

**Ruairi Ó hUiginn**  
**Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies**  
*Ancestors, Gods and Genealogies*

Genealogies and genealogical tracts have a central place in the historical and literary tradition of Early Ireland. A vast amount of time, effort and resources was expended over many centuries in establishing and maintaining the pedigrees of the various ruling dynasties and septs that proliferated throughout the country. The resulting extensive genealogical tracts and associated explanatory texts that have been transmitted to us are testament to the centrality of this scholarly endeavour in medieval Ireland and shed some light on medieval attitudes to the past.

While these tracts are framed in the tradition of the Old Testament and thus locate the Irish to the Judeo-Christian scheme of world history, much use is made in them of dominant ancestral figures, many of whom clearly belong to the realm of myth, while others are perched on the boundaries of fiction and history. In this paper, we will examine the role played by some of these figures.

**Morten Warmind**  
**University of Copenhagen**  
*Ritual Boundaries*

Rituals are in many ways about demarcations and hence about boundaries – between the sacred time and normal time, between sacred space and profane space, sacred speech and everyday usage. At the same time, rituals are about change and hence also about transgressing boundaries. A ritual marks as well as creates the turning of the year, and a new time, it marks and creates the passage of single persons into a married couple and it marks and creates the passage of an individual from this life.

In my paper, I intend to demonstrate the importance of boundaries, and how they are created and transcended in the very few Nordic rituals for which we have some evidence. In a comparative perspective, I will also discuss differences and similarities between the Nordic and Celtic rituals especially concerning the creation of kings – an area where we can see several differences and similarities in Celtic and Germanic cultures.

**Caroline Oxley**  
**University of Iceland**  
*Shape-Shifting and the Self: Implications of Hamr and Hugar on Gender, Sexuality, and Identity in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Culture*

The concept of shape-shifting in Late Iron Age Scandinavia is an ambiguous occurrence with gender and species fluidity attached to its motif. This phenomenon is well documented in the textual materials with previous scholarly study categorizing shape-changing as a result or influence of *seiðr* magical practices, a symbolic depiction of human/animal relationships, and, in the case of the *fylgjur*, as a mirror reflecting the soul and its animal-related identity. The main idea that we may glean from this motif is that ‘actual’ shape-changers seem to experience a relative alienation from ‘normal’ society. Whether divine or human, their obvious dualistic nature marks them out as individuals who tend to stray from the typical path of societal

structure. Utilizing the concepts *hamr* and *bugr*, this paper will analyze the transformation process of the Pre-Christian Scandinavian shape-changer and its implication on identity, often-indistinct morality, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, this essay will strive to connect these boundary-crossing shape-shifters to modern day societies notion of gender and sexual fluidity.

**Ólöf Bjarnadóttir**

**University of Iceland**

***A New Kind of Feminine: From Fated Death to Gentle Life***

This paper will begin by briefly identifying the core concepts associated with feminine supernatural entities of the Old Norse religions before going on to consider the possible appeal that the conceptual change brought about by the introduction of Christianity may have had for the women of the north.

Within the mythological universe of the Old Norse religions the feminine appears to have been intricately tied to the fields of fate, death and the afterworld. Extant sources depict *fylgjur*, *dísir*, *nornir*, *valbur* and *valkyrjur* as having the ability to foresee the outcome of life-threatening situations, sometimes even affecting the sequence of events. Foreknowledge is likewise shown as being possessed by several goddesses who are also closely associated with the afterlife.

In contrast, Christianity was a foreign, hierarchical religion with clearly defined concepts of a single, masculine divine. Interestingly the model of Christian piety was the conceptually complex figure of the Virgin Mary. The core traits of the ‘Mother of God’, humility and subservience, were based on her motherhood, a biological role most women could easily relate to. Meanwhile, with the exception of Frigg, none of the Old Norse feminine entities are particularly maternal and with the exception of Freyja, none are explicitly associated with fertility.

