualified as the first order of signs employed in communication, such as spoken language, a more refined poetic register, or what Jill Bradley (2010) recently described as a "visual vocabulary" of iconographic representation. According to the Saussurean model, a sign is a correlation between a signifier and what it signifies (Saussure 1916: 99). The use of 'text' employed here will be centrally concerned with the system of signifiers rather than their meaningful interpretation as signs.

A 'text' is therefore a coherent system of signifiers of the first order employed in communication. This system of signifiers is distinguishable from what the signs signify, including other signs. Thus the word "bird" is a signifier at the level of text, which is interpreted as a sign yielding an interpretation of 'bird', which may itself be the signifier of a sign – a meaning-bearing image or motif.

The distinction concerning 'text' being made here is somewhat technical. 'Text' tends to be handled as a more flexible and vague term. The distinction made here makes it possible to approach continuity in a 'text' as a system of signifiers transposed into a context in which the values of constituent signifiers may change. A shift in dialect community and the signifier "bird" may be interpreted as 'woman', or a shift into a context rich in religious symbolism and the signifier "bird" could signify a 'bird' as an animal, itself as a signifier for 'The Holy Ghost'. The 'text' is therefore being approached as a surface level of signifiers distinguishable from what that text communicates when interpreted.

Textual Entities

A textual entity is any manifestation of text. Most textual entities are transient, such as those produced in daily spoken discourse. Some textual entities exhibit historical continuity and social reality as a system of signifiers. This development has certain important consequences as the textual entity obtains a socially recognizable identity.

First, the textual entity can become meaningful as a unit or whole. This underlies the phenomenon of formulaic language. Alison Wray (2002: 9) defines a formulaic sequence in terms of morpheme-equivalence, or the ability of a group of words to function as a coherent signifier with a particularized value. This is not a process governed by the length of a compositional unit, but by its recognisability as a coherent complex of signifiers, and thereby potential identity as a coherent signifier.

Second, the recognisability of a textual entity not only allows it to develop a refined or particularized value and associations in communication. This also invests it with meaning-potential as a social resource. A basic example is the proverb – a verbal textual entity with a highly refined and particularized value as a recognizable whole that can maintain long-term historical continuity.

Complex Textual Entities

Conservative oral-poetic systems are characterized by the social transmission of textual entities of varying degrees of flexibility and complexity. Old Norse skaldic poetry was composed in four-line half-stanzas and characterized by metrical complexity and scrambled syntax (see examples on p. 34 of this issue). The complexity of these half-stanzas allowed them to circulate orally with minimal verbal variation as coherent textual units. These textual units were socially recognizable as having unique identities and in some cases appear to have been circulating orally for more than three centuries before being written down.

8

The syntactic complexity and heavy reliance on allusive poetic circumlocutions invests these skaldic textual entities with tremendous meaning-potential, because they could be reinterpreted or mapped onto different circumstances and contexts. The socially circulating textual entity remained a coherent complex of signifiers, but the system of signifieds onto which it was mapped and the meanings that it could generate could vary in context-specific applications. (For examples of a corresponding phenomenon, see Sykäri 2011: 139–140).

These textual entities could be (at least in many cases) characterized by a complex identity which included a package of information related to poets, circumstances of composition or performance, and identity as a compositional unit of a longer poem. Poems were reciprocally recognized as consisting of a series of these highly 'crystallized' (Siikala 1990: 80–86) textual entities. A poem was itself conceived as a textual entity – as a coherent complex of smaller textual entities.

The textual entity of an oral poem contrasts in this respect with the textual entity of a written document. A written text presents signifiers in a sequential progression from beginning to end. Sectional divisions may be signified as units within the text, but such divisions have semiotic reality without necessarily having a corresponding psychological reality. Such sections only exceptionally circulate independently as textual entities (e.g. oral quotation and recitation of chapters from the *Qur'an* or the Bible), and the original written textual entity normally maintains authority as an organizational exemplar. Within an oral tradition, the textual entity of a skaldic poem, for example, consists of a series of compositional units which are discreet textual entities. This does not mean that the presence, omission or reorganization of those compositional units was invariable (or even necessarily inflexible) in the socio-historical process of oral transmission. However, in contrast to a written work, the textual entity of

an oral poem is realized as a set, system or sequence of textual entities that are socially recognized as forming a whole. Just as individual words, collocations and formulae are combined into structures which make up a skaldic half-stanza as a discreet textual entity with a socially recognizable identity, the identity of a skaldic poem as a textual entity is at the level of the presence, absence and organization of those half-stanzas that are characteristics or identity-markers of the poem which they represent. A poem is therefore a textual entity as a whole. The poem obtains a socially recognizable identity as the sum of its parts, even if the significance of that textual entity exceeds the sum of its parts. The conceptual reality of textual entities becomes particularly apparent, for example, in incantation traditions, in which communicating an incantation as a textual entity was interpreted as the transfer of the power and effectiveness of that incantation (see e.g. Tarkka 2005: 86).

Narrative Textual Entities
Finno-Karelian epic traditions were highly conservative, albeit much more flexible than skaldic verse. This tradition presents clear narrative textual entities which were subject to a high degree of verbal crystallization. Epic narratives were characterized by extremely conservative stanza-like units (of flexible length), employed to represent each particular content unit. These stanza-like textual entities were not inflexible, yet they clearly remained socially recognizable and were maintained as compositional units in the historical process of transmission (Frog 2010b). The more semantically central a unit of content was to the epic tradition, the more conservative and stable appears to have been the textual entity employed to represent it. The historical maintenance of the identity of the textual entity appears dependent on a reality of social recognisability, even in highly unconventional applications and transformations.

As in the skaldic poetry example, an orally circulating narrative textual entity is not a

single, inflexible sequence of signifiers (except in a single, transient realization or recording). It is characterized by the textual entities employed in the representation of the socially recognized narrative. These constituent textual entities do not simply allow the narrative to be recognized. They make it possible to recognize the realization of a particular textualization of that narrative.

Most oral narrative traditions are not as conservative as Finno-Karelian epic. According to A.F. Gil'ferding's (1894: 24) observations, *bylina*-epics were characterized by semantically central elements of an epic narrative being produced 'word-for-word' the same by even the weakest singers, while the organization of these elements and material which connected them in performance was highly variable – although remaining within the metrical and poetic system of representation. Anna-Leena Siikala (1990: 80–89) observed that processes of 'narrative crystallization' occurred on an individual basis in even extremely flexible genres as a natural function of human memory. This was most observable in the verbal frameworks employed for the representation of the most semantically central elements of the narrative, around which other elements were organized (Siikala 1990: 84–85), much as Gil'ferding observed in *bylina*s or is found in the still more conservative Finno-Karelian epics.

Following Siikala's research, it becomes possible to identify textual entities on the level of the idiolect of the individual performer, but without them being socially transmitted. It is also clear that a narrative textual entity may be highly flexible in oral circulation while maintaining social recognisability. The point at which it becomes more practical or valuable to shift focus from a narrative textual entity to a narrative, of which certain constituents are represented by textual entities when presented in a certain genre, depends on the tradition and the priorities of investigation. Similarly, it may be a function of the tradition and priorities of research regarding the point at which the

flexibility of reproduction within a system of representation obviates the identification of constituent textual entities employed in reproduction (e.g. South Slavic epic), and the question of whether it is reasonable to approach the narrative whole as a conventionalized textual entity at all. One factor for consideration in such cases is what types or degrees of variation are criticized or corrected within the tradition community.

Iconographic Textual Entities
Migration Period gold bracteates (coin-like objects) exhibit highly conventionalized systems of iconographic representation and several of these bracteates present a dense concentration of motifs reflecting some form of narrative. The most famous of these are the so-called 'Three-God-Bracteates' preserved in eight variations (and one fragment). All of the examples maintain a basic and clearly recognizable Gestalt which can be regarded as a textual entity (a coherent system of signifiers) although minor transfers and transpositions of motifs within that basic textual entity potentially reflect changes in emphasis on episode within the narrative or its interpretation (Frog 2010a: 255–262).

The objects on which these representations appear (bracteates), present constraints on the size and shape of the frame in which the textual entity is organized. This may have been a significant factor in maintaining the recognisability of the visual textual entity (now so culturally and historically remote). Other iconographic representations appear to reflect a correspondingly conventionalized textual entity, although the style and organization was more diversified, not least owing to different frames in which it would be situated. For example, Thor's adventure of fishing for the world serpent is represented on several picture stones. These depictions conform to the basic Gestalt of the god, characterized by his weapon, with his fishing companion in a boat in the upper field, the ox-head of bait on the fishing line in the lower field, and the god's foot (anachronistically)

Figure 2. Manuscript illumination of Snorri Sturluson's prose account of Thor's fishing adventure with the giant Hymir. SÁM 66, f. 79v, reproduced courtesy of Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.

coming through the bottom of the boat, signifying the power and force required to raise the serpent. This textual entity is much more flexible in its distribution as a scene. Although not every motif is necessarily realized (e.g. the foot-motif is absent from the Gosforth Fishing Stone), the principle Gestalt appears to have been socially maintained, but this Gestalt was not carried over into manuscript illumination, where the lower field is absent, as in SÁM 66, 79v (Figure 2).

Narrative Extra-Textual Entities

The narrative represented by a textual entity is communicated and functions at the level of the next order of signs. In other words, the narrative and its constituent elements are not the 'text', they are represented by and communicated through text (i.e. the first order of signifiers employed). A narrative may be approached as an extra-textual entity insofar as it is socially recognizable as having an identity beyond the text.

In Finno-Karelian epic, the threshold between textual entities and extra-textual entities appears to have been very narrow. Each epic was communicated through a narrative textual entity as the authoritative

form of that narrative. The same textual entities and sections thereof were also employed in incantations. However, the non-metrical summary of an epic is not identical to the textual entity in form, and appears more likely to represent understandings of the narrative that it represents. The highly crystallized epic form of a description of or reference to a common mythic event also did not necessarily correspond to the socially central epic account of the same event. This is found in *The Singing Competition*, in which Väinämöinen refers to his role in the creation of the world as his ultimate attribute of power and authority. Perhaps owing to the application, this reference does not directly correspond either verbally or in motifs to his more ambiguous role in *The Song of Creation*. This is a case in which the same singers would employ 'contradictory' textual entities reflecting a common narrative.

In Old Norse, a single mythological narrative could appear across multiple modes of expression in several or even many conventional textual entities. Thor's battle with the world serpent is preserved as a prose narrative in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and in the narrative poem *Hymiskviða*. The greater number of sources for this narrative are skaldic stanzas (quoted by Snorri in his *Edda*) and the iconographic representations. Rather than 'telling' a story, skaldic compositions appear to have been more inclined to paint images and events from familiar narratives in complex and ornamental language. Extant skaldic verses describing the conflict between Thor and the serpent focus on the immediate confrontation: they emphasize the force employed by the god to raise the serpent and eye-contact between the adversaries. Iconographic representations present the act of fishing prior to the conflict with a pronounced distinction between fields above and below the water (although the foot-motif expresses force) – resulting in a representation of the underwater realm (largely) absent from verbal representations. Each of these systems of representation appears to have had its own

priorities and conventions for the selection and organization of elements of a common narrative extra-textual entity in representation.

Within the conventions of each mode and genre, a system of representation was faced with its own formal constraints. The depiction of the underwater realm in iconography appears related to visual-synchronic rather than verbal-diachronic representation. The absence of Thor's fishing companion from the depiction on the Altuna Stone (Figure 3) may be a mere practical function of the narrow monument on which it is depicted, much as when two wise men rather than three could appear in a Christian iconographic representation of the Nativity (Eco 1986: 40–41). Similarly, a skaldic verse could potentially employ a singular rather than a plural noun in order to conform to metrical constraints (e.g. *Brísings* vs. **Brísinga* in *Haustlöng* 9). Each mode of expression was subject to its own conventions as well as employed with particular priorities and intentions. Although these may represent or reflect a common extra-textual entity, they will not necessarily do so in exactly the same way, and may even misrepresent conventional understandings owing to æsthetic and formal constraints or priorities and functions in application (e.g. Blackburn 1988: 142–143).

Internalizing an Extra-Textual Entity
A narrative extra-textual entity is not dependent on any single textual entity. Even in cases where a single textual entity is the primary or exclusive mode of the narrative's social transmission, the textual entity is surrounded by and embedded in discourse. An extra-textual entity is internalized through the full spectrum of its cultural activity, including extra-generic discourse.

An example which is accessible to participants in a modern Western cultural milieu is the system of narrative traditions surrounding the life and death of Jesus. The Bible provides a collection of authoritative texts for these narratives, but it is not necessary to have read the Bible in order to

Figure 3. Altuna Stone, 11ᵗʰ (?) century, Uppland Sweden. All four sides of the stone are carved, and the stone has a memorial inscription.

appropriately interpret and apply these narratives in direct reference or allusion. The internalized understanding of individuals is not, for the most part, based on the Bible, even in cases where the Bible provides the authoritative point of reference in their discussion. Rather, it is the spectrum of cultural activity to which these are subject, from local church plays and sermons to news, radio, popular novels and cinema, as well as proselytizers passing out pamphlets on the street. This knowledge and ability becomes a basic part of our cultural competence that helps us navigate the social world irrespective of what we 'believe'.

Conceptual Schemas
A conceptual schema is a type of extra-textual entity. It is not a narrative itself, but a system of associations, valuations, interpretations, even potentially extending to a full system of images and motifs. A conceptual schema is a framework according to which knowledge and understanding are organized, and consequently upon which narratives and narrative episodes are constructed – the framework which makes them interpretable

12

(cf. Lakoff & Turner 1989: 60–65). Conceptual schemas are particularly important when addressing belief traditions, where the same conceptual schema functions in narrative traditions and also in ritual activity, interpreting experience and all the cares and cautions required in contacts with unseen forces and their avoidance.

An interesting example is provided by conceptions of mythic inhabitants of mounds or hills in Iceland and Scandinavia, going back at least as far as the Middle Ages (Gunnell 2010). The traditions are characterized by *a*) the identification of a hill or mound in the immediate landscape as the habitation of mythic beings; *b*) the association of these mythic beings with the fertility and welfare of a farm and its livestock; *c*) the relations between the human community and these mythic beings as impacting the welfare of the farm; *d*) motifs associated with the positive or negative negotiation of these relationships; *e*) motifs which actualize the pleasure or dissatisfaction of the mythic beings; *f*) motifs associated with the death or departure of these mythic beings.

This conceptual schema is not a narrative, nor even necessarily organized around a particular story pattern. Like many conceptual schemas associated with belief traditions, it is attached to a particular motif – in this case, a tumulus in the vicinity of (rural) human habitation, whether that tumulus is a narrative invention or a concrete feature of a local landscape. Any tumulus identified as the habitation of mythic beings allows the mapping of this conceptual schema over the tumulus and its environment (in both the real and narrative worlds). Motifs manifested in the environment become interpretable through the schema as causally connected with the mythic beings inhabiting the hill or mound no less than clouds are considered causally connected with rain or smoke with fire. There is a reciprocal relationship between the conceptual schema's employment in narrative traditions and its employment in the context of immediate experience, with provisions of expedient strategies for crisis resolution – for example to identify a cause of the dissatisfaction of mythic beings and restore relations in order to recover the welfare of the farm and livestock.

Like the narrative of Thor's fishing expedition, this conceptual schema may be conditioned by conventions of representation within particular signification systems, such as those employed in belief legends on the one hand or in the enactment of ritual performance for crisis resolution on the other. These play diverse roles in the maintenance and communication of the conceptual schema which characterizes a belief tradition.

It should be noted that the conceptual schema belongs to the cultural competence of an individual and the capacity to correctly interpret and navigate experience. There is no inherent difference between the conceptual schema associated with a tumulus inhabited by mythic beings and the conceptual schema associated with a car driven by a drunk driver. As Kaarina Koski (this volume) puts it: "Instead of a firm belief in the motifs, their relevance is judged according to their usefulness and applicability." In both cases, a system of valuations, associations, implications, supplemental motifs, etc., are mapped onto both real and narrative contexts in essentially the same way – although the particular conceptual schema may be socially contested in discourse to different degrees. The difference is that most people in modern Western cultural environments 'believe' in drunk drivers, serial killers and (oddly enough) angels, while they do not 'believe' in the mythic beings inhabiting mounds, sea monsters or honest politicians. A conceptual schema can be employed in diverse contexts as a social resource. However, activating that conceptual schema as a referent and correctly interpreting it do not require subscription to a belief tradition.

Distinguishing Continuities
Textual entities, extra-textual entities and conceptual schemas are three basic and

intimately interrelated aspects of patterns of cultural expression. Although these three aspects of an expression form a coherent whole in a communication, they may (potentially) also be employed and actualized in diverse contexts for different functions independently of one another, and also develop and evolve in different directions, separating and recombining as a historical process. A degree of caution is therefore required when identifying and analyzing continuities and their significance.

A textual entity – a coherent system of signifiers at the surface level of text – may be maintained while the conception of the underlying narrative extra-textual entity is subject to radical transformations. Changes in the textual entity may be largely constrained to valuations and interpretations (e.g. 'Christian' vs. 'other'), or could involve the reorganization, presence, omission and juxtaposition of textual entities affiliated with certain content. The degree of continuity in an underlying extra-textual entity may be great, or may be minimal – little more than a constellation of socially charged motifs. Although the emphasis here has been on narrative wholes, a narrative textual entity is characterized by the representation of its constituent elements – or at least its most semantically central constituent elements – by conventionalized textual entities as compositional units. Although those compositional units may in some sense be 'pure form', a narrative textual entity is characterized by the social recognisability of a conventional narrative that it represents, or a form–content relation. However, the smaller the compositional unit (episode, motif, verbal system), the more stable it appears to be in historical processes of transmission, and it is necessary to remain aware that these can circulate and evolve as social resources independent of any single narrative tradition.

Prose narrative traditions appear less inclined to maintain a clear continuity at the level of textual entities, although comparative mythological research has demonstrated that a narrative extra-textual entity can nonetheless circulate for centuries. There are also examples of narratives being translated from one textual entity into the next as a historical process. The Old Norse eddic poem *Þrymsqviða*, documented in the 13th century, communicated a narrative about the thunder-god's hammer being stolen and recovered. In the 15th or 16th century, this narrative was directly translated into Icelandic *rímur* poetry, and later into the Scandinavian ballad, where it circulated into the 19th century. In each case, this process involved the selection and translation of elements adapted to a new mode of expression. Each translation resulted in a new conventional narrative textual entity, yet repeated translation into new poetic systems and six centuries of transmission had minimal impact on the narrative extra-textual entity.

A conceptual schema often appears to exhibit the greatest continuity in historical processes of transmission, whether in myth or local legend traditions. In many cases, historical continuities are not on the level of a particular narrative, but on the level of a conceptual schema employed in generating narratives, which in some cases may have particular associations with a genre or system of genres, basic systems of motif-complexes which tend to characterize such narratives, and potentially (sometimes quite loose) story patterns. It is also possible to encounter a discontinuity in the conceptual schema associated with a narrative textual entity or extra-textual entity. For example, the Old Norse *Þrymsqviða* tradition emerged from a much broader Circum-Baltic narrative tradition of the theft of the thunder-god's instrument by the 'devil'. However, *Þrymsqviða* exhibits a discontinuity in the basic conceptual schemas relating to the relationship between the devil and thunder and the relationship between the instrument and rain. Recognizing discontinuities in an underlying conceptual schema can offer insight into changes in extra-textual and textual entities.

In any single instance or example, textual entities, extra-textual entities and conceptual schemas unite into a coherent expression. It nonetheless remains important to be able to distinguish them in comparative analysis, in order to recognize how they affect one another, interact and combine.

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A Matter of Interpretation: Ideas on the *Genesis B* Miniatures
Jill Bradley, Radboud University Nijmegen

Having read with interest and some difficulty – not being a Norse scholar – the first issue of the *RMN Newsletter*, and in particular the contribution by Eldar Heide, I began to reflect on the use of what might be called non-contemporary sources in my own field of visual representations. When pictorial sources represent an oral tradition, we are often dependent on written sources that postdate them to decipher the meaning of a work, at least in the first instance. This is something we often forget, just as we forget that so many of the works we examine are 'copies' or later versions, and both text and depiction have been filtered through time. The question is how far can we take later works as a guide to the ideas of an earlier period? We need to be aware of the levels of interpretation, from verbal (oral or written), to depiction, from the earlier works and traditions to what is fitting for the time a work was made, and the influence of our own ideas and perceptions.

So much of what we see from the Middle Ages has been restored, and restorations vary greatly in how closely they abide both by the spirit and content of an earlier period. New techniques give us better means to discern what has been lost, or almost lost, and the care and scholarship that have been exhibited by various scholars over the centuries still provide us with material with which to work. In a number of cases, we are fully aware of

working with a 'reconstruction', for example Rosalie Green's reconstruction of *Hortus Deliciarum*, or Brown and Cothren's (1986) efforts to envisage the Crusader window at St. Denis.

Both these works bring up important points, being based on 19th century drawings of the original (Green 1979) and 18th century drawings and engravings (Brown & Cothren 1986) and it can be said that these give more the spirit and even the style of the time in which they were made, rather than that of the original. What we see is filtered through a later culture's eyes and aesthetics, just as Grimaldi's drawings of the frescos of Old St. Paul's breathe a spirit of Baroque rather than of the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, we can at least have an idea of the elements of a composition, its subject and the relationships between the various elements; and this is very valuable. The enthusiasm with which 'antiquarians' of the past recorded the traces of the Middle Ages in their day is in many cases the basis of present day research. The medieval mind did not seem to see any need to record how something looked.

Suger's *De Administratione* gives the cost, the riches and even the spiritual intent of the works in his abbey in fine detail, but it does not tell us what they looked like. Pilgrims' guidebooks of the high Middle Ages point out which churches a pilgrim should visit, they can even mention that there are statues of this or that saint, the tomb of a notable prince or prelate, but what the pilgrim saw, we can only guess.

We talk about traditions, but traditions, by definition, are living: they change and adapt to circumstances, ideas and current taste. Moreover, traditions are not usually discrete, but overlap and interact. Anybody doing research into the Middle Ages really needs to consider that, whatever their field, it is touched upon by other traditions, written, oral, visual, performative, and not least, scholarly. These can impinge and interact: an example of this is Kaske's (1988: 184–186) assertion that the third figure on the Eardisley

font represents God the Father rather than John the Baptist, basing this on a passage from *Piers Plowman* that he thinks represents a local oral tradition. There may well have been such a tradition, but since none of the (surviving) written or pictorial sources contemporary with the Eardisley font bring in God the Father and some, notably the Lincoln frieze and the Brives-sur-Charente font, as well the written sources, place John the Baptist squarely at the harrowing scene, I ask myself if this is a case of the chicken and the egg. If such a tradition existed, there was ample time in the two centuries or so between the making of the font and Langland's work for the people of the area to adapt their perception of the figure to align more with what they thought should be there. In other words, did the font give rise to a tradition, rather than express one already in existence?

Recent wars and violence have brought home to us the fragility of artifacts, how easily heritage is lost or destroyed. Today's photographic records and reproductions are a tremendous boon: if the artifact is lost, at least we have a record. We can only speculate how our view of the past has been distorted by the loss of works, known or unknown. If we did not have the careful records and facsimile of the *Scivias* lost during WWII, the copy in which the miniatures are thought to have been directed by Hildegard von Bingen herself, would future generations not only miss these astonishing depictions of her visions, but see them as interpreted by the miniatures of the Heidelberg version? Indeed, would her work have anything like the impact it has had without the well-known miniatures? This, in a rather roundabout way, brings me to my point of interpretation, and who is interpreting what.

The influence of visual representations can be great, but often unnoticed; the images we see and to which we grow accustomed represent what is 'right'. Particularly when giving a talk for a non-specialist audience, I have found that people can be disgusted, amused or even outraged by medieval images,

because they do not conform to what they know and think of as the right way of seeing something. However, it is not only the general public that can be influenced by images, and the modern perception of words and images can greatly influence how we understand a work. A case in point are the miniatures illustrating *Genesis B* in Oxford Bodleian Library, Junius 11 – a manuscript with a long and varied tradition of scholarship, and one on which the learned jury is still out.

The Junius 11 manuscript contains four epic poems written in Old English dealing with Biblical subjects, but only the first of these, *Genesis*, is illustrated. The manuscript was found and first made public by Francis Junius in 1654, and he was of the opinion that it was the work of Caedmon, the 7th century herdsman-poet mentioned by Bede. As late as 1969, it was still being referred to as the 'Caedmon manuscript' (Ohlgren 1969), but more recent research has put the poems at a later date – probably the 8th century for *Genesis A* – while the manuscript itself dates from around 1000, and was most likely made at Christ Church, Canterbury. Probably the most controversial part is an interpolation, most likely a 9th century translation of a poem in Old Saxon, a fragment of which was found in the Vatican Library (Doane 1991). This is a very deliberate interpolation since it repeats much of what has already been said in the earlier part of *Genesis A*, but in a much more dramatic fashion. While *Genesis B* has not been the only subject dealt with by scholars of the manuscript from the 17th century on, it has commanded the most attention. The resemblance to Book II of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is marked, giving Satan a voice and presenting his point of view, but perhaps that which shocked readers most is that Adam and Eve seem to be excused, indeed almost entirely freed of guilt. Eve is portrayed as a loving wife who only succumbs to the tempter (not Satan) after long debate, being convinced that she is doing God's will and from a desire to save Adam from God's wrath. It was probably Vickrey's article in 1969 that led to

trying to understand the poem from a medieval point of view, making a switch of mindset. That was in the same year that Ohlgren made the first serious attempt to understand *Genesis B* with the help of the miniatures. Since then various scholars, notably Karkov (2001) and Burchmore (1985), have added to our understanding of this unusual work, and I have added my mite in the hopes that we can see things in a fresh light (Bradley 2008a, 2008b: 166–204).

The earlier scholars paid little attention to the miniatures, and indeed to modern eyes they can seem crude and unattractive. Moreover, they present numerous difficulties, particularly because they seem out of step with the text. However, this is not the place to discuss these details, but first of all to question Ohlgren's basic assumption that the miniatures, made around 1000, can help to understand the poet's intentions of more than a century earlier, secondly to see if the miniatures have influenced the way the text is read, and finally to ask if the text and miniatures shocked the people for whom they were made, as they did scholars from Junius' time onward.

Strictly speaking, the miniatures do not tell us the poet's intentions, although we might find hints in the later treatment. In examining this manuscript, we have to consider many levels of interpretation: the original Old Saxon poet's version of the Fall of Man is interpreted from the Latin, probably the Jerome Bible, into vernacular verse; the translation, whether direct or not, into Old English, is the next stage. Doane notes certain differences in the 26 lines that overlap, and that there "is a slight tendency to reform the diction towards Old English poetic usage"; in his terms, *Genesis B* is an "explanatory renarrativization" of the biblical story (Doane 1991). The miniatures are another level of interpretation, a visual narrative, parallel but not identical to the Old English text. We must also remember that perceptions are colored by the preoccupations and circumstances of the time, and those of 9th century Germany were

not those of England at the turn of the first millennium. The miniatures can give us an idea of how ideas of mankind's sinfulness were viewed around the end of the 10th century in certain circles, but other conclusions must be drawn with caution and while bearing in mind these various levels of interpretation.

With regard to the second question, it would seem that the miniatures have affected how people, including scholars, have read and interpreted the text, especially the angelic tempter.[1] This is the most startling element for the viewer coming on the miniatures for the first time, and there is often a feeling when discussing the text that this is a faithful illustration of the text. Although the poem presents Satan's lament at the loss of his glory and that of his followers, it nowhere says that the subordinate devil who is the tempter takes an angelic form. The tempter, posing as God's messenger, tells Eve, quite truthfully, that he has dwelt long in heaven and when she is suspicious, he asks whether he looks like a devil. He convinces Eve to trust him, but this is based on her perception of him as an angel. The Junius 11 artist shows us events through Eve's eyes, a counterfeit angel who is later revealed as a devil. Nevertheless the idea of the angelic tempter has influenced the traditions of scholarship, and the inclination is to see the tempter as disguised, deceiving Eve, but if we see Eve as working towards her own self-deception, this alters the message: it is not just a warning to beware of others, but also to beware of yourself and your senses.

The final question, concerning whether *Genesis B* shocked its original audience, brings together a number of issues of interpretation. Because it seemed to be unique and outside any known orthodox works, *Genesis B*'s originality gave rise to the question as to why Adam, and Eve in particular, were treated so leniently. Vickrey's work pointed out that we were not really considering the 9th and 10th century views and habits of perception. The discovery of the Vatican fragment showed that the Old English

Genesis B was not entirely unique: traditions of scholarship had to be re-examined, and modern perceptions questioned.

Can *Genesis B* be considered a strange, unorthodox work, going against the grain of the period? In the first place, really unorthodox ideas rarely survive except as mentions anathematizing them: if *Genesis B*, as seems certain, is a translation or adaptation of a 9th century Old Saxon work, then this work must have been preserved and thought important enough to translate. Moreover, miniatures, as costly additions to a work, were normally only found in accepted works. The deliberate inclusion of this work in a major manuscript, accompanying this text with costly miniatures, and the fact that it came from the scriptorium of an important reform house, all indicate that it was seen as relevant to the times and a valuable contribution to the message of the manuscript. A further point to consider is that the text is pointed, indicating that it was intended to be read aloud, and as such not confined to a few highly learned brothers, who might have been considered 'safe' enough to deal with controversial matter. Once we abandon our perception, and that of earlier scholarship, that *Genesis B* is shocking, unorthodox and controversial, and we look at its survival and use, it would seem that it meant something other than we thought, that the monastic reform movement of the late 10th century in England found something in the way the biblical myth was interpreted that fit with their views.

We need to ask ourselves if it is likely that these views were the same as in the Saxon area 150 years earlier. This is unlikely. The original poem was written at a time when Christianity in Saxony was new and unsure, as is witnessed by the Stellinga revolt. Perhaps the original Saxon poet was pointing out the inherent weakness of the non-Christian: perhaps he was trying to put across the Judeo-Christian doctrine in a way that would be comprehensible. Whatever his motives, the circumstances in late 10th century England were very different. This was a

country with a long Christian tradition and one in which the vernacular played an important role. Aelfric and others lamented the lack of Latin and learning and there were projects to translate the Bible, notably Alfred's and a little after the Junius manuscript, the Old English Hexateuch on which Aelfric worked, albeit reluctantly, in case the Old Testament be misunderstood. It is thus not out of keeping that there should be more than one version of the Fall in the vernacular, but why go out of the way to use the dramatic *Genesis B*? How did the makers and compilers of the Junius manuscript interpret the older work as relevant to their own times and conditions?

It is my own opinion that far from exonerating Eve, *Genesis B* shows sin as stemming from good intentions and human fallibility. If the Saxon poet saw the inherent weakness of the non-Christian, the monastic reformers in Anglo-Saxon England saw the difficulties and weaknesses of the Christian. The stern and pessimistic attitude shown by other vernacular works of the period, such as the *Soul's Lament to the Body* and the *Wanderer*, finds a cause and explanation in *Genesis B*, and by so doing, it lays greater emphasis on the redemptive aspect of the final poem of the manuscript. By showing us events through the eyes of the first sinner, her dilemma, her weakness and uncertainty, the miniatures increase the degree of identification. They broadcast a stern message: they interpret sin as the failure to do what is right, rather than the will to do wrong; later generations laid more emphasis on a kinder God, more willing to forgive, more human, and this colors how *Genesis B* is read. The identification with Eve, so strongly reinforced by the miniatures, brings the recognition of the same traits in the reader; but later generations saw Eve's humanity, her desire to do what was right and her devotion to Adam, and they valued that, while the medieval monastic mind saw her love of Adam as a weakness that symbolized the weakness of humankind as a whole. This is in keeping with the introvert and self-denigrating attitude found in many late Anglo-Saxon works dealing with man's unworthiness and the body's dominance over mind. This attitude grew and developed out of an earlier optimism, and later developed into more lenient views of mankind, through which it effected how the biblical myth was viewed, and with it, the interpretation of previous treatments.

Notes:
1. See in particular pp. 24 and 31 at http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msjunius11.

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In Defence of the *Vanir*

Clive Tolley, University of Turku

The *Vanir* are perhaps the most mysterious and elusive class of divine beings known from Old Norse mythology. This has resulted in the *Vanir* receiving a degree of prominence in academic discussion and debate as a contested topic. Feeling that this prominence was disproportionate to the sources which he considered reliable, Rudolf Simek (2010) responded to this in the last issue of *RMN Newsletter* by deconstructing evidence of the *Vanir* as a class of gods, arguing that the basis of our conceptions are dependent on a construct of Snorri Sturluson – a construct arising from the ambiguity of Snorri's sources coupled with the intellectual atmosphere of his time. Simek's argument centrally dependent on negative evidence. I would like to respond by returning attention to positive evidence, with considerations of the term, its uses, some interpretations, and considerations of why the evidence which we do have for this class of beings is so limited.

