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EDITORIAL PREFACE

Apardjón pardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies is pleased to present its third volume. This interdisciplinary volume contains two peer reviewed articles and a peer reviewed note, each focusing on a different aspect of the Viking and medieval North. In the first article, 'Evolving Gender Identities in the Viking Diaspora — A Comparative Study of Orkney and the Isle of Man', Tara Athanasiou examines gendered experiences in the migration to, and the settlement of, the Orkney Islands and the Isle of Man. In the second article, 'From Viking to Sainthood: The Influence of Genre on Literary Gender Identity in Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*', Rosemary Kelly discusses how literary genre shapes masculine identity in Snorri Sturluson's rendition of the life of Óláfr Haraldsson. In the note, 'A Modern Runic Inscription from York', Jasmin Higgs demonstrates the modernity of a recently discovered runic inscription in York.

Each of these articles have been subjected to a blind peer review and have subsequently been edited by members of the journal's editorial board. The editorial board for the present volume consists of Rosemary Kelly, Cassidy Croci, Blake Middleton, Jennifer Hemphill, Solveig Marie Wang, Simon Nygaard, Ségdae Richardson-Read, and Jessie Yusek. Each of these editors have contributed to the completion of the present volume and we are immensely grateful for their dedication and hard work. This volume is also accompanied by five book reviews by Jonas Zeit-Altpeter, Tom Morcom, Eduardo Ramos, Solveig Marie Wang, and Basil Arnould Price. Special acknowledgement is likewise due to Dr Hannah Burrows and Prof. Ralph O'Connor who remain the journal's advisors; we are incredibly grateful for their continued support throughout all stages of the publication process. We are, also once again, thankful to the University of Aberdeen Development Trust Experience Fund for financially supporting the journal. Finally, we thank you, our readers, who are steadily growing in numbers and support.

Apardjón is currently working towards multiple new and exciting projects. Forthcoming publications and translations will be announced shortly. The call for papers for our fourth volume can also be found at the end of this present volume and we encourage submissions of new translations, editions, and transcriptions of medieval Scandinavian literature. Until our next publication, we hope you enjoy reading the present volume of *Apardjón*.

On behalf of the Editors,

Rosemary Kelly

Evolving Gender Identities in the Viking Diaspora — A Comparative Study of Orkney and the Isle of Man

Tara Athanasiou

The Viking Age (*c.* 750–1050) was a time of significant population movement, marked by widespread expansion out of the Scandinavian homelands and ongoing population movement across migratory networks in what is frequently termed the 'Viking diaspora' (see Abrams 2012; Jesch 2015). At its broadest level, *diaspora* can be defined as 'any community that has emigrated and remains culturally visible in the receiving nation' (Abrams 2012: 19; Jesch 2015: 69). *Diaspora* relates to a collective memory of the 'homeland', a consciousness that provides the cultural glue and mutual recognition between migrants from the same original homeland or cultural sphere, despite the geographic dispersal of their destinations (Jesch 2015: 68). This does not in any way imply that migration was undertaken, and diasporas formed, by people who had 'pure' Scandinavian identities (Abrams 2012: 17, 37; Downham 2015: 370). Instead, it provides an analytical framework through which the intersection between cultural identity, socio-economic position, gender, and the motivations and experiences of migration can be examined. The process of migration and resettlement brings with it physical, economic, and social challenges that are experienced at both an individual and group level. This disruption to everyday life, which included contact with other people and cultures, and shifts in social power relations, provides a useful lens through which to examine how gendered roles and behaviours evolved in different temporal and geographic contexts (Stig Sørensen 2009: 264; Jesch 2015: 87). The different ways in which Norse culture, in terms of language, burial practices, religion, and gendered roles were emphasised, downplayed, or reinvented provides insights into gendered experiences and agency in the migration process, and cultural contact and mediation in new places.

This paper will examine the gendered experience of migration to, and settlement of, Orkney and the Isle of Man, two regions that were of strategic importance as locations on the sea routes that connected Scandinavia, the British Isles, and the Irish Sea region (Woolf 2007: 287). Despite the socio-political connections between Norse settlers in Orkney and the Isle of Man, the geographical locations of these islands led to important

differences in the spheres of cultural, political, and religious influence they existed in. These differences provide a useful framework to examine how gender, ethnicity, and cultural contact influenced the gendered experience of migration and settlement, and a valuable context to compare how gender identities evolved in these two diasporic contexts between the ninth and eleventh centuries.

FIGURE 1 MAP OF VIKING-AGE ORKNEY ISLANDS AND THE ISLE OF MAN

This study employs a qualitative and quantitative approach. Evidence about Viking-Age burials from published works, including ascribed sex and/or gender, grave-goods, and signifiers of ethnicity, status, and religion, was compiled within a database wherein these data-points form the basis of the statistics and analysis within this study.[1]

[1] The sources used in this article for data related to furnished burials in Orkney are: Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, McLeod 2015 and 2018, and Redmond 2007. The sources for data related to furnished burials in the Isle of Man are: Redmond 2007, Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, Gardela 2014, and Wilson 2008.

Data has also been gathered from memorial runestones on the Isle of Man which focuses on the genders of and relationship between the raiser of the memorial stone and the person memorialised, the iconography used, and the ethnic origins of the names recorded.[2] In addition, an analysis has been conducted of written sources that depict the Viking Age in Orkney and the Isle of Man, most notably *Orkneyinga saga* and *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum*.[3] This latter analysis has focused on the masculine and feminine roles, attributes and relationships of the individuals recorded in these written sources, as well as an examination of the geographic and social networks they operated within.

Sex, gender and bias in Orkney and the Isle of Man

Based on the extant evidence of settlement sites, graves, hoards, and the written sources, it is likely that the Norse settlement of Orkney probably began around the mid-ninth century (Barrett 2008: 674). The Norse settlement of the Isle of Man was somewhat later, around the turn of the tenth century, based on the earliest Scandinavian-style furnished burials on the island (Wilson 2008: 25, 27). This study is focused on how gendered identities evolved in these two areas within the Viking diaspora, but finding evidence of gender in Viking-Age Orkney and the Isle of Man can be difficult. Gendered identities were neither monolithic nor static, and were instead historically and geographically contextual, and intersected with other areas that construct overall identity, such as ethnicity and status (for a discussion of gender and identity, see Gilchrist 2009: 1). The Norse settlers who arrived on these islands left no contemporary written records, which means that one must rely on the archaeological record as well as written sources created some three hundred years after the Viking Age to piece together how gender was displayed, experienced, and understood. Of course, caution must be taken when relying

[2] The source for data related to the memorial runic crosses on the Isle of Man is Barnes 2019. Although there are fifty-six runic inscriptions in Orkney, the six certain references to female names were all found within Maeshowe and have been dated linguistically and runologically to the mid-twelfth century, much later than the earlier settlement period (Freund 2020: 182). Thematically, this corpus of runic inscriptions focuses on personal names, treasure and mound-breaking (Freund 2020: 123), in contrast to the memorial format found on the Isle of Man, and for this reason they have not been included in the scope of this research.

[3] The source for data related to the *Orkneyinga saga* is Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978, and the source for data related to *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum* is Broderick 2004. These sources were used to populate the database which forms the basis for the results presented in this study.

on sagas and other literary sources as evidence of the earlier Viking Age. The extant written form of the sagas which are today used by scholars to provide insight into the culture, beliefs, and social structure of the Viking Age represent the endpoint of a complex journey of oral and written transmission over time and place and must be viewed as products of the time at which they were produced (Auður G. Magnúsdóttir 2008: 41; Price 2019: 5–6). With limitations inherent within all source material, this research must by necessity take an interdisciplinary approach, identifying correlations and conflicts in fragmentary and imperfect source material to piece together a picture of the gendered experience of the Viking diaspora.

One of the key challenges in finding evidence for gendered identities is differentiating between 'gender' and 'biological sex'. These categories are frequently conflated, with individuals found in the burial record often ascribed a gender based on the assumptions made from looking at grave-goods, without biological sexing or even, in some cases, without any skeletal material at all (Weglian 2001: 137). It also does not naturally follow that biological sex is synonymous with gender. The second-wave feminists of the 1960s drew a distinction between biological sex, which they argued was a fixed category, and gender, which was socially created, learned, and performative, and hence culturally variable (Gilchrist 1999: 14; Moen 2019: 39). From this perspective, gender was understood as the cultural expression of a biological division between 'male' and 'female' (Evans 2019: 5). More recent scholarship has also questioned the supposed fixed nature of biological sex as two distinct binary categories, arguing that the different methods of determination, through chromosomes, gonadal sex or hormonally, are not absolute (Gilchrist 2009: 6, 10). More broadly, the impact of cultural expectations on the interpretation of biology can be seen in the treatment of intersex people in modern times and the interventions at both a social and physical level to attempt to bring their biological sex within an expected binary framework (Evans 2019: 6–7; Monro *et al.* 2021: 431). Although it is estimated by osteologists that sex can be ascribed with up to ninety-seven percent accuracy to adult skeletons where a skull and pelvis are present, it must be recognised that the identification of biological sex from the archaeological record cannot be determined with absolute certainty (Gilchrist 2009: 6). Whilst it is important to recognise the nuances and complexities surrounding the categories of 'sex' and 'gender', evidence suggests that the Norse themselves understood them as different, both biologically and in terms of expected gendered behaviour (Evans 2019: 12–13). In his study of masculinity in the saga corpus Gareth Lloyd Evans argues that gendered

meanings are ascribed to biological markers in *Njáls saga* when Njáll's physical inability to grow a beard raises questions as to whether he is a man or a woman (Evans 2019: 13). Against this complex backdrop, this research is based on a recognition that biological sex and gender must be differentiated, that one cannot assume that male and female bodies are naturally imbued with behavioural or identity norms, and that the relationship between sex and gender provides useful insights into how these categories were understood and enacted in the past.

The majority of graves in both Orkney and the Isle of Man have not been osteologically sexed but instead have been ascribed a gender (and hence a presumed biological sex) based on the nature of their grave-goods. It is standard practice, though far from unproblematic, to associate male burials with weapons and female burials with jewellery (especially oval brooches) and textile equipment (Jesch 2015: 94). Some of the problems that occur when assumptions are made about biological sex based on grave-goods can be seen when we examine the evidence for Viking-Age burials that include weaponry. Elite masculinity is often seen as synonymous with warrior status and this bias can be seen in the interpretation of weaponry within furnished burials as automatically signifying male biological sex (Moen 2010: 11). However, a burial in the Viking-Age town of Birka on the island of Björkö in modern Sweden, which was inhabited from around 750 for the next two hundred years, has challenged these assumptions. Grave Bj. 58 is one of only two Viking-Age burials on the island that included a full array of weaponry, with the lack of any domestic or agricultural grave-goods, and inclusion of gaming pieces leading to the traditional interpretation of this grave as containing a male warrior (Price *et al*. 2019: 184, 187). However, osteological and genomic analysis has shown that the occupant of this grave was biologically female, which challenges the assumption that weapons in Viking-Age burials automatically indicate that the interred was a biological male, or indeed that one's biological sex necessarily carried the same meanings as it does in our contemporary society (Hedenstierna-Jonson *et al*. 2017: 853).

In Orkney, there are fifty-one individuals who have been identified in furnished burials dated between the mid-ninth and mid-tenth centuries, making this region the area with the highest concentration of Norse graves in Scandinavian Scotland (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 54, 154). Of these burials, previous studies have defined sixteen individuals (31.5%) as female and seventeen (33.5%) as male. Fifteen (29%) of the individuals are unsexed, due to the lack of extant biological or grave-goods evidence and three (6%) of the individuals were children. However, of these fifty-one individuals, only

eleven have been osteologically sexed, with six biologically male and five biologically female (McLeod 2018: 15). It is notable that both the osteologically sexed and grave-goods sexed burials demonstrate a fairly equal sex ratio of males and females. However, that does not mean that biased assumptions have not been made when ascribing a sex to the individuals who have been identified on the basis of grave-goods. Of the osteologically sexed burials in Orkney, there is an absence of any type of weaponry in female graves. However, although weaponry has been found in five of the osteologically sexed male burials in Orkney, it is absent in one male burial (Redmond 2007: xx–xxii). This suggests that, although warrior status was deemed important for most men, this was not universal. It is possible that some (or all) of the eleven burials that were designated male based on the inclusion of weaponry within their grave-goods may have been of biological women and, as such, the female buried with weaponry in Birka is a reminder of this possibility (Hedenstierna-Jonson *et al*. 2017: 853). However, an assessment of the likelihood of these weapons burials containing biological women should be undertaken against the backdrop of the broader evidence base which shows that none of the osteologically sexed female burials in Orkney contained weaponry.

The challenge of identifying biological sex in furnished burials is even more apparent on the Isle of Man. These furnished burials on the Isle of Man have been dated between c. 900 to the 940s, which suggests a limited time period of one generation within the initial settlement phase (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 111; Wilson 2008: 55). Previous studies have shown that of the twenty-seven individuals in furnished burials on the Isle of Man, seventeen (63%) have been designated male, three (11%) female, five (18.5%) as unsexed, and two (7.5%) as children. If one takes this assessment at face value, it appears that the relatively equal sex ratio of burials in Orkney is in contrast to the Isle of Man, where furnished burials appear to be a male-dominated phenomenon. However, of the Manx burials only three have been definitively sexed osteologically: 1) a male interred within what is commonly referred to as the 'Ballateare warrior mound burial', 2) a female who is buried with him and who is assumed to be a sacrificed slave, and 3) a well-furnished woman referred to as the 'Pagan Lady burial' (Freke 2002: 66–69). As with those similarly non-osteologically identified graves in Orkney, the remaining 'male' burials on the Isle of Man have only been identified on the basis of interred weaponry. Indeed, it is notable that in some cases for these Manx burials a grave has been ascribed as containing a male where either no body (as in the case of the Ballachrink and Claghbane burials) or

only partial skeletal remains have been found (as with the Knock y Doonee burial where only a skull remains) (Redmond 2007: xviii–xix).

It is possible that the apparent dominance of male warrior furnished burials on the Isle of Man has parallels with Dawn Hadley's research into gendered burial strategies in England (Hadley 2008). Hadley argues that the context of conquest, and subsequent establishing of status and land ownership in new territories already occupied by indigenous peoples, led to an overt display of masculine warrior identities as a way of constructing legitimising narratives around ancestral memory (Hadley 2008: 273–74). However, as all but one of the 'male' Manx burials have been sexed based solely on grave-goods (as noted above), the possibility that gender assumptions have been made cannot be overlooked. Shane McLeod's analysis of ninth-century burials in England illustrates the dangers of making assumptions when ascribing sex and gender and calls into question assumptions that Viking-Age migration, especially where it included campaigning, was male dominated (McLeod 2014). Harnessing evidence from the burial context from the time of the Great Army and using osteological sexing and isotope analysis to both establish the biological sex and where childhood was spent, McLeod demonstrated that women who grew up in Scandinavia were present with the Great Army (McLeod 2014: 89). An examination of fourteen osteologically sexed early Norse migrants buried in different parts of the Danelaw, including Repton mortuary and churchyard, Health Wood, and Adwick-le-Street, indicate that seven were male, six were female, and for one sex could not be determined (McLeod 2011: 345). By demonstrating female mobility, this research provides a reminder of the dangers implicit in relying solely on grave-goods to ascribe biological sex for the furnished burials on the Isle of Man.

Of course, the presence of women during the campaigning period of the Great Army does not tell us whether or not these women played a part in the fighting element of warfare. When examining the written evidence for Orkney and the Isle of Man, it is important to stress that there is no direct evidence of women taking an active role in physical warfare. The depiction of the raids committed by 'the Danes' in the Irish chronicles do provide some specific references to female warriors being active in the Irish Sea region, although the information provided is scant. *The Annals of Clonmacnoise* refer to a 'Read [Red] Daughter' as one of the captains of the invading Danes in the late tenth century (Murphy 1896: 133–34, Price 2019: 275). *The Annals of Ulster* refer to 'the Maid' fighting in a skirmish in 882 and another woman, again described as 'the Maid,' is referenced in relation to an incident in 1098 in which three ships were plundered by a

group led by 'the Maid' (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: 339, *s.a.* 882.4 and 533, *s.a.* 1098.2).

Orkneyinga saga likewise provides a reference to the involvement of women in warfare, which suggests that at least some women may have been able to operate successfully within an idealised 'masculine' role or that the inhabitants of Orkney and the Isle of Man understood that women could potentially function in a martial role. This is seen when Jarl Páll's aunt Frakökk states:

> *'Skolu þér þau segja mín orð þeim feðgum, at vit Ölvir munum koma til Orkneyja annat sumar at miðju sumri með her á hendr Páli jarli; komi þeir Rögnvaldr þar til móts við oss, ok látum þá deila um stafn við Pál jarl; en ek mun í vetr draga afla at mér af Skotlandi ok Suðreyjum af frændum mínum ok vinum ok mágum'*.
>
> 'You can give them this message from me, that Ölvir and I will lead an army to Orkney against Earl Paul around midsummer next year. Rognvald and his men are to join us there and then we'll fight Earl Paul to the finish. Over winter I'll gather an army in Scotland from my kinsmen, friends and in-laws' (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1887: 106–7; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 119).

Frakökk's political and military power is emphasised in this scene; not only does she appear to have the deciding voice on whether to go to war, she also has the ability to command others and direct military strategy. The context within which Frakökk's martial influence emerges provides an insight into the source of her political and military power which is obtained through her negotiation within, and leverage of, family, as well as wider social networks. Although caution must be applied against imposing modern biases around gendered roles and warfare (Moen 2021: 43-44, 56), I would argue that the saga author intended to stress Frakökk's political and military leadership role, rather than to imply that she took part in the actual fighting. Whereas it is specifically stated in *Orkneyinga saga* that Frakökk's ally Ölvir was in command of the troops, with subsequent descriptions of his role in the fighting, there is no mention of Frakökk taking up arms (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 121). This suggests that the role of warrior was multi-faceted and nuanced rather than homogenous, with status, group membership, personal circumstances, and gender influencing a person's potential to enact martial roles, either physically or strategically.

A number of contrasts between Orkney and the Isle of Man are revealed when examining the evidence for gendered identities, the key one of which is the difference in sex ratio of furnished burials in the two diasporic locations. The relatively equal gender ratio of furnished burials in Orkney, seen in both osteologically sexed burials and those ascribed a sex based on the presence of grave-goods, has been interpreted as representing a fairly equal number of males and females in the initial migratory phase (Norstein 2014: 40). However, I would propose that the explanation goes beyond just the gendered composition of migration. Not every person is afforded a grave and the decision as to whom is afforded a burial is tied to value and power, which is disrupted by certain changes in social, political, and experiential circumstances, including migration. A potential parallel can be seen in the sex-ratio of burials in Scandinavia: in rural areas of Norway, the male/female sex ratio was around 80:20 while in the Viking-Age trading town of Birka, Sweden the balance was far more equal, with 58% of inhumations and 61% of cremations being female (Øye 2011: 368).[4] The fairly equal ratio of male/female burials in Orkney compared to those in the Scandinavian homelands suggests that both men and women (or at least those of high status) played an important role in the display of power within this diasporic context.

In contrast to Orkney, the predominance of male furnished burials on the Isle of Man indicates an initially male-dominated and militaristic Norse migration (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 111; Redmond 2007: 91). If this interpretation is accepted one could argue that, within the Manx context, the display of gendered identities was disrupted, with the political, social, and military context leading to a heightened emphasis of elite masculine status (Hadley 2008: 281). However, the reliance on grave-goods to sex the majority of the Manx furnished burials casts doubt on this interpretation. I would argue that the virtual absence of female furnished burials does not mean that women were not part of the initial migratory stage, nor that the women who were involved were necessarily marked by low-status and powerlessness. It is possible that at least some Norse women and men were already Christian by the time they settled on the Isle of Man and, if these individuals were buried in Christian fashion, they may not be visible in the furnished burial record, a suggestion which will be explored later.

[4] Although this provides a useful point of comparison with the Orkney burials, caution must be applied as the majority of Viking-Age Norwegian burials have not been sexed osteologically.

The intersection of gender and ethnicity

As well as underpinning private experience, gender identity also serves a social and communal role. Identity is related to how an individual or group of people perceive themselves in relation to others and, rather than being 'fixed', identity evolves through interaction with others (Gilchrist 1999: xv; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2014: 237). The nature of the Viking-Age diaspora meant that men and women of Norse origin came into contact with, and to varying extents co-existed with, people from different cultures. The concept of ethnicity is a problematic one, both conceptually and evidentially. Increasingly, scholars have argued against the notion of pure 'Scandinavian' (or any other) ethnicity, with the cultural identities of groups and individuals instead being contextually constructed and exhibiting fluidity and hybridity brought about through contact with other cultures (Downham 2012: 5, 7–8). Any attempt to equate the style of artefacts in the archaeological record with a culture and ethnic group is difficult because it cannot show people's origins, behaviour, or how the artefact was originally embedded in everyday life or ritual practice (Redmond 2007: 60; McLeod 2018: 28). There are two main models for understanding ethnicity; firstly, the primordial viewpoint, where ethnic identity is perceived to be determined by certain unchangeable 'givens' such as blood, language, religion, and culture; and secondly, the instrumental model, which views ethnic identity as changeable, contextual, and related to the creation of group and individual identities that are distinguishable from 'others' (Barrett 2003: 93; Gräslund 2009: 131). The ways in which ethnicity is defined, through biological origin, shared language, and shared material culture, do not necessarily correlate and in diasporic contexts they are perhaps less likely to do so as different cultures come into contact (Barrett 2003: 75).