The paper will argue that with the introduction of Christianity the concepts associated with the feminine seem to have changed in line with this ideological shift and that this may have been a deciding factor for women who appear to have accepted the new religion more readily than men.

**Brigid Ehrmantraut**

**University of Cambridge**

***Mythologization of Burial Mounds in Early Medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin Literature***

The lexicon of *tumulus* in Early Medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin literature is both mutable and mythologically-charged. Narrative trends emerge wherein the mythological *side* become sepulchers for their inhabitants as Ireland is Christianized. However, the distinction between mythologizing prehistoric burial mounds as supernatural residences and portraying them as graves is rarely clear-cut, and the ambiguities inherent in such portrayals reflect the equally complex relationships between (imagined) past and present, and between landscape and identity-formation. This paper will shed light on these questions by arguing both that barrows themselves constitute boundaries between worlds and faiths, and that their literary representations occupy a lexical borderland with regards to the languages and semantic range of vocabulary used to describe them.

I will begin by (re-)examining some of the connotations inherent in the etymology of *síd*, and will proceed to analyze the implications of seventh-century hagiographers Tírechán and Muirchú's Latin word choices, as well as their revealing forays into the vernacular to reference physical and mythological topography. I will then treat the geographic terms indicating transfer of religious influence from pre-Christian to ecclesiastical sites in *Féilire Óengusso* and *Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúai*, and consider confusion between *síd*, *fert*, and *lecht* in specific burial scenes from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Acallam na Senórach*.

Ultimately, I will show that the syncretic patchwork of physical landscape and cultural memory in Early Medieval Ireland is mirrored by a linguistic patchwork of topographic terminology in contemporaneous texts.

## **Workshop**

Presentation by Emily Lyle followed by forum discussion.

How to understand Indo-European myth through eliciting the preliterate content. Notes on presentation. (1) The synchronic modified by the diachronic. (2) Appropriate reading of the evidence. Myth is a pre-axial-age 'religion' based on modelling and correlation. In comparing different branches, unrealistic to expect identity after thousands of years of change. Sometimes possible to identify a major shift with overall effects. (3) The models were what was dominant for humans – body parts and social organisation. Four colours were available for marking. Case study: head, upper body, lower body and kinship parallels. Nar, Bres and Lothar with Clothru as parents of Lugaid of the Red Stripes with a tripartite body. Odin, Vé and Vili with Frigg. (4) Ten gods and ten digits. A simple, familiar model of two hands but a complex network of hierarchical and positive and oppositional relationships. A mnemonic system of some use, whether or not it is deeply embedded in actuality.

**Peter Kahlke Olesen**

**University of Copenhagen**

***The Liminality of Deer: A Structural Approach to the Construction of Cosmologies in the Longue Durée***

Deer occupy a special place in the folk classifications and material practices of Ireland and Scotland. In medieval literature as well as in later folklore, deer are conceptualised as wild or supernatural cattle, being herded and milked by otherworldly entities. This persistent belief forms part of the cosmological homology between the cultural sphere and the spaces beyond. As agents of the otherworld themselves, deer become entangled with the domestic world in relations of similarity as well as contiguity. Besides their behaviour as 'wild herds', they frequently appear at narrative and geographical thresholds. Here they function as signifiers or facilitators of the transition between different ontological realms. The indexical relation of the deer with the otherworld may be indicated by the magical effects of consuming venison, and by the transformations of deer-women in liminal spaces.

The liminal character of the deer may be of considerable antiquity given the parallels with the archaeological record of the Neolithic. In the fourth millennium BC deer were introduced to

Ireland and the Scottish islands by migrating farmers. While they were never domesticated, their similar treatment to domesticated animals places them between and betwixt categories of 'wild' and 'domestic'. Neolithic rituals furthermore position deer at physical and conceptual thresholds, and show significant structural parallels with their role in much later narrative. The comparison of these structures challenges our understanding of the stability of cosmologies in the *longue durée*.

