Exploring Religious Ritual Frameworks in the Oral Performance of the Old Norse, Eddic-Style Praise Poems *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál*

Simon Nygaard

Introduction

The performance of oral poetry in the Viking Age, as in many other pre-literate cultures, seems to follow certain, culturally specific, structural patterns. Upon closer analysis, some of the medieval, oral-derived eddic poems like *Grímnismál* (Gunnell 2016; Nygaard 2018; 2019b), *Skírnismál* (Gunnell 2006, 2011), and *Vafþrúðnismál* (Gunnell 2011), seem to preserve traits of orality and drama that in these poems' performance capacity can be viewed as a form of ritual – even one that has religious significance. In this article,[1] this potential initial ritual performance will be explored for the poems *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál*. Furthermore, it will be investigated whether the initial performers of these poems could be understood to be a form of ritual specialists. This reading may not only enhance the understanding of the poems and their initial oral performance context, but it may also provide a new angle on the potential role of the performers of poetry in Viking Age.

Ritual, in the context of this article, may generally be understood as 'the

[1] This article builds on chapters of my unpublished PhD dissertation (Nygaard 2019a) and contains revised version of parts of these chapters. I want to thank Terry Gunnell, Frog, and Joonas Ahola for valuable comments and suggestions on this article at various points in its making.

Nygaard, Simon. 2023. Exploring Religious Ritual Frameworks in the Oral Performance of the Old Norse, Eddic-Style Praise Poems *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál*. *Scripta Islandica* 73: 5–32.

DOI: 10.33063/diva-499567

performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (Rappaport 1999: 24). Built into this definition of ritual is some room for variation and difference of degree with expressions like 'more or less' and 'not entirely' being instrumental. That is, even though rituals are ideally invariant and formal they are also culturally specific, meaning that the invariance and formality has to be located in the cultural tradition and, more significantly when dealing with religious ritual, the type of religion in question. Importantly, however, not all ritual acts are religious (Bell 1997: x; Rappaport 1999: 24–26). Dealing with religion in a pre-Christian Nordic Viking Age context, rituals and cultic activity are key expressions of this type of religion, which has been categorised as ethnic religion (Steinsland 2005: 34) or primary religion (Assmann 2006: 122–25). Rituals within such a religious context are generally aimed at communication with the gods and other otherworldly entities in order to create or maintain a positive relationship with these gods (cf. Jensen 2014: 1–12; Schjødt 2020; J. Turner *et al*. 2018: 3).

Furthermore, religious ritual relies on notions of both temporal and spatial liminality (Schjødt 2008 *passim*; V. Turner 1967): That is, the time and space in which social structures and norms are inverted and where the numinous and sacred are communicated and engaged with. Specifically, in the ritual performance of oral poetry in the Viking Age the creation of what Lars Lönnroth has termed *den dubbla scenen* (the double scene) (Lönnroth 1978, 2011: 243–59) may be employed in a particular way. In Lönnroth's words, the creation of *den dubbla scenen* 'will transform the spectator's or listener's perception of reality' (Lönnroth 2009: 57). That is, by transforming the space in which the ritual takes place into the space which is being performed in the ritual (cf. Gunnell 2011) – in other words, by combining the work of Lönnroth and Gunnell, such performances may transform the space in which the performance is thought to have taken place from a non-liminal, everyday space located in the world of the performer(s) and audience (which I call the *performance space*) into the liminal, ritual space based on the Other World of the narrative of the poems (which I call the *performed space*).

The space is not the only thing subject to potential transformation in ritual performance. As Richard Schechner (2006: 97–98) has argued, during performance a performer may enter what he calls a state of *flow* where the performer becomes as one with that which is being performed. This is decidedly so in ritual performances, where this state of flow can reach an almost ecstatic level of personality altering transformation (Bellah 2005: 193; Durkheim 1995: 378; Rappaport 1999: 136). Furthermore,

the utterances that Roy A. Rappaport terms *performatives* (1999: 114–15; following Austin 1962) have a special relationship to such ritual performances involving flow and transformation. These performatives 'transform ourselves or the conditions surrounding us' (Rappaport 1999: 114) – if the rituals are properly performed by authorised specialists, then the performatives in the rituals come into being (Rappaport 1999: 114–19): When a poetic performer claims to be Óðinn by naming himself as such, as it for instance would be the case in a performance of the eddic poem *Grímnismál*, he is transformed into the god during this performance by using the act of naming as a performative (Nygaard 2018, 2019b; Nygaard and Schjødt 2018). This capacity of transformation and exaction of conformity inherent in a religious ritual act is what I understand as *ritual performativity* (Bell 1992, 1997; Rappaport 1999).

This understanding of the functions and effects of religious ritual acts may help us establish the possible functions of the ritual frameworks behind the performances of the Old Norse poems in question. Since especially Old Norse eddic poetry is generally understood as representing a form of oral poetry stemming from a shared poetic tradition not entirely encoded by the performers – a form of cultural memory in the words of Jan Assmann (2010 and below) –, but nevertheless following formal and more or less invariant Old Norse metrical patterns it would seem plausible that they constitute examples of Rappaportian ritual acts in these poems' performed capacity (Nygaard 2019a, 2019b). In some cases, these ritual performances were most likely even religious. Due to the character of the selected poems in this article, it could be argued that they too represent a form of religious ritual – at least in their initial performance context. Any following reperformances would potentially have invoked those ritual connotations even though they may not have reproduced the ritual framework behind the poems. That is, not every performance of poetry carried the same degree of ritualisation and not every ritualised performance of poetry had the same – if any – degree of religious connotations.

Old Norse Poetry as Oral Poetry

The idea that Old Norse poetry was meant to be performed orally seems nearly uncontroversial (for instance, Harris 2005; Hermann 2017: 33). Even so, the poems proposed as belonging to the category of skaldic poetry – often used

particularly for royal encomia in the Old Norse *dróttkvætt* metre (see, for instance, Gade 1995) – has often seemed problematic to Old Norse scholars following a quite strict (perhaps overly simplified) Oral-Formulaic Theory inspired notion of orality (for instance, Würth 2007). In such an approach, the relative fixity of skaldic poems, their general lack of a narrative tread, and the fact that they are often attributed to known poets does not accord with the view in this approach that oral poetry is fluid, largely formulaic, narrative, and stems from a collective, anonymous tradition. However, the work on Oral-Formulaic Theory pioneered by Milman Parry (1923, 1928, 1971) and Albert Lord (1960) is more nuanced than that. In the Balkans and Central Asia in the 1920 and early 1930s, Parry and Lord experienced oral poets who could use formulae and traditional scenes which importantly "varied within limits" (Foley 2002: 111) to construct poetry on the spot to suit the particular situation. Their approach also put "emphasis on the lack of a fixed and 'correct' version of the text in oral literature" (Finnegan 1977: 69). This was later effectively applied to, for instance, Old English poetry (Benson 1966) and South African praise poetry (Opland 1971). In more recent times in the field of skaldic poetry, Frog (2014, 2016) has, for instance, shown how previously unobserved formulaic language operates in *dróttkvætt* poetry, seeing kennings as idiomatic, semantic formulae that function as 'words', or meaningful units of utterance, in the sense proposed by John Miles Foley (1991, 2002).

