

Book of Abstracts

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Scribal Performance and Eddic Mythological Poems: From 13th-Century Sources to the Origins of Modern Editing

Frog

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The term ‘scribal performance’ developed as a way to talk about how pre-modern manuscript copyists could vary poetic texts through oral-derived knowledge and competence in the respective tradition. The concept has been extensively discussed and debated surrounding, for example, in Old English poetry, and Jonathan Ready (2019) has recently advanced the concept theoretically in his study of Homeric poetry. However, scribal performance has received almost no attention in the study of Old Norse eddic poetry. This paper outlines an approach to scribal performance as a phenomenon and the manifestations that it may take. Examples are first drawn from 13th- and 14th-century manuscripts, which demands rethinking ways that text variants have been viewed. The Codex Regius collection of eddic poetry was ‘discovered’ in the context of 17th-century Scandinavian heritage construction projects, resulting in a massive boom of manuscript copying. Although these copying practices were divorced from the oral traditions of the poems by centuries, scribes learned the poetry and its meters from written texts and engaged in scribal performances that corrected, elaborated, and even transformed poems and their content according to the knowledge they had. The practices surrounding the copying of these poems also developed annotations for variant readings alongside the selection and organization of texts into continuously morphing collections. Rather than scribal performance being terminated through the emergence of modern editing practices, the approach outlined here follows Haukur Þorgeirsson and Teresa Dröfn Njarðvík’s observation of a continuity (2015), developing it into a view of the practices evolving a critical dimension that sought to offset creative interpretation with analytical perspectives. This view is in accord with the current trend to return to the manuscript texts rather than relying in an analysis on published editions and the respective editors’ interpretations and emendations. Comparison is made across medieval cases, cases of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the rise of modern critical editing during the late 19th and early 20th century. Whereas Old Norse eddic texts tend to be viewed as static, this study highlights the dynamism of use and transmission that was likely in their

background already in the 13th century, even if the empirical evidence for that period is very thin.

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Old English *b(e)aldor* ‘prince’ and the luminous ruler

José Luis García Ramón

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OE *b(e)aldor* ‘prince’ can hardly conceal a formation different from that of OHG *balder* (gen. *-eres*, in the second Merseburger charm), irrespective of its being a god or a human, and that of the god name ON *Baldr*. The latter is the outcome of PGm. **bal-ǰ-ra-*, to be traced back to **b^hol(H)-r-ó-* ‘(the god) provided with light’ a derivative of **b^hólH-r-/*b^hélH-n-* ‘light’ (actually **b^helh₂-/*b^hlh₂-*, cf. φαλαῖρός Theocr.), as shown by R. Ginevra (2021), and the same may apply to OHG *Balder*, if it is really a god name: the connection with **b^helh₂-* is supported by a series of synonymous cognates, among others the names PCelt. **balar-o-* (OIr. *Balar* : Gaul.Lat. “*Balarus*”), **belīn-o-* (Gaul. *Belino-*, Βελεινο- : **b^hélHēn-ó-*, Sloven. *Belin*; no PCelt. **beleno-*, cf. Prósper 2017) as well as by the character itself of the god, who is referred to as ‘luminous’ (Snorri, *Gylf.* 1, 22 *hann er beztr, ... hann er svá fagr álitum ok bjartr svá at lýsir at honum ...* ‘he is the best ... he is so beauty in appearance and so bright that light shines from him’ (Ginevra 2021:197-202; 193), and as the partner of Nanna (: *Neps-dóttir* ‘sky’s (and sun’s) daughter’, who basically matches the character of IE Dawn (Ginevra 2023).

OE *b(e)aldor* ‘prince, ruler’ (of friends, of treasures *Beow.* 2566, 2428 +), also referring to God (*And* 544) and even to a queen (*Jul.* 563) takes a special position. The frequently assumed connection with OE *b(e)ald* ‘bold’, ON *ballr*, *baldr* ‘brave’, OHG *°bald* ‘bold’ (PGm. **bal-ǰa- : *b^hol-to-* of IE **b^hel(H)-* ‘to blow, swell’), implies either a special reflex of **bal-ǰa-* or the

assumption of PGmc. **bal-đra-* (**b^hol(H)-tró*), which could reflect a thematized agent noun (“derjenige, der (vor Kraft) strotzt” Schaffner 2002:168) or an abstract ‘force’ remodeled as masculine): a semantic shift /BE STRONG/ → /RULE/ raises no problem, as the word-family of IE **uelH-* ‘be strong’ Lat. *ualēre*) shows, cf. Toch. B *walo*, A *wäl* ‘king’ (ptc. **uelH-ont-/*ulH-nt-*), OIr. *flaith* ‘rule’, whence ‘prince’ (**ulH-ti-*), PCelt. **ualo-* ‘ruler’ in OIr MN *Domnall* ‘world ruler’ (**dubno-ualo-*) or ON *valdr* ‘ruler’, OE *weald* ‘power, rule’ (PGm. **ual-d-a-*, from enlarged IE **uel(H)-d^h-*).