**Amanda Kentish**

**University of Edinburgh**

***The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdui: Supernatural Tales of Giants from Deeside, Aberdeenshire, Scotland***

This paper builds upon mythology surrounding giants, offering a more modern tale and 21st Century interpretation. Tales of giants from Deeside give us an insight into the local area - the giant supernatural creatures of the Deeside Otherworld reflecting the real Deeside of grand scenery, mountains, big rivers, great beauty and remoteness but also isolation, extreme and changeable conditions and sudden danger. These stories comment upon national as well as local society and popular culture, offering moral and other guidance: they speak of strength and power, beauty but danger. In this paper I focus on 'The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdui' and the stories of this giant man living on Ben Macdui, the second highest mountain in the UK and the highest in the Cairngorms National Park. My paper uses existing secondary sources, but much is based on the results of primary research. This was carried out with local people and visitors, some completed on the mountain itself. I explore the story and concept of The Big Grey Man and his role in and impact on the popular culture of the area today, including what he and his presence mean to locals and visitors alike.

**Polina Sedova**

**Moscow State University**

***St. Brigit of Kildare: Origins of the Image***

There is almost no precise evidence of the pre-Christian pantheon of Ireland. Although Brigit the goddess is mentioned in some important texts such as Cormac's Glossary, Lebor Gabála Éirenn etc., her image is far from fully understood. The lack of information may indicate that she is a genuine Celtic goddess who is related to other Indo-European deities. Some of the goddess' features are reconstructed on the basis of the lives of St. Brigit of Kildare.

St. Brigit is one of the most important figures in Irish culture; along with St. Patrick and St. Columba, she is recognized as a patron saint of Ireland having fertility functions. However, her image is considered to have more archaic features than the ones of St. Patrick and St. Columba, which originate presumably in her connection with the pagan goddess. The Irish Christianity is probably one of the most syncretic European traditions: the pagan beliefs become part of the new religion. Although the replacement of a pagan deity with a Christian saint of the same 'accountabilities' is a common practice, the Irish Christian tradition seems to be even less strict in adopting elements of the pre-Christian mythology. They are often not seen as contrary and therefore pernicious; this leads to their preservation. In this paper I plan to describe and structure the features of the saint's image and to discuss if we can distinguish the pagan parts of St. Brigit's image from the Christian ones and if there is a metaphorical religious boundary between them.

**Blake Middleton**

**University of Aberdeen**

***Old Norse Mythological Landscapes as Presented in Comics and Cartoons***

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup>-century many of the visual aspects of Old Norse mythology as portrayed in modern popular culture have been based on the images presented in the pages and panels of comic books and the frames of animated films and television. As a result of these visual choices, much of the subject's layman audience cannot separate Asgard from the smooth, gold encased buildings of Jack Kirby and Stan Lee's *The Mighty Thor* comics, or the realm of Jotunheim from being any more than an endless glacier. That being said, these visuals are constantly updated, depending on numerous factors including the points of view of the comic's latest creative team and as a result over the past two decades numerous Animated Motion Pictures, Comic Books, and interactive Video Games have been produced by those who seemingly wish to portray the mythic characters and locations in a fuller, more 'source accurate' light.

This paper thus aims to examine the portrayal of Old Norse mythology's locations through the visual lens of both animation and comic book art; focusing on some of the iconic imagery associated with the Old Norse mythic landscape that is predominant in these 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century media and make a comparison of these visual depictions and locations as described in the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Eddic source material. In the course of the examination I will not only compare the animated/comic environments with the Eddic sources, I will also discuss some of the changing visuals and some of the enduring visuals of the two modern media, such as the changed in overall style of a location such as Asgard, from a 'Golden Realm' to a citadel of stone, as it is depicted in *Marvel Comics*, and its offshoots in the *Marvel's* various animated depictions. Through both of these brief examinations we will attempt to discern to what extent the modern animator/artist was dependent on the sources for inspiration or, if drastically altered, why this was done.