Etymology

The etymology of *vanr* is obscure. This obscurity is itself probably an indication of the antiquity of the class of beings so named. The most promising suggestion is to derive *vanr* from an Indo-European root **wen-* (in the *o*-grade ablaut form **won-*), which may occur in Latin *Venus*, the goddess of love, and (in zero-grade) in Old English *wynn* ['joy']; also Old Norse *vin* ['meadow'], Gothic *winja* ['pasture, fodder'], may derive from this root (with an original emphasis on the fresh growth affording good sustenance for beasts), implying a notion of fecundity as inherent in the word class (see Kluge 2002, *s.v.* "Wonne, gewinnen"; Old Norse *vanr* is not, however, cited there). Huld (1998: 139–141) does not consider the word's Indo-European derivation, but makes some pertinent comments in other respects: noting that both *æsir* and *álfar* appear originally to have been heteroclitic *a/i*-stems, he questions whether the *i*-stem *vanr* may not also have belonged to this class originally (in Norse, short-syllable *a*- and *i*-stems fell together in the singular). This would mean searching for an Old English cognate in the form *won*, which had not been undertaken hitherto; the word does appear, argues Huld, in names such as *Wonræd*, where taking *won* as 'pale' is unlikely (only *beorht* among hue-related words commonly appears as the first element of names, and adjectives in general are rare in this position). The frequency of occurrence of *álfr/ælf*, *áss/os* and *vanr/won* would correspond between Old Norse and Old English, with the first being by far the most common, the second rare, and the third far rarer still.

Sources
Non-Literary Evidence

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The scarcity of direct non-literary attestation for a cult of the *vanir* in ancient Scandinavia does not mean that no such cult existed. If there were no cult of gods designated *vanir* in the pagan period, their occurrence in the literary sources would have to be explained as a post-Christian-conversion invention; any possible motivation for this is difficult to envisage.

The paucity of material such as runic inscriptions mentioning gods is such that the survival of any god's name is a matter of chance (and controversy: McKinnell, Simek and Düwel 2004: 45). Also, we cannot say whether any particular god was viewed as an *áss* or a *vanr* – the tradition is highly likely to have varied over time and place.

Regarding place-names, the fairly dense scatter of theophoric place names throughout Scandinavia associated with the *vanir* Njǫrðr, Freyr and Freyja, seems to present good circumstantial evidence for their worship, even if it does not guarantee that they were known in all settings as *vanir* (*AR* §§468–470,

but for a more accurate recent consideration of theophoric names, see Brink 2007, including maps).

Our literary references to *vanir* are too meagre to exclude the possibility that other gods were at times included among the *vanir*: the prime example is Ullr, whose occurrence in place names points to such an association (*AR* §447; Brink 2007).

Skaldic Verse
Skaldic mentions of *vanir* are scarce:[1] the 11th century Þórðr Særeksson mentions Njǫrðr as a *vanr* in a *lausavísa* (*Skj* B₁ 304); Freyja is referred to as *vana brúðr* ['bride of the *vanir*'], by the 12th century Einarr Skúlason in *Øxarflokkr* 5 (*Skj* B₁ 450). However, kennings presented by Snorri that mention the *vanir* are unlikely to be anything other than genuine, though undatable as he does not cite his sources (except Þórðr): he records "vana goð/guð" ['god of the *vanir*'] (Njǫrðr, Freyr, Freyja), "vana niðr" ['offspring of the *vanir*'] (Njǫrðr, Freyr), "vanr" (Njǫrðr, from Þórðr Særeksson; Freyr), "vana dís" ['*dís* of the *vanir*'] (Freyja) (*Skáldskaparmál*, Ch. 6, 7, 20).

Why are there so few mentions?

1. Chance: only a small proportion of early skaldic verse is extant. The retort might be that we would therefore expect a similar paucity of references to *æsir* – and an examination of the early verse does not, in fact, reveal a great number of references to *æsir* either. In *Haustlǫng*, for example, the gods are referred to a number of times, but in general terms such as *ginnregin* (st. 13) and *bǫnd* (st. 17); in st. 9, the term *áss* is used in reference to Iðunn, the "mey [...] þás ellilyf ása [...] kunni" ['the girl ... who knew ... the elixir of age of the *æsir*'], which may distinguish the *æsir* as in need of this elixir, as opposed to the *vanir*, who already had the secret of eternal life.

2. Given that a large proportion of the early skaldic corpus is broadly heroic in tone, it is anyway unsurprising to find that *æsir* are

better represented than *vanir*; the *æsir* undertake heroic exploits, and hence also *áss* is sometimes used in kennings to indicate 'warrior' (see *Lexicon poeticum*, *s.v.* "ǫ́ss").

3. As the *vanir* were associated with sexual practices that were found disgusting, in particular to later generations of Christians, it is unsurprising that verse relating to this cult, in which the term *vanr* might be expected to occur, does not survive.

4. As a term for divine beings, *vanr* appears to have referred only to one particular group of gods, whereas *áss* came to include all deities, including the *vanir*: hence *vanr* lacked the generality of reference which is so often called for in skaldic diction.

Eddic Verse (Outside Vǫluspá*)*
The poetic mentions of *vanir* are surely sufficient to establish them as a traditionally recognised group of gods, at least within certain traditions preserved within Iceland, before Snorri. Thus *Alvíssmál* distinguishes the *vanir* from *álfar*, assigning different designations for individual objects to each group: this is, of course, a literary construct, but it would not be possible if the two groups were indistinguishable in tradition. Other mentions of *vanir* stress their knowledge or wisdom: Heimdallr is said in *Þrymskviða* 15 to have good foreknowledge, 'like the other *vanir*';[2] in *Skírnismál* 17 (echoed in 18) Gerðr questions who the arrival at her courts is, whether of the sons of *álfar* or *æsir*, or of the wise *vanir* – a clear terminological distinction being made between three classes of divine being. *Sigrdrífumál* 18 similarly brings together *álfar*, *æsir* and 'wise *vanir*', to which is added 'human beings' ("mennzkir menn") as the destination of the runes which have been carved and shaved off: it would appear that a traditional poetic formula linking the three classes of divine being lies behind these instances. *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 gives the only

poetic narrative mention of *vanir* outside *Vǫluspá*:

> Í Vanaheimi
> skópo hann vís regin
> ok seldom at gíslingo goðum;
> í aldar rǫk
> hann mun aptr koma
> heim með vísom vǫnom.

> In Vanaheimr ['home of the *vanir*'],
> the wise powers shaped him
> and gave him as hostage to the gods;
> at the end of the world
> he will come back
> home among the wise *vanir*.

One odd fragment of a story, and a few eddic lines of verse, are given by Snorri (*Gylfaginning* ch. 35) concerning a goddess Gná, a sort of messenger girl of Frigg who rode through the air into different worlds for her; on one of her rides, she was spotted by 'some *vanir*', who asked what was flying up in the air. It seems impossible to determine what the purpose or wider context of this story may have been (even the name Gná is impervious to analysis: see *AeW, s.v.*), but it surely illustrates that there was once a broader range of verse involving the *vanir*.

Vǫluspá *21–24*

St. 21 to 24 of *Vǫluspá* relate events of the 'first war in the world'. So allusive is the poet that the course of events, and the motivations, and indeed participants, cannot be ascertained without recourse to other sources. Snorri's interpretation is that it was a conflict between two sets of divine beings, *æsir* and *vanir*, which resulted in a truce. Unless good reason can be found for doubting Snorri, there is no well-founded argument for rejecting him. In fact, work by Dumézil, upon which Dronke builds in her edition of the poem (Dronke 1988: 229; *PE* II: 41–44), confirms the basic trustworthiness of Snorri here.[3]

The poet tells first of Gullveig ['Gold liquor'], and then of "Heiðr" ['Heathen'/'Bright'].[4] It appears that Gullveig arrives from the *æsir*'s adversaries, the *vanir*, but the *æsir* seek to destroy her, first with spears then with fire, a punishment which may mark her out as a witch (cf. the burning in of the *seiðmaðr* Rǫgnvaldr réttilbeini). The attempt is unsuccessful, but in the next stanza we are presented with Heiðr, wandering, like Freyja (in the myth of her search for Óðr) among mankind, going round houses, performing *seiðr*, and, it would seem, gathering a cult among women. After this, the *æsir* declare war, but their defences are broken, and the *vanir* are still left alive on the field, so eventually the *æsir* debate accepting the *vanir*, and concede a truce (not stated explicitly in the poem).

Snorri Sturluson

It is something of a misrepresentation of the evidence to suggest that Snorri is the main source for the *vanir*. His emphasis upon the *vanir*, particularly in *Gylfaginning*, stems directly from his major source, *Vǫluspá*, which alludes to the war between *æsir* and *vanir* (st. 23–4) and contrasts the two groups; beyond this, Snorri mentions the *vanir* very little.

However, Snorri, mainly in *Ynglinga saga*, Ch. 4, gives some additional information about the *vanir*.

1. The *vanir* engaged in sexual practices such as incest, which were regarded as unacceptable among the *æsir*.

2. A war took place between the *vanir* and the *æsir*, with neither side able to defeat the other; they finally agreed a truce and exchanged hostages.

3. As a conclusion to the war between *æsir* and *vanir*, the two groups spit into a pot, and from this mixture is made a man called Kvasir.

4. Mímir, sent as hostage to the *vanir*, is killed by them and his head sent back to the *æsir*.

Despite assertions to the contrary, Snorri's account of the war between *vanir* and *æsir* is

essentially in agreement with that of *Vǫluspá* – and we have no grounds for supposing he would deliberately have altered the mythic traditions to disagree with his main source. His failure to mention Heiðr and Gullveig is a consequence of the account's brevity and perhaps Snorri's lack of understanding of their roles; his general familiarity with the poem demonstrates he must have known of them. He has derived the information about the hostages (not mentioned in the poem's allusive treatment) from elsewhere, such as *Vafþrúðnismál* and brief skaldic references to certain gods being *vanir* (indeed, the identification of only Njǫrðr, Freyr and Freyja as *vanir* (*Gylfaginning*, Ch. 23–4) probably derives from Njǫrðr's certain identification as a hostage, and Freyr and Freyja being his children).

Vanir *and* álfar

Hall argues (2007: 26, 35–6) that *vanir* and *álfar* are more or less synonymous:

1. *Grímnismál* 5 declares that Freyr, one of the *vanir*, was given Álfheimr as a *tannfé* [a 'tooth payment', on the appearance of his first tooth as a baby]: he is presented as ruler of the world of *álfar*.

2. The sun is termed *álfrǫðull* ['elf wheel']; as Freyr is said by Snorri (*Gylfginning*, Ch. 24) to control rain and sunshine ("ræðr fyrir regni ok skini sólar"), there is an implied connection again between Freyr and the *álfar*.

3. The many collocations in verse – with parallels in the Old English charm *Wið færstice* (Hall 2007: 2) – of *æsir* and *álfar* point to these two classes as being the main spirit categories evoked in traditional lore; even *Vǫluspá*, which contrasts *æsir* and *vanir* in st. 23–24, uses the traditional formula of *æsir* and *álfar* in st. 49 ("Hvat er með ásom? Hvat er með álfom?" ['What troubles the *æsir*? What troubles the *álfar*?']).

4. *Lokasenna* refers to the assembly of gods as a group of *æsir* and *álfar*: thus Loki accuses Freyja of sleeping with each member of both these groups (st. 30), and if the *álfar* are taken as equivalent to *vanir*, the accusation is the more pointed, as indicating incest, of which Loki accuses Freyja in st. 32 (sleeping with her brother). It would certainly appear that *vanir* are included among or designated by the term *álfar* here.

However, the example of Freyja illustrates the difficulty of a simple identification between *álfar* and *vanir*.

1. Hall demonstrates that *álfar* were originally male, and that female elves are a late-medieval invention. Freyja can therefore scarcely have been an *álfr*.

2. The nearest class of females to the male *álfar* were the *dísir*, and Freyja is indeed called *vana dís* ['*dís* of the *vanir*']. The sexual exclusivity of the terms *álfr* and *dís*, as opposed to the inclusivity of *vanr*, already militates against a simple identification. Yet the very title *vana dís* illustrates that a *vanr* was not the same as a *dís*, otherwise the title would be pointless: among the class of *vanir*, Freyja is the one who has the particular qualities of a *dís* (whatever those qualities may be).

3. More generally, in skaldic verse, *álfr* occurs almost exclusively in kennings for human warriors, and this usage suggests *álfr* could only denote males (Hall 2007: 28). In contrast, *vanr* is not used in this way in skaldic verse, again suggesting a lack of synonymity with *álfr*.

Interpretation
Vanir *Relationality*
The war of the *æsir* and *vanir* in *Vǫluspá* must form the basis of an interpretation of the *vanir*. The following points may be made:

1. Gullveig and Heiðr appear as twin facets of the invincible power of the *vanir*, each carrying out a slightly different strategy in

23

the campaign against the *æsir*. Gullveig epitomises one of the chief attributes, eternal gold, of Freyja (the weeper of gold tears), and Heiðr embodies another, Freyja's practice of *seiðr* (*Ynglinga saga*, Ch. 4), which the *æsir* are similarly helpless against.

2. *Vǫluspá* 22–23 intimates how a female, home-based cult led by Heiðr threatens to undermine the world of the *æsir*, led by Óðinn. An opposition of female home cult and male state cult occurs in *Vǫlsa þáttr*, where the home cult is presented as preserving old pagan ideas in opposition to the new official cult of Christianity (the account is late, from *c.* 1380, but preserves what must have been a persistent notion about the setting for heathen customs, even if the details of the rites are fabrications). Hence gender differences in fact mask political rivalries of a sort which could only arise with the coming of Christianity; *Vǫluspá* has clear allusions to Christian ideas, and the notion of a *vanir* cult being subversive because it was to a high degree feminine may be the result of politicised Christian notions.

3. The *vanir* were kicking on the plain by means of a *vígspá* ['war prophecy'] – "knátto vanir vígspá / vǫllo sporna". *Vǫluspá* wishes to emphasise the continuing youthful vigour, despite being slaughtered on the battlefield, of the *vanir*, with a play in the word *kná* ['know how to'], on *knar* ['vigorous']. Bearing in mind the impossibility of killing Gullveig, the point is that the *vanir* cannot be killed, at least not by normal means (and force is all the *æsir* know, represented by Óðinn casting his spear into the host).

There is a fundamental difference between the *æsir* and the *vanir* here, an opposition between individuality (*æsir*) and relationality (*vanir*), to use terms established in anthropological research. Individuality is primarily a masculine virtue, based on the assertion of the individual and deploring anything that undermined the individual, such as penetration by a spear, or a penis (which leads on to the question of *ergi*, and the *seiðr* practised by the *vanir* – topics too wide for consideration here). Relationality, on the other hand, is more associated with a female perspective, and it defines a person in terms of their relations with others. Taking the other into oneself is part of relationality: this is, I suggest, represented in graphic form in the inability of the *æsir* to harm the *vanir* by sticking weapons into them. The *vanir* indeed thrive on accepting the 'other' (other people, other objects) within their very bodies – far from killing them, as the *æsir* intend, it enables them to be reborn in a yet more vigorous state. The poet implies that the *vanir* have the power to regenerate wealth (Gullveig), prophetic knowledge (Heiðr) and military invulnerability (the *vanir* host). The only way to kill the *vanir* and those like them would be to isolate them, to undermine their relationality – and this secret is of course known to the *vanir* themselves, and is used by Skírnir on Freyr's behalf in his threats to Gerðr: the god will not confront her directly, but isolate her away from society, depriving her of all contact, and cause her to wither.

4. Snorri says in *Ynglinga saga*, Ch. 4, that the *vanir* were appointed as overseers of sacrifice, the general purpose of which is renewal (consistent with their role as just noted). Success and renewal call for sacrifice, however – as when Jarl Hákon's protective (and gold-bedecked) female deity Þorgerðr hǫlgabrúðr grants success in battle once he has sacrificed his son to her. The sacrifice in *Vǫluspá* is likewise of the war-leader Óðinn's son, Baldr, which can only be for the renewal of the world, marked by Baldr's return (noted by the poet in st. 59).[5] This sacrifice, it is inferred, becomes possible within this new union of the *vanir* and *æsir*, in which *vanir* are able to oversee sacrifice.

The Seasonal Cycle

Although it is impossible to prove, the indomitability of the *vanir* implied in *Vǫluspá* was probably built upon recurrent seasonal rites, which would have formed part of popular cult. For example, the name Gullveig may be seen as pointing to a drink (*veig*) that is the result of harvest (being cut down with spears) and the oasting of the grain (thrice burnt). Be that as it may, cyclical myths appear typical for the *vanir*. In brief:

1. The return home of Njǫrðr in *Vafþrúðnismál* at the eschaton may be a mythic representation of a rite closely related to that recounted by Tacitus concerning Nerthus, who came from her island sanctuary, spending time among her peoples, then returned at the end of the season, encapsulating the principle of the ebb and flow of the land's productivity. Njǫrðr's marriage to Skaði, with his stay in the mountains followed by his return, shows a similar pattern. In a satirical tale in *Flateyjarbók*, Freyr is presented as travelling around his realm on a cart in a way reminiscent of Nerthus.

2. Freyja is said by Snorri to have travelled, looking for her lost mate Óðr, and to have wept tears of gold while doing so. The motif of a wandering goddess of fertility is found in other Indo-European traditions, as in the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, recounted in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,[6] and Freyja in this myth may have shared features with Demeter (a topic calling for more thorough discussion). A travelling woman would be seen as a witch (as Heizmann has shown), and Freyja is indeed termed a *fordæða* (*Lokasenna* 32.2); as she passed 'among peoples' she must have interacted with them, as did Gefjun with Gylfi, which implies she performed her special prerogative, *seiðr* magic (and perhaps prostitution), just like Heiðr in *Vǫluspá*, perhaps teaching it to mankind (this would explain how the divine practice of *seiðr*, a

prerogative of the *vanir*, came to be known by humans). Freyja appears in *Vǫluspá* to be the guardian of indomitable life (Gullveig and Heiðr, and the *vanir* on the battlefield, cannot be overcome), and the retrieval of Óðr was perhaps an assertion of this power.

Magic

The practice of *seiðr* originated among the *vanir* (*Ynglinga saga*, Ch. 4: Snorri's statement, but clearly based on the use of *seiðr* in the war between the *æsir* and *vanir* in *Vǫluspá*). The precise nature of *seiðr* is debatable (not least because sources mentioning it are mainly late and derivative), but it appears to have involved prophetic powers gained through opening oneself up to externalised forces, and also through the agency of spirits called *gandar*. It was regarded as shameful for men to practise – the same word, *argr*, is used to describe a practitioner as for a passive homosexual. The implication is an irruption of external forces into a person's body, be these penises or spirits. It is consistent with the principle of *vanir* being relational rather than individualistic that such a penetration was found acceptable among them.

Incest

Snorri says the *vanir* practised incest, which was not acceptable among the *æsir*. Incest may be viewed as a breaking of *mores* which arrogates spiritual power. Incest may be viewed as parallel to *ergi*, but on a social level: it represents the breaking of a socially (and biologically) defined unit of individuals (siblings) through the relational merging of these individuals.

Sacrifice

The *vanir*'s overseeing of sacrifice is mirrored in Freyr's association with the horse, which appears to have formed an important aspect of pagan Scandinavian cult (see Sundqvist 2002: Ch. 9), as in the cases of: *a*) the horse Freyfaxi in *Hrafnkels saga*; *b*) the collocation

25

of horses, Freyr and a fertility cult in the tale of Gunnarr helmingr (*Flateyjarbók* I, 337–339); and *c*) Óláfr Tryggvason's seeing a stallion in a sanctuary (*hof*) in Níðaróss, destined for sacrifice, in an episode in which he contends with the inhabitants over their worship of Freyr the *skúrgoð* ['shower god'] (*Flateyjarbók* I, 401).

Battle

Vǫluspá illustrates the *vanir*'s invincibility in battle, but a further connection is indicated in the name of Freyja's dwelling, *Fólkvangr* ['Battle Field'] (*Grímnismál* 14), and her sharing the slain with Óðinn. Apart from the horse, Freyr's particular animal was the boar (*Gylfaginning*, Ch. 34). De Vries (*AR* §259) regards this as an indication of Freyr's fertility connections, but the boar was both an animal of sacrifice (the *sonargǫltr*) and a symbol of protection for warriors, as indicated in the boars found in warrior images, for example on the Torslunda plaques, and as mentioned in *Beowulf*. They therefore link the god both with sacrifice and with battle.

What Was the Vanir*'s Function?*

It is probably accurate to classify the *vanir* as a class of gods concerned with fertility, and has been set out *in extenso* for example by de Vries (*AR* §§448–475).[7] However, this designation is vague, and might be applied equally to many of the *æsir* (such as Iðunn). Can the *vanir*'s role be defined more precisely? I suggest they are specifically the overseers of *transition*: the *vanir* are liminal beings, overseeing changes in the life of mankind and communities, and the surrounding world on which mankind depends. The principle of transition allows the disparate characteristics of the *vanir* to be brought together in a way that simple fertility does not; at the same time, the sort of transition that is overseen is often related to securing the means to fertility or well-being:

1. The cyclical myths relate primarily to the transition of the seasons and the consequent *ár* – successful harvests – that communities would hope for. There thus appears to have been an underlying principle of guardianship of the seasons. Yet movement on a mythological level is bound to imply change, transition.

2. An association with death – the starkest of transitions – is found from the earliest times, with Nerthus's slaves being slain at the end of the seasonal perambulation, coinciding, presumably, with the oncoming of the deathly season of winter. Freyja in particular, but to an extent also Freyr, in the later Norse tradition oversee death, particularly in battle; this is marked in Freyja's home, 'Battle Field', and in her designation as *vana dís*, since a *dís* was a spirit-being that was made manifest at a person's death, overseeing their transition from this life.

3. As the only god presented in an infant state, Freyr is seemingly also presented as a guardian of birth or childhood; yet his tooth-gift, Álfheimr, may imply a link with death, and is certainly liminal, as the abode of otherworld spirits, the elves.

4. Freyr too is the god associated with marriage, in the myth of his wooing of Gerðr.

5. The *vanir* were guardians of sacrifice: sacrifice is a ritualised transition of an offering from men to gods; the transitory nature is specially emphasised in the horse, sacred to Freyr, which is the animal of passage between worlds, seen in Óðinn's Sleipnir and also implicit in Óðinn's sacrificial tree, Yggdrasill ['Óðinn-Steed'].

6. The mastery of *seiðr* I would read as indicating a control over the liminal state implicit in contacting the spirit world.

7. Incest is a transitional state in that it is a *transgression*, a stepping over of the *mores* of society.

The *vanir*'s indomitability is a consequence of their guardianship of the *limen* between states of being: they are necessarily above the

changes over which they preside, and remain impervious to them. Their relationality is another expression of this principle, enabling them to stand above any change which outsiders, like *æsir* wielding spears, seek to impose on them.

Conclusion

It is worth emphasising a few points in conclusion:

1. There are naturally difficulties in ascertaining the status of the *vanir* in Norse myth – but why pick on the *vanir*? There are difficulties with almost every aspect of Norse mythology.

2. Traditions concerning metaphysical beings were necessarily amorphous and must have been subject to variation over time and place. Thus the sources indicate there was not necessarily a hard and fast distinction between classes of gods. Once certain *vanir* had been accepted into the community of the *æsir*, they became *æsir*. If, as seems likely, *vanir* were only designated as such when they carried out functions which a poet or narrator, or potentially a priest at an earlier period, wished to emphasise were distinct from the norm of the *æsir*'s activities, then the much lower survival rate of the term becomes explicable.

3. It is unnecessary to postulate a monolithic Scandinavian belief system – or rather, such a system should *not* be postulated. Traditions of who belonged among the *vanir*, and the use of the designation at all, must have varied over time and place, their apparent merging with the *álfar* in *Lokasenna* being an instance of this varying tradition.

4. There seems no well-founded reason to reject the traditional view, based upon Snorri's interpretation of inherited Norse poetry, that the terms *æsir* and *vanir* were used to designate two classes of divine being, both of which could be distinguished from *álfar* in certain respects (or traditions).

5. The evidence affords opportunity to interpret the *vanir* as a class of beings with a cohesive functionality, as I have attempted to show. In turn, since this functionality can be shown to mirror concerns with a widespread occurrence within comparative religious studies, there is good reason for maintaining the importance of the *vanir* as a discrete group of divine beings. I would even venture to suggest that – far from being minor characters in the Norse pantheon, as Simek and others believe – the *vanir* are likely to have been involved in the most intimate and central aspects of human existence, as my analysis of their function shows. It may well be for this very reason that Christian missionaries such as St Óláfr were intent upon their eradication, leaving us so little information. If, as *Vǫluspá* intimates, the *vanir* were particularly the 'sweet scent', the darlings, of women, there may have been even greater incentive for the new muscular and masculine Christianity to ensure their demise, as a cult fostered by the guardians of the home would be a serious threat to the spread of the new religion.

Notes:

1. The reading of *vanir* in *Eiríksmál* 2 (*Skj* B₁ 165) from *c.* 950 is less acceptable than Finnur Jónsson's reading of *vánir* ['expectations'], that is of men coming from the world into Valhǫll, mentioned in the previous stanza.

2. This does not necessarily identify Heimdallr as a *vanr*, however: the sense may be "like the *vanir* too": see *KLE*, comm. *ad loc*.

3. I find arguments for the war of *Vǫluspá* 21–24 as portraying a gigantomachia wholly unconvincing. This idea was proposed by Mogk in 1925, at a time before a modern understanding of the poem was inaugurated with, in particular, the edition of

Sigurður Nordal; Ursula Dronke's detailed discussions of the war in *Vǫluspá* are built in part upon Nordal. Mogk's arguments were refuted by Dumézil in 1947 – only to be wheeled out again by Schulz in her recent work on giants (with an acknowledgement that, indeed, scholars have on the whole not seen fit to accept Mogk's arguments: though she has apparently not read Dumézil). Schulz's (Mogk's) interpretation requires us to assume Snorri was deeply mistaken in his interpretation of the myth; I prefer to stick with Snorri.

4. My interpretation of these stanzas in the main follows that of Dronke (1988: 227–231). There is not the space here to rehearse arguments over the approach to mythological sources – though it is primarily the scholarly approach, rather than the evidence itself, which determines attitudes to entities such as the *vanir*. To mention but one point, Dronke acknowledges and builds upon the extensive comparative work of Dumézil (without thereby agreeing to his often forced arguments for trifunctionalism), and recognises that Norse myth is a legacy of a long developing tradition going back to Proto-Indo-European times, but subject to external influences throughout the course of its history, and that an understanding of this heritage is essential in interpreting Norse myths.

5. Attempting to interpret the Baldr myth of course could open a can of worms – but I will not open it here. Lindow (1997) emphasises primarily the aspect of vengeance as central to the Baldr myth/legend, yet as far as *Vǫluspá* is concerned, the aspect of vengeance, while clearly present, does not emerge as the poet's main focus of interest.

6. We might also compare the myths of Inanna and Dumuzi, and Isis and Osiris, which are closer in that they involve the separation and loss of the male consort, who is sought by his wife.

7. It is possible that the fertility aspects, renewing *ár* (good harvest and abundance) for the people, may (as is likely at Uppsala) have been focused on the person of the king, of whom the gods may be divine counterparts, as Motz (1996: 16, 124) suggests, but this does not undermine the essential role of these gods.

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Verses *versus* the 'Vanir': Response to Simek's "Vanir Obituary"

Frog, University of Helsinki, and Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu

In the last issue of *RMN Newsletter*, Rudolf Simek (2010) addressed the Old Norse term *vanir* (sing. *vanr*) as a collective term for 'gods'. Simek was responding to the centrality of the 'Vanir' as a family (Njǫrðr, Freyr, Freyja) or group (*folk*) of gods in modern discourse as disproportionate to the evidence of the 'Vanir' as a typology, and the problematic nature of evidence for such a typology. Academic discourse has constructed its own mythology of the 'Vanir' (in the sense of Roland Barthes [1972]), a mythology that provides foundation assumptions and associations about Old Norse mythology, beliefs and worldviews in present-day discussion. This mythology of the 'Vanir' is almost entirely based on works of Snorri Sturluson (1178?–1241), both his account of myths and mythology in his treatise on poetics called *Edda*, and his euhemerization of the mythology in *Ynglinga saga*.

Following Simek's (2010: 12) review, the term *vanir* is attested in eddic verse only in five poems and a total of seven times outside of the nine formulaic repetitions in the poem *Alvíssmál*, and only two or possibly three times in skaldic verse. The term is not attested in prose outside of Snorri's works (or works dependent on Snorri) and poetry documented in manuscripts in medieval Iceland, unless in the mytho-historical name *Vanlandi* (which

will not be addressed here). Simek challenges the modern mythology of the 'Vanir', arguing that it is largely a construct attributable to Snorri Sturluson himself (*Vanakvísl* [= the river Don] will be accepted as coined by Snorri). He suggests that *vanir* was an archaic collective term for 'gods' that had become suspended within the poetic register – i.e. in the language as employed in the poetic system – and that these references were interpreted and developed by Snorri in his formulation of a coherent mythological system. The present paper will review the attestations of *vanir* in the poetry and consider what insights those uses offer regarding the situation of *vanir* within the poetic register and poetic system more generally.

Alliteration and Lexical Deployment

For reasons that should shortly become clear, let us now undertake an excursus from medieval Icelandic poetry to the world of English pop lyrics, and consider The Beatles' (1963 [1975]) song "I Saw Her Standing There":

> Well, she was just seventeen,
> You know what I mean,
> And the way she looked was way beyond
>   compare,
> So how could I dance with another,
> Oh when I saw her standing there.

Table 1. Alliterative rank of terms for 'gods' in eddic verse, with the number of examples, based on Gering's (1903) concordance, in parentheses. The second rank under 'regin' includes alliterating epithets (addressed below).

	goð		æsir		regin			tívar		bǫnd		hǫpt	vanir	
Ljóðaháttr	42%	(45)	98%	(50)	65%	88%	(26)	100%	(4)	100%	(1)	–	100%	(13)
Long line	0%	(21)	100%	(40)	25%	88%	(8)	100%	(2)	100%	(1)	–	–	
Vollzeile	79%	(24)	90%	(10)	83%	89%	(18)	100%	(2)	–		–	100%	(13)
Fornyrðislag	64%	(14)	85%	(27)		100%	(13)	0%	(3)	–		–	100%	(2)
Simplex Total	**47%**	**(59)**	**96%**	**(77)**	**77%**	**92%**	**(39)**	**57%**	**(7)**	**100%**	**(1)**	–	**100%**	**(15)**
Total w/out Vollzeilen	26%	(35)	94%	(67)	71%	95%	(21)	40%	(5)	100%	(1)	–	100%	(2)

	goð		æsir		regin		tívar		bǫnd	hǫpt	vanir	
compound-	100%	(6)	60%	(5)	100%	(4)	–		–	–	100%	(1)
-compound	–		–		100%	(6)	64%	(11)	–	–	–	
Compounds Total	100%	(6)	60%	(5)	100%	(10)	64%	(11)	–	–	100%	(1)

It can be imagined that the phrase 'I saw her standing there', the title of the song, and the last line of each verse, came first to Lennon and McCartney, and that the words "beyond compare" were pressed into service to make the rhyme. A bit clumsy perhaps, perhaps a little too 'high-flown', but they do the job. In verse forms with recurrent sonic demands (i.e. a requirement that lines rhyme or alliterate), we often find that the poet has sacrificed something (but rarely everything!) in the realms of semantics or stylistics for the sake of meeting those sonic demands. "Beyond compare" still makes sense, but it is a little old-fashioned; had the need to rhyme not been there, Lennon and McCartney may well have chosen other words.

A series of 20th century researchers of alliterative verse (Brink 1920, Borroff 1962, Cronan 1986) have developed a way of identifying likely cases of semantic and stylistic slippage and stretch resulting from phonetic constraints. If we find that a word is always, or almost always, used as an alliterative word or as a rhyming word, this suggests that in those contexts, its usefulness to poets in terms of sound may come at some cost of sense. The word may be in the right neighbourhood, but not the one that the unconstrained poet might otherwise choose. It might also be somewhat old-fashioned. Some verse traditions make a virtue out of necessity and develop a series of synonymous terms

that can be called on in such instances – a ready example is the set of words we find for 'man' (including *bern*, *freke*, *gome*, *lude*, *rink* and *segge*) in Middle English alliterative verse, most of which are not found in Middle English prose, but are found in Old English alliterative verse. These are equivalents to "beyond compare" in The Beatles' song – they are a bit old-fashioned, but they sound poetic and they do the job of conveying meaning. As well as these old-fashioned usages, we also find cases where contemporaneous words found in non-poetic language are used, but with their meaning rather stretched. For example, *tulk* means 'translator' in Middle English, but it has had its sense stretched (or squashed) into 'man' in Middle English alliterative verses where it alliterates on /t/. (See also Roper, this volume.)