In an Old Norse, primarily eddic, context, inspiration from Oral-Formulaic Theory initially resulted in fervent application of the idea of *composition-in-performance* by Robert Kellogg (1988 [1958]) while other scholars, such as Lars Lönnroth (1971), rejected this model because it did not seem substantiated by the sources, where poems appeared to be more or less memorised and subsequently performed with variation. Joseph Harris (1983) proposed different categorical types of oral poetry that took into account both processes of creation and transmission.[2] Within this model, skaldic *dróttkvætt* poetry represents a different kind of orality from that described by classic Oral-Formulaic Theory, one that is far less fluid, presumably following Harris' type 4 (1983), where the poetry is deliberatively composed, then memorised, and afterwards performed from memory. This could also

[2] Other contributions to the scholarship on oral poetry, like that of Ruth Finnegan (1970, 1977, 1988) or John Miles Foley (1991, 1995, 2002) has even further nuanced the Oral-Formulaic Theory. These theories have also been used in an Old Norse context as indicated by, for instance, the articles in Rancovic, Melve, and Mundal (2010), and scholarship by, for instance, Gunnell (2011, 2016, 2020).

be the context for the eddic-style praise poems in question. Furthermore, using John Miles Foley's terminology, the medieval, textual versions of these Old Norse poems, which are the only version we have available to us today, may represent what Foley terms Voices from the Past, that is, 'oral poetic traditions that time has eclipsed and which we can now consult only in textual form' but which still 'bear a telltale compositional stamp' (Foley 2002: 46, 47).

In numerous Old Norse sources, we find descriptions or mentions of Old Norse poems being performed for elite, aristocratic audiences in hall spaces.[3] On the basis of such accounts, the typical performance context of much praise poetry probably involved Viking Age halls (Meulengracht Sørensen 2003) and the typical audience must therefore have been rulers and warriors (Nygaard 2019a).[4] This is thus also the performance context assumed for the eddic-style praise poems in this article.

Three Eddic-Style Praise Poems

This article is concerned with poems that are conventionally grouped as skaldic. However, for various reasons, the poems in question – *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál* and *Hrafnsmál* – seem to transgress the etic classificatory system that we as scholars employ when working with Old Norse poetry.[5] They have even been classified as a 'short-lived sub-genre of Old Norse poetry' (Abram 2011: 105). In the corpus of skaldic poetry these three poems stand out, not so much because of the content they convey, but more because of the style employed in these praise poems. The specific metres that are used – *málaháttr* and *ljóðaháttr* – are conventionally thought of as being eddic rather than skaldic. Another distinguishing feature is the use of more or

[3] For instance, in *Egils saga* ch. 61 where Egill performs his poem *Hǫfuðlausn*, in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlaskálds* where Þorleifr performs the poem *Jarlsníð*, and in *Gríminsmál* where Grímnir performs poetry to Agnarr and Geirrøðr to name but a few.

[4] If not warriors or rulers, then the audience of such poetic performances presumably fell under the categorisation 'social elite', which most scholars assume were the intended receivers of the performance of at least skaldic praise poems (see e.g. Lönnroth 1971; Würth 2007: 264).

[5] See Leslie-Jacobsen (2017) for a very insightful treatment of eddic/skaldic poetry classifications and the problems it entails from the perspective of the 'ecology of metre' as well as Margaret Clunies Ross' introduction to the scholarly distinction between eddic and skaldic poetry (2005: 21-28).

less mythological, hall-based settings and characters and employment of dialogue in these poems, which sets them further apart from other skaldic poems, at the same time as it invokes mythological eddic poems that have been argued to contain religious ritual frameworks, as noted above. These facts have driven many scholars to argue that the three poems should be seen as eddic in essence (see, for instance, Genzmer 1920; Hollander 1945: 19; Marold 1972, 1993; Quinn 1992; cf., however, also Leslie-Jacobsen 2017; Clunies Ross 2005: 21–28). In this connection, it should also be borne in mind that, as Terry Gunnell has argued, the *ljóðaháttr* metre ('metre of songs') used in these poems often signifies the treatment of magical or religious content (Gunnell 1995: 193). It also has strong oral performance connotations and is almost exclusively used for first-person dialogue (Finnur Jónsson 1920–1924, I: 105–111; Gunnell 1995: 187–194; Quinn 1992). Additionally, the performance of poems in the *ljóðaháttr* metre can be argued to have made the past and present appear at the same time in the performance, making the poems' characters seem real to the participants in the performance blending both time, space, and identities in the liminal moment of performance (Gunnell 2011, 2012; Nygaard 2018, 2019b).

Because of the characteristics mentioned above, these three specific poems have often been grouped together as so-called *eddische Preislieder* or *eddic praise poems* (see, for instance, Beck 1986; Fulk 2012a: 91, 2012b: 1003, 2016: 252; Genzmer 1920; Harris 1983, 1984, 1985; Lindow 1987: 312; von See 1963, 1981: 295–343). I will, however, when referring to these poems collectively, use the term *eddic-style praise poems*. The designation 'eddic-style' rather than simply 'eddic', which has been used in most of the past scholarship, is meant as a nuancing of the term.[6] As Helen F. Leslie-Jacobsen has stated in this respect, it is primarily with regard to metre and style that these three poems may be classified as eddic rather than skaldic (Leslie-Jacobsen 2017: 134–135). Their historiographical content and context seem to situate them comfortably, if not firmly, in a conventional skaldic context of royal economia; *eddic-style praise poems* would therefore seem to be an apt designation.

Given the similar structure and subject matter of these eddic-style praise poems, a form of recognised pattern – or even ritual framework – seems to lie behind the perceived one-off initial performances of these

[6] The heading used as a designation for these poems in Klaus von See's collection of articles, 'Preislieder im eddischen Stil' (von See 1981: 294), suggests a similar focus, although not one that von See seemingly employs in any of the essays.

panegyric poems for Norwegian rulers, which is partly supported by the historiographical narratives accompanying them in the medieval *konungasögur* (Nygaard 2019a: 153–226). The function of such ritual frameworks may be discerned through a close reading and analysis of these eddic-style praise poems as pieces of performed, oral-derived poetry as well as the contextual information provided with them (cf. Gunnell 2016: 96; see also Nygaard 2018). As I have noted above and will elaborate on below, the initial performers of these eddic-praise poems may also be viewed as ritual specialists performing often transformative, religious rituals in the ritual space of a Viking Age hall. The markedly *ritual* aspects of these poems' initial performances are very scarcely researched,[7] the only notable exception to my knowledge being Terry Gunnell's work on *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál* (Gunnell 2020[8]). Anna Millward (2014) has partly analysed *Hrafnsmál* using *performance archaeology* leading to the conclusion that it was a poem performed as artistic entertainment, rather than religious ritual (Millward 2014: 173–180) – a conclusion I aim to nuance here.

Performance Archaeology: Reconstructing the Lost Context

Following the approach dubbed *performance archaeology*[9] by Terry Gunnell (for instance, 2011, 2016, 2020), what I shall aim at reconstructing in the following is the performance context of the poems in question, something which was lost when the poems were committed to writing in the early medieval period. As Gunnell has noted, performance archaeology presents us with 'the chance to "dig up" a three-dimensional performance from two-dimensional textual remains' (Gunnell 2011: 18) and, in doing so, pay heed

[7] In general, the performance aspects of skaldic poetry are a very recent and seldomly researched phenomenon. Notable exceptions may be found in Gade (1994), Gunnell (2020), Millward (2014), Morawiec (2011), and Würth (2007). An overview of much of this research can be found in Harris and Reichl (2016) and critical assessments may be found in Millward (2014) and Nygaard (2019a).

[8] *Eiríksmál* is, however, also briefly mentioned in Gunnell (2016, 104), and Nygaard (2018).

[9] The term was first used and further developed in social archaeology by, for instance, Gabriella Giannachi, Michael Shanks, and Ian Hodder (see, for instance, Giannachi, Kaye, and Shanks 2012; Hodder 2012). A performance focused approach has also been used in the field of Viking Age archaeology by scholars such as Neil Price (e.g. 2010, 2012, 2022) and Anders Andrén (e.g. 1993, 2014).

to how a performance may have been experienced. Elements like, for instance, sensory input (smell, lighting, sound etc), spatial components, visual aids, props and gestures, interaction between performer and audience, and the occasion of the performance may be considered to situate the performance in a lived, embodied, Viking Age tradition (cf. Rappaport 1999; Habbe 2005; Merleau-Ponty 2012).

