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Sound Cultures in the Medieval North: Tuning in[1]

Stefka G. Eriksen

The aim of this article is twofold: it reviews and collates recent discussions on sound in medieval and Old Norse studies, and in this way, it serves as a historiographical and thematic introduction to the articles of this special issue. The article is bipartite: first, it accounts for studies of intradiegetic sounds, including various categories of human and animal voices and sounds produced by things, animals, nature, and supernatural agencies, as discussed in scholarship focusing on medieval texts. Second, it reviews discussions of extradiegetic sounds, based on material sources, such as the manuscripts themselves, archaeology, architecture, and landscapes. These investigations testify that sound does matter when studying medieval textual and material culture and they legitimate the further investigations of the topic in this special issue, whose main contribution is its focus on sound cultures of the medieval North.

Like smell, sound is ephemeral and once faded is gone forever. Medieval sound is impossible to study directly, but there are still numerous and various sources that testify to or record past sound cultures. These include texts that describe and discuss sound; images that depict people being exposed to pleasant or terrifying sounds or people producing sound or being silent; objects that were used to produce sounds; still standing architecture that was built to enwrap the sound, to amplify it and transmit it; and even the landscapes of the past, that were actively and purposefully used as a frame for the transmission of sounds that needed to be heard across space.

Studies of medieval sound cultures, based on such varied sources have proliferated during the past several decades, and the main contribution of this special issue of *Collegium Medievale* is its explicit focus on the cultural context of medieval Scandinavia. This special issue is based on three interdisciplinary sessions presented at the Leeds Medieval Congress in 2023, and collects the papers that discussed sound based pri-

[1] This special issue is produced with the generous financial support of The Center for Literature, Cognition and Emotions and the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, both at the University of Oslo. Many thanks for the thorough reading and the constructive comments to the reviewer of the articles too.

marily on texts of various materialities (manuscripts and inscriptions), scripts (Latin and runic alphabet), languages (Old Norse and Latin) and literary genres (law texts, hagiography, Icelandic family sagas, Old Norse translations, among others).[2] Our main aim is to highlight the central role that sound had in medieval, and especially Old Norse, culture. The material remnants that we still have from that period, such as texts, manuscripts, inscriptions, art, things, buildings, were produced, used, and experienced within a multimodal and multivocal universe. This suggests that all the sensory aspects of this culture (its visuality, materiality, audibility, etc) constantly and continuously interplayed and conditioned the way humans participated in it. Our intention is not to present an all-inclusive coverage of sound, as discussed in textual cultures from medieval Scandinavia, but rather to unveil some new aspects of this ephemeral side of Old Norse culture and to investigate how it may have conditioned human existence.

This special issue builds upon a rich tradition of sound-studies based on material from medieval Europe and the North. The following review of these traditions will serve as a thematic and historiographical contextualization of the articles in this special issue. It will thus give the contours of the medieval North as an audible universe, as revealed in previous scholarship, which is to serve as a sonic background for the sounds that will be discussed in the following articles. The review of the existing scholarship will be structured according to the main categories of sounds that are discussed, and will be grouped in: (1) intradiegetic sounds, i.e., voices, discourses, and other sounds that are described in literary texts; and (2) extradiegetic sounds, i.e., sounds outside the world of the texts, which included the voiced readings/performances of the texts themselves as well as all other sounds that may have occurred at such reading/performance scenes. The sources to the former group of sound categories are medieval texts themselves, while the sources to the second group of sounds include, in addition to the texts, the material aspects of medieval manuscripts, as well as art, architecture, and other sound-producing objects. Even though these categories of sound are discussed separately for the sake of structural clarity, it is significant to highlight that the categories are interrelated – for example: the sound of a church bell that is accounted for in a text may also be studied as an extradiegetic sound by investigating church bells themselves. Such parallels will be pointed out when appropriate.

Before we start, two disclaimers must be noted: first, a main category of sound that is not discussed in this special issue is music, mainly because music-studies is

[2] The other papers from the sessions, focusing on material culture will be referred to in this introductory article, as a thematic contextualization for the discussion on sound as described by and embedded in texts.

such a major and independent field on its own.[3] Second, a new and important approach to sound-studies entails hi-tech scientific methods where sound transmission can be measured through three-dimensional scanning of buildings, virtual reality-technology or acoustic analyzes of landscapes.[4] As exciting and productive as these methods may be, we do not engage with them in this special issue, and they thus fall out of the scope of this introductory article.

Sound matters: main debates and concepts

A review on the topic of sound in medieval culture is bound to start with a reference to the essay cluster 'Sound Matters' published in *Speculum* (2016), which explains, enthusiastically and convincingly, why the study of sound matters for our understanding of medieval culture. Its authors, Susan Boynton, Sarah Kay, Alison Cornish, and Andrew Albin, focus on various aspects of the human (and animal) voice, but they all highlight their common starting point, namely that in the Middle Ages, sound was seen as the essential matter of words (Kay 2016: 1000). Medieval rhetoricians distinguish further between different types of sound: articulate and inarticulate, and those that can be presented in writing or not. These categories are used to differentiate qualitatively between the human voice (usually referred to as *vox*) and non-human sounds. Human utterance is, for example, seen as articulate: 'it is the voicing of a rational soul articulated by a body' (Kay 2016: 1001). Nonetheless, the four authors of 'Sound Matters' illustrate that these categories are not so clear cut. Kay shows how medieval writers use *vox* to refer to human words and music, as well as to the sounds made by some animals (birds in the troubadour tradition), angels and sometimes instruments (Kay 2016: 1006). Several of the authors also point out that the hierarchy of sound follows the hierarchy of creatures in medieval ontology. For example, even though humans share the ability to sing with angels, song is essentially angelic and beyond humanity.[5] The *Speculum*-issue discusses sound, voice, and music based on textual and literary sources, as well as manuscript illuminations. Despite its ephemeral nature, sound emerges as a central aspect of medieval culture that demands of us a different engagement with the available sources.

The necessity to turn to sound-studies in the cultural context of medieval Scandinavia is further highlighted by the fact that the theoretical discussion on sound, at the core of the *Speculum*-articles, existed also in the Old Norse cultural context. Two

[3] See for example: Dillon 2012; Jeffery 1992. On the Old Norse material, see Attinger 1998; Attinger & Haug 2004.

[4] See for example Till 2023; Foschi (online).

[5] See especially Cornish 2016: 1015.

of the Old Norse grammatical treatises – *The Second Grammatical Treatise* (SGT) and *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, attributed to Ólafr Þórðarson (TGT)[6] – account explicitly for the nature of sound and its categories, and relate this discussion to the system of sounds of the Old Norse language, as well as its orthography, poetics and metrics.[7] The SGT states: *Allt er hljóð, þat er um kvikvendis eyru má skilja*[8]/ (Sound is everything which the ears of living creatures may comprehend.) This aural universe includes the sound produced by the natural elements (water, the sea, rocks, and the earth), which is inarticulate (*hljóð*). This category of sound also includes music. Then, there are the sounds made by living creatures, such as birds and animals, which is referred to as a voice (*rǫdd*), and they are unintelligible to most men. The third category of sound is men's speech, which is referred to as sound (*hljóð*), voice (*rǫdd*), and speech (*mál*). These are deeply embodied; they depend on breath and the placement of the tongue and the movement of the lips. Most significantly, they are related to reason and memory, and are intelligible. Ólafr's TGT also discusses the nature of *hljóð* (sound) in general and distinguishes between bodily and spiritual sounds related to the holy scripture, even though the text focuses mostly on the former category.[9] The bodily sounds may be made by lively and lifeless entities. The lifeless entities are further grouped into those that move (fire, wind, water), or not (stones, metals). Further, these sounds may be unintelligible (the sound of the wind, for example) and intelligible, such as music, which is referred to as celestial harmony (*cælestis armonia*) or heavenly sound (*himnesk hljóða-grein*) (Finnur Jónsson 1927: 21). The lively entities that are sound producing may lack consciousness (*vitlauss*) (grass, trees, etc), or they may be conscious. In that case, the sound may be referred to as a voice (*rǫdd*) or bodily sounds, such as stamping your feet or clapping your hands (Finnur Jónsson 1927: 21). Here it is also specified that voice is highly embodied, produced by the body, the lungs and the tongue and it is intelligible to the ears. It may be articulate, meaning possible to record in writing, or not, and the articulate sounds/voice can still be meaningful or not. The meaningful voices can be natural, such as children's cries or the sighs of a sick man, or they may be realized in the form of the speech of a conscious willful man (Finnur Jónsson 1927: 22). These categorizations of sounds in the SGT

[6] On the Old Norse grammatical tradition as a whole and the origin, provenance and manuscript transmission of all the four grammatical treatises, see Raschellà 1982.

[7] For *The Second Grammatical Treatise*, see Raschellà 1982. For *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, see Finnur Jónsson 1924.

[8] Raschellà 1982: 50.

[9] These passages accounting for various sound-categories may have been a later addition to Ólafr's grammatical treatise. For a more detailed discussion, see Finnur Jónsson 1927: 16–17.

and the TGT are deeply indebted to European learned culture, and they include direct references to Priscian's and Donatus' reflections on *vox*. The categorizations of sounds in the two grammatical treatises will be discussed more extensively in one of the articles in this special issue,[10] but here it suffices to emphasize that they incorporate the European theoretical discussions of sound in an utterly Norse context and debates, which in itself is an additional legitimation for the further study of sound cultures in medieval Scandinavia.

Before we indulge in how these and other topics have been discussed in medieval and Old Norse studies more specifically, some terms and concepts need to be briefly introduced as they will be used extensively in the following. *Vox* has been referred to already as a central concept in medieval culture, referring to language, spirituality, and textuality, as opposed to sound, which was regarded as inarticulate in theoretical treatises. Scholars have discussed numerous literary voices in texts (i.e., authors, narrators, translators, etc), by deploying the term *vocality*,[11] which signifies the cultural practice of interrelating written and vocally performed text. The latter concept has contributed to the upheaval of the *orality-literacy* dichotomy, which is adjacent, but not always directly related, to the discussions of voice and sound in philological and literary research. *Aurality* is another term that nuances the orality-literacy dichotomy, as it highlights the audible nature of medieval texts. The aurality of medieval texts may be seen as a complementary aspect to their *visuality* and *materiality*, i.e. the visual and material characteristics of texts and manuscripts, which would have impacted the reading process too. Reading today is most often private, i.e. it entails visual reception. The terms aurality and vocality of medieval texts serve to highlight exactly the fact that visual reception (i.e. private reading) was *not* the default mode of reading in medieval culture (even though we have references to that too),[12] but reading was most often vocal, aural, and thus embodied and performative, social and public. Thinking of medieval reading as *performance* brings to mind another term, namely *soundscapes*, which refers to the multiplicity of sounds that may be experienced at a given performance/reading setting. The voiced reading of a text would most often have been accompanied by many other voices and sounds, and the nature of the specific reading/performance-scene and its soundscape would have impacted the reception of the text. In the title of the special issue, we use the term *sound cultures*, in order to highlight that various soundscapes characterized various cultural settings and included

[10] See especially 'Sound, Voice, Speech – and Silence'.

[11] More detailed discussion and references will be provided in the section on 'Extradiegetic sound'.

[12] For a discussion, see Saenger 1982.

various sound cultures. The term *soundtrack* will be deployed too, in order to denote that sound cultures occur and develop not only in space, but also in time. We will return to all these concepts in greater detail below, but for now, they serve to underline not only that voice and sound mattered in medieval culture, but that they were the main medium through which texts were communicated, performed, and received. Learning more about medieval sound cultures is thus central for a renewed understanding of both medieval texts and human existence in the Middle Ages.

Intradiegetic sounds

The main focus of this special issue is on intradiegetic sounds, i.e. on sounds described in texts. These sounds comprise various literary voices, including these of creative agents as well as of created literary characters; silence, as a distinctive form of communication, and sounds perceived with the inner senses; as well as sounds of animal, natural and supernatural energies, and things. The existing scholarly discussions of these categories of sounds will be reviewed in the following.

Literary voices

The topic of literary voice and *vox* as represented in literature, mostly in Middle English but also some Old Norse texts, is discussed in a recent volume, *Medieval Literary Voices: Embodiment, Materiality and Performance*, edited by Louise D'Arcens and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (2022). The book discusses voice on four levels: the narrative level, the authorial/ authoritative level, voice as revealed by various material aspects of medieval manuscripts, and voice from reception perspective. It includes articles on a great variety of topics related to literary voice, such as the link between voice and humanity, spirituality and textuality; the polyphony and multiplicity of voices available in literature; voice, gender and identity; voice and performativity, and thus authority; inner voices from the divine or the past; articulate and inarticulate voices; voice and music; silence and pauses as integral part of voice; externalized voices in the manuscripts; *vox* between orality and textuality. The book as a whole is a great example of the numerous aspects of medieval texts that are relevant for the study of literary voices.

As the volume implies, the most studied categories of literary voices are, without doubt, those of the **authors**,[13] **poets**,[14] **narrators,**[15] **translators**,[16] or other creative

[13] On European material, see Minnis 1984. For a recent review of the discussion on authorship in the Old Norse field, see Introductory article in Gropper & Rosli 2021.

[14] On prosimetrum in *Kings' sagas*, see for example Wellendorf 2022. On the function of skaldic verse in the *Íslendingasögur,* see O'Donoghue 2005. For case studies, see Clunies Ross 2010; Guðrún Nordal 2008.

agents. The material turn has also highlighted the significance of the explicit or implicit voices of scribes and compilers.[17] These voices frame the narratives and impact their form and meaning, and they are thus central when discussing composition, meaning and reception. Their absence or presence, their clarity or vagueness, would have impacted any vocal performance of a medieval text and they are thus significant factors when discussing extradiegetic sound too.

Within the narratives, we also find the voices of the **literary characters**. The distribution of voices amongst the characters and the form of these vocal exchanges matter for how we understand the narrative. The importance of vocal exchange and communication in Old Norse literature may be confirmed by the popularity of dialogues, as exemplified by texts like *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsjá*, *Barlaams saga*, *Gylfaginning*, just to mention a few. However, even regular prose texts include numerous dialogues set in various communicative contexts, which are significant factors when extrapolating meaning out of such discourse (Brian 2021). Discourse norms vary in various Old Norse genres, and sometimes the articulation of a discourse in one and the same saga may even change in the different manuscript versions of the same saga, altering not only verbal expressions, but also the description of the meaning-defining discourse context.[18] Even though many discourse-studies do not engage with the concept of voice directly, but rather lean on other theoretical tools, such as pragmatic linguistics and speech-act theory, they demonstrate how the vocal interaction between characters is a central literary and narrative tool that impacts the meaning of the narrative, as well as its possible performances.

On other occasions, audible and voiced utterances of the characters are presented in monologues. Sometimes, such monologues are rendered in poetic form, such as for example the famous grief-poem *Sonatorrek*, a monologue where Egil Skallagrimsson is mourning the death of his son,[19] while in other texts, such as in the translated *riddarasögur*, the monologues present psychological and emotional reflections in prose.[20] Inner monologues or comments are sometimes supposed to be heard by other

[15] On narratology and voice, see for example Genette 1972/1980.

[16] On European translations, see Copeland 1991. On Old Norse translations, see Sif Rikhardsdottir 2012; Eriksen 2024.

[17] The significance of the agency of scribes is promoted in many of the articles in Gropper & Rösli 2021. Other anthologies that discuss various 'authorial' agencies include Rancovic, Melve & Mundal 2010; Mundal & Wellendorf 2008; Rancovic et al. 2012; Mulligan & Mundal 2019.

[18] Brian 2021, but also for example Hanna S. Þorleifsdóttir (2007) on dialogues in *Ívens saga*.

[19] For a discussion, see Sif Rikhardsdottir 2022.

characters, while at other times they are addressed to God, which suggests that voice and sound is significant not only for the communication between people, but also between humans and the other-worldly. Nonetheless, monologues present clear literary voices, different from those in dialogues, that have various functions within the narrative.[21] They often present excellent examples of how voice, memory, and humanity are linked in Old Norse literature, thus bringing to mind the concept of *vox*.[22]

Another much-discussed feature of vocal utterances in literature, in addition to their form, is **the gender and social status** of the agents who get to have a voice. For example, often, especially in the *riddarasögur*, the inner monologues represent the voices of women and their inner psychological states. Thus, voices of various social groups and even of specific individuals may be represented differently in literature.[23] If we focus on the voices of women as a mini case-study, we have to acknowledge that even though women's monologues can be highly informative about their needs and desires, they do not always correspond to the actual voices and demands that were publicly stated, i.e. they are not always heard,[24] or they are 'heard' to a varying degree, depending on the social context in which they are pronounced, i.e. private or public/legal occasions.[25] Further, it has been pointed out that women could exert their power by using their voice as well as by choosing to keep silent (Wolf 2018). The voices given to women in Old Norse literature, and the way they are received by their surroundings, are thus highly significant for our understanding of the role and position of women in Old Norse society.[26] These debates reveal that the meaning and role of literary voices is contingent on the gender and social status of the agent with the voice, and not least on the social situation in which they are used. The voices of

[20] On psychological and emotional monologues in the *riddarasögur*, see Sif Rikhardsdottir 2015.

[21] On the function of self-reflective comments and monologues in *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*, see Eriksen 2016.

[22] On the function of poetry in the *fornaldarsögur*, see Clunies Ross 2012; in *konungasögur*, see Wellendorf 2022; in *Íslendingasögur*, see Donoghue 2005; Clunies Ross 2010.

[23] For a discussion of speech and silence as an existential discourse, relating to the homogeneity of Icelandic culture, see Österberg 1991.

[24] In some instances, this is demonstrated by inverting the narrative: women who speak and demand the men to be quiet are not heard and deprived of their power through the very speech of men. This motive has recently been explored in a paper by Eriksen 2023. This is work in progress and for more information please contact the scholar: s.g.eriksen(at)iln.uio.no

[25] See for example Mundal 2018; Tromp 2018; Tveit et.al. 2022.

[26] For recent studies of Old Norse women, see for example Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2013, 2021. On women as mediators, see Gos 2009.

other 'marginal' and unstudied agents – such as children – will be investigated further in this special issue.

Silent characters and narrative gaps

Silence, as mentioned already, is an important category of sound, and is described as a chosen mode of communication by various agents and in many Old Norse texts. *Lárentíus saga biskups* and *Jóns saga helga* mention for example the importance of adherence to silence in the Benedictine community.[27] Writing on wax tablets is described as an alternative form of communication in *Augustinus saga*, *Lárentíus saga biskups* and *Sturlunga saga*, and may be seen as reminiscent of the sign language used in many monastic institutions in Europe (Tirosh 2020: 316). Other sagas, such as *Tristrams saga* or *Geitarlauf* from the collection of short stories *Strengleikar*, mention people communicating secretly and silently by sending written messaged carved on wooden sticks. All of these highlight the importance of tuning into the silence articulated in medieval texts, as an essential and meaningful category of sound, as well as paying attention to what other forms of communication appear in conjunction to silence.

The concept of silence may entail not only what various characters do not say in a text, but also topics and themes that are omitted in a text.[28] Richard Cole (2016) offers an interesting contribution to this discourse on silence. Building upon Patrick Fuery's *The Theory of Absence*, he shows that absence materializes itself in numerous ways and forms, and plays various roles in Old Norse tradition. He demonstrates that absence is not the dichotomic opposite of presence, but it is relative depending on space and time and mental distance. Cole proposes a typology of absences: from perfect absence to perfect presence, which Cole explains with the help of Gumbrecht's definition of Christianity as a presence-culture, i.e. God is not a product of faith, but a fact of life (Cole 2016: 154). Cole's typology of absence (and presence) invites us to think of the relationship between what is explicitly mentioned and articulated in a text and what is hinted at through various literary techniques, or what

[27] Tirosh 2020: 318. Silence was important also for the Cluniacs and Franciscans (see Bruce 2007; Bonde & Maines 2015), but it was the Cistercians who utilized the concept to its full by developing complex sign-language consisting of roughly 250 keywords (Ziolkowski 2010: 132)

[28] On silence in Christian textual history, see MacCulloch 2014. He discusses the mentioning of silence (as opposed to the references to words, noise, vocalization) in Jewish and Christian texts, including the Old Testament (the Tanakh), the New Testament, the Gospels, letters, documents, monastic and mystical writings and a great variety of other sources, as well as the big topics that remain unarticulated and enwrapped in silence in this same material. MacCulloch's discussion includes various types of silences today – silence around the Holocaust, slavery, abuse, various voices, etc. These are all very significant discussions, illustrating excellently that cultures of sound and silence have a long and complex history.

is always present but does not need to be mentioned. The relationship between articulation/non-articulation and sound/silence thus appears to be dynamic and shifting, and as conditioned by mental, temporal, and spatial distances. This demands further fine-tuning of the readers and listeners who are interested in understanding the meaning of sound and silence in Old Norse literature.

The inner senses: Voice-hearing (and visions)

This leads directly to our next category of sounds, namely sounds produced and heard not in regular direct human interactions, but sounds heard with the inner senses, or the inner ear. Voice-hearing is a common motif in many medieval texts and genres, and especially in hagiographical and visionary texts (Saunders 2022). Such experiences are not pathologized but form part of the possible sensory experiences in Christian culture – voices perceived with the inner ear could be coming from God, the devil, or spirits. The hearing of such voices may often be triggered by a trauma, and they are deeply embodied, often causing further bodily reactions. Voice-hearing is often a part of a multi-modal, multi-sensory experience, including visions. They have strong affective and relational qualities as they may inspire conversations, through which the voice hearing is made sense of. Ultimately medieval voice-hearing is strongly connected with and explained by faith, even when it seems unreasonable. Voice-hearing is thematized generously in mystical writing, as well as in medieval romances of Chrétien de Troyes, and texts by Chaucer, Gower, and Malory, where they also intersect the human and the supernatural world and address the complex relationship between agency and providence/destiny (Saunders 2018).

Voice-hearing (and vision-seeing and dreaming) is a common motif in the Old Norse literary corpus too, attested in many translated and indigenous texts, including visions, religious texts, and kings' sagas. For example, both Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson are known for 'seeing and hearing' (in their dreams) respectively God and Óláfr Tryggvason, who convince them to return to Norway, take back their land and baptize their people.[29] Voice-hearing is, in these texts, part of the multisensory experience of the vision. Old Norse visions and hagiographical texts have garnered more interest in recent years,[30] but the complexity of their soundscape has not yet been extensively studied.[31]

[29] These episodes and voices in other sagas, such as *Alexanders saga*, are discussed in Eriksen 2024, ch. 10.

[30] See Wellendorf 2007 for a comprehensive account. Heide 2016.

[31] The article 'Audible Children' in this special issue addresses the sound cultures represented in hagiography.

Ecological/animal studies

In addition to the voices and sound exchanged between humans and deitic and angelic energies, medieval texts describe vocal communication also between humans and other natural energies. Susan Boynton indeed points out that sound is mainly 'a form of connection – between human and nonhuman, body and soul, or natural and supernatural.' (Kay 2016: 1002) Sarah Kay also highlights that sound studies enable scholars to make connections to new ecological/ animal studies, since they also challenge the dominant anthropocentric view in medieval studies.[32]

The Old Norse field is also experiencing increased interest in the sounds produced by various animals, such as birds, dogs, or wild animals.[33] The Old Norse literary corpus abounds in sounds made by many other natural and supernatural creatures, such as ghosts or *draugr* (i.e. a reanimated corpse of the deceased, often associated with burial mounds, see Kanerva 2023), as well as the sounds of the natural world itself, including winds and storms.[34] Scholars, inspired by posthumanism and ecocritical paradigms, are devoting attention to the agency of both natural and supernatural energies, and their sounds and communicative strategies are increasingly acknowledged as a meaningful element in Old Norse narratives, a topic which will be further explored in this special issue (see Eriksen 2025 (in print)).

The sounds of things

Another tendency inspired by posthumanism and object orientated ontology is an increased interest in the sounds and agency of things (see for example Harman 2002), which is discussed not only by literary scholars, but also by archaeologists, and art- and church-historians (see references below). Old Norse literature, as expected, contains numerous and varied descriptions of sounds produced by things, such as horns, musical instruments, church bells, swords, ships, and even books, to mention some of the main and most noisy or vocal objects. Such sounds have been shown to be highly significant for human existence, on an individual cognitive level, on a communicative social level, on a judicial and on a religious level (see Eriksen 2025 (in print)).

Taking into consideration all the aspects of voiced communication and sound as described in Old Norse literature, it has recently been pointed out that what we have portrayed in literature is not a soundscape, but a soundtrack that progresses through time and space.[35] This soundtrack comprises human voices of various genders and

[32] Kay 2016: 1003. On animal soundscapes in Anglo-Norman texts, see Lewis 2022.

[33] See article 'The Animal Heard' in this special issue for further references.

[34] For a general study of winds and storms in Old Norse literature, see MacCreesh 2018.

[35] The term soundscape was first used by Schafer 1993 and refers to sonic environments

social classes, performing monologues or engaging in dialogues, the sounds of otherworldly angelic or devilish creatures, the words of God, and the sounds made by animals, natural phenomena, and things. Medieval human experience, as described in literature, is highly multivocal and multimodal, which means that the soundtrack also includes breaks and silences, which may only be understood when interpreted in combination with body language and other enacted interactions. The articles in this special issue discuss all these different categories of sound, as described in various Old Norse texts, and reveal new nuances about specific voices, sounds, and communicative contexts. Our studies on the communication between human, nonhuman and material cultures thus aim to provide new insight into medieval sound cultures and soundtracks as described in literature, but also to bridge the gap between studies of literary and narrative discourse, on the one hand, and studies of agency of things and animal/plant studies, on the other, that most often are still procured separately and independently from each other.

Extradiegetic sound

Even though the primary focus of this special issue is on intradiegetic sounds, some of the articles engage in discussions of sound on an extradiegetic level, i.e. the sounds that occur outside the text. The most relevant type of extradiegetic sounds for us in this special issue are those produced when a text is read aloud or performed, but any other sounds that may occur at a potential reading/performance scene are relevant too. The sources for such extradiegetic sounds include the texts and manuscripts themselves, but also the buildings and landscapes that formed and enhanced the sounds, as well as physical things that produced sounds.[36]

The Sound of the Text: Textuality, vocality, aurality and performance

The voiced reading of written texts is a debate that takes us straight to the core of orality-literacy discussions in medieval studies. The oral-formulaic theories proposed by Albert Bates Lord (1960) and Milman Parry (1971) argued that even though a text

comprising of ambient noise of all kinds, including human and non-human sounds and also sounds that humans cannot perceive. For a further discussion of the idea of medieval soundtrack, see Eriksen 2025 (in print).

[36] For a study of soundscapes during Shakespearean times from such an interdisciplinary perspective (based on information about sounds in text, buildings, landscape, and climate, as well as social and political structures), which promotes the actual physical 'findableness' of medieval sound, see Smith 1999. Art-historical sources fall outside the scope of this special issue, but central contributions to the debates include Debias 2019, Boynton & Reilly 2015. On the correspondence between textual and visual focus on sound/silence in medieval Scandinavia, especially in connection to the rite of baptism, see Andås 2023. This is work in progress and interested readers are invited to contact the scholar at margrete.syrstad.andas(at)ntnu.no..

is preserved in writing, its formulaic nature may indicate an oral origin, i.e. oral, vocal, and audible composition and transmission. Advocates of the consecutive scholarly paradigm, the so-called Great Divide Theory, such as Walter J. Ong (1988), Erik A. Havelock (1986) and Jack Goody (1987) positioned themselves on the other end of the continuum and argued that the main characteristic of a written text was indeed its literate and written nature, which could testify to a completely different process of creation and transmission, cognitively, practically, and technologically. Voice and sound are not central categories in Ong & co.'s discussions and only with the so-called 'secondary orality' (cultures of radio, tv and other mass-media), does sound and voice emerge as an important cultural aspect again. The contention within orality-literacy debates today is positioned along the continuum between these two dichotomic stands. Social anthropologists such as Ruth Finnegan (1977; 1988) have pointed out that orality and literacy co-exist in most cultures, a statement that is also valid with regard to our own highly literate culture, in which orality and aurality still take center-stage (think of podcast, audiobooks, in addition to the more traditional mediums of theatre and other performances).

Medieval studies have pretty much followed these paradigms of orality-literacy scholarship, and many have emphasized the inherently mixed modality of medieval oral and textual culture.[37] The current contention in the Old Norse field also leans towards promoting a multifaceted and complex relationship between orality and literacy.[38] Written texts recount of the oral retelling and performance of stories, as seen, for example, in the famous example from the wedding described in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*.[39] Direct invitations to the audience to listen, or narrator's comments such as 'as you have heard' or 'as it has been told', etc. proliferate in Old Norse texts, suggesting that they were intended to be listened to.[40] Stylistic features that would have been audible, and thus may reflect the intention for the text's aural reception, are nu-

[37] On literary *vox* and vocality of Old French literature, see Zumthor 1984, 1988; Doane and Pasternack 1991. On the aurality of French and English literature, see Coleman 1996. On administrative literacy in medieval England, see Clanchy 2013. On medieval French literature, see Viz 1999. On medieval German literature, see Green 1994.

[38] See Rancovic, Melve & Mundal 2010; Mundal & Wellendorf 2008, Rancovic et al. 2012, Mulligan & Mundal 2019, Gropper & Rösli 2022, where various textual elements (references to public reading, style and aesthetics, and the graphical features) are discussed by various authors.

[39] For a recent discussion, see Mitchell 2022.

[40] For a study of such invitations, seen in conjunction to the graphic design of the manuscript page, see Eriksen 2014. For a discussion of the rhetorical and political function of Old Norse texts produced by or around the Norwegian royal office, see Brégaint 2016.

merous too, such as alliterations, various meters, or end-rhyme (even in prose texts).[41] The intended aurality and vocality of poetic or prosimetrum texts, as opposed to prose, have been much discussed in Old Norse studies too, as their form and aesthetics indicates the opportunity for different transmission and reception processes.[42] Last but not least, various visual and material aspects of the manuscripts have also been interpreted as indicating an intention for the text to be publicly read aloud, as they would have facilitated a public reader to find a specific place in the text and emphasize the passage vocally. Such visual or material elements could include aspects of the *mise en livre* (structure and content), the *mise en texte* (titles, rubrics, illuminations, initials, majuscules, marginalia), and the *mise en page* (punctuation, abbreviations) of the manuscript.[43] For example, marginal notations have been interpreted as visual clues to change in voices during vocal performance (Gunnell 1995). Other studies have demonstrated that changes in the visuality of various versions of one and the same text could indicate changes in the intended reception mode of one and the same text (public reading and visual reception vs private reading) (Eriksen 2014).

To give a few more specific examples, Kate Heslop's recent study of the mediology of skaldic poetry positions this unique form on the continuum, and not the dichotomy, between orality and literacy, by defining the genre both as a media practice (comparable to landscapes, visual art and music) and a vocal discourse. Even though most often, the skaldic verses are linked to named scalds/ authors, this study innovatively highlights that the variance that exists in the manuscript transmission of skaldic poetry is indicative of the significance of the practices of performance, reception, and re-writing also of this genre (Heslop 2022). In this way, skaldic studies are opened up not only for the discussions of *vox* and authorial intention, but also for discussions of various medieval media (runestones, manuscripts, compilations, art and other visual expressions) and multimodal reception through various senses.

The performativity embedded in Old Norse eddic poetry has also been much discussed under the inspiration of the performative or so-called 'play'-turn.[44] It has been argued that even though preserved in writing, eddic poetry should be regarded as an

[41] For a discussion and numerous examples of alliterations and other rhythmical features of Old Norse literature, especially the translations, see Eriksen 2014: 133–136, 185.

[42] For a recent book on sound and voice in skaldic poetry, see Heslop 2022. On skaldic poetry in the sagas, as evidence of speech and oral performance, see Leslie-Jacobsen 2022.

[43] See for example Cazelle 2005; Cruse 2013. Further, evidence of hands-on physical use of medieval manuscripts (touching, kissing, etc.) reveals how they were used in oath-swearing ceremonies, or as relics. Such physical interaction with the books would have included aural performances in specific communicative contexts. See Ruby 2024; 2023-25.

[44] Gunnell 2022:1. See also other of his work such as Gunnell 1995.

aural, visual, and momentary experience, i.e. poetry needs to be thought of in terms of performance. In many such discussions, the focus is on the 'spaces' and 'places' in which performances and story-telling events happened, as these were significant factors that conditioned and contributed to the performance and reception (Gunnell 2022: 3). This had led to the study of dialogues and monologues in the eddic poems, as 'scripts' for performance, based on marginal notations; of Viking halls as 'stages' for such performances and of the aural aspects of archaeological spaces etc.; of instruments from the Bronze and Viking Age (Gunnell 2022: 3–5). Even if such approaches to Old Norse culture that are inspired by performance studies may involve a degree of surmise and speculation, as Terry Gunnell, one of its main advocates, states himself (Gunnell 2022: 6), they certainly promote the multi-sensory nature of the Old Norse experience that involved people, their senses and social communities, and the material and cultural spaces in which they existed.

Without aiming to reconstruct either performances or performative spaces, as some of Gunnell's colleagues do, in this special issue we lean on the same understanding of sound as embedded in medieval texts and as being inseparable from its social, physical, and natural surroundings. This may indeed be further legitimized by the definition of communication in the Latin rhetorical discourse,[45] as entailing *pronuntiatio*, i.e. the realization of a speech by vocalization (*figura vocis*, which covers breath and rhythm),[46] as well as *actio*, i.e. gestures and facial expressions. Besides, *actio* and *pronunciatio* included at their core the idea of silence, i.e. breaks that made the discourse more convincing and successful. These rhetorical principles were important for many different types of performances, including the aural reading of texts,[47] thus emphasizing the embodied, aural, social, and situated nature of medieval texts.

[45] For a survey of the Greek background, see Ziolkowski 2010. Many of the essays in Carruthers (ed.) 2010 explore the relationship between sound and silence as part of rhetoric. Other essays focus on *vultus*, facial expression, and *gestus* (gestures, including clothing) as an important aspect of persuasion, in addition to *vox*. They emphasize that tones and rhythms of voice, gestures and facial expressions were all collectively significance in medieval performance, Carruthers 2010: 10

[46] The other major divisions of rhetoric are *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio* and *memoria*. See Ziolkowski 2010: 126.

[47] Ziolkowski 2010: 135. The significance of silence in secular contexts may be testified by the existence of a highly intriguing French romance *Le roman de Silence*, about a heroine with the name Silence, see Roche-Mahdi 2007; Dahmen 2009.

Rhetoric beyond words: architecture and acoustics

The physical context within which the sound occurs is a central aspect of extradiegetic sound. In medieval culture, there were many interconnections between rhetoric, poetry, theology, music, art and architecture (to mention a few), and each of these disciplines had its own implicit rhetoric and modes to relate to its audience during performances (see Carruthers (ed.) 2010). Many scholars have discussed the intricate and complex relationships between rhetoric, music, and architecture (Binski 2010; Bent 2010), and it has been demonstrated that 'voiceless artefacts' in medieval cathedrals, such as altars, passages, sculptures and stained glass, played significant roles in the visitors' experience of the religious rituals and performances they participated in.[48] Engaging with the religious art in medieval cathedrals, including images and objects that were visually inaccessible, was an integrated part of the experience of the cathedral/church space. They would have activated the inner eye, 'the mind's eye' of the audience. In a similar way, silence had a crucial role, especially in specific types of chants that were common in monastic and ecclesiastical cultures, as it allowed music to 'shift register' from an aural realm to an experience of the inner senses. Activating the inner senses would have triggered the audience's imagination, which was central with regard to devotion, prayers, meditation (Williamson 2013: 3). The experience of extradiegetic sound was thus much more than just the aural reception of a sound, since it also included listening to the silent breaks; it also entailed the visual perception of body-language and movement, of imagery and architectural elements (including those that were difficult to see); it demanded physical presence and movement within a given architectural space, at specific times.

Recently, it has been shown that secular architecture, such as the grand halls of medieval castles, where literature and music were performed regularly, had an impact on the actual form and tempo of the texts performed there, i.e. the troubadours' songs of the 1100s, their words and music (see Brown 2025 (in print)). For us, this emphasizes the fact that sound cannot be studied on its own, instead it has to be studied in connection to the performer and the audience, and in connection to the physical space and social context within which it occurs. Sound is always part of a persuasion-exercise or practice, and it becomes meaningful together with numerous other physical and social aspects.[49] Once again, this promotes the importance of all the senses for

[48] Crossley 2010; on ductus, see Carruthers 2010a.

[49] See also Pentcheva 2021. Another major publication that emphasizes and investigates the interplay between the aural, the architectural, as well as the visual in medieval experience is Boynton & Reilly (eds) 2015. The book discusses different types of physical contexts (churches, synagogues and Topkapi palaces) and different types of social and religious communities (Cistercians, Dominicans, among many others). Some articles focus on the interplay between

the true multimodal medieval experience, which demands a different understanding of what looking and listening was in the Middle Ages, but also it necessitates awareness of how we today look at and 'listen' to the remnants of medieval culture that we still have.

Some similar discussions exist based on the Nordic architectural and the art-historical material too, but they are most often only implicitly related to the topic of sound. In one anthology on the medieval cathedral of Trondheim, the cathedral is understood as 'a unit of physical construction and a number of functions: ritual, liturgical, representational, and symbolic, in other words as a part of the general cultural history of its epoch.'[50] The cultural history, as discussed in the study in question, does not explicitly include the aural elements of the culture, but its ritual and liturgical aspects certainly include sound. This and other similar studies certainly form part of the performance- or play-turn in medieval studies, even if they do not debate the role of sound explicitly.

There are some specific studies of the acoustics of Romanesque churches and halls in Norway, such as Gamle Aker Kirke and the King's palace in Bergen, known as Håkonshallen, king Hákon's (Hákonarsson) hall, constructed in the thirteenth century (see Snekkestad 2010; Fett 1968). Such studies emphasize that stone churches' surfaces changed the way in which sound got transmitted. In stone churches, sound would have been reflected to a much greater extent in the space, compared to the local wooden churches where the sound would have been absorbed in the material. Several other aspects of the architectural design of the churches would also have conditioned the transmission of sound, such as the floor plan, interior, and decorative elements. The acoustic qualities of a building are thus highlighted as equally central and closely interrelated to the architectural qualities, and thus essential for the performance of the liturgy, involving singing, reciting, preaching, and praying.[51]

illuminated manuscripts and liturgical practices; between embroidered textiles, wall paintings, or sculpture; between architectural space and sound, and the way the 'congregation' was to participate and move within this space; or between silence and sound. Some essays explicitly discuss the iconography of sound, such as sculptures on the façade of Orvieto Cathedral or the plainchant capitals at Cluny.

