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*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 such 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

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Editor’s Note

RMN Newsletter appeared in response to the need for a medium of contact and communication for members of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN). Our international reception revealed that the publication not only filled an immediate need for the RMN, but that it simultaneously met a much broader international interest. In the three and a half years since its inception, the readership and circulation of this small, multidisciplinary journal has been growing exponentially, as has our reputation. Our first special issue, Approaching Methodology (RMN Newsletter № 4, May 2012), has already gone on to a second revised edition with an international academic publisher, and our second special issue, Limited Sources, Boundless Possibilities (RMN Newsletter № 7, December 2013) is well underway. With the present issue, we are also advancing from a purely electronic publication to a parallel printed form.

The vital and extensive development and activities of RMN Newsletter have been paralleled by the extending activities of the RMN itself. This has been realized in the foundation of additional networks of scholars within the nurturing environment of the RMN. These have held at least six international conferences, seminars and workshops in four countries since 2010, and additional events already planned for the future.

The RMN is an open network which can include anyone who wishes to share in its focus. It 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. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. Comparative discussion was devalued in the latter half of the 20th century, yet its value is implicit in the degree to which examples from modern cultures are naturally used when illustrating points and propositions concerning cultures past and present in research practice, pedagogy and raising social awareness. Comparison and analogy appear to be essential tools for producing understandings.

RMN Newsletter set out to provide a venue and emergent discourse space in which individual scholars can discuss and engage in vital cross-disciplinary dialogue, present reports and announcements of their own current activities, and where information about events, projects and institutions is made available. Several contributions to the present issue are responses to pieces published in previous numbers, attesting to the interest and significance in the discourse this enables, and anticipating dialogues that will continue into the future.

The international electronic medium of RMN Newsletter has allowed it to become a nexus of contact and communication through which the broader membership in the RMN has increased tremendously, inciting a surprising amount of interest, inquiries and responses. 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. Our contributors and audience have been fundamental in realizing our goal of becoming an emergent discourse space and venue relevant to an international, multidisciplinary academic audience. Although we are moving into a printed form, we will retain our open-access format in order to fulfil our goal to be an accessible channel of communication as we advance into the future.

Frog
University of Helsinki
This article addresses the problems of creating methodological tools for a reconstruction of the pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia. It cannot be in any way exhaustive, and should therefore be seen more as a sketch than as a fully developed ‘methodology’. Some of the considerations here are applicable to historical reconstruction in general, but the special source situation we have for Scandinavian paganism creates some particular problems that will be the focus of this discussion.

There is probably no need to dwell in any detail on this source situation for the readers of RMN Newsletter. Good overviews can be found in Clunies Ross (1994), Steinsland (2005) and in many other general presentations of Old Norse religion. Our problems are mainly due to the fact that we have, on the one hand, some sources that we may characterize as indigenous, such as various kinds of archaeological sources (including in particular runic inscriptions), some skaldic poems, etc., and on the other hand we have sources which are written by foreigners, whether in a ‘historical’ or in a ‘geographical’ sense. The first category is characterized by the fact that those responsible for a particular source participated in the religion we want to reconstruct, and they are thus in a certain sense ‘reliable’ or ‘authentic’. The problem here, however, is that for a variety of reasons that I cannot elaborate here, these sources are difficult to interpret; and in addition, they only allow us to glimpse part of the pagan religion. For instance, very little is known about the mythology from these sources, and that which we do know comes from skaldic poetry, a highly allusive verbal art: these poems only reveal some bits and pieces of the myths, almost never whole mythological narratives.

The second category consists of texts authored by Christians (and a few Muslims). The majority of these written sources were composed in Iceland in the 13th century and later, more than two centuries after the Christianization, whereas others were composed by ‘contemporaries’ who, in one way or another, came into contact with the pagan Scandinavians. A third category could be used for some written sources (mainly the eddic poems) that are difficult to date, some of which probably go back to pagan times while others belong to the Christian period.

Apart from the reliability and interpretative challenges, the source situation also poses another problem, namely that of diversity. In general, we have only one version of any particular myth, or only one description of each known ritual. Scholars have nevertheless often attempted, from such scarce evidence, to reconstruct the pagan ritual of inauguration, funeral, initiation, etc., or the pagan myth of Thor and the Midgard serpent or that of the theft of the mead of poetry. However, we know from other parts of the world that in oral cultures there are usually many different versions of ‘a’ myth, as we shall return to below. We also learn that
rituals are hardly ever performed in exactly the same way in different communities, and perhaps not even from one occasion to the next. Even within the so-called ‘religions of the book’, rituals differ substantially from one place to another, and we must assume that this tendency is much stronger in oral societies without a written canon. The distinction between different types of religion according to the use, or non-use, of writing for producing a canon is made by Jan Assmann (2006), dividing religions into ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’. Another taxonomy, very useful for a diachronic perspective, is the one proposed by Robert Bellah (2011): Bellah distinguishes ‘tribal’, ‘archaic’, and ‘axial’ religions, the first category being fully oral, the next often mixed, and the last literate, at least among the higher social strata. For Old Norse religion, various kinds of diversity must be taken into consideration, such as historical, geographical, social, and even cognitive diversity, for which, however, owing to limitations of space, I must refer the reader to an earlier article (Schjødt 2009). Therefore, the information we get from the sources – whether they are reliable or not – will at best only cover one possible way of narrating a myth or performing a ritual. A myth told in a certain way in the western part of Iceland cannot be expected to have been told in the same way in Old Uppsala, and most likely, not even in the eastern part of Iceland. An initiation ritual may have been carried out in a certain way in Haithabu, and in a different way in Trondheim.

As was just mentioned, the great majority of the written sources are Icelandic. Nevertheless, these have been used by most scholars dealing with Old Norse religion to reconstruct a ‘pan-Scandinavian’ and even a ‘pan-Germanic’ religion (see Nordberg 2012: 124–130). The prerequisite for such an enterprise is a belief that there once existed a religion that was shared by all Scandinavians or all Germanic-speaking peoples. Now, first and foremost, we must ask what is meant by ‘a religion’. Some scholars of an older generation seem to have believed that, just as in Christianity, there was a set of notions and rituals which formed a more or less coherent system. There may have been variations, of course, in connection with certain myths or rituals; but if we use a sufficient amount of source criticism, and go back far enough, we will eventually arrive at the ‘original’ version and the original ‘state of affairs’ – ‘the original religion’. So even if we have no evidence of this original religion, or at best only singular statements in the sources from these early times, the aim was to reconstruct the pagan worldview. However, there was never a religious hierarchy among the pagans as among the Christians (priests, bishops, popes, etc., or in short: the Church) who could dictate the correct way to believe, and there was no canonical book from which it was possible to get the ‘true’ information about myths and rituals. Among the pagans, there were no ‘experts’ who had the authority to decide which was the correct way to believe, since belief probably was not important; the pagan religion was much more concerned with rituals than with ‘dogmatics’ (cf. Schjødt 2010); there was no idea, even, that there was a ‘right’ way to perform the religion as long as the rituals were carried out, at least to a certain degree, in accordance with tradition. However, small changes would inevitably take place over time and this would no doubt lead to a much higher degree of differences in the religious attitudes than was the case later on in Christian times. There is no doubt, therefore, that ‘diversity’ was a much more important characteristic in pagan times than it was after Christianization, although Christianity is also much more diverse than many theologians would like us to think.

A consequence of this diversity is that religious attitudes in one place and among people belonging to a certain social stratum cannot be seen (or at least can only partly be seen, as we shall return to) as evidence for what went on at other places or in other social classes: the kings and the peasants would have different interests, and their rituals would also differ accordingly. Thus, even if the source critics have dealt exhaustively with the chronological ‘diversity’ attributed to the difference in the time between the sources and the object of the sources, there are many more diversities at stake. This could indicate that our problems with reconstruction are even more serious than has been argued by the
source critics, but I shall nevertheless argue that there are some tools that will, on the one hand, provide some access to the pre-Christian worldview, whereas on the other hand, we should also be more modest in our pretentions than has often been the case. In short, we should be a bit more conscious about what we are doing when we attempt to reconstruct a past reality, and we have to be aware of the limits to such reconstructions. The important point here is that, as soon as we give up the idea that we can reconstruct things as they were, we achieve a modesty which—perhaps a bit paradoxically—gives us a chance to suggest solutions, interpretations and reconstructions that will never be in a one-to-one relationship with the past reality, but will hopefully be able to give us a partial understanding of the religion and mythologies of pre-Christian Scandinavia that is more realistic than what can be gained from rather sterile source criticism. All this seems to be common sense, and the questions we must ask, then, are: what significance will this have for the methodology we have to apply to this field, and which tools are useful and which are not?

Argumenta ex silentio

We shall begin with the last category: which tools cannot be used or can only be used to a very limited degree when we aim to reconstruct pre-Christian Scandinavian religion. One argument that has often been raised against historians of religion in their attempts to reconstruct myths or rituals is that there is not sufficient support in the sources and that, according to the source situation just described, no reliable sources support this or that supposition. All this seems to be common sense, and the questions we must ask, then, are: what significance will this have for the methodology we have to apply to this field, and which tools are useful and which are not?

Course, we have to evaluate the sources we use for our reconstructions, there is no point in showing that this or that source may not be reliable: that is something we all know. Not one single source from the second category mentioned above, those written by medieval authors or by foreigners, is beyond suspicion. Therefore, the problem is not whether we can cast doubt on the sources, but whether we can find some tools for reconstruction in spite of the problematic source situation.

Thus, we have to consider the fact that certain phenomena, which we, from comparative perspectives, should expect to be part of the pagan religion, are not mentioned in any of the so-called ‘reliable’ sources (whichever they would be). If we leave aside for a moment the archaeological record, we would not know from runic inscriptions or skaldic poems of pagan times whether grave goods were part of the pagan ritual practice. We do hear about such things, for instance from Ibn Fadlan (but were the Rūs really Scandinavians?—and if they were, can we then be sure that they carried on genuine Scandinavian traditions?), but our primary written sources do not talk about them. So, from the point of view of the hard source critics, we would not be able to argue that this would be a pagan practice (is there evidence in the sources for this postulate?), even though all kinds of comparative material would indicate that it was. Fortunately, however, archaeology teaches us that grave goods were part of the pagan funerals, exactly as we should expect from comparisons and common sense. However, what about religious elements that cannot be confirmed by archaeology, such as mythic and ideological structures? Is it reasonable to maintain, as was done by Walter Baetke in 1964, that the pagan kings were not ‘sacred’, that they were not seen as having more numinous power than ordinary men? Of course not, because it would be quite atypical for the sort of religion to which that of pre-Christian Scandinavia belonged, even though no ‘reliable’ source tells about it. And how could we imagine that archaeology should confirm this idea? The point is that this almost positivistic kind of source criticism based on argumenta ex silentio is not in accordance
with the general source situation within Old Norse religion. If we do not accept the existence of religious phenomena that are not directly mentioned in the ‘contemporary’ material, we can just as well give up any idea of reconstructing Old Norse religion. We shall never know with any certainty whether a particular phenomenon actually existed and was part of the pagan religion, but it would hardly be wise to reject the possibility. After all, the Christians had some knowledge about the paganism they referred to, but it was definitely not exhaustive, and for a variety of reasons, they would have no interest in telling everything they knew.

All this means that *argumenta ex silentio* should be used with great care: if comparative investigations, or sources within Old Norse religion themselves, suggest the existence of a certain phenomenon, it is not reasonable to reject it just because it is not expressly stated in any ‘reliable’ source.

We shall now turn to a couple of notions which may be of benefit for interpretations and analyses of the pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia, namely ‘model’ and ‘discourse’, and in connection with the latter notion, that of ‘semantic centers’.³

**Model**

As was stated earlier, the sources for pre-Christian Scandinavian religion are problematic. The contemporary sources are often hard to interpret, and the medieval sources as well as many of those written by foreigners are dubious with regard to their reliability. In any case, we can nevertheless state with certainty that we do not have the ‘complete picture’. Archaeology continuously makes new observations which supplement and change our knowledge of the religion, and new propositions concerning the later sources improve our understanding of the period. This situation will continue to develop as long as scholars deal with the subject. So, the information we have from the sources represents only ‘the tips of religious icebergs’, to rephrase an expression of Margaret Clunies Ross (1994: 25), who speaks about “the tips of narrative icebergs”. Clunies Ross was dealing with myths in particular, but the situation is no different when turning to religions in general. In order to reconstruct what is below the surface, it is necessary to achieve an idea of what that religion could have been like – not in all details, since that will never be possible, but in its main structures or its discourses (see below).

To use another metaphor, we could imagine coming across some of the pieces of an old jigsaw puzzle in a bag. We will soon discover that not all of the pieces are there, so the picture we will end up with will necessarily be incomplete. It is also very likely that some of the pieces found in the bag belong to other puzzles (e.g. Christian ideas by Christian authors), although it is difficult to decide which are which. Now, in order to do anything with these pieces, we have to have an idea of what the picture could have been like. Part of this idea will come from the pieces themselves, but it is a necessary prerequisite that we begin with an idea of the structure of the picture. The blue will probably belong to the sky, the green to the grass and the trees, there may be pieces with parts of persons that must belong together with other parts of persons, and so on. Following this metaphor, it is not necessary to try to assemble every piece with every other piece: the possibilities can be delimited to those that seem to be part of the same motif, according to our general knowledge of the world. Even so, there will be single pieces or groups of pieces which we have managed to assemble that cannot be connected to other motifs, perhaps because we do not have all the pieces or perhaps because we are not clever enough. In any case, if we want to do anything with such a bag of pieces, we must have a model of what the picture could be like – a model that can, as a point of departure, be placed in dialogue with the pieces as they are collected and help us to situate them in relation to one another in a way that is both reasonable and cogent. The situation concerning the information related in the Old Norse sources is more or less the same: if we do not have a model, the evidence will remain chaotic and incomprehensible.

Knowledge of what religion in general is all about and how religions are structured in relation to socio-cultural environments, the role of technologies such as writing, and so
forth, provide the building blocks for a model of what Old Norse religion would have been like. Some of these building blocks have been touched upon above, but let us repeat: the pre-Christian Scandinavians did not have a religion belonging to the same type as Christianity, Islam or Buddhism. In the terms of Assmann, it was a ‘primary’ religion, i.e. – a religion based on ritual performance or from Bellah’s perspective it would be placed somewhere between a ‘tribal’ and an ‘archaic’ religion. Furthermore, scientific and technological progress has substantially changed the current view of the world and of modern humanity. Consequently, present knowledge of what religion is, how it is structured and how it functions have also developed tremendously. In the Middle Ages, the venerable Bede saw the Christianization process in England as one long series of miracles. In the middle of the 19th century, Sigmund Freud saw them as originating in dreams and the unconscious; numerous other interpretations of myths could also be mentioned. Many things have changed across the past several decades and our ideas of religion have developed in conjunction with the advances of the natural and the social sciences. Our model of a religion like that of the pre-Christian Scandinavians must now take into consideration all of these new factors, including those gained from the field of Comparative Religion. So, even before we have looked upon one single source from the North, we already have a fairly developed idea of what that religion would have been like, because we have a broad base for considering how people in such a culture would act and think concerning religious matters. As examples of such recognitions, we can mention especially:

- A strong tendency towards diversity, as we have just seen
- Numerous versions of every myth
- A marked variation in the way individuals perceived the ‘meaning’ of myths and rituals, although the myths and rituals themselves would maintain a relative stability with regard to certain structural formations
- Clear correspondences between religious ideas of the other world and the formation of society

It is from a model including all these factors and many more that we should interpret and structure the information in the sources, and that, in particular, we should try to draw the lines to connect individual pieces of information.

Furthermore, it is important (if banal) to acknowledge that models are not reality, or in the words of Jonathan Z. Smith (1978): “map is not territory.” A model can never mirror reality in a one-to-one relationship. It is inevitably reductionistic; it focuses on some part of reality (in this case religion, or even portions of a religion) insofar as it must, and by necessity, isolates that part from others. We know that, at some level, everything is connected to everything else. For example, if we focus on 17th-century paintings, we need to consider the painter’s techniques, preferred motifs, mentality and social position. If we want to get the ‘whole picture’, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the history that led up to the period under review, the politics, the wars that were fought, the economy of a certain nation in the period, etc., also played their roles. However, it is simply not possible to take all of these factors into account since we cannot deal with everything at the same time. Our models, as mentioned, therefore have to reduce reality to some manageable and comprehensible discourses that we can work with and which can be used according to the specific purpose of our investigations. This means that there may be several competing or complementary models that can be used to illuminate a certain phenomenon. Such models are usually not ‘true’ or ‘false’. The difference between a good model and a bad model is that the good model is ‘good to think with’: it gives us the possibility to interpret the elements in the sources in a realistic setting. A model should therefore not be confused with reality ‘as it really is’. A model is a perspective on (a part of) reality without which we cannot understand those fragments of the reality that we deal with when trying to reconstruct past religions (or most other parts of the past).
**Discourse**

It was stated above that we cannot hope to reconstruct the pagan Scandinavian religion in its totality, but what is it, then, that we may hope to be able to reconstruct? Or perhaps it would be better to use ‘construct’ here, since – as we know from hermeneutics – reconstructions are constructions made by the scholar in a dialectic process between the model of the scholar and the sources he or she is dealing with. As has already been stated, there are a lot of details that we are not informed about in the sources for Old Norse religion, and most often we have to reconstruct the lines connecting the elements that we do know from the sources. If we take two major categories of religious phenomena such as myth and ritual, it is characteristic, as we saw above, that we only have more than one version of a myth transmitted as a narrative sequence in a few cases, whereas we often have hints at known or unknown myths in the poetry. However, as we know especially from Claude Lévi-Strauss (1971: 603), a ‘myth’ usually consists of a lot of versions that may be transformations or inversions of each other, so it is immediately clear that we cannot go into a detailed study of the myths as a transformational group which has, in other areas, proven to be very useful for our understanding of the way “myths think themselves in the human mind”, as it was formulated by Lévi-Strauss. Concerning rituals, the situation is no better; quite the opposite, since, although the sources rather often talk about pagan rituals, there are only a couple of cases where we have the opportunity to analyze a whole ritual sequence and its symbolic details. Archaeology, of course, may help us a bit, but again, archaeology tells us of the final outcome and the remains of a ritual; it can only enlighten us as to a small part of what went on in the ritual process that led to this result, as has been argued by Neil Price (2010) among others. Thus, even for two of the most important categories of religious phenomena, we cannot reconstruct the narratives or the rituals as they were told or performed in pagan times from the sources alone: once again, we must use our models in order to (re)construct the past.

This has more or less always been the case within the scholarship of Old Norse religion, although scholars of an earlier generation, notwithstanding their often impressive learning, were seldom aware of the methodological and theoretical problems they faced when they made their reconstructions. The most conspicuous of these problems was the confusion of the model with a historical reality, but equally significant is an apparent lack of awareness concerning what it would be realistic to aim at ‘reconstructing’. As just mentioned, we cannot reconstruct much from the sources without having a model in mind, but even when we apply a qualified model, there are certainly limits to what we can do, and this is where ‘discourse’ (in the way I use the term here) comes in. I propose that we use the notion of discourse to connote the frames within which a certain mythic or ritual element can be seen. The main idea here is that we will never know whether a myth related in medieval sources was ever told in that way within a pagan community, or whether a certain ritual was ever performed in this or that way. What we can hope to achieve from our model is the reconstruction of the frames within which a certain culture is able to express its ideas and its worldview. This would mean in connection to myths, for instance, that a certain narrative, even if it is related by a Christian writer, can be seen as something belonging to the pagan worldview. This does not mean, however, that it was told in exactly this way, and it does not even mean that the particular narrative was ever told in pagan times at all. The point is that it could have been told because it seems to be part of a pagan discursive space according to the model we have construed – even if we will rarely know it with certainty. Of course, it is up to us to argue for the model we have chosen, in order to define (or perhaps rather characterize) such a thing as a ‘pagan discursive space’, and, of course, this is not always an easy task. So let us look a little closer at how we can use the notion of discourse.

First and foremost, it is important to realize that a certain discourse does not have watertight borders in relation to other discourses. This means that some discourses
involve several discourses at a lower level, and that each discourse, no matter which level we are talking about, must overlap with other discourses. For instance, we can talk about a religious discourse as distinct from non-religious discourses, but at the same time these discourses cannot be separated in any strict way. The religious discourse will necessarily influence discourses that have nothing to do with religion proper. Ideas concerning the king or the chieftain’s role in society can be mentioned as an example. Although this role apparently involves very profane relations (e.g. the ordinary franklin has to supply the king with men when a war approaches), the acceptance of the king’s superiority can very well be based on his relation to the divine powers. Conversely, religious discourses may be part of a political discourse. It is, of course, up to us to decide where it makes sense to draw the lines between different discourses (cf. above regarding the need to reduce reality into comprehensible units). On the other hand, a religious discourse consists of several discourses at a lower level, dealing with individual gods (Odin, Thor, Frey and so on), with ritual occasions (initiations of warriors, fertility of land and people, death, protection), or with magic (manipulations concerning the ‘luck’ of another person, techniques to prevent sickness or death, or so-called ‘love magic’) (cf. Mitchell 2010). All of these discourses may obviously be related: Odin is clearly involved in warrior initiations and in addition, he is the great ‘magician’ among the gods (Schjødt 2008). Therefore, it is obvious that we cannot speak of discourses that are isolated from each other in any objective way: it is we, the interpreters, who delimit discourses according to what is seen as appropriate in relation to a certain purpose; limits between discourses – although often useful – are thus constructions.

There is no reason to pretend that there are no problems involved in this use of the notion of discourse. There certainly are, but it will take us too far away from our subject here to go into a detailed discussion of these. One of the main lessons to be gained from these considerations would be concerning the reliability of the sources. Very often a certain piece of information in a source is discussed with reference to the presumed age of the source, the religious conviction of its author, whether influences in the source from some other cultures are at stake, etc. Taking discourse into consideration, it seems as though not all these elements are of great relevance. What matters is the individual piece of information, and whether it can be seen as part of the discourse concerning this or that phenomenon. From the perspective of the history of the religions, we must simply shift our focus from the source as an entity to the various pieces of information concerning the issue we are dealing with.

**Semantic Center**

Following the discussion above, a discourse can be characterized as the frames within which a certain semantic content must be seen. It would therefore seem logical also to speak of a semantic center – i.e. a center around which the various utterances concerning a mythic figure or a certain ritual should be seen. For example, if we want to understand the role of Odin within the religious worldview of pre-Christian Scandinavia, it would thus be necessary, according to what was just stated, to analyze sources dealing with Odin as a mythological figure, as well as those dealing with warrior initiations and certain kinds of magic, etc. What we would achieve from such an investigation would be a picture of what could be said and done in connection with Odin in the pre-Christian Scandinavian religion – the discourse – but not necessarily what was actually said and done in a particular period. In other words, we may be able to reconstruct the frames within which utterances related to Odin should be seen. Most of the Odin myths thus deal with two themes, namely: a) how Odin constantly acquires numinous knowledge; and b) how he bestows such knowledge on his chosen heroes. It therefore seems obvious that Odin is closely connected to the numinous and to wisdom, and no myth told about the god nor any ritual performed for maintaining good relations with him can contrast with this characteristic. This characteristic may not play any significant role in an individual narrative, for Odin has
many more functions and certainly is a god of many faces: much more can be said of him. Nevertheless, it would not be possible to present Odin as a figure who is unknowable or stupid. Even in some of the sources where he figures as an opponent to the Christian God, and which have an obvious apologetic agenda, we can see that this characteristic is often pronounced. Odin may be represented as evil or as a demonic seducer and thus as a parallel of the Christian devil, but that is not actually opposed to the information we get from the sources that appear to be ‘pagan’ in their perspective. Even though the attitude towards Odin changes according to the genre to which the individual source belongs (Lassen 2011), his characteristics almost always remain more or less the same: Odin is not a god that can be trusted, but he can endow one with the knowledge and the skills that are needed for performing the functions of warriors or kings (and later for other things, such as acquiring riches, which would probably have been at the periphery of the earlier Odin discourse: cf. Mitchell 2009). From this it becomes reasonable to maintain that the semantic center of Odin would be one dealing with numinous knowledge, and the frames of the Odin discourse would be constituted by the acceptance of these abilities.

Similarly, we do not know whether every single battle Thor fights with giants related in the sources has its roots in pagan myth. However, these stories could very well have been there, and we can reasonably assert that this pattern of action and the qualities of Thor that it reflects and affirms were established in the mythology. What cannot be said about Thor is that he is a weakling, which is clearly outside the frames of the Thor-discourse. Many of the characteristics of other gods similarly appear to be fundamental to the semantics of the particular figures, such as those of the cheater and pervert Loki. This phenomenon can be usefully approached through the notion of a ‘semantic center’ of each individual god, a notion that can be employed in relation to other phenomena as well. As an abstraction and generalization, identifying a semantic center will not reveal a ‘historical truth’ to us, but it will provide an idea of how we should interpret certain utterances about a particular phenomenon that may otherwise be on the periphery of the semantic space. For instance when Odin dresses up like a woman in Saxo Grammaticus’s description of the rape of Rinda, this is not because Odin is effeminate, but because he, as the god who ‘knows’, is responsible for the course of the world after the killing of Balder, and also because he knows how to change shape and disguise himself: it remains consistent with fundamentals of the semantics of Odin as a god directly connected to his associations with the numinous and with wisdom.

When we aim to reconstruct the notions about a god or some other religious phenomenon, it is thus a reconstruction of a discourse and a semantic center we should be aiming at. Such reconstruction will involve a kind of dialectic between our model and the actual information in the sources. Although this dialectic between the model and sources may not enable the reconstruction of, for example, complex narratives and narrative cycles, it can enable a well-grounded development of the idea of a semantic center of particular gods, their attributes, mythic images, motifs, etc., with which we can operate when approaching specific evidence of Old Norse religion.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, then, I would suggest that in order to do anything with Norse religion or mythology, we have to have a model of the world, both of the present and of the past, which is in accordance with scientific as well as social and historical knowledge of the 21st century. This includes, of course, the comparative study of religion, taking into consideration the information gained from disciplines such as cognitive science, social science, comparative studies and many more. From this model, we get a rough picture of what the pagan religion ‘would have been like’, and this constitutes the first step in our reconstructions. Part of the model is that culture in general, and religions such as the Old Norse in particular, are organized in discourses, taking ‘discourse’ to mean that which it is possible to think and express.
concerning a certain issue within certain frames. In order to reconstruct these discourses, we must, of course, use the source information, including sufficient source criticism and philological means. However, we also have to be aware that using the sources for Scandinavian religion means that we have to fill in many lacunae where we simply have to use our models in order to construct the discourses as the structural and semantic frameworks in relation to which specific evidence is situated, and even in some cases to postulate cautiously the presence of some discourses on the basis of compelling analogical information where evidence of specifically Old Norse religious practices may be completely lacking. The source information alone will never be able to provide us with a complete discourse. The discourses will thus be about realistic possibilities, especially when we take the heterogeneous nature of Old Norse religion into consideration. What was actually said and done in certain places at certain times is definitely beyond our reach – unless in the very moment that a skald composed his poem, but it must be remembered that such examples remain the exceptions rather than the rule.

Notes
1. There are some exceptions from this ‘rule’. One example would be the myth of Balder, of which, apart from scattered hints in the eddic material, we have two extended narrative versions which differ in significant ways: one by Snorri Sturluson and one by Saxo Grammaticus (cf. Lindow 1997). Regarding rituals, we could mention the initiation into blood-brotherhood, mentioned in several sagas (cf. Schjødt 2008: 355–372).
2. The examples are legion, but in particular, we can mention the discussion about sacral kingship raised by Walter Baetke in 1964, and for instance carried on by Roberta Frank as recently as in 2007, or the discussion of the description of the blót feasts at Lade (referred to in Hákonar saga goda, ch. 14) by Klaus Düwel in 1985. In both cases, it is maintained that no reliable sources support the phenomena discussed. Likewise in 1966, Olaf Olsen argued that no such things as pagan ‘temples’ or cult houses existed, dismissing almost the entire corpus of written sources for Old Norse religion.
3. I have dealt with other aspects of these notions in Schjødt 2012.
4. The term has played a major role within most humanistic disciplines during the last three to four decades, and most famous is probably Michel Foucault’s use of the term. A detailed discussion would take us too far away from our subject here; for introductions offering a good overview of the many meanings that have been attributed to the term ‘discourse’, see Howarth 2000; Murphy 2000.

Works Cited
The late medieval Icelandic poems called *sagnakvæði* or *sógukvæði* [‘poetic or metrical tales, folk tale poems’] have long been neglected by Old Norse scholars. As a consequence, they have not been widely known – at least not until recently – despite their great significance for the history of Icelandic literature, the developments of Old Norse poetic metres, the use of formulaic language in oral poetry, and, not least, the age and circulation of medieval folktales and fairytales.

The *sagnakvæði* are narrative poetry composed in the old eddic metre called *fornyrðislag*. Even if we might perhaps call them ‘eddic imitations’, it would probably be more precise to call them the evolution or offspring of the eddic poetic style. The poems range in length from 36 to 97 stanzas, according to the copies published by Ólafur Davíðsson in *Íslenzk þulur og þjóðkvæði* (1898). Neither earlier nor contemporary examples of these poems have been found among other cultures and they have thus been considered to be entirely Icelandic. Þóðheri Guðmundsson (1993: 484–485), who wrote about *sagnakvæði* in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* II, claimed that they were “oft falleg og tilfinningarfék og efnismeðferðin stëngur mjögg i stúf við rímur” [‘often beautiful and very emotional and the treatment of the material is inconsistent with that of the Icelandic rímur’]. With these words, Þóðheri understandably compares the *sagnakvæði* with the Icelandic *rímur*, which were the most common form of Icelandic narrative poetry for many centuries, or from the 14th all the way to the 19th century. Compared to the *rímur*, the *sagnakvæði* are in the minority among genres of narrative poetry, yet it is certain that they existed alongside the *rímur*, as well as the folk ballads, or the so-called *sagnadansar*, for a long time.

Usually, the following poems are counted as *sagnakvæði*: Bryngerðarljóð [‘Bryngerður’s Poem’], Gullkársljóð [‘Gullkár’s Poem’], Hynduljóð (here referred to as *Hynduljóð yngri* [‘The Younger Poem of Hyndla’] to distinguish it from the eddic poem of the same name), Kringilnefjukvæði [‘Hook-Nose’s Poem’], Kötuldraumar [‘Katla’s Dream’], Snjáskvæði [‘Snjár’s Poem’] (aka. Snækomungskvæði [‘Snow-King’s Poem’], Snjásljóð [‘Snjár’s Poem’], Vambarljóð [‘Belly’s Poem’] and Þóraljóð [‘Þóra’s Poem’]. One might perhaps also count *Huldufólks gömlu mál* [‘Old Speech of the Hidden Folk’] as a *sagnakvæði*: Jón lærði mentions this poem and writes out one stanza, which is in another medieval eddic metre, the *ljóðaháttur*, but the poem has otherwise been lost (Einar G. Pétursson 1998: 361–362, 384). Other poetic fragments indicate that even more *sagnakvæði* might have been in circulation. This is the case with *Mársljóð* [‘Már’s Poem’], which corresponds to *Sagan*
af Finnu for vitru ['The Saga of Finnu the Prophetic'], and may possibly be counted as a sagnakvæði, as well as the case with one stanza that corresponds to Mærhallar saga ['The Saga of Mærþöll'] (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 209–210). Ljúflingsljóð or Ljúflingsdilla ['Ljúflingur’s Poem'] can also be mentioned here as a supernatural being’s lullaby to his half-human son (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 254ff.). This poem is composed in fornryðislag, as are the sagnakvæði, many of which also relate stories of relationships between fairies and humans. For this reason, the poetic metre of these poems has sometimes been called ljúflingslag ['ljúflingur’s meter'], to distinguish it from the old eddic metre. Two further poems, Grettisfærsla ['An Account of Grettir'] and Völsa þáttur ['An Account of Völsi'] (found in Völsa þáttur), have also been categorized as sagnakvæði, but they have been believed to be older than other sagnakvæði while being not younger than the 13th or 14th century (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 201–202). These two poems are also very different from other sagnakvæði. Ólafur Halldórsson (1990: 25) has shown that Grettisfærsla should not be categorized as one of the sagnakvæði, and it appears that the same can be said regarding the poetry found in Völsa þáttur.

The material of these poems (all published in Ölafur Davíðsson 1898) is descended from oral traditions and many of the stories resemble later folktales and fairytales, while others bear an obvious similarity to the saga-writing of the Middle Ages, specifically to the fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda (the legendary sagas of the north). Stanzas 71 and 72 of the sagnakvæði called Hyndululjóð yngri resemble a story from Ragnars saga lodbrókar ['The Saga of Ragnar Hairy-Breeches'] about Kráka (the wife of Ragnarr and mother of his heroic sons), and stanza 34 of Bryngerðarljóð recalls the episode in Völsunga saga which tells of Grimhildur’s memory-erasing drink. Hyndululjóð yngri, which tells of Ásmundur, King of the Geats (among others), is reminiscent of the legendary sagas in a number of other respects, and the material of Bryngerðarljóð is in many ways more like the medieval literature than like the fairy tales of later times. Finally, Snjáskveði stanza 50 is reminiscent of stanzas 6–8 of Helgakviða Hundingsbana I ['Helgi Hundingr’s Bane I'] (Jón Helgason 1971: 10).

Scholars do not completely agree on the age of the sagnakvæði, as it has not been greatly researched. Most of the poems are preserved in manuscripts from the 17th century onward. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Þorkelsson, who wrote an overview of the sagnakvæði in the 19th century, considered the poems to be from the 16th century (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 202–210). Vésteinn Ólason, who touched briefly on one of the above poems, Kötludraumur, considered it to have been composed no later than the 16th century (1982: 132). However, what kind of indications are there regarding the age of the sagnakvæði?

It is certain that Jón Guðmundsson lærdi (1574–1658) was familiar with Gullkársliðjóð, Snjáskvæði and others of that type. He considered them to be composed by the “gömlu skáldunum” ['old poets'] (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 202), and he referred to Kötludraumur as “Lioð eitt gamallt” ['An old poem']. He claimed the poem was so well-known throughout the country that it seemed unnecessary to write it down (Gísli Sigurðsson 1995: 205; Einar G. Pétursson 1998: 100, 383–384). He considered the poem’s characters, Katla, Már and their son Ari to be historical figures who lived at Reykjahólar, and others that have studied the poem agree: according to sources, Már Atlason, Þórkatla and Ari Másson lived in the 10th century, and these sources indicate that the poem is based upon ancient historical materials (Einar G. Pétursson 1998: 383; cf. Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 205; Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 16).

Considering the large number of preserved copies of Kötludraumur, this seems to have been the most popular of the sagnakvæði: roughly 80 manuscripts are registered (Gísli Sigurðsson 1995: 189–192). The oldest of the poem’s manuscripts is from 1665 and others are from the late 17th century. One of these, AM 154 4o, was copied by Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) from vellum pages that were bound together with the manuscript AM 622 4o, which was written before 1549. These pages were most likely somewhat younger.
than the manuscript itself (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 204; Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 15–16). Árni Magnússon knew of other sagnakvæði – at least of Snjáskvæði and Hyndluljóð yngri. He wrote down Snjáskvæði after hearing it from an “óskýrri kerlingu” ['unclear old woman'], who had learned it from her mother, and he is known to have had Hyndluljóð yngri to hand (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 207; Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 38, 76). Otherwise, the oldest manuscripts of Snjáskvæði, Kringilnefjukvæði and Þóruljóð date from the second half of the 17th century, much as the manuscript of Kötludraumur. Hyndluljóð yngri is preserved in a manuscript from the 17th century, and the oldest manuscript of Bryngerðarljóð is from ca. 1700. Fractions of two stanzas from Gullkársljóð were written down in 1644, but the poem in its entirety was preserved in a manuscript from 1660. This sagnakvæði was likely in the book of poetry at Staðarbakki owned by Jón Gissurðsson, who was alive around the year 1600. In addition, two older versions of Vambarljóð must have been written down considerably earlier than the youngest version (Vambarljóð III) that is preserved in a manuscript from roughly 1700 (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 38, 44, 64, 76, 84, 91 and 94). Finally, it is worth mentioning that Snjáskvæði was translated into Latin around 1700 (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 38). From this brief overview, it is obvious that the majority of the manuscripts containing sagnakvæði cannot be traced back earlier than the 17th century.

