



**THE 15TH BERGEN
INTERNATIONAL
POSTGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM
IN OLD NORSE STUDIES**

2024 – PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

We would like to thank the Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies (LLE) at University of Bergen for funding the conference.

The conference is hosted by the Old Norse section at LLE and the Research Group for Law and Culture in the Pre-modern North

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Programme

Day 1 (Monday, 15.04.2024)

Auditorium ([Jusbygg II, Jekteviksbakken 31, Room 145](#))

09:00-09:15 Welcome

09:15-10:15 Keynote Lecture by Ciaran McDonough, University of Iceland
Session Chair: Helen Leslie-Jacobsen, University of Bergen
The Nineteenth-Century Translation of Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and the Politics of Language

10.15-10.45 Coffee

10:45-12:15 Session 1: Norway and Medieval Europe
Session Chair: Helen Leslie-Jacobsen, University of Bergen

10:45-11:15 Jonas Zeit-Alt peter, Universität Bonn
Beyond 'Indigenous' and 'Influence': Norway in 13th-century Europe

11:15-11:45 Hugo Small, University of Cambridge
Amidst War and A Rising State: An Analysis of Norwegian Peasant Revolts, c. 1180-1217

11:45-12:15 Daisy Bonsall, University of Cambridge
Links Of Labour: An Object Biography of the Coppergate Sock

12:15-13:15 Lunch

13:15-14:45 Session 2: The Man and the Beast
Session Chair: Brittany Schorn, University of Oxford

13:15-13:45 Michele Roncarati, University of Nottingham
Understanding Wolves in Old Norse Culture: Human Perceptions and Use of Language

13:45-14:15 Ashley Castelino, University of Oxford
“Illa hefir sonr minn nú skipazt”: Dogs in Place of Humans

14:15-14:45 Daniel Rusu, University of Bergen
The Courty Berserkr: Familiarising the Foreign

14.45-15:15 Coffee

15:15-16:45 Session 3: Old and New Norse
Session Chair: Jens Eike Schnell

15:15-15:45 Olga Kalinovskaia, University of Bergen
Heilir æsir, heilar ásynjur ok öll ginnheilög goð: How is Old Norse Mythology Represented in Video Games?

15.45-16:15 Kat Lentge, Independent scholar

From Sagas to Screens - The Persistent Presence of Vikings in Nordic Identity

16:15-16:45 Bob van Strijen, University of Oslo

Wrestling with Vikings: Towards an Analysis of Vikingism in Professional Wrestling

Day 2 (Tuesday, 16.04.2024)

Auditorium ([Jusbygg II](#), [Jekteviksbakken 31](#), [Room 145](#))

- 09:00-10:30 Session 4: Pre-Christian Practices**
Session Chair: Judy Quinn, University of Cambridge
- 09:00-09:30 Alexandra Zhirnova, University of Cambridge (online)
Heathen Hair: The Religious Significance of Grooming in England and Scandinavia
- 09:30-10:00 Alison Owen, University of Cambridge
Did Christianity Change the Way Early Medieval Scandinavians Interacted with Strangers?
- 10:00-10:30 Katherine Beard, University of Oxford
Does Miniaturization Mean Magic? Understanding Viking Age Amulets through Parallels in Old Norse Literature and Archaeology
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee**
- 11:00-13:00 Session 5: Eddas and Poetry**
Session Chair: Jens Eike Schnall, University of Bergen
- 11:00-11:30 Miriam Conti, University of Bergen
Eddic Prehistory and the Compilation of Codex Regius
- 11:30-12:00 Yulia Osovtsova, University of Stavanger
Snorri's Use of Poetic Sources in Gylfaginning
- 12:00-12:30 Katrine Andresen, University of Bergen
Skaldic Defamation, or How to be Provoked by the King
- 12:30-13:00 Kendra Nydam, University of Cambridge
Defiant Giantesses: Selected Cases from the Poetic Edda and Fornaldarsögur
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch**
- 14:00-16:00 Session 6: Sagas**
Session Chair: Ciaran McDonough, University of Iceland
- 14:00-14:30 Sebastian Pohland, University of Oslo
Towards Standards in Digital Editions of Old Norse Prose: A Case Study
- 14:30-15:00 Clare Mulley, University of Oxford
Geirriðr, Katla and the Currency of Knowledge in Eyrbyggja Saga
- 15:00-15:30 Eugenia Vorobeva, University of Oxford
Of Saints and Suffering: A Case of 'Andreas saga postola I'
- 15:30-16:00 Emma Horne, University of Nottingham
Ecocriticism and Old Norse: History and Limitations

Day 3 (Wednesday, 17.04.2024)

Auditorium ([Jusbygg II, Jekteviksbakken 31, Room 145](#))

- 09:00-10:30 Session 7: Identity and Social Perception**
Session Chair: Judy Quinn, University of Cambridge
- 09:00-09:30 Nikolaus Frenzel, Independent Scholar (online)
Naming Sagas, Naming People: Historical Perspectives on Saga Titles and the Identities Behind Them
- 09:30-10:00 Adrián Rodríguez Avila, University of Cambridge
Reviving the Gothic Past and Justifying a Swedish Present in Early Swedish Historical Writing
- 10:00-10:30 Ambra Ventura, University of Bergen
Old Norse Depictions of Sámi People
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee**
- 11:00-13:00 Session 8: Old Norse, Latin and Faroese**
Session Chair: Miriam Conti, University of Bergen
- 11:00-11:30 Rhiannon Warren, University of Cambridge
'Það er nu eydilagt'? AM 241 b I fol as a Case Study of Árni Magnússon's Collection and Manipulation of Icelandic Latin Liturgical Manuscripts
- 11:30-12:00 Markus Heide, University of Oslo
Translation Practices in the Middle Ages: Understanding the Old Norse Translation of Barlaams ok Josaphats saga
- 12:00-12:30 Antony Jay Olsson, UHI Institute of Northern Studies
The Ballad of Sankta Jákup in Manuscript Collection FLB F IV, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands
- 12:30-13:00 Brynhild Kamban, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya
The Dwarf Maidens: Five Ballads about Sigurd the Dragonslayer
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch**
- 14:00-15:30 Session 9: Gender and Emotions**
Session Chair: Brittany Schorn, University of Oxford
- 14:00-14:30 Mary O'Connor, University of Oxford, Balliol College
Women in Private Space: Translating Private Space in Tristrams saga
- 14:30-15:00 Natasha Bradley, University of Oxford
Bitch-Witch-Queen: The Depiction of Jezebel in the Old Norse Stjórn
- 15:00-15:30 Molly Bovett, University of Cambridge
Emotional Intimacy in Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds
- 15:30-16:00 Coffee**
- 16:00-17:30 Session 10: Gender and Body**
Session Chair: Helen Leslie-Jacobsen, University of Bergen