Comic sources which may be used in the examination include, but not limited to: *Marvel's* (various) *Thor* comics, *Vertigo Comics/Neil Gaiman's Sandman and Lucifer*, the Belgian comic *Thorgal*, and the Danish *Valhalla* comic. Animated sources include: *Hulk Versus [Thor]* (2009), *Thor: Tales of Asgard* (2011), *The Saga of Biorn* (2011), and *Valhalla* (1986).

**Jack Dyce**

**Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College**

***Bordering on Ragnarok: Bringing into Dialogue Old Norse Mythology, Scandinavian Creation Theology and Nordic Eco-Crime Fiction Around Their Perspectives on Ecological and Societal Collapse and What Might Lie Beyond***

The Old Norse mythological cycle envisions last times, with the destruction of social relationships and solidarity, the reversal of creation itself with the devastation of the ecological order. Yet, this is part of a cyclical pattern with renewal, new life and indeed fresh destruction .... In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Scandinavian creation theologians (in this paper, we focus particularly on Gustaf Wingren), while within a broadly traditional Christian theological framework, seek to offer a contribution for a more universal post-Christian era. They hold together a largely positive image of creation with a critique of modern ecological

destructiveness that leads less to an end-times eschatology than to recapitulation (not as restoration or return but as a more abundant fulfilment). Our third strand is writings within the Nordic Noir fiction genre which frequently serves as a kind of public religion. Our primary resource here is Kerstin Ekman's novels, themselves drawing on Norse mythic motifs, imagery and references. Nordic Noir's rather pessimistic social criticism, increasingly concerned at ecological degradation and the Anthropocene, promotes often a restorative nostalgia, a return to a pursuit of a utopian just and sustainable world. What do these different genres have to say to us and to each another? Do they offer contrasting and conflicting or mutually coherent narratives? Do they share analysis, values, motifs? What do they contribute to developing a meaningful and usable eschatology for the world?

**Jens Peter Schjødt**

**Aarhus University**

***How to Deal with Mythological and Religious Boundaries in Oral Societies – Where Does Old Norse Mythology End?***

As opposed to most of the big religions of the modern world, which belong to the category, designated as 'secondary' by Jan Assmann, or post-axial by Robert Bellah, the religious type to which the religion of pagan Scandinavia belonged (primary religion, archaic religion) have no strict boundaries. Among many modern scholars dealing with this religion, the singular 'religion' has even been substituted by the plural 'religions', mainly because there apparently never was a unified system of beliefs and practices which was specific to this area (as opposed to for instance, Saami religion, Slavic religion or Celtic religion). If we accept this fluid character of the pre-Christian religion(s) of Scandinavia, it becomes relevant to ask which period and which geographical area, Old Norse religion or Old Norse mythology actually cover. What about Germanic religion and mythology of the early Middle Ages, or even the postulated Indo-European religious and mythological structures? Which role do they play for our reconstructions of Old Norse religion, and are they relevant at all. In my opinion the answer should be 'yes'; for if there are no clear boundaries, it must be up to the individual scholars to decide what material is relevant for these reconstructions. In the paper I am definitely not going to come up with final solutions to these problems, but I hope to be able to illuminate aspects of them, and to come up with a few suggestions.

**Kevin Murray**

**University College Cork**

***Sources of Irish Mythology: The Significance of the Dinnshenchas***

Although the *dinnshenchas* corpus draws from various parts of the narrative tradition, it has long been noted that tales from the 'Mythological Cycle' are the most frequently attested therein. Recently it has been reckoned that the *dinnshenchas* includes at least thirty tales, or mentions of tales, whose main characters are of the Túaitha Dé Donann. However, because some of these narratives are so abbreviated, we cannot always be sure of the authenticity of the traditions which underpin them. My aim here is to scrutinise some of the mythological materials present in this corpus in order to interrogate the claim that the *dinnshenchas* is composed 'of artificial learning rather than genuine traditional mythology'.