The aim of the present contribution is to make the case of OE *b(e)aldor* ‘prince’ as the outcome of PGm. **bal-đ-ra-* ‘the one who has royal splendour’, like ON *Baldr* has it divine, and as a reflex of the image of the ‘ruler’ as the one who irradiates ‘light’ – and is himself ‘light’. The proposal finds support in the evidence for semantic shifts underlying the naming of gods and human rulers in different ancient traditions (Indo-Iranian and Greek, also Anatolian), namely /SHINE/ (and /EXCEL/) → /RULE/ (the one which in my opinion applies to OE *b(e)ard*) and, inversely, /RULE/ → /SHINE/ (e.g. Ved. [*vi-*]*rāj-a-*^{ti} ‘to beam, shine’ lexicalized from *rāj-a-*^{ti} ‘rule, reign’ [*rāj-* ‘king’], Gonda 1956:164f.; Gotō 1987:267-271). The shift /excel/, /be visible/ → /rule/ is attested for at least two roots, namely PIE **b^heh₂-* ‘be visible, shine’ (and Gk. **p^han-*, med. φαίνεσθαι) and IE **krejH-* ‘to excel’.

On PIE **b^heh₂-* ‘to be visible, shine’ → ‘to be mighty’, cf. (a) Luv. **pīha-* (**b^hēh₂-o-*) ‘luminosity, splendor’ (*Piḫa-ššašiš* ‘Storm-god of lightning’, also secondarily ‘might’, albeit limited to Storm-god (Luvoid (>)*pihatta/i-* ‘splendor, might’, Luv. *piḫa(i)mma/i-* ‘imbued with *pīha-*’ (Melchert, *Luv.Lex.* s.v.); cf. also CLuv. ^m*Piḫa-ziti-* (HLuv. *Piḫa-vir.zi/a-* ‘man of resplendence’ (Melchert 2013:39), probably inversion of *‘resplendence of man’ – (b) Hom. φώς ‘man’, actually ‘hero’ (cf. the formula /ισόθεος φώς#) from **b^hóh₂-s* “der immer wieder glänzt, leuchtet” (Peters 1993), cf. OIr *lúan laith* ‘the splendour of the warrior’ (Campanile 1978). – (c) With neo-root Gk. **p^han-* (**b^ho-nh₂-o/e-* med. ‘be visible’, García Ramón 1993) /**p^hon-*, Hom. Ἀργεῖ-φόντης “shining with whiteness/brightness (ἀργεῖο)”, reanalyzed as “endowed with superior might” (Masseti 2022).

On IE **krejH-* ‘to excel, be outstandig’ (Ved. *śrayⁱ/śrī* “sich auszeichnen, vortrefflich sein” Narten 1987=1995:340-366), also ‘be visible’, cf. Ved. *śrī-* ‘splendour’ (“Glanz, Schönheit” [Schindler 1972:47]; “glänzende Lebensstellung, Vorrang” [Narten]) of gods and heroes; *Śrī-* goddess of Splendour and Waters in the Epic [af Edholm 2017: 52ff.), also Ep. *pr̥thu-śrī-* (*MBh* 3,64,66) “dessen *śrī-* breit ist” (Narten 1987=1995: 365, 363n.44), *śréyas-* ‘resplendent’: Av. *sraiiāh-*, also *śríyas-* ‘id.’ (dat. *-áse* ‘for splendor’ *RV* I 81.4 [Indra]; 87.6a [the Marut’s]). The visibility (*śrī-*) is explicitly mentioned as characteristic of the king (e.g. *AVŚ* 4.8.3b ... *śríyam*