Specifically, when aiming to reconstruct the performance context of the selected poems, I will investigate *performance markers* and their role in the *performative*, *transformational* qualities of the oral performances. The performance markers I will analyse are instances of *self-reference* by the performer using personal pronouns (e.g. *ek*, *mik*, *mér*, and *min*; what semioticians call *person deixis*; cf. Fillmore 1997) signifying the blending of identities between the performer and the performed role along with the transformation of the performer and *reference to the performance space* by the performer using terms such as *hér* and *inn* (or *space deixis*; cf. Fillmore 1997), words for hall (e.g. *hǫll*, *salr*), or mentions of specific Otherworldly halls (e.g. Valhǫll) transforming the space in which the ritual takes place into the space which is being performed in the ritual (cf. Gunnell 2011) – that is, as noted above, from the non-liminal *performance space* to the liminal *performed space*. All of these performance markers are part of the lost performance context which I will try to partially reconstruct in order to give a better understanding of what it means for these Old Norse poems to be oral-derived.

Performance Markers in *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál*

In the following, the performance context and performance markers in the three eddic-style praise poems will be analysed, but before that can be done each poem will be introduced briefly. *Hákonarmál* is preserved in its presumed entirety of 21 stanzas only in paper transcripts of the lost *Kringla*-manuscript's *Hákonar saga góða* ch. 32 with some stanzas also preserved in manuscripts for *Fagrskinna* and *Snorra-Edda*. It was composed by Eyvindr *skáldaspillir* Finnsson for King Hákon *góði Aðalsteinsfóstri* Haraldsson[10] after his death following the battle of Fitjar (c. 961). Furthermore, *Fagrskinna* ch.

[10] C. 920–961, who ruled Norway ca. 934–961.

12 relates that it was modelled after *Eiríksmál* (see further in Fulk 2012c). The nine extant, anonymous stanzas of *Eiríksmál* are preserved in the 17th-century A-class paper transcripts of the now lost vellum *Fagrskinna* ch. 8[11] where it follows after a description of the death and defeat of King Eiríkr *blóðøx* Haraldsson,[12] half-brother of Hákon. According to *Fagrskinna* ch. 8 and 12, *Eiríksmál* was commissioned by Eiríkr's wife Gunnhildr *konungamóðir* shortly after Eiríkr's death in c. 954 (see further in Fulk 2012b). The 23 stanzas collected in modern editions under the name *Hrafnsmál*[13] are commonly dated to c. 900 and praise the exploits of the father of Hákon and Eiríkr, King Haraldr *hárfagri* Hálfdanarson.[14] *Hrafnsmál* in its extant form is preserved in a variety of manuscripts for the Norwegian *konungasögur* which are all surveyed by Fulk (2012a: 93; who also surveys the stanzas fragmented nature along with the problems with their attribution).[15]

Self-Reference

In *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál* reference to the performer – or self-reference – can be identified by locating in the poems the use of *person deixis*: Personal pronouns (most often in the first person) that signify who is speaking in a communication situation (Fillmore 1997). Naturally, these deictic expressions – both person and space deixis – are also present when

[11] The first stanza of the extant poem as well as the name *Eiríksmál* is also preserved in *Skáldskaparmál* (p. 10).

[12] C. 895 – ca. 954, King of Norway ca. 929–934. He presumably also reigned intermittently in York ca. 948–954 (see Harris 1984).

[13] Following Jón Sigurðsson (1848-49, 3: 410) and Finnur Jónsson (1920-24, 1: 420) among others, the name *Hrafnsmál* is used here rather than the alternative, and perhaps more popular name *Haraldskvæði* (following, for instance, Wisén 1886-89: 122; and Jón Helgason 1946, 1968: 10-21). The latter is also prioritised in the latest edition by R. D. Fulk (2012a) entitled *Haraldskvæði* (*Hrafnsmál*).

[14] C. 850 – c. 932; who ruled parts of southwestern Norway (Vestfold and Sogn) ca. 860–885. After the Battle of Hafrsfjǫrdr (ca. 885–890) he gained control over the whole of Viking Age Norway.

[15] These three poems are analysed in-depth in Nygaard (2019a) where the various interesting and important aspects of, for instance, their transmission and how they may have been performed as rituals is treated in much greater detail than the scope of this article allows for. For instance, the suggestion that *Hákonarmál* and *Hrafnsmál* are compiled of two or more poems cannot be dealt with (cf. Fulk 2012a; Nygaard 2019a; Sahlgren 1927) and neither can the consequences which the performances could have had for the audience and their worldview (see, however, Gunnell 2016, 2020; Nygaard 2018, 2019b).

viewing the poem as a narrative, literary text. But seen from a performance perspective, they take on another significance:

> Used in the proposed setting of a hall-based, oral performance they [the deictic expressions] may function to establish what Foley terms the virtual performance arena, which makes the participants know that the oral-poetic language, or register, now applies and instigates the ritual of oral poetry (Nygaard 2019b: 59).

Furthermore, when viewing the poem in its performance context, the particular use of person deictic self-references is significant because it may be seen as a performative which instigates the ritual transformation of the performer and the blending of identities when used in direct, first-person speech. As we will see, this transformation is not equally prominent in the three poems (see also Nygaard 2022).

In *Hákonarmál*, a number of stanzas in direct speech feature the use of person deixis. In the majority of these instances, we are dealing with Hákon's self-references through the use of *pluralis majestatis*, the royal plural, while the *valkyrja* Gǫndul/Skǫgul[16] also uses the plural in the same stanza when referring to herself and thus presumably other *valkyrjur*, who brought about the death of Hákon but the victory of his army.[17] In the subsequent stanza 13, the *valkyrja* refers to herself and King Hákon by using the dual form when stating that they shall now ride to the homes of the gods. The last two self-references are found in stanzas 15, lines 4–6, and 17 where Hákon questions the intentions of Óðinn (stanza 15) and argues that he should keep his armour on (stanza 17).

12. 'Hví þú svá gunni skiptir, Geir-Skǫgul,
órum þó verðir gagns fra goðum?'
'**Vér** því vǫldum, es þú velli helt,
en þínir fiandr flugu.'[18]

('Why did you decide the battle thus, Spear-Skǫgul, though **we** deserved battle-victory from the gods?' '**We** caused it, that you held the battle field and your enemies fled').[19]

---

[16] The *valkyrja* Gǫndul/Skǫgul may be the same figure if Geir-Skǫgul of stanza 12 is viewed as a *valkyrja heiti* rather than a separate name, even though the name Skǫgul is mentioned in both *Vǫluspá* stanza K30 and *Grímnismál* stanza 36.

[17] On *valkyrjur* in general see, for instance, Damico (1984); Quinn (2006, 2007, 2020); Zimmermann (2007).

[18] For all three poems, the edition by R. D. Fulk (2012a, 2012b, 2012c) in the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035* is used.

[19] All translation from Old Norse are by the author unless indicated otherwise.

13. ‘Ríða **vit** skulum,’ kvad in ríkja Skǫgul,
‘grœna heima goða,
Óðni at segja, at nú mun allvaldr koma
á hann sjalfan at séa.’

(‘**We** two shall ride,’ quoth the mighty Skǫgul, ‘to the green homes of the gods to tell Óðinn that a sovereign/mighty ruler will come to look upon him in person’).

In *Eiríksmál*, just two of the characters portrayed are mentioned using person deixis; Óðinn and Eiríkr. Óðinn, being the speaker of the most stanzas in *Eiríksmál* also makes the majority of these self-references. Uncharacteristically, they are placed primarily in the following *málaháttr* stanzas (1–2, stanza 5 being in *ljóðaháttr*) which are all spoken entirely or partially by Óðinn:

1. ‘Hvat er þat drauma, es **ek** hugðu**mk** fyr dag lítlu
Valhǫll ryðja fyr vegnu fólki?
Vakða **ek** einherja, bað **ek** upp rísa,
bekki at stráa, borðker at leyðra,
valkyrjur vín bera, sem vísi komi.’

(‘What is that dream, that **I** thought **me** a little before dawn to ready Valhǫll for a slain army? **I** woke the *einherjar*, **I** bade them rise up, benches to strew, drinking cups to rinse, the *valkyrjur* to bear wine, as if a ruler should come’).