**Timothy Liam Waters**

**University of California Berkeley**

## ***The Thingness of the Gods: 'Thing Theory' as an Approach Religious Mystery***

Both the literary and archeological landscapes of medieval Scandinavia are rife with the presence of *things*. Whether it is exhumed grave goods or mythic tools like *Mjollnir*, our sources demonstrate a clear preoccupation with the material in the medieval North. Despite this, scholarship has long tended to overlook materiality in the Old Norse literary corpus. This paper proposes an application of 'Thing Theory' as a possible method to approach gaps in our understanding of this materiality. In so doing, it focuses on the religious significance of materiality, employing Bill Brown's claim that 'We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us,' as a platform from which to explore medieval Scandinavian conceptions of the body as *thing*. To this end, an investigation of the divine body's dismemberment follows, centering on corporeal entities like Óðinn's eye, Týr's hand, and Ymir's body. While these corporeal entities rarely played active roles in medieval Scandinavian religious or ceremonial life, literary sources indicate that they were considered instrumental in the cosmology of the Old Norse universe. As a result, the presence of dismembered corporeal entities poses an enigma for Old Norse scholarship. Approaches to the materiality of such entities, however, can help shed new light on their presence in the texts. This work explores the possibility of an understanding of *thingness* to augment our knowledge of how medieval Scandinavians may have viewed the relationship between the material body and religious practice.

**Emily Lyle**

**University of Edinburgh**

### ***Defining the Boundary Between the Divine and the Human in Royal Succession***

Although it has been recognised that a human royal line can be taken to descend from the gods, the actual boundary between the divine and the human has sometimes been confused in the sources and in the scholarly literature and it will be worthwhile to attempt to define it precisely. The first human king is mentioned in Tacitus's *Germania* under the name Mannus, which is cognate with Indian Manu and Iranian Manuchehr. Mannus is the progenitor of three tribes, and the royal line is probably continued through the two that correspond to Dumézil's first and second functions. On the divine side of the boundary is a fratricide (the death of Baldr, Remus, Yama). This is followed on the human side by the revenge taken by an avenger who has not yet been conceived at the time of the murder (Váli, Manuchehr). An important motif in the revenge story is the unusual conception of the avenger/first human king (the rape of Rindr by Óðinn) and it may exist independently of the revenge as in Freyr's wooing of Gerðr, the intercourse of Niall of the Nine Hostages with a hag and the birth of Cú Chulainn. Jaan Puhvel in *Comparative Mythology* places Romulus as first human king and so puts the fratricide on the human instead of the divine side of the boundary, and he also erroneously places Yama as the brother of Manu, the first human king and lawgiver, instead of as a divine predecessor.

**Ingunn Ásdísardóttir**

**University of Iceland and Reykjavík Academy**

### **Two Stories or One?**

In this paper I propose a new interpretation of the *Hávamál* strophes 104-110 (Óðinn's visit to Suttungr) and 138-141/2 (Óðinn hanging on the tree) in which I suggest that these strophes

may for the first belong together and secondly stand in reverse order from how they stand in the poem, thus forming a coherent storyline and that the action in these strophes shows a close connection with certain episodes in various other Eddic mythological poems, especially in relation to the role of the *jotunn*-women.

According to the source critical approach we should not meddle with the sources as they stand in the manuscripts, rearrange order of strophes in poems or emend texts. Some of the Eddic mythological poems, however, are acknowledged to be compilations of more than one poem or strophes, which original form is not known. This applies, for example, to *Hávamál* which is considered to be a conglomeration of more than one poem and/or parts of poems, which have been assembled into one, rather miscellaneous whole. In my view the above mentioned source critical approach may be seen as too strict when it comes to these particular poems and in my talk I will argue this through the example of the above mentioned *Hávamál* strophes.