- 16:00-16:30 Kyla Rowe, University of Cambridge
A Comparative Study of the Motif of Intestinal Death Wounds in Early Icelandic and Irish Literature
- 16:30-17:00 Grace O'Duffy, University of Oxford
Vigilante Hits: Retribution for Sexual Violence in the Old Norse Fornaldarsögur
- 17:00-17:30 Alexia Kirov, University of Cambridge
The Body is a Building: Old Norse and Old English Compounds for the Body

Day 4 (Thursday, 18.04.2024)

Auditorium ([Jusbygg II, Jekteviksbakken 31, Room 145](#))

**09:00-10:30 Session 11: The Supernatural in Literature
Chair: Miriam Conti, University of Bergen**

- 09:00-09:30 Winifred Axworthy, University of Cambridge
Foreboding dreams in Íslendinga Saga: The Role of Pagan Imagery in a Contemporary Saga from the Thirteenth Century
- 09:30-10:00 Saskia Cowen, University of Bergen
Murder, he Quoth: Death and Prophecy in Brennu-Njáls saga
- 10:00-10:30 Abbey Farrow, University of Cambridge
Immanent Otherworlds: Depicting Supernatural Landscapes in Medieval Irish and Norse Literature

Keynote:
The Nineteenth-Century Translation of Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and the Politics of Language

Ciaran McDonough (University of Iceland)

This talk will examine the motivations and rationale for the production of translations of Old Norse-Icelandic literature which were published in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the activities of nineteenth-century Icelandic and Danish scholars, I will examine the idea of language politics around the translation of medieval literature. Translation is the presentation of material in a certain way and in accordance with the translators' values.

Even if we purport to be neutral and objective, our worldviews still creep in and influence the way we perceive things, which is reflected in word choice in translations. Thus, the nineteenth-century text can be seen as an original production and artefact in itself, encoding information about the social, political, and historical environment in which it was produced. As the predecessor to Modern Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, research into Old Norse-Icelandic in the nineteenth century was often involved in nation-building endeavours and this talk investigates how the language was politicised.

Beyond 'indigenous' and 'influence': Norway in 13th century Europe

Jonas Zeit-Altpeter (Universität Bonn)

Although the vernacular literatures of Iceland, Norway, and to a lesser degree Denmark and Sweden have long dominated the field of medieval Scandinavian studies and continue to do so, it has now become commonplace to stress the importance of Latin literature and European culture for these literatures. However, sagas are still termed 'indigenous' as opposed to Latin-derived, and texts are still combed for elements that are 'influenced' by Latin culture as opposed to stemming from local tradition.

Based on my doctoral work, I will attempt to take seriously assertions that Scandinavia in the 13th century took active part in European discourses. I will attempt a reading of the Old Norwegian *Speculum regale* as well as various Latin texts that situate the Norwegian work within a larger discourse, moving past dichotomies such as 'indigenous' and 'European'. Employing Foucault's theory of power, I will also pay attention to specificities of its language and origin in a place that is marginal to centres of learning and power.

Amidst War and A Rising State: An Analysis of Norwegian Peasant Revolts, c. 1180-1217

Hugo Small (University of Cambridge)

Many peasant revolts are documented in Norway during the country's turbulent Civil War Era (c.1130–1240), when various noble factions struggled for the throne. Of particular significance were those that occurred in rather quick succession in the period c.1180–1217, in which the peasantry in various regions killed royal officials and even clashed, usually unsuccessfully, against the king's forces. Like many uprisings of this sort, these were often ignited by increases in or the stricter enforcement of taxation and other dues.

However, what seems to set these uprisings apart from most previous ones is the fact that, at least in their beginnings, they were organized and led by the Norwegian peasantry itself. Though they occurred in differing regions and at differing phases of the Civil War, these revolts were likely expressions of a broader underlying class struggle between the producing peasantry and an ever more powerful kingship and its emerging state apparatus, which, regardless of faction, rested upon an ever more systematized extraction of peasant surplus. The goal of this paper would thus be analyse these revolts from the perspective of the peasantry and discuss their potential goals, organisation, their socio-economic relevance and the class character of the parties involved.

Links Of Labour: An Object Biography of the Coppergate Sock

Daisy Bonsall (University of Cambridge)

This paper examines the Coppergate Sock as a window into the production practices and economic links that underpinned textile work in Anglo-Scandinavian York. To understand the significance of this object, it is compared to the overarching trends in the material profile of other textile finds in the York assemblage. While the wool composition of the sock is in keeping with trends established by these other finds, it was created using a technique called *nålebinding* which is otherwise absent across archaeological assemblages from early medieval England.

However, the *nålebinding* technique is attested across Scandinavia, linking craft practices in Anglo-Scandinavian York to the broader Scandinavian world. While this could be understood as evidence for trade of Scandinavian objects in York, this paper argues that the sock is representative of a more complex network of textile production and skill sharing. Expert analysis of the stitch used to create the sock has revealed no exact matches with extant Scandinavian examples, suggesting that the sock is the product of a craft tradition developed in York with Scandinavian influence and can be understood as the product of a highly skilled textile economy prepared and able to adapt to changing situations within the broader environment of the city.

Understanding wolves in Old Norse Culture: human perceptions and use of language

Michele Roncarati (University of Nottingham)

Wolves (*Canis Lupus*) are one of the few species that had a widespread and long-lasting impact on Old Norse culture. In the wilderness, wolves comprise one of the main competitors for humans in hunting activities and are among the most prolific animals when it comes to the depredation of livestock in several geographical areas. However, the rise of a strong concept of ‘wolfishness’ in medieval Scandinavia cannot be explained only through the predatory habits of wolves.

In order to appreciate this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the role of language in the creation of a system of reference based on these animals. ‘Wolfishness’ should be considered as a conceptual network that originates from wolves and the environment where they are typically envisioned. Through a selection of extracts ranging from Old Norse law (*Grágás* and the *Older Law of Gulaping*), prose (*Prose Edda*) and poetry (*eddic poetry*), I aim to demonstrate how the impact of wolves on the human influenced the creation of a specific set of terms. This approach is based on the theory of the systematicity of metaphorical concepts. Metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts, and we can analyse metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and how they related to the world we experience.

“Illa hefir sonr minn nú skipazt”: Dogs in Place of Humans

Ashley Castelino (University of Oxford)

There is a curious trope recurring across several genres of Old Norse-Icelandic literature that involves disguising a dog to attempt to pass it off as a human. While potentially related to the wider fairytale and folklore motif of substituting a human heart for an animal one (as in the Snow White tradition), this trope is unique in using a full animal instead of a single organ.