Some of the scribes who recorded the poems in the 17th century considered them to be old and degenerated already. They were referred to as, for example: “Eitt fornkvæði gamalt” ['An old ancient Icelandic poem'], “vond útgáfa” ['a poor version'], “marrangt og þar til illa útlagt” ['completely wrong and poorly explained'] (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 38, 29) and “uppdiktadur, aflagadur, ónýtt kveði (Kötludraumur)” ['a made up, distorted, and useless poem (Kötludraumur)'] (Jón Þorkelsson 1888: 206–207). The second and third stanzas of Vambarljóð III bear the mark of the material’s great age, and are as follows (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 56):

Í úngdæmi
eg sá mínú

But why have so many of the sagnakvæði been so badly preserved and degenerated, as they prove to be? It would be convenient to assume that the poems had been distorted in their oral form – Jón Helgason contended that the sagnakvæði had, in fact, travelled orally before they were recorded in a book – and that the tradition of these poems had likely been formed before the Reformation (Jón Helgason 1953: 167). It is certain that the great variation among manuscripts of these poems supports this position, in addition to the fact that common folktales motifs set their own mark on the poems. An example of this is the well-known motif of a relationship between a woman and a supernatural being, regarding which Gísli Sigurðsson (1995: 209) considers it impossible to speak of the age of the story content itself. Concerning speculation about the age of the poems, one might perhaps refer to the old poetic metre fornyrðislag. Examination of one poem – Kötludraumur – has led to the conclusion that the poem was perhaps “gamalt og ort fyrir hljóðdvalabreytingu og á tíma s-stuðlunar” ['old and composed before the quantity-shift and at the time of the s-alliteration'] (Sigríður Þorvaldsdóttir 2004: 14). Recent studies on other poems – Gullkársljóð and Þóruljóð – proved the same: that the poems could probably be composed as early as the 14th century. For comparison one might also consider the sagnadansar – the Icelandic folk ballads associated with the Scandinavian ballad tradition – which have, like the sagnakvæði, been passed down orally and are preserved in copies from the 17th century on,
but are nevertheless considered to be from the Middle Ages and have long been called fornkvæði.

Whatever the actual age of the sagnakvæði or their historical material, it is clear that the poems had been in considerable circulation in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. This is evident not only from the preservation of materials in the manuscripts but also from rímur that were composed on the basis of these poems, as well as oral tales of the same materials. Steinunn Finnsdóttir from Höfn in Borgarfjörður (c. 1641–1710) composed four rímur from Snjáskvæði, that is Snækóngs rímur ['Rímur of the Snow-King'], and still more rímur from Hyndluljóð yngri (Steinunn Finnsdóttir 1950), and Guðrún Jónsdóttir from Stapadalur composed Snjáskvæður (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–1937 II: 701; III: 577b). It has also been thought that Sigmundur Helgason of Kóldukinn in Húnavatnsþýsla had composed rímur from Vambarljóð around 1700 (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 38, 64, 76). Oral tales, which were all recorded in the 19th century and printed in the collection of Jón Árnason, preserve the content of Kötludraumur and Vambarljóð. It has also been pointed out that Snjáskvæði is not unlike the tales of Snotra, Una álfkona ['Una, the Elf-Woman'] and Úlfhildur álfkona ['Úlfhildur, the Elf-Woman'] (Jón Árnason 1954–1959 I: 101–105, 109–111) and that there is a similarity with Kringilnefjukvæði and Sagan af Fertram og Ísól hjörtu ['The Saga of Fertram and Bright Ísól'] (Jón Árnason 1954–1959 II: 308–312).

In addition to the obvious connection between the sagnakvæði and medieval Icelandic literature and folktales, there are certain similarities between some of the poems and Strengleikar – the Norwegian translations of Old French lais from the 13th century – not to mention similarities to the original French lais from the 12th century. The comparison between the sagnakvæði and the Strengleikar might be considered a bit of a stretch, since the Icelandic poetic tales were recorded relatively late, and it has not actually been proven that the Strengleikar collection had come to Iceland in its complete form, even though this has been considered likely (cf. Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2006: 28–32). The first similarity that draws attention to the resemblances between these two forms of poetic tale is the fact that six of the eight sagnakvæði have titles comparable to some of the Strengleikar, combining the name of a character and the word ljóð ['poem']: Bryngerðarljóð, Gullkárljóð, Hyndluljóð, Snjásljóð, Vambarljóð and Þóruljóð (compared to the Strengleikar: Ekvítans ljóð, Eðku ljóð, Gvímars ljóð, Laustiks ljóð, Leikara ljóð and Tveggia elskanda ljóð). In a recent article, published in Francia et Germania: Studies in Strengleikar and Þiðreks saga af Bern, I attempt to cast a light on whether or not there is a relationship between the Strengleikar and the Icelandic sagnakvæði (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2012).

Several motifs are common to both the Strengleikar and the Icelandic sagnakvæði. Snjáskvæði tells of a king of unknown descent who rules over a town (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 31):

[...] hja þreiu vatni
mð glæstan múr
og glóir á turna
[...] by
a broad lake
with a magnificent stone wall
and glowing towers

One evening, the king travels out into a lake, at the bottom of which he finds a green and forested land. The people there greet the king, who turns out to be a fairy queen (!). This is reminiscent of the lai Tidorel, in which a supernatural being, and later his son, ride their horses into the water, and Grelents saga, in which the hero makes an attempt to follow a supernatural woman to her home in the water. The motif of a supernatural being who loves a mortal woman is international and recorded as F301 according to the international motif-type system, and the idea of a land of fairies either in or on the other side of the water (F212) is encountered many times in Icelandic folktales and early Irish literature (Cross 1952: 244). A good example of an Icelandic sagnakvæði that resembles the Strengleikar is Kötludraumur. Some of the motifs in this folktale are quite similar to elements found in, for example
Tidorel, Grelnets strengleikur, Dún and Míluns strengleikur. Finally, another sagnakvæði, Gullkársljóð, has striking similarities to one of the Strengleikur, the story of Yonec (Jónet) by Marie de France. In my research, I compared the contents of these two tales and came to the conclusion that Gullkársljóð may have derived from Jónet through oral transmission in Iceland, even though other possibilities for the preservation of the material cannot be ruled out (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2012: 282–288).

At the beginning of this survey, I mentioned the dearth of research in the field of the sagnakvæði. This was at least the case until quite recently: apart from Gísli Sigurðsson’s article on Kötludraumur in 1995, very few scholars since the late 19th century have considered these poems for their own sake.9 Things then began to change for the better. In addition to my article “Old Norse lais and Icelandic sagnakvæði” (2012), developed from a paper delivered in Oslo in 2006, the Icelandic PhD student Haukur Þorgeirsson has published three articles on the subject, considering, among other things, the age of the poems according to their manuscript transmission, metre and poetic formulas. In his article from 2010, he focuses on Gullkársljóð and the time of its composition; in an article from 2011, he treats Póroljóð in a similar way, as well as looking at some theatrical characteristics and possible relations between the poem and medieval games; and, finally, in an article from 2012, he studies formulaic language in Vambarljóð. Later that year, and as a response to Haukur’s latest article, the Finnish scholar Frog published two articles on Vambarljóð, in which he considered the use of formulas in the poem on the one hand (Frog 2012a), and “the problem of the distribution of formulaic language across different poems, using a register-based approach” on the other (Frog 2012b: 49).10 Finally, Haukur Þorgeirsson responds to Frog’s reactions in the present issue of RMN Newsletter. Judging by the activity in the field during the last two years, we can hope that this new kick-start will lead to even more fruitful discussions in the near future.11

Notes
1. Icelandic poets continued to use the fornyðislag metre for a long time, and the historical course of this metre seems to be uninterrupted into the later centuries (Haukur Pørgeirsson 2010: 300–308).
2. The fragment resembles the sagnakvæði as regarding to the subject matter, and also by using an eddic metre, which is, however, different from the typical sagnakvæði-metres.
3. Some individual sagnakvæði and sections of those poems which Ólafur Davíðsson published in 1898 have either been reprinted or published from other manuscript versions in other collections, such as Kötludraumur, which was published on the basis of different manuscript in the collections of Jón Árnason (1954–1959 VI: 19–28) and Sigfúss Sigfússson (1991: 504–528).
4. Additional poems were composed in fornyðislag following the tradition of the fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda and of (or using) heroic and mythological material, but that stand out from the sagnakvæði (at least as far as content is concerned). Poems of this type include Hrafnaðaguldr Óðins, which Haukur Pørgeirsson (2010: 315) has recently dated to the first half of the 17th century. Other poems are for example Valagaldur Kráku (Lbs. 1689 4º), which has only been published electronically (http://www.hi.is/~haukurth/utgafa/valagaldur.php), and Gunnarsslagur, which is considered to have been composed by Gunnar Pálsson (1714–1791).
5. See Haukur Pørgeirsson 2010: 315–321; 2011: 220. Haukur believes that the author of Gullkársljóð knew and made use of Völundarkviða. He has also shown that there are verbal similarities between Gullkársljóð and other medieval poems, such as Grípisspá, Hervararkviða and Óðvar-Odds kvíða.
8. According to Ingrid Boberg’s Motif-index of Early Icelandic Literature, motif F301 appears only in one Icelandic source in the Middle Ages, and this variant is entirely unlike that which is discussed here. The motif of the love between a supernatural woman and a mortal man (F302) appears in only one source as well (1966: 105). Icelandic oral tales from later centuries are printed in Jón Árnason’s collection I and III, under the category “Huldufólk leitar lags við menskar manneskjur” ['Supernatural Beings Seek Companionship with Mortal Beings'] (see also volume VI, Álfarit Ólafs i Purkey). Both motifs are more common in medieval Irish literature (Cross 1913: 29ff.; 1952: 255–256).
9. Fortunately, some 20th century scholars mention the sagnakvæði in their research on Icelandic literature,
How Can You Tell Who’s Talking? – Transitions between Direct Speech and Narration in Vambarljóð
Haukur Þorgeirsson, University of Iceland

Vambarljóð is an Icelandic poem recorded from oral tradition in the 17th century but composed somewhat earlier – perhaps in the 15th century. It is one of a group of alliterative poems, the sagnakvæði, that, in my view, form a direct continuation of the eddic fornyrðislag tradition (see also Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, this volume). Vambarljóð
tells a fairytale about a princess named Signý. She is cursed by her stepmother and transformed into a cow’s stomach. With her cunning and magical prowess, Signý forces a prince into marrying her. This breaks the curse and restores her to human form.

Following its first publication (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898), Vambarljóð lay mostly undisturbed by scholarly attention until 2012, when three articles (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012; Frog 2012a; 2012b) and a BA thesis (Nanna Halldóra Imsland 2012) were devoted to it.

In my previous article, I was concerned with identifying formulaic language in the poem and tracing which other poems — mostly other sagnakvæði and eddic poems — share those formulas. In his extensive and stimulating set of responses, Frog raises a number of issues which could be explored further. The present article is the result of following up one such clue. Frog writes:

[I]nquitt formulae are conspicuously absent from the material surveyed. Although some formulae may have been too fine for Þorgeirsson’s sieve, sifting for formulaic strings, it seems remarkable that such formulae do not even emerge as repeating through Vambarljóð itself. (Frog 2012b: 51.)

Indeed, my previous article paid little attention to what Frog calls “the fundamentals of narration” (Frog 2012b: 51), a fault which I would like to remedy.

Vambarljóð is preserved in three versions: V, N and T (see further Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012: 182–183). The V text is 62 strophes while N is a fragmentary version consisting of 27 strophes. The N version is the V version interpolated, somewhat clumsily, with 8 additional strophes from a lost source. The present analysis of narrative mechanics is based on V since it is the most coherent text.

**Direct Speech by the Numbers**

Our text is a total of 62 fornyrðislag strophes or 496 verses. They are distributed between narration and individual speakers as shown in Table 1. If we count by strophes rather than verses, we get the result presented in Table 2. We can then compare those results with the eddic poems which Terry Gunnell (1995: 188–189) classifies without reservation as epic-dramatic poems, as seen in Table 3.

Judging by Table 3, Vambarljóð is an epic-dramatic poem with a fairly typical mix of speech and narration. With this established, we will look at how the poem accomplishes transitions between speakers.

**The Mechanics of Dialogue Changes**

I contend that a well-made epic-dramatic poem needs to transition from one speaker to another without overly taxing either the performer or the listener of the poem. In Vambarljóð, there are 22 instances of dialogue changes — i.e. cases where the poem...
“passes directly from one speaker to another without an intervening narrative introduction to the new speaker” (Gunnell 1995:191). We can again take a look at how our poem fares in the comparison group of epic-dramatic eddic poems according to Gunnell, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Proportion of strophies of direct speech in Vambarljóð compared with the eddic poems classified as epic-dramatic poems by Terry Gunnell (1995: 191–192).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Dialogue changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guðrúnarkviða I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guðrúnarkviða III</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymiskviða</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brot af Sigurðarkviðu</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigurðarkviða in skamma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlakviða</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grottasöngr</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prymskviða</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Völundarkviða</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helgakviða Hundingsbana I</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vambarljóð</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlamál</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It turns out that Vambarljóð shows a high preference for direct transitions between speakers. We may ask how these transitions are accomplished without the listener (or reader) becoming confused as to when one character stops speaking and another one starts. A key mechanism here is that in 21 out of 22 dialogue changes, the new speaker begins at the start of a new strophe. It is very rare for a speaker to go on talking after the end of a strophe; this only happens twice in the poem. So, when we are following a dialogue, our default expectation might be that a stanza boundary indicates a change in speaker. According to this view, it is the rare exceptions to the rule which require particular consideration. It is instructive to look at the two cases where Signý talks for two strophes in a row. In strophe 44,1 she continues what she was saying in strophe 43:

Utan þú biðjir mín, / bauga deilir (Vambarljóð 44.1–2.)

Unless you propose to me, divider of rings

There are two facts here which alert us that there has not been a change in speakers. First, it would be unnatural for a new speaker to start with the word utan [‘unless’]. Secondly, Signý renews her address of her interlocutor with the vocative bauga deilir [‘divider of rings’].

Strophes 53–54 are the second case in which Signý continues talking, and again we see the same mechanism of addressing the interlocutor to clarify who is speaking and who is not:

Hér máttu, bragning, sjá / brúði þína
(Vambarljóð 54.1–2)

Here you can, king, see your bride

Having seen how the exceptional cases are not likely to cause confusion, we can appreciate how the strophe boundaries are usually a sufficiently strong signal for the indication of a change in speaker. Of course, it is also frequently the case that some additional hint is provided. For example, one character may have asked a question, made a request or directly commanded the other character to speak.

Transitions from Direct Speech to Narration
The poem transitions 16 times from direct speech to narration. Again, we see that strophe divisions play a role in alerting the audience: in 13 cases the transition occurs at strophe boundaries. Apart from this, the most significant marker is probably seeing a verb form in third person past tense – the dialogue strophes mostly contain verbs in first and second person present tense. Frequently the third person verb is a verb of movement which propels us into a new scene, such as the verbs dreif [‘rushed’] and gekk [‘walked’]:

Dreif drengja lið (Vambarljóð 68.1–2)
A host of valiant men rushed

Gekk ung meyja (Vambarljóð 8.1–2)
The young maiden walked

This sort of transition seems largely unproblematic. The narrative voice is pervasive and a return to it is never likely to be surprising.

Transitions from Narration to Direct Speech
There are 16 transitions from narration to direct speech and only 4 of those are at strophe boundaries. The other 12 transitions
are accomplished with blended strophes – something also typical of the eddic epic-dramatic poems. The most favored device in Vambarljóð with which to transition from third person narration to direct speech is to have one character address another with an imperative verb form. This is the case in 11 out of 16 such transitions. Some examples:

Drack af kálki
kóngr viðrisinn
að til Alþrúðar
ekkert mundi,
‘sezt niðr hjá mér
og seg tíðindi
því að margt við þig
mæla eg vildi.’
(Vambarljóð 14.)

The renowned king drank from the cup so that he remembered nothing of Alþrúðr: ‘Sit down with me and tell me tidings, for there are many things I would like to discuss with you.’

In this blended strophe, we know as soon as we hear the word sezt [‘sit!’] that direct speech has begun. Who is talking? We expect it to be the character whose actions are described in the first half of the strophe. This is conventional and clear within the poetry without requiring any additional explicit marker: it can be considered to be a function of the pragmatics of this poetic narrative form. Strophe 56 is slightly more challenging in that it transitions to direct speech and back again:

Þá tók drottning
við dýrri snót,
‘vertu, flióð, komið
med húsmiði,’
lagði hún meyju
í miðja sæng
og sveipaði að utan
silkidúki.
(Vambarljóð 56.)

Then the queen received the precious girl: ‘Be welcome, lady, and happily received.’ She laid the maiden in the middle of the bed and wrapped her with a silken blanket.

Again we have a blended strophe where an imperative – vertu [‘be thou’] – signifies that the person whose actions are described has started to speak. But this time, we transition back to narration with a third person verb in verse 5. These cases illustrate how word order and verb conjugation carry a pragmatic function of marking transitions from and to direct speech without requiring an inquit formula.

Inquit Formulas
We have seen that transitions to direct speech can be accomplished without the narration explicitly stating that a character is about to speak. But Vambarljóð does sometimes present an explicit inquit, and I classify 7 out of 16 narration-to-speech transitions in this way. I will review each of these cases with special attention to whether the inquits are formulaic.

Fagrvaxin geck
við föður að mæla
og um háls
grami
hendur lagði,
‘skunda til skemmu,
skatna drottinn,
mér er titt við þig
tafl að efla.
(Vambarljóð 5.)

The fairly shaped one went to speak with her father and she laid her hands around the neck of the king: ‘Hurry to the outbuilding, lord of men, I would like to play tafl with you.’

The first half of this blended strophe contains two potential formulas (T17 and M8; codes for formulae are according to the survey in Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012). In addition to the explicit inquit, the imperative skunda signifies the start of direct speech. Finally, the address, skatna drottinn, [‘lord of men’] helps to remove any possible ambiguity.

In the next example, we again have both an imperative and an explicit inquit:

kvaddi hún öðling
með orðum blíðum,
‘sit þú, hilmir, heilí
með huga glöðum.
(Vambarljóð 9.5–8.)

she greeted the king with sweet words: ‘Sit hail, king, in glad spirits!’

The address itself is formulaic (M11), but I did not previously flag the inquit as a formula. Nevertheless, the collocation blið orð [‘sweet
words’) is certainly conventional and occurs in Hugsvinnsmál 89, Kötludraumr 16 (some variants), Gullkársljóð 33 and in some rimur.

In Vambarljóð 52–53, the end of the first strophe has an inquit introducing direct speech in the second strophe:

mátti hún eigi altra / orðanna bindast: (Vambarljóð 52.7–8.)

she could not restrain all her words:

The phrase mega eigi orða bindast ['to be unable to restrain words'] is conventional and appears, for example, in Steins þátr Skáftasonar ['The Tale of Steinn Skáftason'], though I am not familiar with any other instance in poetry.

Strophes 34 and 64 have an identical second half:

spurði á móti
margs fróðlega,
‘eða er hér nokkuð nýtt í fréttum?’ (Vambarljóð 34.5–8; 64.5–8.)

He asked many knowledgeable questions in turn: ‘Or is there anything new to report?’

Since this half-strophe occurs twice and the second pair of lines is attested more broadly as a formula, I classified it as a variation of the more widespread formula (M4). Certainly we can then regard the inquit part of it as formulaic, although it does not occur independently of the particular question in direct speech.

The end of strophe 27 offers this inquit introduction to strophe 28:

þá réð mær við hann / margt að ræða (Vambarljóð 27.7–8.)

then the maiden did discuss many things with him

This is reminiscent of what I previously identified as formula M5:

því að mart við þig / mæla eg vildi (Vambarljóð 14.7–8.)

because I would like to say many things to you

kvaðst hún mart við þig / mæla vilja (Bryngerðarljóð 51.3–4: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 90.)

she said that she would like to say many things to you

kvezk mart við svín / mæla vilja (Merlínússpá I 41.7–8: Skj B4: 18.)

he says that he would like to say many things to the pig

An inquit beginning with þá réð ['then did'] as in Vambarljóð 27 above is also found in another sagnakvæði:

Pá réð að mæla / móðir hennar (Gullkársljóð 4.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 77.)

then her mother did say

Our final inquit is as follows:

hann í hljóði / henni sagði (Vambarljóð 46.5–6.)

he told her quietly

This is a potential formula and it is only by oversight that I left it out of the earlier article, and may be identified as M14 following the earlier system. The verses have these parallels:

Már í hljóði / hana að spurði (Kötludraumur 12.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 6.)

Már asked her quietly

Már í hljóði / mælti við hana (Kötludraumur 58.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 13.)

Már spoke to her quietly

Hrafn í hljóði / hana að spurði (Snjáskvæði 41.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 36.)

Hrafn asked her quietly

Conclusions

Vambarljóð turns out to be similar to the epic-dramatic eddic poems in its overall mix of narrative and speech and also in the way it uses blended strophes to transition from narration to direct speech. What is dissimilar is that Vambarljóð has a high frequency of dialogue changes without intervening narrative introductions. This is enabled through the skilful use of certain mechanisms.
strophe boundaries in particular. Since multi-strophe monologues by individual characters are avoided, the strophe boundary becomes a useful signal of transition between speaking characters, and this is complemented with conventionalized pragmatics of the poetic system that can employ syntactic structures and grammatical cues to indicate changes to and from direct speech. This keeps the conversations moving smoothly and reduces the need for inquit formulas. Nevertheless, some narrative introductions do remain and those are at least somewhat formulaic.

If Vambarljóð gets more mileage out of strophe boundaries than the typical eddic poem, this may be connected to the fact that Vambarljóð (as the other sagnakvæði) is in a perfectly regular form of 8-verse strophes. The strophic form in eddic fornyrðislag is less consistent, with 8-verse strophes predominant but not alone on the stage. West Germanic alliterative poetry is stichic and the strophic form is thought to be a Norse innovation. It is therefore possible to suggest that, in the sagnakvæði, the strophic innovation has been carried through to a logical conclusion. Nevertheless, it is clear that already in the eddic poems, strophe boundaries are an important mechanism for enabling dialogue changes. This is particularly apparent in the dialogue-heavy fornyrðislag poems Grípisspá and Baldrs draumar.

In Vambarljóð, the transitions between narrative and direct speech and between individual characters are generally unambiguous and easy to follow, leaving us with no particular reason to expect a dramatic performance. This stands in contrast with eddic ljóðaháttr poems where Gunnell (1995: 281 and passim) has convincingly argued that a dramatic performance is necessary for intelligibility.

In this case study, I have focused on one poem and the results must be seen as preliminary. A more general examination of narrative transition strategies in the eddic poems and the sagnakvæði would be a worthy undertaking.

Notes
1. I follow the strophe numbering in Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 46–54 since this is the only published edition. The text of my quotes from the poem is based on the two V manuscripts with some spelling normalization.

Works Cited

Remembering the Golden Past: Nostalgia as a Narrative Practice of Karelian Evacuees in Finland
Ulla Savolainen, University of Helsinki

Retrospective methods are methods for “considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period” (Frog 2012: 5). Contributions to earlier issues of RMN Newsletter have illustrated that retrospective methods can be applied to research materials from any period, and many of the materials addressed are texts which themselves look back to earlier periods, to a past from the perspective of a potentially anonymous author. The present paper turns attention to the interpretative force that the notion of nostalgia may have in informing and constructing such images of the past by individual writers. It examines nostalgia as a narrative and cultural practice in the case of
Karelian child evacuees in Finland and their reminiscence writings about evacuation journey(s) which they experienced during and after the Second World War (WWII). These narratives were written in 2004, decades after the wars, and they are parts of the thematic collection made by the Finnish Karelian League in 2004. This paper relates to an ongoing PhD research project, and it sets out to illustrate the potential of research on oral history and life stories to develop a better sense of the relationship between writings about the past and their value and functions to the people and social networks in relation to which they are produced, as well as a better sense of the relationship between a writer’s own understanding of the past and the images of the past conveyed through writing.

In the case of Karelian child evacuees, it is quite apt that the original meaning of the word ‘nostalgia’ was a medical disease that resulted from homesickness (Chase & Shaw 1989). Karelian evacuees direct their nostalgic gaze not only toward their childhood but also toward their former place of dwelling, Karelia. According to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), a concrete significant place, which exists in the past and in the present, is often the basis for a community and for an individual who belongs to that community. Especially in the case of diasporic groups and groups without a shared dwelling place, a place in the past supports the community. Absent places of origins, homes and important events become symbolic constructions, and in narratives they represent a shared past, a collective memory, and also the present community. In this process, absent places become locations untouchable by change and decay – in other words, they become in a way eternal. (Halbwachs 1992; Lowenthal 1985.) In the case of Karelian evacuees, the unattainability of the place is one of the central conditions of nostalgia. Distance from Karelia that lasted for decades turned the Karelia of narratives and memories into a mythical and timeless place which still is the template for Karelian identity and roots. Karelian evacuees treasure this nostalgic place and maintain their relationship to it with memories, narratives, concrete objects, images and home-region visits.

From the viewpoint of the reminiscence writings of Karelian child evacuees, I see nostalgia as a narrative and cultural practice which the writers employ to negotiate with the past, the present and the future, and to create a continuum between them. Nostalgia is not only a way to describe and perceive Karelia and childhood, but also a practice which aims at maintaining and rebuilding a relationship to the lost Karelia and consolidating the identity of Karelian evacuees. Nostalgia is always contemporary and situated in the present, but it draws from the past and is always to some degree directed toward the future (cf. Lowenthal 1989). Nostalgia is similar to a historical inversion, a temporal trans-positioning which, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, is typical for mythological and artistic modes of thought. In historical inversion, things that can only be realized in the future (such as hopes and wishes) are portrayed as something in the past. (Bakhtin 1981.) Due to this temporal trans-positioning, nostalgia that relates to Karelia had strong political and ideological implications in the past, although later these implications have faded somewhat, or have at least been transformed. In the case of the reminiscing writings which I study, political and ideological implications are not the dominant ones.

The History of Nostalgic Karelia
Karelia is a diverse area and nostalgia in the case of Karelia has deep roots. To avoid misunderstandings, I will next elaborate further on the whole ‘Karelia concept’. Karelia is situated in eastern Finland and Russia. Between 1939 and 1944, Finland fought two wars against the Soviet Union: the Winter War 1939–1940 and the Continuation War 1941–1944. Both of these conflicts resulted in the cession of parts of the Finnish Karelian territory – among other parts of Finland – to the Soviet Union. After both wars, the Finnish population living in ceded Karelia was evacuated behind the new Finnish border and a new group, the Karelian migrants or the Karelian evacuees, was born. The total number of Karelian evacuees was 407,000 people, nearly 11% of the national population at the time. In the latter of these
wars, Finland was allied with Germany. At the beginning of this war in 1941, Finland reconquered the lost territories of Karelia from the Soviet Union and about 70% of the evacuees moved back to Karelia while the war was still going on. In 1944, Finland lost the war for good, and the areas in Karelia were again ceded to the Soviet Union, and the people that had returned were again evacuated to Finland. The Karelian evacuees were resettled in their new dwelling places while Finland paid reparations to the Allied governments. The loss of Karelia in 1939 and 1944 did not concern only Karelians, it concerned the whole of Finland because the economic significance of the ceded areas was substantial for the whole nation, and because the evacuees were given land and dwelling places among other Finnish people. Afterwards, the evacuation and resettling of Karelian migrants has been used as an example of a successful evacuation and adaptation process because, for instance, the state government of Finland tried to compensate Karelians for the loss of their land.3

The loss of Karelia and the resettling of the Karelian population can be considered one of the ‘master narratives’ of Finland that have generated a culture of nostalgia around topics related to Karelia. However, the history of nostalgia for Karelia reaches far beyond WWII. In the late 1800s and the early 1900s, when Finland was an Autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, nostalgia for Karelia contained strongly idealistic and political connotations. In the nationalist spirit of that time, Karelia was given the status of a core symbol of an independent Finland. One reason for this status was the Finnish national epic Kalevala, which was compiled by Elias Lönnrot based on folk poems which he collected mainly from Viena Karelia – areas which actually have always been located on the Russian side of the border rather than in the territories of Finland. Kalevala and Karelia were seen as justifications and ancient evidence of a Finnish national state separate from Russia and Sweden. However, after Finland became independent in 1917 and after the wars of 1939–1944, the nostalgia about Karelia changed: it came to rest upon the loss of the parts of Finnish Karelia to the Soviet Union and not upon the idea of a nation state and the goal of constructing such an entity.4 To oversimplify somewhat, the nostalgic image of Karelia can be understood as two different complexes: one prior to the late 1800s and the early 1900s, and the other after the wars of 1939–1944. The complex to which this paper relates is the latter.

Popular discourse in Finland often describes Karelia as a homogenous and Finnish place. The fact that it is a large and diversified area located in the territory of two countries is typically overlooked. In addition to this homogeneous image, a lot of controversy and inconsistency surrounds topics relating to the loss of Karelia. During the Cold War, Karelia was politically a difficult subject, and for a long time the discussion about the loss of Karelia was tense. Often, everything related to Karelia was considered either anti-Soviet (which, of course, it sometimes was) or, on the other hand, anti-Finnish. For this reason, some of the Karelian evacuees feel that they were not able to discuss and to grieve their loss of home for a long time. Kirsi Niukko (2009) has called the remembrance of Karelia in post-war Finland a ‘counterculture’. However, during the last twenty years, discussions surrounding topics of evacuations and Karelia, as well as the war in general, have diversified, and many evacuees feel the changed atmosphere liberating. In addition, while Karelians themselves often feel that they had to keep silent, a fairly common conception in Finland is that the evacuees speak a lot about their paradise-like Karelia in a nostalgic manner. The nostalgia of Karelians is often disdained and laughed about, and it has been seen as a false image and delusion. It is pertinent to mention that there are also some contemporary political agendas related to Karelia. Every once in a while, the ‘question of Karelia’ arises in public discussion – i.e. whether the ceded areas of Karelia should belong to Finland or Russia – and there is at least one organization, ProKarelia,5 that openly aims to return the ceded territories back to Finland.6
**Idyllic Texts and Nostalgia**

Idyllic style is a central component of the textual representations of nostalgia in the children’s evacuation journey writings, and it is utilized in the creation of an image of the past in Karelia that is worth longing for. Characteristic of these idylls is that the writers describe the Karelia of their childhood as ‘Golden Karelia’, a description which represents childhood, innocence, peace and harmony. A timeless time prevails in Karelia, people live in harmony with nature and the animals, and life in general is natural in a sublime way. These writings typically have a lyrical tone and they are often highly coherent and finalized texts which bear a resemblance to the genre of literary idylls. (On the idyll see e.g. Bakhtin 1981.)

The genre of the idyll as well as the narrative of the lost Karelia also have convergences with the concept of a biblical paradise, and the whole idea complex relates strongly to nostalgia. In order to be effective, the idea of idyllic past requires a wretched present in opposition to it, and hence, refers also to the loss of the idyllic past. Frog has observed:

> This also reflects a common and basic pattern of constructing eras of culture and of the world order: a new order of society is produced through events of epic/mythic proportions that separate the present world order from the world order that preceded it. The preceding world order becomes restricted to imaginal experience and imaginal order in a narrative world or worlds distinguished from the present and that imaginal world advances to a mythic status or becomes wholly mythological. The mythic image of evacuated Karelia is constructed according to a basic pattern of ‘mythologizing’ time in relation to the ‘present world order’. (Frog, p.c.: e-mail 21st March, 2013.)

In the case of the evacuation journey writings, the nostalgic gaze towards Karelia creates a division between the times before and after the evacuation journey, which also represents a division between the wonderful life in Karelia and the life outside Karelia where all troubles exist. This division also represents a central threshold in writers’ stories of their lives, and at the textual level it appears as a shift in the content, style and tone of narration. (Savolainen 2012.) When writers utilize the genre of idyll in their writings or mythologize time, Karelia is located in the past but it still very clearly represents a place relevant to the writer’s identity and roots. This narrative or idea complex of ‘Golden Karelia’ is also shared by the community, and similar nostalgic sentiments are recurrent in literature and other artwork about Karelia (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999). Karen Armstrong (2004: 131) has said, “narratives bring Karelia near through details which everyone who is not there, and even those who have never been there, can recognize as their own.” Writing about childhood in a nostalgic, admirable and elaborate way may also have the function of returning to experiences and feelings of childhood. (Lehto & Timonen 1993; Korkiautas 1996.)

Writers apply this shared and generic idea of idyllic Karelia and a nostalgic gaze towards it to their own memories and experiences in order to express them in a way that makes them understandable to the wider community. Idyllic and nostalgic representation can be seen as a practice or a cultural code that connects to the reminiscence of lost Karelia. However, it is important to observe that individuals do not just passively repeat the idyll or absorb the nostalgia and idea complex of ‘Golden Karelia’. Moreover, when individuals are referring to these generic codes and practices, they are positioning their own accounts as parts of wider negotiations. Writers are, simultaneously, utilizing a shared idea complex, contributing to it and adapting it as something personally important.

**Home-Region Visits and Nostalgia**

The experience of displacement has been considered as a collective feeling and an essential feature of the sense of place of Karelian evacuees (Kuusisto-Arponen 2008; 2009). It also generates nostalgia for a ‘stable past’ located in Karelia as a place. However, not all writers have a clear idea of Karelia as a basis for identity and as a place of a communally shared past. They therefore do not all have a nostalgic attitude towards the place in the past in their writings. The
availability of some concrete evidence of the past has been seen as a central condition for nostalgia as well (Chase & Shaw 1989). As time goes by, the concrete connection to the place in the past and evidences of it fade, and Karelia becomes strange. For some of the writers, losing the connection to the place of shared origins also means that they have lost the feeling of belonging to a community. These writers describe not knowing where they are from or to where they belong.

However, this feeling of fundamental homelessness and not belonging is not necessarily eternal. Concrete places in Karelia have become significant for Karelian evacuees and their offspring in a new, concrete way after the Soviet Union began allowing tourist trips into the formerly Finnish regions of Karelia in the late 1980s. After that, thousands of evacuees have visited their former home-regions every summer. Nostalgia can be seen as a central impetus for the cultural phenomenon of these home-region visits. This phenomenon is significant not only from the perspective of the tourism industry but also from the perspective of identity processes. (Cf. Basu 2006.) Often these visits are organized by families or associations of Karelian evacuees and they can be seen as new shared experiences that connect the evacuees with one another. Visits also have the potential to connect the offspring of the evacuees with the community. These visits are significant for the evacuees at a personal level as well. Due to them, some of the writers of the evacuation journey narratives describe how they have been able to discover their Karelian identity and feel a connection to their former dwelling places after decades, even though Karelia has gone through drastic changes since the evacuees left. What is interesting in many of the accounts is that the decay of the actual place in Karelia does not seem to diminish its importance. Experiencing the concrete place and landscape, even though it has been transformed, enables the evacuees to build a continuum from the past to the present and to link themselves to the chain of generations.

Home-region visits have also had an impact on nostalgia. The images of Karelia then and now have begun to merge, as the region and its new inhabitants have become familiar to the evacuees during repeated home-region visits (Niukko 2009). This means that the place can become meaningful for writers as a concrete and contemporary place, not only as a place of memories which belongs to the past and therefore must be unchangeable. When the former place of home is possible to reach, in addition to the nostalgic and longing-attitude towards something lost, the person may experience the concrete place as significant in a new, contemporary way. When a person’s memories of a certain place encounter that same concrete place in a certain moment, that person can experience the past again and, in a sense, travel through time. In addition to a place, mementos and sources, such as diaries or letters for example, may similarly function as links between several layers of time. In narration, these links appear as breaks in the chronological linearity of the plot, and in these ruptures, several periods of time, such as different pasts, the present and future, come together. Different layers of time are connected by a certain place, source or memento, but the role of these layers of time with a plot of, for example, an evacuation journey story, is not always evident. Rather than simple narrative coherence, they are – if anything – used to create and express the coherence of the writer’s life story in relation to a community of migrant Karelians. Happenings at different points in time are important for the writer and they are also associated with the evacuation journey, which is the essential event in the shared past of the Karelian community.

In addition, the home-region visits may evoke whole new memories of places. I would also like to mention that not all of the writers describe the change of the childhood environment as a positive experience. Instead, when they travel back to Karelia they feel that their Karelia no longer exists. The actual concrete place has become alien and strange and their Karelia – ‘the real Karelia’ – is located in memories, the past and stories, and is treated with nostalgia. (Lehto & Timonen 1993; Fingerroos 2007)
Understanding Nostalgia

Based on the evacuation journey writings, the writers seem to be more or less aware of their nostalgic perspective on Karelia and towards their childhood in Karelia, and it seems to be a matter of a relatively conscious choice. Many of the writers reflect upon their nostalgic images of the past and they are aware of their ideal nature. Therefore, idyllic writings cannot, for instance, be interpreted as directly identical to writers’ understandings. Writers of evacuation journey writings are not naïve, and most of them are quite satisfied with their present life and its settings (cf. Lowenthal 1989: 28). Moreover, nostalgia, in the cases of the home-region visits and the idyllic depictions of Karelia, can be seen as a perspective on the past and a practice that the writers use in order to highlight and maintain their roots and identities as Karelian evacuees, to build connections between the self and the community as well as with their pasts, and also to create a shared identity and community of Karelian evacuees. In addition to this, the use of nostalgia in writing and reminiscing is a matter of artistic expression and is something enjoyable for writers and persons who reminisce. However, this does not mean that nostalgia is totally without the substance of referentiality to the ‘reality’ that is being addressed. Rather than realistic depictions or depictions of reality, nostalgic accounts should be understood as expressions or metaphors of writers’ and communities’ experiences, emotions and attitudes which also link to wider negotiations concerning the identity of the community. I see that the oral history and life stories research has great potential to highlight the interpretative force that the notion of nostalgia may have.