[50] Andås et.al. 2007. For a study on Danish churches from a similar ritualistic perspective, without explicit focus on sound, but rather on liturgy, see Bonde 2020.

[51] This work may be seen as parallel and closely affiliated to archaeologists' interest in sound and acoustics, see for example Scarre 2006. The soundscapes in medieval churches, based on prayer inscriptions on the church walls, will be discussed in the article 'Carving Sound' in this special issue.

More recently, even the architecture of stave churches has been included in the debate. While previous scholars have argued that vaulted ceilings and choirs of stave churches have purely architectural, and if painted, aesthetic function, Kjartan Hauglid has postulated that they had also a significant acoustic role.[52] If untreated, the wooden surface would simply absorb the sound, but such vaults would have been covered with gesso (a type of plaster on which one could paint). This would have turned the wooden vaults into just as good a transmitter of sound as the interior of a stone church. Such architectural details that previously have remained unseen and uncommented suddenly become highly relevant when 'new' research questions (such as sound and acoustics) are taken on. Further, they demonstrate excellently how much sound mattered in medieval culture, and how its significance was utterly embedded in medieval art-historical and architectural culture.

Places and communities, urban and rural

The embeddedness of sound in material culture has also been discussed, based on studies of various urban and rural areas and places. For example, in his book, *The History of Rhythm in the Middle Ages*, Jean-Claude Schmitt discusses rhythm from a social perspective and claims that prior to the invention of clocks as tools for measuring time, human experience was mainly structured by the rhythm of God (Schmitt 2016). This was done by creating repetitive patterns through sounds, but also colors, visual representations, acts and gestures, which were meant to primarily reflect the rhythm established by God in his Creation, which took seven days, including a rest-day. This major temporal structure was further elaborated on by the rhythmical repetition of the liturgical calendar. Schmitt argues that this rhythm is embedded in most of the sources of various modalities that we have preserved from the Middle Ages, but it also includes the sound of church-bells, singing, preaching, and praying that are irretrievably lost.

Researchers have also taken up this line of thought for the Nordic material. New research on medieval urban culture in Norway, for example medieval Oslo and Bergen, proposes that urban religiosity was different from rural religiosity and that the aural dimension was one of the main differences (Andås & Aavitsland 2024; see also Hommedal 2023). In a medieval town people would have had to relate to a much more complex religious situation compared to that of rural contexts. In the towns, there would have been several churches, various monastic orders and institutions, as well as possibly a bishop's (or archbishop's) seat, while in rural areas, people would

[52] Hauglid 2023. This is work in progress and interested readers are invited to contact the scholar at Kjartan.Hauglid(at)niku.no.

have mostly related to their one parish church and its priest on all occasions – everyday prayer, baptism, marriage, death, etc.[53] Not only that, but in towns, the aural soundscape would have been much more complicated and would have demanded specific competence to be navigated appropriately. In Oslo, and other towns, the church bells would ring at the start of the rest-day; they would ring three times before Mass, and the monastic churches and cathedral would ring at prayer-times. St. Mary's Church in Oslo, a royal chapel, would also ring in the morning and the evening, and invite the town's people to stop and 'repeat the angel's greetings to the virgin Mary and remember that God became a human through her.' The complex soundscape in the towns would have thus reminded people of their potential salvation in the next life.[54]

Another source-group that is directly relevant for the study of sound are the church bells themselves, which contribute important additional information about the significance and meaning of their sound.[55] Musical instruments found in medieval towns as well as horns that would have been used to announce various events of social and judicial significance are essential sources too.[56] The urban soundscape would have included the sound of animals which are difficult to discuss based on anything else than textual descriptions, but in rural communities animal soundscapes have been discussed based on archaeological studies of the architecture and the organization of the farm houses. Such investigations have revealed that the architectural space was also an auditory space that was a nexus between culture and nature.[57]

Roadmap

This special issue contains five articles that primarily focus on intradiegetic sounds, but the discussions comment also on extradiegetic soundscapes.

In the first article, Miriam Tveit studies the function of sound in the **legal procedures** of the Norwegian town laws, seen in juxtaposition to the *National Law* by

[53] There were of course occasions when bishops would have visited and thus brought the center to the periphery.

[54] For a further discussion of the complexity of urban soundscapes in medieval Norway, see Andås & Aavistland 2024.

[55] The sound of church bells entails both human agency (the striking of the bells) and the resonance of the object itself, which 'speaks', see Arnold & Goodson 2012. On the Old Norse material, see Hommedal 2020; de Grott 2023.

[56] On a recent discovery of a flute in medieval Oslo, see https://www.niku.no/2017/10/middelaldersk-floyte-funnet-oslo/. On previous archeological finds and discussion, see Kollveit 1997.

[57] This is further discussed in 'The Animal Heard' in this special issue.

Magnus the Lawmender.[58] The focus is on the procedural legal role of sound, i.e. when sound was seen as a part of a procedure at the assembly, and not so much on voice and audible communication and oath-taking mentioned in the laws.[59] In order to better understand what the legal implications of different sounds were, as they are described in the legal text, the analysis is structured according to different sound-producing media. These include the human voice, noisemaking, the sound made by bells and by the town-horn. The article demonstrates that legal texts are not only full of sounds, but they also use audible/aural evidence as one of the main legal categories, in addition to visual and material evidence.

In the second article, Rakel Diesen focuses on another Nordic genre, written in another language, namely **Nordic hagiography in Latin** (the miracle corpus associated with Scandinavian saints written from the end of the twelfth till the end of the fifteenth century), and not least on the sounds made by a social group which is seemingly silent and even absent in many debates of medieval culture. The aim of the article is to 'unmute medieval children' by investigating their audible participation in their soundscape ecology. Diesen presents convincing evidence that children had a significant and integral presence in the medieval soundscape, as numerous examples testify to how sound is explicitly described to warn the surroundings about accidents and misfortunes happening to children; how illness and accidents may lead to the temporarily muting or the voicelessness of children; and how children re-enter their soundscapes, by either regaining their hearing or by being heard. The author discusses how the genre of miracle-stories may be seen as conditioning the way children's participation in the medieval soundscape is described. Also, she demonstrates how audible children were in the medieval soundscape, as described in hagiography, and how sound was a main means of communication between this and the other world, and especially between children and the saints who heal them.

The third article attends to other sounds that were potentially audible in medieval churches, namely **prayers**. This study is based on runic inscriptions with religious content from Norwegian medieval churches. These account for about a third of the total of 400 inscriptions preserved from Norwegian medieval churches, the richest of which are the stave churches Borgund, Hopperstad, Urnes near Sognefjorden (Western Norway), and Lom (Gudbrandsdalen, Eastern Norway), as well as the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. Karen L. Holmqvist discusses how prayer inscriptions would have formed and related to the soundscape of medieval churches: some

[58] The title of this text in its most recent English translation is *Laws of the Land*, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2024, but it may also be referred to as *Law of the Realm*.

[59] This is discussed in other studies of legal texts, such as Rønning Nordby 2020.

would have evoked sound, while others may have reflected sound. The potentially aural significance of inscriptions is further discussed in juxtaposition to the degree of literacy in medieval culture, even among carvers. This, as the previous article, highlights the significance of sound for the communication between humans and God and the Virgin Mary. The author demonstrates how sound is embedded in the architectural remains: 'medieval church walls, though silent to the ear, do talk'.

The fourth article invites us to engage with and listen to another category of sounds, namely those produced by **animals**. The main sources studied here are the *Íslendingasögur*, and these are conceptualized as written texts based on oral narratives about past human–animal relationships. They are analyzed in the context of archaeological evidence from Viking Age Icelandic farms and interpreted with the help of knowledge from modern studies of animal behavior and human-animal relations. The author Harriet J. Evans-Tang argues that these narratives may have been developed as tools to pass on knowledge about working with and relating to animals. The study promotes the significance of sound for human-animal relationships and thus the symbiotic relation between various elements of past ecologies.

The fifth and last article touches upon many of the sound-categories mentioned already as it discusses the relationship between **human silence**, or lack of *vox*, and communication and sounds produced by other media, such as the body, natural and supernatural energies, animals, and things. The sources used include indigenous and translated Old Norse texts of various genres and the analysis reveals not only what silence sounds like in these sources, but also how silence, as opposed to sound, voice and speech, is valued in Old Norse culture. In this way, a well-known feature of Old Norse translations, i.e. their comparative brevity and preference for shorter verbal accounts compared to their European source texts, appears to reflect an original and independent feature of Old Norse culture: it is not only actions that speak louder than words, but also enacted reactions, the use of tools and weapons, as well as the embedded existence in the natural and supernatural world. The author Stefka G. Eriksen deploys the framework of 4E cognition and communication to structure the analysis and in this way demonstrates the fruitfulness of moving towards a more relational and symbiotic (and not dichotomic) understanding of medieval culture, where humans, the natural and supernatural, and things are relational elements in the same soundscape and ecology.

To recapitulate: the aim of this special issue is to unmute and reveal new nuances of the sound cultures of the medieval North. Collectively, we study sounds and aural communication on judicial and social level, on religious and on ecological level. We study how sound and silence are valued in the North (Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and

Denmark), compared to Europe. We study intra- and extradiegetic sounds based on texts of various materialities (manuscripts and inscriptions), scripts (Latin and runic alphabet), languages (Old Norse and Latin) and literary genres (law texts, hagiography, Icelandic family sagas, Old Norse translations). The sounds discussed encompass verbal, embodied and extended communication between humans of various social standing, and between humans and natural and supernatural energies, animals, and things. We discuss urban and rural soundscapes, as well as the soundscapes of churches and farmhouses. We thus move beyond established dichotomies and hopefully demonstrate how sound appears as the nexus between body/mind, textual/material/immaterial culture, visual/aural culture, culture/nature, human/non-human. Even though we engage with and study mostly textual cultures, we point out to some of the ways the texts can be linked to their cultural/built environment and natural surroundings, thus highlighting the huge potential of interdisciplinary approaches to sound, to which we hope to return in the future.

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Governing Urban Space through Sound

Aural and Audible Procedures in Norwegian Town Laws

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This article investigates the role of sound within the textual and legal contexts of town regulations in medieval Norway. Specifically, it examines how town governance in medieval Norway necessitated the incorporation of sound in the described processes of written law. It explores the extent to which medieval legal records described sound within the law text and examines its functional and symbolic purposes. By contextualizing urban legal uses of sound against rural district law and laws pertaining to specific societal groups, the study contributes to our understanding of sensory dimensions in legal symbolism, complementing existing research on visual and material symbols. The article highlights the significance of aural and audible manifestations in urban spaces and their broader legal implications.

Introduction

The role of sound in medieval urban governance is an overlooked but significant aspect of legal administration, particularly in how it was expressed and codified within law texts. In medieval Norway, sound not only served as a functional tool, but also carried symbolic weight in town regulations and governance. This article investigates how various sounds, such as voices, bell ringing and horn signals, were explicitly incorporated into written law, shaping collective responsibilities and legally binding actions. By examining the expression of sound in legal texts and comparing its use in urban and rural settings, the study reveals the wider social and legal implications of auditory practices in medieval Norwegian towns.

In the field of medieval law, symbolic aspects have been studied at length (ex. Cohen 1989: 74–84; Cohen 1993; Riisøy 2021; Neu 2023). Others have looked at rituals in legalistic forms (ex. Gustavsson 2013; Nordby 2018: 153–157; Hayaert 2021: 58–61; Frankot 2020). The descriptions of legal procedures could be immersed in symbols and rituals, or with visual presentations of law, such as a law book or a juror, or tactile demonstrations of the acts, for instance a handshake or a contract. Never-

theless, these integrated representations of law that the law texts convey are now understood as functional practices. Within such a framework, sound could also be analysed, to understand how and why sound was part of the legal procedure and why sound was mentioned explicitly in the text itself, and whether this represented the (royal) authorities or mere practical solutions. To carry out this analysis, it is necessary to map the contexts in which sound appeared in the laws, and analyse how sound or sound-producing mediums were presented and described in law texts concerning urban regulations. A number of studies have been conducted on the topic of church bells in the middle ages.[1] Recent years have seen increasing scholarly interest in the sensory world of the medieval person, which encompasses hearing, soundscapes and the functional, as well as aesthetical, role of music.[2] Ongoing projects investigate the impact of sounds in situations of crisis, such as the battleground.[3] However, little research has been conducted on the topic of how and why sound is legislated, the broader significance of sound in an urban setting, and the relationship between sound and textual laws.

This investigation focuses on instances where the significance lies not in spoken words, such as witness statements, oath-giving, accusations, and similar actions, but in the auditive element. While such verbal communication undoubtedly falls under the category of sound-producing actions, procedures requiring spoken words are excluded from this study except in the instances where the ability or quality of producing vocal sound was crucial. Consequently, instances such as those mentioned above although reliant on vocal sound, are omitted except where the sound-making takes priority over the words spoken and has legal significance in itself.[4]

The following examination of sound as a tool of governance in the Norwegian town laws is structured according to the classification of sound-producing medium, to better understand what were the legal implications of the different sounds as they were conveyed in the law text. After an initial presentation of written law in medieval Norway, the legal implications of sounds produced by the human voice are discussed, first the use of voice itself, and thereafter in connection with the concept of noise-making. Thereafter, two sections each consider how instrumental sound was woven into the written town regulations, by first discussing bells as sacral sound in secular

[1] A key work of identifying, although not analysing, legal bell ringing being Lippert 1939.

[2] See, for instance, Constable 2010; Dillon 2012; Tirosh 2021; Baker 2021.

[3] For instance the project Der laute Krieg und die Laute des Krieges. Belliphonie im Mittelalter, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

[4] For a study of the oath system in medieval Norway, see Nordbye 2018. Little is known as to whether oaths could be given without speech, for instance in sign language.

urban law, and then the horn as a signal of urban government and an urban identity marker.

Sounds in Town and Text

The earliest Nordic medieval laws were recorded in the eleventh–twelfth centuries, in a period of transition from oral to textual legal binding. The recording of the law is not itself an indication of this transition, but the law text contains formula that express power of written law at the emphasis of the legal authority. This is particularly true for the legal reform from the mid-thirteenth century, as pointed out by Gudmund Sandvik (1986: 567–568; cf. Melve 2023). The National Law in 1274 and the Town Law in 1276 contain several examples of how authority was transferred from the spoken to the written word.[5]

The extent to which early law functioned as a form of documentation of oral traditions or a codified system establishing authority by claiming roots in 'the good old law' has been the subject of a long historical debate.[6] In any case, the early legal texts reveal a legal culture in which oral, aural, and visual practices conveyed authority, with limited references to a reliance on written proof or documentation of a contract. This non-textual legal culture also prevailed in the oldest extant written urban regulations a fragmented collection of regulations for the town of Nidaros dated to the late twelfth century, known as *Bjarkeyarréttr*.[7] As the principles of law transitioned towards a more text-based approach with the reformed laws of the 1270s, it becomes intriguing to comprehend how non-textual legal elements, such as sound, find expression in written form. In this context, it is necessary to examine how sound was assigned functions in the legal landscape and articulated in text. Consequently, a more in-depth analysis is warranted to understand the role of aural and auditory procedures in written law.

The *Bjarkeyarréttr* of Nidaros is the sole surviving urban regulation from before the late thirteenth century, but there are indications that other towns with royal seats, such as Tunsberg, Oslo, and Bergen, also had their own *bjarkeyarréttr* (see Tveit 2023b: 158). The existence of written law in these royal residence towns adds weight to the argument that Norwegian towns and their associated laws were predominantly

[5] See references below.

[6] A rebuttal of the legal theory that Norwegian law was moulded on an idea of 'das gute alte Recht' was recently published by Njåstad, Opsahl & Sunde 2023.

[7] Printed in NgL I, p. 303-36, Meissner p. 310-457 and Hagland and Sandnes 1997. See discussion on dating in Hagland and Sandnes 1997: IX-XVI. The name, although debated, is thought to derive from the old term for a place of trade, *birka*. See Wessén 1956, col. 657-58.

governed by royal authority rather than independent town lords.[8] In the 1270s, the Norwegian kingdom witnessed the promulgation of three new laws as part of an ongoing legal reform initiated by King Hákon Hákonarsson (r. 1217–1263) and continued by his son King Magnús (r. 1263–1280). These new laws comprised, firstly, one for the royal guard (*hirð*), dated approximately to 1273–1277 (Imsen 2000: 24). The second law, enacted in 1274, was a comprehensive law of the land that replaced the provincial laws and marked the first legal code to cover the entire kingdom; it is referred to here as the *National Law*.[9] Subsequently, in 1276, a third law was promulgated specifically for urban areas.[10] Initially issued for the town of Bergen, which was one of the largest towns in Scandinavia at the time (Helle 2006: 110), this Town Law of 1276 was subsequently adapted for the three other royal residence towns of Tunsberg, Oslo, and Nidaros, and later became generally valid.[11] The Town Law follows the same structure and content as the National Law but is tailored for urban conditions. It includes separate sections regulating urban security, urban life, and urban contract law, in addition to a maritime law written for seafarers.

The Norwegian kingdom, as well as the Norwegian realm, was very little urbanised, with an estimated five percent of its population living in the 13, mostly small, towns around 1300 (Helle 2006: 61–62, 117–118). Furthermore, the Norwegian Town Law of 1276 emerged within a context where written law had long taken precedence over oral traditions. However, the legal culture represented by the law was rooted in a reality where communication primarily relied on oral means. Consequently, it also relied on auditive means and the aural reception of the law. The laws outlined procedures where the spoken word predominated over written proof, even as the significance of written evidence was concurrently increasing. The emphasis with the reformed law on text over talk might have been a deliberate strategy on the part of the lawmaking authorities, as a recent study conducted by historian Leidulf Melve has suggested (Melve 2023). His research sheds light on how the Norwegian royal administration sought to establish the supremacy of written legislation within what he identifies as the predominantly oral and auditory legal culture of Norway.

[8] The exceptions are Hamar and Stavanger, which were episcopal seats and seem to have been governed by the bishop who resided there.

[9] *National Law* 2018; also found in NgL II, pp. 7–178. There is no agreement among scholars on what the best English term for the law termed *Landsloven* in Norwegian is. There are several names in use, such as "National Law", "Code of the Realm" or *Landslǫg*, all of which have issues related to its meaning.

[10] *Bylov* 2023; also found in NgL II, pp. 185–290.

[11] For this process, see discussion in Tveit 2023b: 160.

The development is parallel to what Matthew Clanchy has observed in Europe, albeit occurring somewhat later (Clanchy 1993).

Medieval urban government could rely on the premise that the urban space is more densely built-up, and concentrated, compared to its rural surroundings. Within the urban space, certain modes of communication could be utilised in ways that are not feasible over large rural expanses, particularly in regions of medieval Europe such as Norway, where topography and geography ensured vast depopulated areas. These could be sound and visual symbols of power.

The density of the urban area would make sound more prominent in town laws than district law. It is possible to differentiate in the Norwegian medieval legal corpus in terms of what types of symbolism formed part of written law, and probably legal practice. The rural law was communicated with visual and tactile objects. An example is the case of when an ad hoc assembly had to be summoned: It was to be done by a horn sound in the towns, but with 'the cutting of messages' or *arrows*, a physical object passed between the farmsteads in an intricate web of communications throughout the relevant law district.[12] Sound was not completely absent from rural law. For instance, in the extant version of the provincial Law of Gulathing from the mid-thirteenth century, ineligible nominations for a jury should keep out of hearing distance from the jury, while a petition for divorce would have to be made clearly enough for both parties to have heard it.[13] In the National Law of 1274, an animal pit was to be dug at such a distance from a farmstead so that sounds from it did not reach the closest animal compound (MLL VIII-63). However, sound had no function in the rural law, apart from the fact that procedures relied on oral and aural abilities, where the law would be spoken and heard by the participants.

Crier, shouting and the human voice

A town crier would be a familiar figure fusing sound and law in representations of the medieval European town, as a medium of conveying information among the urban population, and between authorities and the population. However, there are no sources attesting to the existence of a town crier in medieval urban Norway. Shouting information was, however, part of the nightwatch's duties, according to the Town Law of 1276. The law included minute descriptions of the route, which was

[12] MLL III-12, 14-16; VII-23, 46, 54 and 56. The highly sophisticated system of distribution is described in MLL VII-54, with emphasis on the visualisation and speed of the message.

[13] The Law of Gulathing, ch. 37, NgL I, p. 23 *en eigi skolo þeir svo nér dome koma at mál þeirra mege heyra*. On divorce: ch. 54, NgL I, pp. *svá skilit segia at hvartveggia þeirra mege heyra mál annars*.

adapted to the town in question.[14] The guards were to patrol streets and harbour, and the outskirts of the town as well as the town itself. When patrolling 'they shall shout at every allmenning that runs through our town' (*øpa skulu þeir uið huern almenning er liggr vm þuæran bø varn*) (MLB VI-3; *Bylov*, pp. 186–187). The *almenning* was the streets crossing the main streets (*strete*) that ran lengthwise through the towns. It is not stated what they were expected to shout out, although some version of the cliché 'all is well' is a probable guess. In this, the watchmen were expected to make known to the dwellers that the town was safe, using of their voice for people to hear. Town criers in late medieval Florence were instructed to cry their message at specific vital points in the city and for a total of at least 40 times for each proclamation, which also had to be carried out on horseback (Milner 2013: 112). Disregarding the scale and compulsory riding – there is no indication of officials using horses in Norwegian towns – the specifications of the nightwatch were similar to these, and duty-bound the watchmen to strategic spaces.

Besides shouting at intervals, the patrolling watchmen were to raise the alarm by auditive means in case of emergencies. However, they did not possess the instruments of alarm themselves, church bells and horn, but were to rush to the appointed tower guard to sound the bells, and in case of attacks also to the town servant for him 'to have the horn sounded' (*Bylov*, p. 188). The town law allocated considerable attention to safeguarding the town, delineating provisions for the night watch who patrolled the streets and maintained a specific post in a church tower, as well as lookout posts during periods of unrest. The emphasis on town surveillance was predominantly visual, yet the role of sound and auditory perception was also stressed, as can be seen by how individuals chosen for beacon watch duties during tumultuous periods were required to possess 'good eyes and ears, and with good legs' (*augna hælir ero ok øyrna. oc fot hæilir*, MLB III-4). Their ability to see and walk was crucial, but aural abilities were equally important.

The law text relied on the human voice for a town's security measures, but the human voice also figured in procedural descriptions of correct conduct between citizens. Shouting was inserted as a correct mode of dealing with unwilling persons, when taking surety or collecting debts from debtors. If a debtor tried to run away, on foot, boat or horse, the creditor were to 'call so loudly that witnesses could testify that the other party would have heard if they wanted to' (*kalla a hann sva hatt at vattar hans megi bera þat vítni. at hann matte høyra ef hann uildi*, MLB III-25). A relevant situation was presented in the short story *Gísls þáttr Illugasonar* about his visit to the

[14] MLB VI-3. For the town specific variants, see *Bylov*, p. 186. The route of the nightwatch is one of the main features of distinction between the town specific variants of the law text.

town of Nidaros: after attacking one of the king's men, Gísl forced a visiting boat owner to row him mid-river, and from there he, in a shout, declared his responsibility for the deed to the pursuers who had amassed on the river bank (*Gísls þáttr Illugasonar*, ch. 2).

Returning to the law text, a debtor was then compelled to provide surety, a token of intent to pay the debt, under the threat of a fine, with the caveat that the creditor needed to be audible enough to be heard from a distance. This placed some responsibility for audibility on the claimant. Additionally, if the debtor sought refuge in a third party's residence, the creditor would once again be required to shout loudly enough to be heard through gates or walls and over court yards, rather than forcibly entering the property:

> If someone runs into another man's townhouse or house and closes the gate or door, then one shall call for them and demand that they open. And if they do not want to, then [the creditor] shall demand surety from [the debtor] on the spot and speak so loudly that they may hear it if they choose to.
>
> En ef maðr løypr igarð manz eða i hus. ok lætr aftr garðz lið eða dyr. þa scal han kalla oc biðia up lata. en ef menn uilia eigi. þa scal han æsta han taks þar þegar oc mæla sva hatt at hann ma høyra ef hann uil. (*Bylov*, p. 286)

Trespassing into another's home was a serious offence according to the Norwegian legal tradition, as in most medieval law, and it seems this extended to those in pursuit of a debtor, forcing them to resort to auditive action.[15]

The duty to call for attention before taking action was also introduced into the maritime law, regulating conditions and conduct during voyages at sea. Before taking off from strange coasts, the crew was mandated to call for any members of their crew still ashore. A meticulously defined procedure was to be adhered to, wherein the shipmates positioned themselves at specified intervals from each other and vocally summoned their companion:

[15] As attested by several chapters in the town law of the severity of *heimsókn*, to break into someone's home. It was one of the reasons for giving witnesses prolonged time: MLB IV-12. A home was one of the sacred spaces (grid), together with the church and the assembly: IV-19. It was not acceptable to trespass in a home to collect debt or make confiscations: MLB VII-2. The latter chapter was titled with *heimsókn* in several MSS, *Bylov*, pp. 234–235, n. 2 and n. 36.

> Now a shipmate leaves the ship, and fair winds come. Then three people shall debark, and one shall stand at the end of the landing, and the second and third above him, so that they can hear each other's calls. And they shall call three times, and then board the ship. And if he does not come then, they can leave without penalty, if he is in a Christian land.
>
> Nu gengar m*að*r fra skípi oc kømar byr a. þa skulu .íií. men. ganga a land upp. oc standa eín uid bryggíu spord. en annar up i fra honom. oc hín þridi þar nest. oc øpa sua hatt þrem sínnum. at huar mege høyra annars raust. oc gange sidan til skips. En ef han kømar þa eígí. þa mego þeír fara at useckíu ef hann er a kristnu lanðe stadar. (MLB, Farmannslǫg, ch. 7; *Bylov*, pp. 334–336)

After calling for the missing crew member three times, the crew could abandon him without culpability, although other considerations, such as whether they left him in Christian or heathen lands, were also factored in. However, a key aspect in fulfilling their duty was to shout loudly enough for their calls to reach each other within a specified distance, ensuring that the absent crew member had an opportunity to hear the calls. The law not only mandated a sonic procedure but also stipulated that it should be audible in the particular context of being on a voyage. Furthermore, the rule indirectly restricted each crew member to keep within hearing range of the ship.

The foundation of the law in orally given oaths and witness statements underscores the crucial importance of the ability to speak and communicate effectively. The laws explicitly address the identification of the correct perpetrator, emphasizing that if an individual is so severely injured that they are unable to speak and disclose the identity of their assailant, the case is held in abeyance until the injured party regains the ability to communicate (MLB IV-13/MLL IV-12). Only then, the town bailiff was instructed to sound the horn for an ad hoc assembly to initiate the investigation according to the Town Law. In cases where the temporary state of speechlessness extended beyond three nights, the town bailiff was directed to sound the horn regardless, commencing the investigation. The National law, in contrast, prescribes the carving of arrows (*örvarskurðr*) to be sent out instead of sounding a horn, illustrating again the integral role of sound in the Town Law.[16] The earliest town reg-

[16] Ex. 'Then the heir will have arrows carved and to summon the assembly' (*þa late erfingi orfar upp skera ok late þing stæfna*), MLL IV-12; MHLl, p. 350. Most MSS of the National law omits any time prescription, but states that arrows should be sent when the wounded speaks, and the following assembly will be 'as if it was the same day as the incident' (*iamfullt sem samdøgres være orfar upp skornar*), alluding to the time prescriptions in the Norwegian laws that

ulation, *bjarkeyarréttr*, straightforwardly specifies that if an injured person is able to speak, those who find them and hear them name their assailant would serve as witnesses in the case (Bj. ch. 27; NgL I, p. 309).

Consequently, it is not surprising that the reformed laws of the 1270s retained from the earlier provincial laws the prohibition against cutting out or damaging someone's tongue, along with mutilations of hands, feet, and eyes.[17] While the surviving version of the provincial law of Gulathing extensively details harm to various body parts, ranging from the little finger to the rectum, the National Law and the Town Law introduced more general formulations regulating mutilation and violence (The Law of Gulathing ch. 180 and 242). In the reformed laws, cutting out the tongue, hand, foot, or eye of an individual was deemed a heinous crime, typically warranting the punishment of outlawry (*i vapna skiptum*, *Bylov*, p. 119). If mutilated during 'combat with arms', it prompted the assessment of the king, indicating a more militarised context, possibly in times when the leidang was called out. It is likely not coincidental that these specific body parts are the same as those that the watchmen were required to possess, and the emphasis on their significance suggests a heightened focus on agility and sensory abilities within the Town Law. It is noteworthy that the older town regulation of Nidaros specifically mentioned mutilations to the eyes, hands, and feet, excluding the tongue from the enumerated offences (Bj. ch. 17 and 76–77; NgL I, pp. 306–307 and 318–319). However, the examples from the reformed laws emphasise the understanding that the ability to speak was a crucial element in the execution of the law within the Norwegian legal culture.

Noisemaking

Although the Town Law of 1276 does much in terms of describing peace keeping within the urban perimeters, actual noise as auditive disturbances is not a big topic in the law text. Certain regulations can, however, be read in a framework of 'noise'. It is important here to clarify how in our modern understanding we understand the concept of 'noise'. In their introduction to the special issue of Speculum, *Sound Matters*, the authors describe as noise when medieval writers wanted to describe human voices as distorted, and when voice was equalled with animal sounds and sounds from the natural world (Boynton et al. 2016: 1000–1020). In this way noise is understood as the cognition of sound occurring extended, through objects, people or tools outside

demanded immediate action in case of theft, damage and violence. See MLB IV-3, 7, 11-12, and IX-16.

[17] MLB IV-3 and repeated in the amendments; MLL IV-3, and repeated in the amendments. In 10 surviving MS of the National law, castration was also added to the list.

oneself.[18] Lane Baker has also noted an increasing focus among European Church parishioners on the concept of noise in the thirteenth century, accompanied by simultaneous but uncoordinated efforts to regulate noise within a framework of 'sin' (Baker 2021). We meet noise in this sense of auditive disturbances in both the National Law and the Town Law, and then the context of correct behaviour at the assembly. When the court was in session within its sacred, gated enclosure, commotion or shouting outside was unacceptable:

> But if those outside the sacred enclosure makes noise and loud talk, so that the jurymen are not able to gather themselves in peace about their sentence, or those who have the licence from the law man and the jurymen, and [those outside] complain about their cases, they shall pay a fine of 1 aura silver if they are found guilty in this, if they have been told off earlier.
>
> en ef þeir menn gera hark eða harøysti sem ero fyrir uttan vebond sva at logrettu menn mego æigi naðolega gøyma doma sínna eða þeir kiæra mal sín er logmannzok loghrettu manna lof hafa til. sækr huær øyri .Silfrs. er at þui verdr kunnr ok sannr ok er honum sagt til aðr. (MLB I-3, *Bylov*, p. 64)

As such, noise was established as a threat to the rule of law. By extension, we can also infer that the feature of silence was established as a sound that was crucial for *fiat justitia*, and to ensure fair judicial decision-making.[19] The laws of the Danish town of Ribe from 1269 also penalise people who shout at the assembly, or who try to get their case heard without preapproval from the authorities (The Law of Ribe, ch. 33; DD no. 145, p. 123). In a case from the Gulathing province, the bystanders influenced the hearings by loudly expressing disagreement with one of the parties by 'shouting and crowding' (*saker ops ok fylgðar margra manna*) so that the court was forced to forward the case to the king, after which the crowd 'shouted and applauded' (*æpto ok kloppaðo*).[20] Noisemaking at the þing also figures as a motif in the literary corpus. For instance, in the *Njáls saga* during the hearing at the assembly after the burning of Njál and his family, a dispute over who was entitled to sit on the jury resulted in

[18] See the Introduction article of this special issue.

[19] For a further discussion on the sound of silence, see Stefka Eriksen's article in this special issue.

[20] DN I, no 168. Magne Njåstad discussed this case and the possibilities for the local community to interfere with the execution of law, or indeed hinder it from taking place, Njåstad 2023: 193.

'much shout and cry' (*óp mikit ok kall.*) from the outraged bystanders (*Njáls saga*, ch. 142, p. 366).

While noisemaking was prohibited in the respect of the legal work in progress, noise as loud sounds simultaneously featured as part of the agreements reached at the assembly, at least in the time before the 1270s when the Town Law was promulgated. The solution reached by the men within the fence would find resonance with those onlookers immediately outside the fence in the form of noisemaking. The performance was called *vápnatak*, literally 'taking of weapons'. According to Ebbe Herzberg, the term originally meant that the bystanders would show their acknowledgement by banging their sword on shield or in some other way smashing the weapons together to produce sound from them (Hertzberg 1874: 148–150). Thus, *vápnatak* in general refers to clamour of weapons in acclamation, although it could also refer to a display of weapons by raising them in the air and thus display the accord visually (Robberstad 1969: 384). Expressing support in this way was a known feature throughout northern Europe where meetings between (armed) men would come to agreement (Hertzberg 1874: 148–150). From the earlier Norwegian provincial laws, various types of agreements at a *þing* (assembly) were to be sealed with the 'taking of weapons'.[21] Weapons were generally abolished from the assembly with the Town Law of 1276 as it had been in the National Law of 1274, as bringing weapons was in opposition to the ideal of peace keeping associated with the *þing* and it was probably also a security measurement (MLB I-4, MLL I-5). However, the *vápnatak* remained as a term in the law and probably as a ritualistic act and it seems that the term served as a substitute for other forms of showing approval, such as making sound or raising a hand (see Riisøy 2021: 281). As Knut Helle has pointed out, court records attest to the fact that bashing weapons had been replaced with acclamation and shouting, as signs of approval from the bystanders (Helle 2021 [2001]: 75). It was also a part of the urban regulations, as seen in the decree given in Bergen in 1316 on the rights to buy goods from foreign merchants in the town, which was finalised with cheers from the congregation (NgL III, no. 49a, pp. 121–124, at 124). The similar decree given to the towns of Tønsberg and Oslo was also issued in Bergen, and as such there was no acclamation from representatives mentioned (NgL III, no. 49b., p. 124–128). By condemning noise during the decision-making process, and allowing it as support when the decision had been made, we see that human-made sounds were a fundamental part of the legal order as it was represented in written norms and executed in practice.

[21] The Law of Gulaþing, ch. 267 and 279. The Law of Frostathing 5-46, 12-2 and 4, 14-4

Bells

It is plausible that the tolling of church bells was the 'loudest regular sound' in medieval towns, as David Garrioch argues was the case in early modern towns (Garrioch 2003: 9). Iris Shagrir has pointed out how they put an element of *magnificence*, in the meaning of grandiosity, to the soundscape of a town.[22] Norwegian urban churches may have had smaller bells in the Middle Ages than in later periods, but they would nevertheless have dominated the urban soundscape (Kirkeklokker 2018: 18–19). Unlike early modern towns, which had cannons and proto-industrial activities, there were fewer competing sounds of this decibel level.

The sound of bells in the urban landscape has been studied by various scholars, both in terms of the sonic effects and the symbolism of the sound, as well as the way it regulated the public sphere and people's lives.[23] Church bells are first and foremost sacral, and in the Middle Ages the sound they produced was considered to be redeeming (Arnold & Goodson 2012: 124–130). In addition to their liturgical use, church bells rang in the morning, at noon and in the evening, and as such became the sonic symbol of the daily social structure for those who heard them (Ditchburn 2020: 229).

Bells also held legal significance. By the mid-thirteenth century churches, were canonically obliged to have bells (Arnold & Goodson 2012: 99). Furthermore, the sound of bells structured the secular sphere. In this regard, it is interesting to examine how secular authority incorporated the sound of bells into the law text itself. The connection between urban law and its bell, or rather by urban power and public sounds is pointed out by Shagrir in inferring that 'sound in its capacity to articulate and demarcate social space, is also related to power and control – bells and their towers are instruments of publicity, and publicity means power – as is clearly shown in the careful regulation of the possession and employment of bells in medieval towns.' (Shagrir 2018: 104)

In most medieval European towns church bells were also the warning system in case of fire. Even if the bells were within the canonical jurisdiction, their role as a warning system was a secular, or rather public, matter. In the secular Town Law of 1276, the sound of ringing church bells figure within all these contexts, regulating time, religious liturgy and as fire alarm, as will be shown in the following.

For the watchmen that were to call out on every main crossroad during their nightly route, their shift ended when the bells rang in 'the small churches' (MLB VI-3). This was also when the day began for other town dwellers. The same bells rang out at night to announce that the day ended and night began. The divide between

[22] Shagrir 2018: 103, with further reference to Dillon 2012: 56.

[23] See, for instance Lippert 1939; Le Goff 1980; Arnold and Goodson 2012.

night and day had legal implications beyond a day starting. Certain activities were only deemed acceptable during daylight hours. Sureties were expected to be settled 'before the bell rang for mass in the main church', presumably the following day (MLB VII-12, *Bylov*, p. 256). Also, it was not acceptable to demand surety after the bells rang for evensong, which indicates that there was a particular interval that the guarantor needed to assent to.[24] Breaking the law during the night constituted an aggravating factor, presumably resulting in increased penalties. The night also imposed a curfew on town dwellers, and the ringing in of the night served as an auditory signal for settling in, or else arousing suspicion (MLB VI-2).

For the sake of comparison, it is worth looking at the laws of the similar legal cultures of neighbouring Scandinavian kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark. However, the contemporary town laws from these areas hardly include sound as a factor at all. The glimpses we do get nevertheless indicate that sounds held similar roles that had legal implications, although it was not recorded in the law texts. In the two single instances in the thirteenth-century Swedish town law, Bjarköarrätten, where sound is a factor in the last part of the law text, it is about deeds done before or after the bells had rung to signal night and day. The first instance considers theft within town perimeters committed 'after it has been rung for signal' (*siþan i varþ er ringkt*), interpreted by Åke Holmäck and Elias Wessén as the night signal.[25] The last chapter concerns fire, and the penalty for those lighting a fire 'before it has been rung for signal' (*fyr en or warþi er rinkt*) in the morning.[26] This was continued in the later Swedish Town Law of king Magnus Eriksson (*r.* Sweden 1319–1364), from c. 1350, where we learn indirectly that bell ringing formed part of the fire measures and again as a terminus after which the town population was supposed to watch their behaviour with fire.[27] The terminus also marks the aggravating factor of deeds done during the night time, i.e. after bells had rung for night and before they had rung for the morning of a new day (Holmbäck & Wessén 1966: 109, n. 127).