This paper critically examines occurrences of this trope in the wider context of human/animal hybridity in Old Norse-Icelandic literature and dogs being used to test the human-animal boundary. Although the disguises are not always convincing, their success or failure is a good indication of what physical and other features were considered markers of humanity. From cutting off a dog’s head and dressing it in human clothes to confusing canine barking for human insanity, these episodes blend comic absurdity with introspection about what it means to be human. On a narrative level, moreover, the purpose of many of these substitutions is to protect both men and women from harm, as dogs are so often called upon to do. This paper thus fits into my larger doctoral project of exploring the narrative function of extraordinary dogs across Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

The Courtly Berserkr: Familiarising the Foreign

Daniel Rusu (University of Bergen)

The aim of this presentation is to create an outline for the definition of the berserkr, with special focus on the etymology of the term and how the berserkr can be connected not only to its wolfish counterpart, the ulfheðinn, but also to the foreign, the gargantuan and the tröll. I argue that extending the analysis of the berserkr to translated romance sagas could reveal new interpretations and ways the berserkr might have been perceived even prior to their supposed adaptation to the subgenre. *Breta sögur* translates a giant as berserkr and mentions a tröll within the same context, while *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats* names Christ a berserkr of God, and *Ívens saga* translates Chrétien de Troyes' champion to berserkr.

Tracing the possible reasons as to why these characters were renamed berserkr reveals new insights into how these elite warriors were perceived socially, what role they played in kings' retinues, what their shapeshifting might have symbolised, and how the motif of the berserkr could be adapted or reused to familiarise the foreign for a Norse audience. This paper is connected to my master thesis in progress, titled: "Berserkr and the Trespass of Chivalric Virtues: A Norse Motif Adapted to the *Riddarasögur*."

Heilir æsir, heilar ásynjur ok öll ginnheilög goð: How is Old Norse Mythology Represented in Video Games?

Olga Kalinovskaia (University of Bergen)

Interest around the early Middle Ages and the Viking Age does not diminish, even though these time periods took place approximately 1 000 years ago. Popular culture exploits different aspects of this epoch more and more often. Artists, writers, musicians, and other makers of creative products find inspiration in Scandinavian historical and mythological images and symbols and remake them in their own ways. But how much do modern products have in common with their sources of inspiration?

This project both explores ways in which Old Norse mythology is represented in a specific type of creative products, that is video games, and studies its links to scholarly knowledge about pre-Christian religious traditions in Scandinavia. For the analysis there have been selected three video games, where Old Norse mythology plays diverse roles and where the myths are interpreted differently: *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* and *God of War: Ragnarök*. All three are well-known and successful, which can easily be proven by checking open data such as sales statistics and awards they have won.

To conduct the analysis there will be used methods which are common for both Philology and Game Studies: textual analysis and close reading, comparative analysis. There are also tools for analysing game mechanics, aesthetics, and visual presentation.

The existing research usually focuses on other aspects of the games, for example, medieval and pseudo-medieval elements, representation of certain groups of people, specific aspects such as music, gameplay, and others. This project studies religious aspects of these fictional universes, and their links to original pre-Christian heathen traditions in Scandinavia by studying both primary and secondary sources that contain information about Old Norse mythology.

From Sagas to Screens – the Persistent Presence of Vikings in Nordic Identity

Kat Lengte (Independent scholar)

This project examines the emergence and development of ‘the Viking’ as a cultural archetype for the Nordic world through a comparative study of Viking reception in popular culture since the 20th century. It critically assesses modern sources featuring Vikings, comparing them to their Old Norse and national romantic source material and examining how these modern depictions participate in the construction of a national, ethnic, and cultural identity.

The study is structured along three distinct subsections, each connected to a different research question. Section one is concerned with Viking portrayals in movies and series and how those portrayals influence and shape cultural identity. Section two examined the construction of a collective past using Vikings in music and section three seeks to answer the question in how far portrayals of Vikings in games influence historical awareness. This interdisciplinary study highlights continuities and differences in Viking reception and identifies ‘the Viking’ as a key element in Nordic identities.

Wrestling with Vikings: Towards a study of vikingism in professional wrestling

Bob Oscar Benjamin van Strijen (University of Oslo)

Professional wrestling became an orchestrated spectacle of sportsmanship throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Its growth as a sports and entertainment industry is intimately connected to the rise of cinema and television, and through a variety of merchandise and promotional venues—including music, video games, and streaming services—professional wrestling turned into a multibillion-dollar field.

Since the late 1980s, professional wrestlers increasingly developed elaborate characters to garner attention. Wrestlers like ‘The Berzerker’ John Nord, Mexican luchador El Hijo del Vikingo, and WWE tag-team The Viking Raiders, have all taken inspiration from Viking Age Scandinavian culture—or tropes thereof. Their various gimmicks notwithstanding, they ultimately remained wrestlers playing their part in a wrestling show. Conversely, in the recent independent British theatre production *Mythos: Ragnarok*, professional wrestlers portray characters from and act out an adaptation of the famous eschatological narrative from Norse mythology.

In this paper, which follows from an article I am writing for the upcoming volume *Vikingism: Viking-Age Scandinavians in Modern British and North American Media*, I aim to present the portrayal of Vikingism in this transmedial pop-culture phenomenon called professional wrestling. I aim to highlight a variety of similarities and differences in the portrayal of elements of the Viking Age between, for example, British, Mexican, and ‘American’ wrestling; between the eighties and now; and between billion-dollar corporations and an independent stage production. In doing so, I hope, among other things, to help identify trends in recent depictions of Vikings and understand what they communicate to their audiences.

Heathen Hair: The Religious Significance of Grooming in England and Scandinavia

Alexandra Zhirnova, University of Cambridge (online)

In a puzzling passage from a private letter, the tenth-century monk Ælfric of Eynsham denounces the custom of English men who "dress themselves in Danish fashion, with bald necks and blinded eyes." In its passionate attack on Danish grooming customs, the passage from Ælfric resembles Alcuin's Letter to Ethelred, king of Northumbria (written in 793), where Alcuin similarly denounces the English for their "trimming of beard and hair, in which [they] have wished to resemble the pagans." But why were two prominent English ecclesiastical figures so concerned with the influences of Scandinavian fashions on their countrymen?