Notes
1. This thematic collection contains a total of 182 writings, which are filed in the Finnish Literature Society’s Folklore Archive (archival sign: SKS. KRA. LEM. 2004). Writing collections and competitions are organized frequently in Finland by various organizations.

Works Cited

Sigvatr Þórðarson’s *Vestrfararvísur* and Cnut the Great’s Conquest of Norway in 1028

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The present paper focuses on the skaldic poem *Vestrfararvísur* by Sigvatr Þórðarson as one of the main sources for saga authors regarding the matter of King Cnut the Great’s conquest of Norway (Jónsson 1912–1915: 226–228). The poem, which can be treated as a rather contemporary and almost direct insight into the conflict (Tveito 2008), suggests a possibility of diplomatic negotiations, initiated by either Óláfr Haraldsson or, even more likely, by other Norwegian circles, that would have preceded Cnut’s attack on Norway. A crucial role in the search for reconciliation would have been played by Sigvatr Þórðarson himself, since he was very active at the court of the king of Norway.

**The Historical Context**

The addition of Norway in 1028 was Cnut’s crucial step in establishing his dominant position in the North. It was the time when the king of England and Denmark could finally enjoy both a relatively stable position in both kingdoms and recognition on the continent, confirmed by his attendance at Conrad II’s imperial coronation in Rome in 1027. At that time, Cnut knew very well that a key factor for maintaining these achievements would be to eliminate those willing to disturb the Jelling dynasty’s dominance. For this reason, Cnut eliminated his brother-in-law Ulf Þorgilson, who aspired to take control over Denmark either as a new king or as Hardeknut’s regent. The same reasons stood behind the decision to attack Norway. One should however remember that previous Jelling monarchs, Harald Gormsson and Sveinn Forkbeard, also made several, mostly successful, attempts to become overlords in Norway. Taking over the northern neighbour required no serious military confrontation, as Óláfr Haraldsson had fled from the country before the Danish fleet appeared and many prominent Norwegians were already by Cnut’s side, tempted by the prospect of his money and future honour (Lawson 1993; Bolton 2009).

Cnut’s attack on Norway is reflected in the sources. The king’s action is laconically mentioned by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Plummer 1892: 157). The encounter with Óláfr Haraldsson is also described much more thoroughly in kings’ sagas. The latter provide us with a rather schematic view, concentrating first of all on the problem of the rightful missionary king, betrayed by his subjects, willing to obey a foreign aggressor and deprived of his kingdom. The picture is however supplemented by a vision of the
magnificence of Cnut’s fleet and Óláfr Haraldsson’s low military potential – a proportion that affected the final result of the whole campaign.

Vestfararvísur consists of seven full stanzas and one half-stanza. All of them are quoted by authors of kings’ sagas. Various single stanzas are to be found in Fagrskinna and Knytinga saga. The whole poem is to be found in Snorri’s redactions of Óláfs saga helga. Vestfararvísur is traditionally dated to the first half of 1020s. Such a dating is based mainly on the contexts of the poem as found in the sagas, which are quite ambiguous and allow for different interpretations.

The poem is about Sigvatr’s journey to England to the court of Cnut the Great and his return to Norway, followed by the skald’s meeting with king Óláfr:

(1) Bergr, hǫfum minzk, hvé, margan mogrin Rúðuborgar, bǫrð létk í fǫr fyrða fest við arm enn vestra.
Bergr, we thought about Rouen many times this morning, how I travelled with men, holding the mast on the west side.

(2) Útan varðk, áðr Jóta andspilli fekk stillis (meld sák hús fyr hǫlði húsd yrr fyrir spyrjask); en ørendi óru ǫttungr í sal knátti Gorms (berk opt á armi Járnstúkur) vel lúka.
I had to ask from outside a door of the house before I could speak with the King of the Jutes (I saw the royal hall closed to me); but Gorm’s kinsman was able to pay for the stanza (I often carry iron rings on my arm).

(3) Ætti jarl at sætta allframr búendr gamla ok, þeir optast tóku, Áleif, at því máli; þeir hafa fyrr af fari (framt’s Eiriks kyn) meira hóðum keypt, en heiptr Höknun, saman, munði.
Great Cnut, famous for his deeds, richly furnished our arms Bersi when we found him; he, very smart, gave a mark of gold or even more to you as well as a sharp sword, and half of mark to me (God himself brings everything to pass).

(4) Knútr spurði mik, mætra mildr, ef hǫnum vildak hendilangr sem, hringa, hugreifum Áleifi; einn kvaðk senn, en sónnu svara þóttum ek, dróttin
with an army, Cnut and the jarls won’t like it; there is more hope for the battle if he is able to get away.

(5) Knútr hefr okr enn ítri alldáðogefugr þöðum hændr, es hilmi fundum, Húnn, skrautliga búnar; þer gaf hann mörk eða meira margytr ok hjur bitran golls (ræðr gorva ðollu goð sjálfr), en mér hafþa.
Generous Cnut and Hákon seem to put Óláf’s life in danger (I fear the king’s death); let the defender stand on the fells

(6) Heim erum hingat komnir, hygg þú at, jöfurr skatna (menn nemi mól sem innik mín) stallarar þinir; seg, hvar sess hafið hugðan seims þjóðkonungr beimum (allr es þekkr) með þollum (þinn skáli mér innan).
Now I am back at home of the king of men, your marshall; look at this (men accept words I bring to them); see, king of men, where place you choose for me among your subjects (your hall is most precious for me).

(7) Knútr spurði mik, metra mildr, ef hóðum vildak hendilangr sem, hringa, hugreifum Áleifi;
einn kvaðk senn, en sónnu svara þóttum ek, dróttin

Cnut, generous with precious rings, asked me whether I would be as helpful to him as to merry Óláfr; I explained that I can serve only one lord and I intended to answer frankly (every man has adequate models to follow).

Authors of kings’ sagas provide us with two different contexts for the composition of Vestrfaravísur. According to Fagrskinna, Sigvatr came to England while on his pilgrimage to Rome. Staying there for a while, he heard about Cnut’s and Hákon’s plans to attack Norway. This made him compose the poem. Fagrskinna’s account is corroborated by stanza 3 of Vestrfaravísur. The prose context of the saga links the composition of the poem with the events of the year 1028 (Jónsson 1902–1903: 170–171).

Heimskringla provides us with different context. Snorri Sturluson also points at Sigvatr’s stay in England as the time of the poem’s composition. This time, however, one can read that Sigvatr came there from Rouen as a merchant. Although, in a manner similar to Fagrskinna, we find Cnut and Hákon’s preparations as factors that stimulate the skald to compose vísur, this time it is a version of events that result in strife at Helgeá (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 271–271).

Although it is difficult to provide definite answers, the context of the poem found in Fagrskinna seems more likely to be accurate. Stanza 3 of Vestrfaravísur, quoted in the saga, refers to some common dealings of Cnut and Hákon against the king of Norway. In saga tradition, they are commonly linked with the attack by the king of England on Norway that results in Óláfr’s exile. Moreover, jarl Hákon is completely unassociated with the battle of Helgeá and its aftermath in the sagas.

One of the stanzas of Vestrfaravísur is quoted by the author of Knytlinga saga. Its task is to corroborate the account of Cnut’s generosity towards the Icelandic skald Bersi Skáldtorfuson, who indeed is mentioned by Sigvatr in this fragment of the poem (Guðnason 1982: 126).

Most likely, Sigvatr’s authority as a great poet and eye-witness of Óláfr Haraldsson’s reign was decisive for the fact that stanzas of Vestrfaravísur became main points of reference for particular saga episodes. Such a tendency is clearly seen in Knytinga saga and Fagrskinna, but in the most advanced way in Snorri’s Ólafs saga helga. The author of Heimskringla uses particular fragments of Vestrfaravísur in three episodes. Two of them are directly based on the content of the poem.

Snorri describes Cnut’s claims to power in Norway and how Óláfr Haraldsson reacted upon hearing them. This exchange of views between monarchs is intermingled with an account of Sigvatr’s stay at Cnut’s court. Similarly to Knytinga saga, Snorri lists royal gifts that were received by Sigvatr and another skald, Bersi Skáldtorfuson, then quotes stanza 5 of Vestrfaravísur (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 224–225). What makes both accounts different, however, is the purpose of listing those gifts for poets and the quotation of Sigvatr’s stanza. The Knytinga saga author wants to emphasize, and distinguishably to complete, the chapter centered on Cnut’s generosity (Guðnason 1982: 126).

Snorri, however, wants to stress something else. He describes how the skald meets Cnut’s emissaries, who receive Óláfr Haraldsson’s answer for their errand, voicing their king’s claims. They are surprised by Óláfr’s attitude and can not understand how he could reject Cnut’s offer. They still however hope that the former might change his mind as, according to them, “their king is so gracious, that no matter how he is offended by some chieftain, he will forgive him as soon as he will stand before him and surrender to his power”
Snorri is able to show Óláfr Haraldsson as a proud ruler and sovereign, who stands above others, eager to accept Cnut’s dominance and the only one able to withstand the plans of the king of England. The episode of Sigvatr’s stay at Cnut’s court is to make the audience understand and appreciate the way that the saint king has chosen. What befits a skald or minor ruler is absolutely not acceptable for an ambitious sovereign, in this case Óláfr Haraldsson.

Stanzas 1–4 of Vestfaravísur are used by Snorri to build up another episode, this time about Sigvatr’s stay at Cnut’s court. The skald’s journey to England takes place just before the set of events that lead to strife at Helgeå. Based directly on stanza 1, Snorri says that Sigvatr came to England from Rouen, together with a man called Berg. Stanza 2, which refers to Sigvatr’s attempts to stand before Cnut, is a reason for an account about the poet, who wanted the king to permit him to return to Norway. Relying directly on the poem, Snorri reports that Sigvatr had to wait for a long time to meet Cnut. When the skald finally gets a chance to speak with the king, he gets permission, not to leave but rather to recite a poem, supposedly a praise poem. Interestingly, stanza 2 of Vestfaravísur is used here as a so-called situational stanza. However, instead of poetic praise towards the king of England, it contains the skald’s complaints about the time spent waiting for an audience and his delight caused by the long-expected meeting with the king.

In a later part of the episode, Sigvatr learns about Cnut’s plans against King Óláfr. As a reaction to that, he recites another stanza, which is in fact stanza 3 of Vestfaravísur (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 271–273). Surprisingly for the prose context, the stanza refers to jarl Hákon as Cnut’s ally and the skald’s advice for the king of Norway is to keep a defensive position in the mountains. The problem is that it was much easier to hear Sigvatr’s warning in England than in Norway!

Finally, Snorri completes the episode by commenting on other stanzas by Sigvatr about Cnut’s expedition to Norway and quotes stanza 4 of Vestfaravísur. Here again, we meet jarl Hákon, this time urged by the skald to reconcile with the Norwegians and their king (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 271–273).

The last group of stanzas is an integral part of another episode, describing Sigvatr’s return to Norway at Óláfr Haraldsson’s court. Snorri marginally recalls the skald’s journeys, among them, his stay at Cnut’s court. In fact, Sigvatr’s relations with the king of Norway are the clue to the episode. Óláfr extends a rather cold reception to the skald, and asks Sigvatr whether or not he comes back from England as Cnut’s supporter. Stanzas 6 and 7 of Vestfaravísur are the skald’s reply to both the king’s unfriendly welcome and his suppositions. The same episode, found in AM 75c fol. (ca. 1300), contains an additional stanza of Sigvatr (stanza 8 of Vestfaravísur). This version lacks the king’s comment on Sigvatr’s errand, and Sigvatr instead explains to Óláfr the reasons for his absence and assures the king as to his loyalty. The whole story ends up with a note about Sigvatr being able to experience royal grace again (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 292–293).

The last episode is to a lesser extent dependant on the content of both of Sigvatr’s stanzas (or three stanzas in the case of AM 75c fol.). In this case, the dissonance between the content of the poem and the prose context is especially striking. It is overshadowed, however, by a special moment in the king’s relationship with his favourite skald. Sigvatr appears as one of very few who were not lured by Cnut’s promises and who stayed loyal to the rightful king. The skald expresses his loyalty in the best way he is able, through stanzas composed for a king. He does so before Óláfr, which is why the whole episode resembles numerous þættir [‘stories’] that are thematically focused on monarch-skald relations. The testing of the artistic skills of a poet by his patron is among the typical features of the subgenre.

The way Snorri uses particular fragments of Vestfaravísur suggests the omission or the loss of the primary meaning and context of the poem. Content of particular stanzas would have been either wrongly interpreted or ignored – a practice quite frequently met in Old Norse narratives (Morawiec 2009a: 68–69, further works there cited). This is why it
seems important to study the stanzas of Vestrfaravísur out of their prose context. Doing so should make both the primary meaning and context of the poem more visible for us. Even more importantly, Sigvatr’s poem may throw some intriguing light on the problem of relations between Cnut the Great and Óláfr Haraldsson on the eve of the events of the year 1028.

**Textual Analysis**

Stanza 2 of the poem seems to refer to a standard situation in which a skald visits the court of a ruler and asks for a hearing in order to present an already composed poem (Jónsson 1912–1915: 226). The stanza, praising the king’s generosity, suggests that the skald was successful in his attempts. However, there are some intriguing elements that cannot be ignored. Firstly, contrary to convention, the royal court is closed to the skald, and a long time has to pass before Sigvatr gets a chance to meet Cnut. Snorri notices this in his account and paraphrases Sigvatr’s words, but he does not provide any further explanation (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 271). Secondly, what Sigvatr presents to Cnut, and what he is rewarded for, is ørendi. This term has various meanings: ‘mission, errand, news, order, business, request, intention’ (Egilsson 1913–1916: 666). It is also possible to translate ørendi as ‘poetry, stanza of the poem’, according to Geir Zoëga’s dictionary (Zoëga 1910: 529). Nevertheless, ørendi is generally associated with a mission and/or errand. A similar view is taken by previous editors and translators of the stanza (Jónsson 1912–1915: 226; Hollander 2005: 436). Perhaps, bearing in mind that we deal with a very talented poet, Sigvatr presented his case to Cnut in poetic form. There has been so far no attempt to explain why Sigvatr faced such problems in trying to stand before the king of England and what his ørendi contained. Before I propose any answers for these questions, it is worth stressing, that stanza 2 of Vestrfaravísur seems to reflect Sigvatr’s troubles more as an ordained emissary than as a skald desperately looking to let his poetic skills shine.

Two further Vestfraravísur stanzas refer directly to the political situation prior to the year 1028 (Jónsson 1912–1915: 226–227). Moreover, Sigvatr’s account throws some interesting additional light on it. Stanzas 3 and 4 suggest that the author of Fagrskinna seems to be more right than Snorri in the case of the chronology of the poem. Sigvatr does not hesitate to speak openly about the hostile intentions of Cnut and Hákon jarl of Hláðir towards the king of Norway. Moreover, he is afraid of the final result of this confrontation and, consequently, Óláfr Haraldsson’s future. Thus he feels obliged to advise the king to perform some counter actions.

Stanza 4 seems to be even more intriguing. Sigvatr speaks about the need of reconciliation between jarl Hákon and the Norwegians and... Óláfr Haraldsson (Jónsson 1912–1915: 227). One cannot avoid the impression that the will to reconcile the opposing sides was an effect of the fear that the final result of military confrontation could be rather bitter for the king of Norway. The skald appears to be not only an emissary but also a political advisor and strategist. We can only suppose that his views were to be heard somewhere. Where? I will try to answer this question below.

Sigvatr, in stanzas 6–8, speaks directly to Óláfr Haraldsson (Jónsson 1912–1915: 227). These fragments of Vestfraravísur also contain intriguing details. Snorri Sturluson focuses on successive attempts by Sigvatr to lower the king’s anger. According to Heimskringla, Óláfr generally did not like the idea of his favourite skald visiting Cnut’s court as it meant running the risk of him being lured away by the king of England. In this element, Snorri’s narrative corresponds to some extent with Sigvatr’s own account. The skald declares that he is able to serve only one lord. Moreover, calling Cnut “generous with precious rings”, seems to suggest his intentions that drove him to England. However, Sigvatr’s words in stanza 7 encourage one to look for other explanations: “Cnut asked me whether I would be as helpful to him as to merry Óláfr.” Most likely, it is a case of the correct interpretation of the word hendilangr, which means ‘eager to help, helpful’. Therein lies the question: how and in what matter could Sigvatr be helpful to Cnut? The fact that the king of England expected the
skald to be as equally helpful to him as to Óláfr also seems to be important. Obviously, we would perhaps limit ourselves to conclude that Cnut wanted to use Sigvatr for his plans in Norway, namely to gather an influential group of supporters to promote the future Danish regime (Bolton 2009: 258). Even in this case however, the king’s attempts would be found as quite effective, proving Sigvatr’s authority in the country, not to mention the power of his poetry.

Nevertheless, the content of stanzas 6 and 8 of Vestrfaravísur present further complications in interpreting the context of the poem. In the former stanza, the skald not only announces his return to Óláfr’s court, but clearly expresses his loyalty toward the king of Norway and his place in the royal retinue (“see, king of men, what place you choose for me among your subjects, your hall is the most precious for me”). Sigvatr calls himself stallari. This term is sometimes translated as ‘court marshal’. In fact, it refers to someone who played the most prominent role in the court as the most trusted royal advisor (de Vries 1999: 245; Gelting 2007: 93).

However, it is worth paying special attention to Sigvatr’s words in the first helming of the stanza 6: “men accept words I bring to them” (Jónsson 1912–1915: 227). The skald’s dealings refer also to others, not only to the king. Sigvatr may refer to Óláfr’s retinue, his loyal supporters. But it is also possible that the poet had all royal subjects in mind. Then the message behind the whole stanza would be thus: ‘words that I, your advisor, proclaim are accepted by others, now, king, it is your turn to do the same’.

In stanza 8, Sigvatr once again raises the case of his loyalty, saying that “one oath is worth all others” (Jónsson 1912–1915: 228). First of all, however, the skald explains why his journey and stay at the court of the king of England (“I was Cnut’s guest”) took him more time than he had supposedly expected. According to him, the case he presented to Cnut needed proper time. It was due to the fact that, to quote Sigvatr again: “you entrust men with complicated matters.”

**Interpretation of Events behind the Poem**

What did the skald’s words, accepted by all but the king himself, refer to? What did this complicated, time-consuming matter Sigvatr was to present to Cnut, refer to? What were those complicated matters entrusted to the poet by Óláfr Haraldsson?

Before trying to answer these question, it is worth focusing on the terminology that Sigvatr uses in his account. Both the words that the skald sends to all (stanza 6) and the complicated matters entrusted to him by the king of Norway, including the one presented to Cnut, are defined as mál. The word has various meanings: ‘speech, talk, history’, but also: ‘matter, petition, request, agreement’ (Zoëga 1910: 228–289; Egilsson 1913–1916: 394–395; Baetke 2006: 401–403). No matter which interpretation is the closest to Sigvatr’s original intentions, its usage rather excludes the possibility of defining his visit at Cnut’s court only as another example of the typical skald–ruler relations motif.

Actually, the term mál appears quite frequently in Sigvatr’s other poems. Importantly, it is also the case in Austrfaravísur and Bersǫglisvísur, poems that are very useful in improving our understanding of the context of Vestrfaravísur. The former is a kind of report, presented by the skald to Óláfr Haraldsson, about his journey to Sweden (Jónsson 1912–1915: 220–225). During this endeavour, he meets jarl Rǫgnvaldr Úlfsson. The diplomatic character of this journey is rather generally accepted. Through the latter vísur Sigvatr tries to rebuke and warn young Magnus góði that his cruel reign may result in rebellion (Gade 2009: 11–30). Both poems provide numerous instances of mál usage, meaning: ‘promise, terms, matter, proposal’. It is a case of political negotiations that Sigvatr is engaged in, as either emissary (Austrfaravísur) or mediator (Bersǫglisvísur). It seems very likely that Vestrfaravísur should be considered in very similar context.

What idea lies behind Sigvatr’s poem then? What answers can be proposed for the questions listed above? From the perspective of the saga tradition, the situation that the skald faces in his problems with entering the royal court is rather extraordinary. One can
list two other instances when monarchs refuse to listen to poetic encomium. It happened to Hallfírðri Ottarsson, starting his career in Óláf Tryggvason’s retinue (Sveinsson 1939: 155). It was also the case of Sigvatr Þórðarson during his first appeal to Óláfr Haraldsson’s court (Aðalbjarnarson 2002: 54–56). Both cases eventually ended well for the poets, as they were both able to provide their drápur to their patrons.

One may therefore suspect that Sigvatr, contrary to later saga tradition, did not come to England only as a renowned poet, aiming to get recognition in another court and the grace of another ruler. Stanza 2 of Vestfaravísur suggests that Sigvatr aimed to present some ‘errand’, some case entrusted to him. Naturally, we would suspect that it was the king of Norway who sent the skald to England. However, one cannot reject the possibility that Sigvatr made the decision to go on his own or was urged to go by someone else. No matter who stood behind Sigvatr, it was definitely good to choose the skald as emissary. Most likely the poet, as a famed and recognized artist, was believed and was likely to be well received by Cnut, who gathered many skalds in his court.

Sigvatr however says openly in the poem that it took him quite a long time to get to stand before the king. It seems likely then, that if the skald faced any problems in Cnut’s court, it was due to who sent him to England. The context of Vestfaravísur suggests that Óláf Haraldsson was very concerned about Sigvatr’s mission to England and its result. It thus seems likely that either the king of Norway sent the skald himself or got news about his journey and wanted to investigate Sigvatr’s intentions just after his return to Norway. I think we can exclude the possibility that the skald was sent to England by circles opposing Óláf Haraldsson. The content of Vestfaravísur contradicts such an assumption.

What then did Sigvatr want to transmit to Cnut in his ørendi? Relying on Vestfaravísur itself, one can suspect that the skald was going to learn about or confirm his knowledge about the king of England’s plans towards Norway. Moreover, perhaps he wanted to propose solutions that, on one hand, would meet Cnut’s political ambitions, and on the other, would save Óláf’s position in the country. Assuming that it was the king of Norway who sent Sigvatr, such interpretation sounds logical. We cannot however reject the possibility that Óláf did not know anything about the skald’s journey to England. In that case, Sigvatr’s ørendi would have sounded very similar. Vestfaravísur gives us an impression of the skald’s care and concern about Óláf’s future (stanza 3: “I fear the king’s death”) (see also Jónsson 1912–1915: 247). One can assume that there were others in the country that shared this view. Such people preferred to learn something about Cnut’s plans, and worried not only about the king’s but also their own future. Such an interpretation would explain Óláf’s anxiety and Sigvatr’s assurances of loyalty towards the king of Norway even better. Sigvatr stresses in the poem (stanza 3), that he had learned about the aggressive plans of the king of England towards Norway that define Óláfr Haraldsson as an enemy. Sigvatr Þórðarson, one way or another, was associated with the king of Norway. This would explain the way he was initially treated at Cnut’s court.

The content of Vestfaravísur lets us assume that Sigvatr not only became conscious of the plans of the king of England, but also, reacting to that, presented his own political view. On the one hand (stanza 3) he encourages Óláf Haraldsson to organize an effective defense, on the other (stanza 4), he calls for reconciliation. The latter, however, was directed to... Hákon jarl of Hlaðir. Perhaps the skald’s words about the necessity of peace between the jarl, Óláf and the rest of the Norwegians reflects his ørendi, the one that he presented at Cnut’s court. One can only speculate whether it was the king of Norway himself who wanted to reconcile with the jarls of Hlaðir, or, what seems even more likely, whether he was advised to do so by Sigvatr and his other supporters. The question as to how such a plan would have matched Cnut’s political ambitions must remain unanswered (Bolton 2009). Besides, the dominant position of the latter would have prevented the plan’s realization, but one also cannot exclude Óláf’s objection. In this context, it is easier to understand why in
stanzas 6–8 Sigvatr explains to the king the reason for his stay in England. Assurances of loyalty would be a result of accusations of betrayal, caused by the skald’s meeting with both Cnut and jarl Hákon. Intriguingly, Sigvatr also refers to his accusations in stanza 7 of Bersoglisvisur (Gade 2009: 19).

Thus it is important to focus on one more time on Sigvatr’s message (min mǫl), accepted by all but, seemingly, the king himself. The skald’s errand would contain words of encouragement for Óláfr to reconcile with jarl Hákon and/or Cnut and, consequently, to save his position in the country. This kind of plan would appear complicated and time-demanding (esa lǫng þorþyr mál þat). It also contained a risk of accusations of betrayal, something Sigvatr experienced himself. Vestfaravísur points at, this time similarly to later saga tradition, failures of such attempts. Neither Cnut (and jarl Hákon) nor Óláfr were interested in search for a compromise; they were entirely focused on direct confrontation (Bolton 2009).

Comparison with Sigvat’s Austrfaravísur
If Óláfr Haraldsson were responsible for Sigvatr’s journey to England, Vestfaravísur would have been labeled together with another of Sigvatr’s poem, Austrfaravísur. The latter is believed to be composed ca. 1019. As already mentioned, the poem is in fact Sigvatr’s report for the king from his diplomatic journey to Sweden. The skald reveals both the character and the goal of his mission in the poem. He calls himself and his companions sendimenn Sygna grams [‘emissaries of the king of Sogn’], who is Óláfr Haraldsson (Jónsson 1912–1915: 223).

Space does not permit analysis of the political background of Óláfr’s businesses in Sweden in detail here. There is no doubt however, that they are a clue to Sigvat’s journey. In stanza 17 of Austrfaravísur, the skald confesses that he took part in numerous discussions í gǫrðum ens milda heidmanna [‘in the garden of a generous jarl’] (Jónsson 1912–1915: 224). As those discussions are defined as mǫl, it suggests, similarly to Vestfaravísur, their character: political negotiations run by a trusted intermediary, in this case Sigvatr. In stanza 20, the skald once again uses the same term, this time referring to an agreement proposal that Óláfr had put forward to the jarl (Jónsson 1912–1915: 225).

The content of Austrfaravísur lets us assume that, despite some difficulties, the skald was able to complete his task. The king could have found Sigvatr efficient in such cases. Undoubtedly, his relations with Cnut were connected to these abilities. Any change in that matter demanded the engagement of talented and trusted persons. Sigvatr was able to fulfill these conditions. The fact that he was a talented and renowned skald was an important but not a decisive factor.

Comparison with Sigvat’s Bersoglisvisur
It seems, however, that Sigvatr’s visit to Cnut’s court was initiated by circles that, although propitious for Óláfr, were concerned about his non-compromising policy. The author of Vestfaravísur could have belonged to this group, perhaps playing an important role. This would be as a result of his status as poet and as Óláfr’s advisor. The poem contains a large portion of advice and suggestions for the king of Norway, articulated not only by a talented skald but by a man of authority, respected in political affairs. Such an interpretation of Vestfaravísur lets us categorize the poem as fairly similar to another of Sigvatr’s utterances, Bersoglisvisur, composed most likely in the late 1030s at Magnus góði’s court. According to saga tradition, the poem was a reaction to Magnus’ cruel reign as the king took revenge on those who betrayed his father. The king changed his attitude, influenced by the skald’s poetic errand (Helgason 1952: 125; Morawiec 2009b: 317). Bersoglisvisur contains elements that resemble to some extent analogues in Vestfaravísur. In stanza 10 of the former poem, the skald calls himself the king’s vinr, sás þyðr vormuð [‘friend, who offers a warning’], about the prospect of rebellion, and stresses that Magnus should pay attention to the will of his subjects (hlyðið til, hvat bümenn vilja [‘must heed what the farmers want’]) (Gade 2009: 21). We can observe Sigvatr’s analogous attitude in stanza 6 of Vestfaravísur, where the skald encourages Óláfr Haraldsson to listen to his errand,
already accepted by others. In both stanzas, the skald declares his loyalty and, at the same time, warns the king not to make decisions that in effect would be wrong. The same notion can be seen in stanza 11 of Bersöglsvísur. Sigvatr once again points at a bad atmosphere among Magnus’ subjects (reiðrs herr ['people are angry']) and at the same time, referring to purpose of the poem, stresses: engr hafði áðr ráðit ungum bragningi svá ['no one had advised the young ruler that way before'] (Gade 2009: 22). Perhaps these words reflect the time of disgrace and isolation that Sigvatr experienced from Magnus and his retinue. One can feel similar fears of the skald in Vestrfaravísur. In three stanzas (6–8), Sigvatr underlines his loyalty towards Óláfr Haraldsson. Similar declarations appear in stanza 15 of Bersöglsvísur: vör erum vægnir, vildak lífa ok deya með mildum þér ['Magnus, I am well disposed, I would like to live and die by your side']. They are also accompanied by demands of an immediate change of royal policy (Gade 2009: 27).

Perspectives

The poems of Sigvatr reviewed above reveal his strong and influential position as both a skald and a politician. He looks both very sensible regarding actual problems and convinced about his right to voice his opinion and even to take an initiative. Both Vestfaravísur and Bersöglsvísur show that Sigvatr Póðarson should be regarded not only as a key eyewitness to events, but also as an important agent in the orchestration of those events, as he refers to himself in his poetry. In the case of Vestfaravísur, it can be supposed that the course of events that preceded Cnut’s conquest of Norway in 1028 was much more complex than indicated by saga tradition. Sigvatr, it appears, was sent on this important ørendi not because of his skill in the verbal art of poetry, but precisely because of his verbal art as an ambassador and his skills as a politician.

Works Cited

Forecasting the Rain of Óðinn: Referential Ambiguity in Kennings Referring to POETRY
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If there is one thing the skald is known for talking about more than himself, it is fighting. A ‘skald’ is a type of vernacular poet composing in Old Norse-Icelandic from the 9th to the 14th centuries. Battle finds a stronghold in the skaldic imagination, where entrenched images of powerful rulers subjugating the land as if seducing a woman, swords glinting on the battle-field like flames, and weapons showering onto opponents like a hailstorm, form an onslaught of repeatedly activated images and associations in the traditions of Old Norse poetic diction. The saga conceptualisation of the figure of the poet would have us conceive of the skald not only as a warrior of words, bombarding his audience with complex linguistic figures and the keen blade of his wit, but as an active combatant engaging in literal duels, forming scenes often accompanied by aggressive speech acts and insult verse (Clunies Ross 2001: 44; Whaley 2001: 287). Given such a significant cultural association between the instigation of war and the utterance of poetry, it seems strange that battle is all but absent as a metaphor for poetry in the kenning patterns of self-reflexive skaldic language.1

This article aims to explore a small group of poetry kennings which seem to overlap with a particular type of kenning pattern referring to BATTLE. This group consists of the figures Þropregn [‘rain of Þropr <=Óðinn’] (Skj A1: 88) and Þundregn [‘rain of Þundr <=Óðinn’] (Skj B1: 527), which manifest the kenning pattern ‘rain of Óðinn’, and regn Hárs þegna [‘rain of the thanes of Hárr <=Óðinn’] (Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 60), which constitutes a variation of the kenning type ‘rain of Óðinn’.2

Kennings
Kennings are an idiosyncratic, riddle-like form of circumlocution where the concept being referred to is not named directly. A basic kenning consists of three elements: the referent, the base word and the determinant. The referent is the concept signified by the kennings. For example, the referent of the kenning ‘flame of battle’ is SWORD. The kenning’s base word is a term which stands as the syntactic-conceptual representative of the referent. In ‘flame of battle’, the base word ‘flame’ operates as a metaphor for sword. The ground for the metaphor consists of the common properties shared by both concepts. In this case, one might say that both fire and sword have the capacity to inflict harm. The metaphor could also be image-based: the play of light on a sword, wielded in battle, resembles the flickering flames of a fire. The kenning’s determinant is usually a noun in the genitive case which delimits (or directs) the referential potential of the base word to the conceptual sphere of the referent. In the figure ‘flame of battle’, the base word ‘flame’ carries a greater referential scope than simply SWORD; synonyms for ‘fire’ also operate as base words in kennings referring to other concepts, such as GOLD (hyrr vága [‘fire of the waves’] (Skj B2: 236)) and sun (logi skýja [‘flame of the clouds’] (Skj B1: 589). Coupled with the determinant battle, however, the scope of ‘fire’ is regulated to the sphere of martial combat.

Kennings have their foundations in basic kenning patterns. The different linguistic representations of conventional kenning patterns can be numerous as a result of the process of synonymic variation, where skalds drew on a large store of poetic terms. For example, eldr vers [‘ember of the sea’] (Gade et al. 2009: 717), bál báru [‘flame of the wave’] (Clunies Ross 2007: 540) and fjardlogi [‘fjord-flame’] (Skj B2: 231) are individual manifestations of the basic gold-kennning pattern ‘fire of the sea’. Kennings cluster around conceptual patterns which operate as an ‘intermediary’ between the linguistic expression of the kenning (signifier) and the referent (signified) (Fidjestøl 1985: 48). These underlying patterns operate as part of a specialised system of poetic language, where a limited number of referents are represented using a limited, though slightly larger, number of basic kenning patterns. Rudolf Meissner’s (1921) catalogue of
kennings lists one hundred and six main categories of referent. The vast majority of extant kennings are concentrated on around fifteen referents; both battle and poetry feature among the most important and frequent concepts in the skaldic corpus.

If we consider kennings which follow the basic pattern ‘rain of Óðinn’ outside of any verse context, such figures could either be interpreted as POETRY, relating to the poetry-kenning pattern ‘natural body of water of Óðinn’, or as BATTLE, stemming from the battle-kenning pattern ‘weather of Óðinn’. The ambiguity of ‘rain of Óðinn’ arises from the conceptual entailments shared by battle and poetry in the traditions of kenning patterns. Rain can stand as a base word for both battle and poetry as a variant for weather and natural body of water. Óðinn functions as the determining element for both concepts by virtue of the god’s mythological nature as patron of battle and patron of poetry. As the following section demonstrates, this kenning pattern may represent a potential point of convergence between the concepts of battle and poetry within the associative networks of kenning traditions.

**Blending Liquids**

The kenning regn Hárs þegna appears in a stanza preserved in the Ketilsbók version of Egils saga. The verse context cultivates a rich texture of imagery surrounding the consumption and expression of ale and rain, a blend which draws together the concepts of battle and poetry. The verse occurs in the context of a feast, where Egill, after he and his companions had initially been denied ale by their host Bárðr, drinks to excess and then enters into a dispute with Bárðr. Just before thrusting his sword into the stomach of his host, Egil recites this verse:

QLvar mik þvi at Qlvi
q greeting n u folyvan;
ateigera laet ek yrar
yring of gron skyra.
Qllungis kanni illa,
oddskys, fyrir þer ylsa,
rigna getr at regni,
regnbjodr, Hars þegna.
(Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 60.)

(Prose word order: Qlvar mik þvi at ql gerir
nu Qlvi folyvan; laet ek skyra yring atgeira
yra of gron. Qllungis kann i alla fyrir þer
ylsa, regnbjödr oddskýs; rigna getr at regni
Hárs þegna.)

I get drunk, while ale now makes Qlvir pale;
I express the spray of the spears of the oxen
[HORNS > DRINK] through my beard. You’re
very bad at knowing how to look out for
yourself, offerer of the rain of the cloud of
the spear-point [SHEILD > BATTLE >
WARRIOR]; it rains with the rain of the
thanes of Hárr <=Óðinn> [WARRIORS/
POETS/ÆSIR > BATTLE/POETRY].

The lausavísa [‘loose verse’] develops a
complex and dynamic network of associations
where, in the first helmingr (half-stanza), the
ale is literal ale yet also seems to represent a
metaphor for poetry, a metaphor which is
automatically evoked simply by virtue of the
entrenched mapping between mead and
poetry in the traditions of skaldic diction, but
which is further activated by the use of the
verb skýra [‘to explain, expound’] which
describes the movement of the ale, out
through the beard of the poetic persona. This
kind of movement is evocative of the action
of language, of the utterance of poetry. It is
also suggestive of vomit.

In the second helmingr, the blend evolves,
whilst retaining the connotations of the first
helmingr. The liquid-mead transforms into
liquid-rain, a metamorphosis already initiated
by ýring [‘drizzle, rain’], the base word of the
drink kenning in line 4. The rain, which
carries the associations of ale, poetry and
vomit, acquires a new mapping to the concept
of battle, a mapping which is activated in the
kenning for WARRIOR, regnbjóðr oddskýs
[‘the offerer of the rain of the cloud of the
spear-point’]. As a result of this subtle and
progressive fusion of the concepts of ale,
poetry, vomit, battle and rain, the closing
couplet – rigna getr at regni, / regnbjóðr,
Hárs þegna [‘It comes to rain the rain / – rain-
offerer – of Óðinn’s thanes’] – constitutes a
rich image structure which is also charged
with a deal of ambiguity. E.R. Eddison
articulates this rather eloquently in a footnote
to the verse in his 1930 translation of Egils saga:
The “rain of Hoar’s thanes” (Odin’s thanes; i.e. the Gods) is poetry. Egil thus says, ‘I am making a poem’ [...] a somewhat gratuitous and pointless piece of information. Personally, I do not doubt [...] that a double meaning is intended, and the suggestion called up by oddskýr (spear-sky) in the previous line is carried into this last couplet: the Gods can rain not poems only, but swords of vengeance on poison-mixing ale-begrudgers such as Bard. (Eddison 1930: 275.)