Although the artefacts recovered in furnished burials in Orkney and the Isle of Man contain a high level of non-Scandinavian material, with grave-goods of insular origin outnumbering items of Scandinavian origin on the Isle of Man, one cannot equate the style of artefacts in the archaeological record with how an individual or group identified ethnically (Redmond 2007: 60; Wilson 2008: 45, 87; McLeod 2018: 28). However, an examination of the presence or absence of oval brooches in Orkney and the Isle of Man does provide a useful platform from which to examine how gender and ethnicity may have intersected. Oval brooches are frequently interpreted as a symbol of ethnic Norse femininity, although this must be carefully qualified (Jesch 2015: 94). The evidence for Viking-Age oval brooches in the funerary record indicates that, although they were widely found in Scandinavia and across the diaspora, there was significant geographical and social

variation. For example, relatively few oval brooches have been found in England, and in Gotland women wore locally distinctive 'animal head brooches' to fasten the braces of their over-dress instead of oval brooches (Carlsson 2004: 1, 8; Jesch 2015: 94–96). It has been suggested that oval brooches signified a certain status, not of the highest elite but of a married woman with a household, so this was a particular marker of identity for women of a certain status and age (Hayeur-Smith 2003: 230). This is supported by studies that indicate that neither the highest status nor lowest status women in Denmark wore oval brooches (Stylegar 2007: 83). It has also been suggested that oval brooches gradually fell out of fashion in the Scandinavian homelands during the tenth century, which can also be used to explain variation in the inclusion of oval brooches in mortuary contexts during the Viking Age (Hayeur-Smith 2003: 229).

The social significance of oval brooches evolved in diasporic contexts, not just signifying social status but also representing a woman's cultural identity, linking her to and placing her in the dominant social group (Hayeur-Smith 2003: 237). Of the sixteen female furnished burials in Orkney, all but four contain oval brooches and the high prevalence of oval brooches in female graves suggests that there was a focus on maintaining cultural identity through gender performance in this diasporic context (Norstein 2014: 49, 52). However, one must remember that the furnished burials only provide a partial picture of those women who are visible in the funerary record because of the inclusion of grave-goods. In the absence of any certain evidence about Norse women (or men) buried in unfurnished graves, an examination of two of the female graves without oval brooches in Orkney may provide insights into how female identity intersected with ethnicity and other factors such as age and status. One example of this is found in the rich female burial in Westness cemetery. This female was buried within a boat-shaped stone-lined grave with grave-goods which included a Celtic-style penannular brooch, a sickle, and a comb, but isotope analysis indicates that this woman grew up in north-east Ireland or Scotland (McLeod 2018: 23). Despite the absence of oval brooches, the richness of this burial suggests that this woman was high-status. We do not know whether this woman was of Scandinavian or Insular cultural origin, but it is possible that growing up in Ireland or Scotland led to a hybrid cultural identity which was reflected in the absence of oval brooches in her burial. It is also possible that this woman was too high-status to be buried with oval brooches; however, this is perhaps unlikely based on the inclusion of oval brooches in the extremely rich Westness cemetery burial of a woman and infant (Hayeur-Smith 2003: 230; Owen 2004: 19). The burial of an old woman in the Scar

boat burial without oval brooches may also indicate that gendered identities evolved with age and that oval brooches signified female identity only at certain points of the lifecycle (Hayeur-Smith 2003: 230).

Until the recent discovery of a pair of oval brooches on the Isle of Man, it had been argued that there were no female Scandinavian-style burials on the island and that, even if women on the Isle of Man did have Norse heritage, they did not retain ethnically Scandinavian dress (Wilson 2008: 87; Steinforth 2015: 214–15; Manx National Heritage 2020). The remains of the woman in the 'Pagan Lady' burial indicate that she was clothed when buried and may have been either veiled or covered by a shroud (Freke 2002: 66), but nothing remains to indicate the presence or otherwise of Scandinavian-style clothing. However, it should be noted that the absence of oval brooches from the 'Pagan Lady' does not necessarily indicate that her clothing was not of Norse fashion, as such an absence could be explained through either her very high-status and/or the date of burial during the mid-tenth century when oval brooches were falling out of fashion (Stylegar 2007: 83).

It has been argued by David M. Wilson (2008: 87) that the lack of female furnished burials, as indicated through the absence of oval brooches, reflects an initially male-dominated Norse migration to the Isle of Man and that these men married women from the Irish Sea region. However, this theory has been called into question by the 2018 find of two oval brooches on the Isle of Man along with a decorated glass bead of Irish provenance (Manx National Heritage 2020). Although the full details and context of this find have yet to be published, the discovery of these oval brooches suggests a more complex picture of the gendered composition of Norse migration and how gender and ethnicity intersected in the construction of identities of the initial settlers on the Isle of Man. There is certainly evidence that hybrid identities evolved for Norse settlers in Ireland, with intermarriage between Vikings and Gaels attested in the Irish chronicles from the ninth century and a distinct hybrid group, the *Gall-goídil* ('foreigner-Gaels'), referred to from the late 850s (Downham 2015: 270). It is likely that individuals from these hybrid Norse-Gaelic groups were part of the initial settlement of the Isle of Man. Whether the women in these groups had Gaelic backgrounds, Norse, or both cannot be determined with any certainty, but the evidence for Old Norse female names on the Manx runic crosses such as Arinbjǫrg, Fríðr, and Ástríðr suggests that at least some of the women had Norse heritage (Wilson 2008: 87; Barnes 2019).

The expression of gender through religion

Religious belief and practice constitute an important aspect in the formation of personal and communal identity (King 2003: 198). An examination of the different ways in which religious belief and practice were displayed in Orkney and the Isle of Man provide an insightful lens through which to understand regional variation in gendered identities in the Norse diaspora and the potential reasons why this variation existed. The ninth to eleventh centuries saw a gradual yet fundamental shift between the polytheistic Norse pagan religion which was decentralised and marked by spatial and temporal variation, to the monotheistic Christian religion which was universal, hierarchical, and centralised (Urbanczyk 2003: 16–21; Sanmark 2004: 149). The ways in which these religions were ritually and personally understood and enacted were fundamentally different: whereas the pagan religion was experienced through a 'metaphysically charged' landscape, Christianity gradually introduced the mediatory role of priests and religious structures through which ritual practice, and individual roles were increasingly controlled (Brink 2013: 36–37).

However, finding evidence for either pagan or Christian religious belief and practice in both the mortuary record and written sources is difficult. The thirteenth-century written sources were produced within both a Christian and politicised context, and therefore do not provide a neutral or contemporary account of how either pagan religion or Christianity was experienced during the conversion period. The Manx runic crosses, some of which fuse Christian and pagan symbolism, cannot be interpreted as an indication of parallel pagan and Christian belief and practice, as the presence of iconography alone does not show actual pagan worship (Pluskowski and Patrick 2003: 44). Although scholars have identified some useful characteristics to determine whether a grave was pagan or Christian, with the latter associated with an east/west orientation, inhumation, and a lack of grave-goods, these categories are not fixed (Sanmark 2004: 265). In both Orkney and the Isle of Man the normal method of Viking-Age burial was inhumation, with no certain examples of cremation on the Isle of Man and only four cremations in Orkney (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 144; Wilson 2008: 25). This pattern, which varies from the higher proportion of cremations compared to inhumations in Scandinavia, indicates a knowledge of, and perhaps respect of, the Christian practice of inhumation which was used by the indigenous Christian inhabitants (Price 2008: 261).

Christianisation is frequently used to explain a decline in grave-goods in burial contexts, but this interpretation masks a far more complex and varying picture (Härke 2014: 44). The inclusion of grave-goods in burials persisted in Francia (the predecessor of

France and Germany) and Greater Moravia (encompassing the territory of modern Central European states) some two hundred years after Christianisation and the move away from furnished burial tended to be a gradual and socially differentiated process (Härke 2014: 44). Indeed, Hadley has pointed out that not only was there 'nothing inherently un-Christian about burial with grave-goods' but also that 'not all pagans use grave-goods' (Hadley 2001: 16). There is no certain evidence that the Church was interested in prohibiting grave-goods for religious reasons, and it is perhaps more likely that the Church focused on having the inalienable property of the deceased donated to the Church rather than being disposed of through burial (Hadley 2001: 17; Härke 2014: 45). It is important to reemphasise that the dead do not decide what grave-goods accompany them (Fischer and Lind 2015: 6). The type of burial does not reflect what an individual believed, nor how they thought and behaved. Instead, the funerary context provides broader insights into cultural behaviours surrounding death (Härke 2014: 42).

In both Orkney and the Isle of Man, the furnished burials and written sources indicate that the roles of individuals with pagan beliefs and practices were displayed and understood along gendered lines. A common theme in Old Norse mythology and sagas is the symbolic connection between women's weaving and the supernatural ability to 'spin fates', as with the *nornir* ('[the] fates', sg. *norn*), and to determine who would be slain in battle as with the *valkyrjur* ('valkyries', sg. *valkyrja*) (Milek 2012: 121; Jesch 2015: 104–5). This theme can be seen in chapter 55 of *Orkneyinga saga* where Helga and Frakökk, the mother and aunt (respectively) of two rival brothers (Jarl Haraldr and his brother Páll), make a cursed cloak for the latter, but their attempt to murder Páll backfires when his brother Haraldr puts it on and dies in 'terrible agony' (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 100). Similarly, this same idea of an enchanted piece of cloth is seen in chapter 11 of the saga, where Jarl Sigurðr consults his Irish mother Eithne about a difficult battle. After Sigurðr states the odds were heavily against him, Eithne presents her son with a magic banner she had woven, with the words:

> *'Tak þu hér við merki því, er ek hefir gjört þér af allri minni kunnáttu, ok væntir ek at sigrsælt mun verða þeim er fyrir er borit, en banvænt þeim er berr'.*
>
> 'Now take this banner. I've made it for you with all the skill I have, and my belief is this: that it will bring victory to the man it's carried before, but death to the one

who carries it' (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1887: 14–15; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 36–37).

Although these examples can be viewed as Christian cautionary tales acting as a warning against the interference of women in political affairs and the denigration of such roles in thirteenth-century Christian ideology, they can also serve as the link between female spinning, sorcery, and supernatural involvement in battle. Furthermore, the martial connection of women's perceived ability to spin fates is also illustrated in *Njals saga* chapter 157, when a man in Caithness witnesses women at a loom after the 1014 Battle of Clontarf, although it is important to stress that the depiction here is of supernatural rather than real-world women. The scene depicts a vision of women as *valkyrjur*, with their spinning linked to their ability to choose the slain, as illustrated in the following verse (verse 6):

Vindum, vindum	We wind and wind
vef darraðar,	the web of spears,
þar er vé vaða	there where the banners
vígra manna!	of bold men go forth;
Látum eigi	we must not let his life be lost –
líf hans farask;	valkyries decide who dies or lives.
eigu valkyrjur	
vals um kosti.	

(Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954: 457; Cook 1997: 305)

In addition to being noted in various sagas, spinning equipment has also been found in five 'female' burials in Orkney, two of which have been osteologically sexed, though there are no parallel examples in the few extant female burials on the Isle of Man. As spinning equipment and textile production served important economic and social function within medieval Scandinavian society, one cannot assume that grave-goods associated with spinning necessarily denote that the woman buried played a specific ritual role in society (Redmond 2007: xx–xxii; Moen 2010: 30, 45; Øye 2011; McLeod 2018: 15). In order to identify the potential role that some women played in pagan religion and ritual, it is therefore important to look at the full burial context and the grave-goods assemblage in its entirety, rather than examining single types of grave-goods in isolation.

The 'Pagan Lady' grave on St Patrick's Isle, a small tidal island on the west coast of the Isle of Man, provides an opportunity to undertake such a contextual examination. This osteologically sexed burial contains a number of grave-goods that can be interpreted as having a symbolic or ritual function. The item that has received the most attention is the iron rod found at the right-hand side of the woman's body and, although this has been interpreted by some academics as a roasting spit, others have pointed to the parallels with other Scandinavian burials where similar rods, with a knob or handle, have been interpreted as a staff used for *seiðr*, a form of magic or sorcery in the Old Norse pre-Christian belief system (Gardela 2014: 36; Price 2019: 118). The symbolic interpretation of such a rod is also supported by the image of a staff-bearing robed figure with long braided hair on the Manx cross fragment MM 123 Kirk Michael VIII, which could be interpreted as a sorceress (Wilson 2008: 84–85; Barnes 2019: 197). This interpretation can be further reinforced when examining the other grave-goods of this burial, including items that could be interpreted as charms such as a pendant with two amber beads and a pierced ammonite (Freke 2002: 66–69; Price 2019: 118). In relation to the grave's inclusion of amber, Lotte Mejsholm (2008: 50–53) notes in her analysis of graves in Fjälkinge, Sweden that amber was most frequently seen in the graves of the very young, the old, or those with disabilities, with amber interpreted as providing magical protection for these individuals. As the 'Pagan Lady' suffered from osteomalacia, which would have led to problems with walking, this potentially explains the inclusion of amber beads in her burial, with her disability perhaps linked to the special role she played in society (Gardela 2014: 33–36).

A particularly interesting part of the 'Pagan Lady' grave-good assemblage was the attachment of pseudomorphs (imprints) of a goose wing to the iron spit. Although one interpretation could be that this represents a kitchen function, with David Freke (2002: 66–69) pointing to how goose wings were, until relatively recently, used to brush out bread ovens in Manx hearths, I would argue that, taken within the broader burial context, this may have served a ritual function that potentially drew on both Norse and Irish mythological motifs. As noted by Timothy Bourns (2012: 3, 61–64), both Claude Lévi-Strauss and Carl Jung stressed the universal tendency for birds to be embedded within human thought systems as symbols of transcendence between the barriers of ground/air, life/death, and/or human/animal, as well as symbols of the acquisition of arcane knowledge. Notably, swans appear in both Irish and Norse mythology, where they are often depicted as shapeshifters, able to transform between human and bird form. Swan

symbolism is seen in the Irish *Tochmarc Étaín*, where Étaín and her lover can both transform into swans in order to escape from her husband (Bergin and Best 1938: 185). The motif is also seen in the eddic poem *Vǫlundarkviða*, where the poem's prose introduction recounts the experience of three brothers who travelled to a lake:

> *Snemma of morgin fundu þeir á vatnsströndu konur þrjár, ok spunnu lín. Þar váru hjá þeim álftarhamir þeira. Þat váru valkyrjur.* [...] *Þau bjuggu sjau vetr. Þá flugu þær at vitja víga ok kómu eigi aftr.*
>
> Early in the morning, they found three women on the lakeshore, and they were spinning linen. Near them were their swan's garments; they were valkyries. [...] They lived together seven winters. Then the women flew off to go to battles and did not come back' (Guðni Jónsson 1949; Larrington 1996: 98).

In this short scene one can see a merging of the themes of supernatural women as spinners of fate, determiners of battle outcomes, and the ability to transcend the boundaries between human and bird forms. The close geographical, cultural, mythological, and political links between the Isle of Man and Ireland evident from the burial record, personal names, and written sources suggest extensive contact between Norse and Gaelic cultures in the Irish Sea region. It is therefore possible that the inclusion of the goose wing imprints in the 'Pagan Lady' burial drew on traditions from both cultures.

The Old Norse saga corpus and mythology points to the Viking-Age *vǫlva* ('sorceress') having a specialised and peripatetic role in which they travelled to different places to provide their ritual services (Price 2019: 72). Neil Price (2019: 40–41) denotes one such example of this practice in *Eiríks saga rauða*, where (in chapter 4) we are told that:

> *Það var háttr Þorbjargar á vetrum, at hon fór at veizlum, ok buðu þeir menn henni mest heim, er forvitni var á at vita forlǫg sín eða árferð* [...].
>
> It was Þorbiǫrg's custom to spend the winter attending feasts, invited home mostly to those who were curious to know their own future or what the coming year

would bring (Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson 1935: 206; Price 2019: 41)

As noted by Price (2019: 43) the depiction of the complex communal ritual surrounding the predictions of the *vǫlva* include her sitting at a high-seat and holding a staff, and a parallel for this can potentially be seen in the Irish source, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* ('The War of the Irish with the Foreigners'), contained in the *Book of Leinster* in which Otta, the wife of a Viking chieftain, perhaps conducted a similar ritual. After describing the plundering undertaken by the chieftain across multiple places in Ireland, chapter 11 of the chronicle tells us that:

Tuc Cluain mic nois da mnai. Is and ra bered a frecartha daltoir in tempoil móir. Otta ainm mnaa Turgeis.

Cluainmicnois (Clonmacnoise) was taken by his wife. It was on the altar of the great church she gave her answers. Otta was the name of the wife of Turgeis (Todd 1867: 226).

As well as potentially depicting Otta undertaking a specialist ritual role, the source implies a certain level of mobility for this woman. There is also evidence that might suggest that the 'Pagan Lady' had a peripatetic role, or at least that she travelled and was associated with mobility. Strontium isotope analysis indicates that the 'Pagan Lady' did not grow up on the Isle of Man and, although it is not clear exactly where she did spend her childhood (Symonds *et al*. 2014: 14–15), nor can we tell what route her life journey took before her burial on the Isle of Man, we do know that she undertook at least one significant geographical movement in her lifetime. The location of the burial at St Patrick's Isle, which was a place of strategic military importance and a travel hub across the Irish Sea region, as well as the presence of beads of exotic provenance in the burial, may also indicate a level of mobility for the 'Pagan Lady', although it is equally possible that these beads and other items in her grave assemblage came into her possession after they arrived in this travel hub (Freke 2002: 3).

Although there are examples of male ritual practice within *Orkneyinga saga* and the broader saga corpus, the male use of sorcery was often problematic and contentious in Old Norse society (Price 2019: 80). The concept of honour was central to the construction

of masculine identity and at the heart of the honour system was the complex notion of *ergi* ('unmanliness' or 'effeminacy') as the polar opposite of the masculine ideal (Raninen 2008: 22). Related to passive homosexuality, cowardice, and the male practice of the magic *seiðr*, the perversity of *ergi* was linked to a man taking a female role, either sexually, socially, or magically (Ström 1973: 5–8, 10). The ambivalent associations between men and sorcery can be seen in *Orkneyinga saga*, where the consultation of a male soothsayer by Jarl Hákon after Orkney had converted to Christianity is used as a narrative ploy to differentiate Hákon from his saintly cousin Magnús, emphasising his transgressive behaviour both through his clinging to the old pagan ways and in his later murder of his kinsman (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 80–82; Howarth 2017: 49).

However, there are also examples of where idealised masculine warrior identities are emphasised through a link with *seiðr*, specifically through the god Óðinn. Óðinn represents a contradictory figure: he is not only the father of many of the gods, their patriarch, the god of warriors, but he is also a master of *seiðr* (Solli 2008: 194–95). Both written and archaeological sources suggest that leaders had a particular identification with Óðinn (Schjødt 2011: 275; Price and Mortimer 2014: 522). The ability to display more than military prowess and ritually cross boundaries for the good of the community, meant that association with Óðinn could serve an important role in emphasising and maintaining a chieftain or king's leadership role (Price and Mortimer 2014: 532–33). Within this framework, Óðinn and, by association, chieftains and kings were able to transcend normative boundaries. This context provides a useful backdrop to understand how masculine identities were expressed through the medium of ritual associations within *Orkneyinga saga*, where Torf Einarr, the founding jarl of Orkney, is depicted as having many Óðinnic qualities: he is blind in one eye, he performs the blood-eagle sacrifice to Óðinn, and his name appears to associate him with Óðinn's *einherjar* warriors through the shared etymological root in their names (Steinsland 2011: 50; Beuermann 2011: 135). However, a more negative association of a character with Óðinn can be seen in the example of Sveinn Brióstreip in *Orkneyinga saga*. As one of Jarl Páll's retinue, Sveinn is depicted in the saga as communing with the ancestors when he 'spent the night there out in the open, as he often did' (Hermann Pálson and Edwards 1978: 125). This example can be linked to the Óðinnic practice of *útiseta* ('sitting-out'), which has been connected to communication with the dead to obtain spiritual power (Price 2019: 35). It is interesting to note that, to the thirteenth-century saga writer, there was a perception that there was some continuation of pagan practice even after the conversion to Christianity. However,

this could also be a narrative ploy to portray this character in a negative light through his association with Óðinn (Howarth 2017: 50). It is also possible, considering the violent and un-mourned death of Sveinn Brióstreip (Hermann Pálson and Edwards 1978: 126–27), that the saga writer sought to emphasise the point that identification with the transgressive Óðinn may be appropriate for chieftains, but not their followers.