This paper considers the English discussions of Danish hairstyles in the context of broader ecclesiastical discourse and highlights the similarity of Ælfric and Alcuin's concerns to those expressed in (later) Scandinavian law and literature. It argues that hair, as a medium that allowed communication of ethnicity, group membership, gender, and social status, facilitated the production of an unusually complex and nuanced discourse of identity. This paper explores how 'correct' grooming in both English and Scandinavian contexts helped to delineate 'insiders' from 'strangers', to produce and maintain hierarchies of power, and even to attain salvation for the Christian's soul.

Did Christianity change the way early medieval Scandinavians interacted with strangers?

Alison Owen (University of Cambridge)

My research focuses on the impact of Christianity on early medieval Scandinavians' interactions with non-Scandinavians after the conversion of Scandinavia in around the tenth century. This is an attempt to nuance stereotypical or monolithic ideas of how 'Christians' must have thought or behaved, bringing in other factors such as the persistence of pre-Christian ideas in Scandinavian Christianity, the shallow and mixed nature of the Christian teaching available to most of the population, the economic aims of warfare, and prejudices between sedentary and mobile populations.

I examine historical and literary sources for key contexts such as warfare, slavery, and the slimmer evidence for peaceful interactions at the elite level. My findings so far indicate that medieval Scandinavians did not prioritise Christian commands to 'love your neighbour', turning instead to outward shows of conformity to a Christian identity while maintaining their pre-existing cultural priorities. In practice, this led to similar behaviour towards strangers both before and after the conversion. An exception is that Christian teaching did contribute to the decline of slavery. The other most noticeable change was Scandinavia's entry into the European Christian group identity, which led them to increasingly distance themselves from pagans as the medieval period progressed.

Does Miniaturization Mean Magic? Understanding Viking Age Amulets through Parallels in Old Norse Literature and Archaeology

Katherine S. Beard (University of Oxford)

This paper aims to understand the power of object minimization, how it might change an object's meaning, and its potential to imbue amuletic power. Viking age amulets are often miniature versions of full-sized things. The archaeological record of the Viking age is littered with small amulet finds of this type, including hammers, swords, spears, cups, and thrones or chairs. Sometimes these objects are stylized, but they are often also simply replicas of their larger counterparts, shrunk down to fit in a pouch or worn close to the body.

Small amulets, worn as jewelry, in pockets, etc., signal that the symbols represented bore enough import to be physically carried, perhaps implying special personal, cultural, or magical significance. Miniaturization can change an object's meaning: a tiny sword pendant doesn't operate as a martial weapon but could represent power or protection. Objects can also have secondary agency: they can make us act in specific ways or reflect certain values or ideas.

In addition to examining the extant archaeological record of miniature objects, this study endeavors to put the amulets in context with Old Norse literature, weaving material culture into literary analysis using case studies as a primary vehicle. Moving beyond case studies, this paper also uses an analytics application created by the author, Eitri (<http://www.eitridb.com>), to understand more macro trends in small amulet finds over time and space. By examining the extant Old Norse corpus and the ever-growing archaeological record, we can gain further insights into how people interacted with sacred symbols.

Eddic Prehistory and the Compilation of *Codex Regius*

Miriam Conti (University of Bergen)

The goal of my PhD thesis is to contribute to the ongoing evaluation of the prehistory of Poetic Edda applying paleographic criteria to a text-critical approach to the manuscript Codex Regius GKS 2365 4to. The project is based on Gustaf Lindblad's *Studier i Codex Regius* (1954) and *Centrala eddaproblem i 1970-talets forskningsläget* (1978), paleographic analyses of paramount importance for Eddic studies. Lindblad stresses the graphic bipartition of the compilation into two main sections, the “mythological and heroic sections”, marked by the two largest initials.

Another less immediate, yet equally striking paleographic border is on 20r, where the two sections meet: the final part of *Alvíssmál* is remarkably more abbreviated than the beginning of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana*. Such a sudden shift is not likely to happen on the same page, and it is another indication that there were two separate compilations, at some point, before CR was copied.

Starting from Lindblad's considerations on dating and compilation, I will gather further quantitative data on the abbreviations in the two sections and compare their nature and frequency. Moreover, a focus on *Alvíssmál*, displaying a unique structure and use of abbreviations, will provide an insight into its role in the compilation process.

Snorri's use of poetic sources in *Gylfaginning*

Yulia Osovtsova (University of Stavanger)

Snorra Edda, the medieval Icelandic handbook on poetics, is a prosimetrical text, which means that it comprises a mixture of prose and verse. Through a close examination of Snorri's use of identifiable poetic sources, I intend to elucidate various methods of prosimetrical composition applied by him while composing his work. The overarching question will be – How did Snorri avail himself of the poetic tradition in the process of creation of his textbook on poetics?

Snorri, in his account, mentions two sky-wolves, both of which seem to have a defined mission to destroy one specific heavenly body. If we take a closer look on Snorri's main sources, we will find an inconsistency there – while *Grm* indeed has two sky-wolves, also presented by Snorri, who are both mentioned in connection with the Sun, there is only one in *Vsp*, possibly relating to the Moon. Moreover, *Vm* 46–47, explicitly identify Fenrir as the destroyer of the Sun. Furthermore, some kennings in the old poems seem to allude to the myth dealing with the destruction of the Moon. In my presentation, I will attempt to reveal Snorri's various techniques in dealing with the divergence found in poetic tradition.

Skaldic defamation, or How to be provoked by the king

Katrine Andresen (University of Bergen)

This paper shall investigate the metrical structures of six stanzas in the kings' saga compilation *Morkinskinna* (ca. 1220) which exemplify an intricate skaldic play in eleventh-century Norway. The stanzas are part of an anecdote featuring the Norwegian king Haraldr harðráði Sigurðsson (r. 1046–1066) and his Icelandic skald Þjóðólfr Árnorsson. It recounts their encounter with a fisherman who on the king's command composes a dróttkvætt-stanza on the spur of the moment. The king performs a stanza in return, and Þjóðólfr is required to carry on. Although being recognised as a professional skald, Þjóðólfr makes a compositional mistake in a line (“grøṃ; en þat vas skømmu”) and is subsequently taunted by the king. Haraldr, nevertheless, made the very same mistake in the following line (“fram; en þat vas skømmu”), since the used syllable pair containing the needed internal rhyme is not equally high, as expressed in the following prose text (“ekki er þat jafn hátt”).

There is no agreement among modern scholars who sought to explain these flaws. By adopting a quantitative approach to the analysis of dróttkvætt-poetry as developed in my MA thesis, I will compare the stanzas in question with other instances of uneven internal rhymes found in the poetry of Þjóðólfr Árnorsson, Einarr Skúlason, and other skalds, and thereby try put forward a new interpretation of the anecdote from *Morkinskinna*. By developing further previous research by the Icelandic linguist Kristján Árnason, it is my intention to argue for the requirement of quantity-balance for syllables containing internal rhyme in the linguistic analysis of Skaldic poetry.