Editors uniformly read the kenning regn Hárs þegna as signifying poetry (Bjarni Eidarsson 2003: 60; Sigurður Nordal 1933: 110; Skj B1: 43), but in the translation of the lausavísa above, both BATTLE and POETRY are presented as possible referents rather than resolving the original text to a single interpretation. As Eddison observes, the figure harbours an intentional ambiguity, fostered by the poet’s selection of specific language, developed in the stanza as a whole, where he draws into alignment the threatening power of his persona’s battle prowess, and the power of his verse, which are both stimulated by the intoxicating ale and the divine intoxication which Óðinn bequeaths to his poet-warrior thanes. In this way, Egill capitalises on the meaning-potential of ambiguities within the traditions of kenning patterns.

Dark Rain

Pundregn ['rain of Pundr <=Óðinn>'], preserved in Hallar-Steinn’s Rekstefja, is rather surprisingly given as BATTLE in the Lexicon Poeticum (Sveinbjörn Egilsson & Finnur Jónsson 1931: s.v. ‘Pundregn’), but translated as ‘poetry’ in Finnur Jónsson’s Skjaldedigtning B (Skj B1: 527). The kenning in question occurs in a self-referential stál ['interlace'] in the following helmingr:

Haukjóðs harða víða
(hótt) norrænar dróttir
(Pund-regns þeim of vandak)
þengils á þy gengu. (Skj B1: 527.)

(Prose word order: Norrænar dróttir gengu harða víða á by haukjóðs þengils; of vandak hótt Pund-regns þeim.)

The Norse people journeyed very widely under the farm of the hawkling [HAND] of the king (i.e. under the king’s command); I carefully prepare the form of the rain of Pundr <=Óðinn> [POETRY/BATTLE] for him.

Taken alone, the kenning itself would be ambiguous, but there are a few contextual and linguistic pointers surrounding the kenning which direct us to the referent POETRY rather than BATTLE. Firstly, if we consider hótt to be an element in the stál, it can have the specific meaning ‘metre’ in the technical terminology of Old Norse poetics. In addition, the noun phrase, ‘the form of the rain of Óðinn’, is governed by the verb vanda ['to prepare, to make carefully']. It seems that, within the skaldic corpus at least, the verb is employed primarily when the act of poetic composition is being described (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, rev. Finnur Jónsson 1931: s.v. ‘vanda’). Furthermore, the poet’s use of Pundregn has a parallel in the first helmingr of Rekstefja 31, which also contains a kenning with regn ['rain'] as its base word. This is similarly within a self-referential interlace and resonance between the kennings is augmented by their occurrence in the same metrical positions in the stanza:

Ótrauðr allra dáða
djartegnir vann bjartar
(dvergregn) dýrðar í sinn et fimta. (Skj B1: 533.)

(Prose word order: Ótrauðr allra dáða vann bjartar djartegnir dýrðar í sinn et fimta. Magnak dímt dvergregn.)

Willing in all deeds, he got the bright tokens of glory for the fifth time. I conjure the dark rain of dwarves.

Scholars interpret dvergregn ['dwarf-rain'] unambiguously as POETRY (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, rev. Finnur Jónsson 1931: s.v. ‘dvergregn’; Kreutzer 1977: 101; Meissner 1921: 428). Dwarves after all, according to the traditions of battle-kennings and the mythological connotations surrounding them, are not directly related to the conceptual sphere of battle, in contrast to poetry where dwarves feature as the determining elements in a number of poetry kennings (Meissner 1921: 428), as well as performing a significant role in Snorri Sturluson’s version of the mead of poetry myth presented in the Skáldskaparmál portion of his Edda (Faulkes...
1998: 3; Faulkes 2003: 62). The description of this particular dvergregn as dimt ['dim, dark'] is intriguing. Ernst Albin Kock reads it as a modesty topos, where the poet claims that his creative feat is dull in comparison to the exciting and formidable achievements of Óláfr Tryggvason that are conveyed in the inadequate verse (Kock 1923–1944: §1185). Finnur Jónsson, however, relates it to the aesthetics of obscurity developed in skaldic diction by poets following the complex style of traditional court poetry (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, rev. Finnur Jónsson 1931: s.v. ‘dvergregn’). On the other hand, it should be noted that dimt performs an important metrical function, rhyming fully with fimt and alliterating with dverg- and dýrðar. Given that the basic semantic sense of the kenning (and the clause in which it occurs) may be understood without the inclusion of dimt, it could be argued that the application of this adjective is predominantly motivated by the metrical demands of the couplet.4

It may be rather speculative to surmise that the poet’s cultivation of poetry kennings with regn in particular as the base word, a locus of overlap in the entailments of battle and poetry, develops an implicit association between the king’s composition of battle and the poet’s composition of verse. If such a relation is intended, stanza 31 would suggest it to be an oppositional one. The king’s tokens of glory are bright and clear, whereas the poetic depiction of these achievements is dark and obscure.

Slander, Snakes and Salacious Liaisons

The final and most involved instance of the kenning type ‘rain of Óðinn’ appears in a lausavísa attributed to Kormákr Ógmundarson, in which the apparent referential uncertainty emerges both from the unusual or contextually specific kennings, as well as the complexity of the syntax in the second helmingr, which renders even the formal construction of the kennings rather problematic. The verse is quoted within Kormáks saga when Þorvarðr, brother-in-law of the woman Steingerðr, charges the skald Kormákr with slander and declares his intention to fight him, presumably as a result of the poet’s persistent rendezvous with Steingerðr or the spate of insulting and suggestive verse he composes about Þorvaldr and his wife. Finnur Jónsson emends some of the figures quite drastically, presumably finding some difficulty in consolidating them with the framework of basic poetry-kenning patterns laid out by Snorri Sturluson in Skáldskaparmál (Faulkes 1998: 4, 5, 11; Faulkes 2003: 62, 64, 70). The following quotations of the stanza constitute Finnur’s emended text in the first instance, and then my normalised version of the Möðruvallabók text, where the figures Finnur finds problematic are in italics:

Skulut níðingar neyða, nú emk sótt of gjǫf Þróttar (upp geldk Gauta gildi gögnum, mik til þagnar; þat muna Þróttar vittir, Þrós, regns stafar fregna, (byrjak frægð), nema fjórvi féð-miðlendr mik véli. (Skj B1: 80.)

(Prose word order: Niðingar skulut neyða mik til þagnar; nú emk sótt or gögnum of gjof Þróttar – upp geldk gildi Gauta; þat muna vittir Þróttar regns stafar fregna, nema Þrós féð-miðlendr véli mik fjórvi. Byrjak frægð.)

The bastards won’t compel me to silence. Now I am sued because of my poetry – I compose the poetry undaunted; the accusing warriors will learn of it, unless they rob me of my life. I spread fame.

Skulut níðingar neyða, nú emk sótt or gjof döttur upp geldk gauta gildi gögnum, mik til þagnar; þat muna Þróttar vittir, propregn stafir fregna, byrjak frægð nema fjórvi féð miðlendr mik véli. (Skj A1: 88.)

(Prose word order: Niðingar skulut neyða mik til þagnar nú emk sótt or gögnum um gjof döttur. Geldk upp gildi Gauta. Þat vittir stafir Þróttar muna fregna propregn – byrjak frægð – nema féð-miðlendr véli mik fjörvi.)

The bastards won’t force me to be silent, now I am pursued for the gift of the daughter [POETRY/SEX(?)]. I pay out the feast of Gauti <=Óðinn> [POETRY]. Then the challenged staves of Þrótt <=Óðinn> [MEN] will hear news of the rain of Prøtt <=Óðinn>
In the first helmingr, Finnur’s interpretation renders two kennings for poetry, pertaining to the patterns ‘drink of Óðinn’ or ‘gift of Óðinn’. However, Módruvallabók gives dót turr as the determinant of one of these figures. Gjof dót turr [‘gift of the daughter’] does not correspond exactly to anything else in the extant skaldic corpus. We can see the ‘logic’ of Finnur’s emendation as it offers a pattern which may be aligned with poetry-kennning types attested elsewhere: for example, Bragi’s kenning for poet Gauts giafröðtu [‘finder of the gift of Óðinn’] (Skj B1: 5) and Úlfur Uggason’s poetry kenning gjof Grímnis [‘gift of Óðinn’] (Skj B1 128). It seems that dót turr, at least according to the Lexicon Poeticum, only functions as the base word in kennings denoting (personified) waves and other mythological women (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, rev. Finnur Jónsson 1931: s.v. ‘dót turr’). Yet the construction gjof dót turr does not seem inappropriate if we consider its context within Kormáks saga.

The stanza is quoted at a point when the reluctant Porvaldr is encouraged to take some action over Kormákr’s regular visits and flirtatious behaviour with Steingerðr. The previous sections also feature a number of Kormákr’s verses about his desire for Steingerðr whilst simultaneously emasculating her husband, who is depicted as an effeminate slinger of dung. Could gjof dót turr then be taken here as a reference to the ‘gifts’ Kormákr receives from Steingerðr, where the gifts represent something in the line of, if not necessarily amounting to, sex?

Gjof dót turr could also be understood within a mythological framework: Óðinn’s seduction of Suttungr’s daughter Gunnlöð, as related in Skáldspararmál (Faulkes 1998: 4) and the eddic poem Hávamál (Evans 1986: 41). Óðinn, typically sporting a disguise and displaying his usual penchant for giantess-seduction, penetrates Gunnlöð’s mountain abode and sleeps with her on three consecutive nights in exchange for three gulps of the mead of poetry. Gjof dót turr could then access this aspect of the myth, where Óðinn receives the mead as a gift from a giant’s daughter in return for sexual favours. The gift of the daughter then converts into the gift of Óðinn when the god bestows it onto his poetically inclined human protégés.

I have only located two poetry kennings in the corpus which seem to allude to the seduction of Gunnlöð. One appears in a verse fragment attributed to the otherwise unknown Steinþórr, which is preserved in four medieval manuscript versions of Skáldspararmál (AM 242 fol. (Codex Wormianus), GKS 2367 4º (Codex Regius), DG 11 (Codex Upsaliensis) and AM 757 a 4º): forð horma hlístygggs farms arma Gunnlaðar [‘waterfall of the drink of Óðinn’] of the insatiable cargo of the arms of Gunnlöð [ÓDINN’] (Skj B1: 387). In this rekit [‘extended’] figure, it is not so much poetry which is classified in its relationship to the seduction of a giantess, but rather the determinant, Óðinn. Yet the specific selection of the giantess name Gunnlöð implicitly encourages us to map the kenning onto this episode in the myth. The other kenning, which is more pertinent to our discussion, occurs in stanza 6 of Egill’s Arinjarnarkviða:

Þó ek bóqlstrverð
of berþa þorða
maka hængs
markar dróttin
(Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 157.)

Though I dared to carry (my) pillow-price of the match of the salmon of the boundary mark [snake (Óðinn’?) > Gunnlöð > poetry] to the lord.

The base word bóqlstrverð [‘pillow-price’] is suggestive of some form of amorous transaction, so we might read maki [‘match, partner’] in the sense of a sexual partner, although it can also mean a partner in business or equal in strength or status (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874: s.v. ‘maki’). This implicit association may gesture towards Óðinn’s erotic encounter with Gunnlöð and her payment of the mead in exchange for sexual favour in the myth. For this reason, maki hængs markar has been read above as a reference to Gunnlöð, the partner of Óðinn (in snake-form). Although Meissner’s suggestion that this constitutes a kenning for ÓDINN, where the ‘match/erver of the snake’
could refer to Óðinn disguised as a snake, also seems plausible (Meissner 1921: 429).

Bjarni Einarsson reads the determining figure as maki hængs [‘equal of the salmon’], attaching mørk to dróttinn, giving ‘lord of the boundary-mark’, meaning ‘king’ (Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 157). It is unclear exactly how Bjarni reaches the conclusion that maki hængs refers to Óðinn, unless he first interprets it as a kenning for snake, and by analogy, Óðinn disguised in snake form, relating to the god’s transformation in the myth as a means of penetrating the mountain abode of Gunnlög. The ‘equal of the salmon’ seems an unusual kenning for snake; there are no parallels listed by Meissner (1921: 112–16), and one would expect a fish to operate as a base word rather than determinant in a snake kenning, with something relating to the concept of ‘land’ as determinant. From this perspective, hængr markar is a more likely snake-kenning pattern. Dróttinn does not require mørk to carry the general sense ‘ruler’.

Another less mythologically involved way of interpreting bölstrverð maka hængs markar would be to take it as a kenning for gold—‘pillow-price of the match of the salmon of the forest-boundary [snake > female snake > gold]’—which corresponds to the common kenning type ‘bed of the snake’ (Meissner 1921: 237–41). In the semantic context of this verse, poetry seems the more appropriate designation, but it is certainly worth reflecting on the idea that the poet has consciously developed a figure which overlaps with the patterns of gold kennings. The verse offers a retrospective of Egill’s performance of Hofudlausn at the court of Eiríkr blóðox. In Hofudlausn, the poet cultivates a complex correspondence between his head, poetry and payment (gold), where the head, as the vessel of poetry, is imagined in terms of treasure. It appears rather apt then, that Egill should play on an association between poetry and gold in the context of this stanza, where the traditions of gold-kenning patterns are accessed and integrated into what is a highly original kenning for poetry. As we have seen above in the application of regn Hárs þegna, Egill is adept at manipulating the traditions of kenning patterns, playing on potential semantic ambiguities in order to develop a nuanced contextual specificity.

Similarly in Kormák’s verse, the idea of paying one’s dues is strongly emphasised in the line: upp geldk Gauta gildi [‘I pay out the price of Óðinn’]. In this sense, the concepts of payment and return are emphatically connected with the composition of poetry. The construction gjoð döttur, if taken as a kenning for poetry, may deviate from the poetry-kenning patterns listed in Skáldskaparmál, but it can make a certain degree of imaginative sense within this stanza which carries these specific associations of payment. It may also be seen as appropriate in the wider sense of the traditions of kenning patterns—it has a possible parallel in Egill’s Arinbjarnarkviða 6—and in the mythological frame of reference, specifically Gunnlög’s role in the myth of the mead of poetry, but also in the oral narrative traditions surrounding the lausavísur attributed to Kormák. In the version of the myth in Skáldskaparmál and Hávamál, Óðinn uses his sexual whiles as a means of obtaining gulps of the precious poetic mead. This association between poetry and sex also appears to be significant in the characterisation of the poet-protagonists in the Skáldasogur [‘sagas of poets’], where much of the dramtic tension emerges from the poet’s (ill-fated) pursuit of the female object of his desire.

The exact nature of Kormák’s second helmingr is a little more difficult to determine and this, of course, is due to the ambiguity of the potential kenning figures. In his Skjaldedigtning B edition, Finnur takes vittir stafar regns Próttar [‘the challengers of the stave of the rain of Prótt <=Óðinn> [battle > sword > men]’] as a kenning for men, specifically men who, in the context of the saga narrative, are threatening to sue the poet for libel. He also attaches Prós to féil mishlendr, rendering it another kenning for men (‘file-sharers of Pró <=Óðinn> [sword > men]’). But again, these kennings are achieved through certain emendations. That is, the emendation of stafir [’staves’] to the genitive singular form stafar and of Prop- (which is unattested elsewhere but could be an Óðinn name related to Proptr) to the well-attested Óðinn name Prór. Finnur takes regn
here as the base word in a battle kenning of the type ‘the rain of Óðinn’ due to its status as the determining part of a man kenning.

In the above interpretation of the Móðruvallabók text, Propregn could be understood as BATTLE or POETRY. The men are vittir, challenged or rebuked, so it seems appropriate that they would hear news of either a fight – perhaps in the sense of a challenge to a duel – or of poetry (in this context, insult verse). After all, the poetic persona does declare that he originates or disseminates frægð ‘[‘good report, fame’], presumably in the form of poetry. As with Egill’s lausavísa, we might question whether it is in fact necessary for us to ‘resolve’ the ‘rain of Óðinn’ kenning to one of these connotations.

Closing Remarks
The ambiguous nuances developed in Egill and Kormákr’s lausavísur could be appreciated as part of the poets’ aesthetic, which taps into the shared entailments of the concepts ‘battle’ and ‘poetry’ within the traditions of kenning patterns. Egill’s verse blends multiple states of literal and metaphorical liquid which culminate in the ‘rain of Óðinn’s thanes’, threatening a deadly cocktail of linguistic and physical aggression. Kormákr’s challengers are similarly promised both slander and slaughter; these are concepts that are not so much interchangeable as inseparable. Hallar-Steinn’s Þundregn is less ambiguous when its surrounding verse environment is taken into consideration, but it does seem clear that the poet intends to draw a direct parallel between poetry and his patron’s composition of battle. ‘Rain of Óðinn’, as a kenning for poetry, stems from the understanding poetry as a natural body of water within the traditions of poetry kennings. In every case where the natural body of water is specificallyregn, the individual verse context nurtures an association between poetry and battle.

Acknowledgements: I am extremely grateful to Frog for his perceptive comments, stimulating observations and enduring patience while preparing this paper for publication.

Notes
1. A small group of battle kennings feature base words which are evocative of the sound of battle in terms of voice, song or language, for example: sverðs songr [‘song of the sword’] (Skj B: 92), randa rodd [‘voice of shields’] (Skj B: 20), gunnvers [‘battle-verse’] (Gade et al. 2009: 744) and sverða senna [‘flying of swords’] (Faulkes 1999: 7) (see Meissner 1921: 196–197). This type of base word in battle kennings constitutes a shared entailment between the concepts of battle and poetry.
2. For an interesting discussion of referential ambiguity – or rather ‘plurality’ – of kennings within a Christian cognitive framework, see Osborne 2012.
3. Bernard Scudder’s marginal note to his translation captures the ambiguity, suggesting that the rain could represent spears, poetry, or vomit (Scudder 2004: 75).
4. I am grateful to Frog for this observation.
5. My thanks go to Edith Marold and Margaret Clunies Ross for this suggestion, made at the Aberdeen Kenning Symposium, Centre for Scandinavian Studies, University of Aberdeen, 28th June 2010.

Works Cited
Þjálfi’s Journey: An Example of How to Incorporate Younger Sources in the Comparative Study of Indigenous Religions of Northern Europe
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In this article, I would like to address an idea of how to use later material as pointers to older sources, in a comparative perspective. This will be illustrated through a review of the case of Þjálfi, known as the companion of Þórr in Old Norse, one who has been compared with material from other cultures in Northeast Europe. The Sámi material of the 18th century and the Finnish material of the 19th and 20th centuries is problematic in its relationship to the Old Norse sources of the 13th century in many respects, including geographically and chronologically. Earlier research had its image clear: Sámi religion was dominated by the beliefs of their Scandinavian neighbors, as was the religion of the Finns. (Cf. Olrik 1905a; 1905b; 1906.) Later research has, however, shown that the exchange must have been a lot more complicated than that.¹

**Borrowings, Loans, Exchange – What Do We Mean?**

Religious acculturation and change, as suggested by Åke Hultkrantz (1973; cf. Sørensen 2004), is by no means a one-off deal. In most cases, this is a process that extends over a long period of time with several encounters in different settings, introducing, planting and incorporating ideas and motifs among a range of different people. It is not like going into a library and borrowing a book. It is not a single occasion, and probably not with a clear agenda or an open choice. This makes it difficult to state who, in the darkness of early Iron Age Scandinavia, made an impact on whom. Did the reindeer sacrifice to the thunder god on the mountain side in Lapland by a magically-skilled Sámi impress the tax-collector of a Norwegian lord, or was it the cultic festivities in Uppsala that the Finnish merchant told his friends in Satakunta about, that caused the religious change? Whatever happened has left us traces in the written sources, ink on paper or skin. Traces of something that in many respects were anything but that – ink on paper – but rather contacts with the divine, the smell of blood on the idols and tales of powers capable of changing your life. The traces are like gossip about those meetings and the things in life that meant something to everyday life and the people on both sides of the language barriers. I will here try to show how a retrospective comparative method may help us point out possible new perspectives on the sources of Old Norse religion.

**Religions as a Context for Each Other**

A comparative method may help us to lay bare motifs hidden or hinted at in material from different periods and cultures. Most likely the most popular characters of popular belief, so-called ‘traditionsdominanter’ [‘tradition dominants’], that attract popular motifs and draw them to themselves, are the
main target of the method. They are rich in material and usually from different types of sources and times. In this case, with Sámi, Finnish and Old Norse religions, we have the thunder god, in each cultural setting an extremely popular and central character, evidence of which denotes protection against chaos and fertility as the most central topics connected with this figure. The Sámi language is however not one, but several, divided into South Sámi, Lule Sámi, North Sámi and Skolt Sámi, and sometimes even more sub-groups like Ume Sámi and Inari Sámi are also taken into account. Considering the Scandinavian peninsula and the Baltic Sea region as one cultural melting pot, the thunder god’s semantic sphere becomes central and a surface where motifs and even myths are easily transmittable, probably simply due to the fact that they made sense in the everyday world of the worshippers. A mythic motif is taken into a new environment if it seems useful to the worshippers, not if it is approved of by higher authority. Before the domination of the Church, the different ethnic groups interacted in different settings; through trade, war, alliances, etc. Not being exclusive, intercultural settings provided a flow of ideas and impressions. However, with this said, a melting pot and a high degree of sharing does not mean an uncritical borrowing from one another and the copying of an entire mythological system note by note. Each character and religious setting selects its own pieces, forming them and adapting them into the particular system. The cultural sphere of the Scandinavian peninsula is in itself a reason to consider these sources as each other’s context, even though from different times and despite cultural variations.

Who Wrote the Sources?
The three indigenous religions of Northern Europe have three individually very different text corpuses as their main written sources. In sweeping (and somewhat oversimplified) strokes, the Sámi sources were mainly written down by the missionaries of the Swedish and Danish-Norwegian Church, but during a time when the Sámi religion was in full swing. The Finnish material was collected by academics doing fieldwork, but at a time when it had developed into a folk religion with Christian influences. The Old Norse material was written down by Christians a few hundred years after the official conversion to Christianity. All these collectors and scribes have one thing in common: they were all outsiders looking in.

A Human among the Divine?
The helper of the thunder god is an elusive character in several different indigenous religions in Northern Europe, such as the Old Norse, the Sami, and the Finnish. (The helper is also present in the Lithuanian material, but, although interesting, will not be considered in this study). The different sources are spread out not only geographically, but also across several hundred years, from the 10th to the 20th centuries. Nonetheless, they show several common denominators.

The Old Norse character Þjálfi is the only character said to be a human being of any significance in Old Norse mythology when it comes to interacting with the gods and being taken up to the realm of the gods. His sister Röskva is known only by her name. However, not even this is beyond dispute, since Þjálfi and Röskva are said to be giants in Hymiskviða and one suggested etymology for Þjálfi’s name would even point to an elfish origin.

To most of you, the character of Þórr’s helper is familiar. The Old Norse thunder-god uses a number of characters as a sidekick on his travels to Jötunheimar ['Giantlands'], usually Loki or Þjálfi, but there is also the example of Týr in Hymiskviða, not to mention the giant Hymir when he goes fishing for the Miðgarðsrann ['World-Serpent']. In the Old Norse myths, Þórr is the only character who frequently uses a travel companion.

The character of Þjálfi is unique in the Old Norse material. He is a male, age unknown, not considered a child, but not an independent adult either. He is a human/giant, taken as a servant into the realm of the gods. Unlike Loki, Þjálfi is never seen without Þórr and does not star in any of his own myths. Previous attempts to explain Þjálfi have focused mainly on the etymology of his name, and his relationship with, or his swapping places with, Loki as the companion of Þórr.
Regarding the name Þjálfi, suggestions have been made from slightly different directions. One proposal is ‘the serving elf’, others include ‘fighter of shackles’ and ‘one who ties, binds’ (see de Vries 1962: s.v. ‘þjálfi’ and works there cited). In Eilífur Guðrúnarson’s Pósrdrápa, he is called sífuni (Faulkes 1998: Skpm verse 83) together with Þórr, suggesting “a close relationship either by blood or by marriage” (de Vries 1962; Heggstad, Hødnebø & Simensen 1993), which would symbolize a close relationship to the god. Additional information on Þjálfi would be that he is also present in Swedish 19th century folkloristic material, still as the servant of Þórr. Worth noting here is also that Þórr in the same context is often referred to as ‘old man’ or ‘old man Thor’, in the same way that the thunder god is referred to in Sámi, Estonian and Finnish material. (Schön 2005.)

In Sámi religion, the helper of the thunder god is called Thoor-olmai [‘Þórr man’]. This character is more of a guardian to the violent thunder god, who is kept imprisoned due to his bad temper. In North Sámi traditions, the helper is the one releasing the god when thunder is due. But, North Sámi sources suggest that this also could be done by the noajdie, the Sámi shaman. Occasionally in South Sámi tradition, Thoor-olmai also guards the noajdie when he is in a trance, on soul journeys. In the place of Thoor-olmai, we also find Thorens söner [‘Sons of Þórr’], Termes raskaste drängar [‘Termes’ fastest farmhands’] (Fellman 1820–1831 II: 102.), Thorens drängar Luleä 1687 (cultic site in Bergman 1891: 224f.), Tordengudens dreng [‘farmhand/farmhands of the thunder god’] and Thordens striidsman [‘the thunder god’s soldier/fighter’] (Skanke 1728–1731: 255). Three of these names suggest that we are dealing with a group, not a single character. He is the son of the thunder god, and is thus of divine heritage. The Sámi thunder god is called Horagalles in the southern part of the Sámi language area, the name being a loan of the Scandinavian Þórr kall [‘old man Þórr’]. The ‘Germanicizing’ of the Sámi material also points at another problem: the authors of these sources interpreted the information on the Sámi thunder god in terms of Þórr, leaving to us no clue as to how much their interpretation has impacted the sources. The thunder god carries different names in different Sámi languages, where the Hor-names (Horagalles, Horanorias, Horesgudk) are South Sámi, in Lule Sámi he is Thora Galle, in Pite Sámi he is Hora-Gallis and Pajan-Olmai [‘Thunder-Man’]. In northern and eastern regions, the thunder god is called

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the thunder god</th>
<th>Sámi</th>
<th>Old Norse</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SaS. Horagalles – loan from ON Þórr and Norw. kall ‘old man’</td>
<td>Þórr is called ‘old man, oldy’ in late sources</td>
<td>Ukko [‘Old man’], sometimes (exceptionally) called Tuuri</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| Meaning of the servant’s name | Thoor-olmai ‘Þórr man’ (cf. Pajan-olmai ‘thunder man’ a name for the Sámi thunder god in some areas) | Þjálfi [‘one who binds’ (Germ. Gefsessener); or ‘servicable elf’] | tietäjä [‘knower, one who knows’] |

| Nature of the servant | Divine | Human/giant/elf adopted by the god | Human |

| Relationship between the god and the servant | The god’s servant in the myths. Thorens söner, Thorens drängar, Tordengudens dreng, Thoor-olmai, Thordens striidsman, Termes [... ] drängar | The god’s servant in the myths; called Þórr’s sífuni [‘relative by marriage’] | Ritual specialist; called Ukon poika [‘The old man’s / the thunder god’s son/lad’] |

| Role of the servant | Sets the locked up god lose (function shared with the shaman); guards the shaman while he is in trance | Assists the thunder god on his adventures | The religious specialist and the link between gods and men; protects against diseases, protects harvests, etc., relying on the power of the god |

Table 1. Servants of the thunder god in Sámi, Old Norse and Finnish traditions.
The Finnish thunder god Ukko ['Old Man'] does not have a helper in the same sense as the thunder god of Old Norse and Sámi traditions. However, on the other hand, the tietäjä ['knower, one who knows'], the ritual specialist in pre-modern Finland, was called Ukon poika ['son of Ukko, lad of Ukko'], suggesting a close relationship with the god. This specialist was in some sense like a reflection of the deity, and the god supplied the tietäjä with weapons and defensive magic (Siikala 2002: 203–208). In that, the tietäjä and Ukko share the same function. The tietäjä could also be referred to as ‘demi-god’, or even be called ‘god’ (see Table 1).²

By simply combining these three associates of the thunder god, we would produce a non-existent, ideal picture of a helper of the Nordic thunder god with features from the 13th to the 20th century. Such a jumbling could be summarized as follows:

- He is related to the thunder god, either by marriage or as a son.
- He releases the thunder god, and he guards the shaman in trance. He assists the thunder god. He is a religious specialist in close contact with the thunder god and a mediator between man and the divine. He has a connection to shamanic activity.
- He is divine or a human made divine or a human with special abilities.

If we, for a moment, halt this mad speculative train and instead think, we will find several things to be critical about. First of all, the sources stem from different geographically scattered places. Secondly, they are in most cases from very different time periods. At least the heydays of Sámi and Finnish religions are separated from those of Old Norse by several hundred years. Thirdly, we can also conclude that the circumstances under which the different sources were preserved and written down also differ. What to do?

Well, first of all, we can conclude that we have material from the 1200s to the 20th century from all religions, even though the main corpora surface in different time periods for each of them. During this time, new things are added and subtracted from the material. We can also conclude that Christianization struck each differently: with different force and with different outcomes.

By combining all the characteristics, we get something that does not exist and that should not be treated as any sort of reality either. What is it then we have in front of us in the laboratory? Is it a vehicle that will take us easily to new discoveries? No. Is it a map of the complete character of a Nordic concept of the helper of the thunder god? No.

What we have here is a heap of suggestions, road signs pointing in directions where we may look more closely for more clues to solve the riddle.

So what we need to do is to use the suggestions and look deeper into the material that the road signs point to.

It is my firm belief that only evidence found in the Old Norse material says anything about the concept of pre-Christian Scandinavian traditions. Sámi and Finnish material can never be used to simply fill in the gaps in Old Norse religion and vice versa. The material in a comparative study, whether it is cross-cultural or chronological, may tell us something about a cultural contact and influence, and may point back in time, but cannot stand alone. If it points in a direction and more indications are found, it strengthens the possibility. It may be difficult to accept the historical darkness here, but until new light is shed on the matter, this is the only acceptable conclusion.

With this set of rules and the road signs from Sami and Finnish material, it is possible to proceed with the examination of Þjálfi from the suggestions into questions:

1. Is Þjálfi ever considered to be part of a collective, a group?
2. Does anything that Þjálfi or Þórr do connect them to shamanic activity?
3. Could the name Þjálfi have been a title for a ritual specialist?
4. Is Þjálfi a mythological interpretation of a ritual specialist?

Question 1: Þjálfi is never considered to be part of a group as sometimes the assistant in Sámi tradition seems to be, apart from the visit to Utgarðalóki in Snorri’s Edda, a very strange group indeed. Two humans/giants, a god/giant on
his way down and the thunder god. The myth seems to be a compilation of several motifs and shorter tales, and the outcome of the myth is somewhat unclear.

Question 2: I have not found anything that would connect Þórr or Þjálfi with any shamanic activity.

Question 3: No, Þjálfi is more likely to be a human personal name, which strengthens the idea of Þjálfi not being a god in his full right. Recent discoveries though, may have given us new information (Portable Antiquities Scheme: “Spindle Whorl”).

Question 4: There are similarities between the Thoor olmai’s and the noajdie’s release of the thunder god and Þjálfi’s actions in the myth of the battle against Hrungnir. In the story, Þjálfi tricks the giant into standing on his shield, both in Snorri’s prose version and in Eilífr’s skaldic poem Þórsdrápa. Since I consider this to be a myth of ritual fire-striking, where the giant Hrungnir is made of stone with a three-pointed heart and armed with a whetstone clashes together with Þórr and his hammer of steel (as I have argued elsewhere; see Bertell 2003: 227ff.), it seems no coincidence that Þjálfi is the companion in this myth and not Loki. Þjálfi makes the meeting of the whetstone and the hammer in mid-air possible, thus creating the fire/lightning at their collision. The whole idea of the character of Þjálfi seems to be connected to the relationship between humans and the mightiest of the gods as a mythical interpretation of a ritual. The myth of Hrungnir and his heart also connects to the story of Þórost inn Bæjarmagns and his fire striking weapon; a three-sided stone and a nail from the dwarves that returns to the throwers hand. (Bertell 2003:232f.)

The idea of humans related to gods is universal and old (Steinsland 2007: 435–436). Already the Egyptians considered themselves related to the sun god, and many other cultures have as well. The idea of Þjálfi being related (sifuni) to Þórr is therefore by no means radical even if he is human, and could therefore be a mythical interpretation of a ritual specialist’s relationship with the thunder god. Since he is considered to be human by Snorri and a giant in Hymiskviða, and if the etymology does indeed point towards an elvish origin, this may show that the category of being to which Þjálfi belonged was of less importance. The significant point may have been that he was not a god. However, this also raises new questions. To what extent could a worshipper him- or herself turn to a god, and when did he or she need someone to transmit his request for him/her? Here we find different kinds of contact between man and god: a seafarer could still call upon Þórr for better weather, but the Conversion of Iceland was taken care of by a native ritual specialist.

Conclusions?

In the light of the religious surroundings, the etymological explanations of the name Þjálfi could point in the right direction: someone who assists and makes the thunder god successful by letting him lose (as Thoor Olmai does in Sámi myth) and by paving his way. This is what Þjálfi does in the Hrungnir episode, in which he could be interpreted as the fire striker, making the steel and the whetstone meet.

This motif sphere and the flow between the indigenous religions shows that the motifs associated with the thunder god probably had regional variation, and as a ‘tradition dominant’ attracted different motifs in different settings, between cultures and even within each culture. As seen in the poem Þórsdrápa in comparison with Snorri’s prose version of the Hrungnir-episode, even within the same narrow milieu as the one Snorri operated in, there are variations that could be an expression of different traditions or genres, rather than Snorri editing the text. Since the variations across the materials reviewed here are so extensive, we may conclude that the mythological assistant of the thunder god in Sámi and Old Norse religion was a character and a concept in which the central idea is an assistant and the nature and form (race, number) is secondary. It could also be interpreted as a central theme for the thunder god: he may not work alone. In the episodes where he does (Lokasenna; Harbardsljod) this is pointed out as something exceptional. Strangely enough, Þórr is called einridi [‘lone
The (De)Construction of Mythic Ethnography I: Is Every \textit{þurs} in Verse a \textit{þurs}?

Frog, University of Helsinki

Hegemonic academic discourses have developed an over-idealized image of \textit{jötunn} (pl. \textit{jötunnar}) [conventionally translated ‘giant’] and \textit{þurs} (pl. \textit{þursar}) [often translated ‘ogre’], distinguishing it from ‘giant’ as exclusive categories of being. The term \textit{þurs} is one of a number of Old Norse terms for otherworldly beings hostile to humans, all of which commonly get classed as ‘giants’, ‘ogres’ and/or ‘trolls’ in English. The image of ideal categories is a scholarly construction of Old Norse mythic ethnography that has been developed and refined since the 19th century. Particularly across the past decade, debate has
developed surrounding the degree to which different terms for humanoid supernatural ‘others’ had distinct, overlapping or corresponding semantic fields (on Trollology, see Sävborg & Bek-Pedersen, this volume).

It is necessary challenge the hegemonic discourses in order to break down the ‘myths’ of scholarship – i.e. the sets “of unconsciously held, unexamined premises” (Jewett & Lawrence 1977: 17) that inform research. Alaric Hall (2009: 199–200) has elegantly framed the problem as a question of whether jötunn and ðurs and other terms for mythic beings form a lexical set of mutually exclusive categories like robin, sparrow and hawk, or a set of overlapping semantic fields like monarch, king and ruler. Hall (2009: 200–201) quotes a stanza 25 of the eddic poem¹ Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar in order to highlight the plurality of terms that could be employed synonymically and states: “Such evidence is sufficient to put the burden of proof on those who would assume that words like ðurs and jötunn denoted distinct races.” This proposition is both reasonable and provocative, and worthy of response.

The present article considers whether some variation in the use of ðurs is specifically conditioned by factors of contextual discourse function, genre or mode of expression. It focuses on poetic sources following on recent register-based approaches to mythic ethnonyms (Frog & Roper 2011; Frog 2011a). Contesting hegemonic ideals tends to concentrate on sites of inconsistency to illustrate why or how a dominant model does not work. This runs the risk of constructing an image at the opposite extreme, highlighting variation to a degree that might be equally misrepresentative if factors conditioning variation are not considered. This work sets out to survey poetic uses of ðurs in relation to mode of expression and contexts of use in the hope that a more subtle understanding of terms for categories of mythic being may lead to a more nuanced construction of mythic ethnography in the future.