The connection between masculine identities and the ritual display of warrior identity may also be seen in the burial context on the Isle of Man although, as mentioned in reference to the female graves, it is difficult to distinguish between the religious and profane role of individual grave-goods. The inclusion of cauldrons in two high-status male graves at Balladoole and Knock y Doonee may provide an indication of ritual associations with masculine identities, though one must note that these burials have been sexed on the basis of grave-goods (Redmond 2007: xviii). Although the inclusion of cauldrons in burials can be interpreted in terms of their function as a piece of cooking equipment (Jesch 1991: 27), cauldrons also had symbolic connotations in both Norse and Celtic mythology, particularly in relation to their connection to death and resurrection (Green 1998: 63). Julie Lund (2008: 62) has pointed to the fairly frequent deposition of cauldrons in male Viking-Age graves in Scandinavia, and she has argued that the inclusion of a cauldron that was around four hundred years old when it was placed in a grave in Denmark suggests that this item must have served a symbolic function rather than simply serving as a cooking vessel because of its age. Similarly, *Gylfaginning* in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* includes a question posed to Óðinn as to how the extremely large number of fallen warriors dwelling in Valhǫll are fed, to which Óðinn replies:

> *'En aldri er svá mikill mannfjǫlði í Valhǫll at eigi má þeim endask flesk galtar þess er Sæhrímnir heitir. Hann er soðinn hvern dag ok heill at aptni.* [...] *Andrímnir heitir steikarinn en Eldhrímnir ketillinn'*.
>
> 'But there will never be such a large number in Val-hall that the meat of the boar called Sæhrimnir will not be sufficient for them. It is cooked each day and whole again by evening. [...] The cook is called Andhrimnir and the pot Eldhrimnir' (Faulkes 2005: 32; Faulkes 1987: 32)

The Old Norse name Eldhrímnir can be translated as 'fire-sooty' or 'cauldron' and this passage indicates the link in Old Norse mythology between cauldrons and regeneration as

well as the mythical martial association with the warriors of Óðinn (Lindow 2001: 107). Given the cultural contact between the Norse, Irish, and Welsh in the Irish Sea region it is interesting to note that the link between the regeneration of masculine warriors and cauldrons is also seen in the Welsh *Mabinogi* cycle, when Bran the Blessed offers a magical cauldron to the Irish king Matholwch, with the words:

> *'Mi a rodaf yt peir; a chynnedyf y peir yw, y gwr a lader hediw yt, y uwrw yn y peir, ac erbyn auory y uot yn gystal ac y bu oreu, eithyr nab yd llyueryd ganthaw'.*
>
> 'I will give you this cauldron, and the property of this cauldron is that if you throw into it one of your men who is killed today, then by tomorrow he will be as good as ever except he will not be able to speak' (Hughes 2017: 4; Davies 2007: 25).

It is therefore possible that the inclusion of cauldrons in these two Manx burial contexts indicates a knowledge of Norse and/or Celtic mythological themes in which the cauldron expresses and reinforces masculine warrior identity and the ability to ritually transcend death. There have been no finds of cauldrons in the burial context in Orkney, which marks an interesting contrast between the two island contexts, possibly linked to the Isle of Man having closer geographic and cultural links to Celtic Wales.

Gendered roles in the Conversion to Christianity

The conversion from paganism to Christianity was a complex process that involved both the 'top-down' support of the ruling elite and the 'bottom-up' adoption of Christianity at an individual, family, and/or local community level (Garipzanov 2014: 1). Evidence from Viking-Age Scandinavia, including burials, runic inscriptions, and written sources, as well as comparative studies with other parts of the world, suggest that women played an important role in the conversion process and were often quicker to adopt Christianity than men (Gräslund 2003: 492; Sanmark 2004: 87). For example, excavations at Birka have found that there was a higher proportion of Christian graves sexed as female, with eight out of nine pendant crosses found in female graves. Although this evidence cannot tell us exactly what role women took in the conversion process, it does at least suggest that religion was an important part of female identity and roles (Sanmark 2004: 87–88).

The depiction of conversion in *Orkneyinga saga* is at odds with this, however, outlining a process that was driven by men. This can be seen in the depiction of the conversion moment in *Orkneyinga saga*, where the Norwegian king Óláfr Tryggvason forces Jarl Sigurðr to convert by threat of military aggression and then enforces the continuation of this new faith by holding the Orkney jarl's son hostage (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 37). However, this depiction is simplistic, reductive, and has a strong political agenda in which the forced conversion narrative seeks to express the ideological supremacy of Christian Norway over the pagan earldom of Orkney (Beuermann 2011: 143). This narrative cannot be de-coupled from the thirteenth-century context within which it was produced, a time when the Orkney earldom was transitioning from a semi-autonomous political entity to one increasingly under the central dominion of Norway (Thomson 2008: 113). It is highly probable that the Christianisation process in Orkney started before the official conversion date of 995, with evidence of accompanied burials lasting around one hundred years after the original settlement but ceasing around the mid-tenth century (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 154; Morris 2003: 305, 309). On the Isle of Man, there is no evidence for a violent or enforced conversion, and the evidence suggests that furnished burials persisted for some settlers for only a short period after the conversion of the Norse on the Isle of Man, between c. 900 and the 940s, with the raising of runic crosses from the 930s (Wilson 2009: 39; Beuermann 2014: 90; Steinforth 2015: 214–15).

When the Norse settlers arrived in Orkney and the Isle of Man, they encountered complex and thriving indigenous Christian communities (Thomson 2008: 17, 23; Wilson 2014: 118). It is also likely that at least some of the initial settlers on the Isle of Man were already Christian, having arrived on the island via other Christian polities in the insular zone (Wilson 2014: 118). The move from paganism to Christianity was not marked by a sudden event but was instead a gradual process, and during this transitional period it is likely that the burial context would have merged elements of pagan and Christian burial tradition (Brink 2008: 621; Wilson 2008: 50). It is possible that this syncretism was deliberate, reflecting a transitory period and the ability to convey multiple symbolic messages (Hadley 2001: 20). It has been argued by numerous scholars that furnished burials in existing Christian cemeteries indicate a transitional phase between paganism and Christianity, in which the Norse communities were showing a degree of respect for indigenous Christian burial practices and a reuse of what they recognised to be 'sacred space', whilst retaining aspects of their own traditional burial tradition (Brink 2001: 107;

Wilson 2014: 119; McLeod 2016: 246). Both women and men were buried in pre-existing Christian cemeteries in Orkney and the Isle of Man, but what does this tell us about gendered roles during this transitionary period? The female grave (which was gendered based on the presence of oval brooches) in the Pictish cemetery at the Broch of Gurness containing a Þórr hammer amulet, and dated to the late-ninth or early-tenth century, could possibly represent a pagan reaction against the advance of Christianity and the important role of women in perpetuating traditional religious custom (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 149–50; Staecker 2003: 468; Andrén 2005: 125). However, it has been argued by Jörn Staecker (2003: 463, 472, 479) that the role of some women in pagan religion and cult had a continued function in controlling and mediating the transition from paganism to Christianity, in which they could help prepare the community for religious change. The finds of Þórr hammer amulets in Scandinavian burials are concentrated within the ninth and tenth centuries rather than the earlier Viking-Age period, with nineteen of the twenty-eight Þórr's hammers being found in female graves (Staecker 2003: 468). In this context, it is possible that the symbolism of the Þórr's hammer in the Broch of Gurness grave can be interpreted as the female burial meeting a communal need for reassurance in a period of significant religious transformation, with the burial of this woman helping her community to navigate and negotiate the transition to Christianity.

Furnished burials within pre-existing Christian cemeteries are also attested on the Isle of Man. The Balladoole burial, which has been gendered as male on the basis of grave-goods, took place within a pre-existing Christian cemetery and there is indication that the Christian burials were respected, and that the Norse accepted this as a sacred site (Wilson 2008: 46). The St Patrick's Isle furnished burials likewise took place in the pre-existing Christian cemetery which was in use from the sixth century (Wilson 2008: 47). There are also seven graves which may potentially be classed as furnished from the tenth-century use of this cemetery, but only one has been sexed osteologically, the 'Pagan Lady' with the remaining six not possible to sex (Freke 2002: 66). These seven tenth-century graves are generally found in an east-west orientation (with the heads at the west), with the 'Pagan Lady' deviating furthest from an east-west alignment with her head in a north-west orientation (Freke 2002: 67–70). Furthermore, what distinguishes this group of graves from the other burials at the site (other than the burial orientation) is the inclusion of grave-goods (Freke 2002: 69–70; Graham-Campbell *et al.* 2002: 96). As already discussed, this cannot tell us what the religion of the deceased was, as the inclusion of

grave-goods does not necessarily denote pagan belief (Hadley 2001: 16). However, based on the syncretic evidence of these burials, which have been dated to a narrow timeframe between the 930s and 950s, it is perhaps likely that this cohort of graves represented burials in the period of transition from paganism to Christianity, with either the buried or their families partially or fully converted to Christianity and potentially 'hedging their religious bets' (Freke 2002: 70). It has already been suggested that the grave-good assemblage of the 'Pagan Lady' potentially signifies that she may have been a sorceress; however, her burial within a pre-existing Christian cemetery, which included other furnished burials with a general east-west alignment, may provide insights into how she was perceived during the conversion period. Helena Hamerow's study of mid-seventh century Anglo-Saxon burials shows that during the conversion and early Christian period there was an increase in well-furnished female graves, a time period that coincided with a decline in lavish warrior-male burials (Hamerow 2016: 425–26). Hamerow (2016: 423) argues that this may be explained by women's position as 'religious specialists' who, during the conversion period, played a role in providing spiritual legitimacy for high-status families and their newly acquired land in a period of significant change. It is possible that the specialist supernatural role played by the 'Pagan Lady' in life meant that her burial provided an opportunity for her community to harness her religious role to demonstrate Norse power in a contested diasporic context and to help mediate the changes introduced through the Christianisation process.

The conversion on the Isle of Man is likely to have taken place within one of two generations of initial settlement, with no furnished burials after the 940s (Wilson 2008: 55). This coincided with the period in which runic crosses started to be raised and it is likely that these above-ground markers provided an alternative channel through which status and power could be expressed (Hadley 2001: 17). The Manx runic crosses are different in style to those found in nearby territories in the northern and western isles and there are also a higher number (Barnes 2019: 32–33), which indicates the unique position of this diasporic island and the cultural mix expressed in the fusion of the Celtic cross tradition and raising of stone burial markers with the Scandinavian tradition of raising runic memorials (Barnes 2019: 33). It is likely that, in the conversion period, the Church would probably have welcomed this method of Christian memorial, and it is notable that most of the stones have been found in church contexts (Barnes 2019: 34).

Of the forty-four extant Manx runic crosses, there is a fairly equal gender ratio of those commemorated, with eleven raised to a man and nine raised to a woman. There is

no discernible difference in the size of stones raised to men and women which indicates that there was no differentiation in the status and value ascribed along gendered lines and indeed the largest and most elaborate runic cross fragment (MM132 Kirk Michael Va) was raised by a son for his mother:

> *NN sonr Þórólfs hins rauða reisti kross þenna eptir Fríðu móður sína.*
>
> NN son of Þórólfr the red put up this cross in memory of his mother Fríða. (Barnes 2019: 190)[5]

A different picture appears when one looks at the gendered evidence for who commissioned the runic crosses: there are twenty-two stones that have been commissioned by a man but none by a woman, although it is of course possible that the runic crosses where no commissioning name can be discerned were raised by women. This is in contrast to Scandinavia where, although there was regional variation, on average 12.5% of runic inscriptions were sponsored by women, and it has been proposed that this indicates that the raising of runestones played a role in the assertation of inheritance rights (Sawyer 1991:103; Sawyer 2001: 4; Jesch 2015: 113). The apparent absence of women raising crosses on the Isle of Man indicates that for women at least, the runic crosses were not related to inheritance, and I would argue that the high relative number of women commemorated on the crosses indicates the role that they played in the conversion process and the importance of Christianity in the expression of their identity. The inclusion of cross decorations on runic memorial stones can be interpreted as an explicit assertation of Christian faith and that the raising of these stones served a specific religious and social need during the transitionary period between paganism and Christianity (Sawyer 1991: 102; Zilmer 2011: 87–88).

The gradual process of conversion can be seen in the syncretic iconography on the Manx crosses (Wilson 2008: 81–82) and, as a result of this, one can potentially gain insights into gendered roles as expressed through the medium of ritual and religion. The inclusion of animal images or hunting scenes is only seen in runic crosses that were raised to women on the Isle of Man: a hunting scene is depicted on MM131 Andreas IIa (by a

[5] In the transcription of this runic inscription Barnes presented *NN* rather than the initial personal name, which the rune cross presents as iualfir/jòalfr, due to grammatical uncertainty (Barnes 2019: 190–191).

husband for a wife with a Norse name), a horse and rider in MM132 Kirk Michael Va (by a son for a mother with a Norse name) and animals are also depicted in MM130 Kirk Michael III and MM118 Bride (Barnes 2019: 96–97, 146–147, 174–176, 185–186). Previous interpretations of the animal iconography on crosses raised to women have tended to be androcentric, with Hadley (2008: 280) arguing that the iconography is 'resolutely masculine' and David Wilson (2008: 84) stating that the spear-carrying warrior depicted on the Andreas stone cannot represent the commemorated woman and instead perhaps indicates her husband's wishes to depict himself in a 'semi-heroic' role. However, this masculine bias removes women and the role they may have played in the conversion process from the framework of analysis.

Lotte Hedeager (2010: 116) has argued that the use of Nordic animal art was a representation of the pagan worldview in which humans and animals co-existed in a cosmology that was underpinned by fluidity and the metamorphosis between different states (life/death, animal/human). Interestingly, the fusion of Christian and pagan mythological motifs was also a common theme in Irish literary tradition, with older myths reframed to enable a Christian allegorical reading (Rekdal 2014: 110, 113). Jan Erik Rekdal has argued that the syncretic iconography on the Manx crosses draws on this pre-existing Irish tradition and perhaps within this context the depiction of animals on crosses represents the tradition in both Norse and Irish mythology of displaying ritualised barrier transcendence through animal iconography (Rekdal 2014: 111, 115). The display of this iconography on female memorial crosses may therefore demonstrate both how Norse/Gaelic cultural contact was represented through female identities and the role played by women in negotiating the transition from a pagan to a Christian worldview, through which their ritualised role in barrier transcendence was gradually transformed within a Christian context. The display of this animalistic art form in Scandinavia came to an end around 1100 (Glørstad 2014: 158–59) and Hedeager (2010: 117) has argued that this form of iconography could not persist as the Christian worldview became firmly embedded. In the Manx context, the raising of memorial stones ended around 1000, the time at which *keeills* ('Christian chapels') and churches started to be built. These religious buildings would have become the focus of religious practice, removing the cultural need for hybrid conversion symbolism and ways of displaying Christian identity in the landscape provided by the runic crosses (Wilson 2014: 136–37).

The iconography on the Manx runic crosses raised to men point to the different ways in which the conversion was represented and mediated through masculine identity,

with an emphasis on the martial aspects of masculinity. This iconography can be seen on numerous Manx crosses raised to men, which can include links to both Óðinn and Christ. MM128 Andreas III, for example, was raised by a male with an Old Norse personal name 'Þorvaldr' to an unknown person and features what is likely to be pagan and Christian figures on opposites sides of the monument. The iconography on one side of the cross includes a human figure with a spear and raven on his shoulder while a wolf tears at his leg, which has been interpreted as Óðinn being attacked by Fenrir at Ragnarǫk, while on the other face of the cross a human, possibly Christ, is depicted as holding a book and cross whilst trampling a serpent (Wilson 2014: 133; Barnes 2019: 100–3). There have been various interpretations of this syncretic imagery, ranging from an argument that it represents the triumph of Christ over paganism (Wilson 2014: 133) to the suggestion that the equal prominence given to both Óðinn and the Christian figure may represent more of a transitional expression of the themes of resurrection and rebirth set within a martial context (Margeson 1983: 105). A further example of syncretic imagery is seen on MM129 Kirk Michael VI. This memorial stone has an incomplete inscription that mentions the name Grímr *inn svarti* (Grímr 'the black') and includes the Christ figure, the only example of a depiction of the crucifixion on a Manx memorial stone (Wilson 2014: 125; Barnes 2019: 192–94). It is interesting that the crucifixion motif in this Manx context differs from that seen in Irish sculptured crosses, where the figure is usually accompanied by a sponge-bearer and spear-carrier (Wilson 2014: 126). It is possible that, in the conversion period, Christ was understood as a transitional figure in the Manx context, potentially even drawing on the similarities between Christ and Óðinn, with the former dying on the cross before being resurrected and the latter depicted in the eddic poem *Hávamál* (stanzas 138–42) as symbolically dying on the world-tree Yggdrasill to gain prescient knowledge (Larrington 1996: 31; Eson 2010: 85, 95–96).

Warfare continued to play an important economic and political role in Norse society, as well as in the formulation of idealised masculine identities during and after the conversion to Christianity, with the military gift-giving economy underpinning the establishment of power and reciprocal networks. Within the pagan framework, warfare was also symbolically significant, with Óðinn overseeing warfare and warriors going to Valhǫll, whereas Christianity brought with it a different mythology of death and this needed to be reconciled with the pagan notion of idealised masculine warrior identity (Steinsland 2011: 7). The warrior saint was a way to mediate this change in worldview, offering a transitional character through which idealised masculine identities could be

conceptualised and power legitimised (Steinsland 2011: 11). The symbolism of the pagan royal burial mound was adapted and appropriated into the royal martyr's grave, with the saint providing an active symbol to reconcile the pagan notions of warrior leader with the violently martyred warrior Christian (Steinsland 2011: 10–11). St Magnús, who was a Jarl of Orkney until his death in 1117, clearly represented this transitional model of idealised masculine identity, in which the martial qualities of a warrior jarl were fused with a more Christian ideal. *Orkneyinga saga* chapter 45 tells us that Magnús was *sigrsæll í orrostum* ('successful in war') and that:

> *Hann var stórgjöfull við höfðíngja ok ríka men, en jafnan veitti hann þó mesta huggan fátækum mönnum. Í öllum hlutum helt hann ríkuliga guðs boðorð; þjáði sinn líkama í mörgum hlutum, þeim er í hans lofligu lífi* [...].
>
> While he was the most generous of men to chieftains and others in powerful positions, he always gave the greatest comfort to the poor. He lived according to God's commandments, mortifying the flesh through an exemplary life [...] (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1887: 75; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1978: 89–90).

One must, however, consider the hagiographical nature of how Magnús is depicted, which arguably overstates the Christian ethics that would have filtered into ideal masculine models by the early twelfth century (Thomson 2008: 97). The martial aspect of saints is also a theme that appears in *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum*, which depicts women making pleas to St Machutus when the chieftain Gilcolm wants to break the sanctity of his church. In this example we again see the perpetuation of warrior identity within a Christian context in the violence inflicted by this warrior saint:

> *Ego sum seruus Christi machutus cuius tu ecclesiam contaminari conaris, sed non perficies Quo dicto baculum quem manu tenuerat in sublime erexit & punctum eius per cor illius transfixit.*
>
> 'I am Machutus the servant of Christ whose church you are trying to violate, but you will not succeed'. So saying he raised up the staff which he held in his hand and drove its point through his (Gilcolm's) heart. (Broderick 2004: fol. 38v).

When one views the evidence for the display of gendered identities during the conversion process, there are some common themes that occur in Orkney and the Isle of Man, but also some significant differences. In both places, the ritualised link between martial masculine identity formation and pagan religion was also seen in the Christian context. This was likely to have served an important mediatory role in the conversion period, as notions of idealised warrior masculinity were re-formed within a new ideological framework. The burial record in both Orkney and the Isle of Man, and the Manx runic crosses, suggests that the supernatural role that some women played in pagan religion continued during the conversion process and, in this context, female identities may have provided a ritual channel through which the transition between paganism and Christianity could be understood, displayed, and negotiated. It should be stressed, however, that the evidence for this female mediatory supernatural role is stronger on the Isle of Man, largely because of the presence of memorial contexts in this context which are absent in Orkney. The comparatively high proportion of memorials raised to women on the Manx runic crosses and the concentration of animal art on these crosses suggests both the important role women played in the conversion process and that the Old Norse association of women with the ability to transcend barriers such as life/death and human/animal continued to play an important role in mediating the transition to Christianity. The presence of both Norse and Celtic mythological and artistic traditions that can be seen in the burial context, and runic crosses on the Isle of Man, represents the key difference from Orkney. This is indicative of the high level of cultural hybridity on the Isle of Man, with the evidence suggesting that this was incorporated along gendered lines into the display of identities.

Conclusions

Orkney and the Isle of Man played a key role in Norse diasporic migration and settlement during the Viking Age. Their respective geographic positions made them important strategic hubs in the sea routes that connected Scandinavia with the British Isles and Irish Sea region and 'traffic junctions' through which people, goods, and ideas were transmitted. Despite these similarities, the evidence suggests that the gendered migration process and the subsequent impact on and disruption to gendered roles was different in Orkney and the Isle of Man. Perhaps the biggest difference between these two regions is the contrast between the small number of women in the furnished burial record on the Isle of Man, in comparison to the fairly equal number of male and female burials in Orkney. This stark

variation has traditionally been explained as being a result of the composition of the migratory groups, with migration to Orkney assumed to be a family affair, in contrast to a masculine and military-led settlement of the Isle of Man. Although it has been argued that there were probably an equal number of male and female migrants to Orkney (Redmond 2007: 91), it must be remembered that decisions as to whom should be afforded a furnished burial were intrinsically tied to the demonstration of identity and power. As the Norse came into contact with the indigenous population of Orkney, it is significant that their cultural dominance was expressed through both female and male furnished burials. This suggests that, in this context, it was important to emphasise status, power, and cultural continuity through the burials of both elite women and men.

In this paper I have argued that the apparent difference between the sex-ratio of burials in Orkney and the Isle of Man is more likely explained by the earlier settlement of Orkney, the different cultural orbits within which the two places operated, and the religion of Norse settlers when they arrived in their new home. It is probable that many of the settlers who arrived on the Isle of Man came via other areas in the Norse diasporic network, rather than direct from Scandinavia. The mix of Norse and Gaelic names for both men and women, as evidenced in *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum* and on the memorial crosses on the Isle of Man, suggests a high level of cultural hybridity. Hence, the seemingly contradictory situation where there were relatively few female furnished burials but a high proportion of women commemorated on the crosses can probably be explained by some of the female settlers already being Christian when they arrived on the Isle of Man.

