

Krönika över nyutkomna doktorsavhandlingar

Från och med detta häfte vill vi erbjuda nydisputerade forskare inom tidskriftens intresseområden en möjlighet att presentera sina avhandlingar. För denna första doktorskrönika bjöd vi in några som disputerat mellan 2020 och 2023. Förslag till kommande årgångars krönikor lämnas till tidskriftens redaktörer.

Johan Bollaert

Thesis: Bollaert, Johan. *Visuality and Literacy in the Medieval Epigraphy of Norway*. Oslo 2022.¹

Keywords: Literacy, runology, epigraphy

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Abstract

Runic literacy is often contrasted with Roman alphabet literacy, but comparisons have only been made across manuscript and epigraphic use.² This

¹ A copy of the thesis can be acquired by contacting the author.

² See, i.a. Brink (2005); Bunčić (2016); Spurkland (2001, 2004).

Bollaert, Johan, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, Felix Lummer, Jules Piet, Andreas Schmidt, David Šimeček och Romina Werth. 2024. Krönika över nyutkomna doktorsavhandlingar. *Scripta Islandica* 74: 115–138.

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DOI: 10.33063/diva-524132

thesis instead investigates medieval epigraphic literacy by comparing runic and Roman alphabet inscriptions.

All known public inscriptions from medieval Norway, ranging from monumental to graffiti have been analysed. Of these, 211 instances in the Roman alphabet have been collected and their edition is published in appendix to the thesis. These are compared with 399 previously published runic inscriptions.

The *writtenness* of the inscriptions, i.e. the degree to which the potential of writing is used, has been analysed through the visual aspects of writing.³ The analysed features, interpunction, layout, and ornamentation have been studied as semiotic resources.

The study indicates that there is no consistent difference between the alphabets in the degree to which visual resources, such as word division by interpunction, orientation or reading direction are used. However, the use of visual resources in Roman alphabet inscriptions is more uniform, while with the runic alphabet this use is more flexible and adapted to the material and context. This may indicate that the production of Roman alphabet inscriptions was institutionalised to a greater degree.

The study shows that the diachronic decrease of rune usage in public inscriptions is first notable in high status, formal registers in urban centres. However, the investigation does not support a sharp division in *writtenness* in the use of visual resources with the runic and Roman alphabet, suggesting that the public medieval runic inscriptions are no more oral than their Roman alphabet counterparts.

Discussion

With exception of the Trondheim corpus, edited by Syrett (2002), medieval Norwegian inscriptions in the Roman alphabet have not previously been published. To make these inscriptions accessible, the thesis contains a catalogue of all known public inscriptions in the Roman alphabet from medieval Norway, 211 in total. It provides an edition of the inscriptions, as well as discussion of their reading, letterforms, content, layout and ornamentation, and dating. The thesis also provides a further discussion of what characterises these inscriptions, including linguistic, geographic, and

³ The term *writtenness* is based on Koch and Oesterreicher's theoretical work on *Verschriftung und Verschriftlichung*, in, i.a. *Schriflichkeit und kommunikative Distanz* (2007). The term, however, is not used as a direct translation, but the concept is modified in adaptation to the medieval epigraphic context. This is argued for extensively in pages 57–76 of the thesis.

diachronic distribution. It is noteworthy that the Roman alphabet is not mainly used for inscriptions in Latin, although this was previously assumed.⁴ In fact, there are more Roman alphabet inscriptions in Old Norse than in Latin, and the Roman alphabet was used with Old Norse over the entire investigated period (1150–1550), indicating that choice of alphabet (Roman or runic) and language (Latin and Old Norse) did not necessarily overlap.⁵

The investigation shows that public Roman alphabet epigraphy is most common in urban areas, and their production may be connected to the cathedral towns of Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, Hamar, and Stavanger.

The method of the study and its focus on visual resources as an index of *writtenness* is based on an understanding that these visual and material characteristics are the only empirically measurable variables that can clearly be connected to literacy versus orality. While previous studies have focussed on formularity, deixis, syntax, or context boundness, I argue that these variables have limited validity in an investigation of epigraphic material, and that observations made concerning poetry, letter-writing, or other manuscript texts cannot simply be transferred to the epigraphic sphere.

The investigations of interpunctuation, layout, and ornamentation have indicated that runic and Roman alphabet carvers made use of the same resources, which they, however, prioritised differently. All investigated visual resources used in Roman alphabet epigraphy are used in runic epigraphy.⁶ However, while their use with the Roman alphabet is standardised, this is highly variable in the runic inscriptions. In particular, rune carvers adapted the layout and orientation of the inscriptions to the material engraved, while Roman alphabet carvers upheld more strict visual norms.

The most striking difference is found among tombstones, where more than half Roman alphabet monuments display a central ornamentation with

⁴ Cf. Bunčić (2016:74–76).

⁵ For example, the early B17 from Øystese, dated to the late 12th century, starts with *Hér hvílir Þorsteinn [...]*, while the much later O3, from Oslo, dated to the 14th century reads *Hér liggir Guðrún á haugum, móðir herra Þiostolfs*. Even in the archbishopric of Trondheim, both early and late monuments are frequently carved in Old Norse. See for instance T102 *Hér hvíla þörn Eindriða ok Luciu*, dated to c. 1200; or an impressive marble cross from the late 13th century, reading *Er Líðnir váru frá burð várs lávarðar tólf hundruð vetra ok þrim vetrum miðr en lxxx lét ok Ión Biskup reisa kross þenna Guði til lofs svá ok sér til sáluhjalpar ok þeim til gagns er hér fara um bæinn, sem þakki ok syngi fyrir sál hans 'Pater Noster'*.