No attempt to untangle the precise semantics of ðurs will be made here. Concentration will be on the more modest question of whether use of ðurs in oral poetry offers evidence that this was an ethnonym denoting a race distinct from jötunn and other categories of mythic being. Hall (2009) argued that use of the term ðurs in magical charms could refer to an agent that causes illness. The present study builds on this distinction of uses, undertaking an exhaustive² survey of examples of the uncompounded term ðurs in early Old Norse poetic sources. It considers the possibility that the term’s semantics could vary both historically and by conventions of context. (Although the term hrímðurs [‘frost-ðurs’] is generally treated as fully equivalent to ðurs, it will not be included in the present survey; this will instead be reserved for a separate discussion that will also address uses of hrímðurs in prose.) The survey will be prefaced by some general observations and the introduction of some terms and tools relevant for discussion. Although saga literature is not the focus here, its central role in problematizing Old Norse mythic ethnography (e.g. Schulz 2004; Jakobson 2005) warrants comment to situate those materials and discussions in relation to poetic materials. The poetic materials will be addressed in terms of skaldic (dróttkvætt) verse, eddic verse, so-called heroic ‘death songs’ and (but not exhaustively) later rimur poetry. A synthesis of synchronic and diachronic perspectives will be left until the concluding discussion.

The Historical Background of ðurs

Old Norse ðurs appears to go back to Proto-Germanic. It has cognates in Old English (þyrs) and a number of Germanic languages on the continent (Old Saxon thawis, Old High German duris, etc.) (see e.g. Grimm 1883: 520–521; de Vries 1962: 627, s.v. ‘þurs’). Cognates exhibit semantics of a monstrous and potentially powerful anthropomorphic being that is threatening to human societies and/or social order. Proto-Germanic *þurisaz entered Finnic languages, with reflexes in Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry (tursas), Vepsian (turžaz) and Estonian (tursas), designating a powerful monstrous beast or being (of the sea).³ ðurs is also the only hazardous mythic being whose name (presumably since Proto-Germanic) corresponds to the name of a rune (ð)
alongside runes called madr [‘man’], týr [‘god’, or the god Tyri] and dás [‘god’] (cf. McKinnell & Simek 2004: 20–22). Together, the evidence suggests that þurs held prominence as a term, category and/or concept during at least part of the Iron Age, yet by the time of Old Norse manuscript sources, according to Katja Schulz’s (2004) study on ‘giants’, the term þurs is relatively infrequent in saga prose (with the exception of one saga) and only of noteworthy prominence in eddic verse (Schulz 2004: tables on pp. 39, 51–52).

It is impossible to reconstruct the precise semantic field of Proto-Germanic *þursaz and its relationship to other Proto-Germanic terms for mythic beings. Acknowledging the extended history nevertheless remains necessary in this context: the term’s semantic fields and patterns of use would be subject to development in each language and even in each local dialect community across that history, in addition to contextual variation within them. Hall’s question concerning the type of lexical set formed by jotunn, þurs and other terms requires consideration of ‘when’ and ‘where’ – and possibly also ‘for whom’.

Some Tools for Discussion

Register is here used as a term and concept for approaching contextually-based variation in language. The term ‘register’ developed in linguistics to designate language as it is used and realized in accordance with a communicative context, thus a register is one conditioned variation of language among others (see e.g. Halliday 1978; adapted to the analysis of oral poetries centrally by Foley 1995; 2002). Register will here be used as a tool for approaching variation in how lexical items are handled and interpreted in relation to poetic systems and poetic genres as contexts of variation in language use. The oral-poetic mode of expression (even adapted to a written mode of representation) emerges as a remarkably significant determinant on these variations in language use as a historical process. Although the poetic sources addressed here do not enable the identification of factors producing variation such as circumstances, relationships and intentions of interlocutors, audiences and potential agents in communication (Halliday’s ‘field’ and ‘tenor’), conventionalized relationships of oral-poetic modes and genres to cultural practices, including social functions and discourse functions, impacts and constructs the registers and differences between them according to long-term patterns of circumstances, relationships and intentions in use. Depending on the tradition, those conventions can override (i.e. greatly reduce) the impacts of other contextual determinants. As a consequence, an oral-poetic register may be marked by significant deviations from language use in other contexts.

The use of language in skaldic dróttkvætt poetry can be considered an extreme case of a historically conditioned register of Old Norse language that developed in response to the remarkable metrical demands of the poetic mode of expression and conventions of its use in social practices. This register is particularly characterized by the semantic flex of vocabulary for synonymy and the production of poetic circumlocutions called kennings. For example, the Old Norse term álfr [‘elf’] was an ethnonym referring to a particular category of mythic being, even if the precise category varied by time and place (Gunnell 2007; Hall 2007). In the register of skaldic poetry, however, álfr lacked any connotations of mythic quality, and does not appear used in this register with reference to ‘elves’ as a particular category of mythic being, with a single possible exception. Distinguishing registers will help distinguish ranges of use of the term ‘purs’ in different contexts from þurs as a particular vernacular category, and it will provide a foundation for approaching variation across different registers.

Alliterative rank is a tool employed as a potential relevant indicator of variation in lexical semantics (see Roper 2012 and works there cited). Alliterative rank is the relative frequency with which a term carries alliteration out of the total number of occurrences in an oral poetry, expressed as a percentage. For example, following Hugo Gering’s (1903) concordance, the term jotunn occurs as a simplex/uncompounded noun 93
times in eddic verse; 69% of these carry alliteration (Frog 2011a: 45), and therefore jǫtunn in eddic verse has an alliterative rank of 69%. Alliterative rank can also be calibrated, for example by removing Vollzeilen from the calculation (i.e. internally alliterating short lines in which any noun is more likely to carry alliteration) reducing the alliterative rank of jǫtunn to 60%. (Frog 2011a: 45.) Conversely, the poetic term regin ['powers <gods>'] is found 39 times as a simplex in eddic verse with a 77% alliterative rank, which rises to 92% if the alliteration of regin’s epithets is included (Frog & Roper 2011: 30). A high alliterative rank may be a relevant indicator that the semantics of a particular term have been subordinated to synonymy for something else within a register, and this indicator can be triangulated with other indicators of semantics and patterns of use within the particular register.

Finally, a distinction of ‘mythic’ beings from the fully ‘mythological’ will also be employed for discussion. To keep it simple, the term ‘mythic’ will be used with reference to beings, events and phenomena associated with the supernatural or unseen world. The term ‘mythological’ will be reserved for a special category of beings, events and phenomena that stand outside understandings of the created ‘human world’ although they may penetrate into it. Thus gods, giants and monsters involved in the creation of the world or its destruction are ‘mythological’. Various otherworld locations, such as Valhǫll and Hel’s realm of the dead are also here treated as ‘mythological’ along with their rulers (although people from the human world continuously migrate there when they die). This distinction is significant because jǫtunn appears as the primary term for the mythological adversaries of gods, whereas þurs only appears associated with these mythological beings in poetry. More generally, a quality frequently associated with ‘giants’ more generally is their absence (cf. Schulz 2004: 309): they belong to remote times and spaces rather than being situated with potential to interact with immediate living communities in the present. Even if it is not possible to delineate clearly the semantic fields of the different terms, it may be possible to assess a broad distinction of ‘mythological’ beings of the cosmogony, cosmology and/or eschatology, from ‘mythic’ beings interacting with living human communities.

**Semantic Variation in Prose and Poetry**

In much saga literature and the shorter narratives called þættir – especially in narratives marked by Christian conversion themes or exhibiting an interest in the fantastic for humour and entertainment – terms for monster may be used in free variation or identified with lands or countries as in fabricated ethnographies encountered in medieval Latin travelogues. In these sources, the different terms for monster may function like the lexical set monarch, king, ruler. It is important to acknowledge that the saga literature reflects only a limited range of genres and the views and understandings of only certain parts of society. Analogously, most urban Americans cannot distinguish a groundhog from a hedgehog, badger or gopher, or will know which is also called a woodchuck. All of these words are probably recognizable and could even be used to refer to relatively small, furry, four-legged animals that are not considered seriously threatening to humans, but the distinction between them has become culturally remote to urban Americans and is generally not significant in any immediately meaningful way. Of course, ‘this is what Wikipedia is for’ – but the meanings of terms for mutually exclusive categories can, in practice, shift to overlapping or equivalent semantic fields. The emergent patterns of use construct these semantic fields for the language users, even if published reference works provide a mooring-post for terms today. Americans, for whom automobiles are so prominent, would similarly be likely familiar with a range of automotive terms related to the motor of a car (e.g. carburator, alternator, distributor) without knowing what these look like or what they actually do. In this case, as with disease or medical science, web design, dinosaurs and other broad subject domains, categories and terms may blur for the majority of the population while competence in the relevant distinctions is more specialized and may be
concentrated in authoritative specialists. Where the categories in question belong to imaginal worlds and imaginal experience that lack unambiguous physical referents, the social position and authority of specialists may be more significant for the maintenance (and change) of the semantic fields of terms and categories, especially in the wake of Christianization.

The mixing and blurring of categories and terms such as Old Norse þurs could be something particular to certain portions of society, for whom the distinctions were distant, while not for e.g. healers. It could also be a conscious strategy to problematize these categories and devalue distinctions as a form of contesting discourse (as a Christian strategy, see Abram 2009), or a function of emergent registers of vernacular literature, where the roles of mythic beings could become symbolic in relation to Christianity or employed to accomplish narrative functions to which the particular category of being was secondary (Schulz 2004). Even in such a venue, conventional cultural idiom can condition word use. Idiomatic expressions therefore become potential sites where indicators of features or qualities characteristic of þursar might be suspended and maintained within an expression (outside of authorial intent). Although identifying idioms is problematic, some potential examples are the expression ginna þá sem þursa [‘trick them like þursar’] in Ínls saga (Sveinsson 1954: 432), which could be rooted in the characterization of þursar as stupid (although cf. Schulz 2004: 32), or likari þursum at vexti ok at sýn en mennskum mǫnnum [‘[they] look more like þursar in build and appearance than human men’] in Egils saga (Einarsson 2003: 33), which could reflect ideas about their size and appearance. Nevertheless, the value of most of these sources remains highly dubious for developing a perspective on the category of þurs outside of the particular generic discourses which produced their own emergent registers and constructed þurs in relation to the interests, priorities and ideologies engaged by those discourses.

This poetic material provides a valuable counterpoint to the prose because, on the one hand, an oral-poetic idiom is characterized by the conventionalization of language use, and on the other hand, its use implicitly reflects the degree of the user’s competence in that idiom (which can be considered in relation to the broader corpus). Traditions of oral poetry develop a lexicon and shape its semantics as a historical process in relation to metrical demands and functions of use. This enables them to maintain archaisms of vocabulary and grammar as well as words from diverse dialects (Foley 1992). Acoustic demands, such as alliteration and rhyme in particular, can result in the semantic flex of vocabulary and the semantic subordination of terms as synonyms for other words (Roper 2012). Simply put, an oral poetic register is a specialized idiom in which language, its use and semantics may deviate to varying degrees from aesthetically unmarked speech. Even in the wake of cultural and ideological change, formal constraints and conventionally established use present a practical hindrance to abruptly revising the lexicon or its established semantics. This is further reinforced in genres oriented to the consistent reproduction of socially recognized texts, which in the case of eddic poetry appears not simply to have been a reproduction of conventional traditional content, as in South Slavic epic, but the reproduction of ‘poems’ as textual entities (Frog 2011a; 2011c). Unlike prose, traditional poetry required competence in the poetic idiom, its language and patterns of use. Consequently, poetic sources are more likely to represent regular, conventional uses of language among which exceptions become apparent, although conventional uses in the poetic register may be a consequence of the conservatism of that register and not fully coincide with current use in other discourses.

**Purs in Skaldic dróttkvætt Poetry**

The register of skaldic poetry (sometimes called ‘court poetry’) is associated with a richly developed system of synonyms called heiti (cf. ‘elf’ as a semantic equivalent of ‘man’ mentioned above). Heiti were used in the formation of kennings – poetic circumlocutions produced by a noun modified by another noun (in the genitive case or in a
compound) referring to a third nominal (e.g. the kenning ‘elf <man> of blades <swords>’ means ‘MAN/WARRIOR’) (see e.g. Meissner 1921). The system of heiti and kennings, developed in relation to the rigorous demands of alliteration and internal rhyme, is especially characteristic of the skaldic dróttkvætt meter for the generative production of new verses, while verses and poems of exceptional quality or of anecdotal, social or historical relevance would continue to circulate in highly crystallized form, which then provided exemplars for new verses.

Purs is found in only two skaldic dróttkvætt verses and functions as a heiti in a kenning in both cases. The 10th century poet Eyvindr skáladaspíllur uses the obscure kenning þursa tøs byrrr [‘breeze of the mate(?) of þursar’] (lausavísa 11.3–4) (Skj A⁴ 74). The context allows the kenning to be resolved as a variation of the ‘wind of the giantess’ type meaning ‘mind’ although tøs remains obscure (Meissner 1921: 139; Egilsson & Jónsson 1931: 652). In the verse, purs carries alliteration at the onset of the odd line (tøs carries rhyme). Purs also occurs in the kenning þursa kveðja [‘speech of þursar <giants>’ = GOLD] in Rognvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinsson’s 12th century composition Háttalykill [‘A Key to Meters’] (36a.6). Each pair of stanzas in this poem illustrates a ‘meter’ or variation thereon (Skj A⁴ 526). In this case, purs is not connected to normal metrical requirements, but a metrical/stylistic variation of stanzas 36a and 36b seems to be complementary alliterations across lines and couplets: purs–þjóð [purs–‘people’] (36a.6, 8), like bryggja–brynjja [‘pier’–‘armour’] (36a.2, 4), may be strategically employed for alliteration.⁶ Both examples are in the dróttkvætt meter and purs appears semantically neutral, without additional connotations. In both examples, purs can be considered to function as a giant-heiti and its semantics subordinated to this role within the register, although this does not explain why a two-syllable giant-name (e.g. Þjazi) was not used as a heiti for alliteration in these cases.

The fact that there are only two examples in the whole corpus supports the probability that use in Háttalykill is strategically motivated. It also suggests that purs was not significant to the productive register of skaldic poetry in any known period (i.e. since ca. 900). This implication is supported by the fact that the term þurs is neither included in the versified lists (þalur) of giant-heiti (cf. hrímþurs, possibly as a personal name: Faulkes 1998: 111 v.418), nor mentioned as a synonym by Snorri Sturluson in his Edda.

The Corpus of purs in the Eddic Verse
The term purs is potentially found 21 times in eddic verse (cf. Gering 1903: s.v. ‘þurs’; Kellogg 1988: s.v. ‘þurs’). Of these, 1 names the rune þ rather than being used as an ethnonym (Skm 36.1) and 2 are problematic, but purs nevertheless exhibits a 100% alliterative rank. Of these, 8 are in ljóðaháttir (4 in Vollzeilen) and 13 are in fornryðislag: 5 are singular and 16 are plural. The problematic examples are the expressions þursa líki [‘look like a þursi / þursar’] in the poem Alvismál (Alv 2.4) and þursa þjóð in Skírnismál (10.4). This tally includes three metrical runic inscriptions,⁷ but not a possible fourth example within them. Multiple attestations of purs in manuscript variants of verses are here counted only once even where they may offer two independently attested versions of a formula (following conventions of Old Norse scholarship – cf. Vsp 8.6). However, the expression þursa brúðir [‘brides of þursar’] found only in the Hauksbók variant of Völuspá (17.2) where the Codex Regius variant has þur þv í liði [‘out of that company’] is included.⁸ This survey also does not include the 6 examples of hrímþurs that will be addressed in a separate article. The 20 occurrences as an ethnonym will be reviewed in categories, beginning with examples in which the use appears to be a more or less unambiguous synonym for jotunn [‘giant’], followed by use in magic and then considering the peripheral examples.

Purs as a giant-heiti
In fornryðislag meter narrative poetry, 9 of the 10 examples appear to employ purs unambiguously as a synonym for ‘giant’. In all of these cases, purs is used with reference to beings interacting with gods outside of the present world order in mythological time. Of these, 6 are found in the short-line formula
**Þursa dróttinn** ['lord of þursar'] as the collocated alliterative epithet of the giant Þrymr in Þrymskviða (6.2, 11.4, 22.2, 25.2, 30.2, 31.6). The short-line formulae þursa meyjar ['maidens of þursar'] (Vsp 8.6) and þursa móðir ['mother of þursar'] (Bd 13.8) share a corresponding structure. The tenth-century example, Hauksbók Voluspá 17.2, þursa brúðir ['brides of þursar'], appears to belong to the same pattern of use, and all three of these carry alliteration on a þrír–þurs ['three–giant'] collocation. Of these 9 expressions, 8 therefore a) meet alliteration in an even short-line or b-line, b) in which the term þurs is in a genitive plural c) followed by a noun indicating a figure or figures identifiable as giants in the mythological sphere d) and characterized through a social relationship; e) the construction invariably constitutes a complete line; and f) the expression’s structure corresponds to that of a kenning: it is comprised of two nouns in a genitive relation referring to a third nominal. This set of formulaic expressions corresponds to what Milman Parry (1928: 11–15) described as a “formula system” as illustrated in Figure 1 (cf. Lord 1960: 35). The usage of þurs appears to be conventionalized to the degree that it appears formulaic, making it highly probable that it has a consistent, morpheme-equivalent semantic value shared across different uses (cf. Parry 1928: 16; Lord 1960: 4; Froj 2012b: 23–25). In addition, these formulaic uses of þurs are clearly associated with accomplishing þ-aliteration, and of the 9 examples, this is accomplished in 6 with alliteration on a Þrymr–þurs collocation, and on a þrír–þurs collocation in the remaining 3.10 This augments the probability that this is a poetic synonym associated with meeting metrical demands, while the formal structural correspondence to a kenning is a potential cue that þurs may function here as a heiti or synonymous equivalent for ‘giant’ as found in skaldic verse (cf. also Potts, this volume).

The remaining example from this group occurs in the description of Þórr tearing off the head of a bull in Hymiskviða. The full long line is: *Braut af þjóri / þursa råðbani* ['Snapped off of the young bull / slayer of þurs'] (Hym 19.1–2). þursa råðbani is unequivocally a kenning for Þórr. None of Þórr’s mythological adversaries in narratives (including Þrymr) are directly identified as a þurs. The use of þurs in this line thus seems most naturally interpreted as a heiti or poetic synonym for a jötunn of mythological proportions. This use is similarly structured to those above, and like them, it completes a second short-line meeting þ-aliteration. The structure differs from the formulae above in that þurs is a genitive singular monosyllable followed by a three-syllable noun. However, the alternative *Braut af þjóri / þursa bani* ['Snapped off of the young bull / slayer of þursar'] would produce over-alliteration in the line with an alliteration on the final metrical stress, where alliteration was conventionally avoided.

**þursa þjóð: A ljóðahátt Formula?**

The ljóðahátt (and galdralag) meter poem Skírnismál is preserved in two early manuscript copies: the fragmentary 14th century AM 748 4o and the famous Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4o) from the later 13th century. AM 748 4o’s variant of the Vollzeile
formula with a possible third example of purs in verse. The 11th century Canterbury Charm is an Old Norse runic inscription preserved in the margin of an Anglo-Saxon manuscript. The two long lines of verse are preceded and followed by “Gyrid sárþvara”, presumably identifying the agent, and the runic text seems to conclude by stating what the charm is used to heal. The epithet sárþvara is either a nominative “wound-stick (for stirring)” (cf. McKinnell & Simek 2004: 127) or a genitive of sárþvari [“of the wound-stick(s)/spear(s)’] (cf. Hall 2009: 201). The illness is unclear and has been interpreted as, for example, “rushing (infection?) in the veins” (McKinnell & Simek 2004: 127) or “blood-vessel pus” (Macleod & Mees 2006: 120).

kurilsarpåraraffarpurufunduninistþþrauriguþik
[p]orsatrutiniurisarpåraraupaprauruari

Gyrid sárþvara,
far þú nú, / fundinn ertu.
Pórr vígi þik, / pursa dróttin, 
Við æðrafari. 
(McKinnell & Simek 2004: O17.)

Gyrid wound-pvara
Go now! / You’re found!
May Pórr ‘hallow’ you / lord of pursa 
(G)yrid wound-pvara.
Against (–?) of the veins.

The Sigtuna copper amulet, also from the latter 11th century, presents a corresponding long-line couplet. The agent again appears qualified by an obscure sár- [‘wound-, harm-’] epithet, here more reliably identified as a genitive singular. This couplet is accompanied by an additional charm sequence in which the illness agent is addressed as úlfr [‘wolf’] (see McKinnell & Simek 2004: O16).

Only the relevant long-line couplet will be addressed here:

púr × sarriþu × pursa [hole for amulet] 
trutinskiþpurufundunis

Pórt/pursu sarriþu, / pursa dróttinn; 
Fyð þú nú, / fundinn es! 
(McKinnell & Simek 2004: O16.)

Pórt/purs of wound-fever(?) / lord of pursa 
Flee now / [it] is found!

Purs in fornyrðislag Runic Charms

Two runic healing charms in the fornyrðislag meter present examples of the pursa dróttinn
Recorded in Sweden and the British Isles at roughly the same time, the long-line couplet of these two examples is sufficiently similar verbally, structurally, semantically and in function that the wide circulation of the charm is implied. The order of the lines vary as does whether the illness agent with a sár- epithet is named within or in conjunction with the formulae. Nevertheless, one long line exhibits the probable structure (ð-name ...) / þursa dróttinn; the other presents an imperative verb carrying f-alliteration followed by þú nú [‘you now’] and a second short line comprised of the past participle fundinn [‘found’] with a present tense singular form of vera [‘to be’] suggesting the probable structure (f-verb) þú nú / fundinn er(tu).  

It is possible to read an additional example of þurs in the Sigtuna amulet inscription in addition to the þursa dróttinn formula. In runic inscriptions, when the final phoneme at the end of a word is the same as the onset of the following word, it was not always written out, therefore þur × sarrípu can be read either þórr sárríðu or þurs sárríðu. Reading ‘Þórr of wound-fever’ produces a surprising text because of Þórr’s long-term role and prominence as an adversary of giants, trolls and other mythic threats to humanity, as well as his role as a positive figure in contemporary and later healing charms and related magic: it would be contradictory to Þórr’s ‘semantic center’ (see Schjodt, this volume). However, the structure þórr (...) / þursa dróttinn would be consistent with the corresponding lines in the Canterbury Charm. On the other hand, the appearance of þurs as an initial designation followed by its repetition in alliteration with þursa dróttinn also seems peculiar, especially observing that in all other examples of the þursa dróttinn formula, alliteration is carried by a personal name (e.g. þrymr–þursa dróttinn). However, like Gyril and others, the Sigtuna amulet may employ an otherwise unattested giant-name such as *þurr [‘Dry’] (cf. the giantess name þurþóðr; Faulkes 1998: 113 v.427).

It remains unclear whether the illness agent is a þurs or whether this is another example of semantic flex according to the oral-poetic register of healing charms. Hall (2009: 199) stresses that the Norwegian Rune Poem (17th century preservation) states that the rune þ veldr kvenna kvillu [‘causes women’s illness’] and the Icelandic Rune Poem (ca. 1500 preservation) states kvenna kvöl ok kletta íbái / ok Valrúnar verr [‘women’s torment and crag’s inhabitant / and Valrún’s mate’]. This would be consistent with associating þurs with something that required healing, observing that in both charms above, the epithet of the agent contains the element sár [‘sore, wound’]. Although þurs seems to be the only anthropomorphic monster for which a rune is named, other runes are named for injuries and potential illness agents: kaun [‘sore’] and nauðr [‘need, compulsion (illness)’] (McKinnell & Simek 2004: 20–22, 140–144). þurs could thus have been a name for a rune not simply as a term for ‘giant’, but more particularly because of connotations associated with the health and welfare of living human beings, which would resonate with the emphasis of the later Rune Poems.

The index of þurs in the þursa dróttinn formula may have here been informed by the mode of representation: þurs may have been understood particularly in relation to the type of being associated with the þ rune, or the formula may have even been interpreted as ‘lord of þ runes’. If the charm was widely circulating, it becomes probable that the semantic ambiguity of the kenning construction could allow this formula to be flexibly interpreted according to local conceptions of illness and illness agents.14

If the illness agents of these charms were identified as þursar, this would also indicate that þursar were viewed as potentially impinging on inhabited human environments much as the jötnar could potentially impinge on environments inhabited by gods in the mythology. Hall argues that:

[through] Þórr’s invocation against illness and [...] the conceptual association of (some) illnesses with monsters, we can begin to perceive a discourse in which the cosmological framework of medieval Scandinavian worldviews was applied at a day-to-day level to provide a medium for healing. (Hall 2009: 209.)

This theory is supported by equivalent paradigms in Finno-Karelian ritual practices that appear heavily dependent on Germanic
models. In these, the ritual specialist realized himself as a representative of the thunder god expelling the illness and illness agent. This schema symbolically correlates the illness agent with adversaries of the god, and the adversaries of the thunder-god therefore reciprocally inform the significance of engagements with illness agents intertextually as their equivalent in the human sphere. Accordingly, the confrontations of healers with pursar could have been intertextually informed by the battles of Þórr with jotnar, whether the actions of the healer were correlated with Þórr’s or Þórr’s power was called on more immediately (as in the Canterbury Charm) and directed by the healer. This would not mean that these categories were identical or interchangeable.

There is no evidence that jotnar of the cosmological sphere – agents of mythological time and space – were generally threatening to humans as agents of illness in the ethnographic present of the living communities where charms such as these were used (although cf. Tolley 2009 I: 239). A distinction between pursar and jotnar as ethnoi could remain unambiguous and their identification symbolic, metaphorical. Put another way, the healer’s confrontation could employ and even re-enact the schema of the thunder god’s confrontation with a jotum as the model for expelling illnesses. Whatever the precise interpretation, if the pursa dróttinn formula here refers to the illness agent, then the formula could engage, according to the genre or context in which it was used, different categories of mythic being that were not otherwise interchangeable – mythological jotnar in narrative poetry and mythic agents of human illness in practical charms.

**Purs in Other Runic Charms**

The third runic example is among a mix of eddic meters on a rune staff from Norway from the end of the 14th century. The first of four sides of the staff, addressed here, appears to be a protective charm, whereas the other three sides threaten “the infliction of distress and misery [...] aimed at securing the love of a woman” (Macleod & Mees 2006: 35). The meter of the first side appears to be a form of galdralag – a variation on ljóðaháttr with irregular variation between long lines and Vollzeilen (see Sverdlov 2011):

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\]

Ríst ek bót-rúnar / ríst ek bjarg-rúnar einfalt við álfrum
tvífalt við trölum
þrífalt við þursum ...
(McKinnell & Simek 2004: P6.)

I carve healing runes / I carve protective runes once against elves twice against trolls thrice against pursar ...

This charm explicitly identifies categories of mythic being against which the charm protects. The appearance of álfr “alongside various monstrous beings which in earlier evidence seem distinct from álfr” (Hall 2007: 133) suggests that fundamental conceptions of mythic beings and their categories were changing or had changed in genres of magical practice in or by the 14th century. These processes may have been impacting purs. Nevertheless, there is at least formal continuity in the þrír–purs collocation (cf. thurs thriðan stabu [þhurs, the third sign]” in the Old Saxon Abecedarium Nordmannicum). Although alliteration can be considered a determinant on the terms used, the categories of mythic being listed are all of the present world order. There is no reason to believe that the categories of this charm blurred with cosmological beings (observing that jotnar [‘giants’] would also alliterate with einfalt [‘once’] here). The agents here associated with threats or harm all seem to be able to harm or encounter humans in places that humans do or could normally go.

Purs is also found in a still later, non-metrical runic charm formula found in the 16th century Icelandic Galdrabók [‘Book of Charms’]: “Ríst eeg þ[ier] Otte ausse Naudir Nije þossa ðretten” (Lindqvist 1921: 72) [I carve you eight æsir (a runes), nine needs (n runes), thirteen pursar (b runes)]. As in the charm above, purs occurs third in a series of increasing numbers that each alliterate with something in the category according to which purs is interpreted. In the Norwegian charm, these were anthropomorphic beings
associated with the landscape; here they are runes, although each term can also be interpreted as a potential agent. The context is a love-charm, as in the Norwegian example, and thematically consistent with the Rune Poems mentioned above. Although the alliterative collocation is with ‘thirteen’ rather than with ‘three’, the alliteration, structure of the charm formula, and the index with sexuality together suggest continuities with the charms addressed above (cf. McKinnell & Simek 2004: 61). The context of this example leaves it ambiguous whether this charm retained any connection with purs as a category of being. Nevertheless, the accidental preservation of four charms in Sweden, Norway, the British Isles and Iceland, supports the probability of a widespread circulation of purs in the register of (runic) magical charms, of which so little has been preserved.

**Purs in Curses**

In addition to the mention of the ð rune (Skm 36.1) and the potential pursa þjóð formula (Skm 10.4), the ljóðaháttar poem Skírnismál presents 2 ambiguous occurrences of purs (Skm 31.1, 35.1). (The use of term hrímþurs in Skírnismál 30.4 will be addressed in the second article in this series.) The narrative contextualizes these in the mythological sphere leading to the establishment of the present world order, making it appealing to interpret them as alliterative synonyms for jotunn. However, supporting indicators for this interpretation are lacking. The 2 examples of purs occur in the culminating sequence of the emissary Skínr’s curse (Skm 26–36) as a form of love-magic, to compel the resisting giantess Gerðr to marry the god Freyr (because she concedes, the threatened outcomes are never realized). The curse focuses particularly on insatiable sexual desire and undesirable partners, to which both uses of purs refer. One use of purs has a fifth þrís–þurs collocation accomplishing alliteration: Med þursi þríhósfðodom / þu scalt æ nara [‘With a three-headed purs / you shall ever linger’] (Skm 31.1–2). The other collocates purs and hrím, comparable to the term hrímþurs, albeit with double alliteration: Hrámgriðmr heittir purs / er þic hafa scal [‘a purs is called Hrímr–griðmr / who shall have you’] (Skm 35.1–2). (Although the purs–þik alliteration could be regarded as a secondary alliteration pattern, all four examples of purs in ljóðaháttar long lines exhibit alliteration on purs and a second person singular personal pronoun; the double alliteration in this line can therefore be considered incidental to that broader pattern.) Hall (2009: 211) points out that the term purs is found concentrated at the end of the curse, appearing in almost every stanza. This climaxes in the mention of the ð rune being carved three times. This has been considered in relation to the mention of women’s illness or women’s suffering in the Rune Poems (Hall 2009: 199; cf. von See et al. 1997–II: 134–135), and clearly represents magic practiced in the mythological sphere.

Epic narrative is characterized by intergenericity (sometimes described as ‘intertextuality’ or generic ‘transposition’), accomplished especially by situating different genres in the direct speech of characters (e.g. Foley 2004; Martin 2005). This type of intergenericity is predominantly characterized by the ‘irruption’ of a different register into the narrative genre, where its use is (often) conditioned by conventions of the narrative genre’s mode of expression such as meter (Frog 2012c: 52–54). Where multiple genres may share a common metrical system, intergenericity may involve quite subtle shifts in register (Tarkka 2005; cf. Frog 2012c: 54). Considering eddic narrative poems a short epic form or Old Norse equivalent of epic poetry (Frog 2011d), Skínr’s curse may be an irruption of the register of curses into generic epic discourse. The semantics of these examples of purs may therefore conform to the embedded register, rather than that of the narrative genre within which the speech act is framed. Mention of carving the ð rune may further index associations with the register of charms. The ambiguity in the uses of purs in Skínr’s curse may thus be related to an irruption of the register of charms or curses as an intergeneric strategy that rhetorically weights Skínr’s expressive behaviour.

**Purs in Verbal Duelling**

Of the 3 remaining examples of purs in eddic verse, 2 are in heroic poetry. Hall (2009: 200)
used the example of stanza 25 in the ljóðaháttr poem Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar to illustrate the compiling of different terms sharing a common referent. The context of the verse is a hostile dialogue exchange with a giantess whose father was just slain by the hero. The verses exchanged are weighted with metaphor and innuendo in addition to explicit threats and challenges. Stanza 25 presents a series of parallel expressions that refer to a being apparently belonging to the world order of mytho-heroic time (though not the ‘present’ in which it was narrated and documented).\(^{19}\) This being is referred to as: \(a\) þurs, alliterating with Pórr in a placename in a Vollzeile; \(b\) hundviss jötnun ['hound-wise giant'], forming an alliterating long line with \(c\)hraubníuár verstr ['worst of lavadwellers']; and concluding with \(d\) sá er þér maklígr maðr ['he is a proper man for you']. The orientation of the insult appears quite close to the curse in Skírnismál. Although þurs, jötnun and the other expressions are used synonymically, the parallel lines simultaneously require verbal variation. This synonymy is consistent with their semantic indices in mythological narrative poetry.

The use of þurs and jötnun in Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar could be an irruption of a different register into epic discourse. As in Skírnismál, the speech act in which this occurs also requires consideration. The use of terms for mythological beings as derogatory designations is not an uncommon metaphorical adaptation (cf. Harris 2009: 478–480; Koski 2012) and is found of þurs in prose (Schulz 2004: 42). This type of use may stretch semantics, but even when Sámi were occasionally referred to as jötnar in Old Norse prose, symbolically correlating the Norse–Sámi cultural opposition with the mythological gods–giants opposition (e.g. Mundal 2000), this does not mean that ‘Sámi’ and ‘giants’ were undistinguished as categories or as ethnoi. Simply put, calling your boss an ‘ogre’ does not mean you identify him literally as a living representative of ‘ogres’, which you would presumably consider a (mythic) ethnos different from humans (although this may be a fundamental step in a semantic shift as, at a social level, the semantic field of ‘mythic ethnus’ becomes opaque). Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar could present an irruption of the register of insult into the epic generic frame, and use of these terms might then be metaphorical.

On the other hand, if the particular statement of the stanza ‘sends’ the giantess to be the mate of this (mythic) being, then it may be directly engaging a register associated with magical curses as in Skírnismál. The entire second half-stanza constitutes a series of parallel expressions to the Vollzeile in which þurs is used. This suggests the semantic priority of the term þurs, to which the next three lines present parallel expressions meeting the formal requirements of a complete stanza.\(^{20}\) Even if the precise register of this speech act remains unclear (noting that the language of insults and curses could be quite closely related), it seems probable that this use of þurs is associated with an irruption of register associated with direct speech, and that the use of þurs is somehow connected with the sexual suffering and humiliation of the giantess at whom it is directed.

The second example from heroic poetry is also in dialogue, in the fornyrðislag meter poem Helgakviða Hundingsbana I (40.7). This presents an example of the pursa meyar ['maidens of pursar'] formula. The context is an insult exchange called a senna, and in this senna the insults are given mythic quality or mythic proportions. Purs appears in the insult that the other hero did not father the cosmological wolf Fenrir (as the god Loki did) and instead, pursa meyar castrated him. The context does not necessarily require resolving the precise mythic ethnos of the female beings. However, reference to a mythological event of sexual engagement with a giantess as well as the probable (morepheme-equivalent) semantics of the fornyrðislag pursa-formulae would index giantesses of the cosmology. The use of this particular formula – potentially more pronounced as the only example in an odd line – may therefore strategically engage that association. Potential connotations of sexual suffering and abuse could also be relevant. There is the possibility that the expression is encoding an otherwise recognizable image or event in derogatory mythic terms, but that does not alleviate the probability that the use
of the particular formula may be significant. It also highlights that, as in Helgakviða Hjørvarðssonar and Skírnismál, epic verisimilitude may enable, through direct speech, an eruption of registers associated with other genres. In this case, the engagement of a recognizable formula system may be particularly connected to the intertextual reference in the insult with nothing to do with purs as an ethnos.

**Alvíssmál 2.4: þursa líki**

The final and problematic example of purs in eddic verse appears in the ljóðaháttr poem Alvíssmál, in the long line þursa líki / þikki mér á þér vera (Alv 2.4–5) [literally ‘the likeness of þursar / seems to me to be on you’]. This is said by Þórr as the poem advances toward the wisdom competition to which he challenges the dwarf, perhaps engaging a register of insult. This example is problematic because, although líki [‘likeness’] is unambiguous and the word preceding it is recognized as being in the genitive case, þursa must be a plural if it is understood as a form of purs. In this case, the singular dwarf would be set in comparison with a plural þursar. This may not sound like a grammatical ‘mistake’ to a native speaker (Haukur Þorgeirsson, p.c.), but it seems a bit odd when analyzed (cf. Modern English he has the likeness of ogres) and does not seem to be paralleled in other uses of líki (cf. Gering 1903: s.v. ‘líki’; DONP: s.v. ‘líki’).

Alternatively, reading pursa as a genitive singular of pursi appears to have resulted in an entry in the dictionary of Cleasby & Vigfússon (1896: s.v. ‘pursi’), although pursi is not otherwise attested in verse, runic inscriptions or prose (cf. DONP). However this expression is read, it appears to be an exceptional formulation.