Although there was political and cultural contact between the two regions, the Isle of Man was more firmly within the cultural orbit of the Irish Sea region, whereas Orkney's geographic and political position led to more contact with Gaelic Scotland and Norway (Crawford 2014: 78). These different spheres of cultural influence had an impact on how gendered identities were constructed, evolved, and displayed in the two diasporic contexts. In Orkney, the high number of female burials that contained oval brooches suggests that gendered identities were an important channel through which to emphasise Norse identity and power. In contrast, the tradition of raising memorial runic crosses on the Isle of Man, and the gendered iconography that was present on them, suggests that these monuments provided a way of expressing both gendered and cross-cultural identities through a religious lens.

The term *diaspora* implies a level of cultural continuity and contact between the original homeland and new settlement, but it also involves the re-invention of culture in situationally specific ways and this was clearly seen in Orkney and the Isle of Man (Abrams 2012: 19). The evidence from the burial record, written sources, and monumental crosses shows that in Orkney and the Isle of Man the ways in which Norse culture was harnessed, reinforced, and repurposed in diasporic settings was determined by a complex interplay of different factors including the time period of settlement, the cultural and political orbit of the diasporic setting, and the relationship with the indigenous population. What both regions had in common was that gender formed an important channel through which new cultural experience and identities could be formed and negotiated.

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From Viking to Sainthood: The Influence of Genre on Literary Gender Identity in Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga* [1]

Rosemary Kelly

Óláf's saga helga is a one of a number of sagas located within Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, a wider collection of Old Norse *konungasögur* ('Kings' sagas'). It is an account of Swedish and Norwegian kings, beginning with a mythological pre-history of the Ynglings, descending from Freyr and Óðinn (Bagge 1991: 2). The subsequent sagas focus mainly on individual rulers. *Óláf's saga helga* is devoted to Olaf II of Norway, otherwise known as Óláfr Haraldsson, who ruled Norway from 1015–1028 (Bagge 2010: 281). Óláfr is one of a number of kings discussed in *Heimskringla* who have been venerated as saints. *Óláf's saga helga* takes up roughly one third of *Heimskringla*, with Anne Heinrichs arguing that Snorri places a notable emphasis of importance on Óláfr Haraldsson (Heinrichs 1993: 447). Other texts discussing Óláfr Haraldsson, such as *Fágrskinna*, have chosen to omit any reference to alleged miracles, while texts such as various *fornaldarsögur* ('Legendary sagas') prioritise his martyrdom and performance of saintly miracles in both life and death. Snorri's *Óláf's saga helga* lies in the middle, attempting to balance both kings' saga and hagiographical elements across the text, resulting in varying and identifiable stages within Óláfr's life. This paper will centre on *Óláf's saga helga* and the figure of Óláfr Haraldsson, examining how this individual transgresses masculine and genre boundaries throughout the text, despite the prevailing perception of masculinity in Old Norse-Icelandic literature as the dominant and certainly militant type. These transgressions warrant further investigations of the connections between genre and gender in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, and in particular, within hagiography.

There has been a critical focus on the subject of genre in scholarship regarding *Óláf's saga helga* due to Snorri's inclusion of both elements of hagiography and the

[1] This article, although authored by the Editor-in-Chief of the journal, was subjected to the same peer review process as per the journal's standard practice. To ensure impartiality and to avoid any conflict of interest, the Editor-in-Chief recused themselves from the editorial handling of this manuscript.

miraculous, alongside episodes of raiding and saga politics. Heinrichs argues that *Óláf's saga helga*:

> developed form the confluence of two lines of historical writing in medieval Norway and Iceland, the religious-historical tradition of saints' lives and the secular-historical tradition of royal biography (Heinrichs 1993: 447).

The resulting conflation of numerous and, at points, clashing genres creates a complicated and fluctuating identity in Snorri's Óláfr Haraldsson; contrarily we are introduced to a man of alleged arrogance and strength, according to his own stepfather in the saga, but also, to a man of great devotion to Christianity. Later in the saga, we are presented with numerous miracles that point to Óláfr's sanctity, such as his uncorrupted corpse after death and the beautiful smell that wafts from his coffin when it is opened (Phelpstead 2007: 156). These miracles associated with Óláfr are also reported in later portions of *Heimskringla*, complicating the argument that Snorri's work is 'essentially secular' as asserted by Diana Whaley (1991: 121, 130). Snorri's mix of literary influences and combined approach of utilising both history and hagiography are themselves transgressions. These transgressions of genre construct Snorri's Óláfr Haraldsson, creating, in turn, fluctuating identities or forms of masculinity within the Viking-King turned martyred saint. There are three visible stages to Óláfr's life as portrayed within *Óláfs saga helga*. Each stage represents Snorri's Óláfr as neither rigidly sanctimonious, nor as strictly a secular or pagan warrior. All three stages permeate one another as he transitions from one social status to another, both in life and death, and we must consider how these transgressions of genre boundaries construct a transgressive masculinity, and thus subvert the reader's expectations in regard to traditional definitions of masculinity. That traditional image of a violence lusting man, while indeed relevant in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, has been perceived, particularly by the wider general public, as a rigid and unchanging boundary of both manhood and Viking-Age cultures; despite the recent advances in relative scholarship, such an image persists, in part due to the overwhelming influence and combined ease of access of pop-cultural adaptations and mainstream media (Sigurdson 2014: 250).

Ásdís Egilsdóttir claims that despite recent scholarship regarding variability in masculinity, it is still predominantly associated with strength and power, creating what R. W. Connell describes as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2020: 113). Hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that is linked to

power, as it subordinates or marginalises other forms of masculinities, as well as femininities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Carl Phelpstead writes in his article 'Masculinity and sexuality in sagas of Scandinavian royal saints' that 'the models of behaviour in terms of which Scandinavian royal saints are presented in the Icelandic sagas are gendered: there [*sic*] are ways of being masculine' (Phelpstead 2005: 421). He further argues that 'by revealing a conflict or tension between alternative masculinities the saga narratives illuminate a period of transition between different ways of "being a man"' (Phelpstead 2005: 421). The potential for multiple forms of masculinity existing within and beyond the confines of generic boundaries has been discussed more frequently in more recent contemporary scholarship. Ármann Jakobsson (2007: 195) has successfully pinpointed in his article 'Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls Saga*' how there exists a multiplicity of voices within saga texts; the voice of the present, the voice of the represented past, and the voice of the saga itself. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has stated that different genres offer different voices and perceptions of gender; specifically noting that medieval sagas contain 'vastly different representations of gender' (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2017: 227). She goes on to state that:

> 'there is no such thing as "Old Norse masculinity" or "femininity" in the singular; instead, scholars have uncovered an array of attitudes towards sex and gender, with starkly different images existing side by side in the sources' (Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2017: 227).

Upon the conversion to Christianity in the late tenth century and early eleventh century in both Iceland and Norway, the Church needed to establish itself as a masculine authority 'without being able to adhere to many of the outward signs of a hegemonic masculinity such as carrying weapons or being sexually active' (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2020: 113). Alongside the growing interest in masculinity and gender scholarship, has been the growing appeal of hagiography. Jonas Wellendorf states in 'The Attraction of the Earliest Old Norse Vernacular Hagiography' that saints' lives were 'possibly the most popular narrative written genre in the Middle Ages' (Wellendorf 2010: 242). He points to the larger surviving supply of hagiography in manuscripts as opposed to the surviving sagas of the Icelanders (Wellendorf 2010: 243). It is further important to recognise that the earliest surviving vernacular texts were produced at a point when Christianity was 'firmly rooted in the North' (Wellendorf 2010: 244). The potential, therefore, for a Church-led clerical masculinity to have prevailing importance in Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture, alongside other forms of masculinity, is not something that should be easily disregarded,

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A majority of surviving vernacular texts on Óláfr Haraldsson do not give the reader an insight into his childhood, though Snorri elects to in *Óláfs saga helga*. Boyhood, as described by Oren Falk, 'is but a passing phase, a burden that they have to bear for a while' (Falk 2020: 27). *Óláfs saga helg*a begins by telling the reader that Óláfr was raised by his stepfather, King Sigurðr and his mother Ásta, though he was actually the son of Haraldr *inn grenski* ('the Greenlander') (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 3). As a young child, Óláfr frequently causes trouble for Sigurðr. When asked to prepare a mount, Óláfr provides a goat rather than a horse. Sigurðr says to Óláfr '[...] *er þat auðsætt, at vit munum ekki vera skaplíkir, muntu vera miklu skapstærri en ek em*' ('[...] you are going to turn out much more arrogant than I am') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 1; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 3). Snorri also states that Óláfr grew up to be physically strong and handsome, with *eygðr forkunnar vel, fagreygr ok snareygr, svá at ótti var at sjá í augu honum, ef hann var reið* ('keen eyes, so that it was fearful to look into his eyes if he was angry') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 2; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 3). Falk writes that 'sagas imagined boyhood not simply as a static stretch, [...] but as a training period in which his potential had to be cultivated and augmented' (Falk 2020: 33). Óláfr's rambunctious childhood presents him as pre-destined for the traditionally hyper-masculine warrior, preparing the reader for a specified image of masculinity, which Snorri later attempts to subvert through the use of elements from hagiographical texts. When Óláfr is twelve years old he boards a warship for the first time, beginning his life as a warrior and the social role of a *víkingr* or 'viking' (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 3). As he grows older and more successful as a raider, he takes over the raiding force, earning the title *kongunr* ('king') (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 3–4). This can be marked as the first stage of Óláfr Haraldsson's life and it is one that aligns parallel to the masculine figures of many *Íslendingasögur* ('Sagas of Icelanders'). Like Ǫnundr and Grettir of *Grettis Saga*, or Gunnar and Njáll of *Njáls Saga*, Óláfr is raised as a farmer as well as a warrior, going on to participate in Viking raids. According to Ásdís Egilsdóttir, masculinity is earned through a combination of performance and separation from one's

mother, which we have already seen in this chapter (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2020: 157–69). Alongside this separation, in the *Íslendingasögur* as well as other forms of Old Norse-Icelandic sagas, men having eloquent speaking skills, being gifted in the use of weapons, and having numerous physical attributes (such as being handsome and having hair that is well cared for), are key pointers to truly masculine men (Mills 2004: 114). All of these attributes are emphasised by Snorri in the opening chapters of *Óláfs saga helga*, seemingly placing Óláfr as an example of peak or ideal masculine performance – at the very least within generic boundaries parallel to typical family and king sagas (Evans 2019: 13).

Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir argues that hegemonic masculinity in the sagas is a 'concept which refers to "culturally exalted" gender practices that are placed at the top of a hierarchy, based on the subordination of other masculine types', and that 'to be passive undermines one's masculinity, while action and agency reinforce it' (Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir 2020: 147). While her article is specifically examining *Egils Saga* and its 'caricature of extreme Viking masculinity' (Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir 2020: 147), this same concept is applicable in *Óláfs saga helga*. The first stage of Óláfr's life, as the raiding warrior, is therefore presented as an almost satirical caricature of Viking-Age masculinity; an extremity that is now bound for change through his seemingly rightful introduction to the true religion, Christianity.

Óláfr's first course of action after earning his title as leader of his raiding party is to take revenge on the *Svíar* ('Swedes') for the brutal murder of his biological father, Harald *inn grenski* (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 4). Óláfr ravages and burns the land according to Snorri, who at this point elects to include skaldic verse by Sígvatr as a valid source for this detail.

Kann ek til margs, en manna,	Great fear befell people
minni, fyrsta sinni	from your journey, battle-snake's
hann rauð æstr fyrir austan	swan's feeder; then you started
úlfs fót við sker Sóta	to stain red Svíþjóð's [Sweden's] headlands.

(*Óláfs saga helga*: 3; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 5)

Snorri is particularly interested in the inclusion of skaldic verse and routinely cites Óttarr and Sígvatr, who serve not just as poets within the text, but as diplomats, warriors, and royal advisors, with Snorri seemingly legitimising their authority within the text by

presenting them as close to the king (Phelpstead 2007: 123). While the *Legendary Saga of St Olaf*, the only other vernacular text that includes an in-depth look at Óláfr's life pre-kingship, seeks to present a consistently pious and Christian character (Lindow 2008: 107), Snorri instead chooses to secularise this portion of Óláfr's life. In these opening chapters, Óláfr's behaviour aligns with the expectations of a typical masculine raider as Snorri 'departs from hagiographic conventions' (Phelpstead 2007: 117). However, in comparison to this, the *Legendary Saga of St Olaf* instead seeks to explain away secularised or warrior elements of Óláfr's life that do not fit the Christian regime which the text attempts to impose (Lindow 2008: 107). In the *Legendary Saga of St Olaf*, numerous miracles occur during Óláfr's Viking expeditions, which are seemingly presented as God intervening in events to ensure Óláfr's success, which in-turn points towards Óláfr's future sainthood. One such miracle, presented as occurring later in Óláfr's life, describes a band of angelic warriors intervening in battle, saving Óláfr's life as a result. These miracles are adapted by Snorri, with the removal of all elements of the supernatural, creating instead a secularised version of events that pin Óláfr's success on his own actions, rather than those of God. For example, when Óláfr sails to Sótasker he fights against a larger group of Vikings led by Sóti. Snorri writes the following:

> *hafði Óláfr lið miklu minna ok skip stærri. Hann lagði sín skip í milli boða nökkurra, ok var víkingunum úhægt at at leggja. En þau skip, er næst lágu þeim, þá kómu þeir á stafnljám ok drógu þau at sér ok hruðu þá skipin.*
>
> Óláfr's force was much smaller and his ships larger. He positioned his ships between some rocks, and it was difficult for the vikings to attack. But the ships that lay closest to them, they (Óláfr's men) got grappling hooks onto them and hauled them into themselves and then disabled the ships (*Óláfs saga helga*: 3; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 5).

Alongside this, numerous miraculous events in Óláfr's early life are also excluded in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga*. Many of the miracles Snorri does include do not occur until the end of the text, as well as in later portions of *Heimskringla* including the *Magnúss saga góða* ('Saga of Magnus the Good') (Phelpstead 2007: 118). Snorri intends to portray a 'realistically complex portrait of Óláfr as holy Viking' and thus balances elements of *konungasögur* with fundamentals of hagiography (Phelpstead 2007: 118). Snorri does this

by pushing genre markers to the extreme, through his almost caricature-like portrayal of Óláfr the raider, an image that contrasts to the peacemaker or miracle-performer we find in later portions of the saga.

As argued by Phelpstead in his 2007 book *Holy Vikings: Saints' Lives in the Old Icelandic Kings' Sagas*, Snorri seeks to find an authentic balance in the complicated nature of Óláfr's identity; he is not favouring one element over another like previous authors, but rather, he demonstrates how both Christian and *Víkingr* sides have a role to play in biographing Óláfr's life. Ultimately, for Phelpstead, Snorri's rendition of Óláfr's life is a '"mixed" tent in which verse and prose, history and hagiography are brought into dialogue' so as to present a complex and nuanced image of Óláfr (Phelpstead 2007: 118). Similarly, Joanna Skórzewka writes that 'the model of "the suffering leader" was quite a common model of sainthood in the medieval North' (Skórzewka 2008: 36). She further states that the 'context of Olaf's death, for instance, is clearly political, and the Christian hagiography as well as national identity played a crucial role here', while 'his piety and sense of justice were frequently underlined in the sources' (Skórzewka 2008: 37). André Vauchez also claims that many royal family members across Europe were venerated as saints as a 'result of the suffering they had unjustly endured' (Vauchez 2005: 162). Óláfr flits between warrior and devout Christian throughout the text as a result, with both playing prominent roles in Óláfr's identity and behaviours in the saga. In the end, however, his death prompts his public sainthood and affirms his final identity.

The first stage of Óláfr's life, and first stage of his masculinity, is typical in his presentation as a raiding Viking, with much of his Christianity omitted altogether until his journey towards achieving kingship. Only on the road to kingship does the second stage of Óláfr's life begin. His rise to power is presented unsurprisingly different from saga to saga, with some authors, such as the author(s) of *Fagrskinna* viewing his leadership as oppressive in his consolidation of power and rigid enforcement of Christianity across Norway, while Church hagiography such as the *Legendary Saga of St Olaf* favours Óláfr as a righteous and pious leader (Bagge 2010: 285–86). Snorri again seeks to find a balance between the two opposing generic positions. In consolidating his power, Óláfr uses a mixture of both violent and non-violent tactics. In Stjóradalr, Óláfr repairs local buildings not maintained by the ruling jarls, who serve as obstacles to his kingship; *lét hann þar þegar búast um í þeim húsum, er upp stóðu, en reisa upp þau, er niðr váru fallin,* [...] ('There he straight away had things put to rights in the buildings that were standing, and had those that had collapsed rebuilt') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 30; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 33). In

addition to these building efforts, Óláfr also promises locals to reestablish King Óláfr Tryggvason's (r. 995–1000) Christian policies, which Snorri notes in the following:

> '[...] *vil ek yðr lög bjóða ok frið, eptir því sem fyrir mér bauð Óláfr konungr Tryggvason*'.
>
> 'I wish to offer you law and peace, in accordance with what King Óláfr Tryggvason offered before me' (*Óláfs saga helga*: 28; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 31).

In battle, Snorri claims that *Ólafr konungr var svá búinn, at hann hafði hjálm gyltan á höfði, en hvítan skjöld, ok lagðr á með gulli kross hinn helgi* ('King Óláfr was so equipped that he had a gilded helmet on his head and a shield white with the holy cross painted on it in red') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 260; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 245).[2] Here, Snorri combines elements of Óláfr's warrior identity with that of his Christianity. He wishes to lead as a Christian king. At this point, many locals who wish for a Norwegian ruler submit to Óláfr. In turn, he is seen rewarding his followers; he gifts the skald Sígvatr a gold ring for composing a poem, and Snorri claims that Óláfr's warrior have fine armour. (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 34–46). Óláfr is described by Snorri as a *maðr siðlátr, stiltr vel, fámálugr, örr ok fégjarn* ('a virtuous man, very moderate, of few words, generous, and avaricious') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 41; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 45), as he sets about improving the observance of Christianity in Iceland while ruling from Niðaróss, the centre of Christianity in Norway at this time. If masculinity has traditionally been defined by both strength and power established through violent subordination, then this stage of Óláfr's life initially appears to be a transgression from the masculinity the reader has been adjusted to thus far, as Óláfr at several points trades violence for peaceful tactics to garner support for his rule, alongside establishing Christianity in his ruling policies and physically upon his battle-gear. While violence certainly plays a role in *Óláfs saga helga*, so too do the tactics of peace-making politics and Christianity. During this earlier stage of life, Christianity becomes a critical element of his identity and influences the decisions Óláfr makes as Snorri elects to introduce elements of hagiography to the text. Óláfr's pledge of conversion of the people and laws back to a Christian-based rule creates the undertone of hagiography in the absence of the outright miraculous. Indeed, Óláfr Haraldsson

[2] While the Old Norse text states *gulli kross* ('gold cross'), the translators have chosen to translate this as 'red cross' instead.

frequently cites the policies of Óláfr Trygvasson in his pursuit of power. With the promise of a return to Christianity, these locals seemingly submit with ease to Óláfr Haraldsson, with Snorri stating that [s]*vá kom, at bændr játtu þessum lögum, er konungr setti* ('it came about that the farmers agreed to these laws that the king established') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 40; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 45). From this we can see that Óláfr is both a powerful warrior and a devoted Christian. His masculinity is nuanced and flits from one opposing element to the other throughout the saga.

However, Óláfr does not remain the peaceful negotiator throughout his kingship, and instead utilises violent tactics, when necessary, in order to keep his Norway a Christian country and to retain his own political power. This is where the influence of traditional *konungasögur* returns, at points conflicting with the hagiographical genre as Snorri seeks to create a balanced biography of a complex figure. We come to know Óláfr as both a violent and non-violent figure, a scheming politician and a raiding Viking, a peacemaker and later, a miracle-worker. Ásdís Egilsdóttir (2020: 113) argues that hegemonic masculinity in Old Norse-Icelandic literature is defined by the subordination and domination of other identities, and particularly with attributes such as physical strength and violence. She likewise notes that in opposition to this, clerical masculinity, or masculinity of the Church, can be demonstrated through authority without the use of weapons. However, Óláfr's Christianity in *Óláfs saga helga* is at points interlinked with his violence and desire for power. Indeed, the Óláfr of the saga is an overlapping combination of influences from hagiography as well as *konungasögur*. Much of Óláfr's miracles occur posthumously, kept separate by Snorri from his actions in life. Late into the text, Óláfr is exiled into Kievan Rus by Norwegian nobles supporting the rise of Knútr of Denmark. During this exile he prepares to retake power in Norway, telling one of his supporters that he must be Christian. Óláfr states the following:

> *'Ef þú vill á mik trúa, þá skaltu því trúa, er ek kenni þér; því skaltu trúa, at Jesus Kristr hefir skapat himin ok jörð ok menn alla, ok til hans skulu fara eptir dauða allir menn, þeir er góðir eru ok rétttrúaðir'*.
>
> 'If you want to believe in me, then you must believe in what I tell you. You must believe that Jesus Christ has created heaven and earth and all people, and all people shall go to him after death that are good and orthodox in belief' (*Óláfs saga helga*: 261–62; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 247).

At this point, Óláfr has this supporter, Arnljótr, baptised. Óláfr's kingship, and thus his identity, has been shaped by his Christian beliefs but is also permeated by traditional warrior culture. Again, this dichotomy of identity is further demonstrated during an earlier period in the saga when, during Óláfr's kingship, while annexing Iceland, he chooses to have King Hrœrekr (a petty king from Heiðmǫrk) blinded and exiled for having previously denied Óláfr support before his rise to power.

> *þótti Ólafi konungi hann útrúligr, þótt hann gerði nökkura sætt við hann. Hann lét blinda Hrœrek báðum augum, ok hafði hann með sér* [...].
>
> King Óláfr thought he was not to be depended on even if he made some sort of settlement with him. He had Hrœrekr blinded in both eyes and kept him with him [...] (*Óláfs saga helga*: 66; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 67).

Here, Snorri establishes how Óláfr is willing is take violent action against those who do not support his bid for power, actions which openly contradict the religious cult hagiographical texts previously established. While hagiographical texts such as *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar* ('The Legendary Saga of St Olaf') depict Óláfr as a pious ruler and miracle worker (Lindow 2008: 107), Snorri balances this with the realism of the *konungasögur*. Óláfr's leadership, and thus his identity, is at this point constructed by both brute force as well as the peace-making tactics utilised amongst civilians. His exile serves as a reminder of the conflicting forces of clerical and traditional, or hegemonic, masculinity that constitute Óláfr's identity. Ultimately, Snorri's attempt at balancing these at times opposing or even clashing genres has constructed an intricate and almost labyrinthine leading figure.

Snorri has kept much of Óláfr's alleged piousness and saintly nature for the end of *Óláfs saga helga*. However, despite this saintly sequestering, Snorri still recognises the importance of Óláfr's sainthood. Indeed, these miracles become a central aspect of Óláfr's identity, though Snorri made sure to remove any mention of the miraculous in his raiding youth. Of Óláfr's performance of miracles, Snorri writes: [*e*]*n nú skal þat eigi niðri liggja, er honum er þó mest vegsemd í, at segja frá jartegnagerð hans* ('[a]nd yet now it must not lie untold what his greatest glory resides in, to tell of his miracle working') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 290; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 274). When Óláfr is slain in battle, one of his men, Þórir *hundr* ('the hound'), goes to appropriately cover the king's body and finds that Óláfr's

body appears to be in better condition than Þórir had expected. In addition to this, Óláfr's spilled blood also heals Þórir. Of this posthumous healing miracles, Snorri writes the following:

> *Þá kom blóð konungsins á hönd Þóri ok rann upp á greipina, þar er hann hafði áðr sár fengit, ok þurfti um þat sár eigi umband þaðan ífrá, svá greri þat skjótt. Váttaði Þórir sjálfr þenna atburð, þá er helgi Ólafs konungs kom upp fyrir alþýðu.*
>
> Then the king's blood got onto Þórir's hand and ran up between his thumb and fingers, where he had previously been wounded, and he needed no bandage after that, it healed so quickly. Þórir himself bore witness to this incident when King Óláf's sanctity became known, before the whole people. (*Óláfs saga helga*: 273; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 258).

This is a sign of his sanctity and a recurring feature of hagiography across numerous vernacular traditions; a saint's posthumous sanctity and miracles becomes the hero's 'triumph over death' (Grønlie 2017: 8). In Old English hagiography, the blood of the martyred Saint Christopher heals the once pagan King Dagnus from his blindness, before finally the once unrelenting pagan king converts to Christianity (Thomson 2018: 9).

Further healing miracles occur shortly after the battle, as Óláfr's spilled blood also cures a man of blindness (Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 264). In addition to these miracles, Óláfr's body also remains uncorrupted and even smells beautiful according to Snorri, who remarks that *andlit konungsins var svá fagrt* ('the king's face was so beautiful') and *var þar dýrligr ilmr* ('there was a glorious sweet smell there') (*Óláfs saga helga*: 273, 286; Finlay and Faulkes 2014: 258, 270). Through these miracles Óláfr is thus transformed from an aggressive warrior into the pious and now peaceful healer that hagiography desires. The uncorrupted corpse of the eventual saint frequently occurs in saints' lives, including those beyond the Old Norse vernacular such as the Anglo-Latin *Passio Sancti Edmund*i, the recorded life of Edmund the Martyr, whose clean and uneaten severed head calls out to his supporters, having been killed by Viking raiders (Young 2018: 55). The recording of these miracles provide 'proof of the dead king's continuing power' (Phelpstead 2021: 39), which Carl Phelpstead further argues that the cult of Saint Óláfr introduced 'a new symbolic resource for glorifying kings' to Scandinavia upon Óláfr's death in 1030

(Phelpstead 2021: 39). Evidently, the hagiographical elements of Óláfr Haraldsson's story play a critical role in the development of his literary identity, and thus his masculinity.

While in life Óláfr crossed boundaries of identity frequently, flicking between raider and negotiator, warmaker and saint, as evidenced by Snorri's variation in the use of both hagiographical and traditional *konungasögur*, in death Óláfr enters the final and lasting stage of his life, that of a martyred saint. And while he attempted to keep the miraculous elements of the late king's life separate within his saga, Snorri still recognises the importance of Óláfr's sainthood, stating that his miracles will not be neglected in this saga. Christianity features as a self-professed important factor in Óláfr's bid for kingship, underlining his identity for much of *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs saga helga*. It is only Óláfr's Viking youth that Snorri leaves untouched by Christianity, as opposed to texts such as the *Legendary Saga of St Olaf*, which fill his raiding days with the performance of miracles. While hagiography appears almost unimportant at the beginning of Óláfr's life, it becomes a central focus by the end. Ultimately, Óláfr's life is marked by transgressions, transitioning from traditional male roots to Christian, from raider to king, and finally, to martyred sainthood. *Óláfs saga helga* depicts a masculinity that is complex and varying throughout the saga, switching between the hegemonic, a power and violence-based identity, to that of a clerical or Christian based one. *Óláfs saga helga* reveals how masculinity, and the behaviours constructing these identities, are nuanced and multiple, and can vary greatly across genres. Most importantly, this identity stretches far beyond the boundaries of that expressed in modern popular culture, which cultivates a rigidly violent and firmly pagan identity with no space for miraculous Christianity and its heavenly sainthood. This invites a further investigation of genre and its relation to gender in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, particularly against the ongoing impressions bestowed upon the general public through the continuous interest in and expressions of modern adaptation.

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A Modern Runic Inscription from York

Jasmin Higgs

A newly discovered runic inscription was reported by Dr Patrick Ottaway, an archaeologist and heritage consultant based in the English city of York, in June 2022 after he visited the interior of the Multangular Tower in the Yorkshire Museum Gardens. The inscription was subsequently reported via email to Professor Judith Jesch at the University of Nottingham, and the author visited to record the inscription in person in August 2022 with an additional visit in October 2022.

The inscription was inspected and recorded using standard field runology techniques as outlined by Kaiser (2021: 11) and based on the suggested recording of runic inscriptions by Düwel (2004: 136), which includes both an archaeological and graphical analysis. The archaeological analysis is concerned with the writing surface, as well as the location of the find and the dating. The graphical analysis is concerned with the attribution of the inscription to a particular rune row (a set of runic letters used in a specific time and place) and with the inscribing technique. This then allows the runologist to create a transliteration which is where 'word or text is transferred from one writing system (e.g., runes) into another, usually well-known writing system (e.g., the Latin script) so that a non-expert in the field can read the text' (Waxenberger, Kazzazi, and Hines 2023: 318). There is then a subsequent translation of the runic inscription from the historical language to a present-day one.

In the discussion below, the runic graphs are presented as being rendered in the Roman alphabet in bold. As part of the graphical analysis, a light was used to view the inscription, using various angles to illuminate the depth of the individual cuts; a ruler was used to provide accurate length measurements of the inscription; and a camera (with 12 MP [1.4 μm, 1/2.55"], quad-LED flash, $f/1.8$ aperture) was used to photograph the inscription.

The inscription

The inscription appears on a limestone block of the interior of the Multangular Tower, York. The writing surface is exposed to the elements; above it, the tower lacks roofing, and there is notable wear to the limestone blocks themselves.

Made of two runic graphs each being *c*. 10mm in width and *c*. 20mm in height, the inscription reads:

ᛋᛣ

s w

FIGURE 1 THE RUNIC INSCRIPTION ON THE INTERIOR OF THE MULTANGULAR TOWER WITH RULER, AS VIEWED IN AUGUST 2022. NOTE THE WHITE EFFLORESCENCE ON THE TOP HALF OF RUNE 1 (**S**); THIS HAS SINCE BEEN REMOVED, EITHER NATURALLY OR BY HAND, BY THE TIME OF A SECOND VISIT IN OCTOBER 2022. PHOTO CREDIT TO AUTHOR, JASMIN HIGGS.

Rune 1, **s** : the graph is made of three individual cuts joined, forming the zig-zag shaped rune. The top two cuts are relatively straight, with the third bending inwards, and the lower half of the third cut, where the cut bends, is also deeper than the rest of the graph.

Rune 2, **w** : the graph is made of four cuts. The stave, which is the longer vertical, is made of two cuts with a small gap between the cuts that is midway down the lower half of the stave. The bow, being the two cuts to the right-hand side of the stave, is angular. Whilst the top cut of the bow slopes downwards, the bottom cut is horizontal, creating a right angle between the stave and the bottom cut when they join. This 'Rune 4' is an unfamiliar variant of the *wynn* rune since both cuts of the bow are usually angled with the bottom cut angled downwards, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

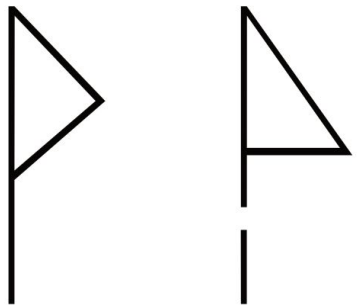

FIGURE 2 RIGHT: A STANDARD *WYNN* RUNE. LEFT: THE MULTANGULAR TOWER VARIANT. IMAGES RENDERED BY AUTHOR, JASMIN HIGGS.

In total, the text is two runes long and features what appears to be a typical **s**-rune, transliterated as **s** and represents an /**s**/ (voiceless alveolar fricative) sound, alongside an otherwise unattested form of a *wynn*, the **w**-rune, which represents the sound /**w**/ (voiced labial–velar approximant) and is transliterated as w. There are limitations to how far the graphs can be assigned to a particular date or rune row. The **s**-rune has been typologically classified as graph type 77: it is made of three individual cuts, two of which run horizontal with the third ascending in between, joining the two horizontal ones. According to the *Runische Schriftlichkeit in den germanischen Sprachen* (*RuneS*) project's online database, their initial and ongoing findings regarding graph 77 is that it is primarily attested in the younger *fuþark* inscriptions of Scandinavia (*RuneS* 1). The more standard wynn-rune as shown in Figure 2 is classified as graph type 86. It is attested almost equally across the older and younger *fuþarks*, as well as the Old English *fuþorc* inscriptions (*RuneS* 2). The form appearing in the York inscription is otherwise unattested.

FIGURE 3 THE TWO RUNES WITHOUT EFFLORESCENCE, AS SEEN IN OCTOBER 2022. PHOTO CREDIT TO AUTHOR, JASMIN HIGGS.

The position of the inscription on the left-hand side of the block could indicate that the space remaining on the right-hand side was intended for additional runic graphs, meaning that **sw** could have been the beginning of an unfinished text. If this was intended to be the beginning of a word in English, whether meant as Old or Present-Day English, the /sw/ consonant cluster could begin a wide range of words, too numerous to list here individually. Alternatively, **sw** might be interpreted as initials for the direction south-west, since the Multangular Tower is the west to south-west corner of the fortress.

The modernity of the inscription

There are several indications that the Multangular Tower inscription is modern, meaning that it was produced post-1831, sometime after the clearance of the interior of the Multangular Tower. These indications are based on the interpretation of and the position of the inscription.

It is difficult to determine with certainty which *fuþark* the inscription is rendered into, since that form of the **s**-rune is attested more so in younger *fuþark* inscriptions whilst the form of the **w**-rune is unattested and therefore cannot be assigned a *fuþark*. This means that the inscription cannot be assigned a date based on runological grounds. The content of the inscription, however, provides more certainty. In a discussion about the interpretation of the inscription, Jesch points out that 'the letters "sw" don't mean anything in themselves, and the habit of inscribing initials is not known in the earliest inscriptions, while carving your initials in runes, especially the older runes, is actually quite common in modern times' (pers. comm. with Ottaway, 24 June 2022). Indeed, there are examples of modern inscriptions in Orkney, mostly post-1900s in date, where the inscriptions either represent full personal names or initials: examples include inscriptions reading three personal names **annette:philip:helen** and possibly the beginning of a personal name or initials **mu** in the Unstan Tomb, and two single-rune **h** inscriptions from the Broch of Gurness and the Wildeford Hill Cairn (Freund and Ljosland 2017: 133–34, 137). Aside from the possibility of **sw** being personal and last name initials, the Multangular Tower is the southwestern tower of the Roman fortress, so it could be that the interpretation of **sw** is the ordinal directions, SW for southwest. This interpretation would indicate that the inscription is a modern creation, as the engraving of ordinal directions or initials of personal names is unknown in extant medieval runic inscriptions.

Aside from the interpretation of the text, another issue when considering the age of the inscription is the access to the writing surface. The inscription is found on Roman brickwork. Though the dating of the brickwork is Roman, the inscription was inscribed sometime after. The tower was one of the defensive towers of the Roman city of Eburacum and was built in the early fourth century CE (*RCHME* 62: 13–14). Upon these Roman walls are built later thirteenth-century additions; between the two types of brickwork – Roman and later medieval – is a band of rough masonry, with the medieval work featuring nine cruciform arrow slits (*RCHME* 72: 111). Whilst used as part of Eburacum's defences, the occupation of the fortress post-Roman period is difficult to establish. Excavations at the nearby Roman interval tower SWI indicate that the tower was used until at least the eleventh century (Evans 1998: 8). The excavation of the defences between the Anglian Tower and the Multangular Tower brought forth a small amount of pottery dated between the seventh and ninth centuries (Ottaway 1996: 267). This could suggest that parts of the fortress, at least, were in use in early medieval York. Nonetheless, information regarding the interior of the Multangular Tower post-Roman period is uncertain, though, at some point, the interior became built up with material mentioned by Charles Wellbeloved. In particular, Wellbeloved discusses the interior of the Multangular Tower as recorded by antiquarians; noting that, below the highest part of the Roman work in the tower, the rest of the tower was 'concealed [...] by an immense collection of rubbish, apparently the accumulation of the ages' (Wellbeloved 1842: 56), which is shown by Joseph Halfpenny's sketch of the interior dated 1807 (cf. Wilson and Mee 2005: 44). It is difficult to say when this collection of debris entered the interior of the tower with any certainty; however, this antiquarian description of the interior of the tower suggests that, until its clearance in 1831 (Wellbeloved 1842: 56–57), the inscribed surface was perhaps not accessible, making the inscription a possible post-1831 production. There were also alterations to the Multangular Tower, for example, the fitting of gun loops to the cruciform arrow slits sometime before the tower's restoration in the 1960s, and a wall walk was once fitted, though the parapet is gone (*RCHME* 72: 111). It is plausible that the inscription was made during these times of alteration when access to the interior was guaranteed during the work.

The similarities between the Multangular Tower inscription and the modern inscriptions from Orkney are also relevant to the find spot. Andrea Freund and Ragnhild Ljosland (2017) discuss access to the find spots of the modern Orkney inscriptions and note similarities between them. For example, in the cases of numerous modern

inscriptions such as those found at the Broch of Borwick, Cuween Hill, and the Unstan Tomb, all are freely accessible to the public; Cuween Hill, for example, is 'freely accessible via a short uphill walk so that any number of the public could have carved these inscriptions' (Freund and Ljosland 2017: 132). Furthermore, the accessibility of the site in the Viking Age, a time of runic inscription production in Orkney, is also a consideration when assessing the authenticity of the Orkney inscriptions. It is further noted by Freund and Ljosland (2017: 137) that the runic inscription at the Broch of Gurness is found inside the structure's guard chamber, which is built into the wall by the main broch entrance; but this chamber was probably inaccessible during the Viking Age. Similarly, Cuween Hill's cairn was filled with rubble until excavated in the 1880s, leading Jesch (1991: 14) to think it a modern inscription, partly due to the accessibility of the site. There are multiple similarities between the Multangular Tower site and the sites of modern inscriptions from Orkney. The Multangular Tower is freely open to the public and was also possibly inaccessible for much of the medieval period due to being filled with debris. This suggests, then, that the newly found York inscription is likely a modern one.

Conclusion

The new Multangular Tower runic inscription appears to be modern; that is, one that was not produced during the medieval period. One indication if this is the interpretation of the inscription, reading **sw** and perhaps meaning 'southwest', a reference to the tower being the southwestern part of the Roman fortress, or initials of someone's name. Furthermore, access to the interior of the tower is uncertain throughout its history. Though access to the interior was perhaps possible during the early medieval period, by a certain point in the tower's history the Roman section of the tower (where the inscription is located) was covered with debris, resulting in it being inaccessible.

The interpretation of the inscription and its writing surface's accessibility suggest that the Multangular Tower inscription is modern, perhaps created by a tourist. Indeed, York's tourism focuses heavily on the Vikings and their use of the runic script; not only is there the world-famous Jorvik centre, but many of York's tourist-aimed eateries, shops and activities feature runes, for example the pub *Valhalla York* and *The Piccadilly York*'s 'Wizards' Emporium' escape room, as well as Jorvik's gift shop, which sell a wide range of rune-related books and objects. Furthermore, the ruins of Roman York, including the Multangular Tower, feature in the 2020 released video game *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla*,

where the character can interact with the interior of the tower as part of their quest. Additionally, in February 2022, symbols which resemble some runic graphs were spray painted in several locations in York, including St Olave's Church Marygate and the city walls, including a possible attempt at a *wynn* rune. The modern inscription, then, could be an attempt at engagement with York's Viking history, by which the public is consistently surrounded.

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Fendel, Sophie, 2024. *Physiologus- und Bestiarienrezeption in Nordeuropa: Wege eines Kulturtransfers*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Jonas Zeit-Altpeter

Sophie Fendel's first monograph contributes to the growing field within Old Norse studies that reads medieval Nordic literature as part of a culture encompassing all of Europe (and regions further afield) in various languages, both vernacular and Latin. The title translates to *The Reception of the Physiologus and Bestiaries in Northern Europe: Pathways of Cultural Transfer*. It reveals the breadth of its focus: Fendel begins with discussing the so-called Icelandic *Physiologus* (attested in two fragments conventionally dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century), which turns out to comprise two very different texts. However, she also discusses the influences of *Physiologus* illustrations felt in various other manuscripts, the role of bestiary animals played in both sagas and learned and religious texts of Norway and Iceland, as well as elements of *Physiologus*/bestiary lore in East Norse literature.

Following a brief introduction covering the contents of the book, Fendel begins with an in-depth review of previous scholarship on the *Physiologus* and bestiary material in the North. She notes that most scholars have so far studied the most palpable attestations of engagement with these texts in the North, the two fragments, and that within this subfield the focus has been on the texts instead of the illustrations. She thus proposes to fill this gap in the literature with a synthesis of the available scholarship and a recentring of the illustrations, on the basis of which she intends to trace the cultural transfer of *Physiologus* material to the North. The literature review is comprehensive, encompassing all scholarship on the *Physiologus* in the North published between 1872 and 2017, and provides an initial critical assessment of the works cited. This makes it an excellent resource for future scholarship on the topic.

Chapter 2 lays out Fendel's 'background and methodology', providing brief sketches of the theories used. She introduces the terminology of cultural transfer, focusing on Franco-German theories such as those by Espagne/Werner, Kortländer, and Lüsebrink, but also alludes to Said's and Bhabha's 'hybridity'. On the other hand, she summarises Copeland, Kraß, and Würth on translation in the Middle Ages. Her final summary of three modes of *transkulturelle Verflechtungen* ('transcultural entanglements') as defined by the *Netzwerk Transkulturelle Verflechtungen* appears most promising for what Fendel sets out to do. Its terminology is indeed returned to in the conclusion, in particular the *rhizomatisches Geflecht* ('rhizomatic net'), allowing for the analysis of non-intentional, dynamic, and occasionally hidden connections. Part 2 of this chapter comprises an historical overview of northern Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, focusing on Christianisation and the integration into Latinate Europe. The following survey of continental and insular *Physiologus* traditions is not as comprehensive as the initial literature review focused on the North but offers a welcome point of orientation. For the Nordic material, it seems especially pertinent to think of the *Physiologus*/bestiary corpus as a widely dispersed genre of texts, as opposed to a hierarchy of an early 'original' and a line of translations and adaptations.

Chapter 3 then focuses on the two Icelandic fragments, tracing possible avenues of transmission of the genre to Iceland, comparing their text in minute detail with the Latin (focusing on the B version), and examining their illustrations by relating them both to the Icelandic texts as well as other illuminated bestiary manuscripts from the Continent and the British Isles. Fendel suggests that the impetus for the translation of the texts came from the see of Skálholt under Bishop Páll Jónsson, detailing Páll's education, his patronage of the arts, and his connection to Lincoln, a production centre of illustrated bestiary manuscripts. She then proceeds to the rather short Icelandic texts themselves, as well as their accompanying images. Fendel analyses each animal individually, identifying sources, tracing the history of its depiction, comparing the structure of the Norse and Latin entries, and detailing translation strategies. In many instances this meticulous work allows her to refute earlier arguments on the quality of the translation; for example, the name *aspedo*, dismissed by Dahlerup as a *vilkårlig forkortelse* ('arbitrary abbreviation') of the originally Greek *aspidochelone*, is revealed to have its origin in the reading *aspido de lone* found in certain English manuscripts (p. 112f.). Instead of passing judgment on the supposedly poor understanding of the Icelandic authors and artists, Fendel continually stresses their creative effort: She demonstrates that variations in the depiction of the

animals often correspond to traditions that have been overlooked, or serve to bring them in line with the Norse text (and vice versa). In keeping with her understanding of the *Physiologus*/bestiary as a genre, Fendel identifies many textual and visual parallels predominantly from England, but also from the Continent, stressing the international nature of the genre.

Chapter 4 offers a brief digression on the continued influence of depictions of bestiary animals in the medieval North. One of the manuscripts appears to have been used as a model book and, just like on the Continent, churches all over Scandinavia as well as the margins of Nordic manuscripts are decorated with *Physiologus* animals. As the fieldwork necessary for a more detailed study was prevented by the Covid pandemic, this chapter mostly sets out possible avenues for future scholarship.

Chapter 5 covers references to bestiary lore in other Old Norse works. The animals described or alluded to in *Stjórn*, the Icelandic and Norwegian homilies, the Norwegian *King's Mirror*, and various texts edited as part of *Alfræði íslenzk* appear similar to the material discussed above. However, no immediate influence can be proven, owing to the wide dissemination of these motifs in other medieval genres and difficulties in establishing direct sources. Both *riddarasögur* ('chivalric sagas') and *fornaldarsögur* ('legendary sagas') feature 'echoes' of elements from *Physiologus*/bestiary lore, usually exoticising the narrated world, but otherwise serving diverse functions. East Norse material, namely Danish texts such as the homilies of Peder Madsen, a sermon by Nicolaus Ragvaldi, and the Danish *Lucidarius*, as well as the Swedish *Siælinna Thrøst*, is given as much attention as the West Norse material. While most of the Icelandic and Norwegian texts seem to make use of English sources, the East Norse material appears to depend mostly on German texts. Bestiary lore seems to have made various inroads into Scandinavia. This latter part of chapter 5 thus represents a welcome widening of perspective compared to the common focus on Norwegian and especially Icelandic texts.

Following the conclusion, the book also provides competent translations of both Icelandic fragments, which had not been available in German before. Moreover, there is an appendix consisting of seventy-five high-quality reproductions of *Physiologus*/bestiary illustrations including the Icelandic ones, adding to the book's practical usefulness.

Overall, Fendel's book manages to strike a delicate balance between a wide focus – the reception of an entire genre of texts in a vast geographic area – and detailed arguments, such as the minute comparisons of text and image, or the historical

investigation of Bishop Páll. Her meticulously researched refutations of older scholarship are convincing, and the thorough review of literature on the *Physiologus*/bestiary material both in the North and in wider Europe is particularly strong. The monograph's list of references may serve as the definitive bibliography on the topic.

There are very few weaknesses, and barely any errors. The ten-page review of Scandinavia's history in chapter 2 appears lengthy in context, but slightly unfocused and superficial when considering the vastness of the topic. It could well have been omitted. There are some curious repetitions that perhaps should have been removed during editing: visual depictions of the siren, which are covered in great detail from page 134, are given another more summary treatment on page 283 in the shape of six footnotes without any reference to the other chapter. Similarly, a critical concept employed several times (Cornelia Lund's *Primat der Vorstellung*, 'primacy of the imagination', pp. 56, 178, 184) is explained again on page 314 without acknowledging the previous discussion.

These criticisms do little to mar the overall excellent impression the book leaves. Fendel demonstrates impressively what can be gained by allowing vernacular translations and visual illustrations to stand on an equal footing with the Latin 'originals'. Beyond managing a large corpus of scholarship, her book succeeds in painting a vivid picture of a literary culture in active contact with other regions – and all this on the material basis of a handful of parchment leaves and scattered allusions in a great corpus of literature. As a comprehensive guide to *Physiologus*/bestiary lore in the North, the book will likely become a point of departure for any future scholarly engagement with the genre in Old Norse studies.

BOOK REVIEW

Bampi, Massimiliano, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdóttir, eds, 2020. *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Tom Morcom

Of all the frameworks by which Old Norse literature has been approached and understood, the concept of genre, as a means of achieving the categorisation and division of works, has perhaps been the most consistent in both its utilisation and its contentiousness. Attempting to establish firm generic boundaries between texts provokes at least two reasonable protests: firstly, that the genres formulated by modern scholars may not have been the same as the categories by which medieval authors and audience understood these texts and, secondly, modern critical consensus on the metrics by which genres should be delineated have not been forthcoming. Nevertheless, the utility of genre in the discussion of both verse and prose is undeniable and the concept of genre is not altogether anachronistic in a medieval context, with evidence of at least a rudimentary system attested to through the use of some generic appellations and, in some instances, the grouping of stylistically similar texts within a manuscript compilation. Genre, it seems therefore, is both irresolvable and indispensable in relation to the study of Old Norse literature. The scale and complexity of this issue merit a comprehensive exploration, which *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre* emphatically achieves. This volume does not seek to produce a cohesive model for the parameters of Old Norse genre across its nineteen chapters, instead offering a full critical treatment of the topic from a diverse range of perspectives, organised into three broad sections: Theory, Themes, and Genre in Focus, which provides case studies focused on individual texts. The ultimate product is an excellent treatment of the simultaneous difficulty and productivity for Old Norse scholars in thinking in terms of genre, which is sure to become a much-referenced scholarly text in future approaches to practically the entire medieval Scandinavian literary corpus. It would be a disservice to the variety and

quality of the chapters of this volume to omit any of them from this review. As such, all chapters will be summarised below.

Massimiliano Bampi and Sif Rikhardsdóttir's introduction effectively situates this work in opposition to twentieth-century genre formulations that they consider to be a method of imposing aesthetic hierarchies upon diverse texts. Conversely, they stress that a range of secular and religious contexts of manuscript production fostered the production of different kinds of literature and view genre as the means by which a variety of social dynamics inflected the development of the Old Norse literary system (pp. 3–7). This neatly foregrounds the ensuing chapters devoted to new theoretical approaches to genre tailored to medieval literature specifically. Bampi's opening chapter, 'Genre', deftly expands upon the ideas previously outlined in the introduction, with the author taking a staunchly anti-prescriptivist stance. The chapter dwells on the difficulties of producing any generic taxonomy, alongside the complexity of genre as informed by a number of interlocking systems of compositional conventions recognisable by the audience. It might have been useful, however, to have a further exploration of the means by which literary conventions, which in a limited corpus may only arise from the aesthetic principles of small clusters of works, develop into genres proper. Bampi's introduction of the notion of generic hybridity (pp. 23–24), which is crucial to many of the ensuing chapters, is excellent, as is his discussion of the genre as a polysystem (pp. 24–28), with the productivity of Even-Zohar's theory as applied to Old Norse literature further cemented in this volume. It might be possible to take slight issue with the degree to which Bampi equates medieval Scandinavian social changes with the sequential development of discrete genres, although as an axiom that foregrounds the numerous diachronic analyses present in this volume it remains productive. One such diachronic approach is Sif Rikhardsdóttir's chapter 'Hybridity', which produces one of the neatest formulations of genre in this book, terming it as the retrospective codifying of patterns amongst medieval works by the modern critic (pp. 32–33). Sif advocates for a stronger focus on generic hybridity as a means of easing the inflexibility of said codification, with her argument for the hybridisation of pre-existing literary modes as a driver of innovation being highly interesting. As such notions of hybridity offer the ability to challenge established generic affiliations, Sif convincingly offers emotion as a mode from which a new genre model could extend – although she does stress it is only one suggestion amongst many possibilities (pp. 41–42). The discussion of maiden-king romances as exemplifying the complexity that generic hybridity can attain is worthy of particular praise (p. 43).

Lukas Rösli's chapter 'Terminology' offers an interrogation of the productivity and consistency of the modern terms through which genre is described. Rösli is swiftly able to demonstrate that the generic distinctions favoured by a range of modern scholars are at least partially constructed out of critical convenience, leaving the present state of Old Norse genre modelling as heterogeneous, yet rigid (pp. 51–53). This chapter's discussion of the production of editions of Old Norse texts as a central, if covert, element of the formation of modern genres is excellent, as is Rösli's invitation to return to these texts' manuscript contexts in developing future theories of genre, with a particular focus of paratextual elements (pp. 56–58). In his chapter 'Form', Mikael Males investigates the evidence for there being a medieval formal classification system amounting to a textual taxonomy. Beginning with the concept of the *lygisögur* ('lying sagas') referenced in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* (p. 63), Males argues that medieval authors and compilers seem to conceptualise prose more in terms of content than form (p. 64). While a later chapter in this volume does focus on the *þættir* specifically, more reference to their apparent evolution from incorporated sequences in larger texts to discrete narratives would have been useful in this chapter. Form, conversely, was a central element by which poetry was understood, with Males offering a convincing and original case for the investigation of skaldic verse operating as a subset of medieval grammatical study, which was formalised in the so-called *Third Grammatical Treatise* (pp. 67–69).

Judy Quinn focuses on 'Orality, Textuality, and Performance' in a chapter that begins with a discussion of Erving Goffman's concept of keying to describe the situation by which skaldic poetry was translated from its original performance context into saga narratives (p. 74). Quinn highlights performance as a lost dimension of many Old Norse texts and skilfully demonstrates that we are consuming a markedly different cultural product than our medieval counterparts. Quinn then produces an excellent close reading of *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, with the selective usage of verse during the *flyting* exchange sequence giving a sense of partisan observation of a more general hubbub that mimics the conditions of oral performance (pp. 77–81). This is then extended to a more general consideration of the saga as a whole: of particular interest is Quinn's suggestion that the echoes of the original performance culture are most pronounced in those verses which are least artfully integrated into the saga narrative (p. 85). The concluding argument of the chapter, that the integrity of skaldic verse in its prosimetric context gives it the capacity to both expand and qualify the feud narrative in which it is embedded (p. 88), is an excellent one that speaks to the significant developments in research into the prosimetrum in recent

years, which, in turn, has led to a welcome complicating of the relationship between verse and prose. The final chapter of the theory section, written by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, focuses on 'Manuscripts and Codicology'. Jóhanna offers a highly useful overview of Icelandic literary manuscripts (pp. 90–92), followed by a nuanced discussion of the evolution that complicates its utility as evidence for a medieval sensibility to genre amongst manuscript compilers, with the ideological and economic pragmatics of creating a codex obscuring direct conclusions concerning genre (pp. 95-96). A focus on texts (or modes of text) that are regularly grouped together is a highly productive method of interrogating genre categories, with one intriguing association made by Jóhanna being a stronger association of eddic verse and *rímur* in their manuscript contexts than would be expected from a case made solely on stylistic grounds (p. 103). The chapter does not proceed, however, to produce firm conclusions regarding genre: it is the author's contention that only the broad saga category forms a coherent group, although this might be challenged by the specific example of the *Konungasögur* compilations of the early thirteenth century, particularly as the term is one of the few modern genre classifications also employed in the medieval period.

The central section of the volume offers an eclectic range of thematic approaches to genre or, perhaps more accurately, how genre intersects with a number of prominent themes within Old Norse literature. In the first of these approaches, Hans Jacob Orning discusses 'The Body Politic', which in the most obvious sense concerns how socio-political structures influence the development of literary genres. Equally interestingly, Orning also considers the effect that the production of texts in a variety of genres has on the political climate, particularly in the Scandinavian elite's utilisation of genre as a means of reinforcing the established social order (p. 115). In Norway, skaldic poetry was pivotal in propagating the heroic persona of kings; while an expansion in the range of genres in the mid-twelfth century is associated with the establishment of the archdiocese at Niðaróss (pp. 116–19). Orning's argument for *Sverris saga* as depicting a clash of contradictory ideologies rather than simply personal rivalries is excellent. More issue can be taken, however, with the contention that the Icelandic *konungasögur* of the 1220s (*Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla*) share the laudatory view of Norwegian kingship as the older skaldic verse embedded within them (p. 117); *Morkinskinna*, in particular, consistently explores the ideological disharmony between all strata of Norwegian society. A more productive approach would have been to see these texts as influenced by similar impulses to those noted in this chapter in relation to the *riddarasögur* popularised in

Hákon Hákonarson's courtly milieu – the disruption of traditional elite values. In turning to Iceland, Orning makes a highly useful distinction between *Íslendingasögur* and the *Samtíðarsögur*, with the former stressing the need for the Icelandic elite to petition local support, while the latter focuses more exclusively on the brutality of inter-elite interactions (pp. 120–21). The situation shifts once again with the fall of the Commonwealth, which precipitates a widening of Iceland's geographical and temporal horizons at the same time as the production of *Fornaldarsögur* and indigenous *Riddarasögur* is increasing (pp. 122–23).

Dale Kedwards' chapter, 'Geography', stresses that the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope is integral to understanding the difference between saga genres, with his equation of the flawed modern analytic categories of genre and geography being an important one (pp. 127–29). Kedwards instead urges the reader to consider the ways in which space is fictionalised, most notably by arguing one of the functions of the *íslendingasögur* was the conversion of the new land of Iceland into a pseudo-national cultural area (pp. 131–34). Kedwards then produces two excellent demonstrations of the relevance to centring geography in saga studies: the first in the simultaneous mapping of the Trojan and viking diasporas in *Ynglinga saga* (pp. 134–36) and the second in the construction of a virtual *mappa mundi* in *Nitiða saga*, in which Iceland is rendered provincial and peripheral (pp. 138–42). Work of this sort is crucial in developing the understanding of the landscapes in which saga action is situated beyond simple 'setting', which risks reducing the complex spatial construction of these story-worlds into mere pantomime staging. Kedwards concludes with an important challenge to the traditional scholarly contrast between the details of descriptions of Icelandic landscape in comparison with the vagueness of chivalric settings, instead claiming, somewhat polemically, that the fabulous geographies of Courtly Romances were no less familiar to an Icelandic audience than mimetic depictions of the island on which they dwelt (p. 144). Kedwards' chapter is well complemented by the one which follows it – 'Time and Space' by Torfi Tulinius. The chronotope is pivotal here too, with Torfi Tulinius viewing different Old Norse genres as exploring and expanding a given chronotope, often one associated with the viking diaspora as expressed in the literature of their thirteenth-century descendants (pp. 146–47). Torfi Tulinius divides his discussion of the chronotope along two axes, the temporal and the spatial. He further splits the temporal span into the contemporary, the historical, and the distant past, three eras utilised to understand reality, explore identity, and promulgate ideology, respectively (pp. 153–54). Torfi Tulinius freely admits, however, that

this paradigm is an oversimplification and that in many sagas all three elements interplay to complex effect. In terms of the wider volume, however, it was highly useful to have two substantially different interpretations of Bakhtin's chronotope offered consecutively, which functioned as a neat demonstration of the ongoing critical issue of how best to understand the configuration of space and time in Old Norse literature. On the spatial axis, Torfi Tulinius successfully charts a progression across the thirteenth century as the chronotopes represented in the sagas shift and expand, from the sparser set of locations present in *Egils saga*, through the more detailed homestead depicted in *Eyrbyggja saga*, to the fully expanded sequence of local and distant chronotopes in Grettis saga (pp. 157–58).

In 'Memory', Pernille Hermann makes a case for genre as a vehicle for cultural memory, a process which occurred during the conversion of oral performances into a literary record, with genre serving as a method for sorting this material (p. 164). Hermann produces an excellent discussion of what she terms 'fictions of memory', in recasting *Íslendingabók* as an ideologically slanted, imaginative version of the past adhering to its creator's perception of history (pp. 166–67). Likewise, the saga form can be taken as the product of a partisan and negotiated memory, with the stylistic variation of genre serving as a means of challenging the established cultural memory and reconfiguring the past. Hermann also discusses memory on a diachronic level through the intertextual networks of motifs, by which various works forget and remember literary components of other texts (p. 171). Here is raised the intriguing concept that texts that draw on a wide range of influences and exhibit hybridity of genre have a high mnemonic capacity, with the chapter concluding with the suggestion that genre serves as a communication strategy for cultural memory in managing the audience's expectation (pp. 173–75). Stefanie Gropper considers 'The Human Condition' in her chapter, that is to say the literary representation of social and cultural conditions, primarily marriage and death, as the cornerstones of family life (p. 177). Starting from a discussion of the general sense in the sagas of personal emotion as a private event, Gropper then complicates our understanding of grief in viewing mourning as primarily a public event with the exception of famous yet atypical expressions of personal sorrow like Egill Skallagrímsson's *Sonatorrek* (pp. 182–83). Through discussion of *Kormáks saga* and *Laxdœla saga*, Gropper contends that there is little private space for the expression of love outside the realm of marriage; indeed, this chapter convincingly argues for romance only taking narrative prominence in cases where its breakdown instigates conflict (p. 188). Gropper leaves us with the deeply thought-provoking idea that the relative scarcity of direct emotional representation in the sagas is

that such moments are almost exclusively used as social manipulators to incite violent action from within a kin group, rather than to provide a window into an individual psyche (p. 191). The difficulties in mapping representations of Old Norse emotions against possible modern analogues is an area of active research to which this chapter significantly contributes in demonstrating how, even when a consistent underlying sentiment seems likely, its affective embodiment varies substantially depending on the social context in which it is experienced.

Carolyne Larrington deftly combines discussion of the pagan and the Christian in her chapter, 'God(s)'. Larrington argues for the exploration of the Norse gods as multi-generic, utilising the various speech acts implied by the thirteenth-century classification of eddic verse (*spá*, *mál*, *kviða*, *ljóð*, etc.) as productive poetic sub-genres (pp. 195–96). It is stressed, however, that such categories are not rigid: the complexity of the *senna* form is discussed, as is the generic deviance of *Hárbarðsljóð*. Indeed, the complication of previous genre systems is one of the great strengths of this chapter, particularly the division of wisdom poetry into three forms – dialogue, monologue, and catalogue (p. 197). In a skaldic context, Larrington stresses that the engagement with the gods is principally stylistic and rarely features in the poetic content, with the notable exception of *Þórsdrápa*. The chapter then proceeds to chart the seismic effect of the arrival of Christianity in Scandinavia on the generic polysystem, as, for instance, in the crucial influence of hagiography on the development of saga literature (pp. 201–3). The discussion of the range of generic treatments of the gods in *Snorra Edda*, where poetry and prose dealing with the figures of Norse myth reside within a Christian framework, is a particular highlight (pp. 204–5). Larrington also considers Christianity as instigating a greater degree of creativity in adapting pre-established genres, exemplifying this trend with reference to the highly unusual fourteenth-century Christian skaldic poem *Lilja* (pp. 207–9). Ultimately, the praising of divinities is convincingly placed as foundational to generic development. This chapter is complemented by Brittany Schorn's thoughtful contribution on 'Wisdom', which instead of advocating for its status as a coherent genre, demonstrates the eclectic diversity of Norse wisdom literature and the artificiality of grouping these materials together. Schorn makes a vital distinction between wisdom as an element of the content of a text and wisdom as a genre proper (pp. 211–12). In her focus on the function of wisdom, Schorn constructs three sub-categories into which wisdom can be divided: applied wisdom, which are the proverbial utterances of characters providing the logic of their actions; traditional wisdom, associated with the mythical world whose characters are

invested with authority due to their distance from their audience; and learned wisdom, in which both classical and continental wisdom forms are rendered appropriate for a Norse context through works like *Málsháttakvæði* and *Konungs skuggsjá* (pp. 213–21).These distinctions are welcome as they achieve Schorn's professed goal of delineating the various types of valued wisdom that the generic classification of wisdom literature can be understood as preserving and promulgating. Schorn concludes with a discussion of the subtle distinction between the terms *mannvit* and *manvit*, the usage of which reveals slight shifts in the quality and source of wisdom between texts (pp. 223–24).

The final six chapters offer focussed case studies as a means of investigating or problematising the genres or works with which they engage. Some of these chapters produce close readings of lesser-studied texts, while others provide reconfigured models for their given genres; regardless, all demonstrate the validity of centring genre in approaching Old Norse literature. Erin Goeres focuses on Skaldic Poetry, particularly that composed by Torf-Einarr Rögnvaldsson of Orkney. Goeres views these poems as typical of the genre of battle poetry (p. 230), but also demonstrates the difficulty of considering this as a consistent poetic category, particular in relation to these verses as preserved in their later prose context. Close readings of all the poems are undertaken and their status as either 'situational' or 'authenticating' is interrogated, with even their status as *lausavísur* being complicated (pp. 238–40). Goeres should be particularly commended for her sensitivity to the alternative framing of these verses in *Fagrskinna*, *Orkneyinga saga*, and *Heimskringla*, and the multiple processes by which they are integrated (pp. 242–44). The chapter intriguingly suggests that Einarr's verses manipulate the conventions of battle poetry rather than merely replicating its conventions, demonstrating the flexibility of the form, possibly from as early as the late ninth century (p. 244). Carolyne Larrington provides a second chapter to the volume, focusing on *Sólarljóð* as an idiosyncratic example of eddic poetry. The exceptional hybridity of *Sólarljóð* is stressed alongside the effect this has on the reader, who must shift their expectation as to which of many genres or sub-genres is active as the poem progresses (p. 248). Larrington charts how the poem appears at times a dialogue between father and son, at others conventional Christian wisdom, as well as at other literary Other World visions comparable with the *Divina Commedia* or Chaucerian dream visions (pp. 247–55). Norse poetry is also shown to have had a major influence on *Sólarljóð*'s form, in particular *Hávamál*, from which it takes its usage of brief contrasting exempla (pp. 250–52). While productive on a formal level, the content of pre-Christian wisdom is, nevertheless, presented as mystifying and dangerous, as *Sólarljóð*

produces a new eschatological framework, which despite its intense hybridity proved highly popular, being preserved in seventy-seven extant manuscripts (p. 256).

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe focuses on the *þættir*, specifically *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*. Rowe begins by rightly stressing the comparative difficulty of identifying a *þáttr* versus a saga; she instead suggests it might be more productive to consider short literary prose narratives as on a spectrum from *þættir*, through *þáttr*-like episodes, to ordinary episodes (p. 259). While Rowe notes that a *þáttr* can be separated from a saga consistently with regard to their respective textual length, quite how a *þáttr* should be distinguished from a simple episode within a larger narrative is unclear. As Rowe notes that the development of the *þáttr* form is inextricable from the development of the *konungasögur* genre (p. 261), an investigation of the narrative function of the *þættir* in the context of these compilations would have provided a means of moving towards establishing firmer generic parameters. While taking care not to draw over-rigid conclusions from the structural principles of the seven manuscripts in which *þættir* are preserved, Rowe nevertheless defends the validity of considering the *þættir* as a coherent genre, while stressing that *þættir* may be hybrid, multigeneric, or multimodal as is the case for other Norse genres (p. 264). This is demonstrated by the analysis of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, a late and unusual narrative that intermingles fabula, escapism, and satire at the expense of the artless and stilted praise poetry presented within the dream itself (pp. 266–70). For the case study of the *Íslendingasögur*, Russell Poole focuses on *Vatnsdœla saga*, in a chapter that seeks to counter normative generic appraisals of the saga, which have partially accounted for scholars' negative opinions of the sagas (pp. 275–76). In the first place, Poole lists the numerous metrics by which *Vatnsdœla saga* can be said to conform to the *Íslendingasögur* genre (pp. 271–75), a list that in itself constitutes a highly useful attempt at sketching the generic boundary for these texts in more detail. He then documents the unique features of *Vatnsdœla saga* that distinguish it from the genre as a whole: local leadership as combatting lawlessness, utilisation of magic by protagonists, and the avoidance of hostility or focus on moderation (pp. 276–80). In Poole's view, together these constitute a special thematisation for the saga, focused on the construction of a noble heathendom whose values prefigure those of Christianity (p. 280). This is an interesting approach in as much as it reveals a limitation of a strictly generic approach to the sagas, in as much as issues of thematization specific to an individual saga typify the text as strongly as generic markers, but issues of genre are not dismissed as wholly arbitrary, and the chapter does not revoke the functionality of the *íslendingasögur* as a grouping. Ultimately, Poole insightfully

connects the composition of this saga with the intellectual milieu of Gunnlaugr Leifsson, centred at the monastery at Þingeyrar (p. 281).

Kevin Wanner does not focus on a particular text but rather interrogates whether a categorical distinction between *byskupasögur* and *heilagramannasögur* can be established. Wanner notes the difficulties of the firm separation of the two genres, most obviously because a character can be both a bishop and a saint, but broadly views *heilagramannasögur* as a sub-genre of the transcultural project of hagiography, while *byskupasögur* are simply a subset of the wider saga genre (p. 284). Wanner then uses a range of multi-media examples to consider the productivity of the modern notion of genre fiction as applied to Norse hagiography. The common replication of motifs across multiple saints' lives, which speaks to the consistency of sanctity, creates a genre fiction in which features recognisable to the audience are produced as an expectation of the form (p. 289). To exemplify this, Wanner constructs a chart, the axes of which place human or divine authorship against contingency or contrivance. *Agǫtu saga*, *Margrétar saga*, *Ambrosius saga*, *Árna saga*, *Guðmundar saga*, *Hungrvaka*, and *Þorláks saga A* are all plotted as a means of delineating the different manners in which they present events as pre-ordained by God or inexplicable tragedies (p. 290). Senseless disasters are more typical of the *byskupasögur*, which provides a highly specialised metric by which to distinguish them from hagiography (p. 296). Nonetheless, the placing of sagas and lives of saints on a single set of axes is in itself deceptively radical in terms of calling into question the primacy placed on formal distinctions in separating these two categories and provides a potential avenue for future considerations of the relationship between Old Norse hagiography and saga prose. Jurg Glauser provides the final chapter of the volume, in which he focuses on Romance, suggesting that the genre's high degree of generic mutability can account for its rapid and widespread adoption in Scandinavia (pp. 301–2). Glauser also provides a sub-division of Old Norse romances, distinguishing between the core group of direct translations from Latin, Old French, and Anglo-Norman models; early fourteenth-century indigenous Icelandic romances; and younger late-medieval Icelandic romances (pp. 303–4). In doing so, the long modern heritage of writing romances in Iceland is helpfully discussed as well as the capability for chivalric motifs or sequences to form constituent elements of texts from other genres. Glauser provides convincing evidence for at least a rudimentary medieval awareness of romance as a coherent genre, as suggested both by codicological evidence and analysis of the usage of the term *riddarasögur* (pp. 304–9). The chapter concludes with a case study of *Flóres saga*

ok Blankiflúr that highlights the sophisticated and extensive intertextual relationships generated by the spread of Romance writing across Europe (pp. 309–11).

While *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre. Studies in Old Norse Literature* concludes with a useful annotated taxonomy of Old Norse genres, a key conclusion of this text as a whole is that the concept of genre is subject to extreme mutability when applied to this body of literature, both due to the creativity of medieval authors and the range of highly productive approaches to genre contemporary scholars are employing. This volume as a whole stands as a testament to the ability to centre genre in excellent research into Old Norse literature, without the necessity of attempting to conclusively categorise texts.

BOOK REVIEW

Phelpstead, Carl, 2020. *An Introduction to the Sagas of Icelanders*. Gainesville, Fl.: University Press of Florida.

Eduardo Ramos

Perspectives on, and approaches to, the *Íslendingasögur* ('Sagas of Icelanders') have varied over the last century, and Carl Phelpstead's book successfully uses identity as a common historical thread to introduce new audiences to this rich genre of the Icelandic saga tradition. The book focuses primarily on national, religious, and legal identity as well as gender and sexuality, the natural and the supernatural, and alterity. It also participates in the recent shift in Old Norse-Icelandic literary studies to more theoretical approaches by addressing questions raised by feminist and queer theories, postcolonial studies, and ecocriticism. The main text of the book is a lean 165 pages, carefully organized and written in clear accessible prose, making it an excellent introduction to the *Íslendingasögur* for non-specialists.

Chapter 1, entitled 'Encountering the Sagas', begins with a brief case study of a scene from *Eiríks saga rauða* that highlights issues of identity and situates the *Íslendingasögur* in the broader corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature. The scene from *Eiríks saga* involves an encounter that ends in conflict between a group indigenous to North America and Norse-speakers attempting to settle in the region they have named Vínland. After the Norse-speaking men retreat from the natives, a woman named Freydís frightens a native away by slapping her exposed breast with a sword. Phelpstead analyses the episode's treatment of gender and ethnic identity to illustrate how the text exposes the contingent nature of beliefs on identity and provides a site for their contestation, revealing the inadequacy of identity based on difference (p. 6). Phelpstead's analysis effectively demonstrates how the sagas can address and challenge various aspects of identity even in short episodes. This analysis is followed by a description of different kinds of sagas beyond the *Íslendingasögur* that are the focus of the book, questions regarding the language of the

sagas, usually referred to as *dǫnsk tunga*, the 'Danish Tongue', in contemporary sources, and the modern terminology used to describe that language, with Old Norse-Icelandic gaining popularity amongst scholars. While the two halves of the chapter can seem unrelated, together they signal how the rest of the book explores identity in the *Íslendingasögur* while situating these texts historically and in the scholarship.

The second chapter, 'Traditions in Time', argues that saga texts 'do not have single fixed identities but are constituted through a complex process of oral and literary creation, re-creation, and conservation' (p. 13). The chapter begins by providing historical context for the composition of the *Íslendingasögur*, neatly divided into subsections on the settlement period, conversion to Christianity, and the Sturlung Age. Phelpstead notes that recent DNA studies have demonstrated that a significant percentage of the original settlers of Iceland came from Britain and Ireland, and that a strand of scholarship on saga writing argues that Irish models may have influenced the development of Icelandic sagas. The section on historical context concludes by arguing that, in the absence of aristocratic courts and urban centres, Icelandic literary culture was fostered in monasteries and certain farms. Throughout this section, Phelpstead effectively familiarises readers with milestones in medieval Icelandic history that influenced saga production, and the notes point readers to fuller studies of the events and periods covered. The chapter next addresses source traditions for the sagas, both oral and literary. Phelpstead summarises the debate between the 'free prose' tradition, which held that texts circulated in fixed and reliable oral form from shortly after the events they recount, and the 'book prose' tradition, which held that sagas, while incorporating oral tradition, were the written works of individual authors. Phelpstead then notes that medieval sources from Iceland, Norway, and Denmark all attest to the vitality of Icelandic oral tradition. Next, Phelpstead offers a treatment of skaldic verse, which is sometimes presented as source material for saga prose, with a breakdown of the notoriously complicated *dróttkvætt* meter. Taking a verse attributed to Gunnlaugr *ormstunga*, Phelpstead uses bold font to mark alliteration in the verse, underlining to mark full rhyme, and italics to mark half-rhymes, thus providing a visual representation of the intricacies of *dróttkvætt* poetry that is accessible even to those unfamiliar with the skaldic tradition. Hagiography and romances are presented as written traditions that influenced the development of saga writing, with attention to the translation project initiated by King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway in the 1220s. Finally, the chapter turns to the textual transmission of the sagas and the variance, both intentional and otherwise, that arises from the copying of manuscripts over time. Phelpstead notes that most published

editions of sagas 'do not reflect adequately the complexity and variance of the manuscript tradition', (p. 48) to the growing dissatisfaction of scholars and critics, but that digital editions may change this. By providing a broad survey of the historical context, source material, and preservation of the sagas, the chapter both makes a case for the unstable identity of the sagas as texts and provides the necessary groundwork for the chapters that follow.

Chapter 3, 'Icelandic Identities', focuses on three aspects of identity: nationality, gender and sexuality, and the distinction between human and nonhuman. Phelpstead argues that it is justifiable to call medieval Iceland a nation without claiming it was a nation-state in the modern sense, since medieval Icelanders had a shared narrated memory, sense of geographical belonging, a common language, and common culture. Particular attention is given to the role of the law in Icelandic national identity. The section on gender and sexuality begins by analysing the saga corpus to highlight aspects of the varied roles of women, noting, for example, that of the twelve divorces described in the sagas, nine are initiated by women. Turning to saga scholarship on gender, Phelpstead addresses Carol Clover's one-gender model noting that despite its influence, the model 'is not entirely unproblematic' and has been extended to other Old Norse-Icelandic texts by scholars 'sometimes rather uncritically' (p. 72). Nevertheless, Phelpstead devotes more space to exemplifying Clover's model than to more recent scholarship on gender that would have strengthened the review of the literature. After providing an analysis of vocabulary associated with gender transgression in the sagas, Phelpstead draws on the work of Judith Butler for his own analysis, stating that 'it is possible to see gendered *identities* in the sagas of Icelanders as constituted by *behaviour* (i.e., acts) rather than by any "essential" orientation' (p. 81). Finally, the chapter's section on the human and nonhuman provides an analysis of relations between humans and animals, as well as what might be broadly construed as the supernatural. Phelpstead draws attention to instances in *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga* where humans refer to animals as their *fóstri* ('foster father'), implying a manner of kinship between these humans and their animals. Again, there is a focus on crossing boundaries, as when humans shape-shift into animals or when revenants cross from death back into life. The chapter makes a convincing case for how the sagas explore identity through depictions of the law and social transgressions.

The fourth chapter, 'Reading Selected Sagas', applies the materials covered in chapters two and three to provide readings centring identity in various sagas. Despite the chapter's title, however, the first reading is not of a saga but a *þáttr*, *Auðunar þáttr*

vestfirzka. After providing a brief overview of the *þættir* as a distinct genre, Phelpstead analyses national, gender, and species identities in the story. The rest of the chapter offers readings of some popular sagas, including Poet's Sagas, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, the Vínland Sagas, Outlaw Sagas, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Njáls saga*. In each reading, Phelpstead provides a plot summary with analysis of identity. This approach makes for lively readings that are accessible even to audiences that may not have prior familiarity with the texts being discussed.

Chapter 5, 'The Sagas in English', traces the history of translating the sagas into English. Phelpstead begins by noting that the 'post-medieval reception of Old Norse-Icelandic literature in the English-speaking world has often been stimulated or sustained by beliefs about identity' (p. 148). He points out that of the *Íslendingasögur*, the Vínland sagas (*Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grælendinga saga*), which tell of the European discovery of North America, have been translated to English the most frequently. Apart from these two, the earliest saga to appear in English was *Njáls saga* in George Webbe Dasent's (1817–1896) translation. Phelpstead identifies Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924) as producing the most substantial translations of sagas by a Victorian, though these remained largely unpublished. He states that Baring-Gould was motivated by 'ludicrously fanciful ideas about his own Nordic ancestry' (p. 152). Among the major translators of sagas into English, Phelpstead names William Morris (1834–1896) and Eiríkr Magnússon (1833–1913), who shifted attention in the English-speaking world toward the *Íslendingasögur* and away from *fornaldarsögur* and *konungasögur*, as well as their rivals F. York Powell and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, who criticized Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon's use of archaisms. The book also considers Muriel Press, who published the first English translation of *Laxdæla saga* in 1899, and fantasy novelist E. R. Eddison, who claimed that no Englishman can read *Egils saga* 'without becoming aware that this is not a foreign book but curiously his own, curiously English' (pp. 156–57). The final translation treated in the chapter is the five-volume *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* edited by Viðar Hreinsson and published by Leifur Eiríksson in 1997. This translation project, carried out by a team of Icelandic and English-speaking scholars, includes forty *Íslendingasögur* and forty-nine *þættir*. Phelpstead provides sample excerpts from the various translations covered in the chapter, giving readers a taste of translation styles. He also notes how beliefs about identity led English speakers to translate the sagas or affected their translation styles. He states:

> 'From the eighteenth century through to the mid-twentieth, many translators claimed some kind of special affinity between medieval Iceland and modern English-speaking peoples. A genre that I have argued is profoundly concerned with questions of Icelandic identity was thus enlisted in support of beliefs about British and American identity' (p. 161).

However, Phelpstead notes how the *Complete Sagas of Icelander*s translation balances national and international perspectives arguing for the global relevance of these sagas. In the book's brief concluding chapter, Phelpstead makes the case that 'encountering the otherness of the sagas can lead to an enhanced understanding not only of the past and the texts it produced but also of our own identities in the present' (p. 165).

Beyond its main chapters, the book contains several helpful reference tools. It includes a pronunciation guide to help English speakers approximate the modern Icelandic pronunciation of names, texts, and places mentioned, and a glossary for various items of note. Particularly helpful is a table listing all the *Íslendingasögur* along with the Íslenzk fornrit volumes in which they are found, their English title and location in the *Complete Sagas of Icelander*s, the possible dates of composition suggested by these major editions, and a selection of other English translations. Since the book is an introduction, many of the topics brought up are by necessity treated in limited depth, but the notes Phelpstead provides consistently point the reader to more in-depth studies on these topics. The notes also include older studies sometimes going back to the nineteenth century, landmark studies from throughout the twentieth century, and newer scholarship that signal where the field is headed. Throughout the book, Phelpstead not only identifies modern trends in Old Norse-Icelandic literary studies, but also remarks on where the field has lagged, such as with regard to editions of sagas that reflect the variance of the surviving material and the limited attention devoted to environment and human-animal relations. These elements together provide a solid foundation regarding the state of the field.

My criticisms of the book amount to a few typographical errors and a few places where I was left wanting more. For example, on page 126 during the reading of *Grettis saga*, the book reads, 'The saga now switches attention to Ǫnundr's son, Ásmundr, the future father of Grettir'. Ásmundr is in fact Ǫnundr's grandson. This is obviously a typographical error, since Ǫnundr is correctly identified as Grettir's great-grandfather on

the previous page, but the error could cause some confusion for readers unfamiliar with *Grettis saga*. I would have also liked to see more on North American reception of the *Íslendingasögur*. The book's preface opens by recounting how 'On May 26, 2017, two people were killed and another injured in Portland, Oregon, allegedly by a man who had earlier that month posted "Hail Vinland!!! Hail Victory!!!" on Facebook' (p. ix). Given that Phelpstead identifies how high the stakes of reception can be, a short chapter on the modern reception of the sagas in the English-speaking world would have been welcome.

Despite these quibbles, I enthusiastically recommend *An Introduction to the Sagas of Icelanders* to anyone wanting to learn more about this genre of medieval Icelandic literature. It successfully provides the background to a variety of approaches to the sagas, analyses the state of the field's critical studies, and offers a roadmap for further reading on whatever areas pique the readers' interest. Phelpstead achieves all of this in a succinct, clear, and engaging prose sprinkled with humour that is sure to appeal to saga fans.

BOOK REVIEW

Virtanen, Pirjo Kristiina, Pigga Keskitalo, and Torjer Olsen, 2020. *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts*. Leiden: Brill. [1]

Solveig Marie Wang

A result of the workshops of the interdisciplinary network Indigenous Research Methodologies in Academia (2017–2019), *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts* addresses the conceptualisation and practice of Indigenous research methodologies in Saami and North European academic contexts.[2] By drawing on a diverse range of research approaches grounded in Saami and global contexts, the twenty-one authors of the book, all based in Sápmi, present the theoretical and practical implications of conducting research in these contexts (p. 3). The book consists of nine chapters discussing different methodological approaches to Indigenous research, in addition to the helpful introduction and epilogue written by the three editors, Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, Pigga Keskitalo, and Torjer Olsen.

The editors address the current gap in contemporary Indigenous scholarship and present the three-fold rationale behind the book, being (1) the need to contextualise the starting point and meaning of Saami research and methodologies employed in this research, (2) how academic discussions of Indigenous studies on both regional and local levels are connected to the practicality of doing Indigenous research today, and (3) how ideas from practitioners (which is not defined) connect to global debates within Indigenous studies (p. 1). The book is aimed at those interested in Indigenous and Saami

[1] This review, although authored by one of *Apardjòn*'s Managing Editors, was subjected to the same peer review process as per the journal's standard practice. To ensure impartiality and to avoid any conflict of interest, the Editor recused themselves from the editorial handling of this review.

[2] For the usage of Saami in English, rather than the more commonly used Sámi, see Marte Spangen *et al.*, eds, 2020. *Currents of Saami Pasts: Recent Advances in Saami Archaeology* (Monographs of theArchaeological Society of Finland 9). Helsinki: Archaeological Society of Finland, p. 3.

research methodologies, as well as those curious as to 'how to implement decolonial approaches into research' (p. 6). As such, the book confronts the so-called Western episteme of academic research (p. 11) and emphasises the need for employing decolonial tools in research on Indigenous societies and peoples. The concept of the Western episteme ('Western'; the 'West') is described as a particular ideological perspective that is in 'opposition to what is Indigenous' (pp. 10–11; see also p. 117).

Chapter 1 is written by the editors and addresses what they call the 'genealogy' of Indigenous Studies, and particularly how this is conceptualised and practised in Saami contexts. Throughout the chapter, the authors highlight the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous ways of doing research in academia. The authors place particular emphasis on the monumental work *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999/2012) by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, something which is continued in the other chapters. The chapter primarily acknowledges the importance of decolonising academia, and how, generally, there is a profound need to 'move beyond the suppression and denial of Indigenous languages, histories, and knowledge bases', rather swapping this suppression for Indigenous concepts, methods and/or Institutions (p. 13). In this discussion, Virtanen, Keskitalo, and Olsen highlight the concept of *Indigenisation* and the importance of self-determination (p. 17).

In chapter 2, Jelena Porsanger and Irja Seurujärvi-Kari present a helpful overview of what they coin 'Sámi thinkers' and their methodological importance for research today. These 'thinkers' consist of Saami people with formal academic education and traditional knowledge-based competence, from the 1600s to today, whom the editors treat as the forerunners of *Sámi duktama máttut* ('Saami methodological thinking') (p. 33). Before going into these, the authors introduce the holistic '*lávvu* method' (pp. 36–37), named after the movable dwelling structure (translated to 'tent') associated with the Saami, to visualise Saami conceptualisation of Indigenous research methodologies (p. 37). This usage of the traditional Saami dwelling structure to conceptualise Indigenous methodology is especially productive since it combines Indigenous research methodology on a global and a Saami level.

In the third chapter, Pigga Keskitalo, Torkel Rasmussen, Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, and Rauni Äärela-Vihriäla use their own personal experiences as Indigenous researchers in Western academic settings to highlight the usefulness of adopting Indigenous research methodologies on academic levels (pp. 66–67). The authors pay attention to the paradigm shift of Indigenous research in the early 2000s onwards (notably also discussing previous

paradigms such as ethnography and *Lappology*), and especially emphasise the works of Rauna Kuokkanen and Shawn Wilson. Their discussion is primarily rooted in the call to make Indigenous research reflect Indigenous contexts and worldviews, and that this research should be based on an Indigenous paradigm rather than an Indigenous perspective (p. 71). They argue that the production of Indigenous research can, using this approach, be separated from the Western episteme (p. 70) through the creation of a particular vocabulary (p. 79) and discourse related to Indigenous values (p. 80).

In chapter 4, Hanna Outakoski writes about two literacy studies conducted in communities in Sápmi (by herself) and how explicit incorporation of Indigenous methodologies into literacy studies can be made possible through active awareness of Indigenous research principles. Confronting the view in Indigenous studies that the field of literacy studies is insignificant in terms of implementing Indigenous methodologies (p. 86), Outakoski stresses colonial processes of writing, Western literacy, and the forceful loss of one's Indigenous mother tongue as significant factors behind this implementation. The author cautiously, but successfully, defends literacy as an enrichening factor that should not be regarded as part of a Western episteme of progress that increases the gap between the Indigenous, their heritage, and traditional knowledge (p. 89). The chapter concludes with an emphasis on the accessibility of Indigenous research to the Indigenous communities under study, and that such research should be required to have long-term real life positive and practical implications for these communities.