Norwegian town laws are rich on general regulations concerning fire, both preventative measures and procedures in case of emergency. Houses in towns being predominantly made up of wood, this is very understandable and the many town fires

[24] VII-16: One should not demand surety from anyone after it has rung for evensong (*eigí scal taksætia siðan er rinkt er til aftans*).

[25] Bjarköarrätt, ch. 39. Holmbäck & Wessén 1946 : 493, ch. 39, n. 2.

[26] Bjarköarrätt, ch. 41. Holmbäck & Wessén 1946: 493, ch. 41, n. 4.

[27] MESt, Byggningabalken, ch. 22. From 1319, Magnus Eriksson was king of both Sweden (r. 1319-64) and Norway (r. 1319-74) in what constituted a personal union between the kingdoms. King Magnus issued a National Law and a Town Law in Sweden around 1350, possibly after the Norwegian example from the late 13th century.

during the Middle Ages speaks to its relevance. That might also be the reason why the bell ringing per se, and the inhabitants' reactions to them are minutely regulated in the law text. There is mentioned a special custom of ringing for the general putting out of all lighted flames, presumably of lights and hearths, and that the flames had to be put out when the ringing ended.[28]

In an urban context, there would be a designated church and its bell that had the role of fire alarm. So also in the Norwegian towns that held more than one church, a knowledge we have due to the Town Law itself (MLB VI-3). In Bergen, with its around 30 churches, the centrally positioned St Nicolas church held this responsibility, calling the bell itself 'Fire extinguisher-bell' (*elldzleckingarklocko*) (MLB I-3). In the Nidaros version of the Town Law, only extant in two sixteenth-century manuscripts, it was St. Margaret's church, and the bell was named 'The town's salvation' (*byiar bot*) (*Bylov*, 63, n. 166). Its tower was to be guarded, and the nightwatchmen were to alert this guard to ring the bell in case of fire (MLB VI-3, *Bylov*, p. 190).

The town's main assembly, the *logþingi*, held in January, would resound with the tolling of the same church bell as the one signalling a fire, thus unequivocally joining the ecclesiastical and secular sphere by integrating the church bell into the secular administration of the town (MLB I-3).

The assumption was evidently that the sounds produced by the various bells were recognizable and familiar to the population, as the community was obligated to respond promptly and assist in firefighting efforts upon hearing the ringing of the fire bell (MLB VI-12, p. 214 and VII-16). While certain Norwegian churches acquired bells as early as the eleventh century, the construction of secular bell towers, or campaniles, within Norwegian towns did not occur until the early modern period. As David Ditchburn has highlighted, bells identified as 'secular' and associated with the town rather than its churches could be significant for shaping the town's 'communal identity' or collective identity (Ditchburn 2020: 227, 239). It would be fair to assume that the bells of the medieval Norwegian towns had the same effect of creating an urban identity between the inhabitants of a town, and that the law writers presumed this effect when writing ringing into the text of the law.

In addition to the Swedish Town Law's reference to lighting a fire before morning had been sounded, the laws of the Danish town of Åbenrå from 1335 briefly mention fire bells when enumerating the fines to be paid to the bailiff (*vogt*) and the councilmen in the event of an outbreak of fire, specifically when 'the storm bells ring and peoples' shouts are heard' (Law of Åbenrå (1335), ch. 36; DD no. 215, p. 185). While these ex-

[28] MLB VI-10, *Bylov*, p. 210. 'Fires shall be extinguished when it rings for putting out the fire, and by the time the ringing has ended' (*elldr scal slekter vera siðan ringir ellz sløkking oc til þes er rínkt er íuír*).

amples clearly show that bells were also intended to signal fires in other Scandinavian towns, the specific procedures for alerting and ringing were only implied in urban law texts, in contrast to Norwegian town laws which provided explicit instructions in this regard.

Horn

Horn blowing stands out as a prominent sonic procedural element in the Town Law of 1276, and it had also been implied to be central in the twelfth-century town regulations of Nidaros. A recent examination of the legal implications of the horn sound has brought to light its multifaceted role (Tveit 2023a). The investigation revealed that, according to the law, the horn was not merely a tool for summoning attention; rather, the sound itself held legal significance, compelling town dwellers who heard it to act accordingly or face liability. This discussion aims to explore in greater depth the integral role of the horn sound in the Town Law, highlighting it as a distinctive trait that distinguishes it from rural law.

A well-known medium in medieval culture, horn blowing is often amplified through contemporary pop-cultural representations of horn blowing on the battlefields and town walls of the Middle Ages. Norse literature, particularly the king's sagas from the thirteenth century, predominantly features horn blowing in the context of war and rural settings.[29] However, the more protagonist-oriented *Íslendingasögur*, written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, include several references to horn blowing in an urban context and within the legal settings described by town laws.[30] Thus, these literary texts further suggest that the features of horn blowing found in town laws reflect actual governance customs through sound in Norwegian towns.

In terms of textual expressions of sound in written town regulations, horn blowing is the single most referenced sound in the town laws. The sound of the horn furthermore highlights the differences between rural and urban laws. The two laws diverge in the medium of summoning ad hoc assemblies; the rural laws included a message or a tactile object of summoning, while the town laws referred to horn blowing (MLB VI-5 and 17 and VII-13, 15–16). However, the urban trait of the horn sound becomes even more evident from those parts of the Town Law of 1276 that were otherwise similar to the contemporary National Law. Particularly in the part of the legislation that can be termed criminal law, or regulations on breaches of the peace we

[29] *Heimskringla*, *Oláfs saga Tryggvassonar*, ch. 80 and ch. 91; *Haraldz saga harðráða*, ch.10; *Saga Magnús blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 16.

[30] *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, ch.13; *Króka-Refs saga*, ch. 19–20 and 22; *Gísls þáttr Illugasonar*, ch. 2 and 4. The horn signal as plot device in these sagas has been discussed by Tveit 2023a: 252–253.

find that the town laws consistently insert the sound of the horn as the mode of alerting the assembly, while rural law would express the summoning with the beforementioned carved arrows.[31]

The old town regulations, *biarkeyiarréttr*, contain multiple references to horn blowing, firmly establishing it as a sonic signal with legal implications for the urban population.[32] The horn is intricately linked with the need to summon and warn the town public. Summoning occurs during ad hoc meetings, such as when a homicide has taken place within the town boundaries, or when collective duties are to be executed, with the law text specifically mentioning ship-pulling into the harbour (MLB VI-17 and Epilog). As a warning system, the law text incorporates the horn signal in the event of attacks on the town, closely associated with the nightwatch in the *Bøarskipings balkr*, the 'Town regulations section', and connected to the beacon watch in the 'Land defence section' (MLB VI-3 and MLB III-4). In addition to the bells, the Town Law also demanded that the horn should be sounded when a fire was detected. Even so, as a warning system it is possible to differentiate between the significance of the two sonic signals in the law text: Bells signified disaster while horn signified danger. If the symbolism is to be analysed further, the bells, representing church authority symbolised salvation, while the horn represented secular authority and symbolised duty.

The two law texts imply the horn sound in three different ways. First as an auditive signal, where the sound signified a message that the town dwellers would readily know the meaning of and would react. Textually this could be expressed as 'when someone hears the horn' (*ef hann høyrir horn*), and 'when horn sounds' (*þegar horn kueðr*, MLB VI-12, MLB VI-17, VII-16). Secondly, in the verb 'to blow', *blása*, where only certain conditions could justify the act of blowing the horn and producing the sound signal (MLB IV-12, 25, V-17, VI-3, VII-13, 15). Finally, the subject horn alone signified in the text the sound signal. This could be expressed as 'to demand horn' (*kræfia horns*, MLB VII-13, 15).

Summoning the town court, known as a *mót*, has parallels in European traditions. English moot horns were similarly integral to the legal functions of English towns, with several examples surviving to the present day (Crummy, Cherry & Northover 2008: 223– 227). There are also echoes in surviving legal texts. For instance, the English town of Romney (1352) used a horn to initiate court proceedings, and in Sand-

[31] See above n. xx.

[32] References of horn blowing in case of pulling ships: NgL I, Bj 134; Summoning for ad hoc assembly in case of homicide in the town: Bj 25, Bj 27, Bj 29, Bj 36. Hagland & Sandnes 1997: Bj 31, in NgL IV: 71.

wich (fifteenth century), a town-employed servant would sound the horn at specific locations, akin to the role of a town crier in Florence (Bateson 1906: 41). Although horn blowing does not appear in other European urban laws, there are indications that the horn was a medium for summoning or drawing attention. The late medieval registrars from the Dutch town of Kampen have several entries reflecting the hiring or payment of a horn blower for the town (Frankot 2022: 16). Edda Frankot proposes that one of the responsibilities of the horn blower was to use signals to announce banishments and runaways, sounding the horn 'on all street corners when ordered to do so and when people were taken into custody'.[33] Danish town laws are silent about the mode of summoning, although the law text itself also assumes separate assemblies in case of disturbances or collective effort in case of fire (Law of Flensborg ch. 61–64). The emphasis on the sound and the instrument are therefore exceptional for the Norwegian town laws. The reason for this probably lies in the tradition in the written laws of expressing the method of summoning, rather than the fact that sound was crucial in the towns. However, when describing the right method of signalling for the subjects, the sound stands out as the crucial factor that defines the legality of the procedures; to be heard and to hear.

Little is known about the actual horn, its typology and sound. In Norwegian tradition, horns usually refer to buck horns, normally a curved instrument made out of a ram's horn. While the town law consequently refers to *horn*, the few case law surviving mentions *luðr*, a straight wooden lure covered in birchbark. The anonymous author of the 16th-century Hamar Chronicle, while reflecting on the town's past urban glory, mentions three town servants, each with a copper horn (*Hamarkrøniken*, p. 58). Although the author is often considered to be idealizing the town's medieval past, the specific reference to copper horns may be based on historical knowledge, as the region was known for producing copper items (Sæther 2015: 190–191). Brass instruments were not common in Norway at this point, although Hans Christian Broholm noted in 1965 that a Norwegian bronze age lure had been recast into a town horn (Broholm 1965: 38). The quality of the sound of buck horns are soft and strong, and have a long range, as do the *luðr*. It is probable that the sound of these wind instruments would carry within the limited extent of the urban area of Norwegian towns, although that highly depends on such factors as the individual instrument and weather conditions. The law text is silent on how the instrument was to be sounded, where and by whom. Therefore, we do not know whether there was any significance given to the sound played in terms of number and length of the blast or melodic in-

[33] Frankot 2022: 84, with reference to Liber Diversorum C (1399–1553), f. 195v, Stadsarchief Kampen, Oud Archief no. 11.

tonations, and the message it conveyed: danger, collective duties, or ad hoc assemblies. The inviolability of the urban night is further reflected in the Town Laws restrictions on the horn signal, explicitly stating that the horn signal was off-limits at night, except in emergencies (MLB VII-16). This suggests that the horn signal was accessible for use by both inhabitants and visitors, forming part of a collective communication system.

While the instances where sound emerges as a pivotal factor do not constitute a substantial portion of the entirety of the Town Law of 1276 those instances where it is relevant, sound becomes integral to legitimate actions in a situation and subsequent proceedings. Consequently, it is worthwhile to consider how the absence of auditory perception might influence a person's legal rights. Examining Old Norse literary culture, Yoav Tirosh finds that deaf individuals faced social exclusion in Norse society, leading to a 'loss of agency' (see also Tirosh 2021: 323–325, quote from p. 335). Despite legal protections for the deaf and mute in Icelandic law, Tirosh argues that social degradation persisted, surpassing the effects of Norwegian dominion in the late Middle Ages (Tirosh 2021: 320–321).

Tirosh and Matthew Clanchy highlight the broader European legacy, tracing hearing and speaking disabilities to Roman law's association with slavery and intellectual disability (Tirosh 2021: 321). The Town Law doesn't explicitly address sight or hearing impairments affecting inheritance or legal rights. All subjects are held to the same responsibility, except for the insane, whose heirs or guardians assume accountability for their actions (MLB IV-9, MLL IV-10). While not hearing poses an obstacle in situations integral to legal procedures, the Town Law only mentions it in the context of horn blowing during ship-pulling. Neglecting to attend when sonically summoned incurred a fine, but the law allowed individuals who claimed they did not hear the horn to exonerate themselves through an oath to the bailiff 'if someone does not hear the horn' (*ef maðr høyrir eigi horn*, MLB VI-17, see above). This rule included various valid excuses for not contributing to the collective task, such as caring for sick family members or serving on a jury, all collectively termed under *naudsyn*, necessity—a principle permeating the legal ideologies of reformed laws and European learned law.[34] Although the text rarely explains accepted *naudsyn*, being hurt or ill was listed as a valid reason for not settling a fine or debt on time (MLB I-6). Indicatively, the care for disabilities in the execution of the law suggests that not hearing or being hearing impaired similarly granted impunity from the obligations outlined in the town laws' sonic procedures.

[34] Korpiola & Sunde 2024. In the Town Law of 1276, the principle of naudsyn is otherwise present in MLB I-2, 6, III-1, 3, 9, 12, 16. IV-15, 16, 17, 18; V-18, Farmanna logh, ch. 2, 18, 19, 21.

Concluding remarks

The town laws of Norway are not explicitly governed by auditory elements. Nevertheless, sonic elements, when present in the law text, bear legal implications that are integral to how the law text articulates urban governance. Instances where sounds, sound-producing activities, and instruments appear in the text carry legal significance. The signals function to alert the population in cases of both danger and general duties; more significantly, the sound marks the initiation of procedures that legally bind the audience. The Norwegian town laws stand out for incorporating sound directly into the text, rather than omitting the town's sound systems from the text or rendering them implicit. Those responsible for composing the law text likely anticipated that various meanings of sonic signals, such as horn signals and bell ringing, were known to the subjects. However, even if these meanings were considered to be common knowledge, it was deemed necessary to formulate the distinct obligations associated with each sound. The law text not only describes how to participate in a collective effort in the event of a fire but also explicitly outlines how the sound obligates those who heard it to respond. Similarly, rules regarding voices underscore that the volume of a voiced demand must be sufficiently loud to be considered a valid claim. In this way, the written laws simultaneously instruct on the legal significances of the sound while assuming that the symbolic meanings of the sounds are known to the subjects.

There was a difference between writing about sound as a mode of communication of law to the population at large, and inserting sound as part of the procedure at the assembly. In the Norwegian town laws, we find sound in both of these functions. The examination has revealed that sound played a significant role in town laws compared to rural laws, which is a rational way of executing governance in dense areas where sound could be heard by most people. While the legal culture evolved from oral to written authority, sound itself continued as a key element of urban regulations. Sound most frequently appears in laws in the form of signals of different kinds; horns and bells were integral to the proper conduct of daily business within the town. In contrast to other Scandinavian town laws, these signals' legal implications also found their way into the textual recording of the law. The human voice, in addition, was a legal tool in the form of its volume, both in resolving disagreements between individuals and in expressing opinions at the assembly.

Nevertheless, it is the sensory pragmatism of sound's purposes that is emphasised in the law texts: it was intended to be heard as auditive messages, marking sound as an integral part of the written legal procedures rather than as expressions of a *vox regis*. Auditory measures were practical tools of governance in built-up areas, in Nor-

wegian towns as well as elsewhere in medieval Europe, where rich soundscapes were present but penetrable.

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Audible children

The sounds of children in medieval miracles

Rakel Diesen

This article aims to unmute medieval children by drawing attention to how their audible presence and participation are reflected in Scandinavian hagiographic sources from the High and Late Middle Ages. The sound-making children discussed here are found in the Nordic hagiographic corpus in Latin, specifically in miracles associated with native Scandinavian saints. These were chiefly written down between the last quarter of the twelfth century and the end of the fifteenth century. This miracle-corpus holds hundreds of narratives featuring children, – child beneficiaries of miracles, the would-be saints as children, and children that feature as helpers, playmates, or siblings. The audible children considered in this article are, however, all children who themselves are said to experience miracles.

Children are great makers of sound, in their play, their small and large accidents, through their want and need for attention and response, and sometimes their lack of understanding of when to be silent. This notwithstanding, their audible presence in history has not garnered much attention. It is nevertheless abundantly clear, when reading hagiography from the Nordic Middle Ages, that children were present in many medieval settings –– not only visibly, but also in audible ways.[1] Miracle narratives are teeming with cursory mentions and more detailed portrayals of children making sound. The children we encounter in these texts both perceive and generate sound, they actively contribute to the soundscape of their environment, and they are shown to respond to the sounds made by others.

The audibility of medieval children is a little explored field in childhood history. The direct speech of historical children is only rarely recorded, and both direct and indirect speech is usually mediated through adults. Consequently, there are significant

[1] There are surviving miracle tales involving children associated with 20 native Scandinavian saints. Around 300 infants, children and adolescents are recipients of miraculous aid in the Scandinavian miracle narratives. Around half of these are found in late medieval Swedish miracle collections. Diesen 2023: 29–33.

methodological challenges inherent in accessing the marginalized, authentic voices of the historical children themselves.[2] In recent years, childhood historians of ancient and medieval childhood have nevertheless looked for the echoes of children's voices in areas and eras where hardly any sources that grant direct access to children exist. The fictional voices of children have been explored in studies of medieval literature (e.g. Raine 2022). In medieval disability studies children's speech and silence are also a theme, especially in conjunction with discussions about vocal and auditory disabilities (Kuuliala 2013: 119–121, 274–279; Finucane 1997: 78–83). The search for children's voices has often been focused on verbal content, that is, children's statements, opinions, accounts, and voiced experiences. However, some research concerning medieval children's voices as sound exists in relation to their role as singers, both as part of children's schooling in the Middle Ages (Zieman 2008), and as singing members of the choir in a church context (Long 2008).

If we focus on the sound of the children's voices rather than on their verbal content it might be possible to account for them as part of the medieval soundscape as presented in the Nordic hagiographical writings. It might also be envisaged to go beyond representations of children's voices and look at other expressions of audible children in the texts. My interpretation is guided by the following question: What may miracle narratives tell us about children's contribution to and perception of medieval soundscapes?

The soundscape perspective of this question is informed by the three aspects of soundscape ecology that were first described by Bernard L. Krause, i.e., *the anthrophony*, *the biophony*, and *the geophony*.[3] The first term covers the human-generated sounds (the anthrophony) that are, in the ecology of soundscapes, integrated with the sounds of biological, non-human organisms (the biophony), and the nonbiological sounds of the environment (the geophony). As signalled in the title of this article, the focus is on the man-made sound of audible children, that is, the anthropophony aspect of medieval soundscapes. However, attention to children's perception as well as production of sound ensures that also the non-human and environmental aspects of soundscapes evoked by the medieval sources are included in the textual interpretation whenever this is possible and relevant.

To uncover how children figure into aural and audible aspects of medieval soundscapes, the Nordic text sources are explored for traces of sounds that children are explicitly or implicitly reported to make, provoke, and hear. These sounds span from

[2] See for example: Musgrove, Leahy & Moruzi 2019; Zottl 2006.

[3] This term together with the terms biophony and geophony were coined by soundscape ecologist Bernard L. Krause 1987.

the dramatic and unnerving, sometimes outright painful sounds found in descriptions of children's illnesses and accidents, via the sounds that children are reported to make and hear in devotional settings, to everyday sounds of play. The sounds made by the children themselves are most frequently vocal, but the described vocality does not necessarily equate language or words. Vocal sounds may also be screams, gasps, sighs, gurgling, laughing, or coughing, and environmental sounds may be the partly human, partly non-biological sounds of play as well as the ambient sounds made for instance in conjunction with accidents.

A certain amount of conjecture is necessary and useful when attempting to uncover a wider range of sounds associated with children encountered in hagiography. To access insights that are similarly implied and therefore probable, but not explicitly stated in historical sources, research fields such as the history of childhood and women's history have applied the interpretative methodology of *empathic inference* (Gleason 2016: 458), or *disciplined imagination* (Garver 2011: 12), that is, an approach that is to some degree speculative as documented historical knowledge is combined with restrained, critical, and educated imagination. This type of approach can be extended to the area of sound, permitting the reader to consider sounds that would most likely have been heard in each situation, even when they are not explicitly reported or described.

The first three sections of this article cover the sound-related evolvement of many miracle narratives, that is, the sounds of warning that may signal an initiating accident or misfortune; the voiceless, or silent, child who may be dumb, deaf, or temporarily muted by illness or accident; and the sounds of proof from a healing or healed child who enters or re-enters the soundscape. The following section zooms in on descriptions of children's voices, including their described voice quality, and children's speech, that is what they are reported to have said. The concluding section discusses the integral presence of children in medieval soundscapes, which is, in sum, suggested by the main findings reported in this article.

Sound as warning

The dramatic events that are found in miracle tales were not silent. A child falling from a high ledge,[4] a child injured by a heavy object falling on it,[5] or the numerous children falling into streams, lakes, or fjords would make sounds. Such event descriptions contain information that may bring discomforting screams of pain or panic to

[4] Vita sancti Brynolphi episcopi Scarensis cum processu eius canonizacionis, p. 180.

[5] E.g: One boy is crushed by a tree being felled in *Miracula defixionis Domini*, 1950: 42. Another boy is injured by a falling door or door-beam in Uppsala MS C631, fol. 241r.

mind, and, at times, the sounds that are evoked or explicitly described in conjunction with accidents and illnesses may be at least as unsettling as the visual descriptions we can find in miracle stories featuring the grotesque and disfigured (e.g. Constantinou 2010).

Medieval hagiographers did not spare their audiences; at times they included rather gruesome details in their descriptions of horrific things that happened to children. However, when considering this aspect of the stories, it is important to bear the narrative structure of miracles in mind. The dramatic event forms a contrast to the eventual healing of the miracle beneficiary, reminding the reader, or perhaps more often the listener, of the Saint's power to triumph over evil and adversity. As a rule, miracle tales do, after all, have happy endings.

In a miracle dated to 1308 and attributed to St. Erik of Sweden, we hear about a blacksmith named Torsten who is alarmed by a scream from his 3-year-old son:

> He heard a single cry from the boy over whom two running wheels passed and miserably crushed him. At the single sound of the little one, as the first wheel passed over him, the father was bewildered, and not knowing what it was that he had heard, he immediately brought the horses pulling the cart to a halt. Looking back at the hay wagon, he then saw the broken body, in which no sign of life appeared, he placed it in his arms and carried it to his own house.[6]

In this story, the single cry or scream of the little boy who is crushed underneath the wheels of his father's horse-drawn carriage is crucial. The father has not seen his son running towards him, but the sound of the child's cry warns him and makes him stop his cart to find his son severely injured and seemingly dead. The human scream that announces the initiating tragedy of this tale, is twice spelled out in the text. Other sounds related to the event are not explicitly mentioned, such as the physical sound of the boy's body as it is crushed under the wheels, the mechanical sound of the cart as it runs over the child, or the animal sound of the horses as they are halted. The accident and its discovery are, however, followed by a description of the father´s reactions and his attempts to bring the little boy back to life through an invocation of St. Erik. His reactions, and especially his invocation, would also have entailed audible

[6] Miracula S. Erici regis et martyris, pp. 308–310: *Audivit unicum eiulatum pueri, super quem duæ rotæ cursus transierunt, et eum miserabiliter contriverunt. Pater ad unicum sonum parvuli, dum prima rota super eum transivit, obstupuit, et quidnam esset, quod audierat, ignorans, subito equos trahentes currum subsistere fecit, respiciens retro plaustratum fæni, contritum corpusculum vidit, et in quo nullum signum vitæ apparuit, in gremium suum posuit, et in domum suam propriam deportavit.*. All translations into English are mine.

responses that add another implicit element of the human voice to the soundscape of this story.

Similar warnings of disaster are found in several tales where the sound of a child in peril produces audible reactions in those present, such as praying, invoking a saint, lamenting, mourning, and crying. In the below excerpt from a fifteenth-century Katarinian miracle, the sudden sound of a screaming young boy evokes feelings of terror and fear in his parents as well as bystanders:

> The tree fell and one branch fatally hit the head of his son. And three branches from the tree´s summit entered through the crown of his head, descended, and exited through the neck. The parents, hearing the cry and wailing of the child, ran with haste, and when they came to him, they found that he had given up the spirit.[7]

Accidents such as the one represented in this text, that is children being crushed or harmed by falling objects, are especially well represented in the miracles of Katarina of Vadstena. In the collections of miracles attributed to her, we hear of children who are crushed under a load of wood,[8] a pile of hay,[9] a cart,[10] a decrepit old barn,[11] and falling trees and branches.[12] In many cases, explicit mentions of the child crying out as the accident happens add to the implicit sounds evoked in the mind of the reader as these accidents are described. In one of these tales, it is not the sound made by the child that is commented on, but what the child hears before the accident occurs.[13] The father warns him about the danger presented by the falling tree, but the boy does not heed the warning. That he hears the father's warning is unequivocally stated in the text, and consequently not listening appears to be the child´s own choice. This act

[7] Skokloster E 8913, fol. 115v: *[…]lignum cadens tetigit uno ramo letaliter caput filii ipsius, et tres rami a summitate verticem capitis intrando descendebant per collum exeuntes. Parentes vero audientes ploratum et ullulatum pueri accurrebant cum festinacione, ad quem cum venerunt, invenerunt ipsum spiritum emisisse […].*

[8] Öberg 2015: 36–37.

[9] *Processus seu negocium canonizacionis B. Katerine de Vadstenis*, p. 79.

[10] Miracula a commissarijs episcopalibus iuridice excepta, p. 522; *Processus seu negocium canonizacionis B. Katerine de Vadstenis*, p. 96.

[11] *Processus seu negocium canonizacionis B. Katerine de Vadstenis*, pp. 114–115.

[12] Öberg 2010: 13-14, Öberg 2015: 42–43.

[13] *Qui vocem patris audiens sed non imperio parens cucurrit directe sub arbore, que conquassavit tam caput quam utraque brachia eius*. Öberg 2015: 42.

of defiance temporarily costs him his life – perhaps underscoring the didactic point of children listening to their parents as failing to do so comes at a great cost. However, this is a rare example of a text commenting on what children hear, exposing some of the child´s soundscape in the narrative.

Disconcerting sounds can also be caused by children´s seizures, persistent pain or what might be mental disorders, which are often explained in terms of tormenting demons. In such cases, sounds are not warnings of serious accidents that occur suddenly, but of repeated or persistent conditions that require holy intervention. In one miracle, dated to 1408 and attributed to Nils Hermansson, an epileptic episode is described in a way that includes several allusions to sound made by the 4-year-old son of Conrad Nipritz, and by others present. During a fit that lasts for over an hour, the child is said to be shouting and crying, biting his tongue and lips.[14] In desperation the parents appeal to St. Nils for aid, and their son is miraculously healed within an hour of the invocation.

In a tale from the early fifteenth-century collection of miracles collected by Gregor of Stockholm, the disturbing and disconcerting sounds we are faced with are of a very different quality:

> Lars and his wife Inga had a small girl by the name of Ingrid who for almost two years was deluded by a frantic spirit. She was never able to rest at night, but immediately after her parents had fallen asleep, she was playing and laughing loudly in the darkness, in the manner of many children playing together, but she ran around on the floor, alone and naked.[15]

This story about the healing of the girl Ingrid is replete with references to sound. Unable to rest, the naked girl´s nightly sounds of play are «in the manner of many children playing together». The parents are said to have unsuccessfully attempted to cure her of her condition by means of both words and beatings.[16] This information adds new layers of sound to the tale, but what most strongly conveys the girl's unhappy state and her parents' desperate situation is the description of sounds made by

[14] De miraculis S. Nicolai, p. 274: *[…] cum in lecto dormiret, cepit anxiari, clamare et flere et oeulos uelut mortui euertere ac linguam et labia dentibus prescindere ac despumare pre nimia morbi inualescencia*.

[15] *Miracula defixionis Domini,* 1950: 16: *Laurencius nomine cum coniuge sua Inga habens filiam paruulam Ingridem nomine, que per duos fere annos spiritu phanatico illusa numquam nocturne tempore quiescere valuit, quin statim soporatis parentibus in tenebris hinc inde per pauiementum ludens ac cachinnans ut moris est plurimorum infantum simul ludencium, ipsa sola et nuda discurrebat*.

[16] Ibid.: *Nec compesci ab hac consuetudine potuit verbis aut verberibus quibuscumque*.

her nightly activities. There is a haunting quality to the portrayal of the little girl running around, playing, and laughing throughout the nights. References to darkness further emphasise the importance of these sounds. Her parents are said to hear rather than see the condition of the disturbed and agitated girl, and the description of her misfortunate state and behaviour evoke an audible image of her great turmoil in the attentive reader.

Soundless children

Questions of sound are often addressed in miracle tales involving children who are persistently or temporarily afflicted by speech and hearing disorders. The initial silence and miraculous unmuting of these children play central roles in many narratives and provide ample references to sound, speaking and hearing. Some children are explicitly described as silent, such as a boy for whom "the chains of long silence are broken" as he is healed.[17] It should however be stressed that children with speech impediments are not necessarily completely silent before they are healed. They can be speechless, but not unvocal, as seen in tales where references are made to mute children making different vocal sounds. Kolbein, an adolescent who has had his tongue cut out, is, in several versions of a miracle attributed to St. Olav, presented as staying at the shrine for some time, crying, groaning, and praying.[18] In some instances, children are also described as mute with no indication given of them being deaf. Potentially, some of these children had the ability to aurally perceive the sounds around them, but they are not presented as vocally participating.

In the Scandinavian miracles, there are three times as many children described as permanently or temporarily speechless than children explicitly described as not hearing. However, according to Irina Metzler deafness (*surditas*) on its own usually only referred to those who had become deaf through illness or accident but retained the ability to speak (Metzler 2009: 80–81). This use of the word entails that congenitally mute children also could be deaf, even when this is not mentioned.

This higher representation of children who are not speaking can also be explained by speechlessness in children due to a range of ailments and circumstances. The state of muteness or speechlessness may occur as one of several listed symptoms of a severely ill or injured child's condition. The child teetering on the edge of death usually does not speak. Consequently, the lack of sound and voice may be emphasised

[17] Miracula S. Erici regis et martyris, p. 315: *Moxque ruptum est vinculum longi silentii […].*

[18] *Passio Olavi*, pp. 37–38: *[…]sanctum multis afflagitat lachrimis, altis exorat gemitibus. Breuiaria ad vsum ritumque sacrosancte Nidrosiensis Ecclesie: […]ad sepulcrum martiris in oratione et lacrimis aliquanto perseuerasset tempore…*

in stories where the silent state of a child is a sign of death or near-death. This is the case with the 8-year-old Paul: "[...] because there was neither speech nor sense in him, but he lay without the breath of life so that all said that he was dead."[19] A severely ill adolescent girl "neither opened her eyes, nor uttered a word," and her silence presents a further complication that brings anguish to both her servants and relatives: "[...] all who were present despaired not only of the life of the infirm, but also because it seemed like she would depart her body without neither receiving the sacraments, nor make her testament."[20] What is feared by the adults present is not only that the girl will die, but also that her quiet state will prevent her from receiving last rites before dying. Sound is thus connected to her salvation.

The sounds that are engendered by the children of these stories are predominantly the sounds of others, that is, the sounds of praying, crying, screaming, or shouting adults who are reacting to events or desperately pleading for their children's life and health, or recovery. The severely ill or injured children themselves are often quiet, and the absence of sound accentuates their status of seemingly dead or lost to the world.

Voice-hearing,[21] visions, and dreams of encounters and conversations with saints are seen in miracles involving children.[22] There are outwardly silent, speechless and soundless children who are portrayed with a capacity for vocal and auditory interactions even when they are otherwise rendered voiceless or deaf due to impairments, illnesses or accidents. This introduces another layer of interior sound into these tales where children engage in communication that crosses between this world and another. One missing and drowned boy, not yet three years old, emerges from one such visionary engagement with a language that is markedly improved from meeting the saint in a vision.[23] The boy has no other previous language deficiency than age-related

[19] Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula, pp. 367–368: *[...] quia non erat in eo uox nec sensus, sed iacebat absque flatu uitali, ita ut dicerent omnes, quia mortuus est*.

[20] Miracula S. Erici regis et martyris, pp. 312–314: *[...]nec oculos aperuit, nec verbum ullum protulit. omnes ergo qui aderant, non solum de vita infirmantis desperabant, sed etiam quod nec sacramentis et testamento videretur migratura de corpore*.

[21] See Eriksen's introduction to this special issue on voice-hearing in visions.

[22] *Passio Olavi*, p. 75; De miraculis Sancti Erici regis Danorum, p. 163.

[23] Miracula a Commissarijs Episcopalibus iuridice excepta, p. 518: *[...]Interrogant pater & mater infantem, ab antea informe loquentem, quomodo palo illi adhæsisset. Respondit puer iam formate loquens: quando de ponte cecidi in torrentem, quædam Domina, albis vestibus induta, suscepit me adhærentem palo sub pallio suo, quod aquæ mihi non nocuerunt, & dixit se vocari Catharinam de Watzsteno: adhortataque est me venire ad Watzstenum*.

unformed language, but after being spoken to by Katarina of Vadstena in a vision while lost under water, his speech is fully formed.

In narratives about children who are persistently speechless, mute, or deaf, their state is of course not signalled by warning sounds; being speechless is from the outset the very reason for seeking holy intervention. However, a reversal of the child's state is needed to bring both the temporarily speechless child who is severely injured, sick, or seemingly dead, and the persistently mute or deaf child, back into sound. Only when healed and recovered they are again –– or for the first time –– able to contribute fully to the soundscape that is perceivable through the narrative.

Re-entering the soundscape

Sounds activated in audiences to miraculous healings of children are often framing the miraculous event. Typically, the initial despair, fear and lament, and the prayer and invocation provoked or stimulated by an accident- or illness-stricken child is replaced with the surprise, joy, and rejoicing caused by the child's survival and healing. Such emotional expressions and activities have clear sound connotations that form an audible backdrop of human sound for the focused miracle.

Miracle narratives may also present more detailed information about the specific sounds experienced by children as hearing is restored to them, either as they cease being deaf, are revived from apparent death, or otherwise (re-)introduced to the audible. The first auditory experiences of these children are included in narratives about children who are being brought into the world of sound as they hear the gospel,[24] prayers, rejoicing and singing.[25] In addition, we hear of children who are interrogated about their names and experiences immediately after their healing.

Various settings described in these accounts carry distinct sounds. In addition to the human sounds that are framing many miracles, other sounds can be added by examining the text through a spatial lens that unveils yet other auditory dimensions. Ecclesiastical spaces, notably saint´s shrines, hold particular significance, with it being a common setting where help is sought and gratitude offered, and where many miracles occur.

The moment when children themselves, many of them previously silenced, are healed, recovered, or revived, is a part of the narrative that is particularly rich in direct or indirect references to the first sounds that previously silent children hear and make

[24] De miraculis sancti Erici regis Danorum, pp. 443–444.

[25] E.g. in one miracle of St. Knud, King of Denmark a congregation reacts seemingly spontaneously to the healing of a child by singing a part of the saint´s office, Excerpta quaedam ex Arnfasti monachi poemate De miraculis sancti Kanuti regis et martyris, p. 163: *[...] et conuentus hec videns cantauit responsorium: 'Iustum deduxit Dominus'*.

themselves as they reintegrate the soundscape. There are for instance the sounds of a child´s running feet on the church floor,[26] the first gasp, yawn, gulp, or intake of breath of reviving children,[27] and the voice and speech of the previously silent.

References to play that may function as evidence of healing are also found in connection with this part of the miracle narrative. The previously mentioned son of Conrad Nilpritz is for instance said to be drinking and playing on the same day as he had his seizure.[28] Obviously, play can be both silent and loud, and like this tale, miracle stories do not necessarily spell out the sounds made. In cases where play is mentioned in contrast to the previously silent or seemingly dead child, or as proof of healing, we should still be safe in assuming some noise, especially when groups of children are playing together.[29]

In other cases, the social function of children's first acts as vocal and aural beings is more clearly in focus. Zumthor and Ebgelhart draw attention to the emerging voice as a social event that links the utterer of vocal sound to the one(s) hearing it (Zumthor and Engelhardt 1984: 74). In miracle narratives, vocal events are sometimes clearly seen to forge such connections between children and their community when children use their voices to integrate into the devotional life of their communities. Considering the genre-related emphasis on devotional acts it is not surprising that these are events centred around devotional actions and often transpiring in church settings. Nonetheless, in such narratives, the making and perceiving of sound, and the interpersonal connections forged through voice, emerge as central points of societal inclusion.

The simultaneous transition to perceiving and making sound is often accentuated in miracle tales about children who are cured of muteness and deafness. In the thirteenth-century miracles of Vilhelm, abbot of Æbelholt, two texts link the actions of perceiving the audible and being audible, i.e., hearing and speaking, in similar ways as simultaneous acts of entering the soundscape inside the church where the relics of St. Vilhelm were kept. In both miracles, the medicinal use of consecrated water that had been in contact with the saint's tooth, known as bone water, plays a central role.

[26] Vita sancti Brynolphi episcopi Scarensis cum processu eius canonizacionis, pp. 144, 169–170.

[27] E.g.: De miraculis Sancti Erici regis Danorum, p. 439: *puer reuixit oscitans septies […]*; Miracula a Commissarijs Episcopalibus Iuridice Excepta, p. 527: *Voto vix facto, contemplabantur ex facie mortuæ animam respirare, oculos aperire, atque oscitare […]*.

[28] Schück, De miraculis S. Nicolai, p. 274: *[…] eodem die adhuc bibens et ludens sanitati pristine omnino restitutus, vnde omnes gaudio sunt repleti de sanitate predicti pueri*.

[29] E.g. Gallén, Les causes de Sainte Ingrid, p. 35: *[…] et puer subito reuixit et perfecte conualuit, et eadem die cum aliis coeuis suis ludere cepit*.

This remedy, described as effective medicine, medicinal water, and healing liquid,[30] is administered by the keepers of Vilhelm's relics. It is used to cure two boys who are both deaf and mute, one lost his hearing and speech while sleeping when he should have been watching livestock, and the other has been mute and deaf since birth.