2. ‘Es **mér** ór heimi hǫlða vánir
gǫfugra nǫkkurra, svá es **mér** glatt hjarta.’

(‘**I** expect certain noble men from the world [i.e. the human world], therefore **my** heart is glad’).

5. [...] ‘Inn þú bjóð—, ef Eirekr séi;
hans es **mér** nú vǫn vituð.’

(‘You invite [him] in if it be Eiríkr; it is he **I** am now expecting’).

When Eiríkr himself finally enters the stage, he also makes two deictic self-references. This happens in stanza 9, a *ljóðaháttr helmingr*:

9. ‘Konungar eru fimm; kenni **ek** þér nafn allra;
ek em inn sétti sjalfr.’

(‘There are five kings; **I** shall tell you the names of them all; **I** am the sixth myself’).

In *Hrafnsmál* there are apparently several levels of speech or performance (Millward 2014: 176). That of the performer calling for attention and setting the scene (stanza 1–2); that of the actual conversation between the *valkyrja* and the raven (stanza 3–23); and perhaps also an additional level in stanzas 7–12. I shall here be focussing on the performer setting the scene and the conversation, leaving out stanzas 7–12, since they in all likelihood form a separate poetic performance (Nygaard 2019a; cf. Larsen 1943–1946, II: 249–250; Metcalfe 1880: 383–385). The first stanza contains three instances of first-person deictic, *ek* ('I'), when the performer calls for the attention of the elite warrior audience and introduces the coming speakers in the poem.

1. Hlýði hringberendr, meðan **ek** frá Haraldi segi
odda iþróttir inum afarauðga.
Frá mǫlum mun **ek** segja, þeim es **ek** mey heyrða
hvíta haddbjarta, es við hrafn dœmði.

(Let sword-bearers listen, while **I** tell about the spear-feats of Haraldr the very wealthy. **I** will tell about the words, those which **I** heard a white, blonde girl speak with a raven).

This *ek* is, however, not the same as the *ek* in the other parts of the poem, although the performer may have been the same. In the remainder of the performance, we are dealing with at least two other speakers, as noted above. The *valkyrja* is the speaker of five stanzas (3, 15, 18, 20, and 22) and all but one (stanza 15) contain the use of self-reference through first-person deixis.

3. 'Hvat es yðr, hrafnar? Hvaðan eruð ér komnir
með dreyrgu nefi at degi ǫndverðum?
Hold loðir yðr í klóum; hræs þefr gengr ór munni;
nær hygg **ek** yðr í nótt bjoggu, því es vissuð nái liggja.'

('What is with you, ravens? From where are you come with blood-dripping beaks at daybreak? Flesh hangs from your claws; the reek of corpses comes from your mouths; last night **I** think you have been close to where you knew corpses to lie').

18. 'At skalda reiðu vil **ek** þik spyrja, alls þykkisk skil vita;
greppa ferðir þú munt gǫrla kunna,
þeira es með Haraldi hafask.'

(Of the equipment of skalds, **I** want to ask you, since you seem to know; you must know all about the travelling poets that stay with Haraldr').

20. ‘At berserkja reiðu vil **ek** þik spyrja, bergir hræsvar:
hversu es fengit, þeim es í folk vaða,
vígdjǫrfum verum?’

(‘Of the equipment of the *berserkir*, **I** want to ask you, taster of the corpse sea [the raven]: What is provided for those who wade into battle, battle-daring men’).

22. ‘At leikurum ok trúðum hef **ek** þik lítt fregit;
hverr es ørgati þeira Andaðar
at húsum Haralds?’

(‘Of players and jugglers, **I** have asked you little; of what consists the entertainment of Andaðr and his companions at Harald’s estate?’).

The second speaker of this part of *Hrafnsmál* is the raven, which makes two explicit self-references in as many stanzas – one to the ravens as a collective, one to the raven-speaker individually.[20] In stanza 4, lines 5–8, it refers to itself and its fellow ravens using the first-person plural *vér* (we) and in stanza 5, the raven makes its only use of *ek* (I) referring specifically to itself.

4. [...] ‘Haraldi **vér** fylgðum syni Halfdanar
ungum ynglingi síðan ór eggi kvǫmum.’

(‘[...] Haraldr **we** followed, the son of Halfdan, the young king, since [we] came from the egg’).

5. ‘Kunna hugða **ek** þik konung myndu, þann es á Kvinnum býr,
dróttin Norðmanna; [...]

(‘**I** thought you could remember the king who lives at Kvinnar, ruler of the Norwegians [...]’).

All of these instances of deictic self-references may have served a transformative purpose in addition to their function as performance markers. As has been have noted concerning the eddic poem *Grímnismál*

> [t]he utterances listed above would transform the ritual specialist into Óðinn in the ritual moment because they function as *performatives* (Rappaport 1999: 114–119) that make what is said really real to the participants in the ritual, who accept its reality through their participation (Nygaard 2018: 29).

[20] The first-person plural forms *kvǫmum* (stanza 4, line 8; from *koma*, to come) and *fǫgnuðum* (stanza 12, line 4; from *fagna*, to gladden or welcome) function as indirect reference to a collective, either the ravens (stanza 4) or the participants in the performance. They are not included here.

This would in all likelihood also be the case in the three eddic praise poems, where the performer using person deictic terms indicated that he or she has taken on the role and indeed ritual identity of the performed characters of *valkyrjur*, dead kings, Old Norse gods and a talking raven.

These performances may have included multiple performers. In the dialogic parts of *Hákonarmál*, a pair of performers (one female, one male) may have portrayed the main roles of the *valkyrja* and King Hákon. A reconstruction of the ritual performance context may then suggest that the heir to the throne may have represented Óðinn on the high-seat and a high-standing retainer could have represented Bragi welcoming Hákon into Valhǫll (Nygaard 2019a: 181–226). In *Eiríksmál*, a single performer could have portrayed the main characters of Óðinn, Bragi, and Sigmundr through the use of poetic and performance techniques, while the heir to the throne could have represented the deceased king being welcomed into Valhǫll (Nygaard 2019a: 153–180). In dialogic stanzas of *Hrafnsmál*, a single performer could have portrayed both *valkyrja* and raven due to the relatively clear question-and-answer structure which could have been underpinned by gestures and props in the performance (Millward 2014; Nygaard 2019a: 236–39).

Reference to Performance Space

The terms connected to space deixis in *Hákonarmál* are mentions of the hall as being the performance setting, something which happens several times. In the two instances below, the use of space deixis (*hinig*, *hér*) specifically points to a confluence between the probable hall space, or non-liminal performance space, and the ritual space, or liminal performed space (see also Gunnell 2020). In this way, the use of space deixis strengthens the creation of the double scene that is thought to have taken place in such hall-based performances (Lönnroth 1978; 2011: 243–259):

14. [...] því at konungr ferr sá es kappi þykkir
til hallar hinig.

([...] because a king, who is thought to be a champion is coming **into the hall here**).

16. [...] Járla bági, þú átt **inni hér**
átta brœðr [...]

([...] Enemy of jarls, you have eight brothers **in here** [...]).

Two further related instances do not mention the image of the hall in a general sense, but rather a specific Otherworldly hall, Valhǫll, which the poem implies to be the performed space. The metre in all cases is *ljóðaháttr*. The stanzas, mentioning Valhǫll are stanza 1 and stanza 9:[21]

1. [...] at kjósa of konunga,
hverr Yngva ættar skyldi með Óðni fara
ok **í Valhǫll** vesa.

([...] which king of Yngvi's kin should go with Óðinn and live **in Valhǫll**).

9. [...] Vasa sá herr í hugum ok átti
til Valhallar vega.

([...] That army was not in good spirits **on the way to Valhǫll**).

Eiríksmál indicates that the performance of the poem takes place in a hall, in this case immediately indicating that it is Valhǫll, through the mention of that place in stanza 1. Further indications of this confluence occur in stanzas 3, 4, and 8 using a combination of the space deixis (*hér* and *inn*) and terms like *í Óðins sali* (in Óðinn's halls) and a unspecified *hǫll* (Gunnell 2020, 145–46).

1. Hvat er þat drauma, es ek hugðumk fyr dag lítlu
Valhǫll ryðja fyr vegnu fólki?
[...]

(What is that dream that I thought me a little before dawn to **ready Valhǫll** for a slain army?)

3. [...] Braka ǫll bekkþili, sem myni Baldr koma
eptir í **Óðins sali**.

([...] All the bench-boards bang, as if Baldr were returning to **Óðinn's halls**).

4. [...] fyr Eireki glymr es **hér** mun **inn** koma
jǫfurr **í Óðins sali**.

([...] who must be coming **in here**, a ruler **into Óðinn's halls**).[22]

[21] Stanza 1 (along with stanza 11) of *Hákonarmál* may be problematic, since it is one of very few purely narrative stanzas in *ljóðaháttr*. Gunnell (1995: 277) has argued that the one other instance, *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 5, should be seen as a later addition to the dialogic stanzas. This may also be the case here.

[22] Following Gunnell (2020: 146).

8. Heill þú nú, Eirekr; vel skalt þú **hér** kominn,
ok **gakk í hǫll** horskr.

(Bless you now, Eiríkr; welcome **here** you shall be, and **go into the hall** wise).[23]

In *Hrafnsmál*, however, there is only a limited use of space deixis, while mentions of or references to the hall do not occur explicitly at all. The only direct reference to space occurs in stanza 2 (quoted above). This stanza describes the raven *es sat á horni bjarga* (sitting on the edge of a cliff), which may suggest an imagined, liminal, outdoor performed space. The use of the space deictic *þar* (there) in *ljóðaháttr* stanza 21, line 6 might corroborate the notion of an imagined outdoor performed space. 'There' can be used to refer to the location of the audience or addressee of an utterance if they are not in the same place as the performer (Fillmore 1997). If we view the location from which the raven speaks as being the performed space of the edge of a cliff, the space deictic *þar* could be pointing towards performance space of the hall where the audience would be sitting indicating that they are the *ulfheðnar* of the stanza (perhaps identical to the *berserkir* of stanza 20; see Dale 2021 on these groups of warriors).

21. Ulfheðnar heita, þeir es í orrusto
blóðigar randir bera;
vigrar rjóðar, es til vígs koma;
þeim es **þar** sist saman [...]

(*Ulfheðnar* they are called, the ones who bear in battle bloody shields; redden spears, when they come to kill; those who **there** sit together [...]).

In both *Hákonarmál* and *Eiríksmál* there is, then, a confluence between the human hall which was the probable site of the 'original' oral performance and Óðinn's hall, Valhǫll, something which also occurs in, for instance, *Grímnismál* (Gunnell 2016; Nygaard 2018, 2019b). As noted above, such a mention of a specific, Otherworldly hall being present *hér* (here) and now would most likely have aided the transformation of the hall-space of the performance into a ritual, liminal space by temporarily transporting the ritual participants into Valhǫll. This is prominently seen in *Eiríksmál* stanza 1 where Óðinn prepares Valhǫll for Eiríkr's arrival and stanzas 4 and 8 of the same poem where Eiríkr is invited into this very hall, all instances stressing the confluence between the mythological or Otherworld and

[23] Following Gunnell (2020: 146).

the performance space creating a double scene. The same is the case for *Hákonarmál* stanza 9. The use of space deictic terms such as *hér* and *inn* in *Eiríksmál* stanzas 4, 5 and 8, lend strength to this argument. They underline the notion that in the ritual moment of initial performance, the physical hall is transformed into a powerful liminal space (Gunnell 2016: 104, 2020: 149–51): The two locations are conflated for the duration of the ritual – with the possibility of this happening again in the future, which enables us to make the argument that the performance constitutes a *transformation* rather than merely a *transportation* in Richard Schechner's terminology (cf. Schechner 2006: 72–73). Indeed, the specific use of the noun *salr*[24] in *Eiríksmál* stanzas 3–4 to refer to Óðinn hall(s) could be significant here, since many indications point towards this noun being used to denote the hall in its capacity of a ritual building (Brink 1996: 255–258).

In *Hrafnsmál*, it could perhaps be expected that the raven and *valkyrja* were to meet on the battle field – a place to which they share a strong connection, and which is often the place we encounter active *valkyrjur* in Old Norse poetry.[25] A cliff may seem to be a curious setting for such a meeting, but it could be significant and it may further strengthen the ritual connotations of the poem. As Luke John Murphy, among others, has argued (e.g. Murhpy 2016, 2018; see also Brink 2007) theophoric toponyms including *-berg* indicate that natural sites like hills, cliffs, or rocky places may occasionally have been considered sacral spaces in pre-Christian Nordic religion. The setting of the imagined performed space on the top of a cliff may have carried connotations of such sacral places possibly giving it a liminal, ritual tenor[26] – especially due to the presence of the talking raven. It should be mentioned, however, that even if the sacral connotations of the locations in *Hrafnsmál* are accepted, it remains difficult to argue for a transportation into an Otherworld. We seem to remain more or less in this world through the performance.

In summation, these mentions of hall(s), sacral places, and the specific naming of Óðinn's hall, Valhǫll, together with the use of space deixis in connection with most of these instances to a greater or lesser degree stresses the confluence between this world and the Otherworld (or at least

[24] This is translated very neutrally by Fulk as 'residence' (Fulk 2012b: 1009).

[25] For instance, *Hákonarmál* and *Darraðarljóð*. However, the probably most well-known *valkyrja(ur)* Sigrdrífa/Brynhildr of *Sigrdrífumál* and *Völsunga saga* are strongly connected to a mountain.

[26] Cliffs also play a prominent role a liminal meeting place in Old Norse eddic poems such as *Reginsmál* and *Sigrdrífumál*.

a sacral location) in the performance of the eddic-style praise poems. This would have aided the creation of a liminal, ritual space where religious, ritual transformations could take place and where especially the audience or ritual participants get a preview of what may await them in the afterlife (Nygaard 2019b: 68), similar to how Christian sacral spaces functioned in the European Middle Ages.

Oral Transmission as Ritual Performance

As has been argued elsewhere (Nygaard 2018; Nygaard and Schjødt 2018; Nygaard and Tirosh 2021), the performance of Old Norse oral poetry may benefit from being viewed from a Memory Studies perspective in which the transmission of much oral poetry is heavily ritualised. Following this line of reasoning, there can be little discussion that the pre-Christian performers of oral poetry in the Old Norse world were what Jan Assmann calls 'specialized carriers of memory' (Assmann 2010: 114; also noted by Russell Poole (2018)). Indeed, the kenning system into which they could compress their vast knowledge of the Old Norse mythology and religion, shows that these performers were in possession of an enormous amount of pre-Christian mythically and religiously-based knowledge. This knowledge may furthermore be viewed as *cultural memory*, something which has been noted by, among others, Jürg Glauser (2014), Russell Poole (2018), and Pernille Hermann (2020). Assmann (2010: 117) defines cultural memory as 'mythical history, events in absolute past' that reaches back in the 'mythical primordial time', and is 'mediated in [...] icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kinds' by 'specialized carriers of memory' using '"classical" or otherwise formalized language(s)'. Unpacking this dense definition of cultural memory, it seems to become evident that the notion of cultural memory fits very well with the nature, context, and content of much Old Norse poetry. Eddic-style praise poetry involves information that taps into the group's mythical history being mediated in performance by memory specialists using formalised language: viewing this poetry as a form of cultural memory thus seems like an entirely plausible suggestion (see also Poole 2018).