vāsānās carati svārociḥ “Clothing himself in splendor (*śrī-*) he goes about having his own brightness”), together with *bāla-* ‘force’ and *yāsas-* ‘glory’ (*VS* 20.3), and the body parts of the king are associated with brilliance and rule (*MS* 3.11.8 *śīro me śrīr ... / rājā me prāṇó amṛtaṃ samrāṭ cākṣur virāṭ śrótam* “My head is splendor ...; my breath is king and immortality, sight supreme ruler, hearing extensive ruler”). Homeric κρείων (**kréiH-ont-*: ‘visible, outstanding’, ‘glorious’ Nussbaum 1976: 104f.; “sich weithin auszeichnend, weithin hervorragend” Narten 1987=1995: 360-4) is equivalent to Ved. *-śrīrā-* : Av. *srīra-* ‘glorious’ (*aliter* van Beek 2014: **krāh-on-* ‘chief’ from **kṛh₂-s-* ‘head’), attested especially in the formula εὐρὸ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων # (Hom.+) ‘the one who is widely resplendent/splendorous’, is always referred to a ruler (cf. εὐρὸ κρείων · μεγάλως βασιλεύων Hsch.; → ὕπατ’ εὐρὸ ἀνάσσω Ὀλυμπίας (of Zeus, P. *Ol.* 13.24/5) or to a god (Poseidon *Il.* 8.208). The old sense of εὐρὸ κρείων ‘broadly visible’ probably lives on in → *Εὐρυ-φάνης (in the short form Εὐρυ-φῶν (a Spartan referred to as a descendent of Heracles Hdt. 8.131).

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Old Norse Elves from a Linguistic and Comparative Perspective

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Even though they feature prominently in contemporary fantasy literature (most famously in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*), within early Germanic poetic and mythological traditions elves are actually an obscure class of beings, whose nature and characterization has long been a matter of debate: see most recently, e.g., Gunnell 2007; Hall 2007; Simek 2017.

From a linguistic perspective, the Old Norse and Old English terms for 'elf', namely ON *álf-r* and OE *ælf*, have been traced back to two distinct Proto-Germanic formations **alβ-a-* and **alβ-i-*, respectively (Hall 2007: 56–57; 212–217), which have in turn been linked with the Proto-Indo-European root **(h₁)alb^h-* 'to be white' (e.g., de Vries 1962: 5–6) of Latin *albus* 'white', Hittite *alpa-* 'cloud', and Proto-Germanic **alβi/ut-* 'swan' (e.g., Old Norse *ǫlpt*, *elptr*, Old English *aelbitu*), among others.

From a semantic perspective, however, if one excludes isolated pieces of evidence like Old Norse *álf-rǫðull* 'elf-disc' (a kenning for SUN), the etymological link of the elves with the concept LIGHT finds little support in these beings' semantic associations in the extant mythological sources. Among other things, Old Norse texts rather seem to allow for the

reconstruction of, e.g., a tradition which identified the *Álfar* with the *Vanir* ‘Friends’ (e.g., in *Lokasenna*) – a group of gods who were in a patron-client relationship with the *Æsir* ‘Lords’ (Ginevra forthcoming) –, as well as of a tradition in which the *álfar* were associated with craftsmanship – e.g., the smith *Vǫlundr* is referred to as *vísi álfa* and *álfa ljóði* ‘leader of the *álfar*’ in *Vǫlundarkviða* (10.3; 13.4; 32.2), and some *dvergar* ‘craftsmen’ (Ginevra 2020: 61–121) referred to as “Ivaldi’s sons” are identified as *svart-álfar* ‘black *álfar*’ in *Skaldskaparmál* (35).

Aim of this presentation is to argue that such traditions – linking the *álfar* with patron-clientage and craftsmanship – find parallels in other Indo-European traditions and support an analysis of the Proto-Germanic formations **alβ-a-* (Old Norse *álfr*) and **alβ-i-* (Old English *ælf*) as reflexes of the Proto-Indo-European root **h₂elg^{wh}-* ‘to bring in, earn, fetch (something as profit for a master)’ (*LIV²*: 263–264), which may be reconstructed on the basis of, e.g., Ancient Greek aor. ἤλφον ‘to bring in, yield, fetch’ (of slaves sold by their master), *alphesi-boios* ‘bringing in (many) oxen’ (of maidens given in marriage by their fathers and of rivers), *alphé* ‘produce, gain’, Lithuanian *algà* ‘pay, wage’, and Vedic Sanskrit *árha^{-ti}* ‘be worth, earn’.