To return to the matter at hand, the observation that the word *vanir* alliterates each of the sixteen times it appears in alliterative eddic verse gives us pause for thought. In eddic poetry, the word has an *alliterative rank* (to use the technical term) of 100%. This is a figure we generally find for words which are useful traditional quasi-synonyms. Words with a greater currency and a better semantic fit do not have such a high rank. Admittedly, fifteen simplex examples and one compound is a rather small number to base a solid conclusion on, but comparison of

this word's rank with *goð*, the common term for 'gods', and its poetic 'synonyms' *æsir*,[1] *regin*, *tívar*, *bǫnd*, and *hǫpt* can offer some perspective.

A survey of Hugo Gering's (1903) dictionary and concordance of eddic poetry reveals variation between uses in different meters (simply approached here as *ljóðaháttr* and *fornyrðislag*). A survey also reveals differences between occurrence in a half-line, where only one element needs to alliterate with one element in an associated half-line, or whether it occurs in a *Vollzeile*, which is essentially the length of a half-line with self-contained alliteration. (See Table 1.)

The 59 examples of the common term *goð* as a simplex exhibit an alliterative rank of less than 50%. This drops to almost 25% if uses in *Vollzeilen* are not included. The synonyms *bǫnd* ['bonds'] and *hǫpt* ['fetters'] are employed in skaldic verse (Marold 1992: 705–707) but almost never occur in eddic verse; *blíð regin* ['blithe gods'] appears for alliteration in /b/ (four examples), alliteration in /h/ is not attested as carried by a term for 'gods' or its accompanying epithet in eddic verse. In contrast, the simplex *æsir* (including the six examples of the feminine plural *ásynjur*) is almost never encountered without participating in alliteration. The rank of *regin* is strikingly higher than *goð*, and this term exhibits metrically conditioned usage in which (conventional) prefixed and epithet terms carry alliteration. When these uses are included in calculating its rank, *regin* and *æsir* are roughly equal. Examples of the archaic term *tívar* are too limited to be conclusive (noting that the adjectival modifier rather than *tívar* carries alliteration in the three *fornyrðislag* examples). Within this data-set, the 100% alliterative rank of *vanir* remains striking. The alliterative rank of *vanir* is consistent with being a poetic synonym for *goð* used to meet demands of alliteration, particularly in *Vollzeilen*, where alliteration is most prominent as a determinant factor in lexical deployment.

The Term *vanir* in Eddic Verse

Alvíssmál is a poem in the *ljóðaháttr* meter. Within a dialogue exchange, it presents an index of poetic synonyms attributed to the use of various mythic beings. The term *vanir* appears in nine of the thirteen lists of poetic synonyms. This prominence makes it appear that it was being treated as a distinct class of mythic being within the context of the poem. However, this remains somewhat ambiguous because multiple terms for 'gods' or 'giants' appear in a single stanza, and alliteration functions as a determinant factor on which terms for mythic beings are employed. The term *vanir* is exceptional among these terms for its ability to participate in /v/ alliteration, which is a high frequency pattern of consonantal alliteration in eddic verse (cf. Hollmérus 1936: 64, table 3; Lehmann & Dillard 1954). The term always appears in the same metrical position and always alliterates with the poetic synonym presented with it.

The four-line stanzaic *ljóðaháttr* meter is characterized by two half-lines joined by alliteration (corresponding to a Germanic long line), followed by a *Vollzeile*, or single half-line with self-contained alliteration. Each long-line + *Vollzeile* constituted a syntactically self-contained half-stanza. A *Vollzeile* normally ends with a two-syllable word with a light first syllable. (Kristján Árnason 1991: 52–56.) In *Alvíssmál*, *vanir* only appears in this final position of a *Vollzeile* participating in alliteration. All but two occurrences of *vanir* in eddic verse are found in the *ljóðaháttr* meter, and all uses participate in alliteration. In *ljóðaháttr*, the term always appears in the same metrical position, with the single exception of the compound *vanaheimr* ['realm of the *vanir*'], as one of two uses of the term in *Vafþrúðnismál* 39. *Vanaheimr* is interpreted as a place-name, and *vanir* could not appear as the final two syllables of the line without reversing the order of the name's constituents. The use of *vanir* in *ljóðaháttr* appears not only to be metrically conditioned, but metrically bound – i.e. it exhibits no

flexibility in how it was employed in this meter (cf. Frog 2009: 234–236).

Examples from ljóðaháttr

The degree to which the use of *vanir* was limited in *ljóðaháttr* is emphasized by the fact that, outside of *Alvíssmál* (where *vanir* alliterates with a correlated circumlocution), *vanir* is only used in alliteration with *vísr* ['wise']. Participation in a single alliterative collocation further suggests that the term *vanir* was not flexibly employed within the poetic system. This would be consistent with *vanir* as an archaism suspended in the poetic system. In three of these cases, *vanir* appears in conjunction with the alliterative collocation *æsir–álfar* ['gods–elves']. The *æsir–álfar* collocation is attested 14 times in eddic verse, and also attested in Anglo-Saxon verse (Hall 2007: 35). This suggests a long history, provided the collocation is attributable to a common linguistic-cultural heritage rather than a loan resulting from cultural contact. Two examples occur in a question and answer exchange in *Skírnismál* (17.1–3, 18.1–3):

> Hvat er þat álfa, né ása sona,
> né **víssa vana**?
> Emcat ec álfa né ása sona
> né **víssa vana**;

> What is that of the elves, nor of the æsir's sons,
> nor of the wise *vanir*?
> I am not of the elves nor of the æsir's sons
> nor of the wise *vanir*;

The third line completes the helming of question and answer without augmenting the semantic content. It is unclear whether this employment of the *vísir vanir* collocation offers a semantic distinction or is a purely rhetorical use of a parallel construction (e.g. 'gods'–'elves' / 'wise ones' or '[any] wise mythic beings'). It can be compared to the corresponding use of *ginnheilǫg goð* ['magic-holy gods'] in *Locasenna* (11.3). The possibility of a parallel construction is further increased if *vanir* were an archaic term, the semantic value of which had become derived purely from its restricted patterns of

employment within the poetic system, or was otherwise semantically opaque. This construction also appears in *Sigrdrífumál* (18.5–8) where it is accompanied by an additional *Vollzeile* (*galdralag* meter):

> Þær ro með ásom, þær ro með álfom,
> sumar með **vísom vǫnom**,
> sumar hafa mennzcir menn.

> They are among æsir, they are among elves,
> some among wise *vanir*,
> some have human men.

The significance here is also obscure. It is not possible to determine whether four types of beings are being distinguished, or the long line and two *Vollzeilen* form a parallel construction with an increase in information: if *vísir vanir* functioned as semantically equivalent to the *æsir–álfar* collocation, then the parallel construction would be augmented by 'men' as additive information. Within these uses, the expression *vísir vanir* appears to be semantically light (if not semantically void), employed to complete a *Vollzeile* with no clear indication that it is intended to distinguish a particular type of mythic being.

The final examples of uses of *vanir* in the *ljóðaháttr* meter are both in *Vafþrúðnismál* 39. The term *vanaheimr* ['realm of the *vanir*'] appears in the opening long line, participating in alliteration with *vís regin* ['wise gods'], which is the only example in eddic verse of *vísr* modifying any term for 'gods' other than *vanir*. The *vísr–vanr* collocation then appears in its conventional position as the final words of the second *Vollzeile*, accompanied by the noun *heimr*– a set of responsions that can be considered to close the frame of the stanza:

> Í **Vana**heimi scópo hann **vís** regin
> oc seldo at gíslingo goðom
> í aldar rǫc hann mun aptr koma
> heim með **vísom vǫnom**.

> In *Vanaheimr* created him, the wise *regin*,
> and handed [him] over as a hostage to the *goð*
> in the doom of ages he will return
> home with/among the wise *vanir*.

Within the poetic dialogue, this stanza answers a question concerning the origin of the god Njǫrðr, said not to have been raised by the *æsir*. The significance of the stanza is opaque: Njǫrðr was 'created' by the 'gods' (*regin*), given to the 'gods' (*goð*) as a hostage and will return home *með vísum vǫnum*, which could mean that the *vanir* are a distinct class of beings dwelling in *Vanaheimr*, or that he will return 'home' accompanied by *vísir vanir*. If *vanir* functions synonymically for 'gods' or 'gods and elves', rather than implying that Njǫrðr was separated from the *vanir* as his people (although he was 'created' by 'gods'?), this stanza could mean that Njǫrðr will die along with most other gods (and elves?) at the ethnic apocalypse – *ragna rǫk* ['doom of the *regin*'] – and together they (the *vanir*) will return 'home' to *Vanaheimr*. Such an interpretation might be supported by the appearance of this stanza among a series related to death and particular deaths.

Examples from fornyrðislag

The poetic source which is central to the construction of the *æsir* and *vanir* as two distinct classes of gods is a long-line couplet in *Vǫluspá* 24, which is conventionally interpreted as the defeat of the *æsir* by the *vanir*, and as associating the *vanir* with magic. Outside of *Alvíssmál* this is the only example of *vanir* unaccompanied by *vísr* or the corresponding verb *visa*:

> Fleygði Óðinn oc í fólc um scaut,
> þat var enn fólcvíg fyrst í heimi;
> brotinn var borðveggr borgar ása,
> knátto **vanir víg**spá **vǫllo** sporna.

> Let fly Óðinn and into the host shot,
> it was that first war in the world;
> broken was the wall of the *æsir*'s fortress,
> the *vanir* worked war-prophesy, trod the field.

However, if *vanir* is merely a collective term for 'gods' used for alliteration, the sense is changed: the passage would state that the gods rather than their adversaries employ *vígspá* ['war-prophesy'] or *vigspá* ['spear-

prophesy'] – which would parallel Óðinn's opening shot and its associations with magic (Price 2002: 335). In this case, although the wall of their fortification had been broken, the gods, not their adversaries, won the field of battle. Of the two extant versions of *Vǫluspá*, the Codex Regius manuscript leaves the narrative unresolved at exactly this point, moving to a different subject. According to a conventional reading, the *æsir*-gods are thus left in defeat. The Hauksbók manuscript juxtaposes these lines with the binding of Loki, generating the implication that Loki's binding is related to the war, and not only that the gods won the war (as described in these verses?), but that Loki was bound as a consequence. Although the Codex Regius version offers no clue to resolving the ambiguity of *vanir*, the Hauksbók version seems to suggest that *æsir* and *vanir* are employed (or at least interpreted) synonymically in parallel lines, and that *vanir* is employed for alliteration.

The *vísr–vanir* collocation takes a variant form in *Þrymsqviða* (15.1–4), where the role of *vísr* ['wise'] is assumed by the verb *visa* ['to know']. This is introduced in a long line of supplementary mythological information without narrative relevance:

> Þá qvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr ása
> **vissi** hann vel fram, sem **vanir** aðrir

> Then Heimdallr said this, the whitest of *æsir*
> knew he well the future, like other *vanir*

Occasional narrative extension through semantically light or superfluous long lines is a peculiar feature of *Þrymsqviða* (cf. *Þkv* 22.7–8). Extension through a half-line to accomplish alliteration (such as *Heimdallr – hvítastr ása*) is a basic compositional strategy, but *Þrymsqviða* carries this to lengths uncommon for eddic verse. This is the only identification of the god Heimdallr as a *vanir*. It is also the only clear case in which *æsir* and *vanir* are clearly employed synonymically, which here appears to be attributable to a use of parallelism across long lines (in which *both*

terms are semantically light or void). The *vísir–vanir* collocation appears to have held a practical compositional value here rather than any semantic significance.

The Term vanir *in Skaldic Verse*

The singular *vanr* is preserved in a stanza of skaldic verse attributed to Þórðr Særeksson. The stanza is in the *runhent* meter and quoted by Snorri specifically for the use of *vanr* as a means of referring to the god Njǫrðr (Faulkes 1998: 18):

> Varð sjálf sunar–
> nama snotr una–
> Kjalarr of tamði–
> kváðut Hamði–
>
> –**Goð**rún b**ani**,
> –**goð**brúðr v**ani**,
> –heldr vel mara,
> –hjǫrleik spara.

Each helming of the stanza is formally comprised of two couplets united by both alliteration and end-rhyme. Rather than fulfilling alliteration, *vanr* is employed in the dative case to accomplish end-rhyme. Semantically, each line of the first helming is paired with the corresponding line of the second, forming four syntactic statements (*a*, *b*, *c*, *d*), as seen in the following translation:

> *a*. Became herself of her son–
> *b*. Could not come to love, the wise–
> *c*. Kjalarr (indeed) broke–
> *d*. It is said that Hamðir–
>
> *a*. –Guðrún the slayer,
> *b*. –[wise] god-bride the *vanr*,
> *c*. –horses rather well,
> *d*. –did not hold back in sword-play.

The first and last syntactic statements (*a*, *d*) address a heroic theme. Snorri explains the second (*b*), *snort goðbrúðr nama una vani* ['the wise god-bride could not love the *vanr*'], as referring to the myth of Skaði's unhappy marriage with Njǫrðr. The two framing heroic statements (*a*, *d*) describe a woman's role in

relation to a man and that man's response, reflecting a coherent narrative (Guðrún's son was Hamðir, whom she sent into the battle where he died). The first mythological statement correspondingly presents a woman's role in relation to a man while the second mythological statement presents a man's role *Kjalarr tamði mara heldr vel* ['Óðinn broke horses rather well']. If the stanza is symmetrically structured, either the poet is suggesting that Óðinn seduced Njǫrðr's unsatisfied wife, or, as in the heroic frame, the same 'man' is central to both mythological statements. In this case, rather than *b* referring to Skaði and Njǫrðr while *c* refers to Óðinn, *vanr* could refer to Óðinn in another myth, such as the most well-known myth of the unwilling 'god-bride', Óðinn's seduction of the giantess Rindr; the unusual lexical choice *vanr* would then be a function of meeting the demands of end-rhyme.

The second skaldic example is in a *dróttkvætt* meter helming: Einarr Skúlason employs the kenning *dóttir vanabrúðr*, ['daughter of the bride of the *vanir*'] in his so-called *Øxarflokkr* (5.1–4), which celebrates an axe that he received as a gift from his patron. The poem is preserved in quotations in Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 1998: 44):

> Gaf sá er erring ofrar,
> ógnprúðr **Vanabrúðar**
> þing- Váfaðar -þrøngvir
> þróttǫflga mér dóttur;
>
> He who achieves valour, that battle-splendid Waverer's [Óðinn's] assembly's ['assembly of Óðinn' = battle] presser ['presser of battle' = warrior], gave me the *vanir*'s bride's [Freyja's] daughter ['daughter of Freyja' = Hnoss ('Treasure')] of enduring might;

This use of *vanir* is not determined by alliteration or rhyme. The kenning *vana brúðr* ['bride of the *vanir*'] can be compared with the kenning *goðbrúðr* ['god-bride'] for the giantess/goddess Skaði or Rindr in Þórðr Særeksson's stanza quoted above, and the corresponding kenning *brúðr goða* ['bride of

gods'] for Skaði in *Grímnismál* 11.5. The term *vanir* is so unusual in the extant corpus of skaldic verse, that its appearance without meeting demands of alliteration or rhyme makes it seem probable that the lexical choice was based on semantic relevance, unless *vanir* is intended to resonate with the Óðinn-name *Váfuðr* in the following line, associating 'Freyja' with 'battle' as the mother of the 'treasure' which is a weapon.

A third potential example from skaldic verse presented by Simek, *Eiríksmál* 2 (Finnur Jónsson 1902–1903: 28), is brought forward for the sake of being thorough. The term in question is normally interpreted as *vánir* ['exectations'] rather than *vanir* ['mythic beings']. An interpretation of this term as *vanir* is interesting, potentially representing mythic beings which bring slain warriors from the world to Óðinn in Valhǫll, but this requires reading the first word in the stanza, *er*, as a relative pronoun rather than a verb, and *hǫlda* as an obscure verb rather than a recognizable noun in genitive plural.

Perspectives

The term *vanir* appears exclusively in the plural in eddic verse, where it always participates in alliteration. In the *ljóðaháttr* meter, it is found exclusively at the end of a *Vollzeile*, with the exception of *vanaheimr*. Outside of *Alvíssmál*, it always alliterates with *vísr* as a collocative pair, which seems to be the basis of its collocation with the verb *vísa* in one of its two uses in *fornyrðislag*. Unlike uses of *æsir*, *regin* and *tívar*, which appear to have been primarily poetic terms but maintained flexibility in their range of employment, *vanir* exhibits almost no flexibility or productive use. Similarly, the term seems to have held almost no role in the register of skaldic verse (which was employed compositionally for the generation of new poems by named poets, whose compositions were socially circulated). Although it is employed to meet the demands of end-rhyme, the absence of employment in alliteration suggests that the term was not significant for this poetry, noting that it does not exhibit an established place in the system of circumlocutions, which capitalized on the use and meaning potential of poetic synonyms.

The appearance of *vanir* in Einarr Skúlason's circumlocution *dóttir vanabrúðar* is not dependent on alliteration or internal rhyme in the line, but its significance remains obscure. Even if the term were selected for its significance, we lack a sufficient range of examples to infer why it may have been used here. This isolated example does not demonstrate that Freyja belonged to a typological category of mythic beings referred to as 'Vanir'; it could potentially also have been, for example, an allusion to battle magic (*vígspá*) or to connect the praised weapon to Óðinn acoustically (*Váfuðr* – the *vanr*?).

When *vanir* was used, its employment can easily be attributed to compositional rather than semantic reasons, with the possible exception of the potential place name 'Vanaheimr'. The term's alliterative rank of 100% in eddic verse is striking even among other poetic terms for 'gods'. The near-complete absence of evidence for *vanir* outside of eddic verse – e.g. in prose, inscriptions, skaldic verse, later language use – makes it unlikely that that this is a 'recent' innovation for compositional practicalities: unlike Middle English *tulk* as a poetic synonym for 'man', *vanir* does not exhibit other current use. The extremely narrow patterns of usage, metrical placement and alliteration of *vanir* seem most consistent with an archaic term which has become suspended in the poetic register. Considering that skaldic verse can (to a limited extent) be dated, the absence of *vanir* from an established position in the system of this poetry's circumlocutions suggests that the term may have already been an archaism standing outside of productive uses for several centuries.

The present survey shows that the poetic evidence does not contradict Simek's argument that *vanir* was a poetic archaism that did not designate a category of gods or related mythic beings called 'Vanir'. It seems

very possible that the plural *vanir* was not considered semantically equivalent to *æsir* or *goð*, whether this was because it had a broader semantic field inclusive of *álfar* (and possibly other beings) or was otherwise a distinct class of beings. However, it seems highly probable that there were multiple and varying interpretations of the signification value of *vanir* attributable to this term's narrow range of applications placing it in conjunction with other terms for mythic beings, where it is unclear whether synonymy or semantic distinction is intended. Compositional functions (e.g. completing a *ljóðaháttr* helming by generating a *Vollzeile*) may not have simply involved the slippage or stretch of a term's semantic fields, but even eliminated the necessity of resolving the term through unambiguous interpretation when the whole interpretation of the formula, line, helming or stanza remained accessible. Snorri, and the generations of scholars who now follow in his footsteps, may have simply interpreted and systematized an ambiguous, functionally oriented term of the poetic register. If this is correct, then it is open to doubt whether it is possible to reconstruct the earlier semantic field(s) of the term on which these patterns of alliterative, compositional, and associative semantic use developed.

These observations should not, however, be considered to present a solution to the riddle of *vanir*. Rather, they open the door to further investigations of how language functioned within this poetic register both semantically and compositionally, and questions of how those patterns of usage developed as a historical process. Future studies of additional lexemes would allow a broader overview and context in which these observations concerning the term *vanir* can be situated.

Notes:

1. Although scholarship treats *æsir* as the primary vernacular designation for 'pagan' gods (which has a certain practical value, in addition to sounding more exotic), this is largely on the basis of poetic usage, Snorri Sturluson's works and the euhemerization of the 'Æsir' as men from 'Asia'. Outside of these contexts, *æsir* generally seems to emerge in specialized contexts of language usage (e.g. oath-taking): it was not strictly a poetic term, but seems to have belonged to a higher register or ornamented speech more generally.

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Lokrur, *Lóðurr* and Late Evidence

Haukur Þorgeirsson, University of Iceland

In the previous issue of *RMN Newsletter*, Frog had some interesting things to say about *Þrymskviða* and *rímur* poetry in late medieval Iceland. I think the idea of identifying common themes and stylistic features in *rímur* and eddic poems is a promising one and I look forward to reading more about Frog's research in this area.[1] The *rímur* cycles dealing with mythological themes are a natural first port of call.

A few years ago I wrote an article on *Lokrur*, the *rímur* cycle dealing with Thor's journey to Útgarða-Loki (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2008). I focused on the differences between the *rímur* narrative and the way that Snorri tells the same story in *Gylfaginning*. I attributed most of these differences to the artistic needs of the poet and his desire to present the story as a self-contained and logical whole. The details which *Lokrur* have but lack an exemplar in *Gylfaginning*, I explained as rhetorical amplification, devised to make the story more vivid and entertaining.

Only briefly did I discuss the possibility that the poet had access to sources other than *Gylfaginning*, possibly some that are no longer extant. Although I felt this was an intriguing possibility, I was cautious in approaching it because I feared being scolded for engaging in idle fantasy. To my surprise, my article was criticized from exactly the opposite direction – for an overly dogmatic assumption that the *rímur* poet must have used *Gylfaginning*, rather than an oral tradition, as his source. Having since come upon the Retrospective Methods Network, it now seems to me that the stars are right for a serious discussion of the value of late Icelandic poetry as evidence to be compared with the classical material.

The Name Lóður *in the* rímur

There is one thing about *Lokrur* which I did not discuss at the time, but which I think could be an interesting case study in the value of retrospective evidence. Several times, *Lokrur* use the name *Lóður* as a synonym for Loki. The name *Lóður* also refers to Loki in *Þrymlur*, *Áns rímur* and *Griplur*, although in some other *rímur*, especially in younger and less mythologically oriented ones, it refers to Odin.

Outside of the *rímur*, the name *Lóðurr*[2] occurs in three Old Icelandic poems; *Háleygjatal*, *Íslendingadrápa* and *Vǫluspá*. In each case, it indicates a figure associated with Óðinn, but scholars have been divided on exactly whom the name refers to. The theory which is most frequently defended – and most frequently attacked – is that the name refers to Loki. Since the *rímur* are the only sources to explicitly identify Lóðurr, one would think that the evidence from them would feature prominently in scholarly discussion of this

mysterious figure. This is not, in fact, the case.

If we look up *Lóðurr* in handbooks or overview works on Norse mythology, we do not, as far as I can see, find any mention of the *rímur* evidence. There is nothing in Steinsland (2005), Lindow (2001), Orchard (1997), Simek (1993), Turville-Petre (1964) or the KLNM (1981). Nor have I been able to find anything in commentaries on the *Vǫluspá* verses in question. There is nothing in e.g. Josefsson (2001), Dronke (1997) or Steinsland (1983). Even works which deal extensively with the question of Lóðurr's identity routinely come up short. There is nothing in McTurk (1991: 37–39), Liberman (1990), Taylor (1987), Polomé (1969) or de Vries (1933: 49–55).

What is the reason for this? From de Vries' treatment of the question, one might assume that he was simply unfamiliar with the *rímur*. Indeed, his text contains remarks such as "[Lóðurr's] identity with Loki, about which the Icelandic tradition has not the slightest idea" (de Vries 1933: 53), which are inconsistent with the existence of the *rímur* evidence. But we can compare this with the way in which de Vries treated *Lokka táttur*, a Faroese ballad telling of Loki, Odin and Hœnir. The eminent scholar tells us that the material in *Lokka táttur* is "[o]f course not from any heathen myth unknown to us", that the ballad has "nothing to do with heathen mythology" and that it is "absolutely worthless" for his purposes (de Vries 1933: 46). With this in mind, it seems possible to me that de Vries was familiar with the mentions of Lóðurr in the *rímur* but felt that these late works were so obviously worthless as sources that one could safely speak as though they did not exist.

Finnur Jónsson was certainly familiar with *Lokrur*, *Þrymlur* and *Griplur*, having edited all three cycles two times (1896, 1905–1922) and published a dictionary of *rímur* (1926–1928). But his dictionary dismisses the use of *Lóður* for Loki with a shrug and his survey of the mythology does not mention it at all (1913: 84–85).

A recent work by Rudolf Simek does mention *Lokrur* and *Þrymlur* (not in the context of Lóðurr) but warns us that "we must not make the mistake of confusing this poetical reception of Germanic mythology with genuine sources for our knowledge of the pre-Christian religion" (Simek 2004: 99).

Nevertheless, while some of the scholars above may have known and (silently) dismissed the *rímur* evidence, it seems clear that many of them simply had little or no familiarity with it. In one curious case, we are told that "the old oral myths speak of the giants Lokrur and Thrymlur, fictive descendents of the giants of the *Poetic Edda*" (Taylor 1987: 610). It seems oddly fitting that the *rímur* themselves have here become mythical creatures – rarely seen but rumoured to be still striding the earth somewhere in the North.

Why Did the Poets Think Lóður Was Loki?

Where did the *rímur* poets get the information that *Lóður* is a name for Loki? Since I have been unable to find any pre-existing answers, I will have to try to feel my own way. I can imagine several possibilities:

1. The poets could have had access to some now lost written source where *Lóður* was listed as a name for Loki – the source might have been something similar to *Litla skálda*. This is not impossible, but I do not think it is likely. The *rímur* in question date to the 15th century or, at the earliest, to the end of the 14th century. At that time, Icelandic orthography made no consistent distinction between the common grammatical ending *-r* and the rarer *-ur*. That distinction, however, was still upheld in poetry (Stefán Karlsson 1964). The *rímur* poets clearly had the correct form of the name since they do not use it as a monosyllable (to rhyme with, say, *óðr* or *hróðr*) but as a disyllable. In *Áns rímur* the name rhymes with *bróður* and *móður* (Ólafur Halldórsson 1973: 169),

demonstrating both the disyllabic form and the long root vowel.

The orthography very rarely distinguishes between /o/ and /ó/ but the metrical structure of the *rímur* confirms that the poets always had a long vowel in the name. If the *rímur* poets had learned the name from a written source one would have expected **Lóðr* or **Loðr* or even **Lǫðr*. The fact that the poets knew the name belonged to the rare class of masculine nouns with an *-ur* ending indicates that they knew the name from oral tradition.

2. The poets could have known *Vǫluspá*, *Íslendingadrápa* and the other material from which (some) scholars have surmised that Lóðurr is Loki. The *rímur* poets then reached this conclusion for themselves around the year 1400 and proceeded to use *Lóður* as a synonym for Loki in their works. This seems rather unlikely to me, but if we are to believe that the *rímur* poets were so scholarly minded and had access to so many sources, then surely their works have some value as retrospective evidence.

3) The poets could have known that *Lóður* is a name for Loki directly from oral tradition. The existence of this oral tradition would be most economically explained by it being old and continuous, or, we might say, 'correct'. This seems to me to be the most likely possibility.

Retrospective Evidence
In my view, the *rímur* present moderate-to-strong evidence that the Lóðurr mentioned several times in Old Norse poetry was understood as Loki. I am, of course, not suggesting that all other evidence should be set aside in favour of this one piece of the puzzle. On the contrary, all aspects of the question call for a detailed examination, a challenge beyond the scope of this article.

I do, however, feel that scholars seeking some identification for Lóðurr other than Loki need to explicitly account for the *rímur*

attestations in some way. If Lóðurr is proposed to have been an independent figure in an earlier historical period, then a discussion of when and why this figure would become identified with Loki is appropriate. In any case, there is no sound methodological basis for *a priori* rejection of 14th and 15th century Icelandic evidence.

Notes:
1. Like Frog, I would caution against the assumption that eddic poetry was "largely or wholly extinct as an oral tradition by the end of the 13th century" (Frog 2010: 35). In 17th century Iceland, there was still an oral popular tradition of narrative *fornyrðislag* poetry and some of the poems then recorded show clear signs of medieval origins (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010 and this volume).
2. By the time of the *rímur*, polysyllabic words previously ending in *-rr* ended in *-r*, thus e.g. *Gunnarr* > *Gunnar*; *Lóðurr* > *Lóður*.

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Hildebrandslied 65b: Suggestions for a New Reading and Interpretation

Tonya Kim Dewey, University of Bergen

The *Hildebranslied* dates from the late 8th or early 9th century, with the most likely date of origin lying sometime in the first half of the 9th century. It is generally considered to be Old High German, though there are a number of Low German features observable in the text, and it is included among the Old Saxon texts consulted for Tiefenbach (2010). The exact time and place of the composition of the *Hildebrandslied* cannot be determined with any certainty. What we do know is that the poem was copied at the monastery at Fulda in the mid 9th century by three separate scribes. The manuscript is now housed in Kassel, and it should be mentioned that the condition of the manuscript has deteriorated a great deal in the last 125 years.

The surviving text is comprised of 68 lines of alliterative verse (*Stabreim*), a genre that may be reconstructed for Proto-Germanic (cf. Dewey 2006). This was already an anachronism at the time of composition, since at the time that the *Hildebrandslied* was committed to writing, rhymed verse based on Latin had already superseded alliterative verse (Murdoch 2004: 236). Germanic alliterative verse is made up of long lines with a clear cæsura dividing each long line into two half-lines. Each half-line generally corresponds with a syntactic unit of some sort, in the *Hildebrandslied*, this is most often a clause. There are four primary stressed syllables per line (two in each half-line), and as many secondary stressed and unstressed syllables as needed for grammatical correctness. The first primary stress (or lift) of the second half-line is called the *Hauptstab* and determines the alliteration for the line; one or both of the lifts in the first half-line must alliterate with the first lift of the second half-line. In the strictest interpretations of alliterative verse, the final lift may not alliterate in its own line (though this requirement is relaxed in later alliterative verse, most notably in the Old Saxon *Heliand*, and is occasionally violated in the *Hildebrandslied*).

The plot of the poem may be summarized as follows. Dietrich (variously spelled *Detrihhe* and *Deotrichhe* in the poem)**,** is expelled from his kingdom by Odoacer (*Otachres* in the poem). Among the retainers who accompany him into exile is Hildebrand (Hiltibrant in the poem), who leaves behind his wife and his infant son Hadubrant. Thirty years later, Dietrich comes back. Instead of sending their entire armies against each other, Dietrich and Odoacer agree to decide the battle by single combat, and Hildebrand and Hadubrant are chosen as champions for this purpose. In the course of their conversation before beginning to fight, Hildebrand realizes that Hadubrant is his son. Hildebrand tells Hadubrant that he is his father, which the younger warrior refuses to believe, having been told that his father was dead. The manuscript ends just as they are beginning to

fight, so we do not know the outcome of the battle (though we assume Hildebrand wins by killing his son, especially based on other versions of the story in the Norse tradition, on which see below). The story has been claimed to be a fictionalized account of the battle between Theoderic and Odoacer at Ravenna in 493 (Murdoch 2004: 238), though this cannot be claimed with certainty.

Line 65b

Standard editions of the *Hildebrandslied* (for example the *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, Braune/Ebbinghaus 1994), print line 65b as *staim bort chludun* (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1994: 85). This line is problematic, since *staim* is a *hapax legomenon* of uncertain meaning, making the line uninterpretable.

Interestingly, neither the 15th nor the 17th editions of the *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch* (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1969 and 1994, respectively), have any comment on this line, either in the apparatus or in the notes to the text. The only thing to be found is in the glossary under *staim*, which has the entry "staim bordcludun *Hl*. 65 ?" (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1994: 239). This entry is completely unhelpful, and also gives a different reading of the line than the one printed in the text, which only serves to further confuse the issue.

Those looking for help from Schützeichel's (1969) *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch* receive none, since under *stai-* the reader is referred to *stei-*: there is no entry for *steim*.