⁶ See for instance the use of dots for word separation, crosses used as an indication of a beginning (much like our modern rules for capitalization), or the framing of inscriptions, but also the absence of word spacing (contrasting with contemporary manuscript practice) or the use of variation in letter forms as reading aids.

peripheral inscription, but the runic inscriptions almost all contain a central inscription with little to no ornamentation. This may be correlated to the expense of the Roman alphabet tombstones, or their centralised production. It may also indicate that the monuments were designed for an illiterate public, allowing for the identification of the deceased even for (Roman alphabet) illiterates. In contrast, one had to know the runic alphabet to attain the information contained in runic tombstones.

Finally, while the decreased usage of the runic alphabet is well known, the study indicates that the Roman alphabet first took over in upper class, formal registers in urban centres, while the runic alphabet was used longer in rural inscriptions both on tombstones and in graffiti.

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Bio

Johan Bollaert (b. 1994, Belgium) is a senior lecturer at Oslo University, teaching Old Norse grammar and runic and Roman alphabet writing in medieval Scandinavia. His current research focuses on continental influence on Viking Age runic epigraphy.

Selected publications

- Bollaert, Johan, forthcoming (2023): “The Material of Roman and Runic Alphabet Tombs in Medieval Norway.” In Cockerham, Paul and Christian Steer (eds), *Tomb Monuments in Medieval Europe*, 3 vols. Donington: Shaun Tyas.
- Bollaert, Johan, 2021: “Dating Medieval Roman Alphabet Inscriptions – An Example from Hallvard’s Cathedral in Oslo.” *Collegium Medievale* 2021. Pp. 91–113
- Andersen, Elisabeth, Johan Bollaert, Karen Langsholt-Holmqvist, and Susanne Kaun, 2022. “Images and Inscriptions: A Study of the Murals in Kviteseid Old Church.” *Collegium Medievale* 2022. Pp. 59–88.

Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir

Thesis: Þorgeirsdóttir, Brynja. Emotions in *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga*: Approaches and Literary Analysis. Cambridge 2020. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.54888>

Keywords: Emotions, *Íslendingasögur*, metaphors, Old Norse, skaldic poetry

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Abstract

The fundamental question of my dissertation is how we as modern readers can understand the feelings depicted in literature written on the periphery of Europe over seven hundred years ago — that is, what might be hidden in the text that we, due to our unfamiliarity with the distant culture, might not fully grasp. My study analyses the emotional expressions in *Egils saga* and *Njáls saga*, two particularly rich and complex thirteenth-century Old Norse *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders). The genre is notorious for the apparent emotional reticence of its narrative style. The dissertation challenges that notion from the fundamental premise that, to understand the literary representations of emotions in medieval literature, we must equip ourselves with a model of the knowledge systems of the culture that created it. To reach this goal, the study applies interdisciplinary methods of literary criticism, intellectual history, cognitive linguistics, anthropology, and manuscript studies. To access the emotional depiction in the two sagas, I argue for the necessity of an approach from three angles: through the

analysis of emotive words, bodily metaphors, and the performance and practice of emotions manifested in the sagas.

Discussion

The study is situated at the cross-section of literary criticism, intellectual history, cognitive linguistics, anthropology, and manuscript studies. To understand how emotions are portrayed in the two sagas, a multifaceted approach is suggested, which involves three key aspects: analysing the use of emotive words in the text, examining how bodily metaphors are employed to convey emotions, and studying how emotions are performed and practiced by characters within the sagas

I. Words. Emotion words in the sagas have hitherto not been comprehensively explored. In this section, I explain my construction of a digital database of the words used to express emotions in the two sagas. The database enabled the plotting of various variables, such as character, gender, social status, and speaker, against one another. This uncovered narrative patterns and formulas for action, as well as allowing the identification of anomalies and the production of the first lexica of the two sagas' emotional vocabulary. The results demonstrate that, contrary to the common scholarly assumption that the sagas are poor in emotional vocabulary, they contain a wide variety of emotion words that are applied systematically, precisely, and purposefully to achieve specific narrative aims. The conclusions provide a paramount foundation for the analysis in subsequent sections.

II. Body. The second and largest section is concerned with bodily metaphors and the interplay between possible Old Norse knowledge systems about the body and emotions and the learned medieval European tradition. As no study to date has mapped material evidence for learned Latin writings on the body and emotions in the Old Norse world, I identify and list manuscripts, fragments, and intertextual evidence for Old Norse thirteenth-century knowledge of Latin learned ideas on the topic. I apply this information in an analysis of the bodily expressions of emotions in the two sagas. Moreover, I analyse bodily depictions in skaldic poetry and investigate the use of the "hydraulic metaphor" of emotions, which portrays the human psyche as a container for internal pressures, seeking release through a range of actions and expressions. The results demonstrate that, within these Old Norse works, emotions are physically conceived of as residing entirely in the breast,

and not partially in the head, as is assumed in learned Latin texts deriving from Galenic ideas of the body, revealing a pectoral model of the mind: a chest-centred conceptual knowledge structure on the location of emotion and cognition in the body. However, the influx and integration of Latin knowledge and translated literature led to a dynamic interaction between these knowledge systems that can be shown to manifest in the emotional depiction of each of the saga texts.