Defiant Giantesses: Selected Cases from the Poetic Edda and Fornaldarsögur

Kendra Nydam (University of Cambridge)

While studies of female figures and their agency in *Íslendingasögur*, *Snorra Edda*, and The Poetic Edda have become far more numerous in recent decades, much of this scholarship has been devoted to representations of female figures whose actions challenge or blur the lines of expected roles within a traditional gender binary. Further study of the full scope of modes and methods through which female figures choose to act, particularly in Eddic poetry and *fornaldarsögur*, is necessary for the development of our understanding of female figures in Old Norse literature and an appreciation of how their agency, motivations, and outcomes compare across literature of different genres, time periods, and places.

This comparative study constitutes a portion of my MPhil research examining how various female figures in the Poetic Edda and *fornaldarsögur* use defiant actions and speech as a tool to defend themselves and their realms of influence from imposition and violation. This paper will examine several cases of overt and covert defiance displayed by jötunn women contained in the Eddic verses of the Codex Regius, *Grottasöngur*, and *the fornaldarsögur*, analysing the variety of ways in which these female figures, with varying degrees of power and autonomy, worked situations to their advantage. It will also discover possible patterns of motivation for their defiant behaviour and provide added insight into how their varied and expansive expressions of femininity and agency play into their unique and complex place within their individual narratives.

Towards Standards in Digital Editions of Old Norse Prose: A Case Study

Sebastian Pohland (University of Oslo)

This paper is an overview of my ongoing PhD-project at the University of Oslo.

My project aims to create a fully digital scholarly edition of *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* based on a small number (5-10) of selected manuscripts. The saga itself has not received a new philological edition since 1829, and much of the existing manuscript material is poorly assessed as it pertains to the saga. As such, the project will contribute to the existing research on the text, by re-establishing the stemma and providing digital images of previously non-digitized manuscripts, as well as with the edition itself. The creation process, from collecting digitized version of the relevant manuscripts to finding a form of presentation for the saga edition, will be used to assess and evaluate methodological approaches to digital textual criticism, as well as the tools available for such a process.

The text chosen allows me to test on a broad variety of texts from different periods, using different scripts and existing in different levels of preservation. In the course of this evaluation process, I aim to contribute to existing, ideally open source, standards wherever possible. The resulting monograph will consist of the result of my research on the text itself, as well as the results of my evaluation work and an in-depth analysis of the decisions ultimately made in the creation of the edition text itself.

Geirriðr, Katla and the currency of women's knowledge in *Eyrbyggja Saga*

Clare Mulley (University of Oxford)

This paper presents a close-reading of key passages in *Eyrbyggja saga* pertaining to the feud between Katla, the widow of Holt, and the family of Geirriðr at Máfalið, with the aim of proposing a more nuanced interpretation of the feud in question. Regarding the troll-riding of a young man named Gunnlaugr (carried out by Katla and initially blamed on Geirriðr), most academic readings focus on the sexual element, describing Katla's actions as the result of her failed seduction. While it is clear that the author is coupling age and deviance, and that Katla's actions are partially driven by the practicalities of narrative structuring, I nevertheless propose that, by centralising the issue of sexual desire and menopausal aggression, such readings focus on the more immediate, but far lesser source of tension, and do not fully reflect the author's preoccupation with women's stories.

As I shall show, by reading certain passages throughout the episode more carefully, it becomes clear that a far deeper, more complex social feud is being depicted between the two women, which is based in knowledge and social power above all, and for which the assault on Gunnlaugr is only the touchpaper. In examining the thematic treatment of women's magical knowledge and competition within this episode, I shall discuss what we may, subsequently, begin to decipher about medieval Icelandic perceptions of the relationship between femininity, knowledge, attractiveness and social standing.

Of Saints and Suffering: ‘Dismembering’ *Andreas saga postola*

Eugenia K. Vorobeva (University of Oxford)

This paper addresses the questions of grace, embodiment, and suffering as seen in the earliest surviving version of *Andreas saga postola*, relating the events of Andrew the apostle’s life and death. The saga presents a compilation and translation of at least two Latin sources: Pseudo-Abdian account based on Gregory of Tour’s *Liber de miraculis Andreae apostoli* for the *vita* part and *Passio Andreae* for the martyrdom.

However, the generally close translation contains a number of interpolations, displays some structural changes and introduces a few references to the liturgical material which might be indicative of the devotional practices and theological understanding of the time.

This paper examines lexical parallels, stylistic devices, and narrative structure of the saga in order to get a more comprehensive idea of its understanding of the saintly torments. Placing the saga within the broader context of the contemporary religious and secular writings allows both to align it with the contemporary universal Christian tradition and to perceive it as a work in its own right, characterized by stylistic and structural originality and produced within the Old Norse-Icelandic literary tradition.

Ecocriticism and Old Norse: History and Limitations

Emma Horne (University of Nottingham)

This paper is based upon the first chapter of my PhD in which I analyse ‘ecocriticism’ as an effective framework and defined concept for literary (and broader interdisciplinary) studies. Cheryl Glofety famously defined ecocriticism as ‘the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment...it takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (1996: xviii). This simple definition remains one of the most prominent across the field. To be an ‘ecocritical’ study, one must simply discuss the connection between environment and literature. I argue that this is an oversimplification. Perhaps the tenuous link between literature and the physical environment is enough for the first wave of ecocritical study, however it falls short for modern ecocritical approaches.

I intend to outline the separate historical waves of ecocritical approaches, and offer a more concrete definition of what constitutes an ecocritical study. But I also suggest that this ‘ecocritical’ analysis falls short, especially regarding premodern texts such as the *Íslendingasögur*. I intend to build upon the work of Phelpstead (2019) and Morton (2016) to suggest a new term: dark cosmology – the analysis of human and non-human relationships on cosmic scale, from the perspective of enmeshment in the universe, as opposed to the “traditional” anthropocentric bias of ‘ecocritical’ thought. The overall aim of this paper is to establish the foundational underlying methodology for the systematic analysis of environment, ecology, and landscape(s) in the *Íslendingasögur* in the rest of my thesis.

Naming Sagas, Naming People: new historical perspectives on saga titles and the identities behind them

Nikolaus Frenzel, Independent Scholar (online)

Some saga titles contain the *-inga* suffix, which generally implies a meaning of ‘the saga of the X people’. Leaving to one side the debate of book-prose and free-prose understandings of the sagas as pieces of history and/or fiction, with the (often limited) knowledge of how contemporaries referred to the sagas that survive to us, it is possible to deduce the overall inferences that authors made towards their purposes for writing about different peoples. Additionally, this is very telling for defining group identities, because in scholarship we have seemingly no better way to refer to groups of people than as ‘nationalities’ and ‘ethnicities’, when neither of these terms truly represent Norse group situations. In this talk, I will discuss *Orkneyinga saga* and *Jómsvíkinga saga* to demonstrate the benefits and challenges in approaching this topic.