However, earlier editions of the *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch* prove slightly more helpful. The 9th edition (Braune/Helm 1928) has a paragraph on this line in the notes on the text, providing several alternate manuscript readings. Why this paragraph was removed from subsequent editions (apparently when Ernst Ebbinghaus took over editing the volume), is unclear, since many of these suggestions make some sense. These are provided here:

> *staimbort chlubun* 'die kampfschilde gingen auseinander' ['The shields of battle broke apart'[1]] (Wackernagel).
> *staimbort chlubun* 'sie spalteten die kampfbrette' ['They split the shields of battle'] (Wadstein).
> *staimbort* 'bemalte bretter' ['painted shields'] (Meissner).
> *sturmbort chlubun* 'sie spalteten die kampfschilde' ['They split the shields of battle'] (Holthausen).
> *steinbort clûbôn* 'ihre edelsteinborten zu bearbeiten' ['In order to rework their jeweled shields'] (Kluge).
> *hlûdun* (acc. pl) < *hlûd* 'die lautschallenden Kampfschilde' ['The resounding shields'] (Grimm).
> *stainun bord chludun* 'mit steinen trafen sie dröhnend die schilde' ['With stones they resoundingly struck the shields.'] (Wagner)
> *staimbortchlûdun* 'krieger' ['Warriors'] (Lachmann)
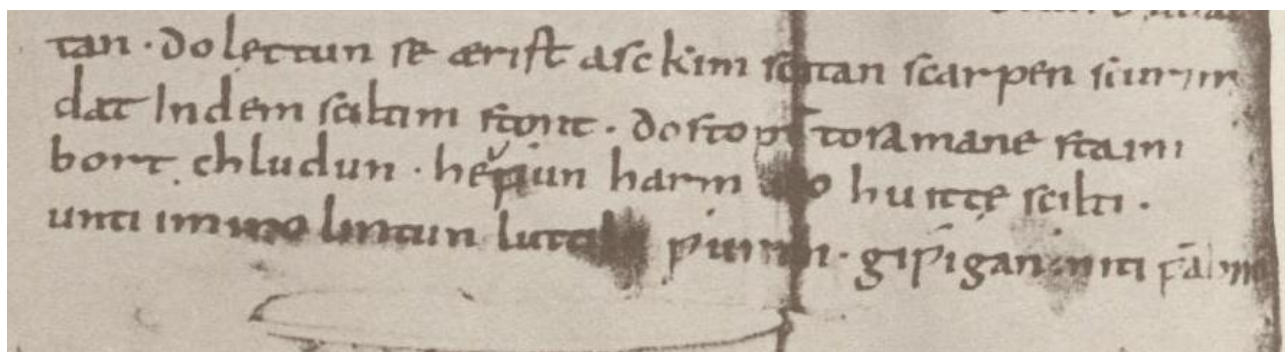>   (All taken from Braune/Helm 1928)

Figure 1. MS facsimile of Hildebrandslied 65b and surrounding text.[2]

From this it can be seen that there is little agreement on the reading of the manuscript. All interpretations agree that the half-line begins with *st-*, but after that there is little or no consensus. Faced with this issue, the best thing to do is to return to the original manuscript.

The Manuscript

The manuscript of the *Hildebrandslied* is available in facsimile form. The facsimile of line 65b and the surrounding text is provided in Figure 1. The line in question comprises the last word of the second line and the first two words of the third line in the text provided.

Let us first consider the second word of the phrase, the first word of the third line in the facsimile, which quite clearly seems to be *bort*. This is unproblematic with the meaning 'shield' (cf. Wackernagel 1971: 41).

Next let us turn to the final word of the phrase, which in the manuscript appears to be *chludun*. A number of scholars (most recently Lühr 1982), would like to emend the <d> to <b>, yielding *chlubun*, cognate with English 'club'. While <d> ~ <b> substitution is common in OHG (likely due to the orthographic similarity between the two letters), such an emendation is unwarrented in this case. Rather, it is preferable to keep the manuscript reading *chludun*, 'sang, resounded' (Wackernagel 1971: 184). The use of noise words as a metonym for battle is well attested throughout Germanic, most notably in heroic alliterative verse in Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon, so the appearance of a noise word in this context is not wholly unsurprising, given that we are dealing with heroic alliterative verse. The grapheme <chl> or <hl> for [l] is not uncommon (see Wackernagel 1971: 137). The reading 'sang, resounded' is also suggested by Wackernagel's entry for MHG *liute*, *lûte*, *lût*. He gives the OHG forms here as *hlûtî* and *lûtî*, indicating that <hl> and <l> were in orthographic variation.

Finally, let us turn to the first word of the phrase, which in the manuscript appears to be *staini*, not *staim*. First, if we compare the end of this word with other occurrences of <m> by the same scribe, we see that the stroke joining the two downstrokes clearly touches the first downstroke in most cases (see the words *dem*, *sciltim* and *samane* in the second line of Figure 1). Even when the stroke does not quite touch (see *askim* in the first line of Figure 1), there is clearly an attempt to make it join. If, on the other hand, we compare this sequence to instances of <ni> by the same scribe (see Figures 2–4), they appear quite similar.
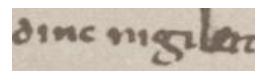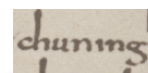

Figure 2. MS facsimile of line 31a.

Figure 3. MS facsimile of line 34b.
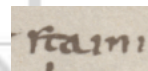
Figure 4. Detail from MS facsimile of line 65b.

To be fully certain, it would be necessary to examine the original manuscript to see if there is any damage to the page at this point, but based on the facsimile, a reading of the line as *staini bort chludun* seems clear. This new reading removes the problem of the *hapax legomenon*, since *staini* is plausibly a form of *stein* ['stone']. The replacement of <ai> for <ei> is unproblematic, since the two graphemes occur in free variation in Old High German.

Having removed the problem of the *hapax legomenon*, a new interpretation suggests itself, detailed in the next section.

Suggestion for Interpretation

It is very tempting to read *staini* as a dative or instrumental of *stein*, 'stone'. However, since 'stone' is a masculine a-stem noun, -*i* is not a possible morphological ending. The instrumental would be *stainu* and the dative

stainai: it is not possible to get -*i* out of either of those endings by phonological reduction.

The more plausible option is to read *stainibort* as a compound, 'stone shields', yielding the phrase *stainibort chludun* 'stone shields resounded'. The fact that the compound *stainibort* is written as two words in the manuscript is not a problem, since elsewhere in the manuscript compounds are written as two separate words, for example *sunufatarungo* 'son and father together' in line four. Additionally, the morphological break between the two elements of the compound falls at the end of an orthographic line in the manuscript. Medieval orthographic practice was to write to the end of the line and continue on the next line without forcing the manuscript line-break to correspond with the end of a word. The third scribe of the *Hildebrandslied* manuscript, with whom we are concerned here, was no exception to this tendency. He breaks the verb *giwinnan* in line 56b between the prefix and the verb stem, demonstrating that he did not necessarily equate line breaks with word breaks (though they do always seem to fall at morphological boundaries).

Finally, there is the question of whether -*i*- is a valid *Bindelaut* in Old High German. A variety of sounds were used to ease the transition between elements of compounds in Old High German, including various vowels. The use of -*i*- in this case makes sense phonologically, since the [n] of *stain* is coronal, making the palatal [i] the most natural following vowel.

As argued above, reading the final word of the half-line as *chludun*, 'resounded', is unproblematic. The manuscript seems clear, and the meaning 'resounded' is appropriate for the context. Any emendation would be superfluous. This yields a reading of the half-line as *stainibort chludun*, 'stone shields resounded'.

It is clear that the 'stone' of 'stone shields' must be metonymic or otherwise metaphorical, since a shield made entirely of stone would be too heavy to be practical in

battle. As argued in the next section, the version of the Hildebrand story preserved in the Old Norse tradition may provide an answer to this problem.

A New "Ending"

If we accept the manuscript reading argued for above, the final extant lines of the Hildibrandslied are as follows:

> do stoptun to samane   staini bort chludun
> heuwun harmlicco   huitte scilti
> unti im iro lintun   luttilo wurtun
> giwigan miti wabnum ...

> Then they stepped together; stone shields resounded. They hewed white shields harmfully and their linden boards became little; they battled with weapons …

Of course, as we know the poem did not originally end here. However, clues to the original ending, as well as arguments in favor of the interpretation above, can be found in the Old Norse sources, particularly *Ásmundar saga kappabana* and *Þiðreks saga af Bern*.

Ásmundar saga kappabana tells us the outcome of the battle between father and son, as well as providing some detail about Hildibrand's shield.

> Oc er Hildibrandr frá þetta, at kappar hans vóro drepnir, þá kom á hann bersercsgangr, oc sneriz þegar til ferðar oc mælti: 'Eigi scall þat mælt, at ec hætta mǫnnum mínom út, enn þorac eigi siálfr at beriaz.' Enn í vanstilli þesso, er á hánom var, oc hann var á ferðina kominn, þá sá hann son sinn oc drap hann þegar. Síðan óc hann upp með ánni Rín til móz við Ásmund. Þann sciǫld hafði hann, er á vóro marcaðir menn svá margir, sem hann hafði drepit.
>
> (*Ásmundar saga kappabana*, Ch. 8.)

> And when Hildibrand learned that his champions had been killed, then a berserker frenzy came upon him, and he set out on a journey at once, saying, 'It shall not be said that I endanger my men, but do not dare to battle myself.' And in this frenzy that was upon him while he was travelling, he saw his

son and killed him at once. Then he drove up along the Rhine river to meet with Ásmund. He had that shield on which as many men were marked as he had killed.

It should be noted that this version of the story makes the battle between father and son seem more like a matter of coincidence, rather than the planned battle it is in the *Hildebrandslied*.

Later in the chapter, in the collection of stanzas called *Hildebrand's Death Song*, Hildibrand refers to both his shield and the death of his son.

> 3. Stendr mér at hǫfði   hlíf in brotna;
>   ero þar talðir   tigir ins átta
>   manna þeira,   er ec at morði varð.
> 4. Liggr þar inn svási   sonr at hǫfði,
>   eptirerfingi,   er ec eiga gat;
>   óviliandi   aldrs syniaðag.
>
>   (*Ásmundarsaga kappabana*, Ch. 8.)

At my head the broken shield stands, on which are tallied those 70 or 80 men whose murderer I became.
The beloved son lies there at the head, the heir I got to have; unwilling, I deprived him of life.

Here, not only does Hildibrand express sorrow for the death of his son, he also describes his shield in further detail than we have previously seen. From this description it is clear that the shield is decorated in some manner, though all we know about it is that he uses his shield to tally how many men he has killed.

A different description of Hildibrand's shield, with much more detail, is provided in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*:

> Hildibrandr inn gamli hefir skjǫld með sama lit ok Þiðrekr konungr ok á skrifuð borg með hvítum steini ok gylltir turnar, ok er sú borg skrifuð eftir Bern.
>
>   (*Þiðreks saga af Bern*, Ch. 173.)

Hildibrand the Old has a shield of the same color as King Thidrek's, and on it is painted a city with white stone and gilt towers, and that city is painted with Verona as a model.

The description of Hildibrand's shield in this source further motivates a reading of the Old High German as *stainibort*, 'stone shields'. Here it is clear that 'stone' refers to the decoration on the shield, not the substance from the shield is made.

The evidence from *Þiðreks saga af Bern* is particularly compelling because the Old Norse text is widely accepted to be a translation of a lost German original. Thus the discussion of Hildibrand's shield in the Old Norse text reveals a German tradition that has otherwise been lost. The Old High German version thus seems to be drawing on a tradition in which Hildibrand has a shield either decorated with stones, or painted with a scene in which stones are significant, namely the white stones of Verona.

Conclusion
Line 65b of the *Hildebrandslied* has long troubled scholars because of the problematic *hapax legomenon* assumed to occur in the line. However, a close reading of the manuscript reveals that there is in fact no *hapax legomenon* in the line; the line is thus interpretable as *stainibort chludun*, 'stone shields resounded'. This reading is confirmed by comparison with the Old Norse sources.

This new reading of *Hildebrandslied* line 65b, in conjunction with the Old Norse sources, allows us to extrapolate the missing ending of the poem, at least in content if not in language.

Notes:
1. This and all subsequent translations from German are my own.

2. All images of the manuscript have been taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hildebrandslied2.jpg and are in the public domain.

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Conferences and Seminars

Conference Report: Gods and Goddesses on the Edge: Myth and Liminality
12th–14th November, 2010, Reykjavik, Iceland
Christian Etheridge, Aarhus University

In 2010, the annual Interdisciplinary Conference on Nordic Mythology, inaugurated at Aarhus University in 2005 finally made its way up the North Atlantic to Iceland. This year, the University of Iceland in Reykjavik was the gracious host to the conference and its participants. A biting wind straight off the North Pole dropped the temperature well below zero and ensured that the participants dashed between the cosy environs of the Nordic House and the University, holding onto their hats and scarves. Once inside the Nordic House, everyone was made to feel very welcome with traditional Icelandic hospitality and was able to warm up with copious amounts of lovely coffee before registering.

Terry Gunnell was the organiser of the conference this year and, together with a hard working group of students, he ensured that everything ran smoothly for all those who attended and took part. Gunnell's hard work bought together an incredibly diverse group of scholars from a variety of disciplines and from all over the world. This year's theme of liminality was bound to attract a very interesting mix of topics and debate, and it certainly did not disappoint. The conference was fully booked and for some lectures there was literally standing room only. The conference hall in the Nordic house provided an excellent venue; spacious with very good acoustics. There were also posters written for the conference describing some of the latest

archaeological discoveries in an Old Norse context.

After a welcome from the University of Iceland, Terry Gunnell took the floor and first mentioned two important scholars who had been unable to attend the conference. These were Rudolf Simek, who had been unable to make the journey, and Pernille Hermann, who had recently become a mother. Pernille Hermann is one of the founders of the Mythology conferences and Rudolf Simek has been one of the driving forces behind it. It is unfortunate that they could not attend, but both are well, and we look forward to seeing them at the conference in the future.

The first speaker to take the floor was Jens Peter Schjødt from the University of Aarhus. Perhaps no other scholar in the Old Norse field has done so much to advance the idea of liminality, so it was only fitting that he should be the first to speak. Schjødt presented an interesting paper on liminality in Old Norse religion. The next speaker was Stefan Brink from the University of Aberdeen whose paper dealt with liminal places for communication with Gods and Goddesses, especially those places that are not naturally formed, such as arable fields and buildings.

After lunch at the University, Stephen Mitchell took the floor and introduced the first speaker of the afternoon: Jürg Glauser from Universitäten Zürich und Basel. Glauser addressed the idea of space in a mythological context. The next speaker was John Lindow from the University of California, Berkley. Lindow made interesting comparisons between the liminal figures Mímir and Kvasir. The final speaker of this session was Henning Kure from Copenhagen, whose paper on "Three Giant Maidens", based on his recent book, *I begyndelsen var skriget*, was both interesting and original.

After coffee, Gísli Sigurðsson took the floor and introduced the first speaker of this session: Ingunn Ásdísardóttir, a PhD student at the University of Iceland and also one of the organisers of the conference. She provided a very interesting paper on the *jǫtunn* identity

of Loki. Next up and following on the theme of Loki was Triin Laidoner, a PhD student at the University of Aberdeen. Laidoner had a fresh and novel approach using the Sámi material concerning the figure of Loki Laufeyjarson. The final speaker of the day was Coppélie Cocq from Umeå Univesitet who continued with the theme of the Sámi in a paper that looked at "Myth and Liminality in Sámi Legends". All these speakers provided interesting, thought provoking, and sometimes controversial papers. The questions and answers that followed each paper were lively to say the least, and there were some heated discussions, but all the speakers were well received.

The day wrapped up with an introduction to The Reykholt Project on Pre-Christian Religions in the North. The editors, Jens Peter Schjødt, John Lindow, John McKinnell, Neil Price and Margaret Clunies Ross, each gave a short talk on a particular part of the project. We can surely expect big things from this project and a rapid advancement of knowledge in many different disciplines. After the day had finished, the speakers went to a reception at the Nordic House, and most of the participants went for drinks and a meal in downtown Reykjavik. Later that evening, we were all very lucky to have a wonderful display of the Northern Lights. Locals said it was one of the brightest displays to have been seen in Reykjavik for many years, so all the participants were very fortunate to have seen this most spectacular of Nature's wonders.

After coffee on the second morning of the conference, Ármann Jakobsson took the floor and introduced the first speaker of the day, Else Mundal from the University of Bergen. Her paper on crossing borders between the living and the dead was very thought-provoking. The next speaker, Judith Jesch from the University of Nottingham, continued on the theme of crossing borders. This time it was the ocean and the fate of the Norse gods that followed the Viking Diaspora. The third speaker of the day was Margaret Clunies Ross from the University of Sydney. Her paper

explored several different aspects of liminality in Old Norse Myth and focused on both feminine and masculine versions of shape-changing. The final speaker of the morning session was Gísli Sigurðsson from the University of Iceland. His paper focused on the night sky and how the stars and constellations could have influenced Old Norse myth, especially the *Gylfaginning* of Snorri Sturluson.

We had lunch again at the University and were able to try some Icelandic delicacies such as hanging lamb, dried fish and delicious, creamy Skýr. The chair of the first afternoon session was John McKinnell. The theme of this session was archaeology and the first speaker was Andreas Nordberg of the University of Stockholm. Nordberg presented a very interesting paper on the symbolism of Iron Age graves. He asked us to look at monuments that were more than just graves. The next speaker was Torun Zachrisson of the University of Stockholm who presented a paper on gables as a liminal space using Iron Age examples in Middle Sweden. This talk focused on three interesting Iron Age figurines that have recently been found. The last speaker of this session was Neil Price from the University of Aberdeen. His paper was on Odin as represented in War Gear of the Later Scandinavian Iron Age. Quite possibly the most fascinating paper of the conference, Price explained that he had been working on the composition of the Sutton Hoo helmet. Making an analysis of the materials used and using an exact replica led him to the discovery that in firelight the helmet appears to have only one eye. Backing this up with other material led him to the conclusion that the helmet was used in ceremonies to represent Odin/Woden.

After coffee, Stefan Brink chaired the final session of the conference. The first speaker of this session was Olof Sundqvist of Högskolan i Gävle, who took us through the cultic context of Odin's hanging in *Hávamál*. The next speaker was Stephen Mitchell of Harvard University. Mitchell presented an interesting paper on "Liminality and Nordic Magic", especially in the context of medieval witchcraft in Sweden. The last speaker of the day was John McKinnell of the University of Durham. He presented a very amusing paper on Male to Female transvestism in Old Norse Mythology. After a ten minute break, there was a final discussion led by Morten Warmind, Judith Jesch, Andreas Nordberg and Torun Zachrisson. The theme of the discussion was "Ways Forward in Cross-Border Interdisciplinary Studies into Old Norse Religion". Many good ideas were put forward and discussed and this will provide fertile ground for collaborations in the future. Jürg Glauser brought the conference to a close by discussing next year's conference to be held in Zurich.

Later that evening there was a final conference meal that was held in the lovely restaurant, Lækjarbrekka. Amidst the wonderful ancient Greek decorations and served by the friendly and hospitable Icelandic staff, the participants and speakers were able to relax and chat informally over a lovely dinner and a few drinks. This was a good opportunity to make new friends and catch up with old, and to share ideas and insights gained over the previous few days. John McKinnell made a fantastic speech after dinner and congratulated Terry Gunnell and his assistants for all their hard work in making a fabulous conference for all the participants. After the dinner had ended, many of the participants ventured out into the city and tasted the famously wild Reykjavik nightlife, which in some cases went on into the early hours.

The next day some of the participants went back home, but others were lucky enough to take a trip into Iceland's stunning landscape and to see waterfalls, mountains, geysers, glaciers and some of the settings of the sagas. All would surely agree that the conference was a marvellous success and thank the hard work of the University and the hospitality of the Icelandic people.

Seminar Report: Genre in Contemporary Finnish Folklore Research

7th December, 2010, Helsinki, Finland
Ulla Savolainen, University of Helsinki

Genre can be considered one of the central terms, methodological tools and research subjects in the discipline of folklore studies. In addition, the term is widely used in other fields such as literary criticism, linguistics and film studies as well. The seminar Genre in Contemporary Finnish Folklore Research was held at the University of Helsinki by the Department of Folklore Studies. The aim of the seminar was to discuss theories, applications and terms relating to genre in contemporary research. The central subjects to consider were:

- Are genre analysis and questions relating to genericity still problematic and relevant in folklore research and how do we employ the term genre?
- How are (if they are) the 'new' folklore materials structured as genres? Is it possible to make new interpretations of established terms and conceptions of genre?

In addition, the questions of whether we have a shared conception of genre and how our understanding(s) of genre relate to those which are prevailing in other disciplines emerged from the presentations and discussions.

The presentations given in the genre seminar covered a variegated range of topics. The first part of the seminar was dedicated to the papers with more general and broad methodological or historical perspectives on the concept of genre, whereas the latter presentations approached genre from the point of view of the particular study and its research data. The first presentation was given by Frog (University of Helsinki) on a structural approach to genre. Frog outlined a framework

which includes individual, local and social levels of understanding genre, which also functions as a more extensive framework for a linguistic-cultural area and therefore provides a basis for more comparative perspectives on traditions. The aim of the framework is to move from a conception of genre based on one core function that can be content, form or application, to understanding more flexible genres and alteration of the core functions in cross-cultural context. Frog also emphasized that this model maintains a concrete validity only in the context of small groups and systems of groups, beyond which it becomes an abstracted working model.

Pertti Anttonen (University of Helsinki) unfolded the theoretical discussion around the concept of genre in the context of Finnish research in particular. Anttonen suggested that the discussions concerning relationships between the concepts of genre deriving from functionalist and pragmatist points of view have not been sufficient. Anttonen argued that different theoretical conceptions of genre are not easily compatible, thus their incorporate application can be impugned. Different theoretical conceptions of genre relate to how a researcher comprehends discourse and research problems in general. It is not without significance whether the researcher sees the 'lack of clarity' of the mass of texts as a property of texts of that type and people using them, or mainly as a problem of the researcher who is trying to sort out texts and discourses unfamiliar to her/him.

The presentation of Pauliina Latvala (University of Helsinki) discussed genre variations in different kinds of written reminiscence materials produced in different competitions and collection endeavours. At first, Latvala described the problems that the folklore archives formerly had with defining

the genre of material of these types and determining their relation to more 'traditional' folklore materials and genres. In the present day, these materials are often methodologically connected to the international oral history research in Finland, but Latvala argued that defining the genre as (written) oral history is problematic due to their inner and relative variation. Latvala also questioned the oversimplified treatment of written reminiscence materials as knowledge of the past and emphasized their nature as *narration structured by history* or *history structured by narration*.

The presentation of Ulla Savolainen (University of Helsinki) provided an example of analyzing written reminiscence materials or, to be more precise, evacuation journey narratives of former Karelian child evacuees. Savolainen suggested that certain kinds of iterating formal and content features of narratives can be considered narrative strategies such as a *fact and event oriented strategy*, a *personal and ruminative strategy* or a *literary strategy*. These strategies serve particular rhetorical purposes, and by using strategies in an individual manner, writers create particular kinds of narratives about their past, and in addition, they actively position themselves in relation to the past and telling about it.

Kaarina Koski (University of Helsinki) introduced a framework for multi-level genre analysis which is developed from her research on legends. Legends have multiple content, stylistic and lexical variables, and these combine in different ways in individual speech acts. For instance, legends can be performed as entertaining stories, personal narratives or in the form of local histories. Hence, structurally and functionally, they may appear as narratives, anecdotes or descriptions. Koski argued that understanding legends as situational and transforming requires a more open and composite conception of genres than the earlier theoretical outlines presented in folklore studies or linguistics can offer. Koski reminded us that even though the aim of research now is not the same as in the earlier

research that developed genre systems for the purpose of categorization, it is still relevant for a researcher to be able to somehow describe what kind of a performance the one in question is. Linguistic genre analysis alone for one, in spite of its accuracy, offers too narrow a focus to analyze all of the variables that are in folklorists' interests. Koski suggested that combining both genre systems enables the researcher both to understand the meanings of legends and narration and to discover the relevant strategies for interpretation.

Eeva-Liisa Kinnunen's (University of Helsinki) presentation examined different definitions and categorizations of humoristic narration. Like many other materials used in folklore research, humoristic narration has also been problematic from the point of view of archival categories. In addition, modern forms of humoristic folklore do not fit in traditional genre categories created for the purposes of archives. Kinnunen also introduced the research of humoristic folklore and evaluated different definitions of it from the perspective of each research field in question. Different genre definitions can also function as links to the existing phenomenon which is the actual topic of a research.

The paper of Liisa Granbom-Herranen (University of Jyväskylä) discussed proverbs and terminological difficulties relating to them. Both the scholars researching proverbs and the people using them have various definitions for proverbs. In addition, proverbs are constantly changing when shifting from one format and time to another, for instance when shifting from oral culture to SMS messages. This led Granbom-Herranen to consider the question of what constitutes a genre and what are the required features that define discourse precisely as a proverb.

Pasi Enges (University of Turku) unfolded the question of whether belief can be considered an independent genre or not. Since the 1930s, archivists and researchers of folklore have tried to situate beliefs in different genre systems. In addition, the term 'belief' has several meanings and applications in folklore studies, philosophy and

psychology as well. Based on his research on Sámi folklore, Enges suggests that instead of a genre, belief should be understood, if anything, as a content that forms the foundation for several different genres.

The final presentation of the seminar was given by Galina Misharina (University of Helsinki) on oral poems which were sung and collected in 1960 in a Komi village in Russia. These sung poems have long been problematic for researchers due to their features which are associated with multiple different genres. On the grounds of their melody and poetics, these songs are reminiscent of laments and the singers also associated them with the same genre as the laments which were performed at weddings and funerals. Researchers were, however, puzzled by the connection that these sung poems had with banishing rites for bedbugs and thistles. This made researchers uncertain whether these songs should be called incantations rather than laments, and they did not receive a stable term or definition in academic literature. Instead, they were referred to in vague terms such as, for example, incantation songs or incantation laments. Misharina argued that the texts of these oral poems are reminiscent of laments. They are performed during rites of passage and their technique is based on a similar idea:

the permanent expulsion of bedbugs requires lamenting just as keeping the deceased away from this world requires lamenting. On the basis of this discussion, Misharina suggested designating the genre of these sung poems 'banishment laments'.

Based on an overview of the common themes in these presentations, it seems that the discussion of genres in contemporary Finnish folklore research is often in close contact with questions relating to the archiving of materials. Although genre is in general understood broadly as a framework for producing and interpreting discourse, the 'old' genre categories and systems are still impacting studies because the materials are often collected and archived based on this conception. Moreover, many earlier research studies were accomplished within the framework of strict conceptions of genre, which is why understanding those conceptions is necessary in order to be aware of the history of the discipline and the bases of the prior studies. Regardless of the fact that contemporary folklore research is often more inclined to search for meanings and ways of using folklore than categorizing that folklore into stabile and clear typological systems, the need to name and define the folklore we are examining is still relevant.

Conference Announcement: *Kalevala*: Finnish and Karelian Epic, Folk Poetry, Art and Music

28th–29th May, 2011, Bottenicco di Moimacco (Udine), Italy
Vesa Matteo Piludu, University of Helsinki

On Saturday the 28th and Sunday the 29th of May, 2011, the medieval Italian cities of Cividale del Friuli and Bottenicco di Moimacco (Udine) will host the conference Kalevala: Finnish and Karelian Epic, Folk Poetry, Art and Music. The conference is organized and financed by the Kalevala Society, as a part of the celebrations of its centenary, in cooperation with the Foundation Claricini Dornpacher, the cultural association Associazione Musicale Sergio Gaggia and the Italian Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia

Giulia. Participation in the conference is free of charge for listeners, scholars, students and all who may be interested. The conference's hall is in the prestigious 17th century Palace Claricini Dornpacher, surrounded by a magnificent Italian garden and a large Italian arbour with spectacular trees.

Eleven professors, researchers and artists working in Finnish Universities will give talks on specific topics related to Finnish and Balto-Finnic epic, mythology, rituals and their representation in Finnish visual art, theater,

traditional and contemporary folk music. The conference is not focused only on the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national poem edited by the ethnographer-poet Elias Lönnrot (the most well-known versions published in 1835 and 1849), but particularly on the original Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian epic folksongs, incantations and spells on which the whole poem was based. Papers will also address, for example, differences between the folk poetry and the creative interpretations and re-elaborations of Lönnrot, and as well as several later generations of artists.

All presentations will be in English, with simultaneous translation into Italian.

The first day of the conference, Saturday, May 28th, will begin at ten in the morning with addresses by Andrea Rucli, president of the Associazione Musicale Sergio Gaggia, and Antonio Picotti, president of Fondazione de Claricini Dornpacher, followed by an introduction to the conference by Seppo Knuuttila (University of Eastern Finland), President of the Kalevala Society.

The focus of the first day of the conference is on *Kalevala* and oral traditions. Lotte Tarkka (University of Helsinki) will open the first session (10:45–13:00) with a paper entitled "The Sampo, Myth and Imagination", followed by Juha Pentikäinen (Lapland University Consortium) speaking on "The Golden King of the Forest: Bear Lore in Traditional Finnish Folk Poetry and in *Old* and *New Kalevala*" and Frog (University of Helsinki) discussing "Lemminkäinen's Death in the Labyrinth of History".

Following lunch, the second session (14:30–16:45) will be opened by Senni Timonen (Finnish Literature Society), addressing "The Virgin Mary in Karelian Folk Poetry and in the *Kalevala*", followed by Eila Stepanova's (University of Helsinki) discussion of "Great Synty in Kalevalaic and Lament Poetry". Jouni Hyvönen (University of Helsinki) will round out the discussions of the day with his paper entitled "Elias Lönnrot's Editorial Strategies in the *Kalevala* Charm Episodes".

Following a sociable evening in Cividale del Friuli, Lotte Tarkka (University of Helsinki) will offer an introduction to the second day of the conference, when the emphasis turns to the reception and responses to *Kalevala* in the arts and music, with closing discussions of questions of identifying and constructing shamanism.

The third session (10:30–13:00) will be set in motion with Seppo Knuuttila's (University of Eastern Finland) paper, "Visualizing the *Kalevala* Myths Today". Risto Pulkkinen (University of Helsinki) will turn attention to the literary arts and a lesser-known attempted epic which was overshadowed by *Kalevala* in his discussion of "*Runola*: Another Finnish Epic Poem?" Karoliina Kantelinen (University of Helsinki and Sibelius Academy of Music) will round out the first session with her discussion of "Kalevalaic and Karelian Singing Traditions, Past and Present: From Folklore Archives to 21st Century Folk Music", in a presentation with live music.

Discussion will resume following lunch with the fourth and final session of the conference (14:30–16:45), opening with Vesa Matteo Piludu's (University of Helsinki) address of the famous late 19th century Italian scholar, "Domenico Comparetti's Studies on *Kalevala*: From the Homeric Question to Theories about the Sciamanistic 'Epic of Charms'". Tanja Eloranta (Theatre Academy Helsinki) will then turn attention to the performing arts in her presentation, "*Kalevala dell'Arte*: A Shamanistic Carnival in Theatre that Unites Finnish and Italian Traditions". Stefano Morandini (University of Udine) will draw the conference to a close with the paper, "Fighting in Trance: From the Documents of the Holy Inquisition to Contemporary Scholarship".

The conference Kalevala: Finnish and Karelian Epic, Folk Poetry, Art and Music, promises to be a lively venue for introduction to the dynamic range of traditions related to *Kalevala*, with perspectives on the uses of traditional poetry and its connections to vernacular mythology, magic, rituals and

beliefs as a vital parts of the lives of people who used it, the transformation of those traditions into the national epic *Kalevala* in the 19th century, and its continuing adaptation, transformations, and its ineffable compelling force that continues to resound through the world of the arts and literature into the present day.

Projects

Septentrionalia: Bridging the Digital Transition for Medieval Studies
Paul Langeslag, University of Toronto

Like so many aspects of life, the world of academics is undergoing an unprecedented rate of change courtesy of the digital revolution. In the humanities, the role of the digital media is typically more linear than in the hard or social sciences: although exceptions exist, the computer's central tasks in our field are the same that the book, the scroll, and the wax tablet performed before it, while most of the processing is still done in the practitioner's head. In our own little way, however, we share a perspective with all other scholars, and that is a vision of many things made possible by today's technology, but seemingly ever just beyond our grasp until someone obtains the funding (in our case mostly a shorthand for time and labour) to make it happen.

Perhaps the most obvious such issue in the humanities is the digital availability of all print materials. New journal issues are available online, if sometimes with a delay instituted to protect print subscriptions, and many journals have now digitised their back issues all the way into the nineteenth century. The same is not true of monographs, text editions, or collections of essays, which for the most part still have to be located physically. To be sure, much of the literary canon from before the First World War, as well as a selection of early philosophical and political thought, is available in plain text or marked-up formats through such initiatives as Project Gutenberg. In the academic world, however, these digital reissues, which typically rely on automated image-to-text conversion (OCR) and manual correction by volunteers, cannot be cited except in the rare cases when they have been subjected to rigorous proofreading and attained an academic authority of their own, as in the case of the texts of the TITUS database at Frankfurt's Goethe University. In view of the labour-intensive nature of such digitisation, the more realistic path for mass digitisation is photographic reproduction in digital image files.

In the past decade, two ambitious projects have sought to improve the availability of print materials in such formats. The best-known of these is Google Books; the other, equally worthy of mention, is the Ebooks and Texts Archive of the more broadly-oriented Internet Archive. Each has its strengths, and both have vastly facilitated scholars' ability to search and access books. Since neither was established with any particular niche audience in mind, however, both also have their blind spots.