Among several other formations, Old Norse *álfr* and its cognates will be analyzed as reflexes of the same agentive formation **h₂e/olg^{wh}-ó-* ‘earning (profit for a master), worth’ attested by the Vedic Sanskrit formation *°arghá-* in *sahasrārghá-* ‘worth a thousand’ (of a river’s refreshment). The expected Proto-Germanic outcome of **h₂e/olg^{wh}-ó-*, namely **aly^w-a-*, would have developed into **alβ-a-* via the same frequent development of Proto-Germanic labiovelar fricatives (**x^w*, **γ^w*) to bilabial fricatives (**φ*, **β*) after liquid **l* that is also attested, e.g.:

- by the Proto-Germanic terms for ‘wolf’ and ‘she-wolf’, **wulφ-a-* (from **wulx^w-a-* < PIE **u_lk^w-o-*) and **wulβ-iġō-* (from **wuly^w-iġō-* < PIE **u_lk^w-iġh₂-*);
- by the Proto-Germanic numerals **aina-liφ-* ‘one-left = eleven’ and **twa-liφ-* ‘two-left = twelve’, whose second element **°liφ-* may reflect earlier **°lix^w-* from the same PIE **°lik^w-* attested by Lithuanian *°lik-* in *vienúo-lik-a* ‘eleven’ and *dvý-lik-a* ‘twelve’;
- by the Proto-Germanic word for ‘liver’, **liβr-ō-* (from **liy^wr-ō-*, if remodeled from PIE **iek^w-r-*).

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What’s ‘Going On’ in *Hárbarðsljóð*?

An Analysis of the Performative Nature of *Hárbarðsljóð* in a Comparative Context

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In this lecture I mean to examine *Hárbarðsljóð* as a poem that was never meant to be read but rather to be experienced in space, examining not only what the form says about the nature of performance but also what we can gather about its probable context in a particular pre-Christian hall situation. Such a close analysis means that careful consideration needs to be made of not only the recognised Nordic and Germanic *mannjafnaðr* format referred to in a number of works ranging from *Beowulf* to the Icelandic sagas, but also that of the *senna*. Here I will naturally be building on the work of a range of earlier scholars, ranging from Carol Clover, and Marcel Bax and Tineke Padmos to Joseph Harris and others, and not least my own previous examinations of Eddic performance in the hall situation. Additional comparative material will be drawn from Inuit tradition and masking traditions from Denmark and elsewhere relating to the combat between Summer and Winter. With regard to the poem itself, it is of particular interest that the poem involves a strong element of visual performance (humour in some cases being as much based as much on what is seen as what is heard), and not least ridicule of a god that seems to have been seen as a dominant figure in large parts of the Nordic area prior to the advent of Christianity. There is good reason to consider what is “going on” here.

What can we do with poetic riddles in Old Norse and Arabic?

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As the cultural historian Peter Burke once said, one of our tasks as historians is to seek ‘an approach to the past which asks present-minded questions but refuses to give present-minded answers’ (1997, 2). I will gesture to three groups of present-minded questions, which I think are the most prominent in Medieval Studies at the moment—at least in majority-Anglophone countries. One group arises from the popularisation of postcolonial thought, from our own experiences of globalisation (and de-globalisation), and from associated thought and anxieties about race, migration, and cultural exchange. Another group of questions arises from the popularisation of fourth-wave feminism, not least its concern with intersectionality and its profound challenging of gender-essentialism. And the third arises from the popularisation of posthumanist thought associated with our species’s creation of an ecological crisis characterised by climate change and mass extinction.

Our historical moment challenges us, then, to contemplate early Germanic poetics—a field which is still processing its particular ideological intertwining with racial supremacism—in ways that are relevant to at least some of these themes, while neither simply imposing our own culture, aspirations or anxieties on the past, nor relinquishing the methodological rigour and clarity of thought which characterises the best work of the European philological tradition. It is worth being honest that when we rise to this challenge, most of us (certainly including me) are partly enacting the age-old strategy of conservative elites seeking to retain power and prestige: we know that if we want things to stay as they are, we have to change. But we can also recognise that putting early Germanic poetics into dialogue with the urgent questions of our own day can also open channels for interpretations of texts and collaborations with scholars that illuminate the past in new ways, and have a better than usual chance of facilitating fairness rather than entrenching inequality in our present.