In the first miracle, a canon brother pours bone water into the temporarily deaf and mute boy's ears and mouth as he says: "I charge you in the name of the Lord, and through the virtue of Saint Vilhelm, to tell us by what name you are called." As he invokes the saint and the Lord, the boy, who is now hearing his voice, answers that his name is Peter.[31] The second child is a young boy of seven. He arrives at the church in Æbelholt, Denmark, where the saint's relics were kept, and he also regains his hearing and speech after a similar treatment with bone water. After the medicine is administered to him, the text proceeds to tell the reader about his first experience of the two senses denied him since birth.[32] The child, who is instructed to repeat the words of the Augustinian brother, clearly articulates himself as he immediately recites the Lord's prayer –– word by word.

Bone water is administered as medicine in several of Vilhelm of Æbelholt´s miracles. In most cases it is ingested; in the case of these two children, it is also poured into their ears, and as a result speech as well as hearing is restored.[33] A clear connection between the perceiving and the performing of sound is thus forged. In the Nordic text corpus, there are several other narratives where children who are said to be mute and deaf from birth are healed and immediately able to understand and use spoken language. This immediate ability is also underscored in a miracle found in the miracle collection of the Danish saint Erik Plovpenning. A boy who is explicitly said to have been deaf and mute from birth is asked what his name is and answers that he has no knowledge of his own name because he has never heard it.[34] He has in other words

[30] E.g. *Rogatur custos sepulcri, ut exhibeat illi paralitico salutarem liquorem, scilicet aquam, in qua dens sancti Willelmi intinctus erat. Qui, satisfaciens precibus rogantium, dedit aquam medicinalem*. Ibid 352.

[31] Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula, pp. 354–355: *Precipio tibi in nomine domini et per uirtutem sancti Willelmi, ut dicas nobis, quo uoceris nomine«. Ad hanc uocem adiurantis ilico apertum est os pueri, auditu simul restituto, et respondit: "Petrus"*.

[32] Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula, p. 355.

[33] Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula, pp. 354–355: *Ad hanc uocem adiurantis ilico apertum est os pueri, auditu simul restituto*; p. 355: *Adiuratus in uirtute sancti confessoris mox duos sensus sibi a primordio sui ortus denegatos capescit, scilicet auditum et loquelam*.

[34] De miraculis Sancti Erici regis Danorum, pp. 442–443: *Puer de Horsnes, natus apud Randros, mutus et surdus a natiuitate, ad sepulcrum Erici curatus est. Requiritur nomen suum; dixit se nescire, quia nunquam prius audivit*.

had very limited means of communicating, and still he is said to gain language immediately together with speech and hearing.[35]

The existence of a societal expectation that people should learn central prayers can be seen in medieval Norwegian homilies where parents are said to be responsible for teaching their children Pater Noster and Ave Maria.[36] The act engaged in by the boy who recites the Lord's prayer, clearly resonates with these expectations, as do other texts where children are portrayed as engaging with devotional practices after being healed. However, few are as explicit as the abovementioned example in their description of the aural and audible aspects of these devotional acts. The 7-year-old boy is said to immediately put his newfound abilities to good use as he performs the recitation of Pater Noster in front of a crowd in church, and even if he stutters a little to begin with, the clearness of his voice is said to amaze the audience.[37] For a child who has allegedly been deaf and mute from his mother's womb and therefore has no previous language experience, this is in itself an extraordinary feat. On the one hand, it functions as a validation of the performed miracle. On the other hand, the sonic quality of medieval dissemination of knowledge and stories is reflected in the way this child is instructed to repeat the prayer after the canon brother. It is through hearing and repeating that he learns. The episode therefore appears as a kind of spontaneous teaching moment where the child is shown how to use his newly acquired faculties –– speech and hearing –– in the service of God. Consequently, the child's entry or re-entry into the world of sound underscores and strengthens its belonging to the Christian community.

The sound of children's voices and speech

In a fifteenth-century Swedish miracle, an apparently dead young boy regains his voice by being administered what appears to be a folk remedy.[38] Adults present pour warm beer down his throat, and he gradually regains his faculties. The description of this recovery conjures both visual images and sounds. First, the boy moves, then

[35] In the same miracle collection, another boy is questioned immediately after healing and does not know his own name. Nothing is said about his condition being congenial or not, pp. 443–444: *Requiritur de nomine et dicit "Nescio, ut surdus; et vocatuas est Ericus".*

[36] *Gamal norsk homiliebok,* pp. 35–36.

[37] Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula, p. 355: *[…] voce articulata & intelligibili, licet in verbis formandis & exprimendis balbutiret: qui autem adduxerant eum, stabant stupefacti, mirantes de his quæ, procedebant de ore ejus*.

[38] Gregorius, *Miracula defixionis Domini,* p. 6: *Et cum ceruisiam calidam in guttur eius infuderunt, iam prope mediam noctem apparuerunt in eo colores varij, quos paulatim motus et oscitacio ac vox succedebant […].*

he gasps or yawns, and finally, the voice follows. The text does not mention what the boy might say. His use of voice is therefore not mentioned as a precursor to a statement. What is emphasised and evoked is rather the very sound of a child's voice.

"Boys can be distinguished from adults by their voices and faces", writes Bartholomeus Anglicus in the thirteenth-century work *De proprietatibus rerum*.[39] The sound of boys before the cracking of voice is thus highlighted as something that sets them apart. Bartholomeus continues by describing many of the ways children use their voices, by speaking, laughing and crying and he comments on how they speak of all they hear and see, and how they are only silent when they sleep.[40] Bartholomeus thus seems acutely aware of the sound of children, with a particular focus on vocal sounds.

In the sources examined here, all statements and vocal acts attributed to children have been written by adult authors, and the encountered children are all part of narratives written with a clear hagiographic intent. Finding children's authentic voices in these adult-authored texts is a methodologically challenging and theoretically complex endeavour. Yet, like Bartholomeus, the authors of the texts often convey the quality of children's vocal sounds in a convincing and engaging manner. Vocal sounds, and especially speech acts, are the child-generated sounds that are most frequently encountered in miracle narratives. The explicit reference to children's vocal actions can in many cases be combined with the details given about the age and gender of the child, evoking a more detailed idea of how the individual child might have sounded.

As previously stated, some studies exist that discuss children as singers elsewhere in Europe in the Middle Ages. While there is no explicit mention of children as singers in liturgical settings in the Nordic hagiographic corpus, there are references made to liturgical hours or mass being sung. Such mentions function as temporal signposts and provide environmental background information to the main events of some narratives involving children. It is also highly likely that the voices of prepubescent boys were part of the choirs mentioned in these texts.[41] However, the only overt mention of a singing child is found in a 15th-century miracle about a boy who had fallen sick and appeared dead due to a devastating plague that hit his community.[42]

[39] Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Book 6, chapter 5 (*De Puero*): *Per vocem et vultum pueri ab adultis dinoscuntur*.

[40] Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Book 6, chapter 5 (*De Puero*).

[41] For a discussion on how the participation of children in liturgical song is attested, see Caldwell 2023: 59–65; Orme, 2021: 76–79.

[42] Gregorius, *Miracula defixionis Domini*, pp. 54–56: *[..]vastante populum graui pestilencia in Dalom Arosiensis diocesis [...]*.

In this case, a vow was made on the boy's behalf to the image of the deposition of Christ in Stockholm, and over the next day, he recovered gradually. "On the following night, however, the said boy sang most joyfully, as a sign of complete health."[43] Here, the act of singing, and thereby the sound of the singing child, explicitly acts as the proof of complete healing.

The quality, and not only the use of the newfound voices of formerly speech impaired children, is also commented on. This was seen in the previously discussed miracle with the boy who initially stuttered, but then recited Pater Noster with amazing clarity. Another tale, about a small boy who was mute for a long time before he regained his voice inside the church in Nidaros on the feast of St. Olav, underscores the beauty and perfect expression of his recovered voice as proof of his miraculous healing.[44] Such narratives sometimes accentuate the articulation, clarity, and extraordinary language proficiency of healed children who speak for the first time. In addition, the voice and speech of children are acknowledged as having specific qualities when developmental traits are commented on. The speech of a 3-year-old boy is for instance described as going from immature to fully formed after he has a vision of St. Katarina,[45] and a formerly mute 6-year-old is said to have reached the normal language proficiency of a child his age within a quarter of a year after he was healed.[46]

In a Birgittine miracle, there is a detailed description of a child's vocal actions in a time of duress, and of how this child sounded to those present. The 10-year-old Holmstein is trapped on an ice flake and unable to get to the shore where several people can see and hear the boy. The text says that he is terrified, and in a loud voice he unceasingly shouts his plea to Birgitta, "O saint Birgitta, help me".[47] This description conveys the desperation of the child's plea and gives an impression of the helplessness of the onlookers on the shore who were unable to aid the child, but who could hear him invoking the saint and begging for help.

Some children are reported to make prosaic statements asking for food or drink as they recover or revive. Concerning a boy from an early fifteenth-century miracle we are told that "As soon as the boy opened his eyes he demanded drink, to the delight

[43] Gregorius, *Miracula defixionis Domini*, pp. 54–56: *Sequenti vero nocte dictus puer letissime cantabat in signum integre sanitatis*.

[44] *Passio Olavi*, p. 75: *[…] pulcra vocis expressione perfecte*.

[45] Vita auctore Vlphone supparis aeui, p. 518.

[46] Miracula S. Erici regis et martyris, p. 315: *[…]et puer infra quariale anni perfectum usym loquendi iuxta sue etatis possibilitatem recepit*.

[47] *Acta et processus canonizacionis beate Birgitte*, pp. 131–132: *[…] vnde puer perterritus alta voce incessanter clamare cepit: "O sancta Brigida, adiuua me*".

of all who were present at the spectacle and praising God for his favours."[48] There are also children who ask to visit the shrine of a certain saint that they saw in a vision while dead, lost, or unconscious. One such example is found in a miracle from the collection of Vilhelm the Abbot of Æbelholt in Denmark where the speech act performed when a little boy called Paul is brought back to life is to ask when they are going to see a saint that he, according to the testimony given by his mother, never had heard of before.[49] In other cases, the sources portray children as speaking in the service of, or to the glorification of the Lord or a saint as they gain the ability to speak. An example of this is seen in a Katarinian miracle dated to 1470, where a girl uses her regained faculty of speech and her own voice to proclaim and praise the merits of St Katerina and the mercy of the Lord to all who will listen at Vadstena.[50] Using her voice to promote the cult and God, she becomes a spokesperson for the saint. Tales like this one demonstrate how children's own voices are described as taking up auditory space in these locations, and as heard by authorities and congregated crowds at the shrines.

Miracle stories are often viewed as a creation of collaborative and communal storytelling as they are the products of people sharing their experiences and stories. Michael Goodich characterises this as a discourse where the miracle beneficiary, the hagiographer, and the cultic community were engaged together (Goodich 2004: 306). As we have seen in several of the previously discussed examples, the child recipients of miracles are many, and their actions, experiences and circumstances are presented to the audience in some detail. Moreover, and most significantly with regards to their vocal roles, by telling and retelling their own stories, and testifying to their own experiences, children appear as members of the cultic community who contribute to the communal discourse. The active and audible presence of these medieval children in devotional life in the region is highlighted by the many examples found in miracle texts of their religious agency, participation, and active involvement in religious practices at local churches, cathedrals, and centres of religious cults.

[48] Gregorius, *Miracula defixionis Domini*, pp. 54–56: *Mox puer aperiens oculos bibere postulabat, letantibus cunctis qui spectaculo aderant et deum in suis beneficiis collaudantibus*.

[49] *Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula*, pp. 367–368: *[…]reuixit spiritus eius, et cepit mouere se; sed loquelam usque ad diem non recuperauit. Mane illucescente die dicebat matri: "Quando ibimus ad sanctum Willelmum?"*.

[50] *Sancti Willelmi abbatis Vita et miracula*, p. 522: *[…] cœpit infans se mouere, deinde loqui, & post paullulum perfecte conualuit, & cum oblatione sua venit ad sepulcrum Domine Catharine, misericordiam Dei prædicans omnibus, precibus & meritis eius secum factam*.

Children's integral presence in the medieval soundscape

Audible children would have featured in medieval soundscapes that were defined by a mix of human-generated sounds, sounds originating from biological non-human organisms, and environmental non-biological sounds. Hagiographic texts, such as the miracles explored in this article, richly recount the activities of children, both indirectly referencing and explicitly describing the vocal and non-vocal sounds children produced. The expressions of sound made by children may also be combined with indirect or direct descriptions that supply contextual details of non-human and environmental sounds. Together this information generates a vivid picture of how children may have figured in medieval soundscapes.

As a distinct part of the anthropophony of medieval soundscapes, the sounds made by children emerge in ways that differ from those made by adult contributors. Together, some of the specific activities that children typically engaged in, and the quality of children's voices, set the sounds made by them apart, and this is repeatedly acknowledged in medieval texts. Thus, the sources reflect a conception held by their authors of sound-making, and sound-perceiving children interacting with the audible in particular childlike ways.

The narrative structure of miracle tales shapes what sounds are present throughout the story. Sometimes descriptions of play or other activities children engage in evoke sounds at the story's outset.[51] However, the sound of children often emerges dramatically, signalling events that later necessitate saintly intervention, such as screams of pain and fear resulting from accidents. These sounds may blend with environmental noises, as seen in the accident caused by the horse-drawn carriage. The need for saintly aid can also be indicated by the distressing sounds made by children who are physically or mentally ill. Other tales begin with the absence of child-generated sound, especially those featuring persistently silent children who are mute, deaf, or both. Alternatively, silence may follow the occurrence of illness or accident, with severely injured, ill or temporarily dead children explicitly or implicitly described as silent.

Despite their own silence, these children may elicit emotional sounds of lament and despair from parents and others, along with prayers and invocations of saints. After saintly intervention, the bodily and vocal sounds produced and heard by recently silent or silenced children as they re-enter the soundscape often serve as evidence of

[51] E.g. Gregorius, *Miracula defixionis Domini*, p. 24: *Pueri in quodam flumine ludentes nauiculam forte repertam intrabant, que silenter aquarum fluentia ad quandam uoraginem deducta est, ubi de rupe horrendo precipitio flumen labitur*; and and *Passio Olavi*, pp. 60–61: *Molendinarius quidam Olauus [...] filiam habuit paruulam etate quatuor annorum, que ludens in procliuis montis super torrentem*.

healing. Children are shown using their voices to fulfil basic needs as well as integrate into devotional practices. Unlike the initial sounds of warning, these child-generated sounds during this phase of the narrative typically evoke joyous reactions, contrasting with the lamentation and despair associated with the soundless children earlier in the narrative.

The narratives that highlight the sounds made by children who were once silenced by illness or accident, showcase how their newfound ability to hear and speak marks a miraculous and transformative healing that (re)introduces them to the world of sound, often in a church or shrine setting.

Beth Williamson stresses that by bearing in mind the effect of sound, we may achieve a broader understanding of medieval faith, devotional practice, and religious experience (Williamson 2013). Such awareness of sound should be extended to the sounds made by children in exactly these settings. The narratives discussed here, which illustrate children adding their voices and sounds to devotional settings, illuminate the role of children and their contributions within religious contexts. Such stories enhance our comprehension of medieval auditory environments, particularly by showcasing interactions between clergy and the youngest lay members of the congregation. Hagiographic sources from Scandinavia provide compelling evidence of children as integral contributors to the medieval soundscape, in turn enriching our understanding of medieval soundscapes through the diverse and significant examples of the audible presence of medieval children.

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Carving sound

Inscriptions in churches as a representation of the church soundscape

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Prayer inscriptions in churches relate to the church soundscape in various ways. I discuss whether epigraphic inscriptions were read aloud or silently and argue that at least the less literate readers would need to use their voices as aids in the carving and reading process, thus contributing to the church soundscape by producing sound. Prayer inscriptions also evoke sound through spurring its readers to pray for people named in the inscriptions. These prayers may have been voiced or unvoiced, audible only to the reader and prayer's inner ear. Inscriptions in churches may also reflect sound, both through their spelling and by reflecting popular prayers sung or read in the church. Finally, I consider a group of inscriptions which are closer to symbols than to verbal text, and how these relate to sound. I argue that although the connection to sound is less apparent in these inscriptions, they attest to the popularity of the *Ave Maria* prayer and thus reflect popular prayers spoken time and again in the church.

Introduction

Textual inscriptions are, literally speaking, reflections of sound; every grapheme reflects a phoneme in spoken language. However, the relation between text and sound may also be much more complex than that. Inscriptions may reflect the soundscape of its surroundings through repeating it in writing, and they could also contribute to the soundscape by spurring oral responses. In churches, the prayer inscriptions in particular engage with – and spur – sounds in their surroundings. If "sound was seen as the essential matter of words" in the Middle Ages,[1] every prayer in the church, be it carved in stone or wood, painted on an altar piece, sung, or vocalised by the priest or members of the public, or silently recited, evokes sound. If not a sound that the outer ear may hear, the sound of the prayer will still be evoked to the inner ear. Beth

[1] This is stated in the introductory article of the present special issue (Eriksen 2024).

Williamson argues that notations of song in medieval manuscripts and artworks appeal to a range of senses, both the eye and the inner ear of the viewer (2013). In the same sense, a carved prayer would appeal to the reader's inner ear, whether the prayer was consecutively vocalised or not.

The purpose of this article is to engage in the discussion of the multifaceted relations of prayer inscriptions and invocations to sound, mainly on an extradiegetic level, i.e. how the inscriptions relate to sounds outside the texts themselves.[2] I aim to explore these relations by using prayer inscriptions and invocations from medieval Norwegian churches as a case-study. I will do this through the following research questions:

> How did prayer inscriptions and invocations relate to the church soundscape?
> How did prayer inscriptions and invocations form part of the soundscape in a society where not everyone, not even every carver, was literate?

I will first give an overview of the inscriptions which are found in and close to churches, before discussing voiced and silent reading of epigraphic texts. From there, I will discuss how inscriptions could evoke sound, and how they can also be reflections of sound. Finally, I will turn to categories of inscriptions where the carver may not have been literate, and thus unaware of the direct phoneme-grapheme relations that are the fundamental building blocks of every alphabetic script system, including runes and Latin script. Although these inscriptions have lost their direct phoneme-grapheme relations, I argue that they still both evoke and reflect the church soundscape.

Material

In Norway, the oldest extant churches are from the twelfth century, and the oldest extant inscriptions on church walls are as old as the church walls themselves. Thus, the inscriptions to be discussed were carved in the period between the twelfth century and the reformation. Most of these inscriptions are runic, while a few are carved in the Latin alphabet. Before the first churches in Norway were built, and the first church inscriptions carved, runes had been in use in Norway for several centuries, while the Latin alphabet became gradually more widespread in the Norwegian society from the eleventh century. Runes were primarily an epigraphic script, while the Latin alphabet was used both in manuscripts and epigraphy. Runes were widely used as graffiti in the churches, while the vast majority of Latin alphabet inscriptions were

[2] See the discussion in Eriksen 2024.

formal, primarily used in epitaphs: in Bollaert's (2022) overview of medieval public inscriptions from Norway, 330 of 399 runic inscriptions are categorised as graffiti, while only 69 belong to the categories of building inscriptions, dedications and epitaphs. For the Latin alphabet inscriptions, the numbers are turned. Of 211 inscriptions, 21 are categorised as graffiti, while 172 inscriptions are epitaphs, of which most are on gravestones. These are also part of the inscriptions in the church environment, although they are not found on the church walls. The remaining 18 Latin alphabet inscriptions in Bollaert's overview are building inscriptions and dedications (Bollaert 2022: 26). From c. 1200, the Latin alphabet seems to be preferred for high-status and formal inscriptions, particularly in urban areas (Bollaert 2022: 261).

During the fourteenth century, runic literacy decreased drastically, and in the fifteenth and particularly sixteenth century, runic literacy was a fringe phenomenon found in a few rural areas. However, while runic literacy decreased, Latin alphabet literacy remained an elite phenomenon. This means that when runic literacy fell in the Late Middle Ages, the general popular literacy fell as well. It is notoriously difficult to date inscriptions on church walls, though there is reason to believe that at least some belonged to the last centuries of the Middle Ages, when popular literacy was low.

The body of Norwegian church inscriptions includes close to 400 inscriptions on walls, pillars and other construction elements, and the majority of these are located in the rural parts of southern Norway.[3] In particular, the stave churches Borgund, Hopperstad, Urnes near Sognefjorden, and Lom, located further to the north and east of these, are rich in inscriptions. Moreover, Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim is extremely rich in both runic and non-runic graffiti, ranging from the Middle Ages to the present day. In addition, Trondheim houses by far the largest collection of inscribed medieval Norwegian gravestones, all carrying Latin alphabet inscriptions.[4] The Nidaros Cathedral inscriptions are the only substantial corpus of urban church inscriptions from Norway; the cathedral is also one of the medieval urban churches in Norway with the best preserved wall surfaces.

Of the almost 400 church inscriptions, about one third are explicitly religious references. There are also two other large groups, the name inscriptions and the agent inscriptions, that is inscriptions following the formula "X carved these runes", or a variant of this. These are usually considered to fit in with the church context in the sense that it is assumed that the carver, by carving a name, implicitly encouraged others to pray for them. In addition, there are also some smaller and quite diverse groups

[3] These numbers exclude gravestones with epitaphs; the majority of these are urban.

[4] There is one potential runic gravestone, N 508 (Bollaert 2022: 42–43).

of inscriptions, some of which cannot be tied thematically to the church context (see Holmqvist 2021: 138–144). In this article, the emphasis will lie on a subgroup of the religious inscriptions, namely the prayers, and in particular those invoking the Virgin Mary.

The sound of inscriptions

In this article, I discuss how inscriptions could evoke or be a reflection of sound, and it is thus necessary to discuss whether and how inscriptions evoked or reflected sound, and whether the carving and reading of inscriptions in itself may have been meant to be audible, or to symbolise sound. This is connected to the larger discussion of voiced vs. silent reading in the Middle Ages. Jonas Carlquist discusses the evidence for voiced and silent reading in medieval Sweden and concludes that there is evidence for both (Carlquist 2022: 275–281), and that the Swedish term *läsa* ("read") can also be found in contexts where it is natural to assume that the reader recited from memory (Carlquist 2022: 291). Moreover, Carlquist cites examples where the term is also used to cover those listening to texts being read aloud (2022: 278–279). In other words, "read" had different dimensions of meaning in the Middle Ages than today. Carlquist discusses the term from a Swedish perspective, though there are also examples of the verb *lesa* being used in the same way, particularly for reciting from memory, in West Nordic contexts (cf. Fritzner 1973, vol. 2: 485–486).

However, one cannot make inferences directly from manuscript culture, which Carlquist discusses, to the epigraphic material. Terje Spurkland argues that there is a distinction in mentality regarding the reading of Latin script in books and the reading of epigraphic runes, tied to the dichotomy of orality and writtenness (1994: 13–14). For runes, the verbs used for reading and writing are primarily *ráða* and *rísta*, while the most common verbs used for reading and writing books are *lesa* and *skrifa/rita*.[5] According to Spurkland, most runic inscriptions are individual: they are carved by an individual and meant to be read by another individual (Spurkland 1994: 14). This claim is supported both by the contexts in which *ráða* and *rísta* are used, and by the medieval runic material, which is dominated by short personal messages, e.g. on rune sticks. In contrast to this, Spurkland argues that Latin letters were often tied to public and collective contexts and were intended to be read aloud, as indicated for instance by the standard opening phrase of diplomas: *ǫllum mǫnnum þeim sem þetta bref sjá eða heyra* "all those who either see or hear this letter" (Spurkland 1994: 13). As Spurkland shows, runic and Latin script often occurs in widely different con-

[5] Spurkland 1994: 4–5. In some cases, *ráða* is also used in contexts with Latin script (Spurkland 1994: 12; Fritzner 1973 vol. 3: 9–10).

texts, tied to different mentalities. However, it is worth mentioning that Spurkland compares epigraphic runes with Latin script in charters, diplomas and manuscript; he does not give examples of epigraphic use of the Latin alphabet. Therefore, we should be careful when drawing conclusions from both Spurkland and Carlquist's arguments regarding voiced or silent reading of epigraphic runes and Latin script. Rather, we should look at what we know of the reading of epigraphic inscriptions in other contexts.

From late medieval Sweden, a large number of medieval wall paintings with incorporated written texts in Latin script are preserved (Sandquist Öberg 2017). These wall paintings are, of course, decorative, though Sandquist Öberg argues that they also had a didactic function (2017: 28). And as literacy in general was low during the Late Middle Ages – not to mention literacy in Latin – it is likely that the priest or parish clerk would interpret the written word orally to the church goers. The late medieval wall paintings are quite far from the runic church inscriptions, both in formality, time, layout, interaction with imagery and in the general visibility. Nevertheless, it is likely that some Norwegian medieval inscriptions were intermediated in the same way. For instance, altar pieces such as that from Tingelstad (fig. 1) integrate the written word and imagery in a similar fashion to that of the Swedish late medieval wall paintings and may also have been used by priests and parish clerks as a teaching tool. Moreover, it is possible that some of the more visible runic church inscriptions were also read aloud or mediated to a non-literate public. An example is the dedication inscription N 526 (*Pétr á mik*, "Peter owns me"), carved in fairly large runes, approximately 5–7 cm tall, to the left of the door leading into Sakshaug Old Church's chancel. Two more examples, both runic Ave Maria prayers, are discussed in the following section.

A final point that should be considered regarding voiced or silent reading of the church inscriptions is the carvers' level of literacy. As the spelling of the inscriptions may tell us, runic carvers belong to all parts of the spectrum from highly skilled and trained in Latin literacy to barely literate or even illiterate. We can also infer from the extant inscriptions that quite a few of the carvers belonged to the latter part of this scale, where the carvers are more or less untrained readers and writers. For them, a central part of the reading and writing process is the connection between sound and writing – phonemes and graphemes (Cabell, Tortorelli & Gerde 2013; Svanes 2021: 47, 61). In this process, articulating the sound of each grapheme is central (Høien & Lundberg 2012: 62–72). This articulation may be done in the reader and writer's mind or through use of one's voice. Research on early reading and writing, and also mere observation of children who are in the early stages of their reading and

writing development, show us that untrained readers and writers often use their voice to aid their reading and writing (Kulbrandstad 2022: 36–40). Thus, the carving and reading of inscriptions may not necessarily have been as silent a process as the carving of graffiti usually is today. In a society where most people were illiterate or barely literate, reading and spelling aloud may have been part of the runic textual culture. At the same time, some runic carvers were undoubtedly highly skilled. Although we cannot be sure if these carvers also spelled their inscriptions out loud, they would not have needed it as an aid.

Fig. 1: The Tingelstad Frontal, from c. 1275–1300, 98.5 x 160 cm. The panel is preserved at the Historical Museum at the University of Oslo (C 5040). The written word is integrated with the imagery, and illiterate viewers would be able to infer the content of the text from the imagery. Photo: Mårten Teigen © KHM, UiO.

Prayer inscriptions

I use the prayer inscriptions as an example because prayers are usually oral, and I will argue that the carved prayers are in a double relationship with oral prayers, and thus to the church soundscape. The prayer inscriptions may be seen as reflexes of the

church soundscape, where they repeat popular prayers from mass. But inscriptions may also spur its readers to pray, thus evoking new oral prayers and contributing to creating the church soundscape. Prayer inscriptions in churches come in a range of lengths, styles, and formats, from those invoking a standard formula to longer, more personalised prayers.

Prayers evoking sound

Inscriptions in churches may, in some instances, spur their readers to recite an oral prayer. Two inscriptions, which illustrate this phenomenon well, are the inscriptions N 493 and N 494[6], both from Nidaros Cathedral, found beside each other inside the octagon.

N 493
(k)kuþtakisal ketills[7]
Guð taki sál Ketils.
May God take Ketill's soul.

N 494
kuþkætiþinærlingrsikmuntarsonnuokiafnan
Guð gæti þín, Erlingr Sigmundarsonr, nú ok jafnan.
May God protect you, Erlingr Sigmundr's son, now and always.

Both are carved in two stages: first, someone has written a name. Later, someone else has added a prayer to the name (as discussed in NIyR vol. V: 56–57; Holmqvist 2018: 117–119). The inscriptions illustrate how prayer inscriptions are not entirely written and visual, but also part of an oral context. Presumably, one reason medieval people wrote their names on the church walls was to be remembered in prayers. We know that some of the carvers were about to embark upon a pilgrimage or another journey (e.g. N 358 from Borgund Stave Church, N 529 and 530 from Sakshaug Old Church, and N 57 from Ringebu; see also N 42 from Lom Stave Church, where the carver prays for a person away on a journey). Carving their name on their home church, the traveller's family could pray for the traveller near their inscription while they were

[6] N + number refers to the corpus edition *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (NIyR 1941–).

[7] The reading of these inscriptions is based on the corpus edition (NIyR V: 56) and verified against the inscriptions *in situ* by the author in November 2017. The overbow (⁀) indicates a bindrune. Parentheses indicate uncertain runes. The name in N 493 is framed by a carved square.

away. In the Nidaros Cathedral inscriptions, we see a different case. Ketill and Erlingr have written their names, and then someone else has added a prayer later on. These second carvers have chosen written, rather than oral, responses. This is very rare, but these inscriptions could nevertheless be read as an indication that it was a well-known practice to pray for inscribed names.

Gravestones in the Latin alphabet are a parallel to this phenomenon. Here, the reader is often explicitly or implicitly requested to pray for the soul of the deceased. For instance, the inscription T33[8] from a gravestone from Nidaros Cathedral reads:

> + IES[VS:DRO // TTIN:HI]MIRIKIS:BLEZCI:SALL:
> BRYNILD(A)R:RANVEIGAR: DOT(T)[O]R: H̄R·IV:ER:HE //
> R:HV[ILIR:OC // GEVE:HENN]E: (Æ)[I](L)IFAN:FAGNAÐ:
> HIMIRIK[I]S:DYRÐ:S(I)NE:FINE:AMEN: // AVE:MARIA[9]
> *Jesus dróttinn himinríkis blezi sál Brynhildar Rannveigar dóttur [...] er hér hvílir ok gefi henni eilífan fagnað í himinríkis dýrð sin fine, amen. Ave Maria.*
>
> Jesus, lord of the kingdom of heaven, bless the soul of Brynhildr Rannveig's daughter [...] who rests here, and give her eternal joy in the glory of the heavenly kingdom, without end. Amen. Ave Maria.[10]

The final Ave Maria here is likely an encouragement for the reader to pray for the soul of Brynhildr (Kleivane 2018: 114). In the Late Middle Ages, everyone were required to know both the Pater Noster and Ave Maria, in addition to the Credo (Kleivane 2020: 215), so writing out the title of the prayer would suffice; the reader would know the rest by heart. We find such explicit requests for prayers on church walls too, where the carver asks the reader to pray either for himself or for the soul

[8] T + number refers to an inscription from the archdiocese from Trondheim. These inscriptions are recently published in Bollaert (2022), and are published with the same numbers in Martin Syrett's edition of Roman alphabet inscriptions from Trondheim (Syrett 2002).

[9] The reading is based on Syrett (2002: 241) and Bollaert (2022 Appendix: 27). Bollaert indicates some more characters as uncertain or missing, and Syrett has supplied a reasonable guess for the missing characters in the first two lines. Both agree on the interpretation. I have kept Syrett's supplied characters and Bollaert's indication of uncertain and missing characters. The inscription runs along the edge of a gravestone, and // indicates where the inscription breaks due to the corners of the stone. Square brackets [] indicate missing characters which are supplied through reasonable guesses or comparison with drawings by Klüwer (see Syrett 2002: 239).

[10] Normalisation and translation from Kleivane (2018: 114).

of another person. One example is found in Talgje Church in Rogaland (N 258), where the priest Eindriði Jónsson asks the reader to pray for him:

> **þessa͡r:runar:reist:eindr͡iþ(i):prest͡r:io͡ns:so͡n:o͡k:b(iþi)t:fyr(i)r:mik**
> *Þessar rúnar reist Eindriði prestr Jónsson, ok biðið fyrir mik.*
> Priest Eindriði Jónsson carved these runes, and pray for me.

This forms a parallel to Ketill and Erlingr's name inscriptions, and it shows how, for some carvers, it did not suffice to carve their name and hope for the best. Eindriði thought it best to write his request out explicitly.

We do not know whether these prayers were always vocal, though in two Norwegian inscriptions (N 227 on a piece of wood from Klepp Church, Rogaland, and N 457 on a gravestone from Skålvoll) the reader is encouraged to sing (*syngja*) for the soul of the deceased. In N 227, the text specifies that the reader should sing the *Pater Noster*, and this may also be implicit in N 457. More common in such encouragements, however, is the verb pray (*biðja*), found in N 258 from Talgje Church, N 264 from Utstein Abbey, N 297 from Hamre Church, N 536 from For Church, and N A222[11] from Ervik. Although the encouragement to pray is just as plain in these inscriptions, it is not clear whether the prayer is expected to be vocalised.

We may see these requests for prayers also in relation to Archbishop Árni's statute from the mid-fourteenth century where he encourages people to say the prayer *Pater Noster* at the graves of relatives and friends before or after attending service or visiting church. In this statute, the verb "say" (ON *segja*) is used, again indicating a vocal response:

> Nu er prestir ey till kirkio komen. edir ey þa en til messo buen. þa stendir uæll at medan þer gangir kring um kirkiuna. gange huar till graftar sins fadhur. modhur. syskina edir frenda oc vina oc seghi þer sina Pater noster. oc gange swa iin i kirkiuna. ellighar geri þet eftir messona før en þeir gangir or kirkiu gardhenum.
>
> Now when the priests have not arrived at the church, or they are not yet ready for mass, then it is fitting that while you [i.e. the public] walk around the church, you should go the graves of your father, mother, siblings or fellows and friends and there say *Pater Noster*, and then you should enter the church. Or you may do

[11] N A + number indicates an unpublished inscription from Norway. Brief details of these inscriptions can be found in the Scandinavian Runic Text Database (2020).

> it after mass before you exit the graveyard. (Archbishop Árni's statute, 1346-49, NGL III: 298).

Just as the relatives could pray at graves, we may presume that people could also pray for named people on the church walls. Here, it is also relevant to mention requiem masses for the souls of the dead on their death day, which the wealthy, in particular, paid for, so that requiem masses would be held every year on their death day. During these masses, prayers would be sung for the soul of the deceased. Individuals who could not afford individual prayers would have been collectively remembered on All Souls' Day and in requiem masses paid for by rich donors (Molland in KLNM XX 1976: cols. 453–457). In these masses, the prayers would be voiced.

Prayers reflecting sound

So far, we have seen how inscriptions may generate prayers. In other instances, we rather see how carved prayers reflect oral prayers. This is the case for the Ave Maria inscriptions, which were well known orally in medieval churches. One example is the Ave Maria inscription found on a door ring from Tønjum Stave Church (N 347). If we look at the runic spelling, we will see that the carver writes the Latin prayer as he has learnt it from listening to it:

> **+hafemariakrasiablenatomiusstekumbenatitausinmulieribusæþbe**
> *Ave Maria gratia plena! Dominus tecum benedicta tu in mulieribus, et be[nedictus ...]*

As argued by Kleivane (2018: 108), the carver does not know the Latin spelling conventions; he is likely not learnt in Latin, and has learnt the prayer orally. When carving the prayer, he implements Old Norse spelling conventions like *f* for intersyllabic *v* in *ave*: He writes **hafe**. He has also doubled the *s* in *dominus tecum* and writes **stecum** (ibid.). Thus, this inscription is, quite literally, a reflection of oral prayers. The inscription's function on this door ring may be didactic, teaching or reminding church goers of the prayer. Moreover, it may also be connected to its liminal position at the entrance, in "the space between what is consecrated and what is not" (Andås 2007: 46). The church entrance is tied to several rituals and is, in itself, rich in symbolism (ibid.).

Another long *Ave Maria* inscription, in fact the longest found on a Norwegian church wall, may also have had a didactic function. This inscription was carved into the wooden wall, visibly located close to the northern nave entrance of Fortun Stave Church, which burnt down in 1992:

auemariagraciabtenadominuslecumbenediclaluinmutie[12]
Ave Maria gratia plena! Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulie[ribus].

This inscription (N 307, NIyR IV: 85–87) is much closer to the Latin spelling. This carver appears not only to have learnt the greeting by heart, but also the Latin spelling conventions. This, in addition to the fact that the carver interchanges the **l** and **t** runes, may indicate that the carver was more versed with Latin than runic script. The inscription was very visible, located close to the northern nave entrance, and its function on this church may have been didactic, teaching those attending mass the prayer in runes, or at least most of it. If so, runes would be the natural choice of script, as that would reach a wider audience.

Mostly, however, the Ave Maria inscriptions are much shorter. In some instances, they may contain only the first three syllables, *Ave Ma…* (N 383 from Borgund Stave Church, fig. 2), or simply *Ave* (N A105 from Bø Old Church, N 343 from Urnes Stave Church) or invoke the Virgin by her name only (N 373 from Borgund Stave Church (fig. 3), N 561 and 562 from Vestre Slidre Church, N 327 from Urnes Stave Church, N 412 from Hopperstad Stave Church, N 484 from Nidaros Cathedral). In these inscriptions, the rune shapes are so simple and condensed that the carvers would not have needed to crack the alphabetic code to be able to understand and use the inscriptions as symbols.

In the runic material (both from churches and in the wider material), the Virgin is by far the most popular recipient of prayers. A few inscriptions mention God, Jesus, and various saints, though the *Maria* inscriptions abound. In total, there are a little over 30 *Maria* inscriptions among the close to 400 church inscriptions. This attests to the popularity of the Virgin Mary and the Mary cult, which was widespread in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages (Johansson, Bekker-Nielsen & Widding in KLNM XI 1966: cols. 352–367), and which can be seen both in artworks and inscriptions on various materials (see e.g. Kjesrud 2018; 2015; Kleivane 2018; 2019; Sidselrud 2000). And, most of all, these inscriptions attest to the popularity of the *Ave Maria* prayer itself, which the carvers would have both learnt by heart and heard time and again in church. Thus, the inscriptions form a visual choir of prayers to the Virgin, reflecting the voiced prayers said and heard in church.

[12] The carver has interchanged the **l** and **t** runes in this inscription. This interchange is quite common as the two runes mirror each other.

Fig. 2: N 383 from Borgund Stave Church. The inscription reads aᵘema, giving the first three syllables of the Ave Maria prayer. Photo by the author.