Reviving the Gothic Past and justifying a Swedish present in early Swedish historical writing

Adrián Rodríguez Avila (University of Cambridge)

In the fifteenth century, Nils Ragvaldsson, the bishop of Växjö and future archbishop of Uppsala, made a choice: to revive Gothic identity and appropriate the Goths as the forefathers of the Swedish nation. This choice, which came in response to external pressures, arguably kickstarted the historical tradition in Sweden, and also a Gothicism interest throughout Europe. Existing scholarship has focused on the uses and evolution of the Gothicism myth, especially after the end of the medieval period.

In this paper, I will focus on the earliest stage, and I will argue that the Goths may have not been the protagonists of the first Swedish historical narratives; rather, they seem to have been inserted in parallel, and –more importantly— in contrast with the Swedes. Furthermore, I argue that Gothic identity was expressed outwardly, whilst Swedish identity was promoted within the realm, especially in connection with the Christian identity of the country.

Old Norse depictions of Sámi people in the *fornaldarsögur*

Ambra Ventura (University of Bergen)

This ongoing MA thesis project examines the ways in which gender and ethnicity intersect in Old Norse depictions of Sámi people in the *fornaldarsögur*. One of the aims of this project is to answer the question of how and why these two categories shaped Norse perceptions of the Sámi or were shaped by them, and which ramifications these had in social structures.

Encounters with Sámi men and women abound in the *fornaldarsögur*. This is at least in part due to the Norse conception of magic as an inherent trait of “Sáminess”, and to magic finding ample space in a corpus of stories geared towards the fantastic and folkloristic. The *fornaldarsögur* were written down around the time when articles forbidding acts such as going to Sámi, believing in Sámi, and going to Finnmark to ask for a prophecy were introduced in such codes of law as the *Borgarþingslög* and *Eidsivabingslög*. As no narrative exists in a vacuum, aspects of Norse preconceptions about, and othering of, the Sámi will be taken into consideration through the lenses of gender and ethnicity, in order to draft a social map of the society depicted in the *fornaldarsögur*. This in the hopes that such a tool will help shed more light on the awareness and anxieties of those who set these stories to parchment.

‘Það er nu eydilagt’? AM 241 b I fol as a Case Study of Árni Magnússon’s Collection and Manipulation of Icelandic Latin Liturgical Manuscripts

Rhiannon Warren, University of Cambridge

On his travels around Iceland (1702-10) an Icelandic scholar named Árni Magnússon collected, copied, and discarded manuscripts. In doing so, the act of what he preserved and what he chose to reuse or throw away has shaped our understanding of medieval Icelandic book culture, and through this, socio-cultural history more widely. While much scholarly attention has been placed on the Arnamagnæan collection’s Old Norse manuscripts, the Latin liturgical manuscripts Árni collected require further attention.

This paper will examine one collection of liturgical fragments, AM 24 b I fol, in the context of Fragmentology and Material Philology. These fragments do not have a shared medieval context, but instead pose enigmatic questions: why these pages were among the small percentage of books that survived and why they were collected, from what contexts, and placed together as they are today? Analysis of palaeography and codicology may provide answers – indicating Árni’s role as manipulator of manuscript material, demonstrating how Árni placed fragments them in compendia to fit his scholarly interests, something he did with paper vernacular manuscripts (Stegmann, 2017). Particular emphasis will be placed on AM 241 b γ fol and its relation to AM 241 a I fol through palaeographical and art historical analysis.

Translation Practices in the Middle Ages: Understanding the Old Norse Translation of *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*

Markus Heide (University of Oslo)

I will present my proposed project on the translation of the Old Norse *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (from here: B.). The aim of this project is to examine which parts of the theological explanations and metaphors presented in B. were significantly altered semantically, added to, or subtracted from when it was translated from Latin into Old Norse.

B. is a text with a remarkable history, having its origin as a Buddhist tale which ended up being transformed into a Christian legend, and in its Greek translation significantly expanded in order to incorporate the teaching of Christian theology. From Greek it was translated into Latin and subsequently Old Norse, and the relationship between these two is particularly interesting as some of the theological explanations and metaphors were altered in the translation process. Since the first modern edition of B. was published in 1851 little has been done to examine the Old Norse text up against the Latin *Vulgate* of B. This project will therefore contribute to the scholarly discourse on B. as well as the practice of translation in the Middle Ages.

I will provide a selection of concrete examples from both texts to discuss the differences with a focus on semantic and periphrastic rework of the source text. I will provide the text in both Latin and Old Norse, with my own translation of both versions into modern day English.

The ballad of Sankta Jákup in manuscript collection FLB F IV, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands

Antony Jay Olsson (UHI Institute of Northern Studies)

In this paper I will discuss the Faroese ballad *Sankta Jákup*. The ballad is built upon the legend of St. James, as told in the chronical *De rebus gestis D. Didaci Gelmirez, primi Compostellani Archiepiscopi* or *Historia Compostelana*, for short, and *Liber Sancti Iacobi*. The legend can be tracked backwards from these two twelfth century texts all the way to the eighth century hymn *O Dei Verbum*.

However, in this short overview I will concentrate on the Nordic balladesque interpretations of the medieval legend. I will compare the national ballad variants from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as look at a translation of a Danish variant from 1860. I will pay particular attention to details which only exist in the Faroese cognates, as well as later Norwegian versions of the ballad.

The Faroese ballad exists in four variants across a number of extant manuscripts and printed material. The first documented recitals in written form of the Faroese ballad date from 1821-1822. The ballad is part of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad tradition with national variants of the ballad existing in Denmark, Norway and Sweden (and recorded in Finland in Swedish), but not Iceland. In the catalogue of the Scandinavian ballads (TSB) it is given listing under the classification B for 'Legendary ballads' and under the subsection B7-16 of 'generally acknowledged saints' (Jonsson, Solheim, & Danielson, 1978:52).

Here I will also focus on a particular manuscript dating from 1840. The manuscript resides in Tórshavn, and is housed at Føroya Landsbókasavn (National Library of the Faroe Islands). It highlights some interesting points regarding indexing and cataloguing of ballad variants.