My specific attempt to rise to this challenge (admittedly quite a timid attempt in many ways) is to explore comparative readings of early Germanic and Arabic-language poetry: although in

some ways their historical contexts are radically different, both corpora do represent dynamic encounters between Abrahamic religions and largely non-literate populations whose deepest roots lay beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. The specific corpus I choose for this exploration is riddles (cf. Hall and Meghani 2021; Hall 2021; Hall and Gamir forthcoming). Riddles are attractive because, among the various genres of verse, the metaphor-based riddle (as opposed to conundra based on guessing the letters of a word or the like) is a genre whose themes and metaphors seem particularly able to traverse space and therefore to open up opportunities for productive comparative analysis (though praise-poetry, laments, and prosimetrum are all forms which also call out for comparison between medieval Germanic and Arabic-language literature). Riddles are particularly interesting for cultural history because, while often sustaining similar metaphors across huge tracts of space and time, they usually create enigmas by subverting cultural norms, and the enigma is usually solved by reimposing cultural norms. Thus riddles almost inherently put a subversive/normative instability at the heart of their poetry, enabling us to explore those dynamics in medieval history (cf. Neville 2011). Moreover, riddles habitually meditate on the material world, often through anthropomorphic metaphors, opening up interesting opportunities for ecological histories and for histories of how humans understand the ways in which they are enmeshed in the world. Finally, the anthropomorphic metaphors of riddles are frequently freighted with gender norms, also affording dynamic perspectives on gender-history.

The specific riddles on which I will focus will probably be the Old Norse riddles of the probably thirteenth-century *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and the riddles contained in the early eighth-century Dhū al-Rumma's *Uḥjiyyat al-'Arab* ('riddle-poem of the Arabs'), though I might look at other ones instead!

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Old Norse Týr and Viðarr: solar turning points, wolves and the sky

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In this paper I re-examine the information that we have about the Old Norse and Germanic god Týr. The latest research concludes that, even if the name *Týr* indicates that he had a connection with the sun and the firmament, this must reflect a period way before our sources. I go against this view and argue that the connection was there in Scandinavia until the Late Iron Age, at least in Denmark. Týr has a clear connection with the sun through the myth where he secures the gods' binding of the Fenrir wolf, because this motif is linked to the myth about the wolves that chase the sun across the sky. Týr prevents the wolf from swallowing the sun before Ragnarøk. I take a closer look at this myth in the Old Norse texts and the atmospheric phenomenon that we believe it derives from, namely parhelion. I also consider the sun phenomenon at Tysnes in Western Norway, which is the only certain Týr place name in Norway, and I moreover consider the link to Mars that is indicated by the overlapping weekday names *týsdagr* – *Martis dies*, the association between Mars and spring equinox, and the names of the constellations *Ulfskjǫptr*, 'Wolf's Jaws', and *Ásar bardagi*, 'the God's Battle'. I conclude that Týr's function is to defend the sun and the division of the year. As part of the interpretation, I launch a new suggestion about how the god Viðarr originated and what his function is. The argument strengthens Gísli Sigurðsson's suggestion that we should see the Old Norse gods in connection with the firmament.

Dwellings Undwindling II: The Germanic Horizon

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In this paper, an attempt is made to further develop the theory of so-called **perlocutionary sites** as a central concept in Indo-European poetics and eschatology with an emphasis on its application in Germanic poetry. Proceeding from a brief analysis of the last strophe (25) of Egill Skallagrímsson's *Arinbjarnarkviða* ("I was awake early [---] I brought words together, heap a hill of praise, which will long stand unbroken in the enclosure of song [*bragr*]") and the etymology of ON *bragr* (< PIE **b^hróg^h-o-*), two remarkable eschatological poems from 10th century Norway (*Eiríksmál* and *Hakonarmál*) are compared with particular regard to poetic strategies of eschatological perlocution, that is, the performative realization of an otherworldly situation as a perceived poetic extension of its mere description.

Stars of the North:

Indo-European Motifs in the *Völuspá*

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In the *Völuspá*, various themes resonate that we know from the myths of related Indo-European cultures: Ymir, the Dragon, the World Tree, and others. In the first part of my lecture I will discuss other inherited motifs: the game of the gods, Odin's fight with the wolf, the ship Naglfar. In the second part I will raise the question of the origin of these and other myths and present a fundamental new approach in the interpretation of traditional narratives of the Indo-Europeans

Revisiting Dumézil's *Loki*:

The Ossetic 'Myth of the Wounded Sun' Compared with its Scandinavian and Vedic Counterparts

Laura Massetti

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In his 1948 book *Loki*, Georges Dumézil shows that Loki has several distinctive traits in common with Syrdon, the trickster of the Nartic (Ossetic, i.e., Eastern Iranian) tradition. Among other things, Loki and Syrdon have analogous roles in myths concerning the death of prominent characters within their respective traditions: Syrdon helps the 'Wheel of *Balsæg* (or *Malsæg* or *Oinon* [of St. John?])' to kill Soslan/Sozyryk'o; Loki kills Baldr by manipulating Høðr like a puppet. My paper focuses on this 'murder myth', in the attempt to detect similarities between the Ossetic and the myths of the 'Wounded Sun', attested in the Scandinavian and Old Indic traditions.