Fig. 3: N 373 from Borgund Stave Church, showing the name maria. The first three runes are fixed to the same stave. Photo by the author.

Prayers, literacy, and sound

Medieval carvers cannot tell us what they wanted to express through their inscriptions; we may only interpret the textual content of the inscription itself, its context and other inscriptions which may shed light upon it. This poses a problem when we meet non-lexical inscriptions on the church walls, that is, inscriptions where the inscriptions do not have any apparent lexical meaning. Here, we have a context and often nearby inscriptions, though the runes themselves give no definitive answers as

to how the inscriptions should be interpreted. We may assume that the carvers of non-lexical inscriptions were illiterate, and research on the writing of present-day children who have not yet cracked the alphabetic code may therefore shed light on the non-lexical runic inscriptions.[13] Observing how these children write, it is apparent that they often wish to express much more complex ideas through their writing than their abilities allow them to; you do not have to be literate to have a message that you want to convey through writing. Texts written by children who have not yet cracked the alphabetic code will not be legible for anyone unless they have heard the child convey their written message orally, though the texts are still perceived as meaningful by the children themselves (on present-day children's early writing and its inherent meaningfulness, see e.g. Hagtvedt 1988; Hjertås, Fjeldstad & Rygg 2023; Høigård 2019: 205–225; Michelsen 2021: 72–87; Bloodgood 1999). Research on early children's writing is ripe with examples of children's texts where only the children know what they have written. Returning to non-legible runic inscriptions, these are often described in quite derogatory terms, and described as though the carver had no aim with their writing. However, even though medieval illiterate runecarvers cannot tell us what they wrote, I argue that we should assume that non-literate carvers also had a message to convey through their carving. They used their abilities as best they could to convey their message, and we should assume that the ideas behind these inscriptions may be quite complex, even though the carved expressions are not.

One could object that an illiterate adult carver is likely to have a greater understanding of his/her own lacking writing competence than what a child has. However, in a society where the overall literacy was vastly lower than today, the understanding of what literacy was may also have looked very different from today. The church inscriptions include a considerable proportion of inscriptions which carry no apparent lexical meaning, and we must either assume that these were meaningful to the carver, or that carvers used the church walls for training their runic skills.[14] I argue that the first alternative is the more likely. This view is supported both by the evidence of

[13] The present article is not the first to compare contemporary children's writing with runic inscriptions. See also Hagland & Lorentzen 1997; Söderberg & Larsson 1993: 67–71; Olofsson 2008.

[14] In addition, a few could be uncracked cryptic runic messages. K. Jonas Nordby has done a considerable effort in cracking runic codes, also on church walls, though some more uncracked codes may still exist (2018: 77–89). For instance, several uninterpreted inscriptions start with an invitation to interpret the runes (Nordby 2018: 78–82). The inscriptions most likely to be codes do, however, look quite different from those most likely to have been carved by illiterate carvers. As writing runic code requires highly skilled carvers, the runes in coded inscriptions will also likely be neat, and it will often be possible to see some sort of systematic features (ibid.: 82–83).

present-day illiterate children's writing, which is essentially meaningful to the child, our knowledge of the medieval view of church buildings as sacred spaces, and by the vast majority of inscriptions with lexical meanings, which clearly relate to the church as a sacred space.[15]

Elise Kleivane (2018) has argued that even non-literate people living in the Middle Ages would have been able to recognise a runic or alphabetic Ave Maria by sight, and that they knew the apt response, for instance if the Ave Maria was carved into a gravestone. A gravestone has diverse aids for the reader, not least iconographic ones. You do not have to be literate to recognise the shape of the gravestone or the picture of the Virgin Mary with Christ on her lap.

However, carvers, who were able to recognise the shape of the runes in Ave Maria, would probably also be able to reproduce these rune forms. A question is, then: What effect did Ave Maria have on a church wall without a name added to it? We could propose that these inscriptions simply echo the oral prayers from inside the church, making the ephemeral oral prayers eternal, carved in stone or wood. However, these carvers, carving Ave Maria, may have had more complex ideas behind their inscriptions than they were able to express in writing. Through carving the prayer on the wall, they would, in a sense, reach out to people to take part in the practice of praying and being prayed for. And even though their names were not present in their inscriptions, they did, perhaps, hope that later readers would say an Ave Maria for them as well. Evoking Ave Maria, or simply the name Maria, could perhaps also have had an apotropaic function, or the carver may simply have had a vague idea that carving the prayer would be the right thing to do, or lead to something good. Whatever their intentions, these inscriptions are clearly a form of interaction with the prayer culture and with the church fabric itself.

When looking at the shorter inscriptions, this form of carved interaction with the prayer culture is a widespread phenomenon. The material of Maria inscriptions ranges from the long inscriptions, which are few in number, to shorter versions with the first few words of the prayers, such as N 383, *Ave Ma…*, from Borgund Stave Church, seen in fig. 2. In addition, we also have inscriptions which are likely to be references to the Virgin Mary, for instance two similar inscriptions saying **mai** in Dale Church in Luster (N 310 + 311). These shorter inscriptions may have been

[15] For a discussion on parallel inscriptions on a different material, see also Marco Bianchi's discussion of non-lexical inscriptions on rune stones from Uppland and Södermanland in Sweden (2010: 165–222). Although the texts on these stones are illegible, they adhere to the textual conventions of runestones in general and use the same semiotic resources (Bianchi 2010: 221).

carved by illiterate carvers, remembering the name or prayer in runes as an image, rather than as a denotation of sound.

We also have a group of inscriptions termed "same-stave runes", where an entire word, typically a name, is merged in one complex rune, a monogram. The name Mary is the most commonly found version of these same-stave runes, found in the stave churches Torpo (fig. 4), Lom, Øye, and Høre, as well as in the stone church of Vestre Slidre. Geographically, all five churches are located in central parts of Southeastern Norway, high up in the three valleys Ottadalen (Lom), Valdres (Øye, Høre, Vestre Slidre), and Hallingdalen (Torpo). There are few of these inscriptions in the corpus of church inscriptions, and there is also a dispute over whether they should be understood as monograms at all. The monograms, except from the one from Vestre Slidre, were discovered by Magnus Olsen, and are discussed in the relevant volumes of NIyR, though in a review of NIyR, Anders Bæksted (1944: 265) has questioned Olsen's readings, suggesting that they are rather personal marks. Since Bæksted published his remarks, however, several new bind-runes have been discovered, including

Fig. 4: N 115 from Torpo Stave Church, showing a same-stave rune with the maria monogram, where all runes are fixed to the same stave. The r is mirrored, so that the twig on the lefthand side functions both as the twig in the r- and the a-runes. The a-rune should be read twice. Photo by the author.

both Maria monograms and other names. For instance, the name Arni occurs three times on the church walls of Byneset Old Church.[16]

The monogram from Vestre Slidre was discovered by Johs. Sivesind in 1952 (Sivesind 1958: 320), and in addition, several Maria monograms on artefacts have been unearthed in archaeological excavations in Greenland (Imer 2017). Therefore, there can be no doubt that several medieval rune carvers experimented with runic monograms, and that monograms of the name Maria were by far the most popular monograms to be carved.

Moreover, there is a clear qualitative distinction between the personal marks found in churches and these monograms. While personal marks are usually carved with a knife, and much more deeply into the surface than what is common for runic inscriptions, all the Maria monograms are particularly shallow; the monograms from Høre, Torpo and Lom seem to be pressed into the wood, rather than carved with a knife. The carver may, for instance, have used his or her fingernail for carving. I have visited all five churches personally to study these monograms, and indeed, the runes are very shallow and almost impossible to see – so much so that I sometimes wondered whether I saw them at all, or simply imagined them. It is, therefore, impressive that Olsen managed to find these inscriptions, though the surfaces of these inscriptions may have deteriorated slightly in the time that has passed between Olsen's visits to these churches and mine.

Among the personal marks, we also find marks similar to the monograms, and this could indicate that the monogram was well known and was passed on even after literacy in runes decreased. We also have other Mary references among the personal marks. In fact, an A+M monogram (fig. 5) is the most commonly found personal mark in the reference material of Tuve Skånberg's extensive study of personal marks (Skånberg 2003), collected from across Northern Europe. According to Tuve Skånberg, this particular mark may also be seen as a combination of *alpha* and *omega*, thus being a reference to Jesus, so its popularity may be due to its double reference to both Jesus and Mary. Skånberg's material also has several marks which are exclusively referencing Mary, or the prayer Ave Maria, attesting that references to the Virgin were immensely popular. These marks may also be found at church walls, e.g. in Borgund, Hopperstad and the Nidaros Cathedral. Here, I assume that they are meant to have a similar function to the runic Mary-inscriptions.

In the inscriptions discussed in this last section of the article, the relationship between inscriptions and sound is gradually vaguer for each category of inscriptions.

[16] These inscriptions are not published, though they are discussed in reports stored in the Runic Archives (Seim 2005; Holmqvist 2019).

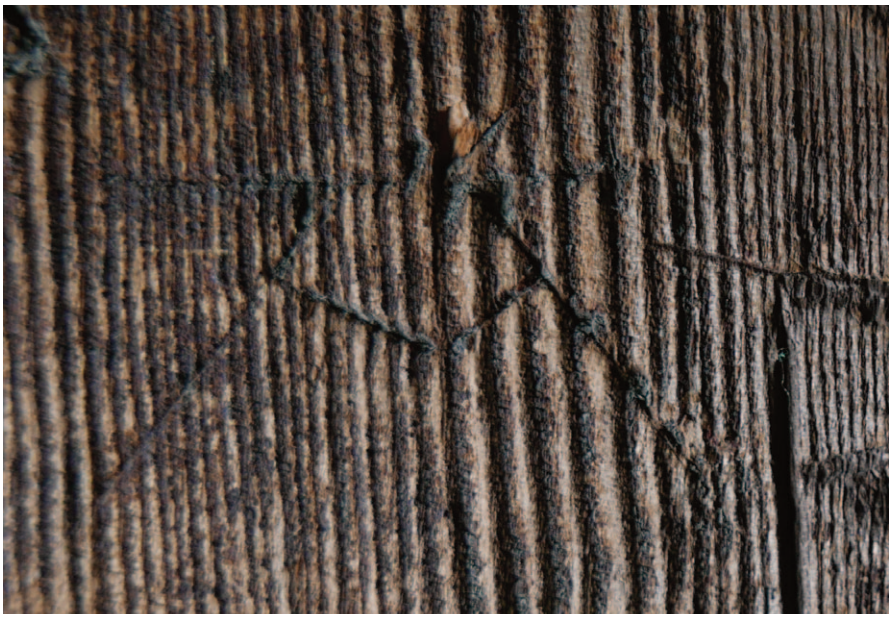

Fig. 5: Personal mark based on an A+M monogram, found in Borgund Stave Church. Photo by Johan Bollaert.

While the illiterate rune carver of e.g. the **mai** inscriptions from Dale Church (N 310 + 311) was seemingly able to identify some of the sounds in *Maria* and convert these sounds to runes, the carvers of runic monograms – and maybe even some of the *Maria* inscriptions – may have carved their inscriptions from a visual memory only, without a full understanding of the relationship between phonemes and graphemes in writing. However, the runic monograms – although possible to remember as symbols, still contain all the rune shapes of the name *Maria* and thus preserve the necessary graphemes for reading the name. In the final category, of personal marks, even this connection is lost. The marks are no longer verbal texts; they are symbols which may even hold several connotations at once, such as the A+M monogram which may be connected both to *Ave Maria* and *Alpha et Omega*. Nevertheless, the extensive use of this particular mark, and others which are also likely references to the Virgin, may bear witness to a continued Mary cult and the popularity of the *Ave Maria* prayer. Thus, although the direct connection to sound is lost, the marks may still evoke oral or silent prayers.

Conclusion

Prayer inscriptions in churches relate to the church soundscape in several ways. They may both reflect sound and evoke sound, in the sense that inscriptions may spur its readers to pray – vocally or silently. But even silent prayers will be heard – by the reader's inner ear. Carving and reading inscriptions may also evoke audible sound in the process where the carver carves and the reader reads, particularly if the carvers or readers are untrained and use their full attention at connecting phonemes and graphemes, encoding or decoding the inscription. And prayers may reflect sound quite literally, as the carver often carved by ear. This is particularly visible where the carvers carve Latin prayers that they know from listening; through their spelling, we may see how the carvers have analysed the sounds of the Latin words that they heard. Prayers may also reflect the church soundscape in a less direct sense, as they may be read as testimonies of popular prayers, where *Ave Maria* is by far the most commonly cited prayer. This could be seen as an indication of *Ave Maria*'s popularity also as an oral prayer. Even inscriptions, which are closer to symbols than to verbal texts, such as monograms and personal marks, attest to the continuing popularity of the Virgin and her prayer. So, to conclude, our medieval church walls, though silent to the ear, do talk. And if we listen with our eyes, this "visual soundscape" talks with hundreds of voices. They talk of names not to be forgotten, and they pray. And most of all, they pray and call to the Virgin mother.

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The Animal Heard

Soundscapes, sound-making, and animal-human relations in medieval Iceland

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The sounds of animals were key soundmarks in the agro-pastoral landscapes of medieval Iceland. The *Íslendingasögur* contain a number of episodes centred around the sound-making of domestic animals and the effects of listening to them. Drawing on a range of sources including saga literature, the archaeology of Viking age Iceland, and modern studies of animal behaviour and human-animal relations, it is suggested that such narratives may have developed from stories about how to work with animals used for teaching within communities. The article also recognises that animal and animal-like sounds have the potential to destabilise both the perceived safety of the house and the concept of the human-animal divide.

Introduction

The agro-pastoral communities of medieval Iceland lived within distinct soundscapes. Alongside the keynotes of wind, waterfalls, rivers, and the sea, these communities would have been constituted by the sounds of domestic animals: the lowing of cattle, snuffling of pigs, bleating of sheep and goats, whinnying of horses, and barking of dogs, as well as the sounds of birdlife and rodents. The presence of animals in medieval texts were rooted in experiences of being with them: experiences grounded in both hearing and listening that generated stories with both oral and aural roots.[1] This

[1] While the current author believes the animal-human interactions in these texts are rooted in aural experiences and oral storytelling, animals would not have been included in this storytelling tradition unless they were useful and entertaining parts of the narratives. The use of animals as methods of telling stories, and especially conveying a meaningful message echoes continental and classical fable traditions (Salisbury 1996; Heide 2022). The animal-sound episodes discussed in this chapter seem likewise to show animals as teachers, although here the focus is on interaction with the human and learning about the animal, rather than the animal interacting as a humanlike character revealing something about the human.

article seeks to understand which animal sounds are given narrative importance in the *Íslendingasögur* and what purposes these sounds appear to serve, both within and without the texts. At the same time, it asks why humans making animal-sounds appears as a repeated motif in these sagas, and whether animal-sound-making and human imitation of such are related in a wider context of understanding domestic animals. I will first discuss examples of animal sound-making and human understanding, before showing how the imitation of domestic animals we find in two sagas (*Njáls saga* and *Heiðarvíga saga*) draw on these animal episodes. I will finally focus on the house as a central figure in all the episodes discussed, and suggest that the location of the hearing, as well as the act that is heard, establish these episodes as teachable moments in embodied narratives.

Soundscapes and medieval Iceland

In Old Norse scholarship, discussion of soundscapes and the sounds of animals has been limited, and often focussed on birds, dogs, and wild animals.[2] The sounds of livestock animals are often absent from discussions of these texts, aside from analysis of descriptions of berserkers bellowing like bulls – yet on reading the *Íslendingasögur* specifically, it becomes clear that the sounds of livestock permeate and direct many more of the narratives than previously considered.[3] The *Íslendingasögur* are texts that were compiled in medieval Iceland from the thirteenth century onwards, but the narratives tell stories of Viking age Icelanders: their lives, their trials and tribulations, and their animals and farms. With their roots in oral narratives of earlier communities but compiled at a time of increasingly fluctuating climatic conditions and husbandry changes, these texts show how medieval Icelanders engaged with the past, retelling and recreating stories of humans, animals and their interactions with environments in a way that can be considered folkloric. The sagas both preserve and reshape tales with meanings that were necessarily of value to medieval compilers.[4] This article focuses on the *Íslendingasögur* because of their rooted nature in the Icelandic past and landscape.

[2] Rohrbach 2009; Bourns 2012; 2017: 225, 241; Evans Tang 2021; Bourns 2021a; Evans Tang 2022; 2023.

[3] While a greater number of publications on sound and animals are available for Old English texts, the focus still rests primarily on birds, following a pattern seemingly common across medieval studies: Gorst 2010; Steel 2010; Poole & Lacey 2014; Stanton 2015; Lacey 2016; Warren 2016; Stanton 2018; Warren 2018; Hooke and Bintley 2019; see Lewis 2022 for a comprehensive introduction to general work on medieval literature and sound.

[4] Cormack 2007; Hermann 2013; Lethbridge & Hartman 2016; Jesch 2018; Evans Tang 2022: 3–4; Evans Tang & Milek forthcoming.

Soundscapes are vibrant parts of living and storytelling in the past. The developing field of auditory archaeology, and subsequent rise in publications on sensory archaeology, emphasise that acoustic information is a key part of experience in the past, and that both sense of place and social relations within communities are formed in part from relationships between the human (and animal) body, acoustic information, and places.[5] In particular, any culture involving animal herding will rely on communication between humans and animals, manifested through music, song, and poetry, as well as engagement with the sounds of animals themselves, and the sounds of their interaction with landscape.[6] For our purposes, it is therefore important to recognise that the aural signatures of communities are key to unravelling the tangled web of interrelations between humans, their animals, and their places of interaction. The sounds, or noise, of the natural environment (for example rain, thunder, wind, waves) may be affected by the change of seasons or climate and form an ecological code for a community in a landscape (Krause & Farina 2016; Farina 2017). The sounds of livestock in early Iceland would likewise have formed part of this ecological code. This is not to say that these sonic phenomena in the landscape should be dismissed as background noise. Rather they are the sounds of living in a place, and, especially for communities working with the land and its inhabitants, would have made up a vital component of the knowledge required to survive and prosper in a specific environment. The sounds of animals, the environment, and the interaction of both may add the authenticity of the earwitness to saga narratives, but they also lie at the centre of their narrative episodes, conveying meaning to the characters and the audience through their similarity to the real-world soundscapes and animals with which those consuming these stories would be familiar.[7] Reviews of herding or farming practices, both in modern factory farms and traditional reindeer herding emphasise the vital importance of attending to animal sounds, on both a herd and individual level, for protection and welfare interests (Sara 2009; Olczak et al. 2023). It is therefore shortsighted to ignore the narrative responses and reactions to aural signatures that we find in stories in which animals feature.

The sounds of animals may have even acted like soundmarks, standing out in the soundscape and defining a farm or community (see Schafer 1993). The placenames in a community would absorb an aural quality: for example, a place called *sauðadalr* (sheep-valley), while referring to a valley in which sheep were kept, would have inevitably become a valley where sheep were heard, as the presence of the animal is in-

[5] Scarre 2006; Mills 2010; 2014; Hoaen 2019; Nyland 2019; Skeates & Day 2019.

[6] Ivarsdotter 2004; Sara 2009; Yoon 2018; Dettmann 2019.

[7] For the idea of the earwitness, see: Schafer 1993.

extricable from the sound of the animal.[8] In preliterate societies, the aural can be said to have precedence over the visual, and in oral storytelling, from which many of the saga narratives have their roots, the sounds of environments and actions play important roles (Schafer 1993; Hooke & Bintley 2019). A distinction should be made however, between a passive act of hearing and active, competent listening – that is of being actively open to the reception of sounds as well as able to understand what it is one is hearing (Pancer 2017: 434). In the *Íslendingasögur*, there is a distinction between those characters who hear the sounds of animals, and those who hear, listen, understand, and react correctly. As will be demonstrated in the following discussion, the misunderstanding of animal sounds often leads to death.

Animal Sound-Making in the *Íslendingasögur*

As part of the Cohabiting with Vikings project, a database was compiled of over 100 texts from across the Norse world, including sagas, poetry, laws, and travel accounts. All references to animals and their interactions with humans were tagged, resulting in over 10,500 references that can now be searched and queried. If these references are filtered by communication or sound, we find that the *Íslendingasögur* contain some of the noisiest animals across the corpus of Old Norse texts (only outstripped by the eddic poetry in terms of number of references to animal sound-making). Of the references to animal vocalisation in the *Íslendingasögur*, the references are overwhelmingly to the noises of cattle, with dogs also well represented (see Fig. 1).

Animal bodies are inherently noisy: the acts of eating, of being milked, of communicating with peers and humans, of moving and fighting, all generate noise. The sounds of animals therefore would be familiar to any who lived near and worked with them. In the *Íslendingasögur*, such intimacy seems most identified with cattle, and the range of words used to describe the sound-making of cattle are more extensive than any other animal in the *Íslendingasögur* (see Fig. 2).[9] Appropriately, discussion of the bull Glæsir from *Eyrbyggja saga*, makes up a large part of the discussion below, but the following sections also investigate the sound-making of four other animals from the *Íslendingasögur*: Sámr the dog (*Njáls saga*), Freyfaxi the horse (*Hrafnkels saga*) and Mókolla and Hǫsmagi the sheep (*Grettis saga*). It will consider the specific

[8] The sounds of animals were not experienced in a vacuum, and Poole and Lacey argue convincingly for the importance of aurality in bird place names in Early Medieval England (2014: 405) – although the relatively smaller sizes of birds than, for example, sheep, would mean that sound was likely a larger indicator for avian species than for the larger domestic herd animals, who would have been more visually prominent in the landscape.

[9] For a deeper discussion of human-cattle relations in early Iceland, see Evans Tang & Milek forthcoming.

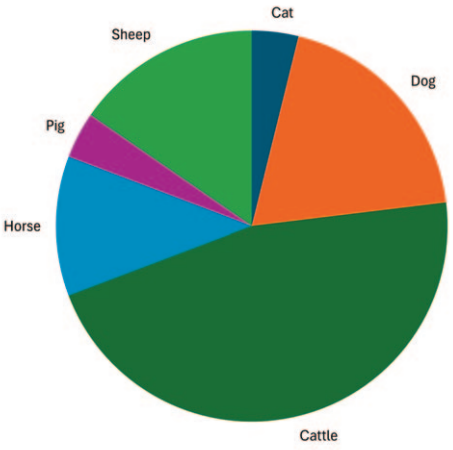

Fig. 1 Animal vocalising in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders.

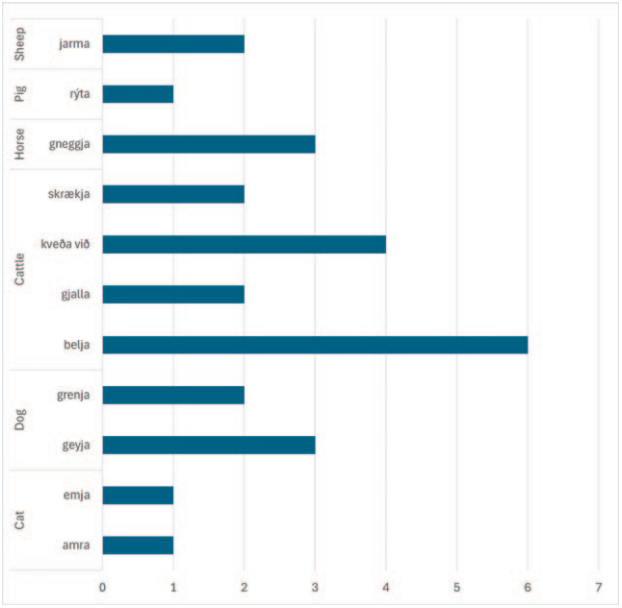

Fig. 2 Animal vocalisation words in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders.

sounds made by these animals, the place and reception of the sound-making, and finally the outcome, perception, and meaning of such noises, especially in relation to two episodes of humans making animal sounds.

The cry of Sámr the dog is a suitable place to begin this discussion (see also the article by Eriksen in this special issue). Perhaps the most famous of all sounds made by animals in the *Íslendingasögur*, the cry of Sámr at his moment of death is notably not described as barking using *geyja* (to bark) but with *kveða við* (to cry out), a term used primarily for human speech, yet notably features in two of the animal episodes discussed here. Before analysing his death cry, we must first consider the nature of Sámr in life. This is a dog whose ability to listen and respond to human communication is emphasised, in a way otherwise seen in Freyfaxi the horse (discussed below). At his first introduction in the saga, Sámr's original owner, Ólafr, gifts him to Gunnarr with the words *Nú skaltú Gunnari fylgja ok vera honum slíkr sem þú mátt* ("Now you must accompany Gunnarr and be to him such as you are able") and *Sámr gekk þegar at Gunnari ok lagðisk niðr fyrir fœtr honum* (goes at once to Gunnarr and lays himself down at his feet) (*Njáls saga*, p. 173).[10] Later, the relationship between Sámr and his new owner, or human partner, is shown to be one of mutual understanding. When Sámr is killed we are told that *hundrinn kvað við hátt, svá at þat þótti með ódœmum* (the dog cried out loudly so that it seemed to them unprecedented) (*Njáls saga*, pp. 185–186). Gunnarr hears the cry from within the house, wakes, and is immediately warned of the impending attack. The note by the saga compiler that the cry of Sámr is unprecedented deserves further examination, and it must be highlighted that the cry seems unprecedented only to the listeners outside the house who have killed the dog. To Gunnarr, the cry is simply Sámr doing the expected, offering both a warning and a call to arms: *Gunnarr vaknaði í skálanum ok mælti: "Sárt ertú leikinn Sámr fóstri, ok búð svá sé til ætlat, at skammt skyli okkar í meðal"* (Gunnarr woke in the hall and said: "Painfully are you played with Sámr foster-kin, and it may be intended that a short time should be between us-two") (*Njáls saga*, p. 186). This episode strongly emphasises the difference between the two sets of men. The attackers can barely believe their ears, while Gunnarr knows exactly what the cry of his dog means.

Medieval philosophers were intensely interested in the question of sound and especially animal sounds.[11] One of the points of these debates rested on whether the meanings of these sounds were supplied by the emitter of the sound, such as intentionally indicating distress or joy, or the listener, who would interpret the sound based on human expectations (Eco et al. 1989: 8). The bark of the dog was especially de-

[10] All translations are the author's own unless otherwise specified.

[11] See Eco et al. 1989 for a comprehensive overview of the different scholastic debates.

bated: for Aquinas, the intentional way animals had of indicating such emotions was akin to the speech of man, but the bark rested halfway between intentional articulate speech and meaningless noise (Eco et al. 1989: 8). For Abelard, the bark of a dog had both intention and interpretation, and the interpretation of it would vary based on the listener's experience and circumstance – for example, a bark heard from far away would simply indicate the presence of a dog in a certain place; whereas if this bark is heard by someone who knows the dog, or is in close quarters with them, the interpretation may be more specific as to intention or meaning (Eco et al. 1989: 15). Perhaps most pertinent, Roger Bacon acknowledged that a man with training will understand animals, and that the understanding of the meaning of animal sounds can be learnt (Eco et al. 1989: 19–20). The question of learning the meaning of animal sounds raises further questions, as to who is doing the teaching, and what recognition of mutual learning is given. The twelfth-century history of the Danes, *Gesta Danorum* shows the emotions and inner lives of animals were recognised as things advantageous to understand, and heavily linked with their expression of sounds. In this text, we hear how a man receives "the most authoritative human wisdom" after a magical meal, which includes "understanding the speech of wild animals and cattle" so that he is able to "interpret the way animal noises conveyed sense and indicated particular feelings" (Saxo V.2.8).[12] In *Njáls saga*, the recognition of emotion, feeling, and intention, behind the cry of the dog sets Gunnarr apart as a man who understands the sounds of animals – or at least this one. Such men are marked out in the *Íslendingasögur*, although not always in positive ways.

As mentioned above, the verbal phrase *kveða við* is also used for the bull, Glæsir in *Eyrbyggja saga*, and like the cry of Sámr, the cry of the bull is interpreted differently by different listeners.

Glæsir's relationship to sound-making and place is key in his story. As a calf, Glæsir is brought into the *stofa* (living room) of the house, and it is said *kvað hann við hátt* (he cried out loudly) while bound on the floor, and *þá kvað kálfrinn við í annat sinn* (then the calf cried out a second time), after an old woman in the house objects to the cry, interpreting it as a *trolls læti* (a troll's sound) (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 171). It is not necessarily the specific nature of Glæsir's cry that marks the sound out as trollish,

[12] The understanding of animals (in this case birds) is also credited to the consumption of particular food in *Vǫlsunga saga* and eddic poetry, in which Sigurðr tastes the blood of Fáfnir and understands the speech of birds as a result. See Bourns 2021b: 213 for further discussion of this motif. The episode from *Gesta Danorum* is the only text in which understanding a domestic animal (cattle) is found, although Guðrún in *Guðrúnarkviða I* seems to have some sort of communication with her geese, and the prose introduction to the poem relates how she also tasted of Fáfnir's heart (*Guðrúnarkviða I*, pp. 331, 329).

as the old woman once again labels the bull monstrous once he has grown and has started to bellow (*belja*):

> Kálfr þessi óx dagvǫxtum, svá at um várit, er kálfar váru út látnir, þá var hann eigi minni en þeir, er alnir váru á ǫndverðum vetri; hann hljóp mikit í tǫðunni, er hann kom út, ok beljaði hátt, sem griðungr gylli, svá at gǫrla heyrði í hús inn. Þá mælti kerlingin:...Þat var þó, at trollit var eigi drepit" (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 172).

> This calf grew day-by-day, so that in the spring, when the calves were let out to graze, he was no smaller than those born in the first part of winter. When he was out, he ran much in the homefield, and bellowed loudly, like a bellowing bull, so that he was clearly heard in the house. Then the old woman said: "It seems the troll was not killed".

While the bull has moved from within the house to outside, his vocalisation is clearly heard within the building. The old woman's designation of his trollish nature does not seem reliant on the nature of the sound-making, except perhaps that he begins to bellow far sooner than the other calves, and therefore the timing of the sound is the issue. Indeed, the act of vocalising in an unexpected context, specifically bellowing, causes humans to be also labelled transgressive: bellowing like a bull is an act ascribed to berserkers (Bourns 2017: 225; 2021a: 644; Dale 2021: 26, 41–47). However, it might be that the fear of Glæsir's bellowing is rooted in the old woman's lack of familiarity with bulls. Vocalisation is a specific feature of grown bulls, but not all early Icelandic farms may have kept them, and so the seemingly incessant noise of this animal taken by the old woman to be trollish, may simply show the sound of a bull at a farm not used to keeping one (McCooey 2017: 87).

Bourns has suggested that the story of Glæsir is a perversion of the natural order, where the bull moves from domestic to wild in stages as he grows up (Bourns 2021a: 636). I find it fascinating then that this potential movement seems characterised both by movements in space (from house, to homefield, to eventual wild), but also by changes in sound:

> Þá er Glæsir var fjǫgurra vetra gamall, gekk hann eigi undan konum, bǫrnum eða ungmennum, en ef karlar gengu at honum, reigðisk hann við ok lét ótrúliga, en gekk undan þeim í þraut. Þat var einn dag, er Glæsir kom heim á stǫðul, at hann gall ákafliga hátt, at svá gǫrla heyrði inn í húsin, sem hjá væri (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 172–173).

> When Glæsir was four-winters old, he went away from the women, children and young men, and if old men went to him, he showed his displeasure and made threatening noises, and eventually escaped from them. One day, when Glæsir came home to the milking-pen he screamed vehemently loudly, so that he was fully heard in the houses that were nearby.

As Glæsir ages then, he moves from bellowing to screaming, accompanied by a change in body language. Where once Glæsir had been the friendliest and calmest of animals to have around the milking pen and the homefield, he has now changed, and his final vocalisation of the story is yet another change: to a *skræk mikinn* (great shriek) (*Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 175; Evans Tang 2022: 200–202). These changes in sound and behaviour, while seeming to show a movement from tame to wild, may show the result of ignoring specific markers in the animal. Bulls were dangerous animals, and careful attention needed to be paid to their temperament and behaviour (Bouissou et al. 2001: 116; Moran & Doyle 2015: 53, 45). The escalation of the noise, from crying out, to bellowing, to shrieking may also be read as communicating increasing stress or pain, which when ignored may explain his later violent behaviour. As a result of this change in behaviour, the householder and the bull fight – and the householder is killed. Evidently listening and responding to animals correctly was vital for secure animal-human relationships on the farm.

An example of a man who understands the sound of his horse, and who can make himself understood to him is Hrafnkell in *Hrafnkels saga*. Hrafnkell is the owner of a beloved horse, Freyfaxi, with whom he is depicted as having a relationship of mutual understanding. Hrafnkell vows early in the saga that no one should ride Freyfaxi without his permission; when a man Hrafnkell hires to watch his sheep does so, and after being ridden hard all day in search of sheep, the horse has a dramatic, noisy, response:

> Hestrinn hleypr ofan eptir dalnum ok nemr eigi stað, fyrri en hann kemr á Aðalból. Þá sat Hrafnkell yfir borðum. Ok er hestrinn kemr fyrir dyrr, hneggjaði hann þá hátt. Hrafnkell mælti við eina konu, þá sem þjónaði fyrir borðinu, at hon skyldi fara til duranna, því at hross hneggjaði, – "ok þótti mér líkt vera gnegg Freyfaxa." Hon gengr fram í dyrrnar ok sér Freyfaxa mjǫk ókræsiligan. Hon sagði Hrafnkeli, at Freyfaxi var fyrir durum úti, mjǫk óþokkuligr. "Hvat mun garprinn vilja, er hann er heim kominn?" segir Hrafnkell. "Eigi mun þat góðu gegna." Síðan gekk hann út ok sér Freyfaxa ok mælti við hann: "Illa þykki mér, at þú ert þann veg til gǫrr, fóstri minn, en heima hafðir þú vit þitt, er þú sagðir mér til, ok skal þessa

> hefnt verða. Far þú til liðs þíns." En hann gekk þegar upp eptir dalnum til stóðs sins (*Hrafnkels saga*, p. 104).
>
> The horse ran down into the valley and stopped at no place before he came to Aðalból, where Hrafnkell sat at the table. And when the horse came in front of the door, then he neighed loudly. Hrafnkell said to a woman who served him at the table, that she should go to the door, because a horse neighed, "and it seemed to me likely to be the neighing of Freyfaxi." She went to the door and saw Freyfaxi in a very poor state. She said to Hrafnkell that Freyfaxi was outside the door, greatly ill-favoured. "What will the bold one want, that he has come home?" said Hrafnkell. "It will signify nothing good." Then he went outside and saw Freyfaxi and said to him: "Bad it seems to me, that you have been treated in this way, my foster-kin; but you had your wits about you when you told this to me, and this shall be avenged. You should go to your followers." And Freyfaxi went from there up into the valley to his stud-mares.

In this episode, Freyfaxi seems to report his mistreatment at the hands of the shepherd to his human partner, and likewise understands Hrafnkell's request for him to return to his herd.[13] The similarity in response between Gunnarr and Hrafnkell at these moments of animal sound-making cannot, and indeed has not been ignored, but what has yet to attract attention is the specific act of hearing, and hearing within the house (Bourns 2021a: n. 7; Evans Tang 2022: 142–159). Like Gunnarr and the men and women in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Hrafnkell first hears the animal from inside the house, recognises the sound of the individual animal, and notably responds promptly – and accurately – to the noise. As the episodes of human imitation of animals discussed below will suggest, the hearing of animal sounds outside comes with an expectation of a human response from within the house.

Understanding of animal sounds can also be a skill that is gained over time – and the depiction of the development of this as a result of close animal-human interactions can be found in *Grettis saga*:

> En ær mókollótt var þar með dilki, sú er honum þótti mest afbragð í vera fyrir vaxtar sakar. Var honum forvitni á at taka dilkinn, ok svá gerði hann ok skar síðan dilkinn; [...]. En er Mókolla missti dilks síns, fór hon upp á skála Grettis hverja nótt ok jarmaði, svá at hann mátti enga nótt sofa; þess iðraðisk hann mest, er hann hafði dilkinn skorit, fyrir ónáðum hennar (*Grettis saga*, p. 200).

[13] For a further discussion of Freyfaxi as a legal actor, see Evans Tang & Ruiter 2023.

> But a ewe with a dusky head was there with a sucking-lamb, and that ewe seemed to him most excellent with respect to stature. It was to him a matter of curiosity to take the lamb, and so he did and afterwards slaughtered the lamb; […]. But when Mókolla missed her lamb, she went up onto the hut of Grettir each night and bleated, so that he was not able to sleep at night; this he repented most, that he had slaughtered the lamb, because of her disturbances.

Here the saga compiler depicts a ewe so distraught by the loss of her lamb, that she will not allow Grettir to sleep by continuously bleating at him. While Grettir's childhood was characterised by a deliberate desire to disassociate from and disfigure animals, he is shown to be capable of learning (Poole 2004: 11; Ranković 2009: 798; Evans Tang 2021; 2022: 164–178). At this point in the saga, an outlaw and alone, Grettir is depicted as understanding both the reasoning for the ewe's vocalisation and potentially feeling sorry for the animal as well as for himself (Evans Tang 2022: 177). Once again, we see the animal, makeshift house, and human in a relationship tied up by the sound of the animal.

The sound-making of sheep returns to Grettir just before his final fight on the island of Drangey:

> Svá er sagt, at þá er Grettir hafði tvá vetr verit í Drangey, þá hǫfðu þeir skorit flest allt sauðfé þat, sem þar hafði verit; en einn hrút létu þeir lifa, svá at getit sé; hann var hǫsmǫgóttr at lit ok hyrndr mjǫk. At honum hendu þeir mikit gaman, því at hann var svá spakr, at hann stóð fyrir úti ok rann eptir þeim, þar sem þeir gengu. Hann gekk heim til skála á kveldin ok gneri hornum sínum við hurðina (*Grettis saga*, p. 237).

> So, it is said, that when Grettir had been two winters on Drangey, then they had slaughtered almost all the sheep that had been there; but they let one ram live, as is spoken of; he was grey-bellied and greatly horned. They took great delight in him because he was so calm, and he stood outside of the door and ran after them as they walked there. He went home to the hut in the evening and rubbed his horns against the door.