Google Books has made headlines with its bold initiative to digitise entire university libraries, but has run into the obvious problem that most of the holdings of these libraries are still under copyright and can therefore not be extended to the general public without explicit arrangements with all the publishing houses involved. In the European Union, copyright on print works typically lasts

seventy years beyond the author's death; in the United States, the most relevant regulation is a blanket terminus of 1 January 1923, used to distinguish between potentially copyrighted and permanently out-of-copyright works. Google has attempted to circumnavigate this issue by providing full access only to books whose copyright has definitely expired in the user's country of access, with a margin of caution to avoid unnecessary legal issues. In addition, search queries may be conducted on many works still under copyright, either via a preview option arranged with the publisher or else through 'snippet view', which ideally provides just enough context to make clear whether the publication is relevant to the user's query. The Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers would not agree even to this situation until a settlement was drawn up concerning the creation of a registry to organise revenue flows. This settlement, now on the verge of finalisation,[1] is of interest to scholars inasmuch as it will allow Google to set up an institutional subscription system that would provide members of subscribing libraries with full access to its fifteen million digital holdings. Such a system would constitute the biggest revolution yet in bringing books to scholars by digital means. For members of U.S. academic libraries, this landmark improvement is just around the corner. The rest of the world, unfortunately, will have to await international settlements that may take several more years to materialise.

Anything that is done until Google's ambitious project is realised may seem inconsequential and pointless by comparison. However, with Google now going the way of big revenue, its focus will be increasingly on copyrighted works. The humanities are one of the rare fields in which recent scholarship is not all that matters, even if that is in part because a lot of early scholarship has not yet been superseded. As important as Google's project is for the availability of current scholarship, therefore, there is an important role for projects like the Internet Archive, whose Ebooks and Texts Archive is aimed exclusively at providing books that may be freely distributed, either by design or because

their copyright has lapsed. Within the humanities, this primarily means books and journals from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no longer in copyright. An additional advantage of the Internet Archive is that it has attracted some smaller and more specialised libraries than Google Books. As part of its collaboration with the University of Toronto, for instance, the Internet Archive has done much for medieval studies by digitising volumes from the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies (PIMS) library as well as many medievalist holdings from several of the university's college libraries. In 2010, the project even digitised an early medieval homiliary manuscript from the PIMS collection. Unhindered by the legal and revenue challenges of the Google project, the Internet Archive has had the liberty to make a great deal of knowledge readily available to anyone with an Internet connection.

Now that scholars have these two resources at their fingertips, in addition to what digital resources their home institutions may subscribe to, the frontier of availability is shifting towards more specialised fields. After all, even the digitisation of Toronto libraries is in principle a categorical process: medievalists have just been fortunate that this institution is so rich in medievalist holdings, but if an early edition or monograph is not in the Toronto library stacks, chances are still that it will not be found online either. An additional problem with both Google and the Internet Archive is that their approach includes consideration of the book as a physical artefact. Naturally, this inclusive approach to the book is laudable as a principle of preservation, but the digitisation of books as full-colour photographic images makes for cumbersome browsing. After nearly two decades of the pdf format, flipping through a book-sized document can still be a slow and unpleasant experience, although navigational interfaces harnessing the power of the hosting server and scaled image rendering, as seen in the browsing interfaces provided by Google and the Internet Archive, have managed to improve the experience enormously. A final difficulty with the Internet Archive is the unfortunate combination of a vast collection

of volumes, many of which are duplicates and many of which have been imperfectly indexed, with a rather elementary search interface. It is especially difficult to find the right volume of a serial publication there, and specific scholarship is easily lost among the mass of other works.

A few years ago, when Andy Lemons and I found ourselves in Europe surrounded by an impressive array of Old Norse text editions, we were keenly aware that few scholars of Old Norse–Icelandic literature had access to a comparable library, online or off. Since the field is small, moreover, and a great deal of foundational scholarship was conducted early on, an impressive number of text editions still of relevance to scholars today are now out of copyright either in the United States or in Europe, and often in both. Our first resolve was to make the *Lexicon poeticum* dictionary of Old Norse poetry available online, both in pdf and through a web-browsable interface. Before long, it was online at septentrionalia.net in all three of its editions alongside a fourth text, a Latin-to-Norse inversion of the original dictionary. While we continue to think of the *Lexica poetica*-project as the centre-piece of our contribution to scholarship digitisation, scholars worldwide are profiting also from the collection of works that materialised around it over the next several months, containing some forty Old Norse text editions and twenty grammars and monographs, plus the occasional text edition from neighbouring medieval traditions. To disentangle the maze of search engines and bring foundational scholarship of the medieval north together on one page, we decided to add in a number of links to externally-hosted volumes as well, but it soon became clear that no volunteer-run project could come close to indexing all the relevant scholarship now available chiefly through the Internet Archive and Google Books. For similar reasons, we have opted not to invest much of our time in performing text recognition on the image files, although many of our files have gone through an automated and very rudimentary text-recognition process.

The chief philosophical difference between Septentrionalia and the larger projects mentioned is that we approach the books not as artefacts but as texts. We therefore offer pdf copies in black and white, relieving the burden on computer processors and facilitating reprinting. For some of our most popular titles whose US copyright has expired, we sell hardcopy volumes through a US-based printing service. However, we do not, and cannot, claim copyright to any aspect of our work, which we think of as a community service bridging the transition to a time when universal online access to print books is a reality.

Notes:
1. *Editor's note* – This settlement was rejected while the current issue of *RMN Newsletter* was in press.

URLs:
Septentrionalia: http://septentrionalia.net
Google Books: http://books.google.com
The Internet Archive: http://www.archive.org
TITUS: http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de

The ALMA Database: An Important New Scholarly Resource
Jill Bradley, Radboud University Nijmegen

On 11th of February, 2011, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam launched an important new resource for scholars, the ALMA (Art meets Artifact) website and database. The website is of interest to archeologists, art and cultural historians and anyone interested in the history of daily objects and daily life. ALMA links depictions of pre-industrial objects, dating from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, found in paintings and prints to actual examples of similar material objects. In this way, new insights can be gained into objects and their uses. At the moment, the ALMA Database catalogues about 2,500 objects, 300 paintings and 2,000 prints from the collections of

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. It is hoped that this inventory will be further extended in the coming years.

The ALMA database can be searched extensively for the relation between object and depiction, and the results of research into these various relations are published in the ALMA showcase. Both database and articles are to be found in Dutch and English versions at alma.boijmans.nl/en.

The website ALMA has been made possible due to the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Lithuanian Folklore Heritage: From Printed to Digital Folklore Library
Jūratė Šlekonytė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

The rapid changes taking place in science and technologies and the processes of globalization demand that folklore researchers as well as folklorists respond to the changing situation. Lithuanian folklore is not excepted from these processes. Today, therefore, making the Lithuanian folklore treasury widely available by use of the possibilities provided by modern information technologies is essential.

The true history of recording Lithuanian folklore began about 200 years ago, when the first collection of folklore texts was prepared: a collection of Lithuanian songs published by Liudvikas Rėza, a professor at the University of Konigsberg in East Prussia in 1825.

The first collection of Lithuanian folktales was compiled in 1835 by Simonas Daukantas, a Lithuanian writer, ethnographer and historian. He was influenced by romantic ideas typical of that period, and clearly imagined the Lithuanian-speaking peasant as representative of the prospective Lithuanian state. Unfortunately, the historical situation was not favourable to the appearance of this book, because Lithuania was still a part of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century and the prohibition of Lithuanian printing was valid until 1904. This is the reason why the collection of folktales was published only in 1932, during the first period of Lithuania's independence when folklore studies commanded a lot of attention.

Regardless of the difficult situation for Lithuanian printing in official use, the end of the 19th century was a rich period for the recording of folklore texts. At this time, the work of recording folklore was mostly done by foreign researchers (linguists) or by local people who were interested in folk life. Most texts are written down in the territory of so-called Lithuania Minor (now known as the Kaliningradskaya Oblast), a place where Lithuanians were dominated by German-speaking people. The collectors, as they saw it, were hastening to record the remains of the dying Lithuanian language through the work of collecting folklore.

The situation definitely changed after the withdrawal of the prohibition against publishing in Lithuanian. At the beginning of the 20th century, Jonas Basanavičius, the Lithuanian patriarch and educator of the nation, organized the collection of folklore.

In the first half of the 20th century (until 1940), the collection of folklore was expanded (about half a million folklore texts and songs were recorded). In the second half of the 20th century, even more intense folklore collection began, when the Department of Folklore was established at the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature. Many students, teachers, and people from different spheres became actively involved and started collecting folklore materials: huge complex fieldwork expeditions went into various regions of Lithuania and the archives of folklore were abundantly supplemented. Thus, from the beginning of the 19th century until the present day a large collection of folklore texts has been accumulated. It has approximately two million items of folklore:

over 570,000 items of musical folklore, ~160,000 folk narratives, ~350,000 proverbs and proverbial phrases, ~100,000 riddles.

The scarce availability of the Lithuanian folklore data on the internet is a great problem for modern cultural studies and for contemporary Lithuanian society. The evolution in the provision of information demands that we react to the changing situation: the modern world needs not only the 'texts', but also multimedia recordings (sound, video).

The main audience of digitalized folklore is not only folklorists, but also researchers from other scientific fields. Therefore, the main aims of the folklore digitalization processes are:

1. To present folklore texts for scholarly research: Lithuanian folklore publications are little or never exploited by students of history, archeology, ethnology and by those from other areas of Lithuanian cultural studies. Such isolation could best be overcome by way of the publication of the great folklore collections in scholarly databases on the internet, which would provide search possibilities for the necessary data even to individuals with no specific knowledge in the field of folkloristics.

2. To develop educational and scientific activities: This information is accessible and useful to pupils, students and other individuals who want to get information about folklore.

3. To make Lithuanian folklore material accessible outside Lithuania, especially to people who are interested in Baltic studies: The other big problem that has meant limited access to the Lithuanian folklore material for foreign researchers is not only the lack of digitalized material but also the language barrier: any foreign researcher who deals with folklore material of other nations will scarcely be familiar with the Lithuanian language.

The first step in overcoming these challenges was made by creating the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Information System Aruodai (www.aruodai.lt), a comprehensive electronic collection of sources on Lithuanian culture, a symbolic storehouse: it holds and provides the stuff of Lithuanian culture – data from Lithuanian language, folklore, ethnology, history and archeology. This system allows for the multifaceted classification of data, thus providing users with the possibility of searching for required material according to their desired criteria.

During the period of this project (2003–2006) only 600 folklore texts were transferred into this system. Such a small number of texts appeared in the IS Aruodai because most of the work was allotted to the creation of the structure of this difficult information system.

The database was supplemented with folklore material by other projects at later dates. During 2007–2008 380 local historical legends about lakes, rivers, castles, and the localities' names were added. At the same time, the system was supplemented with more than 300 photos and 90 records of the local legends. Thus over the period of six years, about 1000 folklore texts were transferred, a very small amount if compared to all the material that is stored in the Lithuanian folklore archives. Consequently the idea of supplementing the system with a large-scale collection of folklore texts arose.

In 2008, the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation and the Research Council of Lithuania supported the project "The Digital Library of Lithuanian Folklore by Jonas Basanavičius" for a three year period. The subject of this project is the treasury of Lithuanian folklore in the fifteen volume edition of the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* (1993–2004).

The aim of the project is to transfer the folkloric and scientific heritage of Basanavičius into a virtual space and making it an effective tool for folkloristic and cultural research and a publicly available object of Lithuanian non-material cultural heritage.

Why was such a collection chosen for digitalization? In order clarify our decision it is useful to summarize the historical situation of this collection's accumulation and publication and, of course, to introduce the personality of Basanavičius, the main initiator of Lithuanian folklore collection.

Basanavičius was the most prominent architect of the Lithuanian national revival at the end of the 19th century, one of the leading figures in the struggle for the political independence of the Lithuanian nation, a doctor, a folklorist, an anthropologist, a publicist, a prominent social and cultural figure, and patriarch of the Lithuanian nation. Although Basanavičius studied medicine, he was interested in the study of Lithuanian culture. His scientific views were based on the mythological school and the classical theoretical trend of ethnography, i.e. evolutionism.

His interest in folklore was apparent when Basanavičius was still at school, and the first folksongs he recorded were from his mother. He also collected folklore when in school and at the university. Along with songs, Basanavičius recorded folktales, proverbs, riddles, folk medicine, etc.

At the end of the 19th century, Basanavičius addressed the Lithuanian intelligentsia in periodicals encouraging them to collect folklore and send it to him. His demand that they strictly document the metrics of folklore items was an innovation for that time.

His first major work on folklore was *The Lithuanian Tales I: Materials for the Lithuanian Mythology*, published in America. Thereafter, more publications of songs, small-scale folklore, folktales and other folk narratives followed. Basanavičius collected a huge number of folklore items. Part of it was published as a large collection of folksongs (the book comprises over 400 songs), and a book of folk narratives *From the Life of Souls and Devils* (comprised of 823 place legends, folk belief legends and folk belief texts reflecting Lithuanian beliefs in mythical beings: devils, souls, ghosts, the deceased, incubi, spirits, etc.). In 1926, he published the last major publication of folklore *The Lithuanian Laments*. As Basanavičius became increasingly involved in various social activities, he lacked time to work with folklore manuscripts, and therefore quite a significant part of them remained unpublished. For instance, a bulky collection of folktales and legends, which had formerly belonged to the collections of the Lithuanian Science Society, was for a long time subsequently preserved at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives.

During his life, he edited and published nine books of Lithuanian folklore. This is a significant collection of Lithuanian folklore. Another part of the texts lay in manuscripts for almost a century.

During the period 1993–2004, the prominent folklore scholars Leonardas Sauka and Kostas Aleksynas compiled and published thirteen volumes of folklore texts and prepared two volumes of studies, research articles, letters and folkloristic investigations by Basanavičius. In total, this collection consists of 15 volumes, called the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library*.

The folklore material comprises texts from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, recorded and collected together on the initiative of Basanavičius. This amounts to approximately 7000 texts of Lithuanian folklore and as such constitutes the golden reserve of Lithuanian folklore: 1200 folktales, 1300 folk belief legends and local legends, 1150 beliefs, 700 spells, 500 folksongs, 250 riddles, 200 items on folk medicine, 180 laments, 150 weather omens, anecdotes, orations, prayers, psalms, parables, pieces of literary folklore, proverbs, onomatopoeias, charms and games. All the texts are systematized according to genre and typology.

The digital *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* attempts to cover all the above mentioned material and the work of transferring the folklore texts into the

information system was accomplished during the three year period of the project.

The most complicated and significant activity is the creation of entries for folklore texts in the virtual information system Aruodai. This activity comprises not only the transfer of the digitalized texts (which is the simplest part of the process), but also the detailed description of texts and creating interfaces with the eight integrated repositories: the Personalities Database, the Bibliographic Catalog, the Audio-Visual Archive, the Geographic Database, the Thesaurus of Terms, the Vocabulary of Keywords, the electronic Index of Lithuanian Folk Narratives, and the electronic Index of Lithuanian Folksongs. One entry of a folklore text can result in filling in over a dozen to several tens of columns.

All the texts are systematized by genre and typology. In the process of transferring texts into the virtual information system, each text is edited by specialists of relevant folklore genres (researchers of folk narratives, paremiologists, specialists on riddles, charms and other small folklore genres).

All the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* texts are being indexed by attaching keywords, thus linking the textual entries with the Vocabulary of Keywords. The *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* contains a lot of specific historical, ethnographic and folklore terms of the 19th century, vernacularisms and foreign loanwords. The creation of a separate entry for every new keyword includes indicating its meaning, synonyms, its hierarchic affiliation and other relevant information.

Usually the data about folklore pieces are from the administrative division of Lithuanian territory of the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The units of territorial division, borders and the localization of administrative locations have changed several times. The current administrative division was created in 1994 and modified in 2000. Thus, many corrections were done, and the search for this kind of information was made easier when localities themselves became attached to the Google Maps system. In addition, the Geographic Database in Aruodai was supplemented with 250 place names from Lithuania Minor: data on the former old names of these localities was discovered. This is very important information for those who are interested in cultural processes in the present Kaliningradskaya Oblast.

The digital *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* provides the possibility for multi-aspect search and has two separate internet gateways: *a*) an integrated search of the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Information System Aruodai (www.aruodai.lt), which allows for the multifaceted classification of data, thus providing users with possibilities for searching for required material according to desired criteria; and *b*) an autonomous search system for the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library* (www.knygadvaris.lt).

Knygadvaris is a webpage presenting users with a unique possibility to leaf through all 15 volumes of the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library*. The name Knygadvaris is taken from a Lithuanian fairy tale (Cinderela ATU 510) published by Basanavičius in his collection of folktales. The fairy tale relates the story of a young girl, who claims to have come from the 'manor of books' (*knygų dvaras*).

This digital library also contains meta-data, which makes it possible to look for texts according to various criteria. A search system allowing three kinds of search has been developed: simple search, complex search and typological search. The simple search is possible according various single criteria: a single word, genre, type, keyword, place, time, person, or volume. The complex search is possible according to the same criteria but by multiple criteria at the same time: you can choose a keyword and place, person and volume etc. The typological search enables users to find a text according to the type of folktale or song. This search is based on folklore texts' connection with the electronic Index of Lithuanian Folk Narratives and the Index of Lithuanian Folksongs.

A visitor to the website knygadvaris.lt can listen to authentic recordings of Lithuanian folksongs, made by Jonas Basanavičius using a phonograph in 1909–1912.

The detailed English version of the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Information System aruodai.lt and the website knygadvaris.lt can be found as well: a foreign visitor can find the main information about folklore collection.

After the project came to an end and the system was supplemented with a lot more folklore material, new tasks arose for Lithuanian researchers: to develop innovations for the programme and to continuously add more folklore material.

Viikinkiaika Suomessa – The Viking Age in Finland
Joonas Ahola, University of Helsinki, and Frog, University of Helsinki

Viikinkiaika Suomessa – The Viking Age in Finland is a collaborative interdisciplinary research project which undertakes to explore and assess the significance of the Viking Age for Finno-Karelian cultures and Finno-Karelian cultural areas. The pilot year of the project is 2011, organized around two seminars hosted by Folklore Studies (Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies, University of Helsinki), and has been made possible thanks to support from the Finnish Cultural Foundation. These seminars are open to the public with presentations in Finnish and in English. Papers from the seminars will be developed for a publication which it is hoped will appear by the end of 2012, or early in 2013.

VIKING AGE IN FINLAND

What Was the Viking Age in Finland?
The Viking Age is a term used to refer to a period of history in Northern Europe in the late Iron Age, often defined as roughly 800–1050 AD. This period is characterized by the mobility and expansion of Germanic populations from Scandinavia. The cultural and historical significance of this period has been extensively researched for these Germanic cultures themselves and other cultures to the west. However, much less attention has been given to impacts on cultures along the eastern routes of trade, travel and migration. The Viking Age appears to have had a central role in shaping Finnish and Karelian cultures, and is a potentially pivotal transitional period in their history, and essential for understanding their eventual emergence in the cultures we know today. The purpose of the project Viikinkiaika Suomessa – The Viking Age in Finland is to construct a working definition of the Viking Age in Finland and outline the significance of this era in cross-disciplinary perspective, addressing diverse aspects of culture and the cultural environment.

The goal of the project is the development of holistic models – models which not only work toward a synthesis of insights, approaches and evidence offered by diverse disciplines, but which also take into consideration the history of discourse surrounding the Viking Age, and the strengths and limitations of the contributions from each discipline. It will also take into consideration how groups of peoples who occupied Finland as a geographical area have been defined and identified in terms of language and other

phenomena of cultural activity or expression (manifested, for example, in the archaeological record) within different disciplines in order to assess the interactions and interrelationships between linguistic-cultural groups in this geographical area and at its peripheries. Rather than becoming fixated on whether specific features or details are or are not rooted in the Viking Age, the goal of the project is to recontextualize the details and perspectives in a broader cross-disciplinary perspective for the construction of a more comprehensive overview of the Viking Age for Finno-Karelian cultures and cultural areas of habitation.

The Organization of the Project
The project is organized in two phases. The first phase is the pilot year of the project (2011). This year is concerned with outlining foundations for an understanding of the Viking Age in Finland and its significance in general terms for diverse disciplines, and to construct a broad overview of the range and nature of cultural contacts which are relevant to addressing this period.

The first seminar of the pilot year of the project, "Suomen viikinkiajan määrittely eri tieteenalojen lähestymistapojen valossa – The Viking Age in Finland Defined in the Light of the Approaches of Different Disciplines", was held 28th–29th April, 2011 at the Department of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki (Finland). This seminar included thirteen discussion-oriented presentations distributed across the following fields: climatology, pollen research, genetics, historiography, archaeology, settlement history and place-names, geopolitics, coin minting, linguistics, language history and language contacts, epic

and mythological thinking. Each speaker presented for approximately twenty minutes, followed by forty minutes of discussion.

The second seminar of the pilot year "Kulttuurienväliset yhteydet ja niiden merkitys Suomessa viikinkiajalla – Cross-Cultural Contacts and Their Significance in Finland in the Viking Age", is scheduled for 6th–7th October, 2011 in the same location. Papers presented at these seminars will be developed into a peer-reviewed essay collection in English, which will reflect a synthesis of the cooperative, cross-disciplinary discussion.

The second phase of the project will be a bi-annual seminar series addressing specific aspects of culture and history in detail, resulting in the publication of a comprehensive treatment of different aspects of the Viking Age in Finland to be published in both Finnish and English at the conclusion of the project.

Project Members
The core members of the project Viikinkiaika Suomessa – The Viking Age in Finland are: Lassi Heininen (University of Lapland) in political science; Sirpa Aalto (University of Eastern Finland) in history; Joonas Ahola (University of Helsinki) in folklore; Frog (University of Helsinki) in folklore; Ville Laakso (University of Turku) in archaeology; Clive Tolley (University of Turku) in linguistics.

For more information on this project and its events, please contact Joonas Ahola (joonas.ahola@helsinki.fi) or Frog (mr.frog@helsinki.fi).

PEOPLE

Research Reports

Being Nordic and Seeing Nordic: Peoples & Places in *Maríu Saga*

Richard Cole, University College London

Maríu saga is a 13th century collection of legends concerning the Virgin Mary, translated from a diverse array of European sources into Old Norse. It was most probably translated by – and for – Old Norse speaking monks; a demographic who were members of a continental movement, trying to bring mainland literature and values into a distinctly North Atlantic setting. The narrative voice of *Maríu saga* teleports and time-travels across the then known world in pursuit of equally transient apparitions of Our Lady, incorporating stories from Iceland to the Holy Land as it goes. Taking a largely post-structuralist approach, this paper uses a diverse hermeneutic armoury, incorporating thinkers such as Gertrude Stein, Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, and even Søren Kierkegaard, to examine an example of catastrophic identity crisis in 13th century Scandinavia. However, there is also traditional philological empiricism. At one point it becomes apparent that the hand of Bishop Kygri-Bjǫrn Hjaltason, who according to Abbot Arngrímr, *samsett Maríu sǫgu* ['compiled *Maríu saga*'] (*Biskupa sögur*, p. 186), has been rather influenced by the way he felt about Bishop Guðmundur Árason – a feeling described as (*Gudmundar sögur biskups* p. 131):

> meire ok margfalldare ... ǫfund er fylldiz honum af diofuliga saðe. ovinarins allz mannkyns ok oaflatligu. ok varþ hon þui meire sem hon hafðe lengr staþit

a greater and more multifarious envy which filled him endlessly from the devilish seed of the enemy of all mankind, and which became all the greater the longer it lasted.

Thus a miraculous Marian intercession once attributed to Bishop Guðmundur of Hólar in Iceland is rewritten to be awarded to Bishop Guðmundur of Kirkjubøur in the Faroe Islands.

Along the way, the Norwegian and Icelandic readers of *Maríu Saga* would encounter not just places but peoples too. There are uncomfortably anti-semitic portrayals of Jews – some three hundred years before the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in Scandinavia. While heavenly voices inspire the townsfolk of Toledo (ON: *Tolhus*) to commit a pogrom, and they praise the Virgin Mary for that miracle, the author is busy negotiating the categories of 'self' and 'other' (and even 'beast' and 'human'). In doing so, he creates a place that narrates the supposed superiority of homogeneity over heterogeneity, analogous perhaps to the role of towns like Rinkeby or Bradford in some media today. In another chapter, the compiler of the saga curiously narrates the arrival of Hrólfr and the subsequent transformation of Neustria into Normandy from the perspective of the Franks rather than the Scandinavian invaders with whom one might expect his readership to identify. This paper explores the exotic peoples and places of *Maríu saga* to reveal a fascinating discourse on identity,

where toponymy, semiotics, philology and literary criticism all intersect to reveal an arresting moment in the development of the Medieval Scandinavian worldview.

The publication of this paper is planned to appear in proceedings from the conference to be published by *JONA* (*Journal of the North Atlantic*) in 2012.

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The Echo of the Future in Erzyan Laments
Natalia Ermakov, Tallinn University

Erzyan laments (Erzya being a Mordvinic language of the Finno-Ugric language family) provide a rich source of research material with many layers. The messages hidden in the symbolic language of the laments help us to understand not only the past, but also the future. This reveals itself in the stability of lament texts and in the continuity of the performance tradition. This primarily concerns funeral laments, and not so much the wedding laments or military conscription laments (i.e. laments for recruits going into military service). The laments have a high epistemic value – therein we can observe customs, attitudes and creeds.

Funeral laments are probably the most ancient variety of laments. They are related to the worship of dead ancestors and they contain elements of folk religion. Funeral laments are quite viable in Mordovia up to the present day. They are performed at almost every funeral, and on commemoration days. Wedding laments deserve attention because of the very few performers left, which is also the reason why these laments can now only be heard on a concert stage.

Contemporary war laments were created mostly because of the wars in Afghanistan and Tchetchenia, causing young men to be sent to war and killed. Laments for soldiers have therefore gone through a kind of revival – in the meantime, laments had become a forgotten genre, but due to the socio-political events in Russia that also impacted the Erzya people, laments have found a new life.

Even the laments preserved in the present day have an ancient background which reaches far back in time. Amongst the content of laments, we can gather plenty of forgotten wisdom, of which it is still possible to interpret the traditional symbolic language. As long as the laments are performed and the content is familiar, the tradition is viable. The lament remembers our past, it reveals the present moment and predicts the future. The proof of this is the rise (or revival in a renewed form), of a subgenre of laments like military conscription laments or war laments. This indicates the continuity of the lament tradition: the tradition has been adapted to the present day situation and to the changes in social mentality. Many of us might not notice it, but the lament tradition is alive, only it now reveals itself in different ways, not always like in olden times. Who knows, perhaps there will come a time when there will be a need for wedding laments again, and they will revive and be perceived as modern – as military conscription laments are being revived today.

Ilmarinen, *Inmar*, *Jen* and *Num-Iləm*: Evolution, Revolution and Ethnocultural Substrates

Frog, University of Helsinki

Finno-Karelian *Ilmarinen*, Udmurt *Inmar*, Komi *Jen* and Khanty *Num-Iləm* have cognate names based on **ilma*, 'sky, weather'. This paper presents a case study of Ilmarinen with the potential to offer insights into the evolution of potentially analogous mythic figures in other traditions and cultures which are not as well documented. Within the context of Finno-Ugric mythologies, this study will first assess the probability that cultural figures behind Finno-Ugric **ilma*-based theonyms are genetically related. The comparison of **ilma*-figures will yield a limited number of broad generalizations about the underlying mythic figure which evolved in diverse directions. These generalizations provide a set of probable characteristics attributable to the antecedent of Finno-Karelian Ilmarinen.

A rich corpus of materials related to Ilmarinen has been documented. Representations of Ilmarinen in this corpus will be compared to his hypothetical antecedent. Differences will be discussed in relation to cultural influences and historical processes. A usage-based approach to folklore will be employed. The corpus of Finno-Karelian materials related to Ilmarinen will be assessed in terms of 'ethnocultural substrates'. Following Lauri Harvilahti (2003: 90–115), 'ethnocultural substrate' is used to describe a historical layer of cultural influence or development which is reflected in a tradition, where it has retained currency and (presumably) evolved as part of the historical process. Intersections in comparative material will be employed to identify features which appear to belong to a particular ethnocultural substratum. These will be correlated with linguistic data and compared to identify specific features and general patterns that seem to have undergone historical changes.

It will be argued the term **ilma* ['sky, weather'] functioned as a theonym for the central or supreme sky-god in the Proto-Finno-Ugric (PFU) linguistic-cultural era. As **ilma* cannot be shown in Proto-Uralic, this theonym may be a development characterizing the PFU ethnocultural substratum. Evidence will be presented to show that **Ilma*'s position changed through a conscious and, in some cases potentially aggressive, redefinition of the figure. Attention will be given to developments which appear attributable to the Proto-Finnic (PF) linguistic-cultural era, such as:

- The PF suffix *-r(i)*, denoting an agent or (anthropomorphic) being disambiguating the theonym PFU **Ilma* >**Ilma-r(i)* from the term noun **ilma* (Finnish *ilma*)
- **Ilma-r(i)* as the 'smith of heaven', demiurge and source of lightning
- *Ukko* ['Old Man'], god of thunder, source of lightning, (subsequent) central sky-god
- *Väinä-möinen* (*Väinä*.DIM ['large, slow-moving water']; a metrically conditioned form of the theonym), as lone demiurge from a PFU dualist creation of **Ilma* and his chthonic antithesis (**Väinä* in PF?)
- The probable transition from 'shamans' as dominant ritual specialists to the incantation-wielding *tietäjä*s under Germanic influence; (as the cultural model of the *tietäjä*, **Väinä*'s shift to centrality over the reflex of celestial **Ilma-ri* parallel that of (chthonic) Proto-Germanic **Wōđanaz*, the corresponding cultural model of magical practitioner)
- *Ilmari-nen* ('*Ilmari*.DIM', metrically conditioned) as mythic smith, forger of the *sampo* (rather than the sky), subordinated to *Väinämöinen*

These features demonstrate that Ilmarinen and narratives associated with him were subject to a heavily stratified process of evolution. This historical process is connected to contact with other cultures. The displacement of **Ilma-r(i)* (> *Ilmari-nen*) from centrality by *Ukko* and *Väinämöinen*, central to the incantation tradition and institution of the *tietäjä*, is suggested to have been aggressive, revolutionary, and not without resistance in the wake of social change.

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Lemminkäinen's Death in the Labyrinth of History
Frog, University of Helsinki

Paper to be presented at Kalevala: Finnish and Karelian Epic, Folk Poetry, Art and Music, organized by the Kalevala Society, Cividale del Friuli (Udine), Italy, 28–29 May 2011.

Lemminkäinen is one of the three great heroes of Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* – the impetuous and hot-tempered Viking-like swordsman and shamanic singer-hero who is magically murdered and must be resurrected.

Kalevala is the national epic of Finland and Karelia composed by Lönnrot in the first half of the 19th century on the basis of traditional folk poetry (predominantly the mytho-heroic epic material collected in Karelia). Lönnrot was himself one of the most important collectors of that poetry, and he synthesized the epic from collected material in the role of editor qua author. In the eyes of his contemporaries, he provided a conduit for the voice of *das Volk*.

In the reception of *Kalevala*, the myth of Lemminkäinen's death seems to be the most interesting and compelling of Lemminkäinen's adventures and it has been a nexus of investigation, comparison and speculation in research. This paper will open with the contrast between the interest provoked by the song of Lemminkäinen's death for audiences of the *Kalevala*, and the lack of interest in this myth in the oral tradition from which it was recorded. Lönnrot's myth and its sources will be compared to evidence of the tradition recorded from the oral culture.

The forms in which the tradition was recorded present a foundation for considering the history underlying it. The myth of the death of Lemminkäinen will be compared to the Germanic myth of the dying god Baldr and the relationship between them will be discussed in cultural-historical perspective. These traditions of the dying god will be situated in the broader frames of a potential Circum-Baltic mythological tradition at an intersection of diverse cultures with a dynamic history of contact. The paper will consider the origins, evolution and processes of renewal of a mythological narrative as it has wound – and continues to wind – its way through the labyrinth of history.

Wedding Songs of Alajõe-Russians from 1902
Mall Hiiemäe, Estonian Folklore Archives

Paper presented at "Sa laulad siinnä, ma laulan siellä...", the 4th Regilaulu Conference, organized by the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia, 24–25 November 2010.

The synopsis of Russian wedding songs, "Svadebnõje obõtsai i pesni Olešnitsõ Vezenbergskavo u. Estl. guberni" ['The Wedding Customs and Songs of Alajõe, Province of Estonia'] by Aristokl Hrebtov (1876–1944), was published in the newspaper

Revalskije Izvestija ['News of Tallinn'] in five installments in May 1906.

Hrebtov was born in Mõniste into the family of an orthodox priest, and he came to Alajõe as a young man after graduating from the Pskov Clergic School in 1902. Alajõe (Allajocki in 1583) is a village on Lake Peipus, people there have come from Petersburg, Novgorod and Pskov provinces, from Oudova and other parts of Russia. On a map of the province from 1896, 67 households are marked in the village. As a sacristan and school teacher and participatory observer, Hrebtov has noted that the Great Russian style persisted in the local wedding traditions. He considered the wedding songs to have been reduced, but to be free of innovations in either lyrics or in melody.

Hrebtov's article offers a chance to compare the wedding traditions of Alajõe to the traditions of other Peipus areas, as well as with the traditions of more distant places (Vepsian, Karelian, Seto, Pskovian, Russian, Old Believers', Estonian etc.). The similarities in the basic structure of the wedding cycle are caused by its background as a magic-related initiation ritual: engagement, wedding, the change in status, the communication between families, etc. The differences in the wedding tradition lie mostly in the singing tradition and customs.

There are three important parts in the Alajõe wedding song cycle from 1902:

1. The farewell to maidenhood starts when a little spruce tree – *krasá* – is brought to the bride's home three to four days prior to the wedding.

2. The *krasá*-rite goes over to performing the bridal lament.

3. The bridal lament is followed by glorification songs along with gathering money for the performance.

In my presentation I mark out the regionally common traits as well as differences, with the help of materials gathered from Gorodishche village in the Pechory district (M. Špis, *Svadebnõje pesni i obradõ...*, Petseri 1936), as well as the collections and disquisitions of the Estonian Folklore Archives and its research.

Elias Lönnrot's Editorial Strategies in the *Kalevala* Charm Episodes
Jouni Hyvönen, The University of Helsinki

Elias Lönnrot's (1802–1884) most famous work is the *Kalevala*, which came out in different versions in 1835, 1849, and 1862. The title for the first published version of this work, namely the so-called *Old Kalevala*, is illuminating: the title *Kalewala taikka Vanhoja Karjalan runoja Suomen kansan muinoisista ajoista* could be translated as 'Kalevala – Old Carelian Poems Telling about the Ancient Days of the Finnish People'. Lönnrot also explicitly articulated the goals of his publication in its preface in the following way: *a*) to study the ancient past, *b*) to describe Finnish mythology and *c*) to bring forth rich linguistic resources which would benefit the future development of the Finnish language (this section also includes a description of the poetic rules of Finnish) (see the "Preface" to the *Old Kalevala*; Lönnrot 1993: 179).

I will focus on Kalevala-metric charms and how Lönnrot used them in the epic world of *Kalevala*. Lönnrot's prime objective was to reconstruct the past of pagan Finns. To be logical in the historical description of the story-world, Lönnrot paid no attention to the Christian influences which were common in the Kalevala-metric charms. In my paper, I will examine in more detail the logic which Lönnrot followed while extracting the

Christian influences from the *Kalevala* epic. My presentation examines this question and tries to illustrate the systematic nature of Lönnrot's editorial decisions. I will concentrate on these source-critical questions, and try to illustrate how Lönnrot's editorial decisions constructed the content and logical description of prehistoric times in the *Kalevala* epic story-world.

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St Katherine of Alexandria: Her Legend and Her Memory in Finnish and Estonian Vernacular Religion

Irma-Riitta Järvinen, Finnish Literature Society

Paper presented at "Sa laulad siinnä, ma laulan siellä...", the 4th Regilaulu Conference, organized by the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia, 24–25 November 2010.

St Katherine of Alexandria was one of the highly venerated martyr saints in medieval Scandinavia, Estonia and Finland. Her cult was promoted especially by the Dominican order. In my paper, I shall present the many-layered traditions centered around St Katherine. I shall discuss one of the most important sources of her martyr legend, by Jacobus de Voragine (13th century), and track the traces of her legend in Finland and Estonia. I ask how St Katherine was interpreted in Finnish and Estonian folklore and ritual traditions, paying attention to the songs about St Katherine in Finnish: a Kalevala-metric song about the death of Katherine, and a rhymed ballad called *Pieni Katri* ['Little Katri']. I shall also analyse the ritual traditions about Katherine, who has been venerated as a women´s saint and promoter of the welfare of the cattle and sheep. The Estonian mumming traditions with songs, and the importance of Katherine as a protector of sheep, *lambajumal* ['sheep god'], will be discussed, as well as the connection of this tradition with Finland.

Kaarle Krohn, Jakob Hurt and the Dissection of Songs

Andreas Kalkun, Estonian Literary Museum

Paper presented at "Sa laulad siinnä, ma laulan siellä...", the 4th Regilaulu Conference, organized by the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia, 24–25 November 2010.

In his presentation, Andreas Kalkun compared the principles of publishing and editing folksongs of the folklorists Jakob Hurt and Kaarle Krohn, and he introduced the discussion on the "cutting or non-cutting" of songs in their correspondence prior to publishing first volume of *Setukeste laulud* ['The Songs of Setos'] (1904).

In the Seto singing culture, long songs have been valued, which among other things means that the singers have felt themselves quite free to unite and combine traditional motifs in songs. Setos themselves have not distinguished between complex and simple songs in their singing tradition. Moreover, in the case of the so-called contaminational songs, the "combining" of songs has not been specifically mentioned, but only the creation of a song or phrase.

While editing and compiling the first part of *Setukeste laulud*, the issue of simple and complex songs suddenly became a difficult problem. For the researcher, compiled songs or combinations were "clear types" befouled by alien, unnatural types or fragments, whether accidentally or arbitrarily, which complicated the recognition of the "pure type", and also complicated the compendious publishing of songs, if the researcher were to try to avoid the dissection of songs.

Ghosts, Vermin, and the Ill-Mannered: Polysemous Words Denoting Opposition to Social Order

Kaarina Koski, University of Helsinki

In belief narratives and ritual texts collected in early modern Finland, social otherness is paralleled with the dead, nature spirits and beasts. Different ways of being outside or in opposition to the human social order are linked with each other in the paradigm of otherness. Studies in word semantics suggest a paradigm which included not only opposition but also erosion of the social and economic interests of the society. In my paper, I analyze Finnish polysemous words such as *männingäiset* (pl.) and *kööpelit* (pl.), which were known in belief tradition as supernormal beings; particularly the dead but also ghosts and spirits in general. In addition, *kööpeli* referred to ugly, grumpy and old people, especially the unmarried. In turn, *männingäiset* also meant 'vermin', especially 'bark beetles' (scolytidae), or any insects not specified. In some areas the word also meant 'bear'. Similarly, E.N. Setälä wrote in 1912 about words *kouko* and *kurko* which meant 'ghost', 'bear', and 'lice', as well as the word *turilas*, which meant 'giant', 'crippled or grumpy person', 'witch', and 'vermin'.

In the last century, scholars like Kaarle Krohn (1914) searched for the semantic connection between the dead and certain animals by interpreting the animals as the souls of the dead. I argue that the semantic connection is rather based on a paradigm of agents that oppose or erode the society's interests. Real and supernatural creatures like ghosts, vermin, and bears represented rivals, with whom the human society had to divide its resources. Ill-mannered, crippled, asocial and unmarried people, in turn, lacked the support of society's ideals of social and economic cooperation and reproduction. Thus otherness does not mean being alien but rather denotes beings – both human and non-human – which more or less eroded the ideal functionality of human societies.

Combining the semantic and thematic in the analyses of folklore texts reveals more meanings of both the texts and the polysemous words. The semantic paradigms show glimpses of the popular world view, folklore, and values: for example, that economic and moral interests were closely knit together, and that individuals were conceived as a resource and paralleled with vermin or ghosts if they did not live up to the ideals of their society.

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Relations between Vowels in Estonian and Finnish Alliteration

Arvo Krikmann, Estonian Literary Museum

The older folksongs of most Finnic peoples share the so-called Kalevala form, the main constituents of which are parallelism, alliteration (and assonance), and quadripartite trochaic rhythm.

Statistical research of the behaviour of vowels in Estonian runic songs and Finno-

Karelian runic songs has hitherto allowed the following conclusions:

1. Runic poetry strives to achieve "pure", same-vowel alliteration (CV:CV or ØV:ØV), that is, alliteration with "pure" assonance is statistically prevailing.

2. Nevertheless, the vocalism of Finnic alliteration does not follow a principle of 'all or nothing'. If, under given lexical-semantic conditions, the perfect coincidence of post-consonant or word-initial vowels is impossible to achieve, the intuitive search for a subsequent word pair with maximal or at least satisfactory similarity of different first syllable vowels ($CV_1:CV_2$ or $ØV_1:ØV_2$) will follow.

3. As a result, statistics from the source material reveal a systematic arrangement of ranks of preferences that correspond to the different combinations of phonetic markers of vowels in alliterating words. However, the sequence of ranks is different for non-low and low vowels.

4. The relative frequencies of combining non-low vowels (in the decreasing order of preference / increasing order of avoidance) are determined by their differences in the quality height → labiality → gravity (i.e. back/front). In Estonian songs, for example, the upper ranks of decreasing preferences in the complex of non-low vowels appeared to be the following (the vowel *õ* being regarded as back mid illabial):

a) vowels differing only in height (high/mid), all the rest being the same: *o–u*, *e–i*, *ö–ü*;
b) vowels differing only in labiality (labial/illabial), all the rest being the same: *o–õ*, *e–ö*, *i–ü*;
c) vowels differing in height and labiality, the gravity (back/front) being the same: *u–õ*, *i–ö*, *e–ü*;
d) vowels differing only in gravity (back/front), all the rest being the same: *e–õ*, *u–ü*, *o–ö*.

5. The analogous sequence of qualities for low vowels seems to be lowness → gravity → labiality; for example, the decreasing row of preferences for the vowel *a* in Estonian runic songs is *a–ä*, *a–õ*, *a–o*, *a–u*, *a–e*, *a–i*, *a–ü*, *a–ö*. However, frequency relationships of low vowels with their non-low partners display notably less regularity, i.e. gradations of preference based on different sample corpora tend to be more varied (and generally more chaotic).

Nenets Taleworlds in Contemporary Russia
Karina Lukin University of Helsinki

The Tundra Nenets speech communities located on the European side of the Russian Federation, and especially on the western side of the river Pechora, went through a fast and thorough language shift during the late Soviet and post-Soviet years. This has affected folklore that is performed both in Tundra Nenets and in Russian in the present day. While Nenets is used for sung performances of epic and lyric genres alike, a narrative tradition told in Russian has appeared amongst the western Nenets.

This paper evaluates what kind of models the contemporary Nenets narrators of folklore used in Russian have when performing the stories. The stories, or rather recollections, were collected on the Island of Kolguyev situated in the Barents Sea. They represent a way of telling that constantly refers to Nenets tradition both on the thematic and even on the

structural level. Looking for possible models for narrating, one cannot use Nenets stories as comparative material, as there are very few stories published in the collections of Nenets folklore. Using the concepts created by Katherine Young (1987) (Taleworld, Storyrealm) and the concept of intertextual equipment created by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1992) (intertextual gap) this paper shows how one can get at the possible traditional and non-traditional references the tellers are making use of in their tellings.

The paper shows that the contemporary Nenets narrators have a rich and varied collection of Nenets themes and means in use when performing stories in Russian.

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Database of Izhorian Epic Songs Morphology

Ilya Nikolaev, St.Petersburg University

Paper presented at "Sa laulad siinnä, ma laulan siellä...", the 4th Regilaulu Conference, organized by the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia, 24–25 November 2010.

My current study is based on the texts of Izhorian epic songs in the *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (*SKVR*) ['Ancient Songs of the Finnish People'] collection, available on the web-site of the Finnish Literary Society (http://dbgw.finlit.fi/skvr/skvr.phtml). This corpus is comprised of quite valuable and interesting material both for folklore and linguistic studies. It is important to mention that the Kalevala-metric songs are practically the only source of linguistic information recorded from various Finnic peoples of North-West Europe from the 19th century.

My research aims to create a grammatical description of Izhorian epic song-texts in the form of so-called "statistical grammar", which makes it possible to list the most frequent grammatical forms and categories of a given language. This description is presented as a morphological database, which, on the one hand, stores analyzed texts of Izhorian epic songs and their description, and, on the other hand, also records word forms from the texts along with their grammatical description. The database can also produce a vocabulary and basic syntactic constructions of epic songs. It can be accessed via a user interface that consists of a text input interface, a word forms analysis interface and a researcher interface.

So far, we have studied about 400 epic songs from the Soikkola Peninsula in Ingria (Leningrad Oblast, Russia), which makes about 80,000 words with an average of 200 words per text. These songs were collected by the Finnish, Estonian and Russian researchers V. Porkka, A. Laanest and E. Kiuru in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Preliminary results of our study show that some of the more frequent forms in Izhorian epic songs are the following: singular forms of nouns, first person forms and past forms of verbs, as well as possessive suffixes and MA and KSE infinitives. Less frequent forms are the following: second and third persons and past passive forms of verbs, as well as TA infinitives. It is quite obvious that many more texts will need to be studied to give more accurate results. However, we suggest that a possible interpretation of current results might be connected with genre features of epic songs.

In order to get more reliable results, the problems of the quantity and the quality of data will be solved: the former is connected with database size, the latter with some textological issues (transcription, its accuracy, a collector's experience, as well as variation in Izhorian dialects).

In the future, it might be interesting to study texts of epic songs in their relation to spoken language (synchronic aspect) and in diachronic perspective.

Retracing Processes of Change: The Case of the Scales of the Setu Songs (Southeast Estonia)

Žanna Pärtlas and Aare Tool, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre

It is often remarked that the musical thinking of traditional musicians changed noticeably during the last century. There are many styles of traditional music that are quite viable nowadays but that are not the same as they were even a few decades ago. The acoustic analysis of historical sound recordings gives us the opportunity to retrace these processes of change and describe them more specifically. Such studies are the most effective if they are supported by field research providing the additional data for a comparison.

In Setumaa (Southeast Estonia) sound recordings of traditional multipart songs have been made for almost a century. During this period, and especially since the 1990s, significant changes took place in both the song repertoire and the musical style, including such aspects as pitch organisation, rhythm and metre, multipart texture, manner of singing, etc. The present paper deals with the changes in the interval structure of the scales, which are the essential feature of the Setu song style.

The most specific and probably the oldest scale of the Setu songs, the so-called "one-three-semitone mode" (its widest form can be notated as D–Eb–F#–G–A#–B), is on the verge of disappearance in the present day: partly because the respective repertoire, work and ritual songs, are mostly out of use today, and partly because of diatonization of the old song tunes. To analyse how the one-three-semitone scale can be turned into the anhemitonic-diatonic scale (E–G–A–B–C), four performances of the same tune type (the work-game song *The Grinding Stone*) were chosen. Special attention was paid to the central trichord of the scales: F#–G–A# (1–3) in the one-three-semitone scale and G-A-B (2–2) in the anhemitonic-diatonic scale. The acoustic analysis of performances recorded in 1959, 1996 and 2006, showed how the intervals of about one and three semitones changed eventually to the two-semitone intervals (the structure 1–3 turned to the 2–2). Nevertheless, even in the newest recordings, the two-semitone intervals of the central trichord (G–A–B) of the anhemitonic-diatonic scale are still slightly different (the lower one is a little narrower than the upper), which gives evidence that the ancient musical thinking has not entirely disappeared.

Synonymy in Alliterative Poetry (on the Basis of Simple Synonyms in Estonian Alliterative Verse)

Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu

Synonyms are the lifeblood of alliterative verse due to the high phonetic demands of the medium. We might assume that a rough measure of the importance of a particular notion in a tradition is the number of simplex synonyms (*heiti*, in Snorri Sturluson's terms) that exist for it. This can only be rough, as, for example, in Estonian tradition, the synonym-dictionary of Peegel (2004) shows that while 'goose' has only one simplex synonym, it has 30 compound synonyms. Nevertheless, as the following results show, such a count can characterise a tradition in a broad-brush manner.

Following Cronan (1986), we see that in Old English verse, the notions with the most simplex synonyms are: lord/king, sea/water, war/battle/fight, boat/ship, man/warrior/

retainer, sword, woman, fire, hall, warrior/hero, son/young man, death and hall, in that order. The heroic character of Old English verse shines out from this list. In Middle English alliterative verse (here relying on the figures in Brink 1920), much remains the same – we find that concepts frequently synonymised in Old English verse are also frequently synonymised in Middle English verse: man, hall, battle, weapons, etc. However, we also find what might be described by some as more 'sophisticated' developments, with a new-found emphasis on splendour, politesse, festivities, clothing and armour, reflected in the number of synonyms existing for them.

If we turn now to Estonian alliterative verse, we find a rather different picture. The notions with the most simplex synonyms are *neiu* ['girl', 'maiden'] (214 simple synonyms) – N.B, if we count agent-constructions and kennings as well, *neiu* would have over 700 synonyms! – *pruut* ['marriageable young woman', 'bride'] (111), *naine* ['woman'] (93), *tütar* ['daughter'] (67), *laps* ['child'] (51), *poiss* ['boy'] (40), *vaeslaps* ['orphan'] (39), *mees* ['man'] (38), *peigmees* ['suitor'] (35), *õde* ['sister'] (28), *minia* ['daughter-in-law'] (27), *velli/vend* ['brother'] (25), *laulik* ['singer'] (23), *poeg* ['son'] (16), *uss* ['snake'] (16), *ema* ['mother'], (12), *noorik* ['bride', 'young woman'], (11), *rikas* ['rich person'] (11), *kubjas* ['estate bailiff'] (10), *vanamees* ['old man'] (10). This list of synonyms underlines that in the Estonian material family relations, romantic relations and the theme of betrothal are to the fore.

Given that, as Peegel (2004: 134) notes, certain terms (*naine*, *neiu*, *noorik*, *minia* and *pruut*) are difficult to distinguish in practice, and given that it can also be hard to distinguish in practice between some of the denotations for man in Old English, we find, by combining overlapping and confusible categories, that over half the simplex synonyms in Old English are for male actors, and over half of the simplex synonyms in Estonian are for female actors. These are from totals including all synonymizable entities (not just people, but fire, ship, and snake, etc.), and are thus significant results. This difference in nominal focus is especially striking when we consider that as far as verbs are concerned, there is little difference – the main semantic fields where we find a great number of synonyms in English tradition are those of speaking, movement and perceiving, precisely the same three areas that Labi (2006) touches upon in her work dealing with Estonian material. So we do seem to be dealing with a significant difference here in the point of view current in these verse traditions.

This brief look at synonyms has confirmed something of the character of two traditions (and implicitly refuted recent claims that Estonian *regivärss* is a masculine tradition). But there is more that the study of synonyms might tell us. The notion of alliterative rank as developed in the study of English alliterative verse (Brink 1920, Boroff 1962, Cronan 1986) has shown us that although alliterative verse depends on synonyms, not all synonyms are, alliteratively speaking, equal. This notion of rank might be applied productively to the Balto-Finnic alliterative corpora too.

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Oral Poems in Manuscripts: The Case of Arhippa Perttunen

Jukka Saarinen, Finnish Literature Society

The object of my research is Arhippa Perttunen, the famous singer and performer of Kalevalaic poems and one of the two singers mentioned by Elias Lönnrot in his foreword to *Kalevala* (1835), the Finnish national epic. Arhippa lived in the village of Latvajärvi in Archangel Karelia. He was born around 1769 and died in 1841. He was met by three collectors: Elias Lönnrot in 1834, J. Fr. Cajan in 1836 and M. A. Castrén in 1839. They noted down almost 6,000 poetic lines from him, containing 19,000 words. His poems have been studied by many scholars from different angles: for example parallelism (Steinitz 1934) and metrics (Leskinen and Särkkä 1985).

When writing down Arhippa's texts, whether from singing or from dictation, the collectors were not striving for an exact representation of words and lines as the singer pronounced them: instead they very often used abbreviations or more "Finnish" forms of the words, which were uttered in the local Karelian dialect. There is a clear difference to be seen if we compare the texts of these collectors to those of later collectors using phonetic transcription. In my presentation I will explore the question of how to reconstruct the original text given by the singer to the collectors out of the uneven and often very fragmentary notes written by them in the original situation. Though the reconstructed text cannot be exactly "the right one" and leaves us frequently uncertain, it can give us a much better understanding of how the metrics, alliteration and other features of Arhippa's poetics function.

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On the Corner

Kristi Salve, Estonian Literary Museum

Probably everything in the world – visible or invisible – and the notions related to those things – has its own culture-specific connotations. Even within one single culture, those connotations are complicated: beliefs and everyday practices, linguistic and other factors are manifoldly intertwined.

Within this 'everything' are the parts of buildings: the door, window, threshold (see Olupe 1995), ceiling, etc. – and among the other things there is also the corner.

The semantics of the notion 'corner' are contradictory: on the one hand they are related to marginality and exclusion, on the other hand to safeness and privacy. This kind of ambivalence seems to be equally present in the beliefs, behaviour and sayings of Latvians, Estonians and Vepsians.

With the song lore, it is otherwise: each of the peoples mentioned persistently use the word 'corner' in connection with different attitudes.

In Latvian folksongs, the fixed formula *tumšs kaktinš* ['dark corner'] is used – it seems well-suited to describe or characterize a room on an ancient farm, but paradoxically it even figures in the descriptions of heavenly rooms. The corner in Estonian folksongs has negative connotations as well: it is combined with the verb 'to cry, to weep' together with its numerous forms and derivations. The corner is a place where one cries. The most salient part of Vepsian song lore is its laments. In laments, the fixed epithet of the word 'corner' is 'beautiful; good' (*čoma čogain'e*). *Čoma čogain'e* is a metaphor for home which is often connoted with a feeling of loss: the bride leaves her paternal home, the deceased leaves its home as well as this world.

The Estonian corner as a place for weeping as well as the Vepsian good, pleasant corner are both by and large prescribed by alliteration, which is very important in Balto-Finnic folklore. The diminutives used in Latvian and Vepsian are in turn very common to the colloquial language and the folklore of those peoples (similar to Russians).

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Great Synty in Kalevalaic and Lament Poetry
Eila Stepanova, University of Helsinki

Paper to be presented at Kalevala: Finnish and Karelian Epic, Folk Poetry, Art and Music, organized by the Kalevala Society, Cividale del Friuli (Udine), Italy, 28–29 May 2011.

Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* stands in the background of the history of discussions of Finno-Karelian mythology. Because of this, names like Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, Lemminkäinen and the thunder-god Ukko are the most likely to be mentioned when Finno-Karelian mythology comes up for discussion. *Suuri Synty* – 'Great Synty' – is almost completely unknown. This paper will set out on the tracks of Great Synty. Beginning with the work of Elias Lönnrot, it will offer an overview of the term *synty* ['birth, origin, genesis'] and its derivatives to refer to mythic beings, objects and places. The focus will be on uses in kalevalaic poetry and in lament poetry, considering how these are similar, how they are different, and how they can inform us about *synty*s and Great Synty in the mythology and belief traditions. This paper will help to illuminate certain archaic features of Finno-Karelian traditions, presenting evidence of their significance to the vernacular culture although they have more often been overlooked or misunderstood in research.

The Poetry of Everlasting Grief: The Language of Karelian Laments
Eila Stepanova, University of Helsinki

Paper to be presented at the 5th International Symposium on Finno-Ugric Languages: The Finno-Ugric Contribution to International Research on Folklore, Myth and Cultural Identity, in Groningen, the Netherlands, 7–9 June 2011.

Karelian laments are performed by women during a ritual – funerals, weddings, and recruiting ceremonies – and were commonly used in other contexts of everyday life. Laments are works of a special kind of improvisation: they were created during the process of performance in relation to each concrete situation, drawing upon traditional language and themes. The main feature of Karelian laments is their special poetic idiom full of circumlocutions constituting a dynamic formulaic system. Relatives, intimate people, some objects as well as phenomena are never named directly. The language, or *register*, and

performance of laments is constrained by poetic conventions (e.g. alliteration, parallelism, plural and diminutive-possessive forms).

My research has revealed that the register of laments clearly divides into two main categories: The *essential register* is used in every lament regardless of the context or circumstances of performance (i.e. ritual or occasional). The *context-dependant register* includes much more flexible and variable systems of formulas which are specific to context and subject. The lamenter can choose freely from her internalized understanding of the register in performance in order to express specific contents. Whether she has only internalized the *essential register* or has developed a much more dynamic understanding of the *context-dependent register*, the internalization of these registers is attached to the internalization of meanings. This individual understanding is applied within these strategies for production in the genre to give rise to a unique product in every performance. This paper is concerned with the relationship of language to theme in terms of idiolects and dialects of Karelian laments.

Published Articles

Alliteration in (Balto-) Finnic Languages

Frog, University of Helsinki, and Eila Stepanova, University of Helsinki

This paper offers an overview of alliteration in Finnic cultures. The focus is on oral rather than written traditions and particularly on two poetic systems which are generally considered to have roots in the vernacular culture going back more than a thousand years. The first of these is the trochaic tetrameter associated with oral epic, lyric and incantation, and which is displayed in the national epics generated for Finnic cultures in the 19th century. The second is what we refer to as poetry of 'unfixed' meters, associated with traditional laments and yoiks. Following a general introduction to Finnic languages and alliteration, each poetic system is surveyed in turn, beginning in the northern regions near the White Sea, where Finnic groups were in close contact with the Sámi, passing by Lake Ladoga and Lake Olonets, around the Gulf of Finland into Ingria, and on through Estonia until reaching the Balts of Latvia.

The orientation of this survey is to provide an accessible synthesized overview of alliteration in Finnic cultures with two objectives. The first is to provide an overview of alliteration as a phenomenon in Finnic cultures generally (as opposed to generalizing a localized phenomenon as 'Finnic') through examples of vernacular poetic systems common across Finnic cultures. The second is to provide a framework which facilitates approaching alliteration among different Finnic groups or in different regions, and understanding them in relation to one another and in relation to Finnic poetics as a widespread phenomenon.

The paper concludes with an overview that briefly addresses the implications of the survey regarding the evolution of uses of alliteration and affiliated poetic systems within a region, language or cultural group. It is proposed that these processes of evolution are not arbitrary or based exclusively on

internal factors, but rather appear to be related to patterns of immediate contact with other Finnic linguistic-cultural groups, and also contacts with other groups across boundaries of language and culture. In this case, a potentially significant factor in the prominence of alliteration in vernacular Finnic poetic systems would be the centrality of alliteration to early poetries of their Germanic neighbours. This paper suggests that the prominence of alliteration in the oral poetries of both these linguistic-cultural groups has a relationship to the long history of contact between them, much as the displacement of alliteration by end-rhyme in these cultures appears as a historical process correspondingly associated with contact and interaction with other cultures with different poetics and æsthetic priorities.

"Þur sarriþu þursa trutin": Monster-Fighting and Medicine in Early Medieval Scandinavia

Alaric Hall, University of Leeds

This article came out a while ago, but since it was published in an unusual venue for medieval research, it might nonetheless be worth publishing an abstract here. Health and healing has not been prominent in research on Old Norse mythology, for the obvious reason that it is not prominent in our medieval mythological texts – in stark contrast to mainstream Christian mythological texts like the Gospels and saints' lives, where healing and disease are prominent both in their own right and as metaphors for spiritual health. The article seeks to establish a dialogue between traditional mythologies and discourses of health and healing in the medieval North. Its core evidence is two runic texts (the Canterbury Rune-Charm and the Sigtuna Amulet) which conceptualise illness as a *þurs* ['ogre, monster']. The article discusses the semantics of *þurs*, arguing that illness and supernatural beings could be conceptualised as identical in medieval Scandinavia. This provides a basis for arguing that myths in which gods and heroes fight monsters provided a paradigm for the struggle with illness.

The article applies retrospective methods in a more speculative section, pivoting on the fact that the Common Germanic ancestor of *þurs* was borrowed into Finnish as *tursas*. It compares the curse in the eddic poem *Skírnismál* with an aetiological Finnish folk-poem *Riiden synty* ['The Birth of Rickets'], collected by Elias Lönnrot (1880: 320–321) in the 19th century. Skírnir repeatedly threatens Gerðr with sexual molestation by *þursar*, while *Riiden synty* describes how Rickets is fathered by a *tursas* who rapes a woman. In both narratives, this assault seems to come about because the woman (implicitly immorally) rejects a suitor or suitors. The article uses this to suggest that there may have been medieval discourses in which illness was constructed as punishment for moral transgression, but could also be seen as evidence hinting at the antiquity of Finnic and Germanic traditions.

Writing the article now, I would do a few things slightly differently. I would consider (but probably regretfully reject for want of medieval evidence) a query raised by Paul Cullen at a 2009 seminar at Nottingham about the characterisation of *þurs* in the Icelandic rune-poem as a *kletta íbúi*, which I translated as 'crags' inhabitant'. Paul wondered whether *klettr* might also (like Modern English *clint*) denote a crack or slit in a rock, in which case there might be parallels for it being used to denote a vagina,

providing a double meaning which would fit the attested associations of *þurs* and *tursas* well. The article would address a suggestion whose origin I regrettably can't remember, made at a seminar at York in the same year, that some of the texts being discussed might also have related to discourses about menstruation. The article would mention the early 11th century Saltfleetby spindlewhorl, discovered in September 2010, which bears an apparently amuletic runic inscription mentioning Óðinn, Heimdallr and one Þjalfa (for more information see: http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/409249). And it would cite Anatoly Liberman's recent work to support the argument that, like *þurs*, Old English *dweorg* and probably Old Norse *dvergr* could denote, at one and the same time, beings and illnesses: Liberman (2008: 46–62) has recently reconsidered the etymology of

dwarf, and argued convincingly that it must be related, *inter alia*, to Old English *dwǣs* 'foolish', implying an etymological role for dwarves as causes of delusion – an etymology which had previously been rejected partly because there was thought to be no likely semantic connection between beings and foolishness.[1] Archival work comparing coparing all surviving fieldnotes of *Riiden synty* would also be desirable (cf. Krohn 1917).

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RMN

Gullkársljóð og *Hrafnagaldur*: Framlag til sögu fornyrðislag [*Gullkársljóð* and *Hrafnagaldur*: A Contribution to the History of *fornyrðislag*]
Haukur Þorgeirsson, University of Iceland

Our first record of organized ballad collection in Iceland is a group of late 17th century manuscripts (the oldest from 1665) from the West Fjords. Most of the poems in those manuscripts are ballads similar in meter and content to those found elsewhere in Scandinavia. Many of the ballads must have reached Iceland no later than the 15th century and then spent a couple of centuries circulating in the oral tradition. However, the Icelandic ballad collections also contain poems with no parallel on the continent, namely poems in the eddic *fornyrðislag* meter. These poems, referred to as *sagnakvæði*, share with the ballads proper a certain feminine sensibility and taste and seem to have co-existed with them in the oral tradition.

There are eight preserved *sagnakvæði*, all published in 1898 (Ólafur Davíðsson.

Íslenzkar þulur og þjóðkvæði) but little studied since then. This article examines one poem, *Gullkársljóð*, in some detail. On the basis of metrical and linguistic criteria, as well as similarities to older poems, I argue that *Gullkársljóð* dates to ca. 1350.

Another *fornyrðislag* poem preserved in the 17th century manuscript is *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, a mythological work. Using the same dating criteria as with *Gullkársljóð*, I argue that *Hrafnagaldur* dates to the early 17th century. The mystical tone of the poem, its interest in magic and its serious perspective on the Norse gods fit well with 17th century Iceland when occult and antiquarian interests led to certain neo-pagan tendencies.

In addition to the examination of two poems, my article gives an overview of *fornyrðislag* poetry in Iceland in the period 1350–1770, listing some 50 poems by name.

The continuity of the *fornyrðislag* tradition in Iceland raises the question of whether young poems can be used to throw light on older poems. This is something I hope to explore in future work.

Edited Collections

Expressions of Belief: Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life
Marion Bowman, Open University, and Ülo Valk, University of Tartu

This collection of articles is intended for scholars and students of ethnology, folkloristics, religious studies, anthropology, area studies, theology and cultural research. It argues that greater understanding of the concept of vernacular religion and broader usage of genres (as employed in ethnology and folkloristics) could produce a more nuanced understanding of religious beliefs and practices and a more sophisticated scholarly lexicon for the study of religion. Vernacular religion refers to "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995). Vernacular religion implies a system of beliefs that shapes the everyday culture of groups and individual and is expressed in both verbal and non-verbal forms. It challenges traditional scholarly boundaries between 'official' and 'folk' religiosity.

Genre as a concept has been used to categorize various forms of literature, arts and culture. In this book, genres are defined and utilised from the folkloristic perspective as forms of expression and interpretive strategies that develop in daily communication and performance situations. Written, performative and oral genres represent and express multiple worldviews, modalities and attitudes, encompassing ways of seeing, being in and acting relationally towards the world that weave together different strands of tradition, culture and experience in an integrative manner for the individual both within and beyond traditional forms of religion.

In order to exemplify both the concept of vernacular religion and the utility of genres as a tool for both describing and interpreting expressions of belief, the book examines vernacular religion in a variety of social, national and individual contexts from the 19th to 21st century. It demonstrates a considerable degree of continuity in form and function of genres employed, and the persistence of certain topics, while exemplifying the extent to which the influence of globalisation is endemic in contemporary culture.

The book discusses expressions of belief in different Christian denominations and also in the contexts of indigenous religion, the New Age and contemporary spirituality. Bringing together articles of different research traditions and disciplines from around the world, it offers an insightful and inspiring set of case studies and theoretical discussions. As the articles are based mostly on field research, there is considerable original content and one of the strongest aspects of the book is the extent it will bring to Anglophone audiences case studies and examples of scholarly literature from a variety of European language and research traditions.

Contents

Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk: "Vernacular Religion, Genres and the Dynamics of Belief: Introduction".

Part I: Belief as Practice
Marja-Liisa Keinänen (University of Stockholm, Sweden): "Everyday, Fast and Feast: Household Work and the Construction of Time in Pre-Modern Russian Orthodox Karelia"; Alexander Panchenko (European University, Russian Federation): "How to Make a Shrine with Your Own Hands: Local Holy Places and Vernacular Religion in Russia"; Judit Kis-Halas (University of Pécs, Hungary): "'I Make My Saints Work…': A Hungarian Holy Healer's Identity Reflected in Autobiographical Stories and Folk Narratives"; Anne Rowbottom (Manchester Metropolitan University, retired): "Chronic Illness and the Negotiation of Vernacular Religious Belief".

Part II: Traditions of Narrated Belief
Madis Arukask (University of Tartu, Estonia) and Taisto-Kalevi Raudalainen (University of Helsinki, Finland): "Autobiographical and Interpretative Dynamics in the Oral Repertoire of a Vepsian Woman"; Agnes Hesz (University of Pécs, Hungary): "Hidden Messages: Dream Narratives about the Dead as Indirect Communication"; Merili Metsvahi (University of Tartu, Estonia): "Religious Legend as a Shaper of Identity: St. Xenia in the Mental Universe of a Setu Woman".

Part III. Relationships between Humans and Others
Graham Harvey (The Open University, UK): "Things Act: Casual Indigenous Statements about the Performance of Object-Persons"; Maria Ines Palleiro (Buenos Aires University, Argentina): "Haunted Houses and Haunting Girls: Life and Death in Contemporary Argentinean Folk Narrative"; Ingvild Sælid Gilhus (University of Bergen, Norway): "Angels in Norway: Religious Border-Crossers and Border-Markers"; Éva Pócs (University of Pécs, Hungary): "'We, Too, Have Seen a Great Miracle': Conversations and Narratives on the Supernatural among Hungarian-Speaking Catholics in a Romanian Village".

Part IV: Creation and Maintenance of Community and Identity
Art Leete (University of Tartu, Estonia) and Vladimir Lipin: "Komi Hunter Narratives"; Tiina Sepp (University of Tartu, Estonia): "Stories of Santiago Pilgrims: Tradition through Creativity"; Marion Bowman (The Open University, UK): "Restoring/Restorying Arthur and Bridget: Vernacular Religion and Contemporary Spirituality in Glastonbury".

Part V: Theoretical Reflections
Ülo Valk (University of Tartu, Estonia): "On the Discourse of Belief as Generic Practice: Vernacular Theories of Belief in Contemporary Estonia"; Seppo Knuuttila (University of Joensuu, Finland): "Some Epistemic Problems with a Vernacular World View"; Leonard Primiano (Cabrini College, USA): "Afterword − Ambiguity, Power, and Creativity: Manifestations of the Religious Vernacular".

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Women, Pain and Death: Rituals and Everyday-Life on the Margins of Europe and Beyond
Evy Johanne Håland

This edited book is a cross-cultural and multidisciplinary collection of articles representing different perspectives and topics related to the general theme Women and

Death from different periods and parts of Europe, as well as the Middle East and Asia, i.e. areas where, through the ages, there have been a constant interaction and discourse between a variety of people, often with different ethnic backgrounds. The studies illustrate many parallels between the various societies and religious groupings, despite of many differences, both in time and space.

The theme, death, is mostly seen from what have been regarded as the geographical margins of society as well as concerning the people involved: women. Thus, the articles, most of them presenting original material from areas which are not very well known to readers of English, offer new perspectives on the processes of cultural changes.

The collection has important ramifications for current research surrounding the shaping of a "European identity", and the marketing of regional and national heritages. In connection with the present-day aim of connecting the various European heritages and developing a vision of Europe and its constituent elements that is both global and rooted, the work has great relevance. One may also mention the new international initiative on intangible heritage, spearheaded by UNESCO.

PhD Projects

Writing Charms: The Transmission and Performance of Charms in Anglo-Saxon England
Rebecca Fisher, University of Sheffield

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate a new methodology for exploring Anglo-Saxon charms. In contrast to earlier methodologies – which read the charms as isolated texts, concentrating on their content – this thesis focuses instead on the contexts of the charms and their places in the lives of the people who recorded and performed them. This methodology is centred on manuscript context: a charm is recorded as part of a manuscript, and therefore should be read as part of a manuscript. By investigating a charm's place in the organisational structure of the manuscript as a whole, one can begin to infer details about the charm's performance context, and who its users and audiences might have been: a study of the content of a charm alone cannot reveal these details.

Each manuscript is imagined as a web in which the charms and other texts are suspended. The contents of a manuscript are held in place by threads of meaning, which connect the texts and give them each a role within the manuscript. On a larger scale, Anglo-Saxon society is also imagined in this way: a web in which manuscripts are held in place by threads of social and cultural meaning. Each charm – and each text within a manuscript – is affected by and affects the other texts. No single text can be lifted out of the web without disrupting the integrity of the web, and thus creating a skewed reading of the text. Equally, a manuscript can only be properly understood if it is seen as part of the larger environment of Anglo-Saxon society and culture as a whole.

This connection between the charm, its manuscript, and the wider context of Anglo-Saxon society and culture is the basis for the ultimate purpose of this thesis: to re-situate the charms in their various contexts, and in doing so, to reconstruct the Anglo-Saxon

experience of charming. The thesis suggests that this approach is appropriate because the Anglo-Saxon charmer did not come to the charm as an isolated text, but as part of a manuscript, a performance and a society and culture. In the first instance, the charmer came to the charm via a manuscript, which had a significance and role of its own. The charmer also experienced the text as part of that manuscript, and as a performance, a unique expression of the written text in oral and physical actions. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon experience of the text was potentially a group experience – as opposed to the solitary experience familiar to the modern reader – involving a performer, a patient and potentially a wider audience of the community as a whole. Furthermore, the charmer was suspended in his/her cultural and social matrix, and was therefore subject to forces due to his/her social status, gender, community, age, and a host of other factors. These factors are now invisible to the modern reader, and so must be reconstructed through an interdisciplinary examination of the aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and society which impact on the charm. This thesis does this by considering the clues provided in other texts both within and outside the charm's manuscript as to the conditions particular to the user of each charm.

Therefore, the methodology is based upon a multidisciplinary approach, drawing upon ideas from traditional and non-traditional textual analysis, archaeology and performance theory. The methodology could also be described as forensic, as it utilises evidence not only from the charms and their surrounding texts, but also, for example, from Anglo-Saxon laws regarding charming, the production and ownership of the charm's manuscript, and representations of charming and healing in literature. By using only evidence which is contemporaneous with the charms, one can begin to build up a picture of the lives of the charms without resorting to problematic comparisons across time and space. Ultimately, this thesis aims to be able

to interpret the charms in the context of their significance to the Anglo-Saxon reader, scribe and performer, in order to avoid producing inaccurate readings as a result of filling the gaps in my understanding with anachronistic evidence.

This concern with suitability of evidence is in response to previous scholarship. Two problems permeate charm scholarship. Firstly, facts about the Anglo-Saxon charms are assumed through anachronistic and inaccurate comparisons with charms from other cultures and times. Secondly, modern ideologies are applied to the charms, rather than ideas contemporaneous with the Anglo-Saxon charmer. Previous scholars did not realise that using these methods produces a reading of the charm that is specific not to the Anglo-Saxons who were reading and using the charms, but to the current scholarly *Zeitgeist*. An example of this is a reading of a childbirth charm which is caught up in the modern struggle with the masculine/feminine binary. This reading applied modern understandings of gender – based on masculine being opposed to feminine – to the charm, associating each gender with a set of characteristics grounded in modern society, for example, relating masculine to the public and official, and feminine to private and unofficial (Weston 1995: 291). In contrast, this thesis approaches the same charm by engaging only with the evidence present in the charm and its manuscript context, thereby creating a reading which divorces gender from modern belief and grounds the interpretation in the Anglo-Saxon context of the charm.

There are limitations to this ambition, however. My aim to be non-culturally-bound is perhaps just as locked into a scholarly *Zeitgeist* as previous scholarship, echoing as it does the current shift in charm studies away from content-based approaches into explorations of context. It is impossible for the scholar to divorce him-/herself entirely from a cultural context of scholarship – by reacting to it, one still remains a part of it – but, as this thesis will show, it is possible to

select methodologies that are sympathetic to the texts and their users. It is inevitable that a study of a bygone age will be a culturally-bound activity, creating, to a greater or lesser extent, a modern representation of a historical period; therefore, all that can be done is to select a method which is distanced as far as is possible from modern preoccupations, which is why this thesis grounds itself in evidence from the period concerned.

A by-product of creating a methodology which aims to function at a remove from modern sensibilities is a consideration of the binary oppositions that have formed a large part of the purpose and content of previous scholarship. For example, the mining of charms for the recovery of 'pagan' material produces a false dichotomy of 'pagan' as opposed to 'Christian'. Whilst there is no doubt that the Anglo-Saxons were acutely conscious of distinctions between pre-Christian and Christian culture, they did not necessarily view them as mutually exclusive opposites. It is true that writers such as Wulfstan and texts such as Beowulf demonstrate an awareness of and concern about the relationship between the concepts of 'Christian' and 'non-Christian',[1] but that does not mean that these same concerns were mapped onto the charms, or that the charms were regarded in the same way by everyone. This is reflected by the wide range of material available to the charmer, and in the various manuscript contexts in which the charms are found. The content of the charm might involve sections from the liturgy, or might prescribe ritual activity which was unconnected to a sense of religious belief. Similarly, the charms could appear in liturgical, ecclesiastical or religious manuscripts (and, of course, legal, secular and medical manuscripts) without this necessarily being regarded as unusual or problematic. There are only a few occasions in which the charms in this study are potentially seen as problematic by the scribe, but these cases seem to be due to confusion over genre rather than an objection to any 'pagan' content.

Therefore, there is no need to impose this sense of binary opposition between 'pagan' and 'Christian', the more preferable tactic being to remain aware of the Anglo-Saxon attitudes to these categories without positioning them at opposite poles.

The body of the thesis is divided into three sections. The first section guides the reader through an in-depth explication of how the methodology was developed and how it operates, demonstrating the process at work on the theft charms. This opening section also introduces the content of the charms, discussing how the internal mechanisms of the charms function.

The second section looks outwards from the content of the charms to their wider context as part of a manuscript, exploring the connections between charms and their surrounding texts, and the manuscript as a whole.

The final section of the study builds on these findings to offer an assessment and advancement on established traditions of scholarship, tackling a set of entrenched dichotomies often applied to Anglo-Saxon literature. Firstly, a discussion of the relationship between oral and literate culture assesses the usefulness of the Parry-Lord Oral-Formulaic theory in terms of charm study, considering how the Parry-Lord conception of the orality of Anglo-Saxon poetry affects our reading of the charms. This discussion will also relate the sections of texts within charms – known as 'units' within this study – to the Parry-Lord idea of 'formulas'. This section focuses on how the connection between oral and literate culture can inform an understanding of the transmission, performance and ownership contexts of the charms. Secondly, the link between charms and other aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture is explored. This discussion is centred on using evidence from material culture to aid our understanding of Anglo-Saxon charming. Furthermore, the relationship between charms, the liturgy, and the symbol of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon culture is explored.

Thirdly, a consideration of how two different theoretical perspectives give rise to two different interpretations of the same charm is undertaken, with the aim of scrutinising the relationship between the charms and gender. Much modern scholarship is dedicated to finding the female voice in texts and aspects of material culture from the Anglo-Saxon period: this investigation puts the manuscript context methodology to one final test, comparing it to the methodology produced by a strongly culturally-bound and content-based theoretical perspective. Standing as a summary for the whole study, the comparison of these two methodologies confirms the usefulness, rationality and validity of the manuscript context methodology, whilst collapsing two final binaries: masculine/feminine and male/female.

I conclude that my methodology makes it possible to reconstruct the performance contexts of these charms, and to identify who might have been responsible for their transmission.

This study is important because it constructs a methodology that could conceivably be applied to other charms, and perhaps to other texts which have also been the subject of content-based study. For example, the riddles – which have long been discussed mostly in terms of their solutions – could be approached by this methodology. This methodology helps the scholar to avoid, for example, forcing modern understandings of sexuality and humour onto the texts, and allows them to find evidence of cultural and performance context by looking outwards from the content of the riddle to the manuscript context.

Furthermore, charms which are recorded as single texts or in clusters lend themselves to this kind of context-based study, as they provide many opportunities to examine connections between the charms and the non-charm material. There are many extant charms recorded in this way which have occasioned much discussion thanks to their apparently 'pagan' context. Charms such as these would benefit from an investigation which takes account of the charms' contexts, making sense of their content without recourse to anachronistic ideas.

This study, therefore, opens up possibilities not only in the field of charm studies, but also beyond, in the study of Anglo-Saxon literature in general. It provides an alternative to the accepted wisdom presented in previous scholarship, offering students and established scholars alike a new way of reading and understanding the charms. Most importantly, it allows the modern reader to recapture, to a greater extent than has been previously achieved, the ways in which an Anglo-Saxon charmer might write and perform these enigmatic texts.

Notes:

1. See, for example, the section of *Beowulf* which discusses the response to the attacks on Heorot:

	Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,
hæþenra hyht;	helle gemundon
in modsefan,	metod hie ne cuþon,
dæda demend,	ne wiston hie drihten god,
ne hie huru heofena helm	herian ne cuþon,
wuldres waldend.	

(*Beowulf* ll. 178b-183a)

	Such was their custom
the hope of heathens.	They meditated on hell
in their hearts;	they did not know the creator,
judge of deeds;	nor did they know the Lord God,
nor were they yet the helm of the heavens	
	able to honour,
wielder of glory.	

(Translation my own.)

This extract demonstrates that the author of the text – and presumably the intended audience – understood the difference between 'Christian' and 'heathen' and the tensions that might exist between the categories. It does not, however, suggest an 'either/or' relationship, or the sense of a simplistic binary relationship. (See Klaeber 1950.)

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Powers of Death: Church-*väki* in the Finnish Folk Belief Tradition

Kaarina Koski, University of Helsinki

This folkloristic study explores the early modern Finnish belief tradition concerning the relationship between the living and the dead. It focuses on a death-related supernatural agent, church-*väki* (sg.), and on the meanings and uses of the narrative tradition concerning it.

Church-*väki* is described in various ways, ranging from an invisible force or a reek of death to a swarm of indistinct, human-like figures, and even corporeal decomposing bodies. Generally speaking, the concept of *väki* functions as a dynamic aspect of the old Finnish system of marking social values or ambiguous sacred status by 'setting apart' (Anttonen 1996; Vilkuna 1956). The belief tradition concerning church-*väki* combines old conceptions of dynamic powers, European belief legends about the dead, and influences from Christian tradition. The concept of *väki* has been known in Finland and Karelia, but church-*väki* is characteristic of Lutheran areas only. Unlike the greater part of Finnish folk belief studies, this study links Finnish folk belief with Western traditions.

The research material of this study comprises approximately 2700 entries of archived material. In addition to narratives, it also includes ritual descriptions and explanations for words. The material was collected over a period spanning from the 1880s to the 1960s, while the greater part of the material is from the 1930s. The tendency to situate the belief tradition in the past prevails and increases during the 20th century (Piispanen 2009). This relates to the fact that this is a pre-modern tradition which had begun to lose its strength in the early modern period. In this study, the material is contextualized by describing early modern worldviews of the rural population and the beliefs and rituals concerning death in pre-Christian, Catholic and Lutheran eras. The complex of beliefs and narratives bears features from different eras.

The relationship between the living and the dead was a culturally relevant issue in 19th century Lutheran Finland. People still died at home and the deceased were prepared and washed at home and stored in an outbuilding until burial. Graveyards were untidy and it was common to come across the remains of corpses. The discrepancy between mutual care and disgust is the ambivalent core of the relationships and the ritual communication between the living and the dead. The disgust was traditionally expressed in prohibitions based on the idea that death is infectious. This is obvious in local folk belief traditions. In addition, the status of the late members of the family changed after the Reformation, which caused some disorientation in popular notions. The dead, who were still considered members of the family group in pre-Christian and Catholic times, were now theologically dissociated from the society of the living. People were encouraged to regard the dead as demonic and dangerous to Christians. In the legend tradition, hostile relations between the living and the dead are well represented, while the whole picture in folk belief is more ambiguous.

The folk belief tradition is here understood as a communication system with traditional imagery and motifs as well as collective discursive practices. Traditional motifs and models have been used both for entertainment and for discussing culturally, socially or personally relevant issues (cf. Polanyi 1979, 211). Instead of a firm belief in the motifs, their relevance is judged according to their usefulness and applicability. The emphasis is on narratives: on genre analysis, narrativity, and the multiple uses of legend and belief motifs.

Conceptual, Semantic and Narrative Analyses

Theories of conceptualization (e.g. Lakoff 1987a, 1987b; Neisser 1987; Rosch 1977; Taylor 1989) are used to explore how the idea of church-*väki* was structured and used. Rather than a clearly defined supernatural agent, church-*väki* is a complex of ideas which have had enough similar features to form a single polysemous concept. Within a conceptual framework, church-*väki* has been defined as a category with three prototypical cores. The first core is a crowd of the dead, usually featured in dramatic legends situated at the margins of everyday reality, such as in the international legend type Church Service for the Dead (C 1341, C 1821; Jauhiainen 1998). The other is an indistinct swarm of beings which appears when someone dies, insults the dead or violates the boundary between the living and the dead. This type is found in local legends and memorates. The third core is an invisible, contagious power, which resides in material objects and can be used in magic. This description of church-*väki* is identifiable with *kalma* ['death-power', 'death-disease'] and familiar from folk medicine (Manninen 1922) and also from narratives which describe magical rituals. Because of rich variation, actual representations do not always reflect any of these prototypical cores, and sometimes the distinctions between them are irrelevant. An invisible force and a crowd of beings may be understood as essentially one and the same thing.

The most common of the several entirely or partly synonymous Finnish words which refer to the concept of church-*väki* is *kirkonväki* ['church-*väki*']. Most other terms are related to death, graveyards or corpses, or to the beings' physical essence as weightless, invisible or headless. In addition, there are polysemous words which mean, on the one hand, ghosts, death beings and devils, and on the other hand, their semantic field covers for example vermin and bears, as well as ugly or unmarried people. They constitute a loose paradigm of otherness – be it supernormal, economic, or social otherness – which includes different ways of opposing the social order or standing outside of it. The appearance of church-*väki* represents disorder between the living and the dead but serves as a symbol of other kinds of social disorder as well.

The narrative analysis elucidates the applicability of traditional belief motifs for diverse purposes and their status in the rural worldview. The folklore genre of legend is here defined broadly according to content and an accessible narrative world. Linguistic structure, in turn, defines how and to which purpose the legend motifs have been applied. The genre analysis is twofold and approaches linguistic genres such as *narrative, recount* and *anecdote* (see Eggins & Slade 1997) as registers (see Halliday 1979; Eggins & Martin 1997) of the legend. Narrativity (see e.g. Prince 1982, 2005; Ryan 2006) is here considered an integral part of the belief tradition. Especially for widely known legend types, such as The Church Service for the Dead (C 1341, C 1821), the narrative frame and its stylistic features are a crucial part of the interpretation and meaning of the text.

Adapting Katharine Young's concepts, the narrated events are located in a place and a time (in a Taleworld) different from the narrating situation (the Storyrealm). The greater the distance between them, the less the demand there is for realistic ontology. (Young 1987.) In this study, near and distant narrative worlds have been analyzed separately. Three aspects of distance typical of belief narratives are distinguished (see also Koski 2008): concrete distance, which concerns time and place; narrative distance, which concerns stylistic devices and narrative framing; and normative distance, which places the story in the margins of social order. In folk belief, supernormal beings most probably act or appear at the margins of the social order: at night or between temporal cycles, in sacred places or in connection with a breach of norms. These contexts share an expectation of supernatural encounters while the proper activities in everyday life sustain the order of the human society itself. Different belief motifs have different truth values, and many

of them occur only in normatively distant narrative worlds such as in a church or graveyard at night. Such motifs present the idea that threatening otherness prevails outside a society's own norms and activities.

Narrated, Experienced, and Ritually Harnessed Church-**väki**

In local narratives and first-hand accounts, church-*väki* appears in a graveyard, on a road or even in the farmhouse when someone dies. Some people are more sensitive to feeling, seeing, hearing or smelling its presence than others. So-called seers can foresee death by the presence of church-*väki*. First-hand accounts relate that it is unpleasant and difficult to be a seer, and being a seer is sometimes treated as an illness which can be cured. Occasionally, church-*väki* is thought to fetch only bad people's souls, or it is said that the appearance of *väki* reveals the state of the dying soul, for example by being black and ugly. Narratives about *väki* are only seldom neutral comments when connected to named people.

Church-*väki* also comes if death-related objects are introduced into people's everyday surroundings. This could happen either accidentally or on purpose. Jealous and malevolent people could thus cause other people's houses to be haunted or to make them ill. Church-*väki* has also been used ritually for healing and other beneficial purposes, but often the same people who could perform these rites were also suspected of doing harm. Church *väki* is described as dangerous and difficult to control; people who try to use it without being sufficiently skilled harm the whole society by unleashing dangerous powers. Powerful sorcerers or priests would then be called upon to fix the situation and to return the uncontrolled church-*väki* to the churchyard.

Narratives and beliefs about church-*väki* have emphasized social norms related to the dead in particular. However, not all issues that were addressed in terms of this tradition were connected to the dead. An intrusion from the otherworld meant a breach of social disorder and could be a sign of some other breach of norms as well. Supernatural powers were also used ritually for punishment. In the 19th and even in the 20th century, sorcerers were asked to help recover stolen goods. One means to accomplish this was to send church-*väki* after the thief, who would find no peace until he had returned the stolen things. Church-*väki* was, however, a dangerous weapon, and narratives warn about the harsh consequences if something went wrong with the rite. Narratives about church-*väki* discuss the role and impact of the realm of the dead that exists in the vicinity of the society of the living. In these narratives, the realm of the dead is concretely embodied in the graveyard and the church but also comprises an abstract, morally alert community of the dead.

Local Traditions and Legend Types

Narratively and normatively distanced performances about church-*väki* usually represent widely known legend types. Four legend types or groups of legend types have been analyzed. The Church Service for the Dead (C 1341, C 1821) is known practically everywhere in Europe. It usually tells about an old woman who accidentally goes too early to Christmas mass and ends up among the dead, who are holding their Christmas mass. The dead pursue her but she is eventually rescued. Legend types D 311–361 about a sorcerer in the church or churchyard at night describe rites that sorcerers performed in a church or churchyard to cure an illness, to recover stolen goods or to gain other information. These legend types share features of the distant Taleworld with other types located in the church at night (e.g. C 1301–1400) but are sometimes also connected to actual folk beliefs and to explicitly named local people. Legend types C 1101–1126, Person Mocks the Dead in Cemetery, tell about thoughtless mockery and its punishment: usually the dead pursue the mocker and he escapes. Type C 1746, *Väki* Appears on Christmas Morning to the Person Who Heats the Church, differs from these other three legend groups. The person – a caretaker or parish clerk – pretends to be sleeping and hears the dead negotiate what to

do with him. They decide to let him be, because 'the sleeping are dead, too'. All these legends are located in a distant narrative world – the church or churchyard at night – where a living person encounters the dead. In all four groups, the supernatural agent, named church-*väki* or the dead, acts according to the requirements of the plot rather than representing the local belief tradition concerning church-*väki*. However, the context is different than in local beliefs, which tell about the dead or *väki* intruding on the reality of the living. Here the roles are reversed: a living individual enters a place and time that, according to the belief tradition, actually belongs to the dead. In their own realm, the dead are described as corporeal, and they are hostile towards the intruder.

In Finnish folk belief studies that searched for the 'genuine belief' (e.g. Honko 1964, 1968), such legends were not considered to represent actual folk belief but to be popular because of their aesthetic qualities: dramatic plot and frightening details. The present study concurs with regard to their aesthetic quality, but observes that these legends also express ideas belonging to folk belief: that sacred places and times follow a different order and do not belong to living people. Memorates which interpret lights seen in church windows as a Christmas mass of the dead strengthen the conclusion that the setting of these legends is not fictive but rather normatively distant. Furthermore, even if interpreted symbolically, these legends handle relevant questions and arguments about the relationship between the living and the dead. Thus, they are a crucial part of the belief tradition, given that their relationship to everyday reality is complex.

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Ancestor Worship in Northern Europe [provisional title]

Triin Laidoner, University of Aberdeen

The fear and veneration of the spirits of dead ancestors appears to be one of the earliest forms of religion. It seems to be generally accepted today that the belief in the survival of the soul after a person's death – or at least some attention given to the deceased relatives – likely existed in most early societies. Although modern scholarship has devoted discussions to the traditions concerning the potential cult of the dead in the northern areas and the veneration of the heroes and kings who later developed into (half-)mythical gods, relatively little attention has been given to ancestor worship itself. That a degree of overlap exists between the cult of the dead and the cult of ancestors is of course inevitable. However, the aim of this investigation is to give special attention to the practices concerned with the belief in the authority of the actual ancestral spirits rather than death, and how the spirits of the dead may later have developed into some kind of personalised spiritual features of the land in both mythological material and later folklore. That attention given to the departed relatives had moral significance for the people living in the northern areas is observable in both literary and archaeological material and will be under scrutiny in the current investigation.

The study will begin by introducing the extant source materials on the religious and mythological culture of the Baltic Sea area, including Sámi, Balto-Finnic and Scandinavian territories. Attention will also be given to the geographical, historical and linguistic background of the above-mentioned groups, the history of research in the scholarly world and the rise of academic curiosity about the so-called 'lower' mythology where supernatural figures were not gods, but rather spirits connected with vegetation and fertility. The investigation will culminate in the comparative analysis of the potential ancestral figures that may have existed (or still exist), in the northern parts of Europe and, finally, an examination of the role and use of sacred gravesites and landscapes connected with areas that the local ancestors were believed to inhabit.

The central idea of ancestor worship is, in a broad and loose sense, the belief in the continuing existence of the deceased who, in their afterlife, continue to influence and even determine the well-being of the living relatives. If the living succeed in ensuring the positive inclination of their dead ancestors then the spirits are believed to help them and provide protection, but the neglect of the dead relatives and their gravesites is thought to bring disease and misfortune upon the living, something that is hinted at in several Old Norse texts and folk legends. In this light, it is not surprising that the feelings of respect and trust towards the spirits are often mixed with reverence and fear and that the dead occasionally also assume the role of malicious beings and revenants, especially in later texts.

Little is known for certain, although much has been speculated, about the beliefs in the pre-Christian North. One form of belief that has attracted a lot of interest and research is of course the belief in mythological gods whose worship is, at least according to Snorri Sturluson, also founded upon ancestral lineage. However, it should not be forgotten that the euhemeristic aspects in Snorri's accounts and the mythical world presented in the *Eddas* are

of course very different from the human world in the sagas, where references are frequently given to sacrifices and offerings in connection with various supernatural spirits. These spirits are often attached to grave mounds and sacred landscapes which, as we learn from the written sources, were places of special power. Therefore, it is difficult to overlook the fact that, alongside the belief in gods, a different tradition existed, namely the belief in local protective spirits that at one time may have been regarded as human and to whom individuals attached certain elements of worship. In my thesis, I will look into these small-scale figures as they appear in early medieval sources and later folktales and investigate their potential link to ancestors and ancestor worship.

From the early medieval sources, we know that the protective spirits seem to have been of two kinds – firstly, the departed ancestors that maintained their individual identity, and secondly, the collective spirits. The first, more personalised figures venerated were usually people who held significant positions in their lifetime. This can be seen in a number of examples, including half-mythical figures such as Ólafr Geirstaðaálfr, who is said to have been a heathen king who was worshipped as an *álfr* after his death, and Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr, who functioned as the ancestral guardian spirit of her family. Both of these figures, and several others, were seen as approximating to the world of protective spirits after their deaths. The power and authority of the identifiable semi-divine ancestral figures will be discussed in the section dealing with the nature of other protective spirits, such as the *dísir* and *álfar*, whose collective powers also seem to be connected with the dead and grave mounds, and who arguably served a function as promoters of fertility.

According to the sources the *dísir* and the *álfar* were the supernatural local spirits attached to one individual, household or even the whole landscape surrounding the household. Similarly to other guardian spirits, they were believed to live in waterfalls, groves,

rocks, grave mounds, hills and other natural places, and it was considered important to leave offerings in these places for health, protection and wealth. A good example of this can be found in, for example, *Kormáks saga*, where the blood and flesh of a sacrificed bull is given to the *álfar* for healing. As will be demonstrated in the thesis, the belief in a connection between the dead and the fertility of the land and vegetation is an important theme of ancestor worship. The fact that it was considered crucial to honour the spirits with various prayers, sacrifices, offerings, festivals, commemorative ceremonies and the attendance of graves can be seen in both literature and archaeological material. Several later law texts, for example, outlawed the belief in these kinds of local guardian spirits (*landvættir*) protecting the farmsteads, and the emptying of the landscape of heathen spirits is also described in some texts with a clerical undertone, something which at the very least underlines the beliefs and prejudices of the people who passed on the account.

If there ever was an actual cult of ancestors in Northern Europe it was inevitably tied to the family and farm. It seems that the creatures that later developed into half-mythical farm protectors were initially linked to the original settlers of the household or to the deceased kinsmen buried in the mounds near the farm. This does not only suggest the existence but also the very old age of the belief in local ancestors that may have links to a number of different traditions. As was already mentioned, the connection between the dead and the living was maintained through various offerings and sacrifices, and the tradition of putting food and drink out for the local spirits (such as *nisse*, *tomte*, *gardvård* etc.) at yule-time has survived into modern times in Scandinavia. The nature, history and role of these modern Scandinavian spirits that arguably have kept elements of ancestor worship is going to be given special attention in the present study and will be compared to the parallel figures in Sámi and Balto-Finnic folk traditions. Although for the first settlers, there were no ancestors living in

the land to whom they could turn to for support, several early texts indicate that the settlers nevertheless made sacrificial pledges to supernatural beings living in the landscape and believed that the spirits of the dead continued to live on in the hills and mountains. A significant amount of superstition is notable in the frequent appearance of the malicious *draugr* and *haugbúi* in the Icelandic narratives, something which is a good indication of the beliefs and superstitions of this time.

In short, it might be concluded that in the daily life of Northern Europe the veneration of protective spirits was considered to have great importance to survival. We learn from the sources that ritual attention was given to death and that after burial, the grave became an abode for the departed kinsmen. Since the spirits of the dead were believed to influence the fertility of the land they had to be conciliated with offerings and the gravesites attained some kind of sacrality and became connected with places for cultic rites, worship and sacrificial feasts. In addition to their connection with the grave mound, the ancestors became attached to whole landscapes, something that made the areas surrounding the farms perilous and full of

threats. All this serves as evidence for the existence of a potential cult of ancestors that possibly originated in the cult at specific grave mounds. It is therefore all the more noteworthy that the traditions concerning the later use of grave mounds reveal a picture of cultural continuity, and that this is also recorded in later folktales and legends. As will be shown in the thesis, offerings for the dead play an important role even today. For example, the custom of leaving food and drink on grave mounds on certain holy days of the year is still practiced in some Finno-Karelian and Estonian areas. In my project I will dedicate research to the existence of this kind of living tradition and the later use of churchyards for ritualistic festivals, which certainly offers an interesting parallel to the earlier custom and might be considered as a relic of this tradition.

Although the evidence regarding the beliefs of pre-Christian Scandinavia, Balto-Finnic and Sámi areas will be drawn from many different places and across a wide period of time, it is hoped that it will offer some new ways of understanding the traditions and beliefs that people in the pre-Christian North potentially had about their forbearers.

The Meanings of Folk Healing as Narrated in Northern Karelia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Ulla Piela, University of Eastern Finland

Finns have traditionally experienced health as a vital facet of life, and the chances of gaining and losing it are the subject of lively discussions by individuals and on public forums. Both 'high' and 'low' cultural circles participate in relating and interpreting experiences and feelings concerned with health and illness. The present situation is not, however, exceptional in any way, to judge by

the number of narratives and descriptions of health and illness which were recorded in connection with the gathering of folk medications at least since the beginning of the 19th century. In particular, the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archive folk-medicine card index points to over 100,000 records of descriptions of human and animal illnesses gathered up to 1955, as well as

narratives about their cures and healers. Even after that, the Folklore Archive organised many collection and writing competitions on illnesses and their cures. Descriptions of people's state of health, their illnesses and their cures are an essential part of autobiographical texts. Recounting them is therefore part of the culturally significant dialogue that takes place between people.