III. Emotional practice. Closely connected to bodily representations is the notion of how emotions are practised and performed through action. The third section of the dissertation investigates this by applying theories of performativity and emotional practice in the analysis of the two saga texts and by probing their relationship with the Old Norse system of honour and gender structures and the prominent emotive scripts in the two sagas. The results reveal the emphasis placed on strict emotional restraint and how behavioural codes differ according to the gender and social status of the characters.

Bio

Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir completed her PhD at the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (ASNC), Cambridge University, in 2020. Her supervisor was Professor Judy Quinn. Subsequently, Brynja was a Post-doctoral Research Associate in the project “The *Íslendingasögur* as Prosimetrum” at Cambridge University, a Teaching Associate at the Department of ASNC, and a Research Fellow at Clare Hall College. In the fall of 2022, she moved back to Reykjavík where she became Assistant Professor of Icelandic Literature at the University of Iceland.

Her current projects include the exploration of the role of prosimetrum in shaping emotional depiction within *Íslendingasögur*, an examination of sensibilities and the body within Old Norse literature in both prose and verse forms, and the further developing of methodological approaches for investigations of emotions in Old Norse texts.

Selected publications

- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2023a: “Eyrsilfr drukkit, þat gerir bana’: The earliest Old Norse medical book, AM 655 xxx, 4to, and its context”. *Gripla* XXXIV. Pp. 207–240.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2023b: “Grotesque Emotions in Old Norse Literature: Swelling Bodies, Spurting Fluids, Tears of Hail”. In: Sebo, Erin, Matthew Firth,

- and Daniel Anlezark, *Emotional Alterity in the Medieval North Sea World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 17–42.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2020: “The Language of Feeling in *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga*: Construction of an Emotional Lexis”. *Scripta Islandica* 71. Pp. 9–50.
- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2020: “Emotions of a Vulnerable Viking: Negotiations of Masculinity in *Egils saga*”. In: Lloyd Evans, Gareth and Jessica Hancock, *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. Pp. 147–163.
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- Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 2018: “Humoral Theory in the Medieval North: An Old Norse Translation of *Epistula Vindiciani* in Hauksbók”. *Gripla* XXIX. Pp. 35–66.

Felix Lummer

Thesis: Lummer, Felix. *Lost in Translation: Adapting Supernatural Concepts from Old French Chivalric Literature into the Old Norse riddarasögur*. Reykjavík 2021. ISBN 978-9935-9477-6-5. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/2568>

Keywords: Old Nordic religion and belief, translation studies, translated *riddarasögur*, chivalric literature, supernatural figures

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Abstract

In the post-millennial era, the study of translated *riddarasögur* has increased, focusing primarily on translation effects, women’s roles, and emotional portrayals. However, the influence of translation on supernatural concepts, especially in Old Norse contexts, remains unexplored. This thesis addresses this gap by investigating how Old Norse translations of Old French chivalric works reshaped Old Norse mythology. It seeks to establish translated *riddarasögur* as vital sources for understanding the evolution of Old Norse supernatural figures, thereby offering fresh insights into the development and transformations of Old Norse supernatural concepts.

The research first explores the aforementioned motifs in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Old French courtly literature, including *fées* (‘fairies’), *nains* (‘dwarfs’), *jaiants* (‘giants’), and magic and magic wielders. Then, it

scrutinizes the corresponding Old Norse translations from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Differences and similarities in their depiction are analysed to understand how these supernatural concepts were perceived in Old Norse mythology and saga literature. The dissertation comprises four articles, three focusing on specific supernatural concepts and one on magic and magic wielders.⁷

Discussion

The dissertation's first article "Of Magical Beings and Where to Find Them: On the Concept of *álfar* in the Translated *riddarasögur*", published in 2021 in *Scripta Islandica*, examines appearances of *fées* and *álfkonur* in translated *riddarasögur* and their Old French sources. Notably, the Old Norse material lacks any mention of *álfar*, featuring only *álfkonur*. By scrutinising instances of *fée* being translated as *álfkona* and the absence thereof, this study explores differences and similarities in depictions of these figures. It delves into not just the narrative motivations behind this choice, but it also explores the possible impact on Icelandic folk beliefs that may have arisen from these translations, given that they were recited alongside indigenous stories.

The second case study investigates the portrayal of *nains* and/or *dvergar* in the considered corpus. The article is titled "‘ek hræðumz ekki þik’ – The *dvergar* in translated *riddarasögur*" and was published with the *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* in 2021. Unlike their Old Norse counterparts, Old French *nains* lack mythical traits, whereas *dvergar* are firmly established mythological figures. The study explores translating *nain* as *dvergr* to understand the potential degree of cultural assimilation that arguably took place. It is reasoned that specific attributes, which are not commonly associated with mythological *dvergar*, including traits like small stature, ugliness, disproportionately large heads, and a degree of combat proficiency, appear to have been imported from external origins. This study also shows that translations exerted minimal influence on the picture of the

⁷ The research project was funded by the Doctoral Grant of the University of Iceland Research Fund. I extend my gratitude to my supervisors Professor Terry Gunnell (University of Iceland), Professor Sif Ríkhardsdóttir (University of Iceland), and Professor Rudolf Simek (University of Bonn) for their guidance and support throughout my research journey. As part of the Open Access Policy of the University of Iceland, this dissertation has been published on the University of Iceland's institutional repository *Opin vísindi*. A stable URL link to the dissertation can be found here: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/2568>.

dvergar in Nordic folk beliefs, as their conventional role as subterranean inhabitants was being overtaken by other figures.