**Sonia Garcia de Alba**

**University of Edinburgh**

*From the Old North to Castile: Adaptations of the Welsh Myrddin*

The character of Myrddin, the legendary prophet and wild man of the Old North, presents a unique opportunity to study the diffusion and appropriation of early Welsh legendary material in continental Europe. References to Merlin as early as the first half of the twelfth century in the Iberian Peninsula suggest not only that the character could have been introduced in Spain independently of the French tradition – that would later set the models for the well-known fourteenth-century Arthurian texts produced in Spain – but also hints at a familiarity with the Welsh Myrddin material. Evidence of this is provided by one of the songs in the *Cantigas of Santa María*, composed in the second half of the thirteenth-century in the Kingdom of Castile. Cantiga 108 explicitly locates Merlin in Scotland, in a context devoid of Arthurian references. Furthermore, Merlin is depicted as a fervent defender of the Virgin Mary and he uses his wisdom and authority to convert a Jewish man into Catholicism, a role that is, in appearance, very different to his original function in the early Welsh material. This paper aims to analyse how Myrddin's ambiguous configuration as a wise man with access to prophetic knowledge allowed this character to easily transverse conceptual boundaries and migrate from the sphere of the Old North, where he was first revered as a source of authority, to England, Spain, and beyond, as he was adapted to serve a variety of political and religious agendas in other literary traditions.

**Jonas Koesling**

**University of Bergen**

*Seeing the Sea in the Iron Age Scandinavia*

My paper will discuss shorelines or coastal boundaries not only as physical lines in the landscape (or on the map and in the text resp.) but as areas of liminal quality. For this the conceptualizations by Arnold van Gennep are taken further and used in similar ways as utilized by Luke J. Murphy (2017), giving the concept of liminality a social, spatial and performative dimension. Hence, the liminal zone between land and the open water will be analyzed and problematized as conceptual boundary, even though physical in nature and discussed in a religious context. It is intended to find answers to the preliminary topic (whether Iron Age people of the North perceived the sea as something different or more than a physical boarder

or not), for which different available material is of interest – archaeological remains may be given priority, but due to their limitations also written sources will be consulted. The focus will be on Western Norway and Iceland during the first millennium AD. A set of questions will be formulated and addressed to e.g. tales (or myths?) of *landnám*, and possible remains of cult and ritual located at the border between land and sea. These questions will draw upon recent and important contributions and critiques (to the disciplines) by scholars as e.g. Terje Tvedt (2015) or Robert Van de Noort (2011), who stress the need of a paradigm shift or new (maritime) turn. Its applicability within the study of Old Norse Mythology will be tested.

#### Bibliography:

Murphy, Luke John (2017): ‘Continuity and Change: Forms of Liminality in the Sacred Social Spaces of the Pre-Christian Nordic World’. *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12, 2016. Pp. 137-172.

Van de Noort, Robert (2011): *North Sea Archaeologies. A Maritime Biography, 10,000 BC – AD 1500*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2011.

Tvedt, Terje (2015): *Water and Society. Changing Perceptions of Societal and Historical Development*. I.B. Tauris: London / New York 2015.

**Nicolai Gabriel Lanz**

**University of Iceland**

***Sleipnir, the Nykur. Water-horses in Old Norse Mythologies and Folklore***

The role of horses in Old Norse Mythologies has already been the focus of extensive research. Predominately, the focus has been limited to both the horses’ connection to a sun-cult going back to the Scandinavian Bronze Age, and the eight-leggedness of the mythical horse Sleipnir. However, such a limited focus does not do the numerous and diverse source material justice. Therefore, this paper aims to look closely at the origins and progeny of Sleipnir, in the light of a creature common to both Germanic and Celtic folklore: the water-horse, e.g. the Icelandic ‘Nykur’, the Swedish ‘Bäckhäst’ or the Scottish ‘Kelpie’. Drawing on evidence spanning more than 2000 years – from archaeological findings from the Scandinavian Iron Age, through Latin, Anglo-Saxon and Old Icelandic literature, all the way to folk-tales recorded primarily during the 19th century – it is proposed that Sleipnir and his relatives share some striking resemblances with the aforementioned water-horses, serving as liminal intermediaries between different worlds and connected to the supernatural ‘other’. It is concluded that beliefs in water-horses and Sleipnir-like mythological beings may have developed reciprocally with wetland sacrifices in Iron Age Scandinavia; such ritual offerings reflect the belief in these beings, as illuminated by the pronounced emphasis on the sacrificing of horses to supernatural powers residing in the water.