Formally, the expression pursa líki shares a common rhythmic and structural shape with the pursa-formula system in Figure 1 and also fills a short line. It could potentially receive its particular shape under the model of this formula system to produce a four-syllable line comprised of pursa followed by another disyllable word. An alternative singular *þurs líki [‘look like a þurs’] would produce a three-syllable line, thereby changing the rhythm-melodic shape of the short-line (Frog 2011a: 50–51). Conventional rhythms for constructions with purs in eddic meters may thus have been a factor in how the expression was realized, although a three-syllable short line would not necessarily be unmetrical: Haukur Þorgeirsson recently observed that three-syllable lines are infrequent in ljóðaháttr, but they do seem to occur one to a few times per hundred lines in poems in the Poetic Edda, with the exception of Alvíssmál where short verses seem to be avoided (although one is found in Alv 3.4) (e-mail 24.04.2013; cf. Gering 1902: 187–194).

Whether use of the genitive plural þursa reflects unconscious interference from the conventional formula system or conscious drawing on that model, if this is an example of purs rather than pursi, it would be a potential case of conventions of a formulaic pattern of word use taking (or given) precedence over agreement in number, as seems to be the case elsewhere with gender (cf. Frog 2011a: 58–62). If this is attributable to a conscious avoidance of three-syllable lines rather than motivated by the momentum of conventional patterns in language use, then it is reasonable to suspect that the alternative *þurs líki might have been the more widely encountered form of the line in the oral tradition – unless the plural had additional connotative significance.

Regarding semantics, there has been an inclination to read pursa as equivalent to ‘giant’, rendering the sense ‘you seem to me to have the look of a (singular) giant’. This would be consistent with formulaic (rather than purely formal) use of pursa, but has led to puzzled speculation regarding the meaning of the line and whether it is ironic (von See et al. 1997–III: 300). Contextually, the phrase precedes the dwarf’s statement that his name is Alviss [‘All-Wise’] in the following stanza and thus the semantics of purs may anticipate the challenge to the subsequent wisdom competition. Whereas mythological giants are identified with wisdom and wisdom contests (Schulz 2004: 61), the expression ginna þa sem þursa [“trick them like þursar’] mentioned above could suggest a possible interpretation here of ‘you look to me like an idiot’ (cf. Cleasby & Vigfússon 1896: s.v.
‘pursi’). If the ‘stupid purs’ were prominent in popular discourse, then the latter sense might be more natural in this context. The formulaic system outlined in Figure 1 nevertheless appears sufficiently conventional (cf. also the skaldic kennings) that this formal correspondence would carry connotative associations of mythological giants. As the dwarf is attempting to carry off Þórr’s daughter, an action appropriate to giants but never otherwise associated with dwarves in the mythology, such connotations might have been humorous (cf. Gering 1927: 328). The semantic index of purs with sexual suffering and torment could also have been active here. The text, however, remains ambiguous: formal stability of the expression could nevertheless leave purs (or pursi) flexibly open to all of these interpretations, and this example may be more suggestive of formal patterns in uses of purs than of its semantics.

**Purs in Heroic Death-Songs**

Purs is found in 3 examples of a special genre of Old Norse poetry called ‘death songs’, or ævi ['biography'] poems in which a dying hero recounts his life of deeds (invariably preserved within a broader narrative frame). These poems are often classed simply as ‘skaldic’ poetry (e.g. Skj; Schulz 2004, although cf. Lönroth 1971), but seem particularly associated with a mytho-heroic sphere or at least with a mytho-heroic narrative atmosphere (e.g. following a battle with a mythic adversary).

In Grettis saga ['The Saga of Grettir'] (14th century), the term purs appears in Hallmundarkviða (5.1) (Skj A: 526), attributed to the cave-dwelling Hallmundr. This poem is in the kvíðuháttur meter (similar to fornyrðislag), and purs carries alliteration. Hallmundr’s feats include conflicts with a variety of mythic beings associated with local landscapes, of which purs is one term among several. These terms also include e.g. álfa kind ['elf-kind'], suggesting that some terms in this poem may have undergone shifts in use or interpretation from conventions of earlier periods (cf. Hall 2007: 73).

Orms þátttr Stórólfsssonar ['The Story of Ormr Stórólfssson'], first attested in the Flateyjarbók manuscript (late 14th century) and associated with the coming of Christianity, presents the term purs in the final stanza of the hero Æsbjörn’s Ævíkviða (9.6) (Skj AII: 344). The poem is in multiple meters and the final stanza is in fornyrðislag. The term purs does not participate in alliteration and is used to refer to the monster that killed the dying hero. This monster is referred to as jotunn and troll when first introduced in the prose. This verse may be attributable to the þátttr’s author, and this use of purs use could belong to the blurring of and playing with terms for mythic being in the prose literature of the period.

The term purs is also found in manuscript variants of Ævar-Ódds saga ['The Saga of Arrow-Odd'] (probably 14th century), in Ævar-Ódr’s Ævidrápa (21.6). It takes the final position of a long line, outside of alliteration (Skj A: 309). The saga prose represents the relevant adversary as a female monster: purs otherwise seems to be male (cf. Þórólfsson 1934: 125). The term purs is not otherwise found in this saga’s prose (Schulz 2004: 42). In this case, purs is not associated with demands of alliteration while variation in manuscript transmission does not support a semantic motivation in the lexical choice: the terms flagð ['ogress'] and troll ['troll'] appear in the place of purs in different manuscripts (Skj AII: 309). In contrast to uses in eddic narratives or charms, this use of purs appears more consistent with the juxtaposition of terms for mythic beings elsewhere in this saga (cf. Schulz 2004: 36).

In ævi-poems, purs appears used to refer to mythic adversaries of heroes, but it does not appear to distinguish one ethnus of mythic beings from others, nor does it exhibit specific semantic connotations or associations such as indexing sexuality.

**Purs in rémr Poetry**

Rímur poetry appears to have emerged as a poetic narrative form in the 14th century (Hughes 2005: 206). This was a stanzaic alliterative and rhymed trochaic verse-form that emerged in relation to established forms of vernacular poetry and their poetic devices, among which kennings became a fundamental of the register (Þórólfssson 1934: 86–204). Although an exhaustive survey is wanting,
puss (< purs) seems to occur in the early rimur poetry primarily as a genitive plural giant-heiti in kenning constructions, where it carries alliteration (as in eddic verse), but it is also found as a simple poetic synonym for alliteration or rhyme. Preliminary observations suggest that puss will be found to have a very high alliterative rank in rimur. This can be compared with, for example, tröll (< troll), which occurs less regularly in alliteration and more frequently in rhyme.

Within this register, puss does not seem to carry connotative significance. It is found in the expression pussagarður [‘realm of pursar’] (Prymlur II.16.1). Eddic poetry does not exhibit an equivalent use for jotunheimar [‘giant-realsms’], with only a loose parallel in the late Fjólsvinsmál (pursa þjóðar sjót [‘settlement of the pursar people’]) and perhaps more abstractly in Skírnismál (pursa þjóð [‘pursar people’]). Although puss is also exceptionally found as a synonym outside of alliteration and rhyme constraints (e.g. Lokrur I.4.3; Pontus rimur X.5.3), this generally suggests that the term purs/puss was assimilated into the poetic register purely as an alliterative synonym for ‘giant’.

In spite of troll apparently blurring into a synonym for ‘giant’ in saga prose (Schulz 2004: esp. 46), the register of rimur does not seem to accept tröll as a giant-heiti like puss, although it could be a synonym for jötunn (< jótunn) outside kennings. The use of tröll as a poetic synonym for mythological giants and other mythic adversaries in rimur but not as a determinant heiti for these kennings indicates a distribution of labour across terms. However, the patterns of use do not seem to suggest any narrower semantic field or index of purs beyond this compositional poetic use.

The use of puss in the register of rimur poetry thus appears semantically neutral, as in skaldic poetry, saga prose and death songs, but unlike eddic verse. This could reflect semantics of popular use at the time the register of rimur poetry was established. As in eddic and skaldic verse, but not death songs, purs appears associated with meeting acoustic requirements of the meter and has a predominant role as a giant-heiti in kenning constructions. Tröll remains distinct from this use in kennings although it may be otherwise used as a synonym for jötunn in alliteration. This distinction may have been current or an assimilated archaism associated with contemporary poetic registers. Björn K. Þórólfsson (1934: 86) observes, “Skáldmál [sic] ríma er að meðu úr drottkvæðum komið” [‘The poetic language of rimur has, for the most part, come from dróttkvætt poetry’], yet the near-complete absence of purs from skaldic dróttkvætt poetry implies that its use in rimur is not a direct adaptation of the vocabulary of heiti associated with that register. The prominent use of the genitive plural form pursa in fornyrðislag verse, producing trochaic formulae suitable for rimur, may have been influential here. The absence of any discernible index of sexuality could then be a relevant indicator of a discontinuity from eddic registers. Insofar as the register of rimur was characterized by semantics of use at the time the poetic tradition established a conventionalized form, purs/puss appears to have been assimilated as a heiti for ‘giant’ that would be employed under particular metrical conditions without additional discernible connotations. This is a potential indicator that distinctive semantics of purs, which may have set it apart from jötunn were no longer recognizable or relevant across the end of the 14th century. It is also possible that the term had by then become little more than a poetic archaism.

**Overview of purs in Old Norse Poetry**
The term purs appears only exceptionally in early Old Norse poetry outside of the eddic corpus. The two examples in dróttkvætt are both semantically neutral heiti for ‘giant’ in kenning constructions. Within eddic verse, the 21 occurrences of purs are primarily found in the 12 examples of the formula system in Figure 1 (half of which are in a single poem). These account for 12 of the 13 examples of purs in eddic poetry in the fornyrðislag meter, or all 13 if Hymiskviða is accepted as a variation. If the ljóðaháatr example in Alvíssmál and the possible Vollzeile formula in Skírnismál and Fjólsvinsmál are considered further variations thereof, this broad group would account for more than 75% of the eddic examples (the exceptions being one charm and irruptions of registers of other
genres). Examples from both skaldic poetry and rímur exhibit a corresponding genitive plural use in kenning constructions. Use of þurs across all of these poetries therefore appears highly conventionalized, which is further emphasized by the þrír–þurs collocation carrying alliteration in 5 eddic examples (ca. 25%). Only the heroic death songs seem to stand outside of these conventions, aligning with use in saga prose. This is more pronounced because the death songs break from the otherwise 96% alliterative rank in eddic and skaldic verse (or 100% if including the use in Hátalykill).

The semantic field of þurs – and even formulae in which þurs participates – appear to exhibit variation by register in relation to genre. The fornyrðislag narrative material exhibits remarkable semantic uniformity complementing the narrow formal use: þurs appears as a heiti for giants of the mythological sphere (although one example is in a heroic senna). When formally identical use occurs in runic charms, the semantic field adapts to refer to agents engaging with the human world or possibly referring directly to the þ rune itself, and the corresponding semantic field may be engaged in the galdralag runic charm. Uses in the ljóðaháttr (and related galdralag) are far more diversified. If the Vollzeile formula in Skírnismál is not a scribal error, it would seem to function as an alliterating giant-heiti as in fornyrðislag narratives and this formulaic use would have at least formal continuity with the example in Fjölsvínsmál. However, the semantics of the expression þursa líki in Álvismál – formally associate with the fornyrðislag formula system – may be quite different, and more than half of the examples in ljóðaháttr narrative are realized in irruptions of the registers of curses and insults as direct speech.26 The contrast of this diversity with the regularity of the structures and semantics of use makes it reasonable to consider that narrative in fornyrðislag and in ljóðaháttr may have been characterized by distinct – if overlapping – registers. This is further emphasized by use in death songs (in fornyrðislag and a related meter) which seems more consistent with prose genres rather than other genres in the same meters. The distribution of the formula system of Figure 1, the specific formula þursa dröttinn and the alliterative collocation þrír–þurs (and possibly þurs–þú) across meters, genres and meanings or referents of þurs highlights the importance of distinguishing formal correspondences in language use in the corpus from semantic significance.

By the 13th century, when the central corpora of eddic and skaldic poetry were being written down in Iceland, the term þurs was potentially only vital and generative in genres associated with magic, if at all. This is largely inferred from the observations that the term is almost completely absent from skaldic verse, attested with a remarkable geographical distribution in runic charms, and the only examples of þurs in eddic narrative poetry that do not fall into the formula system in Figure 1 (with its potential variations) are identifiable with irruptions of the register of magical curses (implying that þurs was used with a greater range of variation in that register). Although the use in eddic narrative is impressively frequent in comparison to all other giant-type monster terms besides jötunn (Schulz 2004: 39), its use is otherwise so narrow and formally consistent that it could potentially be an archaism suspended in the register (cf. Frog 2011a: 32; 2012b: 30; Frog & Roper 2011; Hopkins 2012).

This review treated 26 poetic examples of þurs outside of rímur poetry. According to Schulz (2004: 39, 42–43), the term þurs is otherwise infrequent in saga literature: outside of Barðar saga (10x), þurs is only found 11 times in the prose corpus of Íslendingasögur ['sagas of the Icelanders'] and fornaldarsögur ['sagas of ancient times’]. The term may have therefore belonged primarily to eddic (but not skaldic!) poetic registers. Eddic narrative use is associated primarily with accomplishing alliteration in a kenning structure rather than allowing free variation with jötunn as a term. This is indicative of the semantic subordination of a term for an otherwise distinct category as a compositional resource. This similarly implies that, at the time when these patterns of use became conventional, a þurs was not a jötunn. Etymological and comparative evidence suggest that þurs not only has a long history but also that this term
was earlier significant, whereas the later saga literature and rímur poetry suggest that this category had probably become largely or completely obscure to the general population by the end of the 14th century.

The identity, roles and significance of þurs in the earlier Iron Age cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the poetic material reviewed here. Nevertheless, use in magic suggests that þurs was a category that was somehow connected with harm to humans, making þursar distinct from þotnar insofar as þotnar are associated with mythology, ‘ancient times’ and remote otherworld locations. Although there may have been fields where these terms and categories could overlap – much like þotunn and Sámi – this nevertheless suggests that they otherwise were conceptualized as distinct ethnoi, although ‘when’ remains unclear.

If eruptions of the register of curses have been more or less accurately identified, these complement evidence of the Norwegian runic charm, the Galdrabók runic charm and the later Rune Poems to identify þursar with dangerous or inappropriate sexuality. If þurs carried such connotations, these could also be present in: a) reference to castration and the sexual union that produced cosmological monsters in Helgakviða Hundingsbana I; b) Baldrs draumar, which could refer to the same sexual union (von See et al. 1997–III: 464–465; Frog 2006: 264–266); c) Þrymskviða, where Þrymr þursa dróttins’s threatening sexuality is centralized in the narrative; 25 d) Alvíssmál, where the dwarf seeks to abduct (and sexually possess) Þórr’s daughter and the þurs–þú alliteration parallels the three alliterations of þurs in the Skírnismál charm; and e) Völuspá (see Clunies Ross 1992: 162–165). In the eddic narrative material, such connotations only appear irrelevant in the kenning in Hymiskviða, where this could be related to engagements of skaldic language use and kennings and where þurs appears semantically neutral (Reichhardt 1933; von See et al. 270–273), and also the potential Vollzeile formula þursa fjöðr in Skírnismál and in the late Fjölsvinnsmál (noting that the hero here seeks the maiden identifiable with þursar). This connotative significance is only a possibility, but a possibility worth observing because it is potentially relevant to the majority of preserved examples. Although interpretations might vary, it seems likely that sexually charged connotations were engaged in at least some of these. It is unclear when such connotations may have developed, but their absence from saga literature and rímur suggests that they were probably no longer generally prominent in the 14th century, and may already have been specific to particular registers in the 13th century. Associations of stupidity may have been more current, but the Alvíssmál example remains ambiguous. After the 13th century, it is difficult to say more than that þursar were probably conceived as anthropomorphic beings that could penetrate human environments and cause harm, when they were considered at all.

Pursar are a marginalized and silenced mythic minority that may have been all but extinct in 14th century Iceland. There have been no þurs rights activists in the field trying to break down the prejudiced images constructed around them. It is possible that the þursar were once a powerful and threatening mythic race in the eyes of many Germanic peoples. However, by the 13th century – at least in Iceland – their roles and realities may have been rapidly dissolving, possibly maintained in relation to magical practices that were confronted by Christianity, and apparently suspended in particular conservative registers. The register of rímur, emerging in the 14th century, suggests a differentiation of þurs as a purely functional poetic synonym for þotunn as a category of being, but indications of special or distinctive qualities or associations are lacking: the mighty race of þursar had perhaps already descended into a mediocrity of monsterhood, succumbed to the succession of ages, or perhaps they had simply been left behind, forgotten, as their creators turned attention to angels, devils and saints with the arrival of Christianity. Indeed, perhaps the great þursar had already, many centuries before, fallen into the shadow of þotnar and trúls that, in their various forms through history, have engaged imaginations up to the present day.
Acknowledgements: Research presented here has been accomplished within the framework of the Academy of Finland Project “Oral Poetry, Mythic Knowledge and Vernacular Imagination” of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki. I would like to thank Haukur Porgeirsson for the valuable discussions that have significantly enhanced the sections on Alvismál and rímur. I would also like to thank Joseph S. Hopkins for his comments that helped strengthen and unify this article.

Notes
1. All eddic poems are cited according to the edition of Neckel & Kuhn (1964), except Fjölsvinsmál, cited according to the edition of Bugge (1867).
2. Or a “mostly exhaustive” survey (Frog 2011b: 81), that sets out to be comprehensive while acknowledging the possibility that additional examples could be brought to light.
3. Setálía 1932a; 1932b; Kylstra et al. 1991–2012 III: 322, s.v. ‘tursas’, cf. 321–322, s.v. ‘túrrí’; for examples with translations, see e.g. Kuusi et al. 1977: “Sampo I”, line 262; Hall 2009: 216–217. The form tūsīas is a hapax legomenon in Mikael Agricola’s list of pagan gods in the forward to Dauudin Psalttari ‘David’s Psalter’, i.e. the Book of Psalms. The phonetically similar Finnic term tūrīlas also designating a monstrous mythic being (and appearing in parallel lines with tūrīas in Kalevala poetry), seems unlikely to be derived from *þursisaz, although an etymology from a cognate with Old Norse þyrill has been suggested (Kylstra et al. 1991–2012 III: 318, s.v. ‘tūrīlas’).
5. See DONP: s.v. ‘þurs’; the use of þurs as an epithet to a personal name Þórorð(í)þurs in Landnámabók (Benediktsson 1968: 90–91) suggests metaphorical comparison but its significance and emphasis remains unclear.
6. The supplementary alliteration falls symmetrically on syllables 5–3–3–5 in the sequence of relevant lines.
7. All three relevant inscriptions are available in McKinnell & Simek (2004: O16, O17, P6).
8. Dronke (1997: 61–88), for example, has argued for manuscript dependence of the two versions of this poem and suggests that this line was inadvertently produced in the copying process through interference from copying the formula in stanza 8.6. See also note 10 below.
9. This use is preceded by the same short line as þursa meyjar in Völuspá 8.5–6, but the Codex Regius has or þvi lóti ['out of that company'] in 17.2. The context in which the formula anticipates reference to the three male gods (referred to as æsir in the following line) marks the beginning of the description of the creation of human beings. The Hauksbók variant is therefore generally recognized as manifesting some sort of glitch at this point (e.g. Gering 1927: 20; Dronke 1997). Such glitches are not uncommon in oral performance (cf. Lord 1960: 74–77), and more easily arise if the performer or informant has not rendered a tradition in a long time, and the slow, disruptive process of documentation could easily exaggerate these potentialities (Frog 2011a: 53).
10. Whether the Hauksbók variation is attributed to the process of oral documentation or to a copying scribe’s self-confidence overriding attention to his exemplar, the completion of the alliterating long line with this expression is suggestive of formulaicity with a functional capacity related to metrical requirements. The example appears most probably attributable to a “habitual association of lines” (Lord 1960: 60) connected to the poetic tradition and reasonably a variation on the formula. Thus the example has independent value even if there is a manuscript dependence between the two main versions of the poem.
11. Old English þyrs also appears as a poetic synonym for ‘giant, monster’ in the corresponding reflex of the pan-Germanic epic meter: Grendel is referred as þyrs in Beowulf 426 and an eoton in 761. Although þyrs is as rare in this poetry as in the skaldic register, these lexical choices can be directly associated with the alliteration of the line. Both words’ specific semantics may have been subordinated to other priorities.
12. The correlation of an illness agent with a ‘wolf’ is found more widely in Germanic charms (e.g. Tolley 1995: 69; cf. Price 2002: 227; Macleod & Mees 2006: 118–119).
13. This verbal system can be approached as a ‘multiform’ (cf. Frog 2012b: 31–35).
14. Caution is nevertheless warranted here as semantic flexibility was most likely conditioned within limits. For example, Hall (2009: 205–207) provides general evidence of Germanic conceptualizations of illness in terms of anthropomorphic beings through the example of Old English dweorg ['‘dwarf’] as an illness agent. This would be consistent with the corresponding conception of þurs, but it does not follow that a ‘dwarf’ is likely to be interpreted as a referent of þursa dróttinn even if the two were understood according to a common paradigm of illness agency: þursa appears aligned with jotunn in Old Norse, whereas Old Norse dvergr ['dwarf'] did not semantically stretch to a giant-synonym.
16. Cf. Clunies Ross 1998. This type of symbolic correlation is most familiar in Old Norse scholarship under the rubric of ‘typology’ as a term from Biblical exegesis and particularly associated with Christianity (cf. Tulinius 2002; Kaplan 2011). However, the phenomenon of perceiving mythic and mythological patterns as meaningfully realized through history and in the present has been considered a universal of human cultures (Munz 1973; Coupe 1997: 106–115).
17. Three is a prominent magical number and appears as an alliterative collocation with þurs in 5 of the 21
examples in eddic verse (ca. 25%); there is no reason to believe that carving the þ rune ‘three’ times is directly connected to the number of preceding occurrences of the term (hrím-)þurs.

18. The rune is mentioned last, but contemporary audiences should be presumed to be already familiar the semantically and socially central elements of the poem insofar as the genre was characterized by the repeated rendering of narrative wholes.

19. Giants do appear as active agents (but not causers of illness) in the mythic era between the cosmogony and the establishment of a present world order as apprehended in living communities. For the vast majority of Old Norse written sources, the transition to the ‘present world order’ correlates with the generation involved in the settlement of Iceland and the establishment of medieval Icelandic society (cf. Savolainen, this volume). This is highlighted by cosmogonic images, motifs and narrative patterns associated with accounts of the settlement (Lindow 1997), paralleled in the account of the settlement of Gotland (Schier 1963: 327–328; Buchholz 1993: 326–327) and also more widely (cf. Eliade 1954).

20. A semantic hierarchy is implied by the probable fixity of the parallel sequence: the first and last lines are unlikely to vary in the order owing to syntax (cf. Steinitz 1934: 136; Anttonen 1994: 120), making it less likely that the use of þurs is arbitrary (noting the þurs–þorr alliteration is paralleled in the Carterbury Charm). It is also possible that the parallel lines in Skálmol 10,3–4 were hierarchically organized and conventionally invariable, but there are no syntactic or metrical reasons that their order could not be freely variable.

21. It does participate in masculine rhyme of the long lines, although this could be accidental.


23. In kennning constructions, see e.g. Lokrur I.13.4, IV.18.1; Prymlur I.12.4; Fríðþjófsrímur III.58.3, IV.17.3; Pontusraímur VII.56.4; outside kennings for alliteration, e.g. Prymlur II.8.2, 23.2; for rhyme, e.g. Sturlaugsrímur III.11.2; cf. also accomplishing internal rhyme in the hrýnhentar meter in the 16th century Nikolásdrápú 53.3 (cited according to http://bragi.arnastofnun.is).

24. Björn K. Pórólfsson does not treat þuss as a heiti for jötunn nor mention it when discussing giant-heiti and giant-kennings (Pórólfsson 1934: 169–172), and he seems to distinguish jötunn from þuss elsewhere (Pórólfsson 1934: e.g. 106, 158, 187).


26. Ljóðaháttr poems are almost exclusively comprised of direct speech, but this does not entirely account for the difference when several examples in fornyrðislag appear in direct speech as well (Bd 13.8; Vsp 8.6; Vsp H 17.2; HH I 40.7).

27. I have argued elsewhere that Prymskviða is a parody of Old Norse mythological poetry engaging diverse traditions as recognizable referents (Frog 2013). If this is argument is essentially correct, then the sexual connotations of þurs could be strategic in this role. In addition, if the formula (P-name ...) / þursa dóttinn were particularly connected to the charm tradition, then it is worth considering that this could have also been intertextually oriented to engaging the charm-tradition, identifying the thief of Þórr’s hammer with the (potentially insignificant) illness agent it is used against.

**Works Cited**


The third meeting of the Austmarr Network continued and developed the interdisciplinary discussions of the meetings in previous years. The Austmarr Network was organized to be a meeting place for scholars interested in the comparative and interdisciplinary study of the Circum-Baltic region before the 16th century. The first Austmarr Network meeting, “Cultural Exchanges across the Baltic Sea in the Middle Ages Symposium and Workshop”, was held at the University of Tartu in 2011 (see further Kuldkepp 2011). The second meeting, “Transcultural Contacts in the Circum-Baltic Area”, was held at the University of Helsinki in 2012. For the third meeting, “Historical Infrastructure of the Baltic Sea: Ways, Reason and Consequences”, the Austmarr Network crossed to the western side of the Baltic Sea to Mid-Sweden University. Once again, the event brought together international scholars to discuss research projects and other studies in a multidisciplinary environment. The model for paper presentation and discussion followed the workshop model developed by the Viking Age in Finland project: 20 minutes for papers and 40 minutes for discussion (see Aalto 2011). Maths Bertell (Mid-Sweden University) did an excellent job organizing the event and making sure that everything ran smoothly. The event was made possible thanks to the support of Mid-Sweden University.

Lauri Harvilahti (Finnish Literature Society) was the first keynote speaker of the conference on Friday morning. Harvilahti’s paper was titled “Ethnocultural Poetics, Etymologies and Mythical Models: Pre-1500 Contacts around the Baltic Sea” and he spoke of the impact of National Romanticism on the study of ‘Teutonic’ peoples and how this area of study has directed academic studies. Instead of looking for something unique and original for each culture and people, Harvilahti emphasized the need to look at sources that describe contact between folk belief and Christianity as presentations of the continuous interplay of coexisting syncretistic traditions which go back to interactions between different folk beliefs around the Baltic Sea.

Kendra Willson (University of California, Los Angeles / University of Helsinki) kept up the lively discussion with her presentation “Ahti in Nydam?”. Willson spoke about some runic inscriptions in Elder Futhark discovered at the Nydam bog site in the southwestern corner of Jutland. A bronze strap ring dated to ca. 300 A.D. bears the inscription harkilazsahti and a silver belt-tip dated to ca. 400 A.D. bears the inscription rawsijo. Willson argued that despite the search for the Finno-Estonian origin of these words, it seems more likely that they are Germanic words and personal names. The Finnish names Ahti, Rausio and Harkkila seem to be far-fetched interpretations.

Karolina Kouvola (University of Helsinki) then offered the paper “How and Why Should Kalevalaic Epic Poetry and Old Norse Poetry Be Compared?”, in which she surveyed the possibility of the knowledge-based tietäjä tradition’s background in an Old Norse tradition of Óðinn. Kouvola focused on the methodological challenges of comparing traditions represented in two very different types of sources separated by a period of centuries.

After lunch it was time for the second keynote lecture, “Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian Notions about the World Axis and the Cosmic Quern” by Eldar Heide (University of Bergen). As the title promised, this paper discussed the concept of the magic hand mills Grotti (of Grottasǫngr) and the sampo of Finnic rune songs. Heide considered
the connection these mills have to the world axis or world pillar motif. Heide drew attention to the Icelandic word *hjarastjarna* as implying the existence of a world pillar in Scandinavian sources. According to this interpretation, the eddic poem *Grottasongr* would have cosmic significance connected to this worldview.

Alexander Podossinov (University of Moscow) presented his paper, “The Northern Part of the Ocean in the Eyes of Ancient Geographers”, on notions concerning the northern portion of the Ocean in the works of authors in antiquity. These authors understood that the whole inhabited world was encircled by an ocean. The eastern and especially the northern parts of this ocean remained unknown. Podossinov’s paper was an interesting addition to themes handled by the Austmarr Network, expanding its geographical borders.

Tatjana N. Jackson’s (Russian Academy of Sciences) paper, “Austmarr on the ‘Mental Map’ of Medieval Scandinavians”, focused on the mental geography represented in medieval Scandinavian sources. According to these sources, the world was understood to consist of four quarters: eastern, southern, western and northern. The paper concentrated on the eastern quarter, which consisted of the Baltic lands and the territories beyond the Baltic Sea. In the sagas, the directions change according to where the center was thought to be. This explains why in some cases the protagonist makes journeys which in reality cannot be made as they are described in the saga. Jackson highlighted that this was not because the author was ‘wrong’; it was because the author was evaluating directions from a particular point of view that did not always subscribe to the same concept of ‘center’.

The final keynote speaker of the day was Władysław Duczko (University of Uppsala) with his paper “Scandinavians of the Viking Age on the Southern Coast of the Baltic and in Eastern Europe: Approaching Problems of Identification”. This fascinating paper addressed the regional identification of settlers of the Pomerian and Curland coasts. This identification seems to imply that these settlers came from Scandinavia. Duczko outlined archaeological evidence showing a continuity of Scandinavian settlers along the coastline, enhancing our understanding of cultures in the region.

One of the key elements of the Austmarr Network has been its ability to gather scholars from different fields together to discuss their work and exchange ideas. The day’s papers provided a fine background for lively interdisciplinary discussion, discussion which continued through dinner at St. Peter Logen. All were looking forward to the second day’s papers.

The second day started with a keynote presentation by Kristel Zilmer’s (University of Bergen), “The Sea of Contact: The Baltic Sea and Its Narrative Representation in Old Norse Sources”. The narrative sources, such as the sagas, tell of well-established sea routes. Zilmer spoke interestingly about how by studying geographical details one can better understand routes described in saga sources and ways in which these routes could have been navigated. Jackson’s paper emphasized the importance of Baltic sea routes and made the geographic descriptions of the sagas more comprehensible.
In her paper, “Runestones on Gotland and the Swedish mainland”, Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt (Swedish National Heritage Board / University of Stockholm) introduced 3D-scanning as a method for analyzing the carving technique of runestones. This technique helps to identify individual carvers and to understand the development of the carving of runestones as practice. Kitzler Åhfeldt uses 3D scanning as a method in her postdoctoral research project, “The Dynamics of Rune Carving: Relation between Rune Carvers in a Regional and Chronological Perspective”.

Marge Konsa (University of Tartu) then presented the keynote paper “Violent Contacts: Maritime Warfare in Pre-Viking Age”, in which she presented information about the extremely interesting Salme I and Salme II excavations on Saaremaa island, Estonia. In these excavations, two boat burials with altogether at least 40 men were found. The origins and background of the burial remains obscure, yet it bears some potential resemblance to the account of the raid of the Swedish king Ingvar, as told in the Ynglinga saga. At the second Austmarr meeting in 2012, Daniel Sävborg (University of Tartu) gave a keynote lecture on Salme findings as well. Sävborg discussed a possible connection between Salme findings and the aforementioned account of Ingvar. The saga and the findings can be dated to approximately the 8th century. Although the connection is difficult to prove, the evidence shows that at that time battles were fought at this scale in the Baltic area (see Kuldkepp 2012: 66).

After lunch, Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson (National Historical Museums, Sweden) gave the paper “Alliances across the Baltic: Sword Chapes as Indicators of Military and Political Alliances in the Baltic Region”. Jonson’s presentation centered around two distribution patterns of chapes: the first, a stylized falcon, and the second, an anthropomorphic figure parallel to the image of Christ on the Jelling stone. The stylized falcon image has been interpreted as the mark of a military group associated with movement around the Baltic Sea region. Although they have been found across a more extensive geographic area than the falcon symbol, the anthropomorphic image has been interpreted as a symbol of the rank of officer of the Danish court.

Sirpa Aalto’s (University of Oulu) paper “Changing Alliances: Jómsvikings, Danes and Wends” focused on Jómsvikinga saga. Even though the saga might have a historical core, it should not be forgotten that the saga is also a literary work. Jómsvikinga saga portrays a wider shift of independent chieftains and supra-regional elite networks into parts of royal hirds of the kings. The Jómsvikings could have been any mercenary group which had settled on the coast of the Baltic Sea. Aalto emphasized that even though the saga is not an account of any authentic political situation, the events it describes may reflect general social changes that took place historically.

Leszek Słupecki (University of Rzeszów) followed with the paper “Polish Noble Families and Noble Men of Scandinavian Origin in the 11th–12th Century: The Case of Awdancy Family: Why, When, and What Consequences It Caused?”. Słupecki surveyed the origins of the Polish noble family Awdancy and how this family arrived in Poland from Scandinavia. The use of the name Magnus/Michael, which was popular in Scandinavia in the 11th and 12th centuries, implies a Scandinavian background. It appears that the Awdancy family was only one of 30 powerful Polish noble families with a Scandinavian background – offering a fascinating area of investigation.

The final paper of the meeting was “The Baltic Sea and the Northern Crusades: A Case Study and Main Problems” presented by Remigiusz Gogosz (University of Rzeszów). The familiarity of the Baltic region made it more appealing to crusaders from northern kingdoms than those of the Mediterranean Sea. A bull given by pope Eugenius in 1147 made the crusaders on the Baltic Sea equal to those on the Mediterranean. As an outcome of these crusades, the eastern and western parts of the Baltic region developed closer ties. In turn, this provided essential conditions for the development of the Hansa trade networks a few centuries later.
The third Austmarr Network meeting offered a unique meeting place for scholars and a chance to discuss the Viking Age and medieval Baltic area with colleagues from different institutes and countries. The meeting was successful. One has great expectations for the network’s future meetings. The fourth meeting is planned to take place in Rzeszów, Poland in 2014. In addition, on the basis of themes and selected papers presented during the three Austmarr Network symposiums, two peer-reviewed publications are in preparation.

Works Cited

Conference Report – The 2nd Meeting of the Old Norse Folklorists Network: “Encounter with the Otherworld in Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss”, Symposium and Workshop
29th November – 1st December 2012, Tartu, Estonia
Mart Kuldkepp, University of Tartu

The Old Norse Folklorists Network, founded in 2011 by Daniel Sävborg (University of Tartu) and Karen Bek-Pedersen (University of Southern Denmark), is a loose circle of scholars associated with the Retrospective Methods Network, dedicated to bringing closer together the fields of Folklore and Old Norse Philology.1 The latest step taken in this direction was the second meeting of the network, again organized by Bek-Pedersen and Sävborg with the help of Kait Lubja as secretary. The symposium and workshop took place at the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia, 29th November – 1st December 2012.

The organizers stayed true to the already proven and successful format of the first meeting as held back in December 2011. This meant a limited number of keynote lectures interspersed with longer discussions in smaller groups, and – last but not least – numerous coffee breaks to encourage further discussion and individual conversations. The main innovation this time was that the members of the discussion groups rotated more often, while still maintaining a mixture of more experienced and younger scholars, as well as philologists and folklorists, in each separate group. A more significant departure from the first meeting was the fact that while the first workshop was dedicated to more overarching and abstract questions of continuity, reconstruction and source criticism, this time the focus was squarely on a single, relatively short text, Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, usually classified as one of the so-called post-classical sagas of Icelanders.

The four keynote lectures looked at the saga from different perspectives. Annette Lassen (University of Copenhagen) gave a talk on “The Supernatural Motifs in Bárðar saga in an Old Norse Context”, focusing on the textual connections of the saga to other Old Norse literary works. Particularly numerous parallels exist with The Great Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason and the Melabók version of Landnámasbók, but the whole list of works that the saga author (probably a cleric) seems to have used is so long that Bárðar saga must be regarded as a very learned text indeed. Camilla Asplund-Ingemark (Åbo Akademi) approached the saga as a folklorist in her talk “The Trolls in Bárðar saga: Playing with the Conventions of Oral Texts”, discussing some of the basic plots in Bárðar saga in light of the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index of folk tale types. She demonstrated convincingly that Bárðar saga follows well-known folk tale types, but her conclusion was nevertheless that the saga is a piece of literary art rather than a vehicle for transmission of oral stories. Ralph O’Connor (University of Aberdeen)
gave a presentation on “The Literary Character of Bárðar saga”, pointing out the different literary patterns used in different parts of the saga (the “legend pattern” in Iceland and the “Märchen pattern” in distant lands), as well as its characteristically fluid relationship between the spheres of the human and the supernatural. Interestingly enough, the latter can be related to the psychology of the characters, making Bárðar saga something of a study in social alienation that gradually causes its protagonist and several other characters to become, over time, less human and more troll-like. Finally, Eldar Heide (University of Bergen) focused on “Bárðar saga as a Source for Reconstruction of Pre-Christian Religion”, considering different features and episodes of the saga from the viewpoint of whether they could tell us something about the pre-Christian Nordic religion or whether they should be more accurately regarded as learned or simply imaginative constructions. As is often the case with such problems, the answers must remain inconclusive, but at least some more general features of the pagan religion, such as the association between liminal geography and the otherworld, seem to be apparent in the saga (e.g. in the Raknarr episode).

The keynote lectures were all exceptionally informative and well thought-out, and provided plenty of material for consideration for what was to be the most fruitful part of the two-day event: the group discussions. These took the keynote lectures (and sample questions provided by the organizers) as the starting point, but often ended up somewhere else entirely. During the discussions, much attention was paid to the supernatural elements of the saga, in particular its troll protagonist Bárðr and the curious fact that he is referred to as an álfr, a term normally reserved for divine beings. The relationship between the Christian and possibly pagan elements was also treated in depth and several groups arrived independently at the idea of Bárðr as a kind of “pagan saint”, a folk hero of the people of Snæfellsnes, who, as the saga author hints, had been useful in the past, but was eventually superseded by the real Christian saintliness of Ólafr Tryggvason. Another set of questions touched upon genre problems – whether Bárðar saga should be regarded as one of the sagas of Icelanders (for it is mostly set in Iceland), as one of the fornaldrasörgur (given its interest in supernatural encounters), one of the sagas of kings (with reference to the role of Ólafr Tryggvason and the conversion narrative), or perhaps even something resembling the sagas of bishops, given the Icelandic setting, its high religious overtones and interest in the beliefs and problems of local people. There emerged no real consensus on these issues, but there is no doubt that everyone went home from Tartu with much food for thought.

In short, the fears that there would not be enough to say about Bárðar saga to fill two whole days proved unfounded. This was probably the most concentrated scholarly attention that this relatively short text has ever received, and the benefits of such an approach seem to be considerable. Hopefully the feat will be repeated with other, similarly enigmatic narratives. Perhaps other complex questions relating to entire genres or sets of motifs could also be approached in workshop format with useful results.

Although it seemed that the success of the first meeting of the network would be hard to repeat, the second meeting was, in spite of the availability of less funding, admirably successful. The meeting was supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. Special thanks are due to Kait Lubja who, in addition to contributing to discussions, made sure that all practical matters went as smoothly as possible.

Notes
1. For a kind of manifesto for the Austmarr Network, see Sävborg & Bek-Pedersen 2010.

Works Cited
The Tartu Model

Daniel Sävborg, University of Tartu, and Karen Bek-Pedersen, University of Southern Denmark

In September 2010, a conference entitled *New Focus on Retrospective Methods* was held in Bergen. The idea behind this conference, organized by Eldar Heide, was to highlight the usefulness of late recorded folklore for the study of pre-Christian religious beliefs in Scandinavia. We both participated in this conference, Daniel with a paper, Karen just came along to listen.

This proved a worthwhile gathering, but we felt particularly inspired by the attempt to cross Folklore Studies with Old Norse Studies. On one of the days of the conference, as we were walking back towards the town centre from Bergens Kystsels’s premises in Sandviken, where the conference was held, the two of us fell into a discussion. In between the occasional drops of rain, we came to talk about what a shame it was that conferences generally provide so little time for the really useful stuff, namely the discussions with colleagues during coffee breaks and how often it seems that the most inspiring ideas you take away with you have come from speaking to people informally in between all the formal papers. In short, we both agreed that what appears to truly further academic research is not just the conference paper, but also, indeed, the coffee break!

– If only conference organizers would realize this, we thought, then imagine the possibilities... until it struck us that the idea hatched that we could combine the two types of communication: the formal conference paper and the coffee break chat – and that the workshop format we had encountered at Lysebu was the way to do this. With some modifications to the format, we should be able to get people to cross-pollinate research ideas before finalizing their conclusions or even methodologies, thereby inspiring each other at a crucial stage of the research process.

The Lysebu experience had also made it clear to us that we had more things in common in the shape of our respective translations of *Bárðar saga Snaefellsáss*, Daniel’s into Swedish and Karen’s into Danish. Indeed, prior to the Lysebu meeting, all translators had been requested to submit a short sample of their work – and by sheer chance (says the woman who wrote a book on fate), the two of us had submitted the exact same excerpt from *Bárðar saga* for the workshop we were to participate in. Everyone thought we had planned this beforehand, but it was, in fact, not until the Bergen meeting that we started to plan anything.

The crux of our growing eagerness to make something of this informal chat was our fascination with the main character of the said saga and the many weird and wonderful episodes that are included in the narrative about him. Bárðr himself virtually embodied the junction at which the disciplines of Old Projects, Networks and Resources
Norse Studies and Folklore intersect, thus providing the perfect starting point for the new undertaking that we were suddenly about to embark on: the Old Norse Folklorists Network. Inadvertently, we were in the process of inventing the sort of academic discipline that Bárðr himself would undoubtedly approve of: Trollology. All that remained was to get the right sort of people together under the right sort of circumstances, serve them the right sort of coffee to provide the right sort of atmosphere – and then the minor matter of finding some funding for the whole venture.

What eventually emerged from our exuberant mood that day in Bergen and the lavish funding we later managed to get from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond was what has since been referred to as the ‘Tartu Model’ – a symposium (in every sense of the word) consisting of research-orientated workshops where scholars from the fields of Old Norse Studies and Folklore Studies have the chance to get together and also to join forces.

The first symposium was held over two days in Tartu in December 2011 and was constructed around four small-group discussions, each of which focused on a general theme related to the crossing of the two disciplines concerned (see further Laidoner 2012). What we wanted to achieve with the workshops was some fruitful exchanges of the coffee break type, and for the first symposium, we decided on four rather broad themes, which in turn meant that debates on the one hand became a bit abstract, but on the other hand allowed for big and fundamental questions to be asked.

There were two such discussion sessions on the first day, another two on the second day and for each discussion session the participants were divided into four smaller groups. Each group consisted of 6–8 people representing a spread in terms of age, career stage, background and research interests, with one designated group leader whose role was to guide the discussions, make sure that everyone was heard and that notes were taken in order to inform the other groups of what had been debated during each session. At the suggestion of a couple of participants, new groups were constructed for the second day in order to avoid the risk of repetition and to further the dynamic feel of the meeting.

All parallel workshops focused on the same themes so that all participants would discuss the same issues. Each workshop followed on from a plenary paper and also included a set of questions, both of which related to the theme of that particular workshop and served the function of providing stimulating questions rather than set answers. Moreover, participants had received in advance of the symposium a small selection of relevant primary and secondary texts that could be used to anchor discussions in concrete examples. Thus equipped with texts, questions, a formal paper and a cup of coffee, each participant went off to his or her respective group to throw about ideas, gather inspiration, get to know colleagues from different disciplines and to make new connections of all kinds.

This proved a successful recipe. At the end of that first symposium, a bunch of thoroughly enthused scholars left Tartu in very high spirits. Trollology had taken off.

The second symposium was held in Tartu in December 2012, also running over two days and following very much the same set-up – with four small-group discussion sessions each based on related plenary papers, sets of questions and relevant texts – but this time round the whole symposium focused on one highly trollological case study: Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss (see further Kuldkepp, this volume).

What we did this time was to have four plenary speakers representing four different approaches to the text present each their take on the same text: literature, folklore, philology and religion. We had thought that we might be running a bit of a risk by spending two full days on the same one text, but in fact it turned out to be surprisingly constructive to maintain such a narrow focus. It was a good step onwards from the general themes of the first symposium.

Again, the structured workshop format proved extremely useful – by bringing together people whose scholarly interests overlap, but who would not otherwise have come together; by providing unexpected perspectives onto well-known material; by
steering discussions while managing to leave a great deal of freedom for groups to take whatever directions came up during each session; and by, incidentally, making it virtually impossible for people to sneak off for their own informal chats over coffee elsewhere since this was exactly what we had ensured they were already engaged in on the premises.

Moreover, at the end of the second symposium, one or two people were heard murmuring excitedly about trying out the ‘Tartu Model’ next time they got engaged in bringing large groups of academics together in one place. We thought it was okay to consider that a compliment.

With two successful symposia of the Old Norse Folklorists Network already behind us (colloquially labelled ONF 1 and ONF 2), we are now planning the publication of the eight plenary papers from the two symposia as well as a fullyfledged conference (the even weirder sounding ONF CONF [no, we are not writing a children’s book on strange animal noises]). This will take place in Tartu, June 2014, and carries the title “Sagas, Legends and Trolls”. The challenge this time round will be how to squeeze in sufficient papers between the coffee breaks to actually warrant the name of ‘conference’ – but we are working on this, confident that we will find a suitable solution. If nothing else, we already have a hoard of trollogists eager to attend, which is, in itself, some measure of success.

For details of the two symposia, please visit: http://www.flgr.ut.ee/et/osakonnad-1/old-norse-folklorists-network

For a description of the ideas behind the Old Norse Folklorists Network, please visit: http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/RMN%20Newsletter%20DECEMBER%202010.pdf

On our upcoming conference, please find the call for papers at the back of the present volume.

Works Cited

The Danish Folklore Nexus
Timothy Tangherlini, University of California, Los Angeles

In conjunction with the publication of Danish Folktales, Legends, and Other Stories, (http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/books/catalogs/Spring2013.pdf) a limited content website based on the expanded digital content of that work is open for public access at http://etkspace.scandinavian.ucla.edu/danishfolklore. The “Danish Folklore Nexus” presents the stories of five of Evald Tang Kristensen’s repertoires, comprising nearly 500 stories, ballads, jokes, recipes, cures, and descriptions of everyday life. These main stories are supplemented with an additional 500 stories taken from the Tang Kristensen collection as a whole. All places related to collection, and all places mentioned in the stories, are projected into a mapping environment that includes historical maps, and contemporary street and satellite views. The stories are presented in both English and Danish, and includes transcriptions and images of the original fieldwork diaries. The published version of this material includes nearly six hundred pages of scholarly articles on Danish folklore, Tang Kristensen’s collections, the role of mapping in the study of folklore, and rich biographies of each of the storytellers, expanded story annotations, as well as a discussion of the fourteen field collecting trips that form the basis of this work. The published book is accompanied by a DVD that allows one to install a local app that provides ‘always on’ access to the all of the expanded digital content and advanced search features (no need for internet access).

The group in Computational Folkloristics at UCLA in conjunction with the UCLA library is currently developing a faceted browsing platform for the entire digitized Evald Tang Kristensen collection. Already
functional, but only encompassing the stories included in Danske Sagn, Danske Sagn, ny række, and Gamle folks fortællinger om det jyske almueliv, the platform can be accessed here: http://etkspace.scandinavian.ucla.edu. This browsing platform allows one to rapidly resort the content of these twenty-six volumes according to multiple criteria. Searches on this platform are addressable, and search results can be packaged and downloaded to local machines.

**Austmarr Network Website**

Kendra Willson, University of Helsinki / University of California, Los Angeles

A website has recently been launched for the Austmarr Network. The Austmarr Network is an international, interdisciplinary network of scholars focused on reconstructing the human history of the Circum-Baltic region. We seek to understand the contacts and processes that have shaped the modern ethnicities present in the region – Germanic, Baltic, Slavic, Finnic and Saami. We bring together specialists in history, archaeology, folklore, literature, comparative religion, linguistics and onomastics from different countries around the Baltic to overcome the barriers among different disciplinary, national and linguistic traditions and develop new methods in interdisciplinary intercultural reconstruction. We are especially interested in cultural contacts at the cusp of history and prehistory. The Austmarr Network has held three conferences since 2011 (in Tartu, Helsinki and Härnösand) and further conferences and other activities are planned (see further Kouvolan, this volume).

The web site contains general information about the network and about our meetings. We will gradually be adding links to relevant research and resources as well as further information about the network’s members. If you have information you would like to see included on the web site, please contact Kendra Willson at kendra.willson[at]helsinki.fi.

The web site is found at http://www.scandinavian.ucla.edu/people/faculty/willson/Austmarr.html. The Austmarr network also has a Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/457729010964654/.

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Death by Wisdom: Myth and the Ideology of Oral Knowledge-Objects in the Circum-Baltic Region
Frog, University of Helsinki

In Old Norse mythology, a curious thing about the transfer of mythic knowledge is that – perhaps inevitably – someone either dies or is already dead. A prominent exemplar of this is the eddic poem Vafþrúðnismáli, in which the god Odin and the ancient giant Vafþrúðnir engage in a competition of question and answer about the mythic world and mythic time – a competition in which the first who fails to answer will lose his head.

The present paper considers the interface of these mythological narratives with ideologies of mythic knowledge as an individual and social resource. It considers this narrative pattern in relation to an ideology of magical practice that appears to be prominent in the Circum-Baltic region. This ideology constructs verbal incantations as text-objects that are directly identified with magical power. Accordingly, the magical power of the text-object is transferred (lost by one, gained by another) when it is taught and learned (e.g. Siikala 1991: 197; cf. Vaitkevičienė 2008: 91). These text-objects, or texts as knowledge-objects, may even persist in society if the possessor dies before teaching it, for example by communication through dreams (e.g. Vaitkevičienė 2008: 93). In some traditions, the transfer of these knowledge-objects included accounts of events in mythic time, which it appears could in some cases be assimilated and treated as first-hand experience by the specialist who learned it (cf. Tarkka 2005: 86, 150–151, 175–183). The types of narratives which inform us of these ideologies in more recent periods are generally unavailable for the medieval period. However, mythology by definition has a social and semiotic role in the construction and communication of models for understanding the world order (e.g. Doty 2000: 58–65, 68–74). Old Norse mythology correlates remembering, telling and forgetting mythic knowledge with the empowerment of the figure acquiring that knowledge in contrast with the other figure, who dies.

This paper considers whether Old Norse mythological narratives describing the transfer of mythic knowledge may engage and reflect an ideology of text-objects, presenting mythic models for understanding the realities (and significance) of circulating mythic knowledge. It argues that this may have been one aspect of the cultural relevance on these narratives by placing them in dialogue with a) comparative evidence of an ideology of text-objects; b) legends of acquiring knowledge of poetry in dreams in Old Norse and related traditions (e.g. Anglo-Saxon Caedmon); c) the narrative of Óðinn’s acquisition of the Mead of Poetry; and d) interfaced conceptions of knowledge, language and magical power.

Works Cited
Mythology, Poetic Register and Dialects of Singing
Frog, University of Helsinki


In Viena Karelia, networks of kin groups exhibit distinctive ways of singing at the verbal level of the poetic register. ‘Register’ is a term drawn from linguistics for language as it is used in particular communicative situations. In this case, the registral lexicon is made of words, formulae and multiforms. In other oral-poetic traditions, an oral-poetic register and other generic strategies may be semantically informed or bound up with vernacular mythology. The present paper will introduce this relationship of mythology and register in other cultures as a frame of reference for approaching the very different traditions of kalevalaic epic. It will then introduce on-going research on this verbal aspect of kalevalaic dialects of singing at the verbal level of the poetic register. Once differences from interfaces of mythology and register in other cultures have been introduced, kalevalaic dialects of singing will be triangulated with what Anna-Leena Siikala (2012) has described as ‘dialects of mythology’. This paper argues these dialects of singing and dialects of mythology are not only complementary in kalevalaic epic traditions, but much more directly bound together – i.e. the oral-poetic language of representation in its dialectal form is intimately connected to the dialect of the ‘language’ of symbols constitutive of the mythological narratives it is used to represent. In other words, this paper suggests that dialects of singing and dialects of mythology may be comprehensively interfaced and difficult or impossible to separate in the tradition of kalevalaic mythology.

Works Cited

The Grammar of Moving between the Worlds in Nenets Epic Poetry
Karina Lukin, University of Helsinki

Paper to be presented at the 16th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), 25th–30th June 2013, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Movement is one of the defining features of Nenets epic poetry. In Nenets epic texts, extensive and long-lasting journeys are made, for example, in order to go to war, to take revenge, to obtain a suitable wife or to escape or find the way back home. This movement may be interpreted as customary traveling between earthly places. As the poetry is mythic in nature, most of the travels seem to happen in the worlds beyond the customary world and movement between this and the otherworld often takes place.

This paper will review the landscape of Nenets epic poetry, emphasizing the moments, where the world(s) beyond are passed, entered, or exited. It will also look more closely at some of the linguistic expressions used in these contexts. Most of the expressions are verbs describing motion. However, there are also idiomatic forms that rest on the segmentation of space in the everyday life of the nomadic Nenets, which refer to more passive modes of being, such as sitting.
“Kallehen kandajazen kandamaista kaimatah”: Variety and Flexibility of Alliteration in Karelian Laments
Eila Stepanova, University of Helsinki

Paper presented at the conference Alliterativa Causa organized by the Folklore Society, the University of Tartu and the Warburg Institute, 18th–19th January 2013, London, U.K.

Laments may be generally defined as melodic poetry of varying degrees of improvisation, which nonetheless follows conventionalized rules of traditional verbal expression, most often performed by women in ritual contexts and potentially also on non-ritual grievous occasions. The poetics of Finnic or Balto-Finnic laments is characterized by demands of alliteration within flexible compositional structures. Among these lament traditions, Karelian laments are composed in rhythmic-melodic ‘strings’ of variable length united by alliteration. These strings are not constrained by regularly repeating metrical structures. In performance, one or many parallel strings (of varying length) would represent the same essential content with different patterns of alliteration. This was possible because of a highly developed language of poetic circumlocutions (synonyms) that could accommodate different patterns of alliteration, as in the title expression of this paper: *kallehen kandajazen kandamaista kaimatah* [‘dear carrier’s (mother’s) carried-one (child) is seen off’].

The present paper introduces and explores flexibility and variation in relation to semantic structures and alliteration as a compositional constraint. It looks at the relationship of the semantic content of a poetic string and the use of circumlocutions. These circumlocutions were built on a core word or basic expression that could be expanded and developed into a complex description that nevertheless functioned as a single word such as *kandaja* [‘carrier’] for ‘mother’ within the poetic string of a lament. Special attention will be on use and variation of semantic core-words in relation to patterns of variation, with consideration of the number of conventional core-words meeting the same and different patterns of alliteration.

Syntactically, the verb would normally occur at the end of a string and participated in alliteration. The number of verbs that can be used as equivalents for specific actions and events were limited. This paper considers the possibility that the choice of verb was a primary (but, of course, not the only) determinant on alliteration in a poetic string during composition in performance. Discussion will build on earlier research on the role of alliteration in shaping the semantics of different words in a poetic system and on its role as a determinant on word choice. This offers a new perspective on the relationship of syntax to alliteration in Karelian laments that may have relevance to research on alliteration in other poetries.

Localization in Saga Dreams and Dreaming Scenes
Kendra Willson, University of Helsinki / University of California, Los Angeles

Paper presented at “Supernatural Places”: The 6th Nordic-Celtic-Baltic Folklore Symposium, organized by the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore and the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu, 4th–7th June 2012, Tartu, Estonia.

The persistent spatial anchoring of saga narrative, the spatial confusion of dreams and the prophetic nature of saga dreams interact in complex ways in the discourse structure of saga dream accounts and their narrative contexts.

Vagueness in spatial relations is typical of dream accounts cross-linguistically. Perelmutter (2008) describes their stance as gaze rather than narrative. She points out typical patterns in the use of motion verbs in Russian dream accounts found on internet web sites and their affinities to the narrative
technique of Dostoevsky’s *The Double*. It has also been observed that reports of dreams regarded as prophetic differ in their linguistic structure in Italian, involving more perfective tenses (Giorgi & Pianesi 2001; Perelmutter 2008: 82).

Icelandic sagas make extensive use of dreams as portents and psychological revelations (see e.g. Kelchner 1937, Lönnroth 2002 and works there cited). Saga dreams also serve as schematic encapsulations of the narrative and have been compared to the Norwegian preludes found in several sagas (Andersson 1967: 8).

Sagas of Icelanders are also characterized by geographical specificity. This reflects their emphasis on the formation of the human landscape in the frontier society of Iceland, as well as techniques inherited from oral tradition which use specific place names and local details in order to establish the authority of the narrator and the verisimilitude of the narrative, related to the localization of migratory legend.

Willson (forthcoming) points out that the only chapters in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* which do not contain overt references to locations are a subset of those involving Gísli’s dream women. I suggest that this may reinforce the impression of the eroding line between dream and waking life in Gísli’s perception as his mental condition deteriorates.

By contrast, the dream in the first chapter of *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* forms part of the settlement narrative of the region. It is embedded in spatially specific details presented using typical saga formulae for settlement narration. The dream itself contains reference to a specific direction and geographical point (‘Vestr yfir Lagarfljót’ [‘West across Lagarfljót’]), embedded in a command by a supernatural being which dictates the dreamer’s subsequent actions in waking life.

I will discuss further examples of spatial anchoring and its absence in saga dream accounts and the surrounding narrative. This will shed light on the extent to which these accounts are ‘realistic’, i.e. plausibly related to real dream-sharing practice (cf. e.g. Heijnjen 2005), as well as on medieval Icelandic conceptualizations of dream space.

**Works Cited**


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**Runic Coordination and the Death of IE *kue***

Kendra Willson, Helsinki Collegium

*Paper presented at Etymology and the European Lexicon: 14th Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft, hosted by Roots of Europe at the University of Copenhagen, 17th–22nd September 2012, Copenhagen, Denmark.*

The Indo-European (IE) enclitic connective *kue*, preserved in Gothic as the sentence connective *(u)h [‘and’], is commonly thought to have been lost as an independent form from the other Germanic languages before their attested stages. However, readings involving a postvocalic *h [‘and’] < IE *kue* have been proposed for a number of runic inscriptions in the elder futhark: the Bolbro bracteate (Alexander Jóhannesson 1923: 90), the Sjælland II bracteate (Samplonius 1997: 253), the Kinneve stone (Grønvik 1981), the Nordendorfer Bügelfibel (Grønvik 1987b) and different locations in the Noleby stone (Brate...
1898: 337; Bugge 1899; Alexander Jóhannesson 1923: 99; Grønvik 1987a: 93).

The inscriptions in question are all difficult and the readings problematic.

The proposed enclitic conjunction *h* would be anomalous in the early Norse linguistic system. The only well-attested cognate within Germanic, Gothic *(u)h*, has an exclusively clausal distribution, whereas the putative runic examples coordinate smaller elements (mainly nouns). The clitics that emerge in Old Norse are not sentence connective but tied to specific parts of speech, nouns (the definite article) or verbs (the reflexive pronoun that becomes the middle voice; the subject pronouns and negating elements seen mainly in verse).

All the putative runic examples of *h* are postvocalic and it is not clear what form the conjunction would assume after a consonant. A conjunction which could only appear postvocically, hence subject to both syntactic and phonetic constraints on its distribution, would be unusual and unstable. Word-final postvocalic /h/ is lost in Norse during the period of the older inscriptions, around the 7th century CE (some central evidence for this date comes from examples under discussion here). The hypothesis that the conjunction *h* survived to die a phonological death through this sound change suggests more etymological continuity than it may be appropriate to postulate in this functional domain subject to regular renewal (cf. Meillet 1958: 159–174).

The early runic corpus provides little evidence for coordination, not least because of the brief and elliptical nature of the texts. It is a standard claim (cf. e.g. Falk & Torp 1910 I: 788) that the normal word for ‘and’ in early Norse is *jah*, cognate with Gothic *jah* and Old High German *joh*. However, this statement is also based on the very limited evidence of a few problematic inscriptions, as well as on comparative data. If *jah* were the usual ‘and’ word in 6th or 7th-century Norse, one would expect to see remnants of it in skaldic or eddic verse and perhaps in Old Norse prose. Early Norse *jah*, like *h*, may be an etymological phantom.

*Ok*, which becomes the general word for ‘and’ in all the Norse Germanic languages, appears fully grammaticalized as a conjunction by the time of the Viking Age runic inscriptions and the earliest skaldic verse; given this fact and its wide geographical distribution, it most likely arose well before the time of these inscriptions.

**Works Cited**


Why Care about Later Folklore in Old Norse Studies?
Eldar Heide

Script of a talk that was given at a workshop on Old Norse Studies and folklore at the Fifteenth International Saga Conference, 5th–11th August 2012, Århus, Denmark.

The present short discussion is structured around three common arguments against the use of more recently documented folklore in Old Norse Studies:

1. ‘It is not relevant.’
2. ‘OK, it may seem relevant, but we cannot use it because it is impossible to know if it really has any informative value for periods far preceding it.’
3. ‘OK, it may be relevant and there may be ways to use it, but that kind of work is not Old Norse Studies.’

Each of these arguments will be briefly addressed in turn, beginning with the last one. Old Norse studies is the study of Old Norse manuscripts and all that this brings with it. Often we only use the information that we find in the texts themselves, but we also frequently use different kinds of additional material in order to help throw light on topics that we study. The most important types of additional material are:

a) contemporary but foreign texts, usually learned texts in Latin; and
b) indigenous but much later information, usually post-medieval, of many kinds: place names, dialect words, folklore, etc.

In some scholarly milieus today, especially some that heavily emphasize manuscript studies, many want to limit themselves to the contemporary additional material. In these milieus, some feel that studies that make extensive use of late information, especially folklore, are not really Old Norse Studies, but Folkloristics. However, if that were the case, studies that make equally extensive use of foreign medieval texts in Latin are not Old Norse Studies either, but Medieval Latin Studies or even Classical Studies. This, of course, would be nonsense. Any study that aims at understanding questions raised by the Old Norse texts is an Old Norse study, no matter what kind of additional material it makes use of. And one could argue that we had better try to find and make use of all the potentially useful additional material, because lack of information is our biggest problem.

Many a work from learned literature is highly relevant to the understanding of Old Norse literature. However, this literature is not relevant unless it can be established that the particular work was known by Old Norse authors, and to establish this is often no easier than establishing the relevance of late folklore material.

This leads us to a response to argument 1. Later folklore can be valuable for Old Norse Studies in two ways:

1. As additional material, additional input and data in the calculations that lead to our interpretations.
2. Analogically as a ‘school’ that teaches us how to view the Old Scandinavian religion – which was itself a form of folklore, as opposed to the centrally authorised Christianity – and the background of the written Old Norse literature. The learned European literature was very important for the development of Old Norse literature, but the indigenous, oral background was no less important. Therefore, a broad knowledge of the phenomenon of folklore should be compulsory to any student of Old Norse literature.

The use of post-medieval folklore as additional material can be illustrated with an example from Daniel Sävborg’s work on the so-called post-classical sagas of Icelanders (Sävborg forthcoming). The traditional view is that these sagas are bookish fiction, inspired by the legendary sagas. However, Sävborg’s studies have convincingly shown that the closest parallels to certain narrative episodes appearing in these works are to be found in 19th and 20th century folklore, and that the ‘post-classical’ sagas of Icelanders were also based on oral tradition, just like the
other sagas of Icelanders — although a different part of the tradition, a part more interested in the supernatural.

One compelling episode that led Sävborg to this conclusion can be found in Bárðar saga, where the troll woman called Hetta tells the fisherman Ingjaldr how he can find a certain, excellent fishing spot called Grímsmið. She does this by reciting a verse that lists the landmarks, the cross bearings that indicate the location of the fishing spot. The information in the verses is roughly:

‘It is where you can see this mountain against that headland in one direction, and that mountain clear from this mountain in the other direction.’¹

All the place names in the verse are real. There are no parallels to this episode in the legendary sagas, but many in the popular traditions recorded in the 19th and 20th centuries. Legends where a supernatural being tells fishermen a verse with the bearings for a fantastic fishing spot are found all along the coast of Norway as well as in Iceland (Hovda 1961; Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1983: 194–200). It is hard not to think that these legends have some kind of connection with the Bárðar saga legend, but it is also difficult to believe that the Norwegian legends derive from an Icelandic saga. Had it only been found in Iceland, it could have derived from Bárðar saga, because the sagas have been read by the Icelanders ever since the Middle Ages. But in Norway, it seems that the sagas of Icelanders were largely or wholly unknown even in the Middle Ages. Also, if Bárðar saga were the source for the Norwegian legends, they should have been more like the saga version, but they are very different. From this it follows that:

- The Bárðar saga episode is unlikely to be purely the invention of a medieval author
- The episode probably reflects an oral tradition that existed throughout (at least) Western Scandinavia in the Middle Ages, although it was only written down in Bárðar saga
- The similar legends recorded in Norway in the 19th and 20th centuries probably are independent, late attestations of this common tradition

On the basis of this and other data from 19th and 20th century folklore, Sävborg with quite high probability reconstructs an oral tradition behind the ‘post-classical’ sagas of Icelanders. This will, alongside with his other arguments, lead to a radical change in our view of these sagas.

This brings us to the second argument in the list above. We can all agree that it is difficult to use folklore, and in many cases impossible. However, in many other cases it is possible, as the example just discussed illustrates. The Bárðar saga fishing spot verse is just one example (as the works of many other scholars can illustrate). It is not unusual that folklore data can be demonstrated, with high probability, to reflect ancient times, for reasons like those mentioned in the Bárðar saga example, or other reasons – as many of us know.

Still, because post-medieval folklore is clearly far less reliable for the medieval period than medieval texts, some claim that cautiousness should make us leave late folkloric material aside. However, those who are most sceptical about folklore are usually those who have the most limited knowledge of it. One could argue that it would be more cautious to try to examine and consider all the potentially relevant data before a conclusion is drawn than to reject a certain type of data á priori.

Notes
1. The specific details presented in this verse are not relevant to the present discussion. It is not reproduced and closely translated here as the details of the complicated text would only distract from discussion and the text may also be corrupt (Bjarni Vilhjálmsson & Þórhallur Vilmundarson 1991: 124–125).

Works Cited
The article “Saga Motifs on Gotland Picture Stones: The Case of Hildr Högnadóttir” examines the legend of Hildr Högnadóttir. This legend forms part of the account of the Old Norse ‘Everlasting Battle’, known as the Hjaðningavíg [‘Battle of the Hjaðnings’], and how it originated – i.e. the story of Freyja’s necklace, the Brísingamen, which includes an account of the abduction of a woman and the resulting conflict. This includes a sequence that consists of an abduction and battle, a sequence that is sometimes simply referred to as ‘the Hildr legend’. The legend is best known from sources such as the skaldic poem Ragnarsdrápa (9th century, containing not only kennings referring to the legend, but also the plot itself), Snorri Sturluson’s Edda (13th century) and the legendary saga Héðins saga ok Högna, or Sǫrla þáttr, now preserved in a manuscript from the 14th century.

The article deals with the different manifestations of this legend in poems, written saga texts and archaeological remains, in order to explain how they all influence our understanding of the preservation process. Not only do these sources show that the material was known among the Anglo-Saxons in the 7th century and among the people of Scandinavia a couple of centuries later; they also show that it had been disseminated over a considerable area and was popular. The main theory presented is that the preservation process supports the interpretation that scenes depicted on the Gotland picture stones Lärbro Hammars I and the Stenkyrka Smiss I contain references to the Hildr legend.

The article “Gunnarr and the Snake Pit in Medieval Art and Legend” focuses on Gunnarr Gjúkason of the Völuspá saga, and traces the legend of his death – i.e. the motif of Gunnarr in the snake-pit – all the way from the oldest possible indications of its existence to late medieval textual references. The survey includes iconographic representations. In order to shed light on the development of the motif, the sources in question are examined with the conclusion that Gunnarr’s death in the snake-pit is mentioned in eleven written sources, while the number of visual sources is less certain, as described in the discussion.
This paper presents a case study on formula selection and variation in eddic poetry. It analyses the thirteen formulaic stanzas in Alvíssmál which ascribe poetic synonyms to different types of mythic being. The paper considers that meter and alliteration may be conditioning and determinant factors on the shape and selection of formulae in these stanzas. It develops the discussion introduced in Frog & Jonathan Roper (2011) on the ‘alliterative rank’ of terms for mythic being in eddic poetry and correlates this with their use in formulae. The outcome is that alliteration rather than the mentioned category of mythic being appears primary in formula selection. Therefore, any attempt to use these stanzas for insights into mythology and categories of mythic being must consider and address potential determinant factors of the poetic mode of expression that may impact formula use and word choice.

The article discusses Oral-Formulaic Theory in relation to Old Norse poetry. It approaches the concept of an oral-poetic formula through linguistics rather than directly from Oral-Formulaic Theory, as was also discussed in the last issue of RMN Newsletter (Frog 2012). (According to this approach, ‘Oral-Formulaic Theory’ is preferred as a term to the simplified designation ‘Oral Theory’, because the latter blurs into all voiced language production and becomes too general to be practically useful for discussion.) Binary models of ‘improvisation’—‘memorization’ as opposed extremes are shown to be insufficient to describe actual variation. The term and concept ‘crystallization’ is introduced as an alternative following Anna-Leena Siikala’s (1990) use of this term to describe varying degrees of fixity in oral prose narrative traditions. The repeating formulae in Alvíssmál are analysed revealing an ‘inclination to non-variation’ is demonstrated – i.e. that there is an inclination to reproduce formulae in exactly the same way in each repetition, even with regard to semantically light or void elements such as ok ['and'] that have no impact on the metricality of a line. This type of non-variation is discussed in relation to rhythmic-melodic templates that can by hypothesized as associated with the realization of formulaic expressions.

Comparison with stanzas of the poem preserved as Alvíssmál also quoted in Snorri Sturluson’s Edda is introduced to discuss the possibility that a formula and its variable element were inclined to crystallize as a whole-line unit in memory. Constraints of alliteration, semantics and syllabic rhythm within a line are found likely to have limited variation as a process of social negotiation in transmission of poems and their stanzas. The hypothesis of whole-line crystallization is tested elsewhere in the eddic corpus, where it offers a potential explanation for grammatical peculiarities or inconsistencies associated with repeating lines in Völsúspá, Skírnismál and Þrymskviða.

The following article in this series will turn attention to composition at the level of stanzas, applying the theory of multiforms, the fundamentals of which was initially proposed by Lauri and Anneli Honko (1995, 1998; see also Honko 1998; 2003) and has since been significantly advanced through consideration of diverse poetries and compositional strategies (Frog 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; for quite a different adaptation, see also Drout 2011).

Works Cited
Frog. 2011. “Multiforms and Meaning: Playing with Referentiality in Kalevalaic Epic”. In Laulu
Synonymy and Rank in Alliterative Poetry
Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu

The note on synonymy and alliterative rank by Jonathan Roper that appeared in RMN Newsletter in 2011 has now appeared in more fully-developed form as “Synonymy and Rank in Alliterative Poetry”. The published version of this article is also downloadable from the author’s academia.edu site.

Works Cited

Vikingarnas slavar: Den nordiska träldomen under yngre järnålder och äldsta medeltid [‘Slaves of the Vikings: Nordic Thralldom in the Late Iron Age and Early Midde Ages’]
Stefan Brink, University of Aberdeen

The editors of RMN Newsletter have invited me to make known a new book I have published on Viking slavery to the Retrospective Methods Network. Here follows a short summary of the content.

An early stance in research, emanating from the 19th century, was that Early Scandinavian society was an egalitarian peasant society, with free farmers, kings and chieftains. In the Icelandic sagas and the earliest provincial laws there were, of course, mentions of slaves, most commonly known as þrælar. So the existence of an unfree class was known. Kings could have many þrælar, farmers some. This fact did not alter the view of the prehistoric society; it was still looked upon as fairly homogeneous.

When the number of thralls was discussed, some scholars reckoned large quantities in society, as much as ca. 25% of the population. No serious modern discussion of slavery in prehistoric Scandinavia has, however, seen light so far. When the topic has been under analysis, the two main sources consulted have...
been the provincial laws and the Icelandic sagas; the former evidencing the last phase of thralldom in Scandinavia with the manumission of thralls, and for the latter sources — the sagas — we always have the creeping suspicion that they describe more the time of the writing of the sagas (thus mainly the 13th century) and what these authors thought of or had heard of thralldom in the Viking Age.

It would hence be hazardous to use sagas and the provincial laws to reconstruct the Viking Age situation of the thralls. In the sagas the thrall is always a stereotype – dark, short and stupid, no doubt used as spice in the narrative to contrast with the blond, tall and wise hero. The descriptions of thralls in these stories are far too stereotypical to use in any serious analysis of Viking slavery. What we can deduce from the stories is the fact that many of the thralls in Iceland seem to have been seized abroad; very often slaves from Ireland are mentioned. Another interesting aspect in the sagas is the stories where a child of a female slave and an Icelander grows up as a free man and makes a reputation for himself.

The provincial laws are the most important sources for us in our study especially of medieval slavery (hence from the 12th and 13th centuries). Here we get a wide range of terms for slave, and we get an insight into the judicial dependence of the slave in society; I assume there must have been legal rules in these laws, which were based on old customs, hence older than the Middle Ages. In order to understand prehistoric slavery, and to complement what we can learn from the laws, archaeology, onomastics, and especially the semantic and etymological analysis of slave terminology are vital.

When we try to understand early society in Scandinavia it is obvious that it was decisive for an individual to be part of a family and a social group. You were in a way identified by your affiliation to a family, a group and a society. The worst punishment you could thus get was to be cut off from this group and society, to be excommunicated or outlawed, which has been described as a ‘social death’.

The natural point of departure for all discussions on slaves in early Scandinavia has been the ancient eddic poem of Rígsþula. Here, we find an allegorical description of society, in which named persons represent the social classes, among them the slaves. In the poem, descriptions are also given of each person’s (i.e. each social category’s) behaviour, name, daily occupation and physical appearance. This poem has therefore been used as a kind of description of the tasks of a Scandinavian slave in the Viking Age (“to make stone fences, to manure the arable land, to herd pigs and goats and to dig peat”).