In my doctoral dissertation, which pertains to the field of research into oral tradition, I investigate how traditional texts relating to healing give expression to North Karelians' interpretations of health and illness, and to the changes which took place in them in the course of the modernisation of agrarian Finland. The investigation consists of seven previously published articles and a broad introductory section. The material discussed in the articles is from North Karelia, and was collected in the nineteenth and 20th centuries, and the beginning of the 21st, in the form of oral tradition narrating folk healing, both Kalevala-metre healing charms and ethnographic descriptions and narratives of folk medication. Alternating between descriptive points and perceptions, I investigate how the meanings of health and illness are formulated in different healing situations. I begin with the traditional-type features and the variants of the healing charm, and with the status of the healing rite as a ritual state separated off from everyday life. I proceed to investigate the constructions of interpretations of the relationship between the body and the reality which forms outside it, or between health and illness, in different healing situations. In addition I investigate healing as a producer of images and concepts, the formation of cultural analyses in a healing context and healing narrative as a shifting cultural construction. In order to clarify how interpretations of health and illness are constructed and take on meaning elsewhere than in the context of the healing event, I widen the investigation in the conclusion to Kalevala-metre epic and lyric poems, and to biographical texts. The title of my study therefore bears two meanings: firstly, it points to meanings produced by narratives about health and illness in a folk-healing context, and secondly to how they are given meaning in other narrative contexts.

The theoretical bases of my research are hermeneutics and constructionism, and Paul Ricoeur's theory of the narrative processing of cultural competence. These form the approach guiding the research on the narrative processing of folk-medical knowledge, or the relationship taking place by narrative means between the body and the reality which is observed outside it, a relationship in whose interpretations the concepts of health and illness are formed. The interpretations of this relationship, however, changed in accordance with how folk-medical knowledge and the context of the narration change. I therefore concentrate on the meanings produced by narrations on health and illness, and not on healing methods as ethnographic phenomena or as narrative performances.

My investigation produces new knowledge of how concepts of health and illness are constructed in narrative terms in different contexts. Essential to the formation of the concepts is that they are created in all contexts by means of two cognitive categories which specify reality, of this world and the opposite world. This is a matter of a cultural thought pattern which has been preserved for centuries, despite changes in people's understanding of health. In addition, the research brings to light changes which took place in the course of two centuries in concepts of health and illness. I also indicate how these changes explain why ritual healing with charms and magical methods lost its significance in folk healing at the beginning of the 20th century.

Translated by Clive Tolley.

Icelandic Post-Medieval *þulur*

Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir, University of Iceland

This research project aims at a comprehensive description of Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* – a unique genre of folk poetry, which has some features of formulaic poetry but at the same time differs from it considerably – and at specifying the position of *þulur* within the context of literary history. The purpose of the project is also to define the most appropriate methods for an edition of post-medieval *þulur*; an edition which should follow strict philological principles and take into consideration specific structural features of the post-medieval *þulur*.

Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* are relatively short (usually less than 100 lines), fragmentary, intersecting, ever-changing sequences in very free poetic form, which are mainly declaimed or chanted. They may include narrative episodes (which often do not, however, form a coherent narration), lyrical motifs, and lists of different names: names of people, house animals, months, and so forth. They first appear in the manuscripts from the 15th century, and some of them are still recited or sung for children. They have their roots in Old Icelandic *þulur*, preserved in the *Poetic Edda* and *Snorra Edda*, and are closely related to the Faroese tradition of post-medieval verses named *skjaldur*, and to some post-medieval continental Scandinavian *rim* or *remser*.

The current project consists of two main parts. In the first part, extensive research of both the texts and primary sources of post-medieval *þulur* is carried out in pursuing the purposes specified above. The main sources of post-medieval *þulur*, i.e., manuscripts and audio-recordings, are carefully examined, with a focus on the position and context of *þulur*. The great distance from *þulur* being mere inclusions in rather few manuscripts from the 15th–18th centuries (such as glossaries, collections of proverbs and/or poetry), to featuring prominently in numerous manuscripts in the second part of the 19th century and 20th century, some of them fully dedicated to *þulur*, is traced. The story of the collection of *þulur* is studied; collection methods at different times are taken into consideration, together with their influence on the structure of the sources of *þulur* after the middle 19th century (when Jón Árnason, on the one hand, and Hið konunglega norræna fornfræðafélag, or Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab, on the other, began to collect folklore) and after the middle of the 20th century (when Jón Samsonarson, Helga Jóhannsdóttir, and Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson started their collection). Case studies of some key manuscripts – including Lbs. 587 4to (Jón Árnason's collection of *þulur* and other folk poetry and traditional poetry), AM 960 4to, and DFS 67 – give insight into the actual working methods of Jón Árnason and other collectors of *þulur*. The study of other manuscripts – not specially dedicated to collecting folklore – shows at the same time the low status of *þulur* and the fairly moderate interest in them as compared to other folklore material. It would seem that it is only due to the efforts of rather small groups of folklore collectors, who had a particular interest in *þulur*, that *þulur* were collected in the 19th to the 20th centuries.

The study of editions of *þulur* and their research history confirms this suggestion. Both scholarly editing and research were conducted by some of the pioneer collectors, peaking in the second half of the 19th century (with Jón Árnason and Ólafur Davíðsson, whose editing methods seem inferior to their collecting methods) and in the second half of

the 20th century (with Jón Samsonarson, whose thorough edition was, unfortunately, never finished and whose materials are much used in the current project).

The second part of the current project concentrates on Icelandic post-medieval þulur as a genre. Their metrical form, composition and performance, their position within the context of literary history (with regard to other Icelandic folklore and to comparable Scandinavian poetry), their development from the Middle Ages to the middle of the 20th century, their social context and role is subject to careful analysis.

Versification in post-medieval þulur is rather different from that of most other Icelandic poetic genres. It is based on irregular non-strophic accentual verse – which is prone to relatively regular accentual-syllabic (trochaic) verse due to the prosody of the Icelandic language – with occasional alliteration and rather irregular end-rhyme. This free metrical form puts very few restrictions on the composition of post-medieval þulur. It allows extensive variation at all compositional levels, easy combining of previously existing texts, as well as numerous embedded elements from other Icelandic poetic genres with more fixed meters, e.g., ballads (sagnadansar) and rímur.[1]

The analysis of composition and performance of post-medieval Icelandic þulur leads to a discussion of the applicability of the theory of oral-formulaic composition. The free metrical form of post-medieval þulur – together with their relatively short length and the absence of coherent narration in many of them – poses problems for discussion of formulas in þulur. Nonetheless, it may be shown that, with slight adjustments for the metrics of þulur, expressions qualified by the original definition of formula by Parry and Lord as "an expression which is regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express a particular essential idea" (see Lord 1960: 4) play a considerable – though not key – role in the composition of þulur.

The most comprehensive way to describe the composition of Icelandic post-medieval þulur is apparently to suggest two kinds of basic structural units, names and motifs, which can form so-called episodes (which, under certain condition, can be comparable with Lordian scenes). It is on the level of names, motifs, and episodes that formulas and variation are most active. However, the main compositional principle of post-medieval þulur, likely inherited from Old Icelandic þulur, appears to be the listing of not just predominantly names, as in Old Icelandic þulur, but also motifs and even episodes. Their order is mainly determined by textual connections: associations by rhythm, by syntax, by meaning, and not least of all by neighborhood of units. These textual connections of different intensity form a complex network that covers the vast majority of Icelandic post-medieval þulur. This network ensures a wide scope of possible variation and thus sustains the diversity of þulur-texts – even though a number of their compositional units tend to acquire more regular places in the list, and many connections become rigid.[2]

The structure of those þulur, in which consequent narration takes place, often resembles that of fairy-tales, and a number of approaches to fairy-tales are also applicable to the þulur in question. These particular þulur are closely interrelated with, but less connected with, other þulur. Fairy-tales are, nonetheless, the Icelandic folk prose genre that stands closest to þulur in general. Icelandic folk poetic genres, on the other hand, demonstrate little structural similarity with Icelandic post-medieval þulur. Þulur have borrowed different material from Icelandic folk poetry, in particular from Icelandic ballads (as well as from Icelandic poetry other than folk poetry), but the relations between post-medieval þulur and other Icelandic folk poetry are clearly one-way, since there are few – if any – examples of borrowings from þulur into other folk poetry.

Folk poetry kindred to Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* exists in continental Scandinavia and on some islands of the North Atlantic. The closest relatives of Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* are Faroese *skjaldur* – which, at the same time, have been so much more exposed to influence from continental Scandinavia (in particular from Denmark) that they can be seen as representatives of the Scandinavian *þulur*-like poetry towards Icelandic *þulur*. The structure of Faroese *skjaldur* is similar to that of Icelandic *þulur*, and they partly share the same network of textual connections (the other part of the textual connections network of *skjaldur* is related to that of *þulur*-like poetry of Denmark and other continental Scandinavian countries). However, textual connections in *skjaldur* seem less diverse and more stable than Icelandic *þulur*, and allow less flexibility in composition. The texts of *skjaldur* are usually shorter than those of *þulur* (which facilitates memorizing *skjaldur*), and variation is chiefly limited to the lower structural units (i.e., within episodes). In short, the tradition of *skjaldur* is not quite as manifold and diversified as that of *þulur*.[3]

In spite of the fact that Denmark ruled Iceland for centuries, Norwegian influence is particularly prominent in Icelandic *þulur*. This, together with the broad distribution of *þulur*-like poetry in Scandinavia, suggests that at least some poetry of this kind migrated from Norway to Iceland before or about 1500, as Vésteinn Ólason (1982: 105–109) showed for ballads and Jón Samsonarson (1979) for a number of *þulur*. Provided that no texts that have the genre characteristics of post-medieval *þulur* are found in the medieval Icelandic manuscripts, and that there is definite structural and lexical continuity between Old Icelandic *þulur* and post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, it would be logical to suppose that Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* are the result of the fusing of Old Icelandic *þulur* and this younger West Scandinavian stream. Another possibility – based largely on retrospective argument – is that a folk poetic tradition, kindred to some extent to Old Icelandic *þulur*, post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, and (West) Scandinavian *þulur*-like poetry, might have existed in Iceland in the Middle Ages, but no distinct contemporary recordings of it were made, possibly due to its low status in Old Icelandic literature.[4]

The development of *þulur*-like verses in the North Atlantic region (particularly in Shetland) shows that the migration of *þulur* and their elements in the North Atlantic continued after the 15th century, even though it could be less intensive. An attempt to map this migration – complicated by a lack of reliable sources – is made in the current project. The project also traces post-medieval *þulur* passing from the world of adult males into the nursery room, the sphere of women and children.[5]

Notes:

1. For a discussion of the metrics of *þulur*, see also Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir (Yershova) 2005a.
2. The composition of *þulur* is further discussed in: Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008a and 2008b, and Елена Ершова [Yelena Yershova] 2003.
3. For further comparison of *þulur* and *skjaldur*, see Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008a and 2008b;cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir Yershova 2006.
4. The roots and dating of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and their Scandinavian connections are discussed in Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010b; cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir Yershova 2005 and Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir (Yershova) 2005b and 2005c; on retrospective methods in dating *þulur*, see Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010a.
5. For some additional findings from the project, see also Yelena Yershova 2003 and Елена Ершова [Yelena Yershova] 2001.

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MA Projects

Lokia etsimässä: viisi teoriaa muinaisskandinaavisen Lokin hahmosta ['Searching for Loki: Five Theories of the Character of Loki']

Karolina Kouvola, University of Helsinki

This thesis seeks to answer the question of what has been said about Loki in the 20th century by Axel Olrik, Hilding Celander, Jan de Vries, Georges Dumézil and Anna Birgitta Rooth. In my work I am analyzing the theories of these scholars in order to reach a better understanding of the theoretical background of research on Loki in the 20th century. The second focus of my work is on how these scholars have used the medieval and modern sources. The third focus of my thesis is to explore how these five theories have influenced the study of Loki today.

The diffusionist theories like the Historical-Geographic or Finnish Method have had a great impact on how the background of the Old Norse myths has been understood. The Philological Method and Structuralism have had their impact, as have earlier 19th century scholars such as James Frazer, whose influence is seen in de Vries' survey and in Max Müller's work. Müller's hypothesis that natural phenomena affected religious ideas had an impact on Celander's assumption that, for example, the glittering of dew on fields has been thought of as the work of gnomes. Later the thought of a gnome behind this phenomenon transformed into Loki in folk belief. Celander interpreted Loki as a spider, a view which de Vries discussed and rejected, and was not pursued further until Rooth's investigation. Jungian ideology about the trickster being an archetype is evident in the work of Dumézil and Rooth,

especially in the way Rooth regards Loki as a spiderlike trickster resembling North American Indians' beliefs.

The use of recent sources has divided scholars. Some argue that the use of modern material offers broader insight on the subject if it is used cautiously. On the other hand, there are vast temporal and spatial differences in the societies that produced these materials. The use of modern sources is usually justified with the notion that they tell more about the folk belief aspect of Loki. However, this raises the question of whose Loki we are talking about, and whether all scholars are writing about the same Loki.

There have been at least three main themes for understanding the character of Loki. One began with Celander and Rooth, relying heavily on modern sources and interpreting Loki through an etymology of his name. The second theme follows Folke Ström's theory regarding the connection between Odin and Loki, and this research frame reflects these two characters with each other. The last theme comes from de Vries' perspective on understanding Loki through myths and focusing on only certain features of his characterization – for example his hermaphroditic side. Common to all these approaches is the attempt to see behind the curtain of time, to perceive what and who Loki really was, and what Loki meant to the society that created him.

Folkloristics/Ethnology (*Þjóðfræði*) in Iceland
Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, University of Iceland

I am happy to report that in Iceland the field of Folkloristics/Ethnology is in good shape. Student numbers are growing rather fast, the number of positions has increased in recent years, a number of exciting research projects are underway, we have considerable presence and visibility in the national media and we take an active part in academic collaboration and international networks.

The field's center of gravity is at four national research institutions: the Department of Folkloristics/Ethnology at the University of the Iceland, the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore, the Ethnological Archives of the National Museum, and the Folkloristics Department of the Árni Magnússon Institute of Icelandic Studies.

The latter two were both founded in the 1960s and house important collections. The Ethnological Archives contain some 1000 hours of interviews and 16,000 letters written in response to some 140 qualitative questionnaires on topics ranging from dairy production to childrearing and from roadwork to student life. This month, the Archives mailed a questionnaire to its network of correspondents in cooperation with one of our MA-students for his thesis research on popular weather forecasts and knowledge of the weather. In collaboration with several local museums, the Archives have also just launched a research and documentation project on contemporary children's games.

The Árni Magnússon Institute (earlier the Manuscript Institute) was founded to prepare for the return of medieval manuscripts to Iceland from Denmark, but from the outset folklorists have been on its faculty and a part of its mandate has been to collect, preserve, and research oral traditions in Iceland and among North Americans of Icelandic descent. Its collection contains over 2000 hours of sound recordings, to which our students at the university have been adding in a steady flow in recent years as part of their fieldwork training. The Folkloristics Department of the Árni Magnússon Institute is also involved in a great deal of public outreach in cooperation with university satellites around the country and with the state radio, as well as various musicians, and it has released highlights from its collection on CDs, at least one of which is a best-seller.

Founded in 2008, the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore conducts research and coordinates the communication of research results in exhibits, documentaries, books, and multimedia. Some current projects involve the identity practices of Icelanders abroad, road culture and driving as an everyday practice, foodways, images of the north, and contemporary children's culture.

There are two fulltime faculty positions at the Folkloristics Department of the Árni Magnússon Institute (Gísli Sigurðsson and Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir), and both are also involved with teaching in the Department of Folkloristics/Ethnology at the University. The same holds true for Kristinn Schram, the director of the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore, and for Katla Kjartansdóttir, project manager at the Centre. The Ethnological Archives of the National Museum are headed by an ethnologist (Ágúst Georgsson), but many more of our colleagues are employed at the National Museum in other positions, including the director of collections management (Lilja Árnadóttir). Some of these also teach courses in Ethnology at the University.

Students of Folkloristics/Ethnology do research projects and internships at all three institutions, so there is a great deal of cooperation between the four national institutes in our field. In addition, our colleagues in the field are employed by and direct various local and folk museums around the country, including the Reykjavík City Museum (Guðný Gerður Gunnarsdóttir), and they have developed various exhibitions, such as the notorious Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft (Jón Jónsson). Several colleagues also serve as cultural directors for the various regions and municipalities in Iceland.

The Department of Folkloristics/Ethnology dates from the late 1980s. In 1987, Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson was appointed to the first fulltime academic position in the field at the University of Iceland. He built up a department and student body in the next ten years, when he retired and was replaced by Terry Gunnell. Terry built on the foundations laid by his predecessor and expanded course offerings and student numbers to the point that he was able to create a second fulltime academic position, to which I was appointed in 2005.

I myself studied for my BA with Jón Hnefill in the early nineties along with a small cohort of students – there were eight of us back then. Today we are more than twenty times that size: We have 125 BA students, 30 MA students and four PhD students. A number of these are distance-learning students, for we now also offer our courses to students around the country with the help of distance-learning technologies. In addition to Terry and myself, the department boasts two adjunct faculty members, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir and Kristín Einarsdóttir, and an accomplished team of part-time teachers who give courses in their areas of expertise. What is more, in 2009, a third full-time faculty member joined the department, Sigurjón B. Hafsteinsson, who leads the newly created MA-program in Museum Studies. We had hoped to be able to advertise another position in Folkloristics/Ethnology within a year or two, but with the economic crisis and associated budget cuts we will need to postpone those plans.

Internationally, we have strong ties to various sister departments of folklore and/or ethnology. Thus, we have active Erasmus and Nordplus relations, including teacher and student exchanges with Edinburgh, Cork, Tartu, Göttingen, Lisbon and Århus; student exchanges with a dozen other departments; and research partnerships with scholars in a number of institutions in Europe and North America, including Uppsala, Copenhagen, London, Utrecht, Stockholm, Åbo, Helsinki, Alta, Tartu, Århus, and Berkeley. Furthermore, three Fulbright professors of folklore have taught at the department in the past few years, all California's finest folklorists: John Lindow from Berkeley, Timothy Tangherlini from UCLA, and Elliott Oring from CSU.

Within the department, emphasis has long been on narrative, performance, and historical perspectives. In addition, we now place growing emphasis on material culture, cultural heritage, and contemporary society in our research and course offerings. About one-third of our courses concern various aspects of narrative (including Legends, Wonder Tales, Nordic Mythology, Oral Tradition, Humor), another third concerns material culture (including Clothing and Fashion, Food and Culture, Cultural Heritage, Museum Studies), and the remainder is on diverse topics in the field (e.g. Performance Studies, Festivals and Games, Children's Folklore, Icelandic Film, Witchcraft, Old Norse Religion, and Research Methods). We also co-teach with sociology and anthropology a graduate level introduction to the social and cultural theory of the last decades; and in cooperation with the same fields, in addition to disability studies, gender studies, and information science, we offer an interdisciplinary concentration in difference and diversity, while with anthropology, archeology, tourism studies and museum studies we offer an interdisciplinary concentration in material culture.

By way of example of the work conducted in the department, the two full-time lecturers

are actively involved in a wide range of research. Terry Gunnell is author of *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (1995), and editor of *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area* (2007), and *Legends and Landscape* (2009), as well as the organizer of the Sagnagrunnur database of 12,000 Icelandic folk legends in print and the recent national survey of Icelandic folk belief. He has written a wide range of articles on Old Nordic religions and beliefs, folk legends, festivals past and present, folk drama, performance and modern school traditions. My own research currently runs on two parallel tracks, the one dedicated to the study of cultural heritage as a concept, dynamic and bone of contention, the other to copyright and folklore. In addition to a range of articles on both themes, I have a contract with the University of Illinois Press for a book on UNESCO's convention for safeguarding intangible heritage and I have recently begun a three-year research project on "The Unknown Author" within the framework of the HERA-funded collaborative project "Copyrighting Creativity" I have also written on an array of different topics in folklore and ethnology, including the history of collections, biological metaphors in folklore theory, supernatural incursions in construction work, and fieldwork in Vǫluspá.

Among current MA thesis topics in the department are the following: heritage and melancholy; food and localism in West Iceland; copyright disputes over a traditional lullaby; virtual community in EvE Online (a multiplayer online role-playing game); gender and initiation in voluntary rescue squads; contemporary paganisms; community-making among Icelanders in the Canary Islands; symbolism in social protests; political activism and the revolution of 2009; repertoires and narratives about hidden people; cultural tourism in the West Fjords of Iceland; goddesses in Nordic mythology; itinerant beggars in the peasant society; popular knowledge of the weather; the role of Konrad Maurer in the history of folklore in Iceland; the oral history of a Down syndrome clinic; the oral history of whaling in the half-century; and the material culture of family ties.

In sum, there are six fulltime faculty-level positions in Folkloristics/Ethnology in Iceland. In addition, there are several adjunct and part-time teaching positions. A good number of director and middle-management positions in museums and cultural administration around the country are incidentally held by scholars from our field. Student numbers have been on the rise for more than a decade and we have every reason to expect that trend to continue in coming years. Unfortunately, not all our students find employment in the field, and there is cause for concern that fewer opportunities will be available to them in the present economic climate. We are currently preparing an employment survey of students who have graduated from our department to document what folklorists/ethnologists wind up doing for a living and how useful the education is in their line of work.

The research conducted in Iceland builds on a lineage that goes back on the one hand to vernacular philology and on the other hand to the folk museums. Both are captured in the Icelandic name of the field and the department, *"þjóðfræði",* but are translated into English each with its own term: Folkloristics and Ethnology. Outside the university, each has its own separate national institution (Folkloristics at the Árni Magnússon Institute and Ethnology at the National Museum). At the university, however, the two are intertwined and inseparable in the training of our students, and the new Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore makes no particular distinction between them (except in the English translation of its name).

We look forward to learning more about our various sister departments and institutions in Europe and we welcome opportunities for further cooperation, exchange, and dialogue.

Some URLs:

Department of Folkloristics/Ethnology at the University of the Iceland: https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=skoli&chapter=content&id=12363

Ethnological Archives of the National Museum: http://www.natmus.is/english/about-the-museum/

Folkloristics Department of the Árni Magnússon Institute of Icelandic Studies: http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/a_folkloric

Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore: http://www.icef.is/

Reykjavík City Museum: http://www.minjasafnreykjavikur.is/english/

Terry Gunnell: "From Grímnismál to Graffiti: Themes and Approaches in 1000 years of Icelandic Folkloristics", http://www.hanko.uio.no/planses/TerryGunnel.html

The Sagnagrunnur Legend Database containing searchable information on c. 12,000 Icelandic legends (still in draft form) http://notendur.hi.is/terry/database/sagnagrunnur.htm

6th Nordic-Celtic-Baltic Folklore Symposium "Supernatural Places"
Tartu, Estonia, June 4–7, 2012

An international symposium organised by the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore and the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu.

In 1988, the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin, hosted the symposium "The Supernatural in Irish and Scottish Migratory Legends". Other symposia then followed: in Galway (1991), Copenhagen (1993), Dublin (1996) and Reykjavík (2005), and now, for the first time, it will be held on the east side of the Baltic Sea. With each symposium, the international scope has expanded and the number of participants has increased. The local and migratory legends of Northern Europe have remained the major topic of the meetings, providing common ground for discussions about contents, form, performance, history and theories of folk narratives and their relationship to social realities.

The 6th Nordic-Celtic-Baltic folklore symposium returns to the topic of the supernatural in legends, which was also discussed during the earlier meetings. It is also dedicated to the relationship between tradition communities and their environment expressed in folklore. The symposium will explore the supernatural dimensions of natural places in the cultural landscape and in the wilderness, as they are narrated and manifested in legends and other genres. The supernaturalisation of places – holy groves, churches, haunted houses, cemeteries, grave mounds, hills, lakes, locations of hidden treasures and other tradition dominants of place-lore – will be studied as a narrative practice with social impacts, shaping the everyday-life and behaviour patterns of tradition bearers. The symposium will also study the localisation of legend plots in a local environment, blending legends with social realities and other strategies for enchanting the world through belief narratives. The supernatural also opens narrative space to the realms of fantasy and imagination. Representations of heaven, hell, lands of the dead and other supernatural worlds are a vital part of several oral and literary genres that will also be addressed at the symposium.

We also welcome papers on the following sub-topics:

- The history of legend research
- The classification of legends
- Legend and everyday life
- Pragmatics of legends and other genres of belief
- Legends and other place-lore
- Legends in sagas and other ancient sources
- Fantasy realms between belief and fiction
- Legends and theorising the super-natural

The working language of the symposium will be English. Each paper will be given 20 minutes for presentation followed by 10 minutes for discussion. Proposals for papers and panels may be submitted via the website: http://www.ut.ee/folk/ (the conference registration will be opened by September 2011), by contacting the conference secretaries by email (Pihla Maria Siim pihla.siim@ut.ee, Siiri Tomingas-Joandi siiri.tomingas@ut.ee), or by sending a letter to the conference secretariat:

Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore
University of Tartu
Ülikooli 16
51003 Tartu
ESTONIA
Tel./ Fax: +372-737 5310

The deadline for registration and submitting the abstract (up to 300 words) will be January 20, 2012. You will be notified about your proposal by February 20, 2012. The second circular letter will be sent out in late February, 2012. There is no registration fee but participants are expected to cover their travel and accommodation costs.

Welcome to Tartu!

Genre – Text – Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond

Call for papers for a peer-reviewed essay collection edited by Kaarina Koski (University of Helsinki) and Frog (University of Helsinki).

'Genre' has been a central concept in folklore studies, and has perhaps been nowhere so intensively discussed and analyzed as through that discipline. Whether explicitly or implicitly, the concept of genre maintains a central position in the research of this and many related fields. Intensive debates surrounding genre, how this concept and the term itself should be defined and employed, were very much alive in the 1960s and up into the 1980s, but these questions gradually moved into the background of discourse. Questions of genre now flare up occasionally in individual works which disturb the coals of these earlier arguments, yet academic discussion has rather left it behind in the wake of insights, strategies and approaches which have made tremendous progress in other aspects of these fields across the last several decades. With the coming of a new century, multidisciplinary influences have offered new insights into 'genre' as a concept and challenged earlier definitions. 'Genre' is such a core concept to research on traditions, and so implicit in the ways that we, as researchers, think about those traditions, that it has become necessary to return to this fundamental term and concept in order to reassess it. This is important both within folklore studies and across the diverse and intersecting disciplines to which it is central, considering the values and drawbacks of genre as a term and concept, as well as the impacts which this has on research, research history and how these sorts of conditioning can be overcome.

A multidisciplinary discussion on genre has become crucial. We are organizing a peer-reviewed volume of essays of contemporary views on this topic surrounding, but not limited to, the following central concerns:

- How should 'genre' be defined, and how do different definitions hold to different kinds of texts, to different kinds of communications and representations, or to different contents of those communications and representations?
- How should relationships between genres be approached, to what degree is it possible to define a genre system, and how do those relationships impact or construct understandings of texts in analysis and for those who use them?
- What is the contribution (or consequences) of generic approaches to the study of oral/written texts today?

We welcome theoretical views on different genre systems and theories as well as material-based analyses focusing on

genre. We are looking forward to working with 12–15 contributors and a wide range of different genres. The acceptance of proposals and further information will be sent to the contributors in September. The deadline for articles (20–25 pages in Times 12 / 1.5 line-spacing) will be Wednesday, February 1, 2012.

If you would be interested in participating in this project, please send an abstract in English of up to 500 words outlining a proposed contribution, along with your name, affiliation and contact information.

Abstracts should be sent to Kaarina Koski (kaarina.koski(at)helsinki.fi). The deadline for abstracts is August 20, 2011.

European Oral Singing Traditions of Today:
Living Oral Singing Traditions, Methodological Questions & a Workshop on Northern Singing Traditions
8.–9.10.11, Kuhmo, Finland

An international conference organized by Runosong Academy / Juminkeko Foundation in collaboration with the University of Tampere, the Folk Music Department of Sibelius Academy and Petrozavodsk State Conservatory.

This conference is organized around two main themes and one workshop:

- Living oral singing traditions: What oral singing traditions can be found living in different parts of Europe? This theme is centrally oriented to the traditions of Northern Europe, from the British Isles to the diverse cultures in the Russian Federation, but we would also welcome presentations on oral singing traditions of other cultures of Europe.
- Methodological problems concerning the orality of song: What is essential in orality? How should we study it? How does song and singing research differ from music research generally? What are the relevant concepts of song research? Is song research (or should it be), an independent discipline? How do we study the influence and encounter of singing styles and cultures?
- Workshop on Northern Singing Traditions, chaired by Jarkko Niemi (University of Tampere) and Marko Jouste (University of Tampere): The work shop will offer examples of

different recordings, comparison and discussion about methods and materials.

There will be a keynote presentation under each theme.

Scholars are invited to submit proposals for papers to be presented at the seminar. Paper presentations should be 20–30 minutes in length and reflect a topic of the seminar. The languages of presentation may be in one of three languages: Finnish, English or Russian. Simultaneous translation will be available for each presentation in the other two languages.

The proposals for papers should be sent to the secretary Riikka Nevalainen (riikka.nevalainen@runolaulu.fi) no later than the 31st July, 2011. Proposals should include the presenter's name, affiliation or background information, a 200-word abstract, postal address, e-mail address, and list of technical equipment required for the presentation.

Proposals will be selected by the 30th August, 2011. Selected papers from the conference will later be published by the Runosong Academy in a collection of essays.

Approaching Methodology

The Retrospective Methods Network emerged with a concern for functional methodologies, as interests and priorities in a range of intersecting research disciplines appear to be rapidly changing. Questions of method and methodology are often both problematic and elusive. 'Method' is easily conflated with 'theory' and even 'argumentation'. It is not infrequent for a researcher to have difficulty defining or explaining the method employed in research – or the 'method' employed is a framework which has evolved through the history of discourse in a field, a history of discourse which has naturalized us to various associations and inferences through which we may work on an intuitive level as much as on the level of conscious analysis.

In Finnish scholarship, the discussion of method and methodologies has moved into particular prominence. We feel that it is relevant and necessary to carry this discussion into an international venue, and we would therefore like to open the discourse on method in the emerging discourse space of *RMN Newsletter*. We are therefore planning a special issue to appear in May 2012 with Pauliina Latvala as a guest editor. We feel that it is particularly important to open this discourse on method and methodology on a broadly international level because these discussions have been developing to some degree independently in the research traditions of many countries with emphasis on different types of traditions and corpora.

We would like to invite short contributions (3–10 pages) addressing either specific methodologies or abstract and theoretical questions and problems associated with method and methodologies. We would welcome contributions on any of the following or related themes:

- Defining 'method': What is a 'method'? Why is 'method' often problematic for researchers in a way that e.g. 'argument' is not?
- Method and methodology in a particular field: What is the relationship between a particular method or methodologies in the history of discourse? – in the present day?
- Method, theory, argumentation and dominant research paradigms: What is the relationship between method and theory? – between method and argumentation or dominant paradigms in a discipline?
- Method and research objectives: To what degree should research objectives be determinant factors in the choice of method or methods? To what degree can method condition research objectives or findings?
- Established methods: What are the problems or benefits of methods currently employed or established in a discipline? Are certain established methods complementary or contradictory?
- Outdated methods: Are there elements or features of older methods that have been rejected or fallen out of favour that can have value and relevance today? What do statements such as, "[a certain scholar] was right for the wrong reasons", inform us about particular methods?
- New methods: We would welcome the introduction of new or emerging methodologies and opening those methodologies for international discussion.

Approaching Methodology will be subject to a length restriction as a whole, requiring us to limit the number of contributions. The deadline for participation in *Approaching Methodology* will also be earlier than the standard deadline for *RMN Newsletter*, in order to allow us the opportunity to work with

contributors and coordinate contributions with one another prior to publication in the special issue in May 2012. Therefore, if you are interested in participating in this international and cross-disciplinary discussion, we ask you to please submit a 500 word abstract of your proposed contribution, by Friday, 30th September, 2011. Completed 3–10 page submission then will have a deadline of Monday, 15th January, 2012, allowing contributors to respond to comments and coordinate their papers with other authors in February and March, with final language-checking in the beginning of April.

When addressing specific methods, please focus on the method, why it was chosen or developed, how and why it was or was not effective, etc., rather than focusing on the specific findings of your research. We would like submissions to be oriented to discussion and engagement in discourse.

If you are interested in participating in *Approaching Methodology*, please submit a 500 word abstract of your proposed contribution, with your name, affiliation and contact information to Pauliina Latvala (pauliina.latvala@helsinki.fi) by Friday, 30th September, 2011.

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

For further information on guidelines for submission, please visit http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/contributors.htm

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

Frog
University of Helsinki
editor.rmnnewsletter@gmail.com