In recent years, our insight into the inherited background of the Scandinavian myth has tremendously increased: as Ginevra (2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2023) has explained, we can now safely recognize the myth of Baldr's death as the Germanic version of the Vedic 'Myth of the Wounded Sun' (on which cf. Jamison 1991), as the details of the two myths match impressively. In my paper, I present the textual material concerning the Ossetic 'Myth of the Wounded Sun', i.e., a group of oral Iron and Digor (: East- and West-Ossetic) tales grouped under the title 'The Death of the Nart Soslan/Sozyryk'o', which were first transcribed in the 19th century (cf. Abaev *et al.* 1989–1991). Thus, collateral aims of the paper are:

- (a) to make available (with selected transliterations and translations) texts which are only summarized in Dumézil's seminal work;
- (b) to show how the comparative analysis of these texts and their variants reveals that the similarities shared with the Scandinavian and Vedic version(s) of the myth go beyond the analogous roles Loki and Syrdon have, since, among others, they concern the solar nature of the hero killed by Loki and Syrdon; the role of the daughter of the Sun/Sky in the prequel of the story; the weaponization of the solar-character's material killer by the victim's archrival (fire-character).

In the end, my analysis ultimately proves not only that the Dumézilian comparison between Syrdon and Loki is well grounded, but also that the myths in which these characters take part are the same.

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The roots **uel(h)-* in Germanic tradition

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Due to partial phonological merger, the distinction between a handful of originally independent roots of the structure **uel(h)(u)-* in Germanic is extremely difficult, and this situation has severe implications for the analysis of a number of mythologically important concepts, especially in Old Norse tradition.

The aim of this presentation is an attempt to sort out some of the formal and semantic intricacies of the roots

- 1) **uelh*₁- ‘choose’
- 2) **uelh*₃- ‘strike’ and
- 3) **uelhu*- ‘envelop, wrap up’ and ‘roll’

Particular attention will be paid to Germanic concepts of afterlife.

Wodan in Saxony?

The search for Germanic knowledge in *Heliand*

Heike Sahn

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In the first half of the 19th century, the Old Low German *Heliand* (ca. 840/50) was regarded as a residue for Germanic: A.F.C. In 1842, Vilmar brought up the initially unchallenged thesis of "Christianity in Germanic guise" and identified, among other things, references to the religion of the Germanic peoples in the text. Only with Johannes Rathofer in 1962 did the scientific perspective on the alliteration epos change, in that the theological content was now placed in the foreground of the analysis compared to possible Germanic reminiscences. In recent decades, the willingness to see pre-Christian things preserved in the *Heliand* has grown again, initially in contributions by Ronald Murphy and Prisca Augustyn. Their theses on the reference to the Germanic world of gods in *Heliand* have hardly found an echo in continental research, but with Assmann's theories on cultural memory there has also been renewed willingness in German-speaking research to use *Heliand* as a repository for cultural knowledge, especially that of the illiterati (Haferland, Mierke). In the lecture, the above-mentioned works will be discussed with regard to their premises and methods. Furthermore, questions of historical semantics are to be raised following recent historical studies on the norms and values of Carolingian society (Esders, Haack, Reynolds, Springer, Timpe) and introduced into the discussion on the location of the *Heliand*

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Immersing in the Cult of *Nerthus* and Finding Paradise in *Neorxnawang*: Etymological Considerations and Cultic Connections between Germanic Deities and Their Natural Habitats

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This study examines the connection between Nerthus and related deities with associations to cult ships and maritime themes and the concept of the afterlife in Germanic mythology, characterized by nautical elements (e.g. Nehalennia, Njörðr's abode Nóatún), and celestial fields like Neorxnawang (cf. Fólkvangr, Þrúðvangr, Idistaviso, Iðavöllr).

Their potential cultic and semantic connection to epigraphically attested theonyms such as Nerios, Matronae Vatviae Nersihenae, Naria Nousantia, all of which seem to be associated with water or ships, chariot processions or fertility, and notions of the afterlife, is explored. In this way, I hope to provide insight into the intricate relationship between those Germanic deities and their natural environment, illuminating the realms of Nerthus and the paradisaical concept of Neorxnawang. By exploring the cultic practices and reevaluating the etymological interpretation of the mentioned onomastic data, my research might provide compelling evidence that paradise on earth may be found on fertile floodplains or beyond and below cool waters.