This ram, named Hǫsmagi by Grettir's younger brother in a later episode, does not speak with a voice or vocal expression, but rather uses his body to make his sound, rubbing his horns against the door. The sound is explicitly highlighted in Grettir's final fight, when Grettir and Illugi hear knocking on the door, and Illugi quips: *Knýr*

Hǫsmagi hurð, bróðir (Hǫsmagi knocks on the door, brother) (*Grettis saga*, p. 359). Except, this time it is not the sheep but their enemies, who eventually enter the house via the roof and kill Grettir. It is possible that the men outside the house are attempting to imitate the familiar actions of the ram, and that Illugi's comment, rather than an attempt at gallows humour likening the knocking of enemies to the friendly sheep, is indeed an honest mistake, and the men outside have successful imitated their target.

Human-animal sound-making

The recognition of embodied animal sounds, and the ability of men to successfully imitate these is found elsewhere in the *Íslendingasögur*, in episodes from *Njáls saga* and *Heiðarvíga saga* in which men imitate the embodied sound-making of animals to influence those within the house. It seems, from the episodes discussed above, that the human hearing the animal outside from within the house was a key part of these mini-narratives; so much so, that other storytellers could play with this motif for dramatic effect. In *Heiðarvíga saga*, in an aim to lure a man out of bed and into an ambush, Snorri goði gives the instruction to pull at the grass of the turf house *líka sem hestr bíti* (like a horse might graze) (*Heiðarvíga saga*, p. 248). The sound is heard and understood as horses by the intended target, and while the man inside the house twice gives the order of driving the horses away to a boy, both times the lad falls asleep. Only the third time he hears the noise does the man get up and investigate, leading to his ambush and death:

> Þorsteinn vaknar ok kallar til smalapiltsins ok segir, hann muni of skammt hafa rekit hestana frá í gærkveldi, ok skuli hann fara at reka pá. [...] Enn heyrir Þorsteinn, at eitthvat nagar þekjuna, kallar aptr til piltsins, en hann sofnar aptr. Ferr þá Þorsteinn á fætr út at forvitnask um þetta [...] Í því bili hlaupa þeir Snorri at honum (*Heiðarvíga saga*, p. 248).

> Thorstein wakes and calls to the sheep-boy and says, he must have driven the horses only a short distance away the evening before, and he should go drive them away. [...] Again, Þorsteinn hears that something gnaws on the roof, calls again to the boy, but he again sleeps. Then Þorsteinn gets up and goes out to investigate [...] In that moment Snorri and his men leapt at him.

While it might be said that the laziness of the boy contributes to his householder's demise, it is also the misunderstanding of the noise that does so. A similar event occurs in *Njáls saga*, in which Skarpheðinn Njálsson successfully imitates the sound of a grazing sheep:

> Skarpheðinn hleypr á hús upp ok reytti gras, ok ætluðu þeir, er inni váru, at fénaðr væri. Tók Starkaðr ok Þorgeirr, vápn sín ok klæði ok fóru út ok hljópu upp um garðinn; en er Starkaðr sá Skarpheðinn, hræddisk hann ok vildi aptr snúa. Skarpheðinn høggr hann við garðinum (*Njáls saga*, p. 195).
>
> Skarpheðinn leapt up on the house and pulled at the grass, and those who were inside thought that it was the animals. Starkaðr and Þorgeirr took their weapons and clothes, went out and leapt up over the wall; and when Starkaðr saw Skarpheðinn he was afraid and wanted to turn back. Skarpheðinn struck him by the wall.

Skarpheðinn and Högni have just completed an attack at a farm in which they effectively utilised the sound of actual animals (driving livestock down towards the farm and ambushing the men when they came out to shoo the animals away), but this second attack is more emphatically focussed on the embodied act of sound-making.[14] This episode explicitly connects the sound of Skarpheðinn's action with the reaction of the men inside the house: the hypervigilance of the men inside, listening out for any disturbance, leads them to their deaths – and yet, had they been able to properly distinguish between animal and human-animal sounds, they may have not fallen for the trick. Evidently, Skarpheðinn's understanding of animal sound-making is too good, and the imitation is performed perfectly.

Listening from within the house

Stories of animal-human interactions, animal sound-making and human imitation of such would have held additional layers of meaning to those who lived and worked with animals; and so, these episodes prompt the question: why is hearing the animal in these texts so exclusively presented as an inner-house experience? Soundscapes play a formative role in how places, persons, and interactions are remembered across the landscape, so why do these episodes focus so closely on the farm? Perhaps because this is where the activity happens: both in terms of the saga narrative and everyday life. Living on a medieval farm would have been a noisy affair, and the farm area a place of intense activity involving humans, things, and animals.

The animal and human places could be very closely entangled on early Icelandic farms. Take for example, Sveigakot: an early farm in Mývatnsveit in the north of Iceland. Figure 3 shows the plan of the farm, with structure S7, a multi-functional

[14] *Njáls saga*, p. 195. For a more detailed discussion of this episode, see Evans Tang forthcoming.

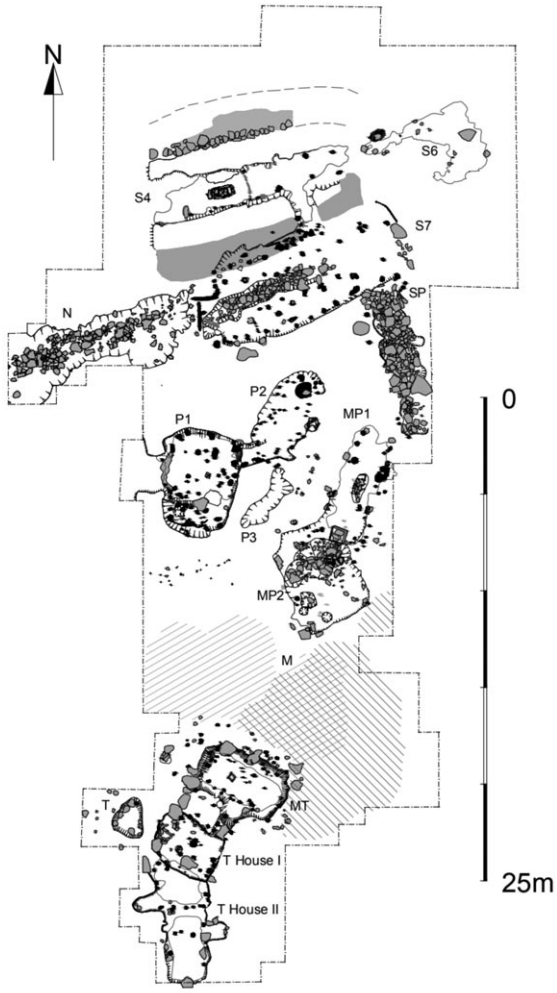

Fig. 3 Site plan of the Viking-age (and medieval) site at Sveigakot. The building labelled S7 is a multi-functional building likely used both for animal-stalling and storage and variously for other purposes such as metal-working. The structures labelled P1, MP1 and MP2 were likely used as human dwellings, with P2 interpreted as an outside activity area. Image provided by and used with permission from Orri Vésteinsson.

animal byre and workspace the largest structure in the earliest phases of the site, before the construction of a later longhouse-style dwelling S4 adjacent to the ruins of the byre.[15]

Around S7 are a cluster of human dwellings (including P1), closely connected both by walkways and line of sight to this animal structure (Evans Tang 2022: 83–84, 86–87, 89–100). This is a site at which, at least in its earlier phases, encountering and hearing animals would have been unavoidable: the byre was a multi-purpose building in which humans and animals would have regularly and meaningfully mixed, with further possible evidence of pig-keeping around these buildings.[16] While Sveigakot is only one possible formation of a Viking age farm, it offers a glimpse into the possible entanglements of sounds and sights between humans and animals in such places. The structures of farms did change over time (as mentioned above, at Sveigakot dramatically so, see also Evans Tang 2022: 96), and the animals with whom relationships were built would have changed too, as numbers of sheep increased, and goats and pigs declined; nonetheless, the importance of animal care remained, and animals were unlikely to have been far enough away to exclude their sound-making from the farm site.[17] Variation in farm organisation is evident even in the sagas, with byres and animals placed at varying distances from the farmhouse. While no saga seems to explicitly depict an arrangement of animals and humans in the same living space, the descriptions in *Valla-Ljóts saga* (p. 250) and *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (p. 53) of there being *innangengt* (a thoroughfare) from within the byre, may suggest either a conjoined house and byre, or a passage house (*ganghús*) of the type that develops in later medieval Iceland (Evans Tang & Milek forthcoming; Vidal 2013: 102). In *Gísla saga* the byre is explicitly set in opposition to the *mannhús* (human dwelling area). The designation of human space in this way may have been especially important when an animal space (byre) was so close.

As highlighted above, the sagas, compiled in manuscripts from the thirteenth century onwards, are not products of the Viking age, but the stories they are telling are recreating their own Viking age pasts for the entertainment of the medieval audience – and perhaps their education. The representation of the house as a place of listening

[15] More examples of entangled human and animal spaces can be seen in the houses at Aðalstræti and Hrísbrú. See Evans Tang & Milek forthcoming.

[16] It is also possible that the farm at Vatnsfjörður organised itself in such a way as to balance the noises of animal-keeping, with the suggested byres placed at opposite ends of the farm site with their entrances looking outwards. See Evans Tang 2022: 87–88, 89–100.

[17] See Evans Tang 2022: 89–100 for further discussion of the effect on farm organisation on animal-human relationships and the transition from Viking age to medieval farms in Iceland.

in the *Íslendingasögur* should be considered intrinsic to such stories: this is where animals were heard, and would continue to be heard, and these stories tell us why *listening* within the house, not just hearing, was important. These sagas would likely have been told within the house, and therefore the focus on hearing animals from inside places may have been a trope that held educational meaning and significance for the listeners – listeners both to the narrative and to the sounds of the farm outside. Such an activity may have been especially significant in times of darkness. In the Icelandic winter, with many hours of daytime darkness, the need to be acutely attuned to the sounds of animals would have been vital. In the house, out of sight of your animals, would have been when humans needed to be listening the hardest.

Rather than being a safe place, being within the house, and therefore having your sense of sight restricted, makes you vulnerable in the *Íslendingasögur*. Gunnarr keeps having to expose himself to get a clear shot when his enemies are attacking him; and houses can be surrounded, deconstructed, and even burned.[18] Furthermore, the human is vulnerable in more ways than one. While the placement of the listener within the house and the animal without might seem to act as a dividing line between animal and human space, such a dichotomy is blurred by the permeability of the turf-house. Rather than being a secure, human haven from the animal space of the outside, the houses and shelters in these texts let the sound in, and in places even seem to serve as conduits, amplifying the sounds of animals and animal-like sounds. Likewise, the stability of the category 'human' is rendered fragile by the ability of the human to imitate the animal so successfully, disrupting the safety of an animal-human boundary in the body, as well as in the built environment. Given the vulnerability associated with such circumstances, it is unsurprising then that these episodes of animals and animal-like sounds being heard within the house are fraught with risk. Sámr's cry is the result of an attack and prefigures the destruction of Gunnarr and his house; Freyfaxi's neighing reports a crime but leads to death and exile for his human partner; Glæsir's bellowing leads to the death of the householder, Hǫsmagi's knocking foreshadows the invasion of Grettir's hut, and human imitation of grazing animals leads to ambush and manslaughter. Only Mókolla's bleating seems relieved from imminent danger, although it is an episode that may have had a more introspective effect on Grettir's psyche: a reminder that animals were persons with emotions too.

Conclusions

It is clear in these narrative episodes that the human voice is not the only sound to which one should listen, and a cultural understanding of animals allows us to more

[18] For an analysis of Gunnarr's death scene see, Evans Tang 2023.

thoroughly understand the sounds woven into these texts. Men failing to correctly interpret animal sound-making leads to problems, and multispecies mutual understanding of sounds is presented as perfectly possible. These episodes clearly acknowledge the agency or intention of the dog, cattle, horse, and sheep to alert humans to a specific act or circumstance; how the humans acted was up to them. But what is clear, is that these noisy animals are subjects of their narratives, requiring attention to be paid to them. The example of Sámr and his *manns vit* (human understanding) (*Njáls saga*, p. 173), shows that human understanding was not reliant on the capacity for human speech. These animals may not have had human words, but they were depicted as capable of intelligent and emotional communication in various ways.

For medieval Icelandic audiences, whose lives were entangled with the sounds of the farm, the cry of the bull, the bleat of the sheep and the neigh of the horse were recognisable, knowable sounds, so the inclusion of these in the *Íslendingasögur* may have helped to keep the stories engaging and alive. But everyday sounds were meaningful and understanding them was necessary. In showing the value of understanding animal communication – and the risks of misunderstanding it – the retelling and inclusion of these episodes may have had an educational, or at least cautionary angle. Stories are a useful technique in passing knowledge from one generation to the next, or between experienced farmworkers and those new to a role. I would not say that these sagas should necessarily be considered as consciously partaking in such a regime of knowledge sharing, but the stories behind them may have been, and show a society invested in caring for their animals and in training others – perhaps children – in this work. It should be noted however, that the compilers of the *Íslendingasögur* did not always see experienced human-animal interactions behind these narratives, with stories of animal sound-making sometimes placed into supernatural or paranormal contexts.[19]

Teaching through stories is a plausible act for a preliterate society such as early Iceland, as stories would form around animals and the places in which animals and humans interacted, then be passed on (Hadjielias et al. 2021: 280; Evans Tang 2022: 212). Such stories are most likely to be told about animals with whom work was undertaken, or with whom the closest intimacy was experienced; and these would likewise be the animals for whom such teachings were especially valuable: the horse, the canine companion, the ewe with lamb, or the potentially dangerous bull or ram. Stories about animals were likely to be retold across generations because people who work with animals talk about them, with the purpose both of entertainment and of

[19] For example, Glæsir is labelled trollish, and Freyfaxi is described as half-dedicated to Freyr, a divine association that is taken by some to explain his behaviour; see Miller 2017.

knowledge sharing within families and communities, facilitating interpretations of past actions, and guiding future ones (White & Meehan 1993: 31; Campbell 2009: 244).

We may therefore rethink the animal episodes in these sagas and the animal subjects at their centre, not just as background, or ways to show character or plot development in human stories, but as parts of stories actively for those caring for animals. Episodes such as the those discussed above seem to centre the animal experience and provide advice around how to practise good animal care, and at their core show animal-human interactions that recognise the importance of listening to animals, working with animal agency, prioritising animal knowledge, and benefitting from mutual interspecies learning, especially around animal suffering and the correct reading of animal behaviour.

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Sound, Voice, Speech – and Silence – in Old Norse Culture and Ecology

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The main aim of this article is to study the relationship between various types of sounds, voices, and speeches, as described in Old Norse literature, and more specifically to investigate what sounds fill the presumed silence when humans chose not to speak. Using the three-partite sonic system, as presented in the so-called Second and Third Old Norse Grammatical Treatises as a starting point, the article moves on to deploy the theoretical framework of embodied, embedded, extended and enacted cognition (4E cognition) as a structural scaffolding for the analysis. Examples from various translated and indigenous Old Norse text show that the lack of human speech is usually complemented by the sounds and effects of human actions, their body language, the tools they use, as well as the sounds of natural, supernatural, and divine agencies. The article offers a new understanding of the integral value and symbolism of human silence in Old Norse literature and culture, thus highlighting its significance in an ecology that otherwise abounds with a rich variety of sounds and voices.

Medieval rhetorical discourse includes explicit discussions of the nature of sounds and voices, based on the work of such authors as Donatus and Priscian, among others.[1] These discussions exist also in the Old Norse context, and more specifically in two of the four Old Norse grammatical Treatises, namely *The Second Grammatical Treatise* (SGT) and *The Third Grammatical Treatise* (TGT). The latter of these is attributed to the skald and scholar Ólafr Þórðarson hvítaskáld, who was closely affiliated to two other famous writers and historians, namely Snorri Sturluson and Sturla Þorðarson.[2] As explicated in detail in the introductory article of this special issue, the SGT states that sound is everything that can be heard and distinguishes between inarticulate sound produced by the natural elements (water, sea, rocks, earth) and music

[1] See Boynton 2016, which is reviewed in greater detail in the introduction of the special issue.

[2] For *The Second Grammatical Treatise*, see Raschellà 1982. For *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, see Finnur Jónsson 1924.

(referred to as *hljóð*); the sounds made by birds and animals that are unintelligible to most men (referred to as *rǫdd*, voice); and men's speech, which is referred to as sound (*hljóð*), voice (*rǫdd*), and speech (*mál*). The latter is deeply embodied; it is closely related to breath and the use of the tongue and lips. It is contingent on cognitive faculties as reason and memory, and it is intelligible and articulate. Ólafr's TGT describes a similar categorization of sounds, but with some further nuances: sounds can be produced by alive and lifeless entities. The sounds produced by lifeless entities include sounds made by the elements, as well as music, possibly referring to the sounds made by instruments. Some of the entities that are alive do not have consciousness/reason (plants, trees, etc) but they may still have a voice (*rǫdd*). Humans, on the other hand, can produce bodily sounds (clapping their hands or stamping their feet), or meaningful but inarticulate sounds such as crying or sighing, and they have meaningful, articulate, and writable voices through their speech. The latter category, just as explained in the SGT, is both embodied, as it demands the use of the lungs, the tongue, the lips and the ears, but it is also contingent on cognitive faculties, such as reason, wit, consciousness (*vit*) and understanding (*skyn*). The final aspect of the sound-system described in the TGT is that some of the sounds, such as music, are classified as heavenly and celestial harmony (*cælestis armonia*; *himnesk hljóða-grein*). Further, in the very beginning, the TGT mentions spiritual sounds, related to the holy scripture, even though this category is not explained any further (Finnur Jónsson 1927: 22).

In short, the SGT and the TGT propose a three-partite hierarchical sonic system incorporating sounds, voices, and human speech, depending on the degree of liveliness of the agent, the availability of consciousness/wit, and the mode of bodily and cognitive engagement. These sounds, voices and speeches provide the aural dimension of a universe and an ecology, comprising of humans; natural elements, plants, and animals; things and musical instruments; and heavenly energies.

The main aim of this article is to discuss these concepts not as part of a hierarchy, but in relation to each other, by investigating what sounds and voices fill in the 'void' caused by the lack of human speech, as articulated in Old Norse literature.[3] The lack of human speech will in this article be referred to as silence (for the sake of convenience). Silence and pauses in speeches have certainly been acknowledged as significant, meaningful, and integral to human articulate communication.[4] When discussing

[3] My focus will be on voluntary silence or a choice not to speak, and not on the lack of ability to speak. For a discussion of the latter theme, in conjunction with other disabilities, such as deafness, see Tirosh 2020. On the use of silence as a literary device to reveal the consequences of enforced silence in three Icelandic sagas, see Aune 2015.

[4] See work on sign-language for example Ziolkowski 2010; Bruce 2007; see also the Introduction of the special issue.

sound and silence, it is relevant to note that the Old Norse word *hjlóð*, has the double meaning of (1) silence, hearing (*biðja/kveðja sér hjóðs*, meaning 'to beg/ask for a hearing'), and (2) sound, musical sound, tune. This, in itself, legitimates this investigation of the relationship between sound/voice and silence. Therefore, here I will discuss what happens during presumed silences, i.e. when humans chose not to speak. How is this silence articulated and described in Old Norse texts: Does the narrator explain that a person is silent, or is the silence *shown* and *filled in* by some other communicative expression? As prompted by the grammatical treatises, the relationship between sounds, voices and speeches will be studied not only within a human cultural context, but also within its integral ecology and cosmology.

Old Norse literature of various genres is especially suitable for investigating the articulation of silence (i.e. the lack of speech) because when compared to Latin, French and English texts, Old Norse texts are known for their characteristic style of brevity of expression, understatements, and reduction or even exclusion of elaborate and detailed descriptions of psychological and emotional states. In other words, at first glance, Old Norse culture seems more silent. The Old Norse eddic poem *Hávamál*, containing many proverbs and words of wisdom, includes a clear recommendation on the topic of silence, str. 6–7:

At hyggjandi sinni skylit maðr hrœsinn vera, heldr gætinn at geði; þá er horskr ok þǫgull kømr heimisgarða til, sjaldan verðr víti vǫrum; þvíat óbrigðra vin fær maðr aldregi en manvit mikit. Inn vari gestr, er til verðar kømr, þunnu hljóði þegir, eyrum hlýðir en augum skoðar; svá nýsisk fróðra hverr fyrir. (*The Poetic Edda*, ed. Pettit, p. 80)	One shouldn't be boastful of one's brains, but rather be reserved of mind; when a wise and reticent man comes to homesteads, misfortune seldom befalls the wary; for one never gets a more unfailing friend than great common sense. The cautious guest, when he comes to a meal, is silent with strained hearing; he listens with his ears and looks with his eyes; so every wise man spies things out before himself. (*The Poetic Edda*, trans. Pettit, p. 81)

These two strophes illustrate clearly *Hávamál*'s, and traditional Old Norse attitudes towards silence: it is related to wisdom and integrity.[5] This legitimates a study of the role and the sound of silence within the Old Norse cultural context, as it has the potential to reveal different ideologies concerning the relationship between articulate voices as opposed to inarticulate sounds in medieval culture.

Before we start, three comments on method: First, in order to juxtapose the Old Norse material to the European, the study will encompass both original Old Norse

[5] See McKinnell (2014) for a further discussion of silence in *Hávamál*.

texts and translations. This comparison will reveal how European perceptions of voice, sound, and silence are adapted to Old Norse literature, culture, and ecology.[6] Further, even though many Old Norse texts are preserved exclusively in younger manuscripts, in this article, the texts will be studied as text-works translated and written down during the thirteenth century, reflecting various attitudes to sound, voice, speech – and silence – in the Old Norse literary context as a whole. The two grammatical treatises providing the theoretical explications on sound were written and are preserved from this same cultural context, and even though I will not be looking for direct parallels or discrepancies between the grammatical and literary sources, it is significant that they circulated and were known in the same cultural context. It may be expected that different literary genres may reveal different attitudes to speech and silence, and in the context of this article, it is this variety of sound-cultures that I am particularly interested in. Even though not all genres can be studied in detail in this context, texts from different genres are intentionally read in juxtaposition to each other.

Second, the analysis of the articulation of silence in Old Norse literature will be pursued by tracking both explicit *mentioning* of silence, but also implicit *showing* of silence. As human cognition is embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended (4E cognition),[7] communication involves not only the exchange of words that can be heard, but also non-verbal body-language that must be seen or experienced or felt by the body; enacted responses and behavior; movement in and engagement with the cultural and natural environment; usage of various objects and tools. In other words, even if people are silent verbally and no speech can be heard, they may still communicate and thus fill the silence with many different types of audible or visual responses. The combination of silence and other embodied or enacted reactions is what forms and conveys the full meaning of the discourse. Because of the importance of all these aspects of human cognition for our understanding of the meaning of voiced and silent communication, they will be used as a structuring scaffolding of the analysis in this article. The examples of sounds or communication will be grouped depending on whether they are expressed through action (enacted cognition), or through the body (embodied cognition), through the use of various objects or tools (extended cognition), or in dialogue with nature (embedded cognition). As discussed in the introductory article of the special issue, embodied, enacted, extended and embedded

[6] Various recent posthumanistic and ecocritical studies focus on the sounds produced by animals, other non-human and supernatural beings. For references, see the introductory article in this special issue.

[7] See Newen, DeBruin & Gallagher 2018; see also the introductory article of this special issue.

aspects of communication, in addition to verbal and voiced utterances, were central in many medieval rituals and contexts, such as in the liturgy, or in monastic institutions where sign language was used extensively, or during any other medieval performances. The aim here is to review how Old Norse literature describes what silence, i.e. the lack of human speech, may have sounded and looked like, and what it may have meant in various communicative contexts, as described in Old Norse literature.[8]

This takes us to the third comment on the methodology: in the introductory article of the special issue, we discussed sound on intra- and extradiegetic levels. In this article, the focus will be on intradiegetic level, as we will study the sound of silence as conveyed in literary sources. Nonetheless, it will be relevant to discuss whether different modes of articulating silence in literature may also reveal different attitudes and degrees of appreciation of voiced vs silent communication in Old Norse culture.

Action speaks louder than words

The first category of silent communication, *shown* through enacted engagement, may be exemplified, firstly, with an episode from *Breta sögur*, which is the translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. Geoffrey's Latin text is the oldest version of the story about King Leir and his three daughters, that is later used also by Shakespeare. The story demonstrates well that it is not words, but actions and appropriate behavior that matter most in a relationship. The moral of the story is the same in both the Old Norse and the Latin version, but the articulation is different. To start with the Old Norse version: When time comes for the king to divide his inheritance between his three daughters, he asks them all how much they love him. While two of his daughters express their love for him through elaborate verbal explications, they betray him later on. The third daughter, Cordeilla, is much more moderate in her verbalization of love. She is not completely quiet, but she answers with few words and moderately:

> hvat ma dott*ir* v*n*u foðor sínvm meira en sva sem sœm*ir* ok sva vil ek þer vnna se*m* bezt sam*ir* at goð dott*ir* vn*n*i goðv*m* foðvr *ok* sva mik*it* gott se*m* ek ma þ*at* vil ek þ*er* vn*n*a. (*Breta sögur/ Hauksbók*, eds. Eiríkur & Finnur Jónsson, p. 249)

[8] Important references to existing studies of the episodes will be included in the footnotes, but the focus in these is most often on emotions, embodiment, or embeddedness, and not silence as such. The aim of the article is not an all-inclusive coverage, but some additional examples will also be given in the footnotes.

> How can a daughter love her father more than that which is granted? Therefore, I shall love you so far as it is befitting that a good daughter loves a good father, and I will love you as much as I can. (*Breta sögur*, ed. and trans. Black, pp. 24–25)

Cordeilla's statement promotes moderation in terms of verbal excess, as well as appropriateness between behavior and response to the behavior: one gets what is befitting. Despite this relatively moderate statement, later she demonstrates her absolute and unconditional loyalty and love for her father when he needs her (*Breta sögur*, ed. and trans. Black, p. 29), unlike the two other daughters who have declared unconditional love but betray him. This episode promotes the significance of demonstrating one's own standpoint and emotions through one's actions, rather than communicating them through 'empty' words.

This episode appears in book 2 of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, where the content of Cordeilla's honest answer is the same, but it is longer and its verbosity is greater:

> Est uspiam, pater mi, filia quae patrem suum plus quam patrem praesumat diligere? Non reor equidem ullam esse quae hoc fateri audeat nisi iocosis uerbis ueritatem celare nitatur. Nempe ego dilexi te semper ut patrem et adhuc a proposito meo non diuertor. Et si ex me magis extorquere insistis, audi certitudinem amoris quem aduersum te habeo et interrogationibus tuis finem impone. Etenim quantum habes tantum uales tantumque te diligo.
>
> Father, is there any daughter who would presume to love her father more than a father? As far as I am concerned, no one would dare to say that, unless she were trying to conceal the truth with playful words. Certainly, I have always loved you as a father, and will not be diverted from that course now. If you persist in trying to get more out of me, hear the true love I bear you and put an end to your questions: you are worth what you have, and that much I love you. (Geoffrey of Monmouth, Book Two, pp. 38-39).

The moral of the answer is the same, but a comparison between the Latin and the Old Norse passage highlights the significance of silence in Old Norse culture in two different ways. First, the Old Norse translator literally silences the character, by making her speech shorter and less elaborate. As saying goes, action speaks louder than words, but such translating strategies make the enacted responses speak even louder. Second, the shortness of the speech in the Old Norse version allows for it to be read

as a meta-comment that argues for the negative value of excessive speech and conversely promotes the positive value of integrity, silence and appropriate action, not unlike the Eddic poem *Hávamál*.[9]

From the indigenous Old Norse corpus, *Njáls saga* presents us with a communicative episode, which even though not entirely void of verbal-exchange, is nonetheless fully understood through its enactment of radical and fatal actions. Chapter 48 of the saga includes the episode where Gunnarr hits his wife Hallgerðr because he is suspicious that she is serving food that has been stolen. When he asks where the food is from, she answers arrogantly and tells him that it is not his duty to worry about food and cooking. Her actions, probably in combination with her words, trigger his unfortunate verbal and enacted response – '*Illa er þá, ef ek em þjófsnautr,'– ok lýstr hana kinnhest* (*Njáls saga*, p. 124) (It is a bad thing if I'm a partner to a thief' – and he slapped her on the face.) (*Njál's saga*, trans. Robert Cook, p. 57) The saga relates that she answers him, but her speech is not given in direct form, unlike his speech: *Hon kvazk þann hest muna skyldu ok launa, ef hon mætti* (*Njáls saga*, p. 124) (She said that she was going to remember this and to repay him for the deed, if she could.) (*Njál's saga*, trans. Robert Cook, p. 57) There and then, the evening continues, and the couple hosts their guests, even though some of the food was stolen.

Much later, Gunnarr is in a precarious situation, when he is attacked by many of his enemies in his own house and the string of his bow gets destroyed, jeopardizing his ability to protect himself (ch. 77). His wife and mother are in the house with him, and he reaches out to his wife Hallgerðr for help:

> 'Fá mér leppa tvá ór hári þinu, og snúið þit móðir mín saman til bogastrengs mér.' 'Liggr þér nǫkkut við?' segir hon. 'Líf mitt liggr við,' segir hann, 'því at þeir munu mik aldri fá sóttan meðan ek kem boganum við.' 'Þá skal ek nú', segir hon, 'muna þér kinnhestinn, ok hirði ek aldri hvárt þú verr þik lengr eða skemr.' (*Njáls saga*, ch. 77, p. 189)

> 'Give me two locks of your hair and you and my mother can make a bow's string for me.' 'Does anything depend on this?' [she asks.] 'My life depends on this,' he says, 'as they will never manage to harm me as long as I can use my bow.' 'I will

[9] Other examples from Old Norse translations may be given from *Pamphilus saga*, which thematizes the verbalization of feelings, and other enacted methods when words do not work, such as tricks and manipulation. For a discussion, see Eriksen 2024, ch. 7.

> now,' she says, 'remind you of the slap you gave me, and I don't care if you manage to defend you for a long or a short time.' (*Njál's saga*, trans. Robert Cook, ch. 77)

Hallgerðr's response is here given in direct speech (unlike in the previous exchange), which emphasizes its vocality and audibility. In addition, it contains much more than the words she says as it also includes her choice not to help her husband and, in this way, to facilitate his death. This enacted response belongs to the discourse they had earlier in the saga about the appropriateness of serving stolen food, which ended with him slapping her. In other words, Gunnarr's enacted cognition (his slap) is responded to by Hallgerðr through her own enacted communication (refusal to help her husband). Interestingly, even though she responds to his deed with a deed, her response is complemented by one of the famous one-liners, so typical of the genre: 'I will now remind you of the slap you gave me.' Even though she is not completely silent, the brevity of her verbal answer gives the central-stage position to the enacted response. The saga literature is full of examples of this kind, and their commonness may also be seen as an explanation for the changes and adaptations made in translations, such as *Breta sögur*, where a verbal exchange was reduced to the minimum, while an enacted response was promoted as more efficient and important.

Silence and embodied response

The next couple of examples reveal how bodily reactions are important means of communication, even when literary characters are silent and speech-less. In these cases, it is people's bodies that communicate their feelings and thoughts instead of their words. In *Ívens saga*, which is the Old Norse translation of Chrétien de Troye's romance *Yvain*, there is a scene, when Laudine, the lady of the so-called Red Knight in the French version, sees her dead partner after Yvain has wounded and killed him. The Old Norse saga tells us that *hún syrgði ok æpti sinn harm; stundum fell hún í óvit* (she mourned and moaned loudly in her grief; now and then she fell into a swoon) (*Ívens saga*, pp. 50–51). The verb *at æpa* means 'to scream, to yell,' but in this case, she is not screaming words, but she is rather wailing and moaning, mourning audibly, but inarticulately, i.e. without speaking words. The saga adds that she occasionally grabs her own neck and attempts to kill herself, thus adding on to the gravity and desperation of Laudine's embodied response to the sight of her dead husband.[10]

The Old French version is a bit more extensive, as expected, but a significant difference for us here is that she is even more dramatic in her embodied reaction, and

[10] For other discussions of the emotionality of this episode, see Sif Rikhardsdottir 2017: ch. 1, pp. 25–56.

not least, she is not as inarticulate as the lady in the Old Norse version. The first part of the grieving scene is described as follows:

> Mais de duel faire estoit si fole
> C'a poi que'ele ne s'ochioit.
> A la feÿe s'escrioit
> Si haut qu'ele ne pooit plus,
> Si recheoit pasmee jus.
> Et quant ele estoit relevee,
> Aussi comme femme desvee
> S'i commenchoit a deschirer,
> Et ses chaveus a detirer.
> Ses chaveus tire et ront ses dras,
> Et se repasme a chascun pas,
> Ne riens ne le puet conforter. (lines 1,150–161)

> But she was so crazed with grief that she was on the verge of killing herself. All at once she cried out as loudly as she could and fell down in a faint. When she was lifted back to her feet, she began clawing at herself and tearing out her hair like a madwoman;
> her hands grabbed and ripped her clothing and she fainted with every step. Nothingcould comfort her. (*Arthurian Romance*, p. 309)

In this version, the lady also grieves so vehemently that she gets exhausted of her own wailing, she faints, and when she recovers, her torments continue, she rips her clothes in pieces, she pulls her own hair, until she faints again; but her pain is never relieved, nonetheless. Sif Rikhardsdottir has argued that one reason for the intensity of the scene in the Old French version may have been that mourning was meant to be a public social performance to a much greater degree than in the Old Norse context, where the description of the embodied reaction is more subdued (Sif Rikhardsdottir 2017a: 41–42). Further, Chrétien's text includes more details about the later stages of her grieving. After the knights is buried, 'she remained all alone, frequently grasping her throat, wriggling her hands and striking her palms, as she read her psalms from a psalter illuminated with gilded letters' (Chretien de Troyes, p. 312). The embodied mourning is a lot alike the reactions described in the Old Norse version, with the exception of one element: reading of the psalms in the Old French version is a clear distinction from the Old Norse version, where such activity is not

included in the grieving process. Even though it is not made explicit whether the reading of the psalter is voiced or silent and inwardly, it is certainly a different form of expression that is verbal and articulate, clearly connected to textuality and spirituality and thus reminding much more of the concept of speech and voice, rather than sound. Audible or not, the reading of the psalter in the Old French version is omitted in the Old Norse version, where the mourning entails only inarticulate moaning, wailing and strangling-attempts. As in the example from *Breta sögur*, the silencing of articulate communication emphasizes and gives even greater priority to the meaning and significance of the embodied response.

Silent but embodied responses are numerous in the Icelandic sagas too. *Egils saga* includes the famous episode when Egill goes to the court of king Aðalsteinn of England after his friend Þórólfr has been killed by the king's troops. Egill enters the hall, sits in the high seat facing the king, casts his shield before his feet but keeps his helmet on his head, holds his sword across his knees and occasionally draws it partly out, and then clashes it back into the sheath (*en þá skelldi hann aftr í slíðrin*). He sits upright, with his head bent forward. This silent but stark and unavoidable physical presence is made even more visual by a detailed description of Egill and his body:

> Egill var mikilleitr, ennibreiðr, brúnamikill, nefit ekki langt, en ákafliga digrt, granstœðit vítt ok langt, hakan breið furðuliga, ok svá allt um kjálkana, hálsdigr ok herðimikill, svá at þat brá frá því, sem aðrir menn váru, harðleitr ok grimmligr, þá er hann var reiðr; hann var vel í vexti ok hverjum manni hæri, úlfgrátt hárit ok þykkt ok varð snimma skǫllóttr. (*Egils saga*, ÍF, ch. 55, p. 143)

> Egil was large-featured, broad of forehead, with large eyebrows, a nose not long but very thick, lips wide and long, chin exceeding broad, as was all about the jaws; thick-necked was he, and big-shouldered beyond other men, hard-featured, and grim when angry. He was well-made, more than commonly tall, had hair wolf-gray and thick, but became early bald. (*Egil's saga*, ch. 55, p. 100).

This description effectively zooms in on Egill's physical and embodied presence and response. By focusing on his visual appearance, the author/narrator stages a pause in his narrative – the series of actions is interrupted by a descriptive sequence that stresses Egill's visual and embodied presence. After this narrative pause through such a poignant and detailed portrayal of Egill's body, the saga continues: Egill sits there, and he drags one of his eyebrows down towards the cheek and the other up to the roots of the hair. Many scholars have pointed out how this episode reveals the em-

bodied nature of Egill's emotionality. What is more important for us here is that he is not only emotional in his embodiment, but that this embodiment is also silent. He does not speak, nor does he drink, even when the drinking horn is passed by him. In other words, he does not participate in any verbal or social discourse but imposes his own silent presence onto the scene and defines the discourse in this embodied and silent way, by simply twitching his eyebrows up and down.

Even though no words are exchanged, the king seems to read Egill's embodied response quite well; he knows why Egill is there, namely, to get compensation for his friend's death. The king takes off a silver arm-ring from his own arm and sends it over to Egill with the help of his sword. Egill takes it and puts it on his own arm. He is still silent, but the saga tells us that now his brows go back to their natural place. After that, he puts down his sword and his helmet and returns to regular social participation. He starts drinking and most significantly for us here, breaks his embodied silent and inarticulate response with highly articulate words: he recites a verse and starts talking to the people around him. This is a prime example of embodied silent response, of which there are plenty in the sagas. [11] The example demonstrates that embodied silent responses were acknowledged as a legitimate way to respond in Old Norse culture. In the episode discussed above, the narrator's 'words' and focus on Egill's physical appearance and presence strengthen the validity of his embodied response. Such attitudes toward the meaning and weight of inarticulate embodied response may explain the changes in the description of Laudine's emotional response in the translations of *Yvain*, from embodied but also articulate and spiritual to simply embodied.

[11] Another episode that reveals Egill's embodied emotionality is his reaction to the news about the death of his own son Þǫðvarr. ch. 81. He gathers the corpse, buries him in the family burial mound and then hides away in his room and in his bed. Once again, the saga states explicitly that no one dared to demand to speak to him. For a discussion of this episode, including the fact that much of the scene is enacted in silence, see Sif Rikhardsdottir 2017b: 77–78. Egill is also silent when he is lovesick and longs for Ásgerðr; once again he does not talk but expresses his emotions through embodied reactions. Another illuminating example of the power of silence, combined with embodied reaction, to express emotional pain may be given from *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, when Þórðr skáld Kolbeinsson tells his own wife Oddný about the death of the man that she was supposed to marry, Björn. She turns silent, gets sick, and looses her desire to live. The only activity that calms her down is to sit on the back of her horse, and to be dragged back and forward by her husband (ch. 33). On other examples of embodied emotionality in Old Norse literature, see Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir 2023; on grief, from gender perspective, in various Old Norse texts, see Mills 2014; on body language in medieval Iceland, see Wolf 2013.