It can be argued that the transmission of cultural memory in oral contexts is based on a process of ritual reconstruction (see Nygaard 2019a, Nygaard

and Tirosh 2021). Assmann (2006, 2010) argues that this transmission is led by memory specialists accustomed to remember large amounts of information in their individual memory or embodied storehouse, something noted by Pernille Hermann (2020). Following Assmann (2006: 39, 2011: 41–42), the collectively-aimed, ritual reconstruction in the oral, or pre-literate, societies of the pre-Christian North would have happened in a tripartite process comprising of preservation, retrieval and communication: 1. *preservation* by memory specialists in poetic form; 2. *retrieval* by memory specialists through ritual performance; 3. *communication* between the memory specialists and the group through ritual participation (see further Nygaard and Schjødt 2018; Nygaard 2019a; Nygaard and Tirosh 2021). This proposed model of transmission of oral poetry can quite productively be paired with the understanding of ritual performance used in this article.

As also quoted above, Rappaport defines rituals as 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (1999: 24). This can be argued to connect well with the idea of the ritual reproduction of cultural memory in pre-literate, Nordic societies mentioned above: Rappaport's invariant and formalised acts and utterances may thus be read in light of Assmann's first function of *preservation*. Performance in general is key to both Rappaport's ritual definition and to Assmann's second function of *retrieval*. Assmann's definition of cultural memory as something that is imbedded in the mythic past of the specific group, which is the one thought to take part in Assmann's third function of collective *communication*, means that the argument can be made that the performed content of both the ritual and the cultural memory is not entirely encoded by the performers.

This could further be connected to the more or less invariant Old Norse poetic utterances governed by formal, oral-poetic rules thought to stem largely from an oral tradition. Naturally, this understanding of the performances of Old Norse poetry, and thus also that of those described in this article, has room for each performer's individual artistic touch and thus for poetic variation. On the basis of the synthesis described above, I would argue that it is plausible to interpret the oral performances of the Old Norse poems presented in this article as acts of ritual. It furthermore seems reasonable that some form of religious ritual would be involved in the cases of *Eiríksmál* and *Hakonarmál*, where liminality and communication with the Other World feature more clearly than is the case with *Hrafnsmál*.

Old Norse Poetic Performers as Ritual Specialists

Following on from this, it may also be argued that it seems entirely plausible to view the performers as ritual specialists of some kind as well as specialised carriers of memory (Nygaard 2019a; Poole 2018). As just noted, the performances of the Old Norse poems treated in this article may be construed as acts of ritual, and thus a performer of this kind of poetry could accordingly be viewed as a form of ritual specialist. A ritual specialist in this context, may be understood as someone who in various ways mediates between the world of humans and the Otherworld(s) of divine and mythological beings (Malefijt 1968: 229–45; V. Turner 1972). In the Old Norse context, ritual specialists were most likely only devoted to ritual duties part-time and had other responsibilities in the Old Norse society (Sundqvist 1998). Seeing the performances of poetry in the light suggested by the analyses in this article suggests that the performers of the poems did in various ways mediate between worlds. An important insight from ritual studies lies in the fact that not all rituals are religious, as also noted above (for instance, Bell 1992, 1997; Rappaport 1999; Schechner 2006), and this naturally extends to the persons who perform the rituals. That is, just as not all of the ritual performance suggested in this article can be argued to be religious, not all poetic performers are religious ritual specialists – even if they may have the potential to be so. The argument can, to my mind, only be made convincingly in those cases, where the ritual performances of poetry take on more or less explicit transformative, religious connotations. Viewing both *rituality* and *religiosity* as concepts that exist on a spectrum is productive in this sense: Performances and performers of Old Norse poems can thus be more or less embedded in pre-Christian Nordic religion and ritual.

Concluding Remarks

As I have aimed at showing in this article, the oral performances of these three eddic-style praise poems seem in varying degrees to have taken on ritualised, transformative qualities through the use of self-references and references to the performance space by the performer(s). The person deictic self-references can be argued to function as Rappaportian performatives, which transform the performer into the performed characters by claiming a shared identity. The space deictic references to the performance space

effectively create a double scene, and when they are paired with mentions of Valhǫll or potentially outdoor sacral places they furthermore take on a Rappaportian performative quality transforming the performance space into the performed space in a ritualised manner – the former being more readily religiously charged than the latter. Would such performances then have had a role to play in pre-Christian Nordic religion? As I have argued above, in these ritual performances the ritual specialist *becomes* an Otherworldly being in front of the eyes of his or her audience and essentially transports both performer and audience to an Otherworldly or sacral location by transforming the performance space and conflating this world and the Otherworld. In essence, such a performance should be viewed as a more or less religious ritual (see also Gunnell 2011; Nygaard 2018, 2019b). If this interpretation of a religious ritual framework underlying these performances is accepted, then it must also be considered whether the individuals performing these eddic-style praise poems could be a form of pre-Christian Nordic ritual specialist with religious, performative and transformative abilities and functions in addition to their poetic knowledge.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Eiríksmál, Anonymous, ed. and trans. R. D. Fulk. In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035, ed. Diana Whaley: 1000–13. Turnhout. 2012.

Grímnismál. In Eddukvæði 1: Góðakvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánson and Véstinn Ólason: 367–79. Reykjavík. 2014.

Hákonarmál, Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, ed. and trans. R. D. Fulk. In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035, ed. Diana Whaley: 117–95. Turnhout. 2012.

Hrafnsmál, Þorbjǫrn hornklofi, ed. and trans. R. D. Fulk. In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035, ed. Diana Whaley: 91–119. Turnhout. 2012.

Reginsmál. In Eddukvæði 2: Hetjukvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánson and Véstinn Ólason: 298–302. Reykjavík. 2014.

Sigrdrífumál. In Eddukvæði 2: Hetjukvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánson and Véstinn Ólason: 313–21. Reykjavík. 2014

Skáldskaparmál, Snorri Sturluson, ed. Anthony Faulkes. Snorri Sturluson: Edda: Skáldskaparmál 1: Introduction, Text and Notes. London. 1998.

Vǫluspá (K). In Eddukvæði 1: Góðakvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Véstinn Ólason: 291–307. Reykjavík. 2014.
Völsunga saga. In Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda, 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson: 3–91. Reykjavík.

Secondary Sources

Abram, Christopher. 2011: Myths of the Pagan North: The Gods of the Norsemen. London & New York.
Assmann, Jan. 2006: Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies. Trans. by Rodney Livingstone. Stanford, CA.
Assmann, Jan. 2010: Communicative and Cultural Memory. In A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies. Ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin & New York. Pp. 106–18.
Beck, Heinrich. 1986: Eddische Preislieder. In Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, 6, 2nd ed. Berlin & New York. Pp. 425–26.
Bell, Catherine M. 1992: Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. Oxford.
Bell, Catherine M. 1997: Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions. Oxford.
Bellah, Robert N. 2005: Durkheim and Ritual. In The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim. Ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith. Cambridge. Pp. 183–210.
Benson, Larry D. 1966: The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry. In Publications of the Modern Language Acssociation 81(5): 1–334.
Brink, Stefan. 1996: Political and Social Structures in Early Scandinavia, I: A Settlement-Historical Pre-Study of the Central Place. In Tor 28: 235–81.
Brink, Stefan. 2007: How Uniform Was the Old Norse Religion? In Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross. Ed. by Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Will. Turnhout. Pp. 105-136.
Clunies Ross, Margaret. 2005: A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics. Cambridge.
Dale, Roderick. 2021: The Myths and Realities of the Viking berserkr. London.
Damico, Helen. 1984: Beowulf's Wealhtheow and the valkyrie tradition. Madison.
Durkheim, Émile. 1995 [1912]: The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Trans. by Karen E. Fields. New York.
Fillmore, Charles. 1997: Lectures on Deixis. Stanford, CA.
Finnegan, Ruth H. 1970: Oral Literature in Africa (World Literature Series, 1). Oxford.
Finnegan, Ruth H. 1977: Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context. Cambridge.
Finnur Jónsson. 1920–24. Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie, 2 vols., 2nd ed. København.
Foley, John Miles. 1991: Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic. Bloomington.