The third article, “Solitary Colossi and Not-So-Small Men: A Study on the Effect of Translation on the Old Norse Supernatural Concept of the *jötunar*”, published in 2021 in *Arv*, explores the portrayal of *jaiants* in Old French courtly literature and their counterparts, the *jötunar*, in translated *riddarasögur* material. Interestingly, the translated *riddarasögur* consistently substitute *jaiant* with *jötunn*. Occasionally, they employ *tröll* to underscore any demonic aspects. This case study reveals the significant shift from *jötunn* to *tröll* and the growing emphasis on size in *jötunar* imagery by the early thirteenth century. This corresponds to the Scandinavian transformation of *jötunar* which gradually saw them merging with other supernatural motifs. Consequently, this portrayal marks a step toward the *jötunar*’s eventual depiction as malevolent trolls in later folk legends.

The final article delves into magic and magic practitioners in the same text corpora utilised by the preceding case studies. This case study is entitled “The Translation of Magic in the Translated *riddarasögur*” and was published in *Medium Ævum* in 2022. This case study concludes that, for instance the translation of *enfantosmer* ‘to bewitch’ as *trölldómr* may have been heavily influenced due to the figures associated with this type of magic. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the aspect of a *galdr* ‘magic’ or *kraptr* ‘strength, force’ being woven into a fabric – an idea introduced via translation – represents a novelty in Old Norse.

This dissertation underscores the significance of considering the impact of translation, particularly in the context of complex concepts like the supernatural. Certain motifs from these translations appear to have exerted a more pronounced influence on local beliefs than others. For instance, the transformation of *dvergar* into a *nain*-like form appears to have remained largely within literary realms, reflecting a decline in belief in *dvergar* as real-world beings in Norway and Iceland. In contrast, the influence of the translations on *álfar/álfkönur*, and the evolution of *jötunar* towards *tröll*, demonstrates a more dynamic cultural shift. The translations of magic and magic wielders reveal a multifaceted influence and development.

Bio

Felix Lummer (b. 1990, Germany) teaches Old Nordic religion and belief at the University of Iceland both at the undergraduate and graduate level. His current research interests are Old Nordic belief and mythology, translation

studies, the studies of emotion in literature with a particular focus on their portrayal in supernatural figures, and the belliphonic.

Selected publications

- Lummer, Felix (ed.), forthcoming: *Emotions on the Fringes*. Budapest: Trivent Publishing.
- Lummer, Felix, 2021a: “Of Magical Beings and Where to Find Them: On the Concept of *álfar* in the Translated *riddarasögur*”. *Scripta Islandica* 72. Pp. 5–42.
- Lummer, Felix, 2021b: “‘ek hræðumz ekki þik’ – The *dvergjar* in translated *riddarasögur*”. *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 51(2). Pp. 335–355.
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- Lummer, Felix, 2022: “The Translation of Magic in the Translated *riddarasögur*”. *Medium Ævum* 91(2). Pp. 210–235.

Jules Piet

Thesis: Piet, Jules. *The Self-Made Gods: Euhemerism in the Works of Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson*. Strasbourg 2023. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/4357>

Keywords: Euhemerism, mythology, Snorri Sturluson, Saxo Grammaticus
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Abstract

Three of the most important texts of 13th century Scandinavia, Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum*, and Snorri’s *Edda* and *Heimskringla*, feature euhemerism. This theory, according to which the pagan gods were human impostors, was one of the main tools used by medieval authors to explain pagan religions. In my dissertation, I show the specific features of Scandinavian euhemerism. A comparison of Saxo’s work with those of Snorri reveals that behind an apparent similarity, their euhemeristic narratives serve radically different ideological agendas: Saxo constructs the identity of the Danish Kingdom, which he wants to depict as an independent kingdom, whereas Snorri produces a discourse about the nature of royal power, its limitations,

and its transmission. Furthermore, the study of these three texts shows that the euhemerist method involves not only a humanization of the gods, but a complete reconstruction of the mythical cosmology.

Discussion

One of the main achievements of my dissertation is to present a definition of euhemerism useful within the medieval Scandinavian context. For that purpose, I characterized euhemeristic narratives as meta-mythology, a concept defined by Frog (2015). In addition, I used myth theory to define four principles, which guide my study:

- 1 Euhemeristic narratives proper are myths *about* myths. Their subject matter, understood in the sense of Robert Segal (2004), are myths, pagan religions, and their origin. This subject matter is generally literally expressed in the narrative.
- 2 Euhemeristic narratives, as any myth, are connected to tenets within a system of belief. To understand these narratives is to understand what the underlying tenets behind them are.
- 3 Euhemeristic narratives are part of broader works and must not be read in isolation, but as narratives which serve the broader purposes of the works they are found in.
- 4 Euhemeristic narratives may be read as the works of “rival narrators” who drew from similar traditions for different purposes. Analyzing these divergences allows us to highlight the ideological and esthetical orientations of these works.

I have shown that euhemerism cannot merely be defined as the portrayal of the pagan gods as weak and mortal beings. The *Institutiones divinae* (c. 300) by the Church father Lactantius, is the text which had the biggest impact on the reception of this theory in western Europe. This text, however, is about the Greco-Roman gods, who are immortal and generally possess perfect idealistic bodies. On the contrary, the works of Saxo and Snorri are about the Nordic gods who may occasionally die, and whose bodies may be wounded. Yet, the Greco-Roman and the Nordic gods share one essential characteristic: they are transcendent beings who live outside of the common world of humans and can travel freely across the various worlds of the Old Norse cosmos. Against these pagan conceptions, both Saxo and Snorri assessed that the pseudo-gods are part of the common world and, as such, are limited in space and time. To prove this, I used Mikhail Bakhtin's

(1981) concept of chronotope, according to which a literary world is defined through the two dimensions of time and space. As I show, Saxo and Snorri humanized the gods not only by modifying them, but also by modifying their chronotope. The main aspect of this modification is the creation of a new chronotope, compatible with medieval Christian conceptions, which limits the existence of the pseudo-gods within the boundaries of time and space.