Extended cognition and the communicative agency of things

The episode discussed above, when Egill was playing with his own sword, pulling it out and clashing it back in, draws the attention to the third aspect of sound in this study, namely the sound made by and with things, instead of verbal speech and communication. From the translated corpus, an example of this mode of communication may be given from *Möttuls saga*, a translation of the Old French *Le Lai du cort mantel* (*Le mantel mautaillié*). This is the story of the magic mantle that is brought to the court of king Arthur and that 'tells' whether and how women have been unchaste and/or unfaithful. The mantle, in this case, is an extended element of the women's cognition and morals, and 'speaks' their truth even when they are silent.[12]

In the Old Norse story, the mantle is described as having been made by an elf-woman with such great and inconceivable skill that nobody understands how it is made. It is embroidered in gold in a beautiful pattern of leaves, a magic charm (*galdr*) is woven into it by the elf-woman, it is made with a specific craft (*list*) and sewn with her special powers (*kraptr*). It is this combination of a charm, craft and power woven in the mantle that makes it possible for the mantle to reveal the misdeeds of every maiden. In Old Norse, *galdr* means magic song, charm, witchcraft, or sorcery, possibly corresponding to Latin *incantatio*; *incantamentum*. Further, it is often used in expressions referring to vocalization – *kvedja galdr*, *segja galdr*, *gala galdr*, meaning 'to put/ to say a spell'. This suggests that the mantel does more than simply show; it magically 'speaks/tells' the truths of the one it is put on. The mantle would also tell different things depending not only on whether but also how a maiden had sinned. In the saga, none of the women admit their own sin, even after they realize and understand how the mantle works, but as we know, the mantle reflects their inner morals and previous actions, and shows them all to be sinful, except for one. The secrets revealed by the mantle have a central role in the rest of the verbal discourse in the saga. Even though the mantle's communicative agency is non-verbal and non-articulate, it is clear and very intelligible, provoking and triggering intense verbal exchanges, public shaming, and social commotion at the court of king Arthur. The charm woven in the mantle reveals the women's secrets and inner truths and even though the communication is nonverbal and inarticulate, it represents clearly and intelligibly the women's souls, morals, and actions.

[12] Other objects that may be studied from a similar perspective, i.e. as producing sounds that represent or express people's emotions and cognition, include horns, weapons, musical instruments, among many others. On the sound of horns, see Miriam Tveit's article in this special issue. For a discussion of the role of music/ musical instruments in *Tristrams saga*, see Eriksen 2025 (in print).

The Old French text, on the other hand, refers to the mantle as a 'work' (*ouevre*), which is characterized as a 'miracle' (*merveille*) (*Le Lai du cort mantel*, ll. 198–199). The mantle is here made by a fairy (*la fee*), but the designation as a miraculous *ouevre* has different connotations than the *galdr* that is woven in the mantle in the Old Norse version. The former triggers stronger associations to textuality and thus articulate verbal communication. *Ouevre* is a term used by many Old French authors, including Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, and refers to a piece of creative work, or to the collected authorship of a specific writer. We could thus read in a reference to words or a text 'woven in' into the mantle, while the Old Norse version refers more explicitly to magic, art, power. In any case, the Old French term alludes to textuality and articulate communication, while the Old Norse term refers more explicitly to the nonverbal and inarticulate magic, art, and power of the object.

The motive of the mantle with its own communicative agency was very popular in medieval material. It exists in other Old Norse texts such as *Skikkju saga* and *Samsons saga fagra* (Kalinke 2011). In European literature, there are many other objects used in chastity tests, with similar communicative agency. These include drinking horns that spill (their liquid content), if the man's wife has been unfaithful; or knots in shirts and belts that can be opened only by the right person; or gloves, rings, crowns that do not fit anyone else but the chaste one.[13] Another version of the motif popular to this day today in fairy tales, is Cinderella's shoe that tells the prince who his true sweetheart is. A common feature of all these stories, and most importantly for us here, is that all these objects 'tell' or show the truth, even when the characters wish to keep their secrets to themselves and stay silent. These objects become their extended cognition and do the talking for them (Besamusca 2010; Matyushina 2019).

Returning to the indigenous Norse material, the previous example of the silent Egill, drawing out and clashing his sword back in its sheath, may easily be understood as extended communication testifying to the communicative agency of things. In that case, the verb used, *at skella*, means to make a slam or a clash, i.e., to make a sound (Zoega 2004), which confirms this interpretation. Another example from the Old Norse corpus may be given from *Njáls saga*, when Gunnarr is told by one of the servant boys that people talk and accuse him of having cried when Otkell rode him over. This is a major insult, so Gunnarr is expected to defend his honor. Nonetheless, Gunnarr stays calm on the surface and replies that one should not get offended by people's talk. But while some of the people go to bed and others stay up talking and drinking, Gunnarr takes his shield, his sword Ǫlvisnautr, he puts his helmet on and grabs his

[13] For a further discussion of the use of these motives in European medieval literature, with examples, see Kalinke 2013.

halberd. The halberd 'sings' loudly (*ok sǫng í honum hátt*, *Njáls saga* (ÍF), p. 136), the saga says, and his mother Rannveig hears that. She approaches her son and asks him if he is angry, as she has never seen him like that. Now, he is quiet: he does not respond and just rides away. When she goes back to the group who is still up and drinking, she says:

> 'Hátt kveðið þér', segir hon, 'en þó lét hæra atgerirrinn, er Gunnarr gekk út', Kolskeggr heyrði ok mælti: 'Þat mun eigi engra tíðenda vita.' 'Þat er vel,' segir Hallgerðr; 'nú munu þeir reyna, hvárt hann gengr grátandi undan þeim.' (*Njáls saga* (ÍF), p. 136)

> 'You are talking loudly,' she said, 'but Gunnar's halberd was even louder when he went out.' Kolskegg heard this and spoke: 'That means no small news.' 'This is good,' said Hallgerd, 'Now they can find out whether Gunnar will be crying when he leaves them.' (*Njal's saga*, transl. Cook, p. 91)

Through this announcement, Gunnarr's mother refers to the audibility of Gunnarr's response, but not in terms of his own words, but in terms of the noise he makes when he engages with his halberd. His men understand immediately what this means, and so does his wife, who elegantly refers back to the original crying-insult that causes this audible reaction. This episode presents another example of both enacted cognition (i.e. Gunnarr does not respond verbally, he just rides off in an affected way, which may suggest that he is on his way to revenge his honor), as well as extended cognition, because Gunnarr expresses himself inarticulately but audibly and comprehensively through the way he handles his weapons. And even though he is silent, the halberd reveals his mind and intentions, by producing an audible sound, that is interpreted and understood correctly by his mother, his men, and his wife.

A last example of the communicative agency of things may also be given from a king's saga, namely the saga about Óláfr Tryggvason in the compilation *Heimskringla*. The relevant episode is from the end of the saga, from the battle at Svolder, when the king's enemies have taken over all his ships and there is only one ship left, Ormrinn, where the king and his surviving troops are fighting from. One of the king's men Einarr þambarskelfir is trying to kill as many of the enemies as he can with his bow and arrow, when a person called Finn, shoots back at Einar and hits Einar's bow in the middle. Next time, Einar tries to shoot an arrow, his bow breaks in two. The king asks him, what it was that broke/ tore/ braked so loudly (*hvat brast þar svá hátt*). Einar answers, *Nóregr ór hendi þér, konungr*. (It was Norway [falling] out of your hand,

king).[14] The verb *bresta* may refer both to the breaking of the bow, but also to the sound it makes in that moment. This episode may be seen as pointing towards the tragic end of the battle and of the king's life, but here it serves as an excellent example of how an inarticulate sound is used masterfully by the narrator as part of the discourse. The inarticulate sound made by the breaking of the bow is interpreted verbally or translated by Einarr in this famous one-liner. Nonetheless it is the breaking of the bow that is audible for the king, and this is the sound that signals to him his imminent future, even though at this point he is still reluctant to accept it.

Embedded cognition and the sounds of the environment

In the example from *Möttuls saga*, we remember that the mantle was made by an elf-woman, which may insinuate that some of its qualities may possibly be due to its super-natural origin. In the following, we will investigate a few more examples where human silence is replaced by or filled with sounds from the natural and supernatural world. Examples of this kind will allow us to discuss the embeddedness of human existence and cognition within its natural environment, which includes animals, nature itself, as well as God or devilish creatures.

One very appropriate example of sounds produced by animals that fill in the silence of men from the translated material, is the song of the nightingale from the short story *Laustik*, which is based on Marie de France's *lai Le Rossignol*. The story is about two neighbors, one of whom is in love with the wife of the other, and she loves him back. The Old Norse story tells us that from her chamber, she could talk to her sweetheart (*hon ræða við unnasta sinn*; *Strengleikar*, p. 102). Then at the beginning of summer, the nightingale starts singing a very beautiful melody. The narrator explains:

> Sa er þa var ælskandi matte miok ihuga af fuglanna songum þat er honum likaðe at ælsca.
>
> Then he who was a lover could because of the songs of the birds, deeply contemplate whatever it pleased him to love. (*Strengleikar*, p. 104)

The bird's song reflects the lovers' emotional state, as well as it inspires and triggers their contemplation: the bird's song fills in the void of human silent contemplation and emotionality. The lovers fix their attention on each other and in the moonlight, they stand by their windows and listen to the bird singing, without talking. When

[14] *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ch. 108. p. 362–363.

confronted by her husband, the lady explains that she is simply listening to the beautiful song of the bird, which, as known, does not convince him of her innocence. He therefore projects his jealousy to the little bird and kills it. This enacted response confirms the symbolic significance of the bird as a representation of their love, and of its songs as the main communicative strategy between the two lovers.

The Old French version is not very different. It also tells of the lovers' sweet talking and about the *laustic* that starts singing at the beginning of summer, and how that inspires their 'sweet thoughts' (*Laustic*, trans. Sjoaf). The rest of the narrative is very similar to the Old Norse version.

There is, however, one difference between the two versions that is relevant for us here. In the Old French version, the two lovers chat while listening to the bird: *qui échange avec lui paroles et regards* (And the lady, at her window, higher, / speaks, and looks, only desire.) (*Laustic*, v. 68, trans. Sjoaf). In the Old Norse version, the lovers are, as usual, not so chatty, and they exclusively listen to the bird's singing. The translator may have cut out that second reference to the conversation just to reduce the repetition, but it still makes the characters quieter, and the song of the bird emerges as the sound that fills in their silence, and that expresses their emotions and thoughts. In any case, in both versions, the laustic's song is symbolic of their love and their relationship and fills the communicative space between them. This communicative space is otherwise relatively silent, also because of the secret nature of their love, which is however directly embedded and audibly celebrated by its natural surroundings.

Another possible interpretation of the song of the nightingale is that it 'tells' of the secret silent love-affair and thus it points towards its inevitable end. This may be supported by medieval *Physiologus* tradition, where some animals sing when dying, as for example the nightingale (and the swan) (Kay 2016: 1005). The laustic, being the symbol of the love-affair, announces thus both the end of the affair, and thus its own death, through its audible song.[15]

In the Old Norse material, there are plenty of examples of such embedded and symbiotic relationships between humans and animals. A well-known example from *Njáls saga* is the close relationship and communication between Gunnarr and his dog Sámr (ch. 76). The dog gives a howl at the moment of its death, a warning which Gunnarr interprets easily as indicating his own imminent death. Once again, the dog's

[15] Another appropriate example of an animal that seems symbiotically attuned to its master's/mistress' cognition is the magical dog that Tristram acquires and that he later sends to Ísönd. The dog sooths their owners' sorrows with its magical and aesthetic appearance and with the sounds made by its bell. See Eriksen, forthcoming.

howl replaces the attackers' silence and their secret approach, and despite its inarticulate nature, it is perfectly comprehensible to the dog's owner.[16]

Old Norse literature is full of other natural or other-worldly sounds, such as storms and winds, which speak on behalf of or with the characters.[17] In a storm-episode in *Laxdœla saga*, where one of the characters dies, his relative listens to the storm and interprets its meaning: *Þar megu vér nú heyra gnýja bana Þorkels frænda*[18] (There we can now hear the roaring of my kinsman Þorkell's killer). In this case the sound of the storm is really audible and impossible to misinterpret, but many other sagas describe people's sensitivity to their natural environment, and the importance of listening when navigating the natural world.[19]

A last category of voice, sound, and audible presences of another agency or entity, that fills in human silence, is the 'voice' of God, or the sounds made by the devil or evil spirits.[20] God shows Himself and speaks to humans in numerous dreams and visions, guiding them in their decision-making by suggesting the right path of actions.[21] In other instances, God may communicate through church bells, as in the episode when Kjartan Óláfsson, Bolli Bollason, and other Icelanders convert to Christianity

[16] The Old Norse corpus is full of other animals that have such direct communicative connection with their owners, such as Óðinn's own ravens Munin and Hugin, whose names even refer directly to their significance for Óðinn's cognition. On this and other examples, see Harriet Evans Tang's article in this special issue.

[17] This example is also discussed in Eriksen 2025 (in print), where it serves to demonstrate how sound impacts individual and narrative development.

[18] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 222

[19] For a detailed discussion of other examples of bad weather in the sagas, see McCreesh 2018. 'Nature" could be defined to also include various supernatural creatures that populate the Old Norse literary universe, everything from giants and dwarfs, to ghosts and the undead. The sounds they produce are not always inarticulate, as may be expected, and have direct impact on people's fate and existence, see for example the interaction between Glámr and Grettir in *Grettis saga* (p. 85).

[20] See the introductory article for the complex meaning of speech and silence in medieval Christianity. For example: God uses speech during the very Creation, but silence may also be seen as God's first language. This motif is not studied extensively based on the Old Norse material, but the speech of Wisdom in *Konungs skuggsjá* may suggest that such a study may be worthwhile. The passage includes a recapitulation of Genesis, and she retells of her central role in the creation, together with God: 'With gentle speech I taught the silent calm its pleasing manner." (*King's Mirror* 2012: 301), referring to both the significance of speech and silence for the balance of creation.

[21] This is a very common literary topos, but one example may be given from Odd Munk's saga about Olav Tryggvason (ch. 13), when God appears to him in a dream and recommends to him to go back to Norway and baptize his people.

after hearing the church's bells and Mass, as described in both *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (ch. 81–82) and *Laxdœla saga* (ch. 40).[22] In hagiography, God's energy leads sometimes to people regaining their speech, and thus demonstrating that human silence or inability to speak is often an excellent occasion for God to demonstrate His powers through miracles.[23] Other times, God's energy leads to human silence, as for example when the pagan spokespeople in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* are silenced down: they lose their speech at the thing and cannot argue against the king (ch. 55). These examples comply well with Christian idea of *vox*, as related to God and the true faith – the sound of the church bells is the voice of God, and having a voice is having the true faith.[24]

However, human voicelessness and silence are other times caused by or inhabited with the sounds of evil spirits. One example is the episode when Egill's creative process or attempt to create articulate praise-poetry for the king (a *drápa*) is disturbed by a bird (*svala*) that twitters (*klaka*).[25] The bird turns out to be the shapeshifter queen Gunnhild, trying everything to prevent him from succeeding to save his own neck (*Egils saga*, ÍF, pp. 182–83). A similar episode is found in the Icelandic *Reykjahólarbók*, in a text about pope Gregory the Great. The episode tells of a deacon named John who tries to write the life of holy Gregory, but his creative process is disturbed by a mean spirit, who blows out his candle and threatens him (see Wellendorf 2012: 290). Such an allusion to the Christian ideology to voice, sound and silence, in *Egils saga* is interesting, but all these examples illustrate also how human voicelessness and silence are on various occasions embedded in the audibility of sounds produced by numerous other natural and supernatural elements, such as animals, storms and winds, God, shapeshifters, or the Devil. Human silence is thus highly meaningful when listened to in juxtaposition to other sounds of ecological contexts.

Narrators' comments on silence

So far, we have discussed examples where human silence was articulated in the narratives through the description of the characters' silent actions and bodily reactions, or through the mentioning of sounds made by other agencies. Even though these examples were here presented as examples of the silence of literary characters, they may

[22] See discussion on church bells in the introductory article of this special issue.

[23] For examples, see Tirosh 2020, especially the last section of the article on hagiographical sources. See also Rakel Diesen's article in this special issue.

[24] See my introductory article in this special issue.

[25] The verb *at klaka* may be understood descriptively, i.e. to say klak, klak, klak. It may also refer to people debating and disputing.

also be characterized as examples of the voice of the narrator, accounting for the characters' silence. Sometimes, the narrator does more than simply accounting, as he also expresses an opinion about the moral and social values of silence.

One example of such a narrator's comment from a translated Old Norse text may be given from *Parcevals saga*, the Old Norse translation of Chrétien's *Perceval*. In the saga, Parceval visits the castle of the Fisher king and fails to break the curse placed on him and the castle as he stays silent and does not ask the right questions, as he does not know how to socialize properly. The narrator then comments:

> Svá sem maðr má vera ofmálugr sér til meina, svá má hann ok vera ofþögull sér til skaða, þvíat hvárttveggja má mein gera, ofmælgi ok ofþögli.
>
> Just as a man may be too talkative to his own injury, so may he also be too silent to his own undoing. For both may do harm, excessive talking and stubborn silence. (*Parcevals saga*, pp. 150–151).

With this comment, the narrator fills in but also explains the consequences of the silence committed by Parceval. This comment would have been a direct trigger to the audience, inviting them to reflect on the repercussions of being too talkative as opposed to knowing when to be silent, and vice versa. The result of Parceval's silence is that in the morning, when he wakes up, the Fisher king and his entourage have disappeared, and the castle is empty.

This explicit narrator's comment is an addition by the Old Norse translator or a later scribe. The Old French *Perceval* certainly contains the same episode, where the Grail is described much more explicitly, and the narrator comments that '[Parceval] kept more silent than he should have' (Chrétien de Troyes, *The Story of the Grail*, p. 421). It is somewhat ironic that the addition in the Old Norse version concerns the importance of knowing when to be silent (and not), while so often actual conversations between the characters are silenced.

An explicit narrator's comments about the value of silence from the indigenous Old Norse corpus was already given at the very beginning of the article: the poem *Hávamál* explicitly praises the virtue and wisdom of silent men, an ideal that was truly well reflected in all the other examples from Old Norse literature. The saga-material includes also numerous explicit narrator's comment, having proverbial character, and an example may be given from *Hrafnkels saga*, where one of the characters exclaims: *En vit munum opt þess iðrask, en vit erum of málgir, ok sjaldnar mundum vit þessa iðrask, þó at vit mæltim færa en fleira*. (We may often regret when we talk too

much, and more seldom do we regret when we talk less rather than more) (ch. 7). This is part of a direct speech by a character, but the statement may certainly be read as a meta-comment praising the value and power of remaining silent.

Concluding remarks

All examples discussed in this article revealed that, in Old Norse literature, if and when humans do not respond with their speech, they respond in other ways. They respond through actions, sometimes much later than the event that triggered the response. They respond through specific body language, facial expressions, but also diverse bodily reactions, including weeping, moaning, fainting, and attempts to take one's own life. Other times, people's minds, thoughts and emotions are revealed by the way they use various objects that produce sounds, and yet other times human silence is caused, filled, or replaced by the sounds made by animals, storms and winds, God or devilish powers. These were all literary descriptions of what silence, here defined as the lack of human speech, sounds and looks like: lack of speech does not mean a lack of communication, nor a lack of sound.[26] In addition, sometimes such descriptions were elaborated on or explained through explicit and additional narrator's comments. Both these modes of articulating silence – either through telling or showing in the narrative, or by explaining through an explicit comment – may be seen as literary techniques that would have invited the readers/ listeners of the texts, medieval and modern, to tune into the soundscape of the medieval universe and ecology as described in the sagas. The way the silence was articulated would have allowed the audience to engage in imaginative immersion, to hear the silence with their inner ears and, especially with the help of explicit narrator's comments, to reflect on the meaning and virtue of silent as opposed to voiced verbal responses. Such a complex and multimodal literary scaffolding of the soundscape of the Old Norse medieval world and ecology in literature testifies also to the significance of sound and silence in the culture.

Another point follows from the fact that in all cases where we investigated Old Norse translations, the characters in the Old Norse translations were more silent – they either did not speak, while the Old French characters spoke, or they spoke less, or their sounds were less articulate. Further, the sounds made by the other agencies were either louder or appeared louder, seen in juxtaposition to the silence of the human voices. Such changes in the translations may have been caused by, at the same

[26] For a discussion on 'absence", defined in more general terms, see Cole 2016. He concludes that absence is always relative and not absolute, and that absence triggers and activates both the literary characters, and the readers, to immerse in the literary entanglement to a greater degree.

time as they would have reinforced, the Old Norse cultural ideal that silence is a sign of wisdom. Making the characters more silent in the Old Norse translations, leads to the turning-up of the volume of the sounds made by things, actions, bodies, animals, and nature. This is of course only a preliminary conclusion, and further studies on the topic are necessary to confirm or nuance such understanding.[27] Nonetheless, it is a well-known characteristic of Old Norse translations that they are usually shorter than their original source-text; they reduce narrator's comments, as well as dialogues and emotional monologues. Such changes and adaptations are well-known literary features, that in this study, have emerged as important signifiers to the way human silence was valued and appreciated in Old Norse literature and culture. When interpreted as part of an enacted, embodied, extended, and embedded communication, silence emerged as a meaningful communication mode, necessary for making sense of and understanding the literary, cultural and ecological discourse.

To return to our starting point: the SGT and the TGT suggested a hierarchical structure between human speech, voice, which also is something animals and birds have, and sounds produced by human bodies, things, and natural elements. Nonetheless, our few examples from Old Norse literature indicate a less hierarchical relationship and a higher degree of interchangeability between speech, voice, and sounds. Human silence, i.e. a lack of speech, in combination with other enacted, embodied, extended, and embedded modes of communication, becomes a fully comprehensible mode of communication, even the preferred mode sometimes, and it emerges thus as both a common and meaningful literary motif in many sagas, and a cultural ideal in Old Norse society. Human silence is indeed always filled in by voices and sounds from the other elements of the ecology. Speech, voice, sounds – and silence – alternate as mediums for symbiotic interaction and communication between humans, objects, nature and the supernatural. In other words, by listening to the human silence in Old Norse texts, we have heard the sounds of the whole ecological system, including human bodies, weapons and other objects, animals and nature, magical energies and heavenly creatures, all contributing to and forming the sonic ecosystem, which humans navigated by means of their 4E cognition.

[27] Such future studies may include the study of the soundscape in various literary genres; the study of voice and sound depending on gender; or the study of changes in descriptions of voice and sound in various manuscript versions of one and the same text.

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Shetland, det første norrøne landet i Solundhavet

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This article is about Shetland's political history as a Norse country, from the colonisation in the eighth century until 1469, when the country was pledged to King James III of Scotland, and some years later annexed by the Scottish Parliament. The author rejects the story told in *Orkneyinga saga* that the archipelago from the outset was included in the earldom of Orkney, which was established at the end of the ninth century. Indeed, the inclusion of Shetland in the Orcadian earldom did not happen until the turn of the millennium. From then on, Shetland was ruled as part of the earldom of Orkney for almost two centuries. When in 1195 Shetland was annexed by King Sverre of Norway, the country attained the status of a royal tributary country ("skattland") of its own. Besides discussing Shetland's political connections during the central and late Middle Ages, the author also aims at elucidating social organisation and political structures.

Prolog

Shetland og Orknøyene opptrer gjerne i par, som to land i ett jarledømme, som to separate kongelige norske skattland med felles fortid, eller som nordskotsk utkant hvor den norrøne arven fortsatt kan anes under det skotske preget. Skottene kaller dem Nordøyene. Parforholdet er interessant, men av varierende betydning for den perioden vi skal se nærmere på. Her vil Shetland som et norrønt land for seg stå i fokus fram til øyene i 1469 ble pantsatt til kong Jacob III av Skottland og tre år seinere annektert av parlamentet i Edinburgh.

Shetland og de nordøstre Orknøyene ble kolonisert fra Vest-Norge allerede på slutten av 700-tallet. Deretter er Orknøyene og Katanes (Caithness) på nordspissen av det skotske fastlandet blitt kolonisert.[1] Sannsynligvis har det også før det vært kontakt mellom Vestlandet og øyene i Nordsjøen, eller Solundhavet, som havstrekningen vestover gjerne kalles i middelalderkildene. De første norrøne bosetterne på Shetland

[1] Se ellers innledningen til *Orknøyingenes saga* (Oslo 1970). Ifølge Robert G. Cant (1984: 175) ble Shetland og de nordøstre Orknøyene bosatt først.

har trolig ikke dratt vestover på måfå.[2] Solund i Sogn skal ha vært vanlig startpunkt for seilas både til de norrøn-britiske øyene nord og vest for Skottland og i Irskesjøen, samt Færøyene og Island. Ellers vet vi lite om hvordan landnåmet forløp på Nordøyene og Caithness; men det mangler ikke på spekulasjoner. Hele området ble norrønt i språk, kultur og samfunnsorganisasjon i løpet av vikingtida, da også norrøne jarler etablerte seg på Orknøyene og Shetland.

Caithness ble også en del av orknøyjarlenes rike, skjønt fra slutten 1000-tallet holdt jarlene fastlandsdelen av jarledømmet som len under kongen av Skottland. Forbindelsen mellom Orknøyene og Caithness varte fram til 1353, da den siste jarl av Orknøyene og Caithness, Malise av Strathearn, døde (Crawford 2013: 317–319, jf. 325–326). I drøye 250 år hadde Orknøyjarlene to herrer å forholde seg til, noe som kunne skape lojalitetskonflikter, som f.eks. under Håkon Håkonssons tokt til Skottland i 1263. Shetland var da for lengst skilt ut fra jarledømmet og blitt et land for seg direkte under den norske kongen.

Mellom jarler og konger

Jarlene ankom Orknøyene knappe hundre år etter de første norrøne bosetterne. Den islandske *Jarlesagaen* (Orkneyinga saga) fra tidlig 1200-tall forteller at Harald Hårfagre ga Ragnvald Øysteinsson Mørejarl († ca. 900) Orknøyene og Shetland som erstatning for sønnen Ivar, som hadde falt i slag under kongens tokt vestover for å tukte vikinger.[3] Men Ragnvald var ikke interessert i øyene og ga dem videre til sin bror Sigurd, seinere kalt den mektige, som også mottok jarletittel av kong Harald. Da Sigurds sønn, Guttorm, døde sønneløs etter ett år, falt imidlertid jarledømmet tilbake til Ragnvald, som igjen ga øyene til sin yngste sønn Einar. Ifølge sagaen skal Einars overtakelse av jarledømmet ha startet på Shetland, hvor han fikk mannskap til erobringen av Orknøyene, som var blitt overtatt av vikinger. Seinere måtte Einar forsvare jarledømmet mot angrep østfra, først av Harald Hårfagres sønner, og dernest

[2] Ifølge en nylig publisert studie har blant andre navnet Shetland "parallels with early pre-Viking names", og "typologically it fits into a group of old pre- early- names in -land, with people names as a specific, such as Rogaland and Hordaland" (Jennings & Kruse 2024: 74). Jennings og Kruse mener altså at navneforholdene kan tyde på tidlig kontakt mellom Vestlandet og Shetland. Når jeg her velger å bruke norrøn i stedet for norsk, er det for å unngå et anakronistisk og norsk-nasjonalt perspektiv på den vestskandinaviske ekspansjonen vestover havet i tidlig middelalder.

[3] *Jarlesagaen* hører til den islandske kongesagatradisjonen. Men selv om sagaen mest sannsynlig er skrevet av en islending, eller kanskje flere, kan vedkommende forfatter ha besøkt Nordøyene eller hatt kontakt med folk fra jarledømmet. Se ellers innledningen til Anne Holtsmarks utgave av *Orknøyingenes saga* (Oslo 1970).

av kong Harald selv. Det endte med forlik mellom Einar og kongen, som la skatt på øyene.

Sagaen forteller at Einar tok på seg å betale skatten for alle øyboerne mot å overta all odel i øyene som sin eiendom. Ifølge sagaen ble ikke Einar tvunget til underkastelse under kongen, følgelig sies det heller ikke at kongen skal ha gitt Einar jarletittel. Og den skatten Einar påtok seg å betale på vegne av øyboerne svarer ikke til den tributten som seinere jarler måtte betale sine herrer i Norge. Einar døde på sotteseng og skulle bli stamfar til de norrøne orknøyjarlene. Han fikk tilnavnet Torv-Einar fordi han lærte øyboerne å skjære torv, fortelles det.

Fortellingen er lite troverdig. Den bærer preg av sagn. I dag tror knapt noen på historien om Harald Hårfagres kongegave og toktet vest over havet; eller for den saks skyld historien om hvordan øyboerne lærte å buke torv til brensel.[4] Den kunnskapen hadde nok de norrøne bosetterne tatt med seg fra Norge. Og historien om Einars odelstilegnelse minner påfallende om Snorre Sturlassons fortelling om Harald Hårfagres odelstilegnelse i Norge. Som mye annet av det *Jarlesagaens* forteller om jarledømmets tidligste historie bør også denne beretningen skrives på sagaforfatterens konto. Når vi likevel i en viss grad velger å støtte oss på *Jarlesagaen*, er det fordi den er den eneste sammenhengende beretning om jarledømmets historie fram til ca. 1200, og fordi den trass alt gir oss et kronologisk rammeverk vi kan forholde oss til. Dernest kommer at den for 1100-tallets del er nær på begivenhetene. At den eldste delen i liten grad skiller mellom sagn og historie må vi bare leve med. For tida etter 1200 er kildesituasjonen en ganske annen. Det skal vi komme tilbake til.

Når det gjelder spørsmålet om hvordan Orknøyene ble et norrønt jarledømme, er framstillingen i *Historia Norwegie* (HN) mer nøktern, og trolig også mer troverdig, enn *Jarlesagaen*, skjønt heller ikke *HN* er uproblematisk i alle enkeltheter. *HN* er av norsk opphav og noen tiår eldre enn *Jarlesagaen*, og historien om jarledømmets tilblivelse er mer kortfattet enn *Jarlesagaens* episke framstilling.[5] Dessuten har denne latinske teksten et mer lærd og encyklopedisk preg. Etter en første del som presenterer geografien, etnografien og den politiske strukturen i Norge og det vi kan kalle den norrøne verden, følger en summarisk gjennomgang av den norske kongerekka fram til Olav Haraldssons overfart fra England for å ta kongemakten i Norge.

[4] Krag 2003: 302, jf. Woolf 2007: 277–289. Woolf gir også til beste en kritisk gjennomgang både av det britiske og det islandske kildematerialet. Se også Crawford 2013: 85–86.

[5] Halvdan Koht anfører gode grunner for at arbeidet med *HN* er utført av en norsk geistlig med tilknytning til bispesetet i Kirkwall, og at det aldri ble skrevet ferdig. I seinmiddelalderen er så manuskriptet kommet til Skottland, Koht 1949.

Ifølge *HN* skal «visse vikinger, som nedstammet fra den djerveste av menn, Ragnvald jarl», i Harald Hårfagres tid ha krysset Solundhavet med en stor flåte. De utryddet den lokale befolkningen (pentene, det vil si pikterne) og underla seg Orknøyene. Etter å ha bygd vinterkvarter brukte de øyene som baser for herjinger i Skottland, England og Irland sommerstid. En av dem, kalt Gange-Rolf på grunn av sin størrelse, erobret også Normandie. Hans etterkommere skulle bli konger i England. «Mens Rolf herjet på kontinentet, etablerte de andre riker på Orknøyene, og deres etterkommere har fortsatt herredømme over øyene, men nå betaler de tributt til de norske kongene», heter det til slutt.[6]

I *HN* spiller hverken Ragnvald Mørejarl eller Harald Hårfagre personlig noen rolle, hverken i erobringen av øyene eller ved etableringen av jarledømmet. Øyene ble erobret av jarleætlinger fra Nordvestlandet, sies det, og de etablerte riker på øyene. Alt fra starten av framstår dermed jarledømmet som et samjarledømme, svarende til ordningen med samkonger som vi kjenner fra Norge i sagatid og tidlig middelalder. Seinere er jarlene blitt tributtpliktige overfor de norske kongene, fortelles det, og med det har øyene også fått status som kongelige skattland.

I *HN* brukes navnet Orknøyene på to måter. Først forekommer det som fellesnavn på alle øyene utenfor Skottland, både i nord og vest, og forfatteren legger til at øyene var delt i to riker (*in duo regna*) med småkongedømmer i vest og jarledømmer i nord. Dette synes å speile situasjonen ved midten av 1000-tallet da orknøyjarlen Torfinn den mektige hersket over både Nordøyene og Suderøyene (Hebridene), samt Caithness. Dernest får vi vite at de øyene Ragnvalds etterkommere erobret opprinnelig het Pentland, og at sundet mellom øyene og det skotske fastlandet fortsatt het Pettlandsfjorden (Pentland Firth) etter den tidligere befolkningen. Dette må kunne forstås slik at det tidligere Pentland svarte til Orknøyene, og at Shetland ikke var inkludert i det første jarledømmet på Nordøyene. Nå var det riktignok piktere på Shetland også da norrøne kolonister tok landet i besittelse, men Shetland var langt unna det Pentland som lå rett utenfor det skotske fastlandet. Shetland var nesten midtveis mellom Vestlandet og Skottland. Det er med andre ord grunn til også å betvile *Jarlesagaens* påstand om at Shetland fra første stund av var en del av orknøyjarlenes rike. Dessuten omtaler *HN* under gjennomgangen av kongerekka Shetland som et kongelig skattland for seg ved siden av Orknøyene, og altså flere tiår før Shetland ble annektert av kong Sverre.

Vi må anta at fortellingen om Shetland som del av Harald Hårfagres gave til Ragnvald Mørejarl, og deretter Torv-Einars erobring av Orknøyene ved shetlendernes hjelp, og følgende konsolidering av jarleherredømme og jarledynasti, speiler

[6] Sitert etter Ekrem & Mortensen 2003: 65–69.

situasjonen seinere i middelalderen, da Shetland for lengst var blitt forent med Orknøyene. Hvor tittelen jarl opprinnelig er kommet fra, er uvisst. Jarletittelen behøver ikke nødvendigvis å ha blitt gitt av en overordnet fyrste. Barbara E. Crawford hevder med god grunn at jarl i denne eldste tida var en vanlig høvdingbetegnelse som ikke innebar noen formell underordning under en annen fyrste (Crawford 2014: 85–86).

Jarlesagaen sier ingenting om befolkningen på Nordøyene før jarlene tok øyene i besittelse. *HN* kan imidlertid fortelle at pikterne ble utryddet da jarleætlingene fra Møre etablerte riker på Orknøyene. Dersom pikterne ble utryddet da erobrerne fra Møre kom, må de ha levd side om side med de norrøne nybyggerne i bortimot hundre år. En form for etnisk rensing som følge av den norrøne koloniseringen, kan likevel ikke utelukkes. De lærde strides fortsatt om den opprinnelige befolkningen ble utryddet eller assimilert; det gjelder både Orknøyene, Shetland og Caithness.[7] Likeledes er det vanskelig å vite når øysamfunnene kan regnes som norrøne i etnisk forstand, og hvor vidt elementer fra tidligere kultur- og samfunnsforhold er blitt videreført av de norrøne kolonistene. Det eneste vi med noen grad av sikkerhet kan si er, at Nordøyene ved utgangen av vikingtida kan oppvise et mer distinkt norrønt preg enn de skotske Vestøyene (Hebridene) og Man, hvor den gæliske kulturen blandet seg med den norrøne og til slutt skulle bli dominant (McDonald 2021).

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I boka *Scandinavian Scotland* fra 1987 sier Barbara E. Crawford at Nordøyene siden slutten av 700-tallet hadde utgjort «pirate lairs [...] and until the establishing of control by the earls must have been subject to different Viking chieftains for half a century or more». Og når det gjelder Shetlands forhold til jarledømmet på Orknøyene i Torfinn den mektiges tid (ca. 1050), sier hun at «the expansion of Thorfinn's power to Shetland seems to have been regarded as a matter of conquest. Throughout *Jarls' saga* Shetland is usually referred to as a port of call en route between Orkney and Norway with little mention of any political control exercised there by earls.» (Crawford 1987: 75) Crawford mener videre at dette bekreftes i et kvad av skalden Ottar Svarte om Olav Haraldsson den hellige, hvor det sies at shetlenderne var Olavs under-

[7] Brian Smith 2001. I et upublisert paper fra en konferanse i Lerwick 2008, gjort publiseringsklart 2009, og her lastet ned fra Academia edu 21 oktober 2023, finner Alex Woolf det sannsynlig at det har vært kontakt mellom Vestlandet og Shetland langt tilbake i tid. Når det gjelder den norrøne koloniseringen av Nordøyene opererer han med to faser, en fredelig alt på 700-tallet, hvor de norrøne nykommerne og den piktiske befolkningen har levd side om side, og så en mer massiv og militær okkupasjon rundt hundre år seinere, som førte til at det piktiske elementet på Shetland forsvant. Dette samsvarer for så vidt med beretningen i *HN*.

såtter, og hun antyder at Shetland kan ha vært kong Olavs land da han forlente øyene til orknøyjarlen Ragnvald Brusesson (†1046), Torfinn den mektiges bror. [8]

Også Brian Smith stiller seg skeptisk til fortellingen om Harald Hårfagres gave, men han mener likevel at det er «clear from these references [i *Jarlesagaen*] that, as might be expected, the Earldom of Orkney included Shetland from the outset» (Smith 1988). Påstanden kan hverken bekreftes eller avkreftes, men man kan spørre seg om hvorfor denne delen av historien om kong Harlds gave skulle være mer troverdig enn resten av fortellingen. Seinere synes Crawford å ha nærmet seg Smiths standpunt idet hun i 2013 skriver at de første orknøyjarlene «would claim Shetland as part of their earldom, for Shetland was a vital maritime base for earls whose home estates in Norway was in Møre…» og at «Shetland formed an integral part of the early Orkney earldom…» (Crawford 2014: 145). Om orknøyjarlenes eventuelle godsinteresser på Møre vet vi ingenting. Alt tyder på at forbindelsen til Nordvestlandet ble brutt etter at Ragnvald Mørejarls etterkommere etablerte seg på øyene. Og hvor vidt Shetland alt fra starten av tjente som en viktig militær base for jarlene og dermed også utgjorde en integrert del av jarledømmet på Orknøyene, er og blir en antakelse. For øvrig serverer *Jarlesagaen* en helt parallell historie til fortellingen om Torv-Einars erobring av Orknøyene i beretningen om hvordan Ragnvald Kale Kolsson i 1130-årene kom til makten på Orknøyene. Det er fristende å tenke seg at også dette er et forfattergrep. Einar og Ragnvald Kale Kolsson må kunne regnes som sagaens to hovedskikkelser. Einar jarl ble stamfar for det gamle jarleriket mens Ragnvald la grunnlaget for det nye.