The Dwarf Maidens: Five Ballads about Sigurd the Dragon Slayer

Brynhild Kamban (University of the Faroe Islands)

The Faroese ballad circle about Sigurd the Dragon Slayer contains various ballads, among them the five so called Dwarf Maidens recorded between 1818 and 1823. Most of the content in these ballads is about Sigurd's fighting skills, but Dwarf Maiden I, III and IV are romantic stories about the Dwarf Maiden's love for Sigurd. In *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (1978) the Dwarf Maidens are described as "female gnomes", but in the ballads they are depicted like beautiful elf maids.

The third dwarf maiden is called Ása, she shines like a snow drift and lives in a hall east of the brown hill. The hall is thoroughly depicted: It is made of gold, and gold is playing in the courtyard. The floor is made of marble, and the doors are of ivory, the hinges are of cedarwood, the beams of silver, and gold sparkles in the paths like the sound of oat grain. While she is living in a beautiful hall, Sigurd's homeland is wicked, wind and snow are blowing, and bandit horsemen rob the people's goods.

The third Dwarf Maiden ballad is reminiscent of the Scandinavian ballad *Elveskud* (A 63 in TSB), but where the elf maiden in *Elveskud* bewitches the knight, so he dies, the dwarf maiden in the Faroese ballad (E 151) does not use witchcraft. Instead, the Faroese ballad emphasizes Christian morality, and that Sigurd rejects the girl, because she is heathen.

Women in Private Space: Translating Private Space in *Tristrams saga*

Mary O'Connor (University of Oxford, Balliol College)

The story of Tristan and Isolt explores the tragic love between two characters caught in an impossible situation: torn between private love and public demands, the lovers are forced to conduct their affair in secret while constantly negotiating with public demands and social obligations. At the story's core is the conflict between passionate love and feudal loyalty, between lover and king. And so, private spaces are fundamental to the exploration of the themes of passionate love, as this is where Tristan and Isolt conduct their affair, but also to the debate of conduct and social obligations. It is in these spaces the characters experience emotional fulfilment and suffering and in which they struggle to reconcile their love with their position in courtly society.

Thomas d'Angleterre's version of the Tristan story, the "courtly versions", was translated into Old Norse, as *Tristrams saga*, in 1226 at the court of Hákon Hákonarson. The Old Norse version is amongst the most important versions as it represents the only complete account of Thomas' narrative. This paper will examine the translation of private space in *Tristrams saga* focusing on two scenes set in private spaces: the Cave of Lovers and Tristram's illicit entry into Isolt's bedchamber. Considering the characters speech and actions in these spaces, this paper will discuss the ways in which the debate between courtly love and chivalry prowess was interpreted and the translation of private space as a space of emotional fulfilment but also as a problematic gendered space in *Tristrams saga*.

Bitch-Witch-Queen: The Depiction of Jezebel in the Old Norse *Stjórn*

Natasha Bradley (University of Oxford)

Jezebel is an *Old Testament* figure whose depiction in the *Books of Kings* has had long-standing influences on gendered and racial mores throughout history. As a foreign queen who convinces her husband to worship Baal over Yahweh, the Judeo-Christian God, the biblical Jezebel is depicted as ‘the archetypal bitch-witch-queen in misogynistic representations of women’ (Tina Pippin, 1995, p. 222). *Stjórn*, an Old Norse translation of parts of the *Vulgate Old Testament*, contains a depiction of Jezebel in its third part (*Stjórn* III) in the translation of the *Books of Kings*.

This paper examines the depiction of Jezebel in *Stjórn* III (the only sustained depiction of Jezebel in Old Norse literature) against its source material in the *Vulgate*, with a particular emphasis on Jezebel’s four speech acts. First, she convinces her husband to abandon his religion and worship pagan idols (1 *Kings* 16.31, *Stj* III p. 1080; 1 *Kings* 21.23-26, *Stj* III p. 1107); next, she commands her men to kill the prophets of Yahweh (1 *Kings* 18.4, *Stj* III p. 1084; 1 *Kings* 18.13, *Stj* III p. 1086; 2 *Kings* 9.7, *Stj* III p. 1158). She also verbally threatens Elijah, forcing him to flee and narrowly avoid death in the desert (1 *Kings* 19.2-3, *Stj* III pp. 1092-93). Her final speech act is in her plots to murder Naboth (1 *Kings* 21.4-16, *Stj* III pp. 1105-1106). This paper examines Jezebel’s use of her verbal power in *Stjórn* III, examining how this understudied figure affects our understanding of the themes of gender, race, and power within Old Norse literature.

Emotional Intimacy in *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*

Molly Bovett (University of Cambridge)

Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds dramatises the life of 10th century Icelandic court poet Hallfreðr Óttarsson; in particular, both main redactions of the text – found in *Möðruvallabók* and most texts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* respectively – explore Hallfreðr’s personal relationship with his royal patron, King Óláfr Tryggvason. The poet’s deep affection and subsequent grief for the king play key roles in the narrative, impacting Hallfreðr’s actions and affairs back in Iceland and eliciting strong commentary within the text on his performance of masculinity. Grief even triggers the abandonment of the illicit courtship that is a common *topos* in the *skáldasögur*, redirecting Hallfreðr’s attention to a type of vengeance quest.

Despite the prominent role played by emotional intimacy between king and poet in this saga, a thorough analysis of emotional language and bonds of affection within the prose text is yet to be conducted. Following Sif Ríkhardsdóttir’s work on emotive scripting and Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir’s work on emotional lexicons, this paper aims to address the role of emotional intimacy in the saga, with particular focuses on the intersection of emotional vulnerability and masculine performance and the possibility of conducting a queer reading of the saga based on the saga’s emotive and gendered scripts.

‘A Comparative Study of the motif of intestinal death wounds in early Icelandic and Irish literature’

Kyla Rowe (University of Cambridge)

Though the living body and its actions can often foster an understanding of cultural and societal ideals, this paper delves instead into the literary functions of the dying body, whose proposed transitional state between the heroic deeds of life and the posthumous fame of death informs upon the literary traditions within which the observed deaths are recorded.

This analysis focuses on the motif of the fatalistic intestinal wound within the literatures of medieval Iceland and Ireland, taking into special consideration the episodes found in the Icelandic *Fornaldarsögur*, the *Íslendingasögur*, and selections from the poems of the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. This will be in addition to selected tales of the Irish Ulster Cycle, of which the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Aided Óenfhir Aífe*, and *Aided Con Culainn* will be of special interest. This paper will investigate the usage and context of the intestinal motif, utilizing the comparative method in order to establish whether or not the motif functioned in a comparable manner between the literatures examined. Theodore Andersson's (1967) concept of the Icelandic ‘posturing’ as a final statement upon the threshold of death will aid in my investigation of the intestinal wound functioning as a performative act of authorial intent within literary traditions where the medieval physiognomic beliefs were particularly transparent. Thus, I argue that in traditions where the living aesthetic often denotes character and morality, so too does the largely overlooked imagery of the fatalistic intestinal wound maintain comparable symbolic intent.

Vigilante Hits: Retribution for Sexual Violence in the Old Norse *Fornaldarsögur*

Grace O'Duffy (University of Oxford)

Rape in the *fornaldarsögur* is often presented in conflicting and contradictory ways. At times, rape is outwardly and even vehemently condemned, and yet the rapist himself is not always presented as wholly condemnable. However, a handful of texts contain graphically violent depictions of rapists or would-be-rapists being severely punished for their crimes or would-be-crimes.

In *Áns saga bogsveigis*, for instance, a man named Ketill attempts to rape a woman while in the guise of the titular character. Án shaves and tars him before gouging one of his eyes out and ‘gelding’ him. In *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, Hálfðan mutilates and castrates Áki inn illi, who had previously attempted to rape his sister. In *Hrólf's saga kraka*, before Helgi can attempt to sleep with her, Queen Ólöf penetrates him with a svefnþorn (sleep thorn) before shaving and tarring him. When he later does succeed in raping her, she allows him to unknowingly marry their daughter in the hopes that it will bring him shame.

These examples, taken as a triptych of vigilante retribution for sexual crimes, demonstrate how the *fornaldarsögur* frequently present sexual punishments as apposite to sexual crimes. This paper will examine how castration and penetration — whether literal or figurative — are combined with visibly humiliating punishments to ensure the total personal, sexual and social destruction of the aggressor. I will assess how these mutilations might be regarded as diegetically permissible de facto punishments for rape, and this in turn raises questions about the severity of rape as a crime within these sagas and perhaps beyond.

THE BODY IS A BUILDING: Old Norse and Old English compounds for the body

Alexia Kirov (University of Cambridge)

The conceptual metaphor of THE BODY IS A BUILDING occurs frequently in both Old English and Old Norse poetry. This paper examines kennings for the body (or body parts) in Old English and Old Norse Skaldic poetry which contain the base words ‘house’ and ‘hall’. In Old Norse, these are ‘rann’ (‘house’) and ‘salr’ (‘hall’); in Old English, these are ‘hus’ (‘house’) and ‘sele’ (‘hall’).

The difference between the use of kennings in Old Norse Skaldic poetry and Old English poetry has been noted, most recently by Robert D. Fulk, who notes the more ‘riddle-like’ quality of those in Skaldic verse. This paper furthers this observation using evidence gleaned from a corpus search conducted across the poetry of each language. It investigates the nuances of these compound terms and the contexts in which they appear. In doing so, it argues that, overall, Skaldic poetry uses THE BODY IS A BUILDING more frequently for positive presentations of the body’s capacities. In contrast, in Old English poetry it is overwhelmingly used to emphasise the body’s vulnerability.

This paper thus emphasises the importance of scrutinising kennings within their textual contexts rather than in isolation; the connotations of THE BODY IS A BUILDING are not homogenous.

Foreboding dreams in *Íslendinga Saga*: The Role of Pagan Imagery in a Contemporary Saga from the Thirteenth Century

Winifred Axworthy (University of Cambridge)

Íslendinga saga includes a number of stanzas of poetry which are spoken in a dream, or occasionally a vision, foreboding events in the saga. The dreams that will be discussed in this paper often include pagan figures. Sometimes they recite the poetry, other times they are simply witnessed by the dreamer. I will discuss these figures, as well as the other references to pagan tradition in the dream stanzas. Although the saga does not have an overtly Christian purpose, it was written in the thirteenth century when Iceland had officially been a Christian country for over two hundred years.

This raises a number of questions about the inclusion of pagan themes in the poetry of the saga. Are they meaningless features of a literary tradition that began in pagan times, or do they have a more meaningful purpose in the saga? I will argue that the pagan imagery reflects a continued engagement with pagan supernatural beings and that the stanzas use this imagery to express an emotional state that is not necessarily connected to one faith or another, but is rather a facet of the human experience.

Murder, he Quoth: Death and Prophecy in *Brennu-Njáls saga*

Saskia Cowen, (University of Bergen)

The sagas of Icelanders depict a variety of crises and calamities, from the realistic in the form of judgements of outlawry at the Thing or the death of individuals and families and the blood-feuds that resulted from them, to the more fantastical in the form of murderous giants and haunting revenants. In some cases, such events are predicted in the form of dreams, curses or other verbal announcements, thus giving the reader an insight into the role and structure of a prophecy in the *Íslendingasögur*. One such saga is *Brennu-Njáls saga*, which is particularly famous for its omens and prophecies, especially those by its titular character, Njáll. Though some of the prophecies in the saga are positive, the majority of the prophecies in *Brennu-Njáls saga* end with a characters' death or downfall, or, in one especially noteworthy instance, the death of an entire household. As has been noted by several scholars, structure has an important function in the *Íslendingasögur*, which should be reflected in the prophecies they include. Despite this, earlier research on the topic of prophecies in the sagas has focused in large part on the reactions characters have to the prophecy as well as the perhaps unintentional side-effects of prophesizing bad tidings, yet ignore the utterance and the complete development of the prophecy. This begs the question, what is the structure of a prophecy in the *Íslendingasögur*, and how does it develop? By analyzing three prophecies in *Brennu-Njáls saga* – those regarding Hallgerðr, Gunnarr and the burning of Njáll and his family – I aim to demonstrate the differences and similarities in structure and function of crisis-prophecies and their use in the saga, and through this demonstrate its relevancy in Old Norse-Icelandic research.

Immanent Otherworlds: Depicting Supernatural Landscapes in Medieval Irish and Norse Literature

Abbey Farrow (University of Cambridge)

My paper will present research on imaginary immanent otherworlds as depicted in medieval Irish and Norse literature. It will be focused on chthonic otherworlds within the landscape, such as those reached through grave mounds, mountains, and water. There were otherworlds scattered across the landscapes of Ireland and Iceland, whose immanence meant that the Christian populations confronted them daily. I am researching concepts of and attitudes to these otherworlds as they are presented in the literature. This delves into the question of how and why Christian authors dealt with and incorporated the pre-Christian past of their ancestors, living within the same landscapes. In particular I am considering the concept of liminality, questioning whether chthonic otherworlds themselves are depicted as liminal or merely the entrances into them. My paper will be firmly grounded in literary analysis, as I compare the attitudes of two medieval cultures, both of which appear to have held the belief that their everyday landscapes contained the supernatural, and which continued to be concerned with the depiction of these otherworlds long after the conversion to Christianity.