Finally, one of the main achievements of this study is to have demonstrated that there is indeed a medieval Scandinavian euhemerism. The views that Old Norse so-called euhemeristic narrative could properly be defined as euhemerism has been challenged. The classical scholar Nickolas Roubekas (2017) argues that Snorri's euhemerism is only superficially similar to ancient euhemerism, and Heinrich Beck (2000, 2013) believes that Snorri's reading of Old Norse mythology was chiefly analogical. Against Roubekas' view, I show that Snorri's prologue to the *Edda* is a narrative whose structure is remarkably similar to that of Euhemerus' work to a greater degree than any other medieval text. Against the views of Beck, I have shown that Snorri uses both analogy and euhemerism in different places of his works for different purposes. Snorri's description of the death of Baldr in the *Gylfaginning* is indeed akin to analogy, but his narrative from the *Ynglinga saga* is undoubtedly related to euhemerism, as it treats myths as distorted memories from historical events.

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Bio

Jules Piet (b. 1993, France) received his MA in the *Viking and Medieval Norse Studies* program at the University of Iceland and University of Oslo. He pursued his studies on Old Norse literature with a PhD in a joint degree between the University of Strasbourg and University of Iceland. He continues to work on euhemerism and Old Norse literature and is the cofounder of the newsletter Efna (Études Francophones sur le Nord Ancien). His main areas of interest are myth theory, medieval ideological discourses, and cultural history.

Selected publications

- Piet, Jules, forthcoming (2024a): “Timeo Danaos’: the representation of Greece and Byzantium in the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus. *Source(s)*.
- Piet, Jules, forthcoming (2024b): “Warriors and Seductresses: Comparison of the representations of the agents of magic in the *Gesta Danorum* and *Heimskringla*. *Deshima*.
- Piet, Jules, 2022a: “Religious Conversions in Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* and in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum*: A Comparative Approach”. In: Bartusik, Grzegorz, Radosław Biskup, and Jakub Morawiec (eds), *Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*. London: Routledge. Pp. 130–145.
- Piet, Jules, 2022b: “De Midgard au Valhalla : la cosmologie mythique scandinave dans la culture geek”. In: Di Filippo, Laurent (ed.), *Vikings!* Paris: Les moutons électriques. Pp. 215–239.

Andreas Schmidt

Thesis: Schmidt, Andreas. *Erzählung und Macht. Narratologische Studien zur Færeyinga saga*. München 2018.

Keywords: Narratology, saga studies, Faroe Islands, manuscript studies, narrative ambiguity

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Abstract

The thesis contains a narratological reading of *Færeyinga saga*, primarily in its longest redaction in *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol.), but also detailing the differences of this redaction from the shorter versions of the text as transmitted in other manuscripts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* and *Óláfs saga helga*. The analysis traces the inner workings of this narrative, which has often been interpreted against the background of the *Sturlungaöld* as to its ideological ramifications. My reading argues that both the saga's structure and narrative setup, including its bipartite ideological framing between Norse colony and colonizers, and its rendering of conversion to Christianity are determined by the centrality of its discourse on power politics. This is largely exemplified through the dichotomy of its two protagonists Þrándr and Sigmundur. The thesis shows that the saga's main concern is to formulate a kaleidoscope of various ways of accumulating, using, demonstrating, and eventually losing power, illustrating these in various individual rulers and participants in power politics. As a narrative, meanwhile, *Færeyinga saga* continuously cues models for interpretations, which it simultaneously undermines by producing contradictory evidence. Through this purposeful method of creating ambiguity through storytelling, the saga serves as a platform to invite the audience to reflect on power instead of formulating unambiguous messages. This can be explained both by the nature of the saga's central theme, power, as a fluid aspect of interpersonal dynamics, and the essence of narrative as the verbal articulation of changefulness.

Discussion

The thesis is methodologically founded on narratological theory as formulated by the German scholar Albrecht Koschorke and the Estonian semiotician Yuri Lotman, but includes aspects of material philology (in tracing differences between the redactions of *Færeyinga saga*) and the study of the *Íslendingasögur* for intertextual comparison, while the foundational understanding of 'power' is based on Max Weber's 'Economy and Society' and Michael Mann's 'Sources of Social Power'. The starting point of the thesis is a spatio-narratological reading, as prior interpretations hinged on understanding the saga's binary setting in both the Faroe Islands and Norway as the representation of a colonial discourse, with Norwegian authority colonising a North Atlantic, semi-independent country. With the help of Lotman's concept of semiosphere, which denotes a continuum of inter-

dependencies between a centre and a pertaining periphery, this reading can be shown to be deficient. It reveals both the Faroe Islands and Norway to be inextricably linked in one semiosphere, with the Norwegian sovereigns and Þrándr, as a contender to their power, each aiming either at establishing their central authority in the Faroese periphery or at founding the Faroes as a new centre to reverse the relation of Norway and the islands. The main part of the thesis consists of character analyses of the protagonists, Þrándr, Sigmundur, Þrándr's nephews, and Leifr Ózurarson, with a further chapter analysing additional characters such as various Norwegian rulers, the outlaw Úlfr/Þorkell, and the saga's female protagonists, the latter of which become the eventual victors of the Faroese power struggles by cleverly using their male relatives for their gain. Each chapter also analyses the narrative position of the character(s) in question relative to the surrounding protagonists. A final chapter reviews the saga's narrative structure, including possible mythic allusions and references in the storytelling. The analytic sections focusing on narrative techniques and intradiegetic social concepts, norms, and behaviours also draw comparisons to the *Íslendingasögur*, while the analysis incorporates the theory of chivalric, heroic, and folkloristic traditions of storytelling, which are especially important for the construction of the character of Sigmundur. Significant manuscript variation in phrasing and content is demonstrated throughout, especially between the *Flateyjarbók* redaction of the saga and the much shorter first part as rendered in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. It can be shown that the version of the text outside of *Flateyjarbók* betrays a drastically different intention: to glorify the missionary king and portray Faroese submission to the Norwegian crown as rightful. This differs considerably both from the inclusion of an episode in *Óláfs saga helga*, which demonstrates the failing of the latter king's expansionary politics in the North Atlantic, and the open discourse on power in *Flateyjarbók*, which outright denies unequivocal interpretations and seems designed to create ambiguity in its audience reception. Thus, previous research on the composition of *Flateyjarbók* can be supplemented with additional perspectives.

Bio

Andreas Schmidt (b. 1989, Germany) studied Nordic Philology, German Language and Literature of the Middle Ages, and Medieval History at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München. After graduating from his PhD studies at the same university, he worked at the University of Tübingen and held research fellowships at Árnastofnun in Reykjavík and

the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, during which he worked on the manuscript transmission and narrative variation of the *Íslendingasögur*, as well as the cartography and description of the Faroe Islands in early modern times. In 2023, he received a project-fund from the German Research Foundation (DFG – project number 522486190) for a three-year project entitled “Ambiguität als Erzählstrategie in den Isländersagas” (Ambiguity as Narrative Strategy in the *Íslendingasögur*), to be carried out at the University of Munich.

Selected publications

Books

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- Schmidt, Andreas, 2022. *Erzählen von Macht. Narratologische Studien zur Færeyinga saga*. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 131. Berlin / Boston. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110774979>

Articles

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- Schmidt, Andreas, 2022b: “Schwarze Kunst? Vergleichende und narratologische Perspektiven auf die altnordische Darstellung von Nekromantie und Magie am Beispiel der ‚Færeyinga saga‘”. In: Hammer, Andreas, Wilhelm Heizmann, and Norbert Kössinger (eds), *Magie und Literatur. Erzählkulturelle Funktionalisierung magischer Praktiken in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*. Philologische Studien und Quellen 280. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag. Pp. 109–152.

David Šimeček

Avhandling: Šimeček, David. The Old Norse Periphrastic Future: The Origin, Grammaticalization and Meaning. Praha 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11956/171073>

Nøkkelord: norrønt, gotisk, framtid, aspekt, grammatikalisering

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Sammendrag

Temaet for avhandlingen er opphavet, grammatikaliseringen og betydningen til den norrøne sammensatte fremtidsformen. I kapittel 1 presenteres en kort oversikt over fremtidseksposter i indoeuropeisk, germansk og norrønt. Det blir identifisert to grunnleggende fremtidsmarkører i norrønt, hjelpeverbene *munu* og *skulu* hvorav *munu* er det viktigste med tanke på frekvens og betydning. Kapittel 2 analyserer verbenes semantiske egenskaper mer detaljert på grunnlag av deres bruk i norrøne spådommer og forbannelser. Analysen viser at *munu* var en universell fremtidseksposter og at *skulu* hadde en mer modal karakter. I kapittel 3 analyseres grammatikaliseringen av *munu*, dvs. utviklingen fra den opprinnelige betydningen til fremtidsbetydningen samt andre betydninger av verbet slik de forekommer i norrøne kilder. For å redegjøre for disse prosessene er det brukt komparative data fra beslektede språk samt typologiske sammenligninger. Kapittelet konkluderer med at *munu* befant seg på et høyt grammatikaliseringsstadium allerede på 800-tallet. Kapittel 4 prøver å finne svar på hvorfor en sammensatt fremtidsform dukket opp så tidlig i nordgermansk. Kapittelet undersøker den aspektuelle funksjonen til germanske verbprefikser og deres rolle i å uttrykke fremtiden i de andre germanske språkene, spesielt gotisk. På dette grunnlaget blir en ny teori om opprinnelsen til den sammensatte fremtiden i nordgermansk formulert. Videre argumenteres det for at den populære bruken av historisk presens i norrønt også kan ha sammenheng med den tidlige anvendelsen av fremtidsformen. Det konkluderes med at den sammensatte fremtidsformen var en svært tidlig nordgermansk innovasjon i verbsystemet.

Diskusjon

Avhandlingen presenterer en teori som skal forklare hvordan den norrøne sammensatte fremtidsformen oppstod. Germanske språk hadde opprinnelig

bare presens og preteritum, men ingen egen form for å uttrykke fremtiden. Etter hvert kom forskjellige hjelpeverb i bruk, men de fleste oppsto ganske sent - ikke før den litterære perioden. Presensformene hadde derfor vært den viktigste måten å uttrykke fremtiden på i de fleste gammelgermanske dialektene. Norrønt er derimot et unntak da fremtiden oftest ble uttrykt med hjelpeverbet *munu*.