Av de tre utsagnene finner jeg Crawfords fra 1987 mest troverdig. Vi vet ikke noe sikkert om shetlendernes forhold til hverken orknøyjarler eller norske konger før ca. år 1000. Vi må derfor kunne anta at Shetland siden slutten av 700-tallet hadde vært et norrønt land for seg, med sin egen samfunnsordning og med tette bånd til Vestlandet, muligens underlagt lokale høvdinger. Vikingtidsspor etter noe som kan ligne en jarleresidens fins ikke. Langhusene i de delene av ruinkomplekset Jarlshof, som dateres til vikingtida, kunne tenkes å ha vært et lokalt høvdingsete, liksom tilsvarende langhus i Norge, skjønt de er ikke tydelige vitnemål om lokal høvdingmakt. Det største av de norske vikingtidslanghusene som nå er rekonstruert finner vi i Borg i Lofoten. Det dekker hele 700 m² mens det største langhuset på Jarlhof er på 110 m².

[8] Crawford 1987: 56. Dette samsvarer i noen grad med Robert G. Cants syn (1984: 173): "The influence of the earls certainly extended to Shetland but far less effectively than in Orkney. Not only was the more northerly archipelago at a considerable distance from the main seat of their power in the west mainland of Orkney, but it was also in itself much larger in area, rugged and fragmented in geographical character, with areas of high fertility few in number and scattered in distribution."

Ifølge Anna Ritchie var «Jarlshof … never more than a farm, although it grew more substantial as the years went by and the family increased in size» (Ritchie 1993: 65–66).

Shetlands geografiske plassering i den norrøne verden, som utgjør den vestlige delen av det Judith Jesch nylig har døpt «the Viking Diaspora», er også et forhold vi må ha in mente når vi skal se nærmere på Shetlands historie før øyene ble pantsatt til Jakob III. Jesch påpeker at «Shetland was often the first port of call for travellers going west, *especially to Faroe and Iceland*». Det er verdt å merke seg at forbindelsen nordover fra Shetland understrekes. Også Barbara Crawford viser til Shetlands kontakt nordover til Island (Jesch 2015: 26; jf. Crawford 2014: 149). Shetland var på sett og vis et slags veikryss mellom leia til Irskesjøen og derfra igjen til kontinentet og ruta til landene i Atlanterhavet. Vi ser også seinere i middelalderen at forbindelsen nordover, og da i første rekke til Færøyene har vært viktig. Dette skal vi komme tilbake til.

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Harald Hårfagre samlet ikke Norge. Her er for øvrig *HN* på linje med dagens norske historikere da det fortelles at kong Harald bare oppkastet seg til herre over kystlandet. Heller ikke ble Shetland del av et Orknøy-jarledømme i Haralds tid. Gjennom hele vikingtida var den norrøne verden en politisk smeltedigel med omskiftelige og kortvarige riksdannelser. Adam av Bremen, som omkring 1070 skrev om de nordiske land og folk, forestilte seg nordmennenes land (Nortmannia) som en nærmest grenseløs periferi som fra det norske fastlandet strakte seg vestover og nordover i havet, helt opp til Grønland og ut til Vinland (Imsen 2015: 39–41). Samtidig beklaget Adam seg over at man stadig oftere kalte nordmennenes land for Norvegia i stedet for det eldre navnet Nortmannia. Ganske annerledes var det hundre år seinere, det vil si da *HN* ble skrevet. Da var de norrøne landene i vest blitt omdefinert til kongelige skattland, og Norge var endelig blitt et samlet rike med tilløp til en statsorganisasjon. Går vi enda hundre år fram i tid var Norge blitt en monarkisk stat. Og gjennom det som en gang hadde vært en nærmest grenseløs norrøn-britisk mark, som strakte seg fra Shetland over Orknøyene og nedover det skotske fastlandet og ut til vestkysten og Irskesjøen, var nå Pentland Firth blitt ei fast grense mellom den norske og den skotske kongens riker. Men før det var orknøyjarlenes rike blitt delt i to. Shetland var blitt lagt direkte under den norske kongen, mens Orknøyene fortsatt fikk være et jarledømme, i alle fall i navnet. Jarlen ble i løpet av 1200-tallet en slags guvernør i den norske kongens vestligste grenseland (Imsen 2009).

Mange har begrått tapet av Orknøyene og Shetland i 1468 og 1469 da Christian I pantsatte Nordøyene til Jakob III av Skottland for å finansiere sin datters medgift.

Lenge har tapet av disse landenes skjebne blitt tolket inn i den store nasjonale fortellingen om Norge hvor nedgangen i seinmiddelalderen med pest og nordiske unioner spiller en sentral rolle. Denne fortellingen ble diktet i hop av 1800-tallets historikere. Med et par unntak har paradoksalt nok norske historikere vært lite opptatt av forholdet mellom Norge og de norrøn-britiske landene i middelalderen.

Middelalderens norske rike var ingen nasjonalstat, det var både etnisk, geografisk og politisk ganske forskjellig fra 1814-Norge. I seinere tid har interessen for å studere forholdet mellom det norske monarkiet og de oversjøiske landene i middelalderen fått et oppsving både blant norske historikere og historikere utenlands med tilknytning til de tidligere norrøne skattlandene.[9] Ettersom Shetland opprinnelig ikke var inkludert i avtalen av 1468 om prinsesse Margretes ekteskap, men ble plusset på i 1469 da Orknøyene ikke strakk til for å dekke utgiftene til morgengaven, og Shetland dessuten var det norrøne landet som siden vikingtida hadde vært nærmest knyttet til dert norske fastlandet, kan det være interessant å se nærmere på Shetlands politiske situasjon i de ca. 450 årene shetlenderne måtte føye seg under norrøne jarler og norske konger.

Jarlenes tid

Det var på 1000-tallet at orknøyjarlene ble tvunget til å underordne seg den norske kongen. Det kan ha skjedd alt i Olav Tryggvassons tid, da kong Olav tvang Sigurd Lodveson med tilnavnet digre († 1014) til underkastelse, eller noe seinere under Olav Haraldsson, da Bruse Sigurdsson ifølge Brian Smith «submitted to (king Olav) in a feudal relationship», og absolutt under Olav den helliges halvbror, Harald Sigurdsson Hardråde, som brukte Orknøyene som base under forsøket på å erobre England i 1066. Men stort sett har ikke jarlene merket mye til norske konger før mot slutten av århundret. Det er uvisst når jarlenes tributtplikt ble innført. Sannsynligvis har det skjedd ved århundreskiftet, det vil si under Magnus Olavsson Berrføtt. Omtrent samtidig ble jarlene som nevnt tvunget til å akseptere den skotske kongen som overherre over Caithness.

På toktet til Irskesjøen i 1098 okkuperte Magnus Berrføtt Orknøyene. De to jarlene Pål og Erlend Torfinnssønner ble tatt som gisler og seinere sendt til Norge, i en annen versjon sies det at de ble tvunget til å følge kong Magnus på ferden videre nedover mot Irskesjøen. Imens satte Magnus sin egen sønn Sigurd til å styre jarledømmet. Begrepet skattland er ikke kjent før ca. 1160 (*HN*). Sannsynligvis har både Håkon Pålsson (1103–1123) og Magnus Erlendsson (1105–1115), som delte jarledømmet etter at Sigurd Magnusson vendte tilbake til Norge ved kong Magnus

[9] Imsen (red.) 2014 og litteratur anført der.

død, avlagt troskapsed og forpliktet seg til å betale tributt til den norske kongen.

Shetland nevnes langt sjeldnere enn Orknøyene i *Jarlesagaen.* Orknøyene hadde vært, og skulle forbli, jarledømmets hovedland. I størstedelen av jarletida har Nordøyene med Caithness vært styrt av to til tre jarler i fellesskap, og selv om delingen av jarledømmet har variert, er Shetland normalt blitt behandlet som en tredel for seg. Ordningen med samjarler fortsatte også etter at Shetland i 1195 var blitt konfiskert av den norske kongen, men da den norrøne jarlelinjen døde ut i 1230-årene og ble erstattet av jarler av skotsk avstamming, ble samjarledømmet avskaffet for Orknøyenes del, men fortsatte i den skotske delen av jarledømmet. Enejarledømmets tid, som varte fram til 1468, skal vi la ligge her, ettersom det bare angår Orknøyene.

I store deler av *Jarlesagaen* ser forbindelsen sørover til Caithness og videre nedover i Skottland ut til ha vært viktigere for jarlene enn forbindelsen nordøstover. Mange av de norrøne jarlene hadde også sterke slektsbånd til Skottland. Torfinn den mektige var eksempelvis dattersønn av den skotske kongen Malkolm, og Harald Maddadson, Ragnvald Kale Kolssons medjarl, var sønn av Maddad jarl av Atholl. Og ut gjennom 1100-tallet kjempet mange av dem med de skotske kongene om herredømmet over den nordligste delen av Skottland. Ragnvald jarl og hans slektninger tilbake til begynnelsen av 1000-tallet har derimot hatt sterke bånd til det norske riksaristokratiet.

Shetland var jarledømmets periferi. Når landet forekommer i sagaen, er det ved milepæler i jarledømmets historie; første gang da Einar jarl skal ha fått militær hjelp hos shetlenderne til å ta Orknøyene, og dernest da Torfinn den mektiges bror Bruse Sigurdsson (1014–1035) fikk Shetland i forlening av Olav Haraldsson. Også Bruses sønn Ragnvald (1037–1046) knyttes til Shetland, likeså Magnus Erlendsson den hellige (jarl ca. 1105–1115) og hans nevø Ragnvald Kale Kolsson (jarl 1136–1158). Som Brian Smith har påpekt, er Ragnvald å regne som *Jarlesagaens* hovedperson. Han var nordmann og hjemmehørende på Agder, og han ble utnevnt til jarl to ganger, først av Sigurd Magnusson Jorsalfar, det var da Kale tok jarlenavnet Ragnvald, og dernest av Sigurds halvbror Harald Magnusson Gille, som egentlig het Gilchrist og var fra Irland eller Suderøyene.[10] Hos shetlenderne fant Ragnvald støtte til å kreve sin rett også på Orknøyene. Ifølge sagaen skal Pål Håkonsson jarl (1123–1136), som satt på Orknøyene, ikke ha turt å ta opp kampen mot Ragnvald på Shetland, hvor han var uønsket. Vi vet ikke hva shetlendernes motvilje mot Pål skyldtes, men det kan nevnes at han var mer orientert sørover mot Skottland enn østover mot Norge.

Med andre ord, Shetland graviterte mot Vestlandet, og Ragnvald var norsk med tette bånd til Norge og det norske aristokratiet. I 1153–1155 deltok han på korstog til

[10] Det var først etter den siste utnevnelsen Kale lyktes i å bli anerkjent som jarl på Orknøyene. Jarlen Pål Håkonsson (1123–1136), som var hans tremenning hadde med våpenmakt forsøkt å hindre ham i å få del i jarlemakten.

det hellige land sammen med Erling Ormsson Skakke, far til den seinere kong Magnus Erlingsson. Shetlenderne forble Ragnvalds mest trofaste tilhengere (Smith 1988). En mannsalder etter Ragnvald jarls død skulle folk fra øyene, i sagaen kalt øyskjegger, kaste seg inn i kampen mot kong Sverre. De sto på samme sida i de norske tronfølgekrigene som Erling Skakke og Magnus Erlingsson hadde stått. Øyskjeggenes nederlag ved slaget i Florvåg utenfor Bergen i 1194 innevarslet et epokeskifte i jarledømmets historie.

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Under Ragnvald ble jarledømmet «modernisert», kan vi si. Liksom Olav Haraldsson var blitt det norske kongedømmets skytshelgen, fikk Ragnvald Kale Kolsson opphøyd sin onkel Magnus Erlendsson til jarledømmets beskytter. Ragnvald selv ble for øvrig gjenstand for helgendyrkelse etter sin død, ikke minst på Shetland, hvorfra de aller fleste av hans underverk er rapportert. *Jarlesagaen* tegner et bilde av ham som ligner kirkens fyrsteideal, den rettferdige konge (rex justus) (Mundal 2018).

Et spørsmål som har vært heftig diskutert er utviklingen av et inndelingssystem for Orknøyene og Shetland og med det en tidsmessig skatteordning, med andre ord: når ble Orknøyene og Shetland delt inn i såkalte ounceland (gno. *eyrislǫnd*) og pennyland (gno. *penninglǫnd*). Dette var et forholdsvis avansert beskatningssystem basert på jordeiendom. De fleste historikere har tillagt systemet forholdsvis høy alder, enkelte vil føre det helt tilbake til jarledømmets tidligste tid, noen enda lenger bakover. Det synes å være enighet om at ordningen har hatt sitt opphav i de gælisknorrøne landene i Irskesjøen og langs vestkysten av Skottland (Oram 2011). Men det er ingen enighet om når eyrislandet og penninglandet ble innført på Orknøyene og Shetland. Torfinn den mektiges jarletid kan være en mulighet ettersom han utvidet sitt jarlerike både mot sør, vest og nord. Torfinn regnes som den fremste riksbyggeren blant orknøyjarlene. Per Sveaas Andersen har imidlertid argumentert godt for at ordningen først ble introdusert ved slutten av 1100-tallet eller begynnelsen av 1200-tallet. Blant annet peker han på parallellen til samtidige fiskale nyordninger i naboland, som f.eks. Norge. Ettersom eyrislandet og penninglandet levde videre på Shetland etter 1195, da øyene ble lagt direkte under den norske kongen, må ordningen nødvendigvis ha blitt introdusert seinest under jarlen Harald Maddadson († 1206). Allerede som guttunge ble han Ragnvalds medjarl, men Ragnvald var sjefen. Etter Ragnvalds død styrte Harald jarledømmet alene. Jeg holder likevel en knapp på at det var Ragnvald jarl som innførte den nye skatteordningen. *Jarlesagaen* kan fortelle om «relatively frequent talks between earl and peasants on financial matters during Ragnvald's reign» (Andersen 1991; Imsen 2000).

Shetlendere og orknøyinger betalte med andre ord skatt og avgifter til jarlen, men ikke til den norske kongen. Jarlen alene var tributtpliktig overfor kongen, derav begrepet skattland. Kongen var jarlens overherre, mens jarlen var shetlendernes og orknøyingenes umiddelbare herre.

I tillegg til skattene og avgiftene, må vi tro at shetlenderne også har ytt jarlen 'veitsle', det vil si mat og drikke når han krevde det. Veitsle var vanlig i Norge i sagatida, og ifølge *Jarlesagaen* var dette noe av det første Ragnvald krevde av bøndene på Shetland da han landet der på veien til Orknøyene for å kreve sin jarlsrett. *Jarlesagaen* forteller at Ragnvald jarl også etter at han var blitt herre over Orknøyene beordret sine menn til å dra ut i distriktet for å kreve inn det som trengtes av mat og drikke til jul, også under et opphold i den skotske delen av jarledømmet, Caithness, tok han veitsle. I det hele tatt ser det økonomiske systemet i jarledømmet ut som en miniatyr av det de islandske sagaene skriver om det norske kongedømmet i sagatida. For øvrig ble veitsle fortsatt krevd av bøndene på Shetland på 1400-tallet, men da var veitsla blitt omgjort til en fast avgift (DN II nr. 623).

Jarlene har liksom de norske kongene omgitt seg med håndgangne menn, både på Orknøyene og Shetland. *Jarlesagaen* forteller dessuten om 'skutilsveiner' og 'kjertesveiner' i jarlens gård på 1100-tallet, og om et seremoniell ved jarlens bord, som minner om de norske høymiddelalderkongenes hoff. I *Håkon Håkonssons saga* forekommer også såkalte 'gødinger' på Orknøyene; det var lokale stormenn som var gått jarlen til hånde, og som han støttet seg på i styret av jarledømmet. Gødingene utgjorde en eksklusiv gruppe av stormenn på Orknøyene. For så vidt minner de om de norske kongenes lendmenn. Om det fantes en tilsvarende elite på Shetland, vet vi ikke, men det kan ikke utelukkes. I artikkelen *On the nature og tings: Shetland's law courts from the middle ages until 1611* skriver Brian Smith om 'local potentates' med tilknytning til viktige kirke- og tingsteder (Smith 1988: 32; jf. 2009: 41). Og når vi ved slutten av 1200-tallet møter en krets av kongelige hirdmenn rundt kongens styringsmann på Shetland, er det fristende å se dem i forlengelsen av en eldre landselite.

Shetlands eldste lokalsamfunnsordning vitner om vestnorsk opphav. Riktignok sier Brian Smith at «Trying to understand the organisation of justice in Shetland before Magnus Lawmender's time is a near hopeless task». Likevel tør han å oppsummere som følger: «Shetland might have had an althing, a general assembly of free men, during the centuries after the Scandinavian settlement of the islands. If so, it met at Tingwall. Sometime in that ancient period Shetland was divided into administrative units called quarters and eights, but also into much smaller ones called *herað*s,

which may have had their own tings.»[11] Dette svarer til fjerdingene, åttingene og herredene i de sentrale delene av Vestlandet, og viser trolig tilbake på Shetlands eldste norrøne historie (Helle 1994). Brian Smith trekker samtidig en parallell til Færøyene, og antyder at Shetland liksom Færøyene og Island har innført Gulatingsloven, og det er absolutt ingen ueffen antakelse, som vi snart skal se.[12]

Ellers er det vanskelig å få tak i hvordan Shetland er blitt styrt i jarletida. Jarlene ser ut til å ha oppholdt seg mest på Orknøyene eller på Caithness. Vi må derfor kunne anta jarlestyret var basert på en gruppe fremtredende menn i lokalsamfunnet i samspill med de frie bøndene. En slik lokal elite kan ha hatt ansvaret for å oppebære jarlens inntekter og ført oppsyn med jarlens eiendommer. Da arbeidet med å reise en katedral i Kirkwall viste seg å bli i dyreste laget, ble Ragnvald jarl rådet til å innføre en lov om at jarlene skulle arve odelen etter alle som døde i Orknøyene; men arvingene skulle ha lov til å løse den inn igjen. Deretter sammenkalte han ting og ba bøndene om å bidra med én mark sølv av hvert «plógsland». Til gjengjeld skulle de slippe å løse inn odelen ved arveskifte. Bøndene var tilfredse med ordningen, sies det, og siden manglet det ikke penger til kirkebygget. Sannsynligvis har også bøndene på Shetland blitt bedt om det samme, ettersom ordningen skulle gjelde alle øyene (Holtsmark 1970: 125; jf. Thomson 2001: 218). Hvor begrepet plógsland har kommet fra, vet vi ikke. Fortellingen om denne ekstraskatten antyder også at jarlen har hatt en slags lovgivningsrett, som vi ellers ikke vet noe om. Men det kan tenkes at han har lagt saken fram til godkjenning på tinget, som i dette tilfellet må ha vært et allting. I så fall ligner det på lovgivningsprosessen slik vi kjenner den både fra Norge og Island i sagatida. Trolig har de første norrøne bosetterne tatt med seg ordningen da de utvandret. Vi får også vite at det fantes et varslingssystem på Shetland med varder for å samle landsfolket til forsvar mot ytre fiender, tilsvarende det vi finner hjemme i Norge.

*

Også kristendommen skal de hedenske folkene på Nordøyene ha fått fra Norge ifølge både norske og islandske kilder. *Jarlesagaen* forteller om Sigurd digres nederlag for Olav Tryggvasson og valget mellom dåp og død. Sigurd skal ha valgt livet, og han ble deretter døpt sammen med alt folket på øyene, heter det. Det er uklart om øyene det viser til er både Orknøyene og Shetland, men det kan være verdt å merke seg at kong Olav ifølge *HN* fikk kristnet alle sine landsmenn (compatriotos) utenfor kysten (av Norge), det vil si Shetland, Orknøyene, Færøyene og Island; de omtales i denne

[11] Smith 2009: 43. Brians Smiths synspunkter er seinere blitt bekreftet av Sanmark et al. 2021.

[12] Nedenfor, s. 161–162 og 168–169

rekkefølgen som fem separate skattland (*HN*: 94). Nå har nok selve trosskiftet vært en mer kompleks og langvarig prosess enn det sagaene gir uttrykk for, og vi må også regne med betydelig innflytelse fra De britiske øyer i kristningen av Orknøyene og Shetland, som for øvrig lå under erkebispesetet Hamburg-Bremen fram til 1070-årene.

Selv om Orknøyene skal ha fått egen biskop i Torfinn den mektiges tid, vet vi lite om hvordan Orknøykirken var organisert og fungerte før begynnelsen av 1100-tallet. Noen fast bispedømmeinndeling fantes knapt i de landene som lå under de norske kongenes maktsfære før mot slutten av 1000-tallet. Det kan ikke utelukkes at Torfinns biskop Torolf, som ble vigslet til biskop på Orknøyene av erkebiskop Adalbert i Bremen også hadde ansvaret for Shetland, ettersom jarlen var enerådende på alle Nordøyene fram til 1065 (Kolsrud 1913: 209; Crawford 2014: 149–151). Torolf holdt til på Birgisey (Birsey), som også var jarleresidens. Men ordningen med en felles biskop for Orknøyene og Shetland har i første omgang trolig vært situasjonsbestemt og midlertidig. Mye er uklart med hensyn til Torolfs etterfølgere. Også Adalbert, som ifølge Kolsrud etterfulgte Torolf, og som seinere kan ha blitt forflyttet til Nidaros, ble trolig vigslet av sin navnebror erkebiskopen i Bremen i 1067 eller 1072, mens Rudolf ble vigslet av erkebiskopen i York etter anmodning fra Pål Torfinnsson jarl i 1073. Hvem av disse to biskopene som var hvor og når, er uklart. Om Roger, som også ble vigslet av erkebiskopen i York i 1102, og som var død i 1108, vet vi ellers ingenting. Rudof Lovell, som ble vigslet av erkebiskopen av York i 1114, kom aldri til Orknøyene, selv om paven sendte anbefalingsbrev til kongene Øystein og Sigurd i Norge. Allerede i 1112 var nemlig Vilhelm, som skulle få tilnavnet den gamle, blitt utnevnt av kong Sigurd Magnusson Jorsalfar til biskop på Orknøyene (Imsen 2021). Vilhelm satt i embetet til 1168 og flyttet fra Birsey til Kirkwall etter 1135 (Kolsrud 1913: 295–297). En viktig del av hans embetstid falt med andre ord sammen med Ragnvald Kale Kolssons jarletid, som også med hensyn til de kirkelige forhold i jarledømmet skulle markere et epokeskifte med helgenkåring, katedralbygging og bisperesidens i Kirkwall. Fra Vilhelms tid kan vi med sikkerhet regne med at bispestolen på Orknøyene også hadde ansvaret for Shetland, noe som ble bekreftet ved opprettelsen av erkebispesetet i Nidaros 1152 eller 53. Men for de førti årene etter Torfinn jarls død er det usikkert om så var tilfelle.

Det er rimelig grunn til å tro at Shetland etter 1066, det vil si i Olav Kyrres tid, liksom Færøyene ble knyttet til det Vestlands-bispedømmet som kong Olav fikk opprettet i 1070, og som i det store og hele svarte til Gulatingslagen. I det hele tatt var det under Olav at Norge fikk en fastere inndeling i bispedømmer. Han har også fått æren av å ha grunnlagt Bergen by, som i løpet av hans kongstid utviklet seg til et

viktig sentrum både kommersielt og politisk for Vestlandet og trolig også for Vesterhavsøyene. Vestlandsbiskopen ble først plassert på øya Selje utenfor Stadt, Sankta Sunnivas øy. Hundre år seinere, da også domkirken i Bergen sto ferdig, ble bispesetet formelt flyttet til byen, hvor biskopene for det meste hadde oppholdt seg. Edvard Bull d.e. viser blant annet til den årlige avgiften 'sunnivamel' som bøndene på Shetland fortsatt betalte til bispestolen Bergen på 1300-tallet, og antar at avgiften trolig var blitt pålagt dem i forbindelse med byggingen av domkirken i Bergen.[13] Følgelig mener Bull at avgiften må ha vært innført før Shetland ble en del av Orknøy-kirken. Også Eldbjørg Haug er inne på tanken om en tidligere forbindelse mellom Shetland og Vestlands-bispedømmet.[14] Det kan legges til at ifølge Ronald G. Cant var den eldste lokale kirkeordningen på Shetland mer lik den vestnorske med et sterkere «kommunalt» preg enn den orknøyske, som var mer preget av jarlemakt og biskopsmakt (Cant 1984: 178).

Det er derfor nærliggende å tidfeste et samlet bispedømme for Orknøyene og Shetland til tida etter århundreskiftet, da Vilhelm den gamle ble biskop. Omtrent samtidig ble Færøyene skilt ut fra Bergen bispedømme, og i 1125 var også Sørvest-Norge blitt et eget bispedømme med Stavanger som bispesete. Det kan føyes til, at gjennom hele 1100-tallet og fram til og med utnevnelsen av tønsbergprosten Jofrøy til biskop i Kirkwall (†1246) har de norske kongene spilt en sentral rolle ved utnevnelsene av orknøybiskoper (Kolsrud 1913: 295–297). Unntaket kan være Bjarne Kolbeinsson skald († 1223), som var orknøying og nær knyttet til flere jarler, skjønt han hadde også norske aner. Bjarnes far, Kolbein Ruga, var ifølge Halvdan Koht opprinnelig fra Trøndelag (Imsen 2021; Koht 1949: 54). Fra slutten av 1300-tallet har de norske kongene, som nå også var nordiske unionskonger, igjen spilt en viktig rolle ved utnevnelse av biskoper til bispestolen i Kirkwall (Imsen 2021: 62).

De norske kongenes tid

Ifølge *Sverres saga* ble Harald Maddadson i 1195 tvunget til å avstå Shetland til kong Sverre, med alle skatter og avgifter, som det heter i forliket mellom kongen og jarlen. Sverre mente at Harald var skyld i øyskjeggenes forsøk på å styrte ham fra tronen.

[13] Se brev fra biskop Audfinn i Bergen til biskop Vilhelm av Orknøyene, datert mellom 1326 og 1328, om å hjelpe hans (Audfinns) fullmektige, presten Ivar, med innsamlingen av Sunnivamelet, som innbyggerne av Hjaltland fra gammel tid har betalt til St. Sunnivas skrin i Bergen (DN VII, nr. 119. jf. Hamre 1964, sp. 664). Det kan være den samme avgiften, nå under navnet St. Olavs toll, som ble betalt av shetlenderne til Bergenhus i 1537, og som tidligere hadde ligget til bispestolen i Bergen (NRR I: 53).

[14] Bull 1931: 134, jf. Haug 2009: 478. Fram til 1125 hadde også Rogaland med Stavanger hørt til Selje bispedømme.

Harald jarl måtte også finne seg i å dele alle bøtene av Orknøyene med kongen, som dertil beslagla godset etter de øyskjeggene, både fra Orknøyene og Shetland, som hadde falt i Florvåg året før. Slektningene fikk tre års innløsningsfrist. Deretter skulle godset tilfalle kongen som eiendom. Avtalen, som det gis et kort resyme av i sagaen, har foreligget som et eget dokument ifølge Magnus Lagabøtes hirdlov.

Sverre sendte sysselmannen Arne Lørja til Orknøyene. *Jarlesagaen* kan også berette at Harald Maddadson tidligere var blitt tvunget til å dele skatten av Caithness med den skotske kongen. I det hele tatt vingeklippes nå både jarlemakten og jarledømmet, som på den sørlige flanken ble mer skotsk, og på den nordlige mer norsk. Etter kong Sverres død (1202) ble sysselmannen Arne Lørja drept, og ifølge *Baglersagaen* tok Harald Maddadson tilbake Shetland. Haralds sønner, David og Jon, som delte jarledømmet da faren døde i 1206, ble i 1210 tvunget til å gi tilbake Shetland til kong Inge Bårdsson og dessuten godta strenge sanksjoner for brudd på forliket fra 1195. Siden lå Shetland fast under kongedømmet, og i verdslig forstand adskilt fra Orknøyene, men det kirkelige fellesskapet besto. Orknøyjarlen Magnus Gilbertsson ble i 1267, året etter freden i Perth mellom Norge og Skottland, tvunget til å fornye forliket fra 1195 samt godta en rekke andre pålegg. Fram til 1469 var Shetland både formelt og reelt den norske kongens land og shetlenderne hans undersåtter.

Bortsett fra referansene i *Sverres saga* og *Baglersagaen* forekommer Shetland og shetlendere bare sporadisk i de mer samtidige kongesagaene fra 1200-tallet. Fra nå av er vi stort sett henvist til dokumentkildene når det gjelder Shetlands politiske historie. Også dem er det få av, og det som er kjent fins i *Shetland Documents 1195–1579*, utgitt av John H. Ballantyne og Brian Smith.

Ifølge Brian Smith innebar kong Sverres anneksjon at Shetlands historie og institusjoner heretter «…under the aegis of the Norwegian, and later the Danish and Scottish kings…would diverge markedly from those of the adjacent group of islands.» (Smith 2003: 161) Det har han utvilsomt rett i da Shetland under kongelig norsk vern i århundrene som fulgte utviklet sin egenart som land innenfor rammene av det som etter hvert tok form av et norsk-norrønt samvelde.

Øyene fikk nå en kongelig sysselmann og trolig også en erkedekan, Nikolas. Han nevnes første gang i 1215 og skulle seinere bli biskop på Grønland. Et dansk kongebrev fra 1183 nevner til og med en *Henricus Hetlandensis episcopus*.[15] Eldbjørg Haug antar at det dreier seg om en shetlandsk erkedekan. I så fall kan det shetlandske erkedekanatet dateres til tida før Sverres anneksjon av øyene. Men denne påståtte shetlandsbiskopen er og blir et mysterium. Sikkert er det i alle fall at erkedekanene

[15] DD 1. rk., III, nr. 111. Henrik står i dette brevet som underskriver av den danske kongen Knut VIs stadfestelse av et eldre privilegiebrev for en rekke danske klostre.

på Shetland ser ut til i de fleste kirkelige saker, de rent sakramentale unntatt, å ha handlet med biskoppelig myndighet (Haug 2014: 120). Mange av dem er også blitt biskoper og må regnes som kongelige protegerer. For øvrig ligner dette på den kirkelige organiseringen på Man og Suderøyene, som også var et norsk skattland, som fra 1130-årene utgjorde et samlet bispedømme (Sodor), og som fra 1152/53 lå under erkebispestolen i Nidaros. Også det var delt i to erkedekanater med betydelig myndighet til erkedekanen på Suderøyene. Bispesetet var på Peel (Man), hvor også den andre erkedekanen holdt til. Etter hvert skulle også Orknøyene få egen erkedekan, men erkedekanen på Shetland rangerte først og var formann i domkapitlet i Kirkwall.

Sysselmannen het Gregorius Kik, og i 1223 deltok han på et stort riksmøte i Bergen. Gregorius var ifølge P.A. Munch gift med kong Sverres datter Cecilia.[16] Hvem som fulgte etter Gregorius, vet vi ikke, men ved slutten av århundret styrte Torvald Toresson øyene på hertug Håkons vegne. Torvald var fortsatt kongens mann på Shetland i 1330-årene, og omtales som herren til Papey, trolig fordi han holdt hus på den lille øya Papey (Papa Stour) rett utenfor vestkysten av Mainland. Et brev fra 1299 omtaler «hertugstova» på Papey (Crawford & Ballin Smith 1999). Også Torvald hadde familiebånd til en sidegren av det norske kongehuset, og arven etter ham og datteren Herdis, som ble fordelt blant noen av Norges fremste slekter, samt Munkeliv kloster i Bergen, kan vi følge langt inn på 1500-tallet (Smith 2011; jf. Helle 2002). Torvald var opprinnelig norsk, men ser ut til å ha blitt naturalisert shetlender med årene. Det samme kan gjelde Gregorius. I det hele tatt er norske stormenns økonomiske interesser på Shetland påfallende. Noe tilsvarende finner vi ikke i de andre skattlandene. I 1329 solgte drottseten Erling Vidkunsson en rekke eiendommer på Orknøyene til jarl Magnus Vs enke Katarina. Erling var da regent i Norge, og eiendommene hadde han etter sin avdøde orknøyske kone (RN IV, nr. 660, 661, 664). Ifølge William P.L. Thomson var dette «one of the few examples of an estate owned by a Norwegian landowner (in Orkney), and it contrasts with Shetland where much land was owned by absentee Norwegians (the Lords of Norway).» (Thomson 2001: 149–150)

I 1380-årene var trolig Malise Sperra kongens sysselmann på øyene. Det er noe uklart når han ble utnevnt til kongelig styringsmann på Shetland og tatt opp som medlem av det norske riksrådet; trolig skjedde det først mot slutten av 1380-tallet. Han ble også slått til ridder. Malise var skotte og hadde vært en av arvingene etter den siste orknøyjarlen av huset Strathearn, som også het Malise. Han døde trolig i

[16] Munch 1857: 653, note 3. Foruten Gregorius deltok også erkedekanen Nikolas fra Shetland, mens Orknøyene var representert ved Jon jarl og biskop Bjarne, og fra Færøyene biskop Sørkve, Smith 2003: 161.

1353 og hadde tre barnebarn, Alexander de Ard, Henrik Sinclair, og altså Malise Sperra. Både Alexander og Henrik aspirerte til jarletittelen da de ble myndige. I første omgang ble Alexander utnevnt til sysselmann på Orknøyene (1375), hvor han fikk et prøveår, men det var Henrik som i 1379 ble forlent med jarledømmet. Sammen med Henrik Sinclair var Malise Sperra til stede da Erik av Pommern i 1389 ble mottatt som norsk arvekonge av riksrådet (NgL 2. rk., I, s. 14–15). Som ridder, norsk riksråd og guvernør på Shetland må Malise kunne regnes til det norske riksaristokratiet, selv om han var utlending. Han faller dermed inn i rekken av kongelige styringsmenn etter Gregorius Kik. Av ukjente grunner ble Malise drept av sin fetter Hanrik i 1389 eller 1391, årstallet er noe uklart (Wærdahl 2011: 246). Han har også ligget i strid med Herdis Torvaldatters arvinger, deriblant Håkon Jonsson, som hadde vært guvernør på Orknøyene, og som i 1388 frasa seg arveretten til Norges trone og dermed ryddet veien for dronning Margrete og henne planer for tronfølgen etter Olav IVs død (1387) (DN III, nr. 478). Malises forsøk på å tilegne seg noe av jordegodset etter Herdis mislyktes (DN I, nr. 501).

Shetland ble ikke ei ordinær norsk sysle. Både Gregorius, Torvald og Malis hørte til toppsjiktet i det norske riksaristokratiet. Guvernør kan være en mer adekvat betegnelse. I 1418 forlente Erik av Pommern øyene til John Sinclair, sønn av jarlen Henrik I Sinclair og bror av jarlen Henrik II, som døde i 1420. Johns dødsår kjenner vi ikke, men han ble ikke sittende lenge som 'lord of Shetland', som han kalles i engelskspråklige tekster. Sett med britiske øyer betraktes Shetland heretter som et 'lordship'. Et tilsvarende begrep fins ikke på norsk, skjønt Absalon Taranger bruker begrepet 'lordskapet' Shetland én gang i sin norgeshistorie, men uten å si noe mer om det (1917: 144). John mottok lenet på livstid med full myndighet til å styre på vegne av kongen, og med rett til å nyte alle kongelige inntekter. Etter hans død skulle øyene umiddelbart tilbakeføres til kongen og hans etterfølgere (DN II, nr. 647; jf. Ballantyne & Smith 1999: 14). Hvorvidt Johns forlening fortjener betegnelsen 'a feudal grant', som enkelte britiske historikere har tydd til, kan være en smakssak. I britisk sammenheng gir betegnelsen en viss mening, da føydale forhold preget skotsk rett, likeså passer begrepet 'lordship' godt inn i en føydalrettslig terminologi, men begge deler er ganske fremmed for norsk forvaltningsrett og dermed også misvisende for tida før pantsettingen i 1469. Den britiske begrepsbruken kan også sies å speile et skotsk nasjonalt perspektiv på Nordøyenes politiske historie i seinmiddelalderen; Orknøyene og Shetland ble skottifisert, heter det seg, og dermed falt også pantsettingen inn som en selvsagt brikke i en forutbestemt overgang til Skottland. Etter at skottene overtok øyene ble imidlertid 'lordship' også offentlig betegnelse på landet Shetland, men det er en annen historie. John ble ikke delegerte noen kongelige

høyhetsretter, men fikk lenet fritt mot tjeneste, kan vi si. Arrangementet ble et engangstilfelle. Og dessuten var Shetland fortsatt et land i korporativ forstand, noe vi straks skal komme tilbake til.

Mellom 1391 og 1418 kan det ha vært et slags fogdestyre på Shetland, lignende det vi finner i Norge fra slutten av 1300-tallet og utover i seinmiddelalderen. Kongen kan også ha gitt deler av kronens inntekter av Shetland til fortjente menn, som i 1412 da kong Eriks «troo þiænare ok man» Alexander van Klapam ble forlent med kronens inntekter av Northmavine, ei halvøy nordvest på Meginland (Mainland). Det dreide seg om skatt, landskyld og veitsle, drapsbøtene tegngjeld og fridkaup var unntatt. Samtidig forbød kongen alle menn, fogder og embetsmenn å hindre Aleksander i innkrevingen av disse inntektene (DN II nr. 623, jf. nr. 625). Det ser ikke ut til at Alexander er blitt pålagt administrative oppgaver, og ut fra brevteksten må vi tro at andre kongelige ombudsmenn har skjøttet kronens offentlige oppgaver på øyene. Slike ikke-administrative forleninger forekom stadig oftere også i Norