



Conferences and Events

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Newsletter

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11th Annual Aarhus Student Symposium on Viking and Medieval Scandinavian Subjects

25th – 26th April 2018, Aarhus, Denmark

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This year's two-day Interdisciplinary Aarhus Student Symposium on Viking and Medieval Scandinavian Subjects, the 11th annual edition, was yet again a delightful and intellectually stimulating event, with the symposium continuing to bring together young scholars from many different countries and universities, to enter a lively discussion on their current research. It is always a very friendly and encouraging conference, especially given the large number of first-time and new presenters, who can showcase their undergraduate or postgraduate studies and get peer and lecturer feedback on their research. Furthermore, the broad category for calls-for-papers encourages a diverse range of topics; thus, one can enter into a deep discussion of literature or mythology in one session and learn something new in the next session on digital humanities or archaeological theory, or indeed vice versa. This year, we also transcended location boundaries with the symposium's first ever live Skype presentation from Nottingham, bringing the symposium into a new virtual and modern dimension. We thank our organising committee Simon Nygaard (chair), Mai Nørskov Nielsen, Line Korsholm Lauridsen, and Johan Sandvang Larsen, and all the session chairs and presenters for bringing us another fantastic conference this year.

After a bright and cheerful welcome by Simon Nygaard, we delved straight into our first session, "Queering Old Norse Literature", chaired by Kathryn A. Haley-Hallinski

(University of Cambridge). This session brought about interesting discussion on the perception of gender and re-visualising modern concepts of gender and sexuality. Amy Jefford Franks (University of Iceland) explored the theme through semantic centre analysis of Óðinn in their paper "Óðinn: A Queer *týr*? A Study of Óðinn's Function as a Queer God in Iron Age Scandinavia". Lee Colwill (University of Iceland) discussed how we can theorise gender as a performance in their paper "The King's Two Bodies? The Performance of Gender in *Snjáskvæði*". Paul Martino (University of Iceland) used queer theory in discussions of Marie de France, in their paper, "The Fay and the Foreigner: Translating Queerness in *Strengleikar*".

The next session, chaired by Line Korsholm Lauridsen (Aarhus University) was all about "Runes". Scott T. Shell (University of California, Berkeley) opened the session with how we can use semiotic models to show the importance of looking at runes *in situ*, when trying to deduce possible magical qualities in his paper, "Applying Semiotic Models of Communication to the Elder Furthark Period". Johan Bollaert (University of Oslo) gave us a fascinating paper on Latin and Old Norse inscriptions from Norway in his paper "**her:huilir** or *†R:*NINR – Carving Traditions in Early Medieval Norway". Finally, Christian Alexander Lyons (University of Iceland) took us to the Isle of Man in a discussion of cultural

connection and influence in his paper “Runic Evidence of Manx Identity”.

After a lunch break, we went into the first of the afternoon sessions on “Transgression and Marginalisation in Old Norse Literature”, chaired by Anna Solovyeva (Aarhus University). Basil Arnould Price (University of York) kicked off the session with their paper on “Grimmer and Wiser: Transformation, Cannibalism and the Eaten Heart in Norse Myth and Legend” with a discussion of heart eating in the Sigurðr cycle. Next was a paper from Kayla Kemhadjian (University of Nottingham), entitled “In the Eyes of God: Acceptable versus Unacceptable Incest in Medieval Nordic Conversion Narratives”. Kayla was unfortunately unable to give the paper in person, so Simon Nygaard stood in for her. Hannah Armstrong (University of Oxford) continued the session with her paper on “Princesses, Prisoners and Pawns: A Reconsideration of Slaves and Slavery in the *Íslendingasögur*” which discussed the literary function of a selection of slaves from *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Laxdæla saga*. The session ended with Josefina Troncoso (University of Oxford), who took us into eddic poetry, discussing the women of the Sigurðr cycle in her paper “I am By No Means Fit to Live: Women and Suicide in the *Poetic Edda*”.

The final session of the day centred on “Iconography”, chaired by Arngrímur Vídalín (University of Iceland), with a rather exciting presentation delivered from Nottingham via Skype, as Harriet Clark discussed the cultural influences on wooden church doors with her paper “Symbols of Identity: Cultural Hybridisation in the Iconography of Norwegian Stave Churches”.