Mythological collocations in the poetic Edda

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We normally assume certain mythological terms to be given, and once we have used the definitions given by Snorri Sturluson, we are happy to apply those to the instances where they occur in more enigmatic circumstances. However, poetic diction has its own rules, and although Snorri's main sources were poetic texts, he may have stressed apparent semantic aspects more

than the formal rules of poetics, when it came to mythography. An obvious starting point for an investigation into the discrepancies between prose and poetic texts may be collocations and other formulaic expressions found in Eddic poetry. The present paper shall concentrate on terms for mythological beings such as álfar, æsir, vanir, dvergjar and dísir to see what their original associations may have been.

Oat cuisine and orphaned motifs

Patrick Stiles

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The concept of the orphaned motif is introduced. Orphaned motifs are oddities that have lost their original motivation and context and often seem irrelevant. However, they can sometimes be matched with attributes of corresponding figures elsewhere in the Indo-European world (where they often make more sense).

Thus, it is reported of the Irish saint Brigit — without contextual motivation — that she was born at sunrise, her mother giving birth on the threshold of the house, with one foot inside and one foot outside. The inside of the house represents the darkness of night and the outside daylight. These peculiar details are inexplicable unless one recognizes Brigit's descent from the dawn goddess, one of whose stock adjectives Old Indic *br̥hātī* 'high, noble' has provided her name. Like the Vedic Dawn goddess, St Brigit is also associated with cows.

Both the Vedic god Indra (and his associate Pūṣan) are said to eat porridge. For no obvious reason, this is also reported once of the Scandinavian god Thor (Indra's Germanic counterpart). A third comparandum is offered from Irish; the main god Dagda, another Indra equivalent, is known to love porridge (although no more is elaborated).

It looks like the principal deity's habit of eating porridge is an inherited motif, but why this should be is unclear

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Collocations in Old English and Old Saxon religious poetry

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In the field of Old English poetry studies and the underlying compositional practices, research on the topic of stylistic and lexical structures known as collocations has significantly increased in the past decade. Collocations refer to the repeated occurrence of two or more words connected by alliteration within a long verse (or occasionally in adjacent verses) (Ruggerini 2021, p. 1332). These elements, which can be grammatically modified and expanded by incorporating (semi-)homophonic words with respect to the core components, form a collocative string that can be adapted to various thematic contexts. Alongside formulas, collocations were essential tools used by poets within the oral tradition, and later, they were successfully incorporated into the poetry created in Britain after the conversion to Christianity and the subsequent transition to written culture. In my paper, I aim to compare two poetic passages that share the same subject matter, i.e. the biblical story of Cain and Abel, in the light of the collocations present in each of them. These passages, which were composed in different languages and settings, are extracted from Old English *Genesis A* and Old Saxon *Vatican Genesis*. The objective of this comparison is to observe the characteristics and functions of collocations in religious poetry, particularly in the context of recent conversion dynamics, such as the case with the Saxons.

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Fate and honey: Between Yggdrasil and Parnassos

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The paper compares a possible cluster of shared motifs in Greek and Norse mythology. The relevant primary sources are as follows.

a. The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*:

"And now, son of glorious Maia and Zeus who holds the aegis, helpful genius of the gods, I will tell you another thing: there are **three awesome sisters**, virgins, delighting in their swift wings. Their heads are **besprinkled with white barley flour**, and they dwell **under the fold of Parnassos**, apart from me, as *teachers of divination*, which I studied when as a mere child I tended the cows, and my father did not mind. From there flying here, now there, they **feed on honeycomb and bring all things to pass.**"

(Athanasakis 2004 [1974]: 41-42, 80; for rendering differences, compare Cashford & Richardson 2003: 83-84)

b. *Gylfaginning & Völuspá*:

"It is also said that the **norns that dwell by Weird's well** [Urðarbrunnr] take water from the well each day and with it the mud that lies round the well and pour it up over the ash so that its branches may not rot or decay. And this water is so holy that all things come into that well go as *white as the membrane* called the skin that lies around the inside of an eggshell, as it says here:

'I know an ash—its name is **Yggdrasil**, high tree, holy—**drenched with white mud**. From it comes the dews that fall in the valleys. It stands forever green above Weird's well.'

The dew that falls from it on the earth, this is what people call honeydew, and **from it bees feed**. Two birds feed in Weird's well. They are called swans, and from these birds has come the species of bird that has that name. (Faulkes 1995 [1987]: 19)."

Both sets of sources describe trios of fate-telling women ("three awesome women"—perhaps the Thriac—and the Norns) dwelling at the base of an evident axis mundi (Parnassos and Yggdrasil) and the text also associates these trios with a peculiar white substances (white barley flour and white mud) and with bees.