Verbet dominerer både i prosa og diktekunst og hadde en nøytral betydning. Det forekommer allerede i de eldste kildene, dvs. skaldekvad fra 800-tallet. Dette står i motsetning til verbet *skulu* som sjeldnere ble brukt som fremtidsmarkør og hadde en sterkere modal betydning.

At fremtidsbetydning er sterkere i verbet *munu* mens modalbetydning er sterkere i *skulu*, vises nærmere i en analyse av norrøne spådommer og forbannelser. Mens verbet *munu* forekommer hyppigst i spådommer siden de er tett knyttet til fremtiden, er *skulu* vanligst (sammen med konjunktiv) i forbannelser hvor det uttrykker et påbud eller ønske (som blir utført i fremtiden).

En undersøkelse av grammatikaliseringen av *munu* har vist at det allerede på 800-tallet hadde betydninger som utviklet seg fra futurum, spesielt epistemisk betydning (jf. *Haraldskvadet: greppa ferðir þú munt gøra kunna...* „du kjenner nok til reisene til de mennene ...“). Dette betyr at *munu* som fremtidsmarkør må ha blitt vanlig mye tidligere enn de eldste forekomstene av verbet som dukker opp i skaldekvad. Ytterligere bevis på at *munu*-futurum ble brukt tidlig i nordgermansk kommer fra en rekonstruksjon av verbformenens utvikling. Der kommer det til syne at *munu* gikk fra å tilhøre en klasse av regelrette svake verb til å bli innføyet i den preterito-presentiske klassen som var nært assosiert med modalitet eller hjelpeverb i germansk. Denne overgangen må ha skjedd veldig tidlig da *munu* alltid bøyes som et preterito-presentisk verb selv i de aller eldste tekstene. Disse egenskapene til verbet *munu* (frekvens, tidlig bruk, nøytral fremtidsbetydning, avledede betydninger, utviklingen av bøyingsformene) er unike innenfor germansk, som tyder på at verbet nådde dette høye grammatikaliseringnivået i nordgermansk betydelig tidligere enn hjelpeverb i andre germanske språk.

Avhandlingen argumenterer for at tidligere teorier som knyttet fremveksten av sammensatte fremtidsformer i germansk til kulturelle-religiøse faktorer og påvirkning fra fremmedspråk, spesielt latin, (Sieberer 1925, Bauschatz 1982, Mutti 2010) ikke redegjør for utviklingen i nordgermansk, hovedsakelig av kronologiske grunner. En ny teori foreslås derfor for å forklare hvorfor futurum oppsto så tidlig i Norden. Den er basert på at verbprefikser i andre germanske språk, spesielt gotisk, ofte betegnet perfektivt aspekt og dermed ga presensformer en fremtidsbetydning, f.eks.:

andbæte mis, unte *matj-a* jab *drigk-a*, jab
 tjen meg til [IPFV]ete-PRS.1SG og [IPFV]drikke-PRS.1SG og
bjþe ga-matj-is jab *ga-drigk-ais* þu
 så PFV-ete-PRS.2SG og PFV-drikke-PRS.2SG du

διακόνει μοι ἕως **φάγω** καὶ **πίω**, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα **φάγεσαι** καὶ **πίεσαι** σύ

“Vær min oppvarter mens jeg eter og drikker – og så kan du selv ete og drikke.”
 (Luk. 17,8)

Til dels lignet dette på slaviske språk der presensformene av perfektive verb ikke kan uttrykke nåtiden, men har en fremtidsbetydning. I avhandlingen argumenteres det for at dette bør ses på som et urgermansk fenomen. Siden alle ubetonede prefikser forsvant tidlig i nordgermansk, begynte den sammensatte fremtidsformen å utvikle seg som en reaksjon på dette. Videre pekes det på at et annet særtrekk ved det nordiske verbsystemet, nemlig bruken av historisk presens også kan knyttes til denne prosessen. Det konkluderes med at den sammensatte fremtidsformen er en eldgammel innovasjon som adskilte det nordgermanske verbsystemet fra det vest- (og øst-) germanske.

Litteratur

- Bauschatz, Paul, 1982: *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture*. The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst.
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- Sieberer, Anton, 1925: *Das Futurum in der Entwicklung der germanischen Sprachen* (Doctoral thesis). Leipzig: Universität Leipzig.

Bio

David Šimeček (f. 1986, Tsjekkia) har studert mastergrad i skandinavisk og litauisk filologi og doktorgrad i germansk lingvistikk på Karlsuniversitetet i Praha, hvor han underviser i norrønt, samt nordgermansk språkhistorie. Hans interesser er historisk og sammenlignende språkvitenskap, spesielt norrønt og gotisk. Han jobber også som lektor, tolk og oversetter (han har oversatt bl. a. *Den legendariske Olavssaga* og sammen med kollegaer en antologi av færøyske sagn). For tiden skriver han en lærebok i norrønt språk og

bidrar til forberedelsen av et grammatisk annotert korpus av norrøne tekster, samt arbeider med en oversettelse av *Egil Skallagrímssons saga*.

Utvalgte publikasjoner

Šimeček, David, 2022: "David Šimeček. 2021. The Old Norse Periphrastic Future: The Origin, Grammaticalization and Meaning". *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði* 44. Pp. 235–236.

Šimeček, David, 2021: "The Origin of the Periphrastic Future in Old Norse". *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 136. Pp. 25–72.