Unfortunately, one has to use the Rígsþula with great care and caution, especially if the aim is to use it as a kind of cultural-historical source for life in Viking Age Scandinavia. The poem is a very special one, a mythical allegory, in which the principal character, Rígr, as the god Heimdallr is called in the poem, bears an Irish name (Ir rí, OIr ríg [‘king’]). Also the dating of the poem is problematic. Earlier, the Rígsþula was looked upon as an ancient poem, while later research has tended to place it in the 13th century.

It is very clear that the author is following a certain slave topos that is always found whenever slaves are mentioned in Old Norse literature. The thrall was dark, short, stupid, gloomy and ugly; this was in contrast to the tall, blond, handsome and attractive hero. The
picture of the thrall is often used in contrast to the free human being. It is apparent that we are here dealing with literature. Therefore, one has to approach the text with the utmost care, if one wishes to extract historical facts from it. This literary topos is found again and again in the Old Norse texts. The thralls were not only ugly, but also cowardly and stupid. To sum up, the qualitative aspects of the slaves and their situation during early times are difficult to obtain in the Old Norse literature. The picture drawn here is based on stereotypes and clichés.

An excellent point of departure for a discussion on the terms for slaves in Scandinavia is to be found in a paragraph in the Old Law of the Gulathing (198): Tvar ero hans hinæ bezto ambatter. Seta. oc deigia. oc tveir prælar. hjönn oc bryti. [‘Two bondwomen are counted as the best, the housemaid and the housekeeper. Two thralls are counted the best, the foreman and the master’s personal servant.’] Here, we see that the early West Scandinavian ambatt was obviously some kind of collective term for a female slave, while the male counterpart was þræll. The seta and deigia, and the hjönn and bryti, were hence slaves with some kinds of special functions. The most commonly used contemporary term for a slave was ON þræll, OSw, ODa þræl. This kind of etymological and semantic analyses of terms for slaves proves to one of the best tools for understanding a prehistoric slavery in Scandinavia.

The numbers of slaves assumed in early research are in my opinion grossly overestimated. When Northmen were dealing with slaves, in Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England or Francia, large quantities could have been taken. But the custom seems to have been either to take them as hostage and then ask for a large ransom, or to sell them at some slave market. The bringing home of slaves to Scandinavia was certainly a fact, but in my opinion only on a small scale; probably the slave was seen as a precious commodity, to show off. I think slaves were fairly uncommon in society. There might have been working slaves on ordinary farms, but larger quantities were probably only to be found on chieftains’ and well-to-do farmers’ farms. This could be reflected in some ‘double graves’, found in Denmark and Sweden, where one of the buried is often beheaded and has his or her hands tied (interpreted as a slave) and the other one is obviously a wealthy man or women with rich grave goods.

The main result in my book is – not surprisingly – that the slave institution in prehistoric Scandinavia was, depending on economic, social and legal aspects, probably rather complex.

For more information, please visit: http://www.atlantisbok.se/layout/detail.php?id=7689

Works Cited

Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans
Emily Lyle, University of Edinburgh


The various Indo-European branches had a shared linguistic and cultural origin in prehistory, and this book sets out to overcome the difficulties about understanding the gods who were inherited by the later literate cultures from this early ‘silent’ period by modelling the kind of society where the gods could have come into existence. It presents the theory that there were ten gods, who are conceived of as reflecting the actual human organization of the originating time.
There are clues in the surviving written records which reveal a society that had its basis in the three concepts of the sacred, physical force, and fertility (as argued earlier by the French scholar, Georges Dumézil). These concepts are now seen as corresponding to the old men, young men, and mature men of an age-grade system, and each of the three concepts and life stages is seen to relate to an old and a young god. In addition to these six gods, and to two kings who relate in positive and negative ways to the totality, there is a primal goddess who has a daughter as well as sons. The gods, like the humans of the posited prehistoric society, are seen as forming a four-generation set originating in an ancestress, and the theogony is explored through stories found in the Germanic, Celtic, Indian, and Greek contexts.

The sources are often familiar ones, such as the *Edda*, the *Mabinogi*, Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but selected components are looked at from a fresh angle and, taken together with less familiar and sometimes fragmentary materials, yield fresh perspectives which allow us to place the Indo-European cosmology as one of the world’s indigenous religions. We can also gain a much livelier sense of the original culture of Europe before it was overlaid by influences from the Near East in the period of literacy. The gods themselves continue to exert their fascination, and are shown to reflect a balance between the genders, between the living and the ancestors, and between peaceful and warlike aspects expressed at the human level in alternate succession to the kingship.

The following points may be of special interest to readers of *RMN Newsletter*:

- This book offers an approach to mythology for the 21st century.
- It proposes that Old Norse mythology should be understood as a core area within Indo-European mythology.
- It works through stories that have had a life in oral as well as literate cultures.
- It finds that certain giantesses play roles that can be interpreted as those of a primal goddess.
- It offers a new view of the nature of the hammer of Thor.
- And, although Baldr’s death has been exhaustively discussed in the past, it also offers a new suggestion that aims to solve the problem of a revenge killing within the kin group.


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**PhD Projects**

**One Family, Shared Emotions: Textualisation Methods and Articulation of Lyrical Folk Poetry in the Kalevala**

Niina Hämäläinen, University of Turku

*Dissertation defended for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Folkloristics at the University of Turku (Finland); published as Yhteinen perhe, jaetut tunteet: Lyyrisen kansanrunon tekstualisoinnin ja artikuloinnin tapoja Kalevalassa, in the series Annales Universitas Turkuensis, Scripta lingua fennica edita Series C, 349 by Turun yliopisto in Turku, Finland; the dissertation was successfully defended on 17th November 2012. Supervisors: PhD, University lecturer, Adjunct prof. Pertti Anttonen, Folklore studies, University of Helsinki and Prof. Pekka Hakamies, Folklore studies, University of Turku. Opponent: Prof. Lotte Tarkka, Folklore studies, University of Helsinki.*

The research analyses the different versions of the Kalevala, the practical and ideological procedures relating to Elias Lönnrot’s editing work and the relationship between Lönnrot and contemporary readers. The aim is an analysis and understanding of the preparation.
of the different versions of the Kalevala as part of 19th-century social and communal questioning. Lönnrot edited folk poems into an epic at a specific historical and social point, and this context is reflected in all his editorial work. He lived on the boundary between two worlds. He belonged primarily to the Swedish-speaking urbane culture, but by birth was Finnish-speaking, the son of a tailor who grew up in modest circumstances. He gathered, edited and defined oral tradition by publishing various literary collections of poetry for a cultured readership. Additionally, he wrote enlightening tales for the common folk and took part in contemporary discussions on the role of marriage and the family.

I have selected a family discussion of the period as a special context against which I have investigated Lönnrot’s editorial work. At the same time as Lönnrot was working in the area of the Kalevala, he took part in a discussion on the family and upbringing in various writings. The central question of the research is the way in which Lönnrot’s social activity was manifest in the endeavours to textualise folk poetry, and the extent to which he brought together the current questions of his time as part of the world pictured in the ancient epic. My research is an attempt to restore the significance of historical contextualisation, which has remained a side issue within Kalevala studies. At the same time, it focuses attention on the social questions of the time of the birth of the Kalevala, the early 19th century.

I analyse Lönnrot’s textualisation work through two Kalevala poetic sequences. The Aino and Kullervo poems have been chosen as the main materials for investigation, for the signs of Lönnrot’s editorial work are more obvious here than in other poems of the Kalevala. Lönnrot exploited lyrical poetry to an increasing degree as part of the contexts of the Aino and Kullervo poems. The materials investigated comprise the various versions of Lönnrot’s Kalevala: the so-called Proto-Kalevala (1833, originally unpublished), the Old Kalevala (1835), the interleaved Old Kalevala, the New Kalevala (1849) and the Abridged Kalevala (1862), and Lönnrot’s recordings of Kalevala-metre lyrical poems taken down on his collection trips (379 texts). The proportion of lyric used in Lönnrot’s editorial work has received an unwarranted lack of attention within research. I investigate textualisation in particular through the placing of lyrical folk poetry within the Kalevala, and relate the textualisation of lyric to 19th-century historical-cultural contexts. In what ways did the use of lyric as a part of the epic construct define Lönnrot’s editorial work, and what did he strive to communicate by means of lyrical poetic entities?

Within this investigation, by ‘textualisation’ I mean the conscious objectives and intentions relating to the process of making folk poems into literary products, by means of which the textualiser moulds the content of the traditional material and strives to form a link with the text’s readers. The examination of textualisation focuses on the literary moulding of traditional material and the assessment of the resulting products. Textualisation is a methodical tool of research to show how Lönnrot used folk-poetry material on a textual level. I have arrived at an overall picture of the methods of textualisation by comparing the lyrical material used by Lönnrot with the corresponding presentations in the versions of the Kalevala. In addition, the accumulated lyrical lines and passages of the various Kalevala versions have been checked in relation to each other and Lönnrot’s writings proportionalised as part of a multi-faceted editorial process. The textual analysis shows that Lönnrot included in the Kalevala particularly lyrical folk poetry characterised by themes of worry, which related to the depiction of feelings and hence broadened the presentation of the emotional world of the epic’s dramatis personae. The comparison has also provided a picture of the lyrical material that remained outside the ambit of the editorial work. For example, sexually coloured, aggressive or humorous themes found no place among the Kalevala’s lyrical themes.

Apart from being a procedure, textualisation is also an object of research. I not only investigate Lönnrot’s methods of operating with folk-poetry material on the level of the text, but I also place Lönnrot’s
methods within a contemporary context and the expectations vested in it, alongside other contemporary editorial methods. The premise is the notion of the search for meaning in textualisation and for ideological objectives. As the Kalevala’s readership had a weak understanding of the language and allusions of oral tradition, Lönnrot had to negotiate the meaning and poeticism of oral poetic material. He had to balance between the poetic materials and the concepts of the readership. He had to adapt the meanings and poetics of the verse texts into a form which could be taken in and understood by the epic’s readers. In the context of the Kalevala, the recognisable element was folk lyric, which contemporaries admired, and whose language and poetic depictions they were in a position to understand.

‘Articulation’ as a theoretical framework of my work has highlighted the links with choice and power in Lönnrot’s editorial work. In cultural studies, by ‘articulation’ is meant the hinging together of different ideas or phenomena. Hinging indicates the actualisation of different texts, readers and contexts, a process-centred attribution of meaning, as a consequence of which texts are articulated in new contexts and contexts in turn are situated within cultural practices. The lyrics of anxiety made use of by Lönnrot are approached in this investigation as a linguistic register, which in the context of the Kalevala bears linguistic, poetic and semantic meanings both from oral tradition and from modern culture. Lönnrot did not merely present oral poems in the Kalevala, but moulded their meanings and content, and strove to articulate them in relation to the modern age. By sinking lyrical themes within an epic narrative, Lönnrot created an imaginary emotional environment for the readers of the epic. So too, he presented an illusion of a mutually shared culture and its perceptions. Thus the Kalevala softened the differences of time, place and culture existing between different groups of people and the multi-layered folk-poetry materials.

The use of lyric in an epic narrative increased its length, joined the intervals of the narrative together, paused the flow temporarily and created atmosphere and feelings as part of the narration. Lyrical passages also paused the reader and focused attention on special points. Lönnrot grabbed the reader’s attention, presented feelings in comprehensible language and thereby communicated meanings which were familiar to contemporary readers. The emotions, and the conventions of the presentation of emotions, are emphasised in the Kalevala. Aino’s worry, physical and filling her whole being, and Kullervo’s feelings of loneliness and incapacity are evident in the texts collected by Lönnrot, but the meanings took on new forms as part of an epic. For example, the many terms for the mother in lyric poetry, like ‘beautiful bearer’, ‘milk-giver’, ‘fair suckler’, are not evident in Lönnrot’s final interpretation. In the context of the Kalevala, the mother is ‘my mother, my bearer’, and the close relationship with the mother, including the emphasis on bodily proximity, which appears in folk poems is wholly absent. The empirical part of the investigation has examined how the anxiety experienced by the personae has been associated in Lönnrot’s rendering with the idea of the family and, linked with this, with contemporary ideas about the relationship between mother and child.

Lönnrot was guided by his choice of editorial methods and ideological practices, and the aim of producing from the folk material an epic that resembled the oral tradition. At this time, hierarchical meanings and differences between oral culture and the editor who presented it and his readership were significant. From the perspective of textualisation, Lönnrot’s Kalevala is a representation, built upon a folk-poetry foundation, of the messages, customs and language of oral poetic culture. There is purpose in examining the Kalevala within the framework of this representation and context.

By linking lyric to epic narrative and through exposition of his textualisation methods, Lönnrot offered his readers a language and through this language a passage to the world of oral folk poetry. The peephole which was opened by the emotional world of lyrical themes of anxiety, presented not only the meanings and messages of oral culture, but above all the concepts of 19th-century
society. On this basis Lönnrot’s Kalevala can be characterised as a modern epic.

Translated by Clive Tolley.

Notes

1. According to Lauri Honko, the Kalevala is not one epic but many forms of an epic (Honko 2000, 2002). By referring to several performances of the Kalevala that took place between 1828−1862 (five versions in total), Honko wished to emphasise that the Kalevala was closer to oral tradition than literary epics. It is for this reason that Honko did not italicise different versions of the Kalevala in his later works. In this research, the Kalevala, as well as all other textualised presentations of Elias Lönnrot, are presented without italicisation. Although my approach to the Kalevala and its textualisation is different than Lauri Honko’s idea of the Kalevala as close to an oral performance, I define Lönnrot’s textualisation work not as a single epic but rather as a process of (re-)construction by the editor for the purpose of making the oral text readable and comprehensible to its readers.

Works Cited


It is my pleasure to inform the readers of RMN Newsletter of the upcoming launch of an international journal of versification and poetics, Studia Metrica et Poetica, edited by Mihhail Lotman, Igor Pilshchikov and Maria-Kristiina Lotman. All papers submitted to the journal will be double-blind peer reviewed by external reviewers. Studia Metrica et Poetica will be published twice a year by Tartu University Press. Tartu University Press aims to achieve acceptance to the Thomson Reuters database in a few years.

We are convinced that there is much need for Studia Metrica et Poetica. Versification and poetics are important and promising spheres of research, yet there are only a few publications which concentrate specifically on these problems. The fate of the international journal Poetics is worth mentioning here: its content corresponded to the title in its first years, but recently it seems to be more engaged in different ideological questions. In accordance with the concept of our journal, our intention is to focus on these aspects of verbal art (in the widest sense, including both literature and folklore) which are related to different aspects of techne. This will not exclude psychological issues nor different problems of reception, but we do not intend to address these as main topics of the journal.

We are interested in diversity of both material and methods. The thematic range of Studia Metrica et Poetica will not be limited to narrow language families nor certain schools. Therefore, we are especially interested in non-European and non-Indo-European traditions. As for methods, Studia Metrica et Poetica’s only restriction is that methods must meet the requirements of scholarly research; results must be verifiable. Studies of singular poems are not preferred, but submissions handling a question of importance or a text of significance will be considered.

The deadline for submissions for the first volume will be 15th August 2013 and publication is projected for March 2014. Submissions for the second volume of Studio Metrica et Poetica are due by 15th March 2014, and publication is projected for October 2014. The journal’s website is presently under construction. For specific guidelines and further information, please contact Mihhail Lotman at mihhail[at]ehe.ee.

Your contributions are extremely welcome!
The Kalevala Society Encourages the Study and Interpretation of Kalevala
Elina Lampela, The Kalevala Society

Kalevalaseura or the Kalevala Society is a foundation established in 1911. Its roots are in Karelianism, which was a movement characterized by an interest in the national epic Kalevala, folk poetry, the cultural context of its performance, and Karelia. Karelia is a large territory extending roughly from the Gulf of Finland to the White Sea and is on both sides of the Finnish–Russian border. The founders of the Kalevala Society were inspired by the life work of Elias Lönnrot, his compilation of Kalevala, his many field trips to record folk poetry, and his indelible impact on Finnish culture. The founding members of the Society were leading figures in Finnish arts and sciences. They included folklore researchers, professors, poets, artists and composers as well as architects.

During the past 100 years, the Kalevala Society has become a significant actor in Finnish culture. It is the only foundation in the world dedicated to a national epic. It supports research and art based on Kalevala and Finnish folklore, publishes research, organises events, grants awards and collaborates with researchers, translators, artists and so forth.

The Kalevala Society is governed by a board of seven members. The chairperson is Professor Seppo Knuuttila and the vice chairman is Professor Hannu Saha. The other board members are Senior Archivist Irma-Riitta Järvinen, Director General Jussi Nuorteva, Professor Hanna Snellman, Author Antti Tuuri, and Museum Director Tuija Wahlroos. The Kalevala Society has two employees: the Executive Director Ulla Piela and the Communications Coordinator Elina Lampela. The office of the Society is located on Mariankatu in the Kruununhaka area of Helsinki.

Although the Kalevala Society is a foundation, it has members: 339 Finnish members, 130 foreign members and 5 honorary members. Every year the board invites new members that have earned credit in science or art based on Kalevala or Finnish folklore.

Information about Kalevala
One of the main tasks of the Kalevala Society is to offer information about Kalevala and Finnish cultural heritage. This is accomplished by publishing research and offering information on the internet. The Kalevala Society has produced two web pages that offer general information about Kalevala. One is based on the book Kalevalan kulttuurihistoria – ‘The Cultural History of Kalevala’, which the Kalevala Society produced and was published by the Finnish Literature Society in 2008. This webpage is available in Finnish and it offers information about the cultural history of Kalevala (www.kalevalaseura.fi/kaku/). The other webpage is aimed at children and it is available in Finnish and Swedish. This website is called Kalevalan kankahilla – ‘Heath of Kalevala’ (www.kalevalaseura.fi/kalevalankankahilla/).

In the future, we will publish more webpages to spread information.
The annual publication *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* ['Annual Journal of the Kalevala Society'] is the main product of the Kalevala Society. It has been published since 1921. *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* is a refereed publication in Finnish. Each volume is an anthology of articles that has a specific theme every year. Previous volumes have dealt with, for example, Lapland, the Sámi, Karelia, games and plays, folk medicine, space and place, Elias Lönnrot and A.O. Väisänen. The latest anthology comes out every autumn. *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* has offered and still offers young researchers a chance to publish sketches or summaries of their writings.

In addition to *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, the Kalevala Society has produced several other books. These books are either based on projects of the Kalevala Society or they are anthologies that focus on *Kalevala*. Last autumn, the Kalevala Society published an anthology about translations of *Kalevala*. This is the volume *Kalevala maailmassa: Kalevalan käännösten kulttuurihistoriaa* ['*Kalevala in the World: The Cultural History of Translations of Kalevala*'], edited by Dr. Petja Aarnipuu. In 2010 we produced a small and very informative book in English called *Kalevala Guide* by Senior Archivist Irma-Riitta Järvinen and published by the Finnish Literature Society.

Two Annual Events

Every year, the Kalevala Society organizes two of its own events: the first in February and the second in October. In February, we celebrate *Kalevala* on Kalevala Day: February 28th has been unofficially recognized as ‘Kalevala Day’ for almost 150 years. In 1978, Kalevala Day was granted official recognition as a flag day (i.e. a day when the national flag is flown). Finland is the only country in the world to officially honour its national epic with a nationally recognized day. Every Kalevala Day, the Kalevala Society organizes a gathering at the statue of Elias Lönnrot in Helsinki to lay a wreath in front of it. This is a tradition that was started in the year 1921. There is always some program at the statue, including a speech and also expressive art such as singing, dancing or poetry. Later that day, we organize a seminar and this is usually followed by a concert in the evening.

Our other annual event is on Kekri Day in October. Kekri was a significant celebration time in rural Finland. On Kekri, the harvesting season ended and it was time to celebrate it. The Kalevala Society has celebrated Kekri Day annually since the 1960s. We usually organize a seminar and a concert. We also present the Kekri Day Awards at the Kekri Day seminar.

Myths and Translations

During the past few years, the Kalevala Society has focused on the question of how myths can be visualized. By collaborating with artists in Finland and abroad, we have received many interpretations of *Kalevala* and the myths it contains. In Finland, we had a project called *Taiteilijoiden Kalevala* ['The

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*Photo 1. Kekri Day Concert, Helsinki, 2012. The band and singers Aija Puurtinen and Tuomari Nurmio performed pop songs that have been translated into Finnish from other languages. Photo by Elina Lampela.*
Artists’ *Kalevala*’), in which ten visual artists and ten composers produced individual works based on *Kalevala*. The outcome of this project was an exhibition and concert in the Ateneum Museum (Helsinki) and the Finnish Literature Society published a book called *Taiteilijoiden Kalevala* representing the visual art work. Since then, we have invited interpretations of *Kalevala* from Italian, Spanish, African and Vietnamese artists. As *Kalevala* is the most translated work in Finnish, all of the artists we have worked with have the possibility of reading *Kalevala* in their mother tongue.

When it comes to the translation of *Kalevala*, the Kalevala Society supports translators by offering information to facilitate their labour and we also help them to find funding for the work. In addition, the Kalevala Society established an Epic Award in 2009. This award has thus far been granted once to Bui Viet Hoa, who translated *Kalevala* into Vietnamese. Last autumn, the Kalevala Society granted one of the Kekri Day awards to Arshad Farooq, whose translation of *Kalevala* into Urdu was published last year.

**Awards and Grants**

Awards are the most visible way to show support to people working with *Kalevala* and Finnish cultural traditions. Every year, the Kalevala Society grants the Kekri Day Awards. Every third year, it awards the Akseli Gallen-Kallela Award to an innovative artist, and the Kalevalaseura Award to a person who has made Kalevala, Finnish culture or folklore better known with his or her scientific or artistic work.

At the moment, the Kalevala Society is focusing on the research of Kalevala-metric poetry. The Kalevala Society wants to promote the research of old poetry. It will therefore offer two grants in order to guarantee the continuous work of two researchers. The grants celebrate Kaarle Krohn, the first Professor of Finnish and Comparative Folk Poetry Research at the University of Helsinki. This year will be the 150th anniversary of Kaarle Krohn’s birth.

In addition to awards and grants, the Kalevala Society supports many projects every year. In 2013, these include projects such as the opera *Akseli*, the *Kalevala*-magazine, the composing of a Kalevala musical and a movie by Rax Rinnekangas.

**Notes**

1. *Kalevan läpilaulu* was a sort of singing parade, organized by a student group from the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department, that travelled (with a few strategic stops coordinated with the Kalevala Society’s events) through the city centre as a tribute to Lönnrot, his work and the magnificent kalevalaic language he used. They sang, without interruption, all 50 songs / 22,795 lines of *Kalevala*, to experience the epic in a sung form and the communality of the solo-chorus-styled singing. People were allowed to take part or just listen across the more than 39 hours required to sing the epic.
The Folklore Society
Caroline Oates, The Folklore Society

The Folklore Society (FLS) is a learned society based in London devoted to the study of traditional culture in all its forms. One of the world’s earliest organisations established for the study of folklore, The Folklore Society has continuously published scholarly studies of folklore in both books and serials since 1878, most recently selected articles of Jacqueline Simpson, Studies in English and Scandinavian Folklore (2012). Our journal Folklore, is now published in 3 issues a year with Taylor and Francis and continues our earlier Folk-Lore Record and Folk-Lore Journal.

The term ‘folklore’ describes the overarching concept that holds together a number of aspects of vernacular culture and cultural traditions, and is also the name of the discipline which studies them. The Folklore Society's interest and expertise covers such topics as: traditional stories, tales and legends, arts and crafts, customs and belief, popular religion, traditional and regional food, folk music, song, dance and drama, medical, herbal and plant lore, children’s folklore, traditional sayings and proverbs.

As a registered charity (No. 1074552), our aims are to foster the research and documentation of folklore worldwide, and to make the results of such study available to all, whether members of the Society or not, via our publications and library services.

The Folklore Society has a substantial library of over 12,000 volumes which are held at University College London Library. Our archives are held at UCL Special Collections. For information about FLS Library and Archives, please feel welcome to contact enquiries[at]folklore-society.com.

The Folklore Society is also actively involved in organizing several national and international events, such as the conferences “Urban Folklore”, a joint conference of the Folklore Society and the School of Welsh, Cardiff University, 19th–21st April 2013, Cardiff University, U.K., “Beasts in Legend and Tradition”, 7th–8th September 2013, at Paignton Zoo, Devon (U.K.), and “Popular Antiquities: 3rd Folklore and Archaeology Conference”, 12th–13th October 2013, at University College London, Institute of Archaeology.

Visit www.folklore-society.com for more details about our forthcoming events.
CALLS FOR PAPERS

Song and Emergent Poetics: Oral Traditions in Performance
A multidisciplinary conference on the interfaces of form, meaning and imagination in sung poetry
21st – 24th November 2013, Kuhmo, Finland

Song and singing represent a fundamental of human artistic behavior as well as a multivalent mode of expression and communication that, in some form, seems to manifest itself in every oral culture. Sung poetry transmits and renews cultural knowledge through resources that are simultaneously conventionalized and variable. It is a vital site of imagination that carries earlier established images and concepts about life and the world from the past that are used to construct, reflect and negotiate the ideas and understandings of singers in the present. Song and singing is approached from a multitude of diverse angles in research, from its socially stable formal features to flexibility and meaningful creative personal expression in improvisation, from its role and interconnection with mythic knowledge, beliefs and mythology to the vernacular aesthetics of the melodic structures through which its poetics are realized. It is studied by many disciplines, including Folklore Studies, Musicology, Philology and Anthropology. In order to draw their dynamic and diverse perspectives into fruitful dialogue, we are organizing an international, multidisciplinary and multilingual conference concentrated on “Song and Emergent Poetics: Oral Traditions in Performance”.

We invite presentations (papers) addressing any of the following themes:

- Improvisation and emergent structures in singing traditions
- Song and singing as a form of oral tradition
- Individual creativity and vernacular imagination in oral poetry
- Communicating the language and structures of poetry through song
- Communicating mythic knowledge through poetry and song

Keynote speakers at this event include:

- Dr John Shaw (University of Edinburgh, the School of Scottish Studies)
- Dr Taive Särg (Estonian Literary Museum, the Department of Ethnomusicology)
- Licentiate in Philology, Olga Susoreva (Mordvian State University, Finno-Ugric Research Center)
- Dr Astrid Nora Ressem (The Norwegian Folk- and Popular Song Archives)
- Professor Emeritus, Dr Karl Reichl (University of Bonn)
- Academy Research Fellow, Docent Jarkko Niemi (University of Tampere, Music Studies)

Scholars are invited to submit proposals for papers to be presented at the conference. Paper presentations should be 20 minutes in length and reflect a topic of the seminar. The language of presentation may be in Finnish, English or Russian. There will be simultaneous translation of each presentation into the other two languages.

If you would like to participate with a paper presentation in this event, please submit:

- An abstract of up to 500 words in Word-compatible documents (NO pdf-documents)
- A CV-like summary of up to one page including degrees, research field(s), current position/occupation and affiliation, and current contact information

These materials should be sent to Karina Lukin at karina.lukin[at]helsinki.fi. The deadline for proposals is August 15th 2013.
The conference is organized by the Runosong Academy in cooperation with the University of Tampere (Academy of Finland project Song and Singing as Cultural Communication of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities), the Sibelius Academy (Folk music Department) and University of Helsinki (Academy of Finland project Oral Poetry, Mythic Knowledge and Vernacular Imagination of Folklore Studies).

Further information with suggestions for travel and accommodations will be made available on our website http://www.runolaulu.fi/ajankohtaista/, or contact Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen at pekka.huttu-hiltunen[at]runolaulu.fi or +358 40 2501395.

Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity
20th–22nd August 2014, Helsinki, Finland

A conference organised by the research project Reading and Writing from Below: Toward a New Social History of Literacy in the Nordic Sphere during the Long Nineteenth Century (financed by the NOS-HS, 2011–2014).

Papers are invited which seek to contribute to the study of the social history of literacy and its connection to the advent of modernity. Modernity is here understood to have taken place anytime from the 17th to the 20th centuries, depending on the context. Literacy is meant not just as the ability to read and write but rather as the totality of processes and practices involved in the production, dissemination and reception of written texts, while the perspective ‘from below’ indicates that the focus is on non-privileged people, their experiences and points of view.

Studying the literacy practices of people with little or no formal education from the lower strata of society challenges traditional dichotomies such as manuscript vs. print, oral vs. written and centre vs. periphery. This from below perspective also changes the ways in which the processes of literacy education, acquisition and appropriation have previously been understood, and thus invites a revision of social, cultural and literary history.

The language of the conference is English. Participants are welcome from disciplines such as folklore studies, history, linguistics and literature. The proposed papers should focus on literacy and involve a ‘from below’ perspective. Suggested themes:

- Early media and the public sphere
- Reading experiences
- Artefactual philology
- Popular prints

The programme will include plenary lectures by Margaret Ezell and Jan Blommaert, a roundtable discussion and paper sessions. Each paper will be allocated 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for discussion. Abstracts of no more than 2000 characters (including spaces) should be sent by 1st September 2013 to reading-conference[at]helsinki.fi.

Notifications of acceptance will be communicated in November 2013. Please include your name, affiliation and contact information in your abstract, in addition to a brief biography (max. 1000 characters).

The conference is organised by the research project Reading and Writing from Below: Toward a New Social History of Literacy in the Nordic Sphere during the Long Nineteenth Century (financed by the NOS-HS, 2011–2014).

The organising committee of the event consists of Anna Kuismin (Senior Fellow, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies), Tuija Laine (Professor of Book History, University of Helsinki), Kirsti Salmi-Niklander (Academy Research Fellow, University of Helsinki), Laura Stark (Professor of Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä) and Conference Assistant Kristiina Anttila.

For more information, please visit: blogs.helsinki.fi/nord-corp/conference-helsinki-2014-3/
The Medieval and Early Modern periods in Northern Europe (ca. 600–1600), defined broadly to include both Scandinavia, the Baltic, the British Isles and the Hanseatic areas of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea, were characterized by the simultaneous existence of oral and literary as well as Latin and vernacular cultures. Worldviews, ideas, beliefs, customs and norms were neither purely Christian nor purely pagan. Instead, the surviving sources show traces of various cultural layers as a result of cultural blending; sometimes the different elements are easily discernible, but sometimes they are so intermingled that they cannot be distinguished. The syncretism applies to both religious and secular texts; the coexistence of Latin and vernacular sometimes appears literally in manuscripts that combined both Latin and vernacular content or used different vernacular languages in parallel. Moreover, some texts (defined in the broad sense of the word) were never written but remained oral, manifesting themselves in later folklore.

The workshop Indigenous Ideas and Foreign Influences will offer an arena for discussion of the interaction between oral and literary and the Latin and vernacular cultures in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe. The seminar will take place on Thursday 26\textsuperscript{th} September and Friday 27\textsuperscript{th} September 2013, in Helsinki, Finland, at the House of Science and Letters (Tieteiden talo), Kirkkokatu 6.

The programme for the event will consist of workshops and keynote lectures. Suggested preliminary themes for the workshops included, but are not limited to:

- Latin and Christian influences in vernacular sources
- The relationship between Latin and vernacular: multilingualism in sources
- Practical skills of vernacular culture vs. Latin artes
- Indigenous elements and foreign influences in beliefs, conceptions and practices (e.g. in beliefs regarding the supernatural, conceptions of the sacred, magical practices) in vernacular sources
- Interaction between oral and literary cultures
- The physical context of oral performance of the Latin or vernacular texts
- The role of language in the modes of textual transmission (prose, poetry, official documents, letters, songs, charms, incantations, runic inscriptions etc.) and performance (e.g. singing, reading silently or aloud, ritualistic performances)

The invited guest-lecturers are:

- Marco Mostert (Utrecht University)
- Mara Grudule (University of Latvia)
- Terry Gunnell (University of Iceland)
- Tuomas Heikkilä (University of Helsinki, Institutum Romanum Finlandiae)

Those who wish to participate in the seminar and propose a paper for the workshop are kindly requested to send an abstract (max 300 words) in .rtf, .doc or .docx form by May 28\textsuperscript{th} (extended deadline) to the organisers at indigenousandforeign[at]gmail.com. Please also contact this address if you wish to receive further information regarding the event. Please include in the abstract your name, affiliation, contact information and field of specialization.

The workshop papers will be sent to all seminar participants before the event with the intention that everybody will be able to acquaint themselves with the texts in advance. The papers (max 5–15 pages) should be sent to the organisers by August 20\textsuperscript{th}, after which date the texts will be...
forwarded to other participants. More information regarding the seminar, social programme, travel and accommodation in Helsinki will be posted soon at http://www.glossa.fi/iifi/.

The seminar is free of charge (including coffee and lunch during the seminar days). Unfortunately, we cannot offer any travel grants; the costs of travel and accommodation must be covered by the participants themselves.

The seminar is funded by Thure Gallén stiftelse and organised by the Finnish Literature Society, Historiska Föreningen i Finland and Glossa – the Society for Medieval Studies in Finland.

The Jarl Gallén prize in North European Middle Age Studies will be awarded at the seminar and the recipient will present a ceremonial lecture.

Sagas, Legends and Trolls: The Supernatural from Early Modern back to Old Norse Tradition
12th–14th June 2014, Tartu, Estonia

A conference of the Old Norse Folklorists Network.

We cordially invite you to submit a paper to our upcoming conference on Sagas, Legends and Trolls: The Supernatural from Early Modern back to Old Norse Tradition, which will be held in Tartu on 12th–14th June 2014.

The idea behind this conference is to follow up on the first two working meetings of the Old Norse Folklorists Network during which some very fruitful discussions took place at the crossroads of Old Norse studies and Folkloristics. (You can also visit our website: http://www.flgr.ut.ee/et/osakonnad-1/old-norse-folklorists-network.)

We find that the time is now ready for a fully-fledged conference based on the same idea, namely incorporating folkloristic material and approaches into Old Norse studies. What we also hope to achieve is to use Scandinavian material from the 1400s through to the 1600s to throw new light on earlier traditions involving supernatural beings, encounters and events in Old Norse literature.

The conference will run over three days, with six keynote speakers and with sessions planned on the following topics:

- Eyrbyggja Saga
- Byskupa sögur
- The Troll
- Law and the Supernatural
- Late Heathen Cultic Activities
- Open Session

If you would like to present a paper, please indicate what session you think would be the most appropriate.

There will be 30 minutes set aside for each paper, with about 20 minutes for the paper and about 10 minutes for questions and comments. Abstracts should be c. 200 words in length and the deadline for submitting abstracts is 1st November 2013.

There is no registration fee, but participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

You are of course welcome to forward this call for papers to anyone whom you think might be interested.

Please send your paper proposals to, or for more information, please contact Daniel Sävborg (University of Tartu) at daniel.savborg[at]ut.ee or Karen Bek-Pedersen (University of Southern Denmark) at karen[at]bek-pedersen.dk.
Would You Like to Submit to RMN Newsletter?

RMN Newsletter is an open-access biannual publication that sets out to construct an informational resource and discourse space for researchers of diverse and intersecting disciplines. Its thematic center is the discussion and investigation of cultural phenomena of different eras and the research tools and strategies relevant to retrospective methods. Retrospective methods consider some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. RMN Newsletter welcomes and encourages its readership to engage in this discourse space and it also promotes an awareness that participation will support, maintain and also shape this emergent venue.

The publication is organized according to four broad sections: Comments and Communications, People, Places and Calls for Papers:

-- Comments and Communications
  • Short-article / discussion pieces
    -- preferred length, 3–7 pages body text (plus images, tables, list of works cited)
  • Conference report / announcement
    -- preferred length, 2–3 pages (max. 5)
  • Project announcements
    -- preferred length, 1–3 pages (max. 5)

-- People
  • Research report (abstract / summary of conference paper)
    -- max. 1 page body text
  • Published paper summary
    -- 1 page
  • Edited volume summary
    -- 1–3 pages (max. 5) body text
  • Monograph summary
    -- 1–3 pages (max. 5) body text

-- PhD project summary
  -- 2–3 pages (max. 5) body text

-- MA project summary
  -- 1 page body text

-- Places
  • Outline of programmes, projects and other activities or research associated with an institution, organization or network of organizations
    -- preferred length, 1–3 pages (max. 5)

-- Calls for Papers
  -- preferred length, 1–2 pages

The orientation of RMN Newsletter is toward presenting information about events, people, activities, developments and technologies, and research which is ongoing or has been recently completed. Rather than presenting conclusive findings, short-article contributions for the Comments and Communications section are generally oriented to discussion and/or engaging in discourse opened in earlier issued of RMN Newsletter or in other publications.

The success of this publication as both a resource and discourse space is dependent on the participation of its readership. We also recognize the necessity of opening contact with and being aware of the emerging generation of scholars and welcome summaries of on-going and recently completed MA and PhD research projects.

If you are interested in making information about your own work available or participating in discussion through comments, responses or short-article contributions, please send your contributions in *.doc, *docx or *.rtf format to Frog at editor.rmnnewsletter@gmail.com.

For more information and access to earlier issues of RMN Newsletter, please visit our web-page at www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiki/English/RMN/.