**Gregory Darwin**

**Harvard University**

***Suffering a Sea Change: Seal Bride Legends in Gaelic and Norse Folklore***

The migratory legend known as ‘The Seal Woman’ (ML 4080) recounts how a human man captures an aquatic female being (mermaid, selkie, water spirit) by stealing her magical garment or skin, and compels her to marry him, until she recovers her skin and returns to the sea. It has been told throughout western Ireland, Gaelic and Scots-speaking regions of Scotland, Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, and Scandinavia.

While legends occupy a world closer to that of day-to-day experience than the realm of gods and heroes found in myth, both genres employ the supernatural to explain and justify the existing social order. The figure of the seal-woman traverses a number of boundaries, such as that between human and animal, land and sea, the foreign and the domestic, and in doing so imparts lessons on how to navigate these borders in daily life. The story itself crosses several boundaries as well, appearing in a range of generic forms, and in multiple languages and territories.

This discussion will explore the figure of the seal woman or mermaid in this legend, her many transgressions, and the social meanings which they encode.

**Katherine Beard**

**University of Iceland**

***Charms in Context: Viking Age Magical Amulets and Their Mythological Connections***

Archeologists often find objects in Viking Age graves that appear mundane, like bones, seeds, and decorative jewelry. When placed in the cultural and mythological context of the time, however, these objects instead may emerge as amuletic charms imbued with mythological power. This paper seeks to understand the power that charms, or *taufr*, draw from their connection to Nordic religions and their importance to the people they were buried with.

First, this paper shall identify possible *taufr* found in ritual specialist's graves and group them into categories including amuletic jewelry and organic materials such as bird remains, pig remains, and plant parts. This paper then analyzes *taufr* through the lens of the mythology of the Viking Age. With primary source material and archeological context this study seeks to establish a firm connection between *taufr* and mythology. The study then applies concepts such as sympathetic magic, metonymy, and animism to justify and reinforce the claim that an object, in part or in whole, can represent a higher symbolic construct. Even the smallest piece of bone or silver may have carried a multitude of mythological, religious, or cultural meanings to the Viking Age people they were buried with.

**Fiona Mulgrew**

**Independent Researcher**

***A Challenge to Disciplinary Boundaries? Pictorial Arthurian Narrative Wrought Upon Small Artefacts Found in Lowland Scotland***

An outline of the characteristics of these artefacts and the elucidation of a narrative minutely sculptured or carved and sometimes dyed/painted, will be given. Pattern recognition, animal portrayals, the locating of events within the landscape by topographical mapping are some examples of how the story of Arthur and the 'Men of the North' was revealed. Something of the function of the tiny works of art/craft will be addressed too.

Grounded observation of the pictorial representations demanded that the researcher explored many knowledge areas. Some of these were: early history, etymology, the earliest poetry of Scotland, mythology, sculpture theory, early mapping of Scotland, archaeology and art history. The direction of travel in this experience with the artefacts was always from the sculpture

pointing the way towards another journey along yet another knowledge pathway. To illustrate the need for a broad approach to achieve an understanding of the worked pieces several examples will be examined.

**Dean Miller**  
**University of Rochester**

***The Mythologies of Totalitarianism, With Special Attention to Hitler's Germanic Bias***

The Germanic 'Aryan' connection in Adolf Hitler's Third Reich.

1. Fascist Italy looked to one myth-in-history, namely Imperial Rome, as a model, but also paid attention to an extension of the Great Man idea, that is, the Duce as sole leader and guide, buffoonish as he turned out to be.
2. Adolf Hitler conceived of an idealized Germanic past, purely Aryan, with a special affinity for war and conquest, all the martial arts. Under this regime the Norse-Viking past was privileged. German scholarship, once concentrated on the Classical world, shifted northward; archaeology investigated Viking battle-sites and burials, funds were transferred to enable more textual work in Iceland and Denmark (new editions of the saga literature, for example), and the Scandinavian branches of 'Germanitas' were identified as 'Aryan close kindred'. An example: the police force known as the SS was militarized and imbued with what Hitler (and Himmler) with the virtues of a warrior class, that is, physical perfection, a propensity for war-making, merciless ferocity in battle, absolute loyalty to a Leader. The SS members swore fealty to Adolf Hitler himself, not to the Reich, and in this elite force the memory of the Viking warrior was revived. One other form of myth was revived as well: the medieval 'knightly' ideal (see certain iconic figures, as of an armored Hitler carrying the swastika on his lance). These images were directed specifically as a form of crusade against 'Asian/atheistic Communism'. The models were the knightly orders: the Livonian, the Knights of the Sword, and of course the Teutonic order.
3. The Soviet totalitarian state, as avowedly secular and rational, is not easy to shift into a mythographic mode, but it is worth noting that a Great Man theory had to be constructed here, and that as war grew nearer Stalin's propagandists began to identify old enemies, specifically the German military orders. See Eisenstein's brilliant propaganda film, *Aleksander Nevsky*, with Prokofiev's score.

**Olha Bielopolska**  
**National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy**

***Metal Cauldron as a Border Guardian in Comparative Mythology and Archaeology Perspective***

Comprehensive overview on symbolic meaning of Celtic cauldrons in the article by M. Green based on deep analysis of mythological and archaeological data resulted in strongly assumed connection of the metal vessel with Otherworld in Western material and spiritual culture study.

Separated from Celtic community by great distance, the Tungusic people, the Khanty and the Ossetians preserved in their Mythology some more examples of the most archaic cauldron vision. Thus, the metal vessel was not simply connected with Otherworld, marking the possible portal places; it served as a guardian of borders, preventing mankind from potentially dangerous contact with evil spirits.

Archaeology of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age as well as ethnographic data proves this sacral function by numerous deposited metal cauldrons.

Comparative mythology approach of the case study helps to fill the gap in interpretation, broaden the territory of theoretical results applied on archaeological data, and specify the context meaning according to local peculiarities.

**Jörg Füllgrabe**

**Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main**

***Northern Myths. The Localisation of 'Dietrichs Ende'. A Geographic-Mythological Transfer from Italy to the 'Northern' Hemisphere***

The period of the Germanic migration is the basic background for the later conception of these Teutonic 'heroic ages'. Dietrich von Bern/Didrik/Thidrek is the literary figuration of Theoderich the Great, the most famous King of the Goth in Italy.

But at the end of his kingdomship the heretic Theoderich became more than only a slightly paranoid, with the negative effect of sentencing senator Symmachus and the philosopher Boethius – and the even worse sentencing pop to live imprisonment of Pope Johannes. In catholic standing point this was a 'mega-capital-crime' – and so is the description of Theoderichs death connected with his condemnation. In texts of this tradition, Theoderich was thrown into the volcano, localised in, I think, the Vesuvius, as the door to hell.

But on the other hand we have a change, not only in place but although in function: Praying to the mother of Christ, Maria, the heretic king is able to save his soul – in spite of the awful things even by the worse things he had done. This way of being saved can be found in Nordic tradition: But there are even more mythical interpretations of 'Dietrichs Ende' in central and northern Europe.

To compare the myths on the localisation of 'Dietrichs Ende' and the switch over between a 'real' landscape – changing in different traditions – and its antagonistic interpretation – will be theme of this lecture