Foley, John Miles. 1995: The Singer of Tales in Performance. Bloomington.
Foley, John Miles: 2002. How to Read an Oral Poem. Urbana & Chicago.
Frog. 2016: Metrical Entanglement and dróttkvætt Composition – A Pilot Study on Battle-Kennings. In Approaches to Nordic and Germanic Poetry, ed. Kristján Árnason & al. Reykjavík. Pp. 149–229.
Frog. 2014: Oral Poetry as Language Practice: A Perspective on Old Norse dróttkvætt Composition. In Song and Emergent Poetics – Laulu ja runo – Песня и видоизменяющаяся поэтика. Ed. by Pekka Huttu-Hilttunen & al. (Runolaulu-Akatemian Julkaisuja). Kuhmo. Pp. 279–307.
Fulk, R. D. 2012a: Introduction and Notes to Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál). In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035. Ed. by Diana Whaley. Turnhout. Pp. 90–117.
Fulk, R. D. 2012b: Introduction and Notes to Eiríksmál. In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035. Ed. by Diana Whaley. Turnhout. Pp. 1003–13.
Fulk, R. D. 2012c. Introduction and Notes to Hákonarmál. In Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Vol. 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035. Ed. by Diana Whaley. Turnhout: Brepols. Pp. 171–95.
Gade, Kari Ellen. 1994: On the Recitation of Old Norse Skaldic Poetry. In Studien zum Altgermanischen: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck. Ed. by Heiko Uecker (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, 11). Berlin & New York. Pp. 126–151
Gade, Kari Ellen. 1995: The Structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt Poetry (Islandica, 49). Ithaca.
Genzmer, Felix. 1920: Das eddische Preislied. In Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sparche und Literatur 44: 146–68.
Giannachi, Gabriella, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks, eds. 2012: Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistance of Being. London.
Glauser, Jürg. 2014: Foreword. In Minni and Muninn: Memory in Medieval Nordic Culture. Ed. by Pernille Hermann, Stephen A. Mitchell, and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (Acta Scandinavica, 4). Turnhout. Pp. vii–x.
Gunnell, Terry. 1995: The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia. Cambridge.
Gunnell, Terry. 2011. The Drama of the Poetic Edda: Performance as a Means of Transformation. In Pogranicza teatralonsci: Poezja, poetyka, praktyka. Ed. by Andrzeja Dabrówki. Warsaw. Pp. 13–41.
Gunnell, Terry. 2012: The Performance of the Poetic Edda. In The Viking World. Ed. by Stefan Brink in collaboration with Neil Price. London. Pp. 299–303.
Gunnell, Terry. 2013: Vǫluspá in Performance. In The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Vǫluspá and Nordic Days of Judgement. Ed. by Annette Lassen and Terry Gunnell (Acta Scandinavica, 2). Turnhout. Pp. 63–77.
Gunnell, Terry. 2016: Eddic Performances and Eddic Audiences. In A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia. Ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn. Cambridge. Pp. 92–113.

Gunnell, Terry. 2020: Performance Archaeology, Eiríksmál, Hákonarmál and the Study of Old Nordic Religions. In A World of Oralities: Ancient and Medieval Text and Tradition and Contemporary Oral Theory. Ed. by Mark C. Amodio. Leeds. Pp. 137–53.

Habbe, Peter. 2005: At se och tänka med ritual: Kontrakterende ritualer i de isländske släkstsagorna (Vägar till Midgård, 7). Lund.

Harris, Joseph and Karl Reichl. 2016: Performance and Performers. In Medieval Oral Literature. Ed by Karl Reichl. Berlin & Boston. Pp. 141–202

Harris, Joseph. 1983: Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and Performance. In Edda: A Collection of Essays. Ed. by R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason. Winnipeg. Pp. 210–42.

Harris, Joseph. 1984: Eiríksmál and Hákonarmál. In Dictionary of the Middle Ages 4. Ed. by Joseph R. Strayer. New York. Pp. 414–15.

Harris, Joseph. 1985: Haraldskvæði. In Dictionary of the Middle Ages 6. Ed. by Joseph R. Strayer. New York. Pp. 97–98.

Harris, Joseph. 2005: Eddic Poetry. In Old Norse–Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide. Ed. by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Islandica, 55). Toronto. Pp. 68–156.

Hermann, Pernille. 2017: Methodological Challenges in the Study of Old Norse Myth: The Orality/Literacy Debate Reframed. In Old Norse Mythology: Comparative Perspectives. Ed. by Pernille Hermann, Stephen A. Mitchell, and Jens Peter Schjødt with Amber Rose (Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 3). Cambridge, MS. Pp. 29–51.

Hermann, Pernille. 2020: Memory, Oral Tradition, and Sources. In Pre-Christian Religions of the North: History and Structures, 1. Ed. by Anders Andrén, John Lindow, and Jens Peter Schjødt. Turnhout. Pp. 41–62.

Hodder, Ian, ed. 2012: Archaeological Theory Today. 2nd ed. London.

Hollander, Lee M. 1945: The Skalds: A Selection of the Poems, with Introductions and Notes. Princeton.

Jón Helgason. 1946: Haraldskvæði. In Timarit Máls og menningar 9(2): 131–46.

Jón Helgason. 1968: Skjaldevers. 3rd ed. København.

Jón Sigurðsson. 1848–49: Edda Snorra Stulusonar: Edda Snorronis Sturlæi. København.

Jensen, Jeppe Sinding. 2014: What Is Religion? Durham.

Kellogg, Robert. 1988 [1958]: A Concordance to Eddic Poetry. Woodbridge.

Kellogg, Robert. 1990: The Pre-History of Eddic Poetry. In Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Preprints. Ed. by Teresa Pàroli.Spoleto. Pp. 161–72.

Kellogg, Robert. 1991: Literacy and Orality in the Poetic Edda. In Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages. Ed. by A.N. Doane and C. Braun Pasternack. Madison. Pp. 89–101.

Larsen, Martin, trans. 1943–46: Den ældre Edda og Eddica minora: Oversatte og forsynede med indledning og kommentar, 2 vols. København.

Leslie-Jacobsen, Helen F. 2017: The Ecology of 'Eddic' and 'Skaldic' Poetry. In RMN Newsletter 12–13: 123–38.
Lindow, John. 1987: Norse Mythology and Northumbria: Methodological Notes. In Scandinavian Studies 59: 308–24.
Lord, Albert B. 1960: The Singer of Tales (Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 24). Harvard.
Lönnroth, Lars. 1971: Hjálmar's Death-Song and the Delivery of Eddic Poetry. In Speculum 46(1): 1–20.
Lönnroth, Lars. 1978: Den dubbla scenen: Muntlig diktning från Eddan til ABBA. Stockholm.
Lönnroth, Lars. 1981: Iorð fannz æva né upphiminn: A Formula Analysis. In Speculum Norrœnum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre. Ed. by Ursula Dronke & al. (Odense. Pp. 310–27.
Lönnroth, Lars. 2009: Old Norse Text as Performance. In Scripta Islandica 60: 49–60
Lönnroth, Lars. 2011: The Academy of Odin (The Viking Collection, 19). Odense.
Malefijt, Annemarie de Waal. 1989: Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion. Prospect Heights, Ill.
Marold, Edith. 1972: Das Walhallbild in den Eiríksmál und den Hákonarmál. In Mediaeval Scandinavia 5: 19–33.
Marold, Edith. 1993: Eiríksmál. In Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia. Ed. by Philip Pulsiano. New York. Pp. 161–62.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2012: Phenomemology of Perception. Trans. by Donald A. Landes. London.
Metcalfe, Frederick. 1880: The Englishman and the Scandinavian: or, a Comparison of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Literature. London.
Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. 1993: Saga and Society: An Introduction to Old Norse Literature. Trans. by John Tucker. Odense.
Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. 2003: The Hall in Old Norse Literature. In Borg in Lofoten: A Chieftain's Farm in North Norway. Ed. by Gerd Stamsø & al. Trondheim. Pp. 265–72.
Millward, Anna. 2014. Skaldic Slam: Performance Poetry in the Norwegian Royal Court. Master's thesis, University of Iceland. http://hdl.handle.net/1946/20452
Morawiec, Jakub. 2011: Characteristics of Skaldic Court Performances. In Pogranicza teatralonsci: Poezja, poetyka, praktyka, Ed. by Andrzeja Dabrówki. Warsaw. Pp. 41–48.
Mundal, Else. 2008: Introduction. In Oral Art Forms and their Passage into Writing. Ed. by Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf. København. Pp. 1–5
Murphy, Luke John. 2016: Continuity and Change: Forms of Liminality in the Sacred Social Spaces of the Pre-Christian Nordic World. In Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 12: 137–72.
Murphy, Luke John. 2018: Processes of Religious Change in Late-Iron Age Gotland: Rereading, Spatialisation, and Inculturation. In Place and Space in the

Medieval World. Ed. by Meg Boulton, Heidi Stoner, and Jane Hawkes, Routledge Research in Art History, 1). London. Pp. 32–46.

Nygaard, Simon and Jens Peter Schjødt. 2018: History of Religion: Pre-Christian Nordic Religion. In Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches. Ed. by Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann, and Stephen A. Mitchell. Berlin & Boston. Pp. 70–78.

Nygaard, Simon. 2018: ...nú knáttu Óðin sjá: The Function of Hall-Based, Ritualised Performances of Old Norse Poetry in Pre-Christian Nordic Religion. In The Fortified Viking Age: 36th Interdisciplinary Viking Symposium in Odense, May 17th, 2017. Ed. by Mette Bruus and Jesper Hansen. Odense. Pp. 26–34.

Nygaard, Simon. 2019a: Poetry as Ritual in Pre-Christian Nordic Religion. PhD Dissertation, Aarhus University.

Nygaard, Simon. 2019b: Being Óðinn Bursson: The Creation of Social and Moral Obligation in Viking Age Warrior-Bands through the Ritualized, Oral Performance of Poetry: The Case of Grímnismál. In Social Norms in Medieval Scandinavia. Ed. by Jakub Morawiec, Aleksandra Jochymek and Grzegorz Bartusik: Leeds. P. 51–74.

Nygaard, Simon. 2022: ...með skarða skjöldu ok skotnar brynjur: The Distribution and Function of Aural Sense Impressions in Old Norse Poetry. In Old Norse Poetry in Performance. Ed. by Brian McMahon & Annemari Ferreira. London. Pp. 63–84.

Nygaard, Simon and Yoav Tirosh. 2021: Old Norse Studies and Collective Memory: An Introduction. In Scandinavian Canadian Studies 28: 24–35.

Opland, Jeff. 1971: 'Scop' and 'Imbongi': Anglo-Saxon and Bantu Oral Poets. In English Studies in Africa 14(2): 116–78.

Parry, Milman. 1923: A Comparative Study of Diction as One of the Elements of Style in Early Greek Poetry. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley.

Parry, Milman. 1928: L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère; Essai sur un Problème de style homérique. Paris.

Parry, Milman. 1971: The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry. Ed. by. Adam Parry. Oxford.

Poole, Russell. 2018: Skalds. In Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches. Ed. by. Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann, and Stephen A. Mitchell. Berlin & Boston. Pp. 641–45.

Price, Neil. 2010: Passing into Poetry: Viking-Age Mortuary Drama and the Origins of Norse Mythology. In Medieval Archaeology 54: 123–56.

Price, Neil. 2012: Mythic Acts: Material Narratives of the Dead in Viking Age Scandinavia. In More than Mythology: Narratives, Ritual Practices and Regional Distribution in Pre–Christian Scandinavian Religions. Ed by Catharina Raudvere and Jens Peter Schjødt. Lund. Pp. 13–46.

Price, Neil. 2022. Performing the Vikings: From Edda to Oseberg. In Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift 74: 63–88.

Quinn, Judy. 1992: Verseform and Voice in Eddic Poems: The Discourses of Fáfnismál. In Arkiv för nordisk filologi 107: 100–30.
Quinn, Judy. 2006: The Gendering of Death in Eddic Cosmology. In Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions. Ed. by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere (Vägar till Midgård, 8). Lund. Pp. 54–57.
Quinn, Judy. 2007: 'Hildr Prepares a Bed for Most Helmet-Damagers': Snorri's Treatment of a Traditional Poetic Motif in his Edda. In Reflections on Old Norse Myths. Ed. by. Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt, and Rasmus Tranum Kristensen. Turnhout. Pp. 95–118.
Quinn, Judy. 2020: Valkyries. In Pre-Christian Religions of the North: History and Structures, 3. Ed. by Anders Andrén, John Lindow, and Jens Peter Schjødt. Turnhout. Pp. 1513–26.
Rankovic, Slavica, Ulf Melve, and Else Mundal, eds. 2010: Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications. Turnhout
Rappaport, Roy A. 1999: Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity. Cambridge.
Sahlgren, Jöran. 1927: Eddica et scaldica 1–2. Lund.
Schechner, Richard 2006: Performance Studies: An Introduction. 2nd ed. London & New York.
Schjødt, Jens Peter. 2008: Initiation Between Two Worlds: Structure and Symbolism in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Religion. trans. by Victor Hansen. (The Viking Collection, 17). Odense.
Schjødt, Jens Peter. 2020: Theoretical Considerations. In Pre-Christian Religion of the North: History and Structures, 1. Ed. by Jens Peter Schjødt, John Lindow, and Anders Andrén. Turnhout. Pp. 1–39.
See, Klaus von. 1963: Zwei eddische Preislieder: Eiríksmál und Hákonarmál. In Festgabe für Ulrich Pretzel zum 65. Geburtstag dergebracht von Freunden und Schülern. Ed. by Werner Simon, Wolfgang Bachofer, und Wolfgang Dittmann. Berlin.
See, Klaus von. 1981: Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung: Autsätze zur skandinavischen Litteratur des Mittelalters. Heidelberg.
Sundqvist, Olof. 1998: Kultledare och kultfunktionärer i det forntida Skandinavien. In Svensk religionshistorisk tidskrift 7: 76–104.
Turner, Jonathan H., Alexandra Maryanski, Anders Klostergaard Petersen, and Armin W. Geertz: 2018. The Emergence and Evolution of Religion: By Means of Natural Selection. New York and London.
Turner, Victor W. 1967: The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual. Ithaca, N.Y.
Turner, Victor W. 1972: Religious Specialists. In International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 13. New York. Pp. 437–44.
Wisén, Theodor. 1886–89: Carmina Norrœna. Lund.
Würth, Stephanie. 2007: Skaldic Poetry and Performance. In Learning and Under-

standing in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross. Ed. by Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills. (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 18). Turnhout. Pp. 263–81.

Zimmermann, Ute. 2007: Walküren: In Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, 35, 2nd ed. Berlin. Pp. 595–602.

Summary

The idea that Old Norse poetry derives from an oral tradition is commonly accepted in contemporary research. However, more detailed considerations of the consequences of this notion for our understanding of specific poems and their context are seldomly given. In this article, three Old Norse poems that challenge the genre categories of eddic and skaldic (i.e. *Hákonarmál Eiríksmál*, and *Hrafnsmál*) are analysed using performance and ritual studies in order to consider the poems possible function as orally performed poems in a presumed Viking Age context. It is argued that the performance is these poems constituted more or less religious rituals with the potential to transform both the performer(s) and the physical settings of the poems. Furthermore, is it argued that the analysed presented in the article have consequences for the understanding of the role of the poet in the Viking world; they were also individuals who potentially had religious, ritual knowledge and authority and thus an important role to play in pre-Christian Nordic religion.

Keywords: Pre-Christian Nordic religion, Old Norse poetry, skaldic poetry, performance studies, ritual studies, *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, *Hrafnsmál*.

Simon Nygaard
Aarhus University
Department of the Study of Religion
ORCID iD 0000-0001-8059-3245