Hanna Guttorm, Lea Kantonen, Britt Kramvig, and Aili Pyhälä highlight the significance of what they coin 'Decolonized Research-Storying' in chapter 5. They achieve this by drawing on their personal experiences as Indigenous women in academia and confront the generalised 'Western academic standard' (p. 114). By inviting *Eana* (the *Earth* in North Saami) to be the narrator of the chapter, the authors emphasise concepts like feminist critique (p. 119), 'friction' (p. 121), and 'care' (pp. 136–37) as important for Indigenous Research Methodologies. Particularly intriguing is Britt Kramvig and Aili Pyhälä's narration of their personal experiences during fieldwork in Indigenous communities (pp. 123–25) that are used to demonstrate how 'Indigenous' narratives are often not taken seriously in academia. Their stories are thought-provoking and certainly succeed in challenging a Western episteme (pp. 12–14).

In chapter 6, Jelena Porsanger, Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, and Ragnhild Lydia develop a research methodology appropriate for exploring and conceptualising the role of female leadership in Saami contexts. As with the *lávvu* method introduced in chapter 2, the

authors of chapter 6 employ Saami cultural images to visualise methodologies appropriate for Indigenous and particularly Saami contexts. By using the *solju* (a breastpin used as part of Saami women's dress) method (p. 147), they holistically connect the actions and values of Indigenous research and connect it to female leadership (p. 151). The authors emphasise concepts like collectivity (p. 156), memory (p. 154), and *muittašit ovttas* ('shared remembering') (pp. 152–54) to explore the politics of gender equality in Sápmi (pp. 160–65). Primarily, the chapter is successful in making 'theory talk' (p. 167) and contextualises the proposed methodology as a connecting force between the method itself and 'our histories, our senses, our practices, and values' (p. 168).

Chapter 7, written by Marja-Liisa Olthuis, Trond Trosterud, Erika Katjaana Sarivaara, Petter Morottaja, and Eljas Niskanen, reflects on the methodological implications of the Aanaar (Inari) Saami revitalisation project *Čyeti čälled anarâskeliân*. The chapter gives an overview of the statistics of the Aanaar Saami language and its speakers (pp. 177–79), before going into the pedagogical principles behind the project that were based in the creation and/or maintenance of literacy in Aanaar Saami (pp. 179–80). These attempts were grounded in setting up new writing domains and strengthening the writing culture of the participants, forming parts of writing groups within Aanaar Saami communities (p. 192). The authors emphasise the need for bringing this literacy into professional domains like academia, and perhaps more importantly, highlight the very human and personal domains of literacy and the empowerment behind being able to write in a language previously removed forcibly by the nation-states (p. 195).

In chapter 8, Attila Paksi and Ilona Kivinen relate their experiences working with the Khwe San in Namibia and the North Saami in Finland and Norway, respectively, and present two sets of principles (*Photovoice* and language recording) related to working with these communities. The authors employ key principles and approaches of Indigenous studies to contextualise the 'specificities' of conducting research with Indigenous peoples (pp. 202–4), before going into their 'own story' as a conscious act to state positionality and reflect on epistemological history (p. 205). Having discussed this history and his fieldwork with the Khwe San, Paksi sombrely remarks that 'the entrenched positional superiority of a researcher exists not only in academic circles but also in the mind of Indigenous peoples, which makes it even more challenging to form a legitimate and meaningful alliance' (p. 213). Touching on difficult aspects of Indigenous Research such as power structures (pp. 212–18) and the polarisation of Indigeneity and non-Indigeneity (p. 219), the authors highlight that acknowledgement of power relations should be at the forefront

of research in Indigenous Studies (p. 223). The importance of acknowledging such power relations is emphasised throughout the different chapters (pp. 36, 48–49, 53–55, 69, 86, 88, 149, 157, 167, 201–2, 206, 214, 216–217, 223, 234, 247) and is particularly clear in the epilogue when the editors articulate the necessity to constantly remind oneself of 'our deep responsibility' (p. 256).

In the ninth and final chapter, Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen writes about her role as a 'northern' researcher carrying out research with Indigenous Amazonian peoples. The chapter is introduced with the question 'how will this benefit the community?' (p. 229), which is sustained in the author's reflections on the possibilities for combining Indigenous Amazonian agendas with academic research (p. 231). Virtanen repeats the importance of acknowledging power relations (p. 234) in Indigenous Research, but also reflects on the negative impact of research activities rooted in this acknowledgement that adopt participative approaches (p. 240). The author reflects on Amazonian Indigenous knowledge and, in this context, her stories about the research agenda in contrast or connected to the Indigenous agenda are especially productive (p. 245). This dichotomy of contrast and connection is repeated throughout the various chapters (pp. 51, 92, 163, 223, for example), showcasing the constant necessity of researchers of Indigenous Studies to practice 'self-assessment', as articulated by the editors in their epilogue (p. 256). The chapter concludes that Indigenous sovereignty in research still 'needs to be critically looked at' (p. 247).

At the end of the book, there is a short epilogue written by the editors (pp. 254–56), addressing the need to have 'an anchored and reflexive approach to doing [Indigenous] research' in academia (p. 254). The editors stress that the present book should not be treated as a methodology textbook, which it does come across as (especially after reading the introductory chapter), but rather as an 'attempt to take part in an ongoing struggle to Indigenize research methodologies' (p. 254). Lastly, the editors accentuate the significance of self-assessment and responsibility and emphasise the need for researchers to commit to the nurturing of Indigenous agendas. For this, they state that 'there is no magic or immediate solution' (p. 256).

Virtanen, Keskitalo, and Olsen's book is a complex and significant contribution to the Indigenisation of research methodologies in Saami and global contexts. The diverse chapters provide a helpful overview of how the creation or implementation of research methodologies specifically designed with Indigeneity and an Indigenous agenda in mind is helpful in, and crucial for, both Indigenous Studies and academia in general. While the

chapters certainly consider Indigenous methodologies, more in-depth analysis or definition of the approaches behind these would have been helpful. Furthermore, while the chapters succeed in articulating the need for Indigenous research methodologies both in Indigenous and Western academic contexts, few chapters actually succeed in explaining how these should be implemented, practically speaking (see chapter 1). However, the editors do address the difficulties of defining such approaches in their epilogue (p. 254), explaining that these 'concepts' are not always easily defined. Nevertheless, the book does succeed in making 'theory talk', especially through the fieldwork analyses presented throughout. Particularly significant are reflections across the chapters based on the authors' own experiences (see chapters 5, 8, and 9) that challenge the Western episteme of doing research. These examples are thought-provoking and, at times, confrontational. This confrontation is especially productive for the decolonising aim of the book and quite clearly demonstrates the values behind adopting Indigenous Research Methodologies in Indigenous Studies as well as more generally in academia (see chapter 3). The book is successful in closing a gap in current scholarship by efficiently articulating the meaning and importance of Indigenous and Saami research methodologies, in addition to emphasising the broader practicalities of academic discussion of the field of Indigenous studies itself. Ultimately, the work is a significant contribution to the establishment of an independent Indigenous Research paradigm (as opposed to the more generalised 'Indigenous perspective') and introduces effective discussions on communal responsibility and care as key in doing Indigenous Research.

BOOK REVIEW

Merkelbach, Rebecca and Gwendolyne Knight, eds, 2020. *Margins, Monsters, and Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Basil Arnould Price

Margins, Monsters, and Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture, edited by Gwendolyne Knight and Rebecca Merkelbach, aims to unsettle. By focusing on what is unsettling – the titular margins, monsters, and deviants – this collection of essays seeks to unsettle underlying, unchallenged positions in Old Norse literary studies. As the editors outline in their introduction, this volume uses alterity as a lens to interrogate power imbalances in Old Norse literature as well as within 'the world outside the text', for the purposes of 'challeng[ing] and deconstruct[ing] these intra- and extra-textual discourses of deviation and "Otherness"' (p. 12). To my mind, this volume centres around three broad, interconnected questions. First, who is 'othered' in Old Norse literature and what new understandings of medieval Scandinavian literature and culture are afforded by focusing on these figures? How are cultural hegemonies reinforced through these literary representations – but also what alternatives do they gesture towards? Second, what texts are 'othered' by Old Norse literary scholarship, and for what reasons? Relatedly, how does alterity provide a vocabulary for attending to the possibilities presented by 'othered' texts, or for dismantling problematic assumptions of their critical merit? Finally, do 'margins, monsters, and deviants' necessitate praxes that blur the disciplinary boundaries between Old Norse literary studies and other areas of medieval, literary, and cultural studies?

Margins, Monsters, and Deviants engages with these questions in a variety of ways through its eight chapters, which are grouped into three thematic sections: 'Paranormal Beings', 'Rogue Sagas', and 'Marginality and Interconnectedness'. That said, the robust introduction, composed by Merkelbach and Knight, engages directly with the question that underlies the volume as a whole: what methodologies or theoretical perspectives are

needed to discuss alterity in medieval Scandinavia. The editors propose that the subject(s) and interdisciplinary approach of this volume 'attempts to dismantle the binary inherent to the "othering" process', an aim furthered by 'bringing in perspectives from literary and cultural theory (postcolonial theory and theories on gaps and absences to name a few)' (pp. 11, 15). The methodological and disciplinary diversity of the included essays speak to this commitment to multidisciplinary collaboration, and the introduction speaks to the editors' engagement with cultural theory, and postcolonial studies in particular. There are good reasons to begin any discussion of alterity by turning to the foundational voices of Edward Said and Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak, whom the editors introduce in a brief but highly informative summary of approaches to the dichotomy of 'Self' and 'Other' in literary and cultural studies and who are also included within their useful bibliography of secondary criticism related to the theme of 'Alterity, Monstrosity, and Deviation in Old Norse Literature' (pp. 10–11, 17). Attending to this bibliography points to the strengths of this volume, but also raises some productive questions about who and what is included within the remit of a nascent 'subaltern turn' in Old Norse studies.

The bibliography provides an overview of some of the most significant research on alterities from within Old Norse literary studies, despite the editors' disclaimer that this bibliography is necessarily partial, since 'the amount of material published on paranormal, deviant, and 'Other' aspects of Old Norse literature and culture is too vast to accomplish a complete compilation of available scholarship' (p. 17). Refreshingly, said bibliography also includes scholars not grounded in medieval Scandinavian studies or even pre-modern studies, such as Said (1978) and Spivak (1994) but also other postcolonial theorists, like Memmi (1991), Pratt (1992), and more recent voices such as El-Tayeb (2011). The inclusion of this scholarship invites the field of Old Norse studies to consider not only the applicability of these approaches to medieval Scandinavian literature, but also to reflect upon whether readings of medieval Scandinavian alterities would be nuanced by greater engagement with cultural theory. Although it would be unreasonable to expect this bibliography – which is explicitly not an exhaustive survey – to include anything beyond ironically canonical criticism on alterity, the insightful introduction would be further sharpened by further consideration of how alterity has been theorised in the context of critical race studies (and Black studies in particular), disability studies, Indigeneity studies, and queer studies, amongst other allied frameworks. One of the thinkers included in this bibliography, El-Tayeb (2011), specifically engages in a 'creolization of theory' because of the multivalences of alterity, eclectically but purposefully drawing from a variety of

theoretical perspectives to inform her approach to ethnic and racialised minoritarian identities within and against European hegemonies (El-Tayeb 2011: xiii-xix). With this introduction, the editors imply that such a 'creolised' approach to alterity is needed in order to dismantle hegemonic narratives within and without Old Norse literature, inviting the field to further consider what challenging the conceptual category of 'otherness' in these texts would look like and mean.

The first section, on 'Paranormal Beings', has two essays dedicated to shapeshifters. The first, by Knight, considers whether shapeshifting constituted a distinct category within Old Norse literature through a lexical analysis of words commonly associated with shapeshifting before turning to survey three 'differentiations' of shapeshifting across the Old Norse literary corpus. Given that this volume seeks to investigate the 'power imbalances within the text as well as those that the text invites its reader to perpetuate', Knight's investigation of the association between *Finnar* (likely analogues of the Indigenous Sámi peoples) and shapeshifting in Old Norse literature is particularly relevant to the aims of this volume (p. 12). Though Knight admits that this study might raise more questions than it answers, she offers a useful starting point for interrogating and dismantling the intersections of racialised and bestialised figures in Old Norse narratives. The second, by Minjie Su, approaches the Old Norwegian *Bisclaretz ljóð* through a comparative study of this text with kennings for wolf found across Old Norse poetry. She convincingly demonstrates how attending to kennings offers new insight into a seemingly unrelated prose text, as well as indicating the utility of this methodology to studies of 'monstrous' figures like the werewolf. Her methodology also threatens to destabilise the artificially constructed boundaries between genres of poetry and prose, and raises questions about what kennings might reveal beyond the obvious dichotomy of beast and man. Although Su's essay focuses on the hierarchical relationship between werewolf and king, reading her chapter after Knight's made me wonder: what do kennings tell us, not just about class stratification, but also about identity markers, such as (dis)ability, gender, race, or queerness? Both essays provide engaging initial forays into shapeshifting as a conceit to think more broadly about intersectionality (and alterity) in medieval Scandinavia.

Given the similar focus of the former two chapters, the last essay in this section is an outlier. Tom Grant and Jonathan Y. H. Hui provide a thorough investigation of the enigmatic figure Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir, surveying the texts in which this figure appears to point to variations in his characterisation, particularly with respect to the

attitude that Goðmundr expresses towards Christianity. The breadth and depth of this analysis affords approaching Goðmundr as an entry point into the revolving 'cast' and varied concerns of the *Fornaldarsögur*. The authors foreground the mutability and fluidity of Goðmundr's character, but the question of his alterity is always at the edge of their analysis, never brought to the forefront of discussion. The authors clearly demonstrate that Goðmundr confounds categorical classification but, given the thematic focus of this volume, I think that this positionality demands further theorising.

Two of most compelling essays are in the second section, on 'Rogue Sagas'. Rebecca Merkelbach reviews how the 'post-classical' sagas, a corpus of maligned *Íslendingasögur*, have been constructed as 'Other' by scholarship. Her analysis moves beyond simply revealing how these texts have been 'Othered', but also thinks through the possibilities that this alterity affords. Since these texts subvert familiar social and generic norms, the post-classical texts provide an alternative to the world imagined by the classical *Íslendingasögur* and, perhaps, necessitate a different critical approach. Merkelbach's contention that these sagas 'collapse categories that are supposedly firm and stable' fulfils the wider aims of the volume: demonstrating that approaching Old Norse literature through the framework of alterity not only dismantles hegemonic ways of knowing and being, but affords alternatives (p. 123). The whimsical yet rigorous essay by Joanne Shortt Butler likewise realises the productivity of 'alterity' as a lens for Old Norse literature. More than any chapter in this volume, Butler embraces the creolisation of theory proposed by El-Tayeb, flitting from Italo Calvino's postmodern novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979) to Mark Z. Danielewski's experimental nightmare *House of Leaves* (2000), from Derridean deconstruction to Lichtenstein and Brontë, in order to chart the intersections of absence and alterity in the fragmentary *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. Both essays stand out not only for revealing how alterity functions within and without these texts, but also for uncovering how these 'othered texts' make meaning in non-normative ways, with promising implications.

The third section, on 'Marginality and Interconnectedness', focuses on cross-cultural and multi-ethnic confrontations, interactions, and interpretations in Old Norse texts. The first essay, by Roderick W. McDonald, considers how Old Norwegian texts imagine the Iberian Peninsula, and how *riddarasögur* 'other' the peoples and practices of Spain. He offers a thoughtful and highly interdisciplinary survey of the socio-political and economic conditions that lead to these representations, and further engagement with the idea of 'rupture' – a concept McDonald borrows from Black feminist bell hooks – seems

highly productive for thinking through how these conceptualisations of Iberia afford alternative, 'oppositional' ways of thinking and being in Old Norse literature. Csete Katona offers a similarly interdisciplinary study, focusing on cross-cultural interactions along the *Austrvegr*. With more of a historical bent than many of the chapters in this volume, Katona moves fluidly between material and textual sources to provide a grounded and rigorous introduction to the hybridity of Scandinavian and Slavic cultural practices. However, given the aims of this volume, this essay perhaps could more directly approach how concepts of alterity developed in its thorough survey of cultural exchange between disparate ethnic groups, or pose more overt questions as to what extent racialisation occurs in these encounters. An interrogation of the intersection between alterity and racialisation is vigorously pursued by Arngrímur Vídalín, in his chapter on *blámenn* ('blue-' or 'black men'). His essay provides an important boreal perspective on the ongoing discussion about the construction of race in the Middle Ages – a conversation that, as he notes, only recently has included medieval Scandinavia. Arngrímur Vídalín, like Knight, focuses on classifying the characteristics of his chosen subject, while also gesturing towards the ways in which *blámenn* confound easy categorisation. This chapter insists upon the necessity of examining these monstrous figures as racialised when attempting to analyse how the supernatural is figured in Old Norse literature – a demand which has since been echoed by scholars such as Thysse (2022), Wang (2023), and Price (2020).

The volume closes with an afterword by Ármann Jakobsson: an appropriate editorial choice, given Ármann Jakobsson's extensive research on monstrosity and alterity in Old Norse literature. Even in this brief space, Ármann Jakobsson offers a sharp and unsettling reading of *Grœnlendinga saga* that illustrates the necessity of an intersectional and self-reflexive approach to literary depictions of supernatural alterity in medieval Scandinavia.

No one volume can entirely deconstruct the discursive production of alterity in the discipline of Old Norse literary studies and in the literature itself, but *Margins, Monsters, and Deviants* offers an important reconsideration of the categorical assumptions that underlie the discipline of Old Norse literary studies. This volume invites further consideration of how different methodological and theoretical perspectives may illuminate what has been overlooked in texts both familiar and unfamiliar, and challenges medievalists to reflect critically upon the boundaries of our discipline, and our own complicity in upholding these borders.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Tara Athanasiou received her BA in social anthropology from the University of Cambridge and an MLitt in Viking Studies with Distinction from the University of the Highlands and Islands' Institute for Northern Studies. Her primary research interests are gender and mobility in the Viking Age and early medieval period, and the depiction of 'otherness' in Old Norse sources. Her MLitt dissertation examined gendered identities in the Viking-Age diaspora and was awarded Best Dissertation Award 2020 by the Institute of Northern Studies. Tara has recently commenced her PhD research at the University of the Highlands and Islands.

Jasmin Higgs is undertaking her PhD at the Centre for the Study of the Viking Age at the University of Nottingham and is awaiting her viva in March 2025. Her PhD research focuses on determining the functions of runic script using methodological approaches from historical pragmatics. She received her previous degrees, BA English and MA Viking and Anglo-Saxon Studies, from the University of Nottingham. Jasmin is currently an analyst working in the research consulting field.

Rosemary Kelly is a PhD candidate in the School of English and Digital Humanities at University College Cork, focusing on gender and genre in Old English literature, and is also the current Editor-in-Chief of *Apardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies*. Her primary research interests concern gender (particularly masculinity), genre, and translation in Old English and Old Norse literature.

Tom Morcom is currently an Associate Lecturer in Old Norse Literature and Language at UCL. He completed his DPhil at the University of Oxford in 2020 with a thesis entitled 'Structuring Disruption: Narrative Insurrection in *Morkinskinna*'. His primary area of expertise is in narratological approaches to Old Norse saga literature, but his research interests also include: old age, masculinities, disability studies, insult, elegiac poetry, and early medieval English hagiography.

Basil Arnould Price is currently a John. W. Baldwin postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Early Global Studies at UCLA. He is also an Associate Researcher at the University of York, where he completed his PhD in Medieval Studies as a Humanities Research Centre Fellow and Wolfson Scholar. His research broadly focuses on the intersections of colonialism, racialisation, and queer embodiment in Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic literature. He is the first editor of the coedited volume *Medieval Mobilities: Gendered Bodies, Spaces, and Movements* and an assistant editor for *Medieval Feminist Forum*.

Eduardo Ramos is Assistant Professor of Literature at Arizona State University. His work has appeared in *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, *Literature Compass*, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, and *What is North?: Imagining the North from Ancient Times to the Present Day*.

Solveig Marie Wang is an anticolonial researcher of medieval Fennoscandia. Wang is currently conducting a postdoctoral project for the *Interdisziplinäres Forschungszentrum Ostseeraum* (Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research) at the University of Greifswald, and she is also affiliated with the project 'Mission before Colonization. Towards a non-lachrymose history of religious contact in Greenland and Sápmi, 1000–1700'. She completed her PhD – 'Decolonising Medieval Fennoscandia' – at the University of Aberdeen in 2021, which has since been published by De Gruyter in their 'Religious Minorities in the North' book series. Her research interests lie in the medieval North, with a focus on the history of Indigenous peoples, postcolonial theory, and decolonial frameworks.

Jonas Zeit-Altpeter is a PhD Candidate in Old Norse Studies pursuing a double degree at the Universities of Bergen and Bonn, and teaching at Bonn and Cologne. He holds an MA in Medieval Studies and a BA in English, German, and Scandinavian Studies from the University of Bonn. His research focuses on the interactions of Old Norse and Latin literatures, especially learned and Christian texts.

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This volume is also accompanied by five book reviews by Jonas Zeit-Altpeter, Tom Morcom, Eduardo Ramos, Solveig Marie Wang, and Basil Arnould Price.

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