Romina Werth

Thesis: Werth, Romina. *A Different Story: The Fairy Tale in Old Norse Literature*. Reykjavík 2023. 195 s. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/4081>

Keywords: Sagas of Icelanders, legendary sagas, fairy tales, folktale motifs, Cinderella

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Abstract

Responding to the rapid growth of interest in the intersections between folklore and Old Norse literature in the field of Old Norse studies in recent years, this study aims at renewing and expanding the discussion on the relation between the fairy tale and medieval Icelandic literature. This scholarly discourse reached its peak around 1900 but declined in the twentieth century, when the closely related fields of folkloristics and medieval studies separated and diverged in their research goals. Although the interest in the folkloric method and approach has returned to Old Norse studies, the fairy tale and its connections to Old Norse literature have not gained much interest so far. Meanwhile, the field of folkloristics has turned its back on the historical development of folktales after spurious claims on a literary origin of the fairy tale sparked a fierce debate in the first decade of the twenty-first century. My thesis engages and revisits prior discourses on fairy tales and their medieval counterparts. It examines fairy-tale material in medieval Icelandic saga texts, such as the legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and clarifies whether entire tale types or smaller narrative

units similar to fairy-tale motifs can be found. To what extent does fairy-tale material in Icelandic saga literature equal its much more recent counterpart from the nineteenth century, and to what degree do they differ? Finally, the possible meaning and purpose of those fairy-tale elements in Icelandic sagas are discussed. The dissertation is made up of three published articles (Werth 2021, 2022, and 2023; see “Selected publications” for the relevant bibliographical information).

Discussion

This doctoral thesis is intended to identify fairy-tale material in medieval Icelandic saga literature. The findings indicate that the Icelandic sagas rely to a considerable degree on an oral tradition, such as folktales and fairy tales. As a rule, the folkloric material is applied by abiding by the stylistic and structural characteristics of the particular saga and its function and purpose each time. While the findings indicate that oral storytelling has had a much greater impact on Icelandic saga literature than scholars have previously assumed, the “magic” component of magic tales or fairy tales is rarely present in the analysed material. Fantastical and magical events and characters have been the main benchmark for comparison of saga literature and later folklore so far. The thesis, on the contrary, demonstrates that the folkloric depth of the sagas is by no means restricted to magical and supernatural incidents, but is deeply rooted within Icelandic saga narratives themselves. The findings suggest that many of the Icelandic sagas, belonging to various saga genres, feature metaphorical enchantments. Those sequences usually do not include magical or supernatural events but apply the cyclic logic of enchantment and disenchantment that is indispensable to the fairy tale. The unvarying theme of a noble-born child deprived of its status and cast into an enchantment-like state, almost forfeiting its humanity, is found throughout Icelandic saga literature, which indicates the popularity of this common narrative pattern. Later, the child is identified as the rightful and high-born heir. The metaphorical enchantments of noble children seem to apply the logic of fairy tales in accordance with the narrative conventions of the Icelandic sagas, enforcing the notion of family ties, kinship, and heredity. Overall, the results suggest that fairy tales as we know them today looked different in medieval times, arguably due to their undergoing literary treatment and adaptation by medieval writers. However, despite their differences with modern fairy tales, they usually display the same core principles and symbolic language.

As this study has shown, the folkloric depth of the Icelandic saga opens new layers of meaning and significance. Important connections between saga episodes and characters, not plainly described by the words written on the page, are often implied in the underlying fairy-tale intertext. This symbolic matrix does not necessarily hold historical or factual truths, but encompasses ideas and values bound to the social conventions of a given society at a given time. In my view, the fairy-tale matrix in the sagas is not intended to fill in the gaps where historical sources are lacking. It tells quite a different story instead: the fairy-tale matrix lends the sagas symbolic and metaphorical depth and ensures their popularity and longevity. The thesis might encourage folklorists to reengage in the study of early literary manifestations of well-known folk- and fairy tales. This research will hopefully also prove useful for scholars of Old Icelandic literature and Old Norse studies further exploring the folkloric depth of Icelandic saga literature.

Bio

Romina Werth (b. 1984, Germany) has recently defended her doctoral thesis in Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland. She holds a MA-degree in Folkloristics from the same university. Her research interests are Icelandic folk- and fairy tales as well as Icelandic literature with a focus on oral tradition. Werth has taught several courses on Icelandic folktales, folk belief and Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland. She published the annotated Icelandic folktale collection *Andlit á glugga* [A Face at the Window] (2021) together with Prof. Jón Karl Helgason. Currently, Werth coordinates the doctoral studies at the School of Humanities of the University of Iceland and recently received a grant from the Salary Fund for Independent Scholars for editing and publishing the *Rímur af Hálfðani Eysteinsyni*. Werth also co-organizes a conference on the works of the eighteenth-century Icelandic writer Eiríkur Laxdal.

Selected publications

Books

Werth, Romina and Jón Karl Helgason (eds), 2021: *Andlit á glugga: Úrval íslenskra þjóðsagna og ævintýra með skýringum* [A Face at the Window: A Collection of Icelandic Legends and Folktales with Annotations]. Reykjavík: Mál og menning.

Articles

- Werth, Romina, 2023: "The Fleece of the Ram: Cinderella in Iceland and the Narrative Tradition of the Chastity Cloak". *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 53(1). Pp. 61–79.
- Werth, Romina, 2022: "The Serpent and the Crow: Reassessing Fairy-Tale Motifs in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*". *Folklore* 133(1). Pp. 73–95.
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- Werth, Romina and Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 2017: "Glitvoðir genginna alda: Um framlag kvenna til söfnunar þjóðsagna á Austurlandi" [Glittering Weavings from the Past: The Contribution of Women to the Collection of Folktales and Legends in East Iceland]. *Gripla* XXVIII. Pp. 7–38.