We started the second and final conference day bright and early with “Digital Humanities”, or as our chair Seán D. Vrieland (University of Copenhagen) put it, “Let’s get digital!” Sven Kraus (European University Viadrina Frankfurt), started by taking us through the digital programme, Prolio, which he had worked on during a research period at the University of Bergen, in his paper “*Oc SQL vex mer iafnan*: Tackling Single Manuscript with Large Scale Network Analysis”. Amina Hilbert and Fredrik Gahm (Uppsala University), showed us the work they had

conducted during their internship at the university museum Gustavianum in Uppsala, in 3-D digitalisation of archaeological finds from the Valsgårde burial site onto the Alvin platform, in their paper “If You Can’t Go to Valhalla, You Can at Least Go Online: Digitalizing Iron Age Collections”.

After the break, Mai Nørskov Nielsen (Aarhus University) chaired the next session on “Contemporary Approaches”. Rune Hjarnø Rasmussen (Uppsala University) took us out of Scandinavia in a comparative anthropological study of Norse mythology to tribal religions from the West African region, in his paper “Viking Globalization: Applying Globalization Anthropology on Viking Age History of Religions”. The session ended with Luca Panaro, (University of Iceland) and a study of the appropriation of mythological and eddic material in the music of Norwegian Black Metal, in his paper, “Return to Yggdrasil: Pagan-Inspired Black Metal as Modern Retextualization”.

Johan Sandvang Larsen (Aarhus University) chaired the third session on animal studies. Jane Jordahl (Uppsala University) picked up where her two colleagues had left off in the first session, to give us a more in-depth analysis on bird remains found at the Valsgårde burial site in her paper, “Birds as Companions to Humans: Bird Remains Found in Boat Graves from Valsgårde”. Christopher Nichols (Uppsala University) continued from there in the same vein with analysis of dog bone remains from the Valsgårde burial site, in his paper “Hounds of Hel: Canine Remains at the Vendel-Viking Cemetery of Valsgårde, Sweden”. Finally, Kathryn A. Haley-Halinski (University of Cambridge) gave us an iconographic survey of bird motifs to challenge previous interpretations of their significance on bracteates, in their paper entitled “Not All Bracteates: The Bracteates’ Forward-Facing Bird Motif and Socio-Cultural changes in Scandinavia”.

The next session dealt with “Ritualised Behaviour”, chaired by Simon Nygaard (Aarhus University). Anya Maltzberger (University of York) opened the session with a discussion of reciprocal gift-giving and death rituals in Old Norse literature, in her paper entitled “Keeping Close: Gift-Giving and the

Deceased in Pre-Christian Scandinavia”. Emily Parsons (University of Iceland) then presented us with the role of nuns and convents in Iceland, with a particular focus on the Benedictine order of nuns at Kirkjubæjarklaustur in her paper, “Sister Act: Piety, Performance, and Prayer at the Convent of Kirkjubæjarklaustur”.

The penultimate session, chaired by Amelia Herridge Ishak (University of Cambridge), centred on “Material Culture”. Zachary C. Cole (University of Iceland) opened the session with a presentation on new and upcoming research on dietary and social differences to try to demonstrate migration patterns between Denmark and the British Isles through bone analysis, in his paper “Buttered Bread and Battered Bones: Dietary Analysis of Human Remains from Medieval Period Denmark and the British Isles”. Olivia Elliot Smith (University of Iceland), gave an interesting paper on the use of cloth and colours as literary memory indicators in her

paper, “Material Culture and Memory: The Textiles of *Laxdæla saga*”.

The final session of the day was chaired by Luke John Murphy (University of Leicester) and concerned “Old Norse Poetry”. Anna Solovyeva (Aarhus University), discussed the case of Ragnarr loðbrók as a king and a skald and his removal from the Codex Uppsaliensis of *Snorra Edda* in her paper, “Power over Men and Power over Words: The Poet and King Ragnarr loðbrók”. The final paper of the conference was presented by Eleonora Pancetti (University of Iceland) on the archaeology of emotions and cognitive responses to negative emotions in her paper, “The Vocabulary of Negative Emotions in the *Poetic Edda*”.

Further information on the Student Symposium can be found at: www.vikingoldnorse.au.dk/activities-and-events/student-symposium/. We look forward to welcoming more exciting papers for the conference next year.

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