Archaisms and neologisms in the Old Norse poetic vocabulary

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In Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon's etymological dictionary (1989: 1220), a list of five different etymological explanations of the poetic term *øglir* m. 'hawk' is followed by the statement that "most falcon terms in Old Norse are, in fact, probably young, as the taming of falcons and falconry in the Nordic countries are hardly older than from the Viking Age, and most of the terms (and kennings) are connected to those [activities]" (transl. GÐ). This comment appears to be a general statement, not a conclusion which unequivocally rules out or strongly recommends a particular etymology, but attempts at determining the age of certain falcon terms can be found in the literature. Falk (1925: 245), e.g., believed the hawk terms *øglir* and *olgr* to be synonyms, meaning 'the nauseous one', *øglir* being the earlier coinage, *olgr* a later Norwegian formation. This paper will discuss certain poetic words that throw light on the fact that the Old Norse collection of *heiti* and *kenningar* is a mixture of archaisms and neologisms. For this reason, a *hapax legomenon* is, *a priori*, just as likely to be a skaldic creation as an ancient relic. Certain types of word formation were obviously productive, such as deriving agent nouns in *-uðr* (ON

gløtuðr, *topuðr*, etc.) from weak verbs of Class II (ON *glata*, *tapa*). In other cases, the suffix itself does not give the age of the word away. The masculine *ija*-stems in *-ir* can, e.g., be difficult to analyze. As indicated above, this is indeed the case with ON *øglir*. Yet another etymological explanation of that word was suggested in Gudrún Thórhallsdóttir (2004), which certainly was in agreement with a Viking Age origin.

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Charming the poetic mead: Egill's *Sonatorrek*

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Einarr Helgason begins the poem *Vellekla* with series of stanzas on the myth of the mead of poetry; he here calls poetry *galdr*, 'charm'. This may raise questions about how far in general poetry partook of the nature of the charm, though for Einarr, this is primarily surely just a turn of phrase. However, he based his verse in part on that of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, particularly *Sonatorrek*, from a couple of decades earlier. Here the same myth is integral to Egill's own self-definition, and to dealing with the grief over the loss of his sons. Egill seems to picture himself as a sort of realisation of Óðinn. Apart from being lord of war, who lost his son Baldr, Óðinn was also lord of poetry, and in particular he was the maker of charms, *galdra smiðr* (as *Ynglinga saga* terms him along with his people, the Æsir) and practitioner of *seiðr* magic. I would like to pose the question, could we look at *Sonatorrek* as, in some sense, a *galdr*? One commonplace feature of many charm types is banishment: the ills that are causing misfortunes are expelled from the patient (this is seen, for example, in the Old Saxon charm against worms). Apart from the calamity of the sons' loss and the vengeance Egill seeks to take for them, the multivalent title *Sonatorrek* suggests the notion of purging or expulsion, corresponding to the banishment

effected by certain types of charm. Another feature of some charms is the *historiola*, an account of the first, primordial instance of a healing or righting of a wrong taking place, which acts as a template for subsequent charmers to evoke (indeed, partake in) in order to achieve the same desired result (an example is the German Second Merseburg Charm, or, somewhat obscurely, the Nine Herbs Charm in Old English). The chief way Egill seeks to assuage his grief is through poetic composition; he appeals, as far as we can judge from the rather corrupted opening stanzas, to the primordial myth of poetry's origin through a series of kennings: hence we may ponder, if we view *Sonatorrek* from the perspective of being a pseudo-charm, whether, in particular contexts, a kenning might be functionally equivalent to a *historiola*. My suggestion does not seek to displace other interpretations of how *Sonatorrek* works, but rather to supplement these with a further nuance.

Ragnarøk: From Dawn to Dusk

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'Few see further into the future than to Óðinn's meeting with the wolf,' the seeress Hyndla tells us (*Hyndluljóð* st. 44). The Eddic poems *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál* nonetheless foreshadow aspects the world that is to follow the encounter with the wolf.

Starting from Haraldur Bernharðsson's (2007) etymology of Ragnarøk (not Ragnarøk) as the 'renewal of divine powers,' I will explore the nature of renewal and regeneration foretold in the Scandinavian apocalyptic tradition, as reflected in the two Eddic poems. Through comparative analysis, it becomes evident that while both poems develop the inherited materials in distinct ways, *Völuspá* is the less traditional of the two. Nevertheless, both poems foresee a future in which the influence of the Æsir is significantly diminished. As a consequence, one might question the regeneration's status as a new dawn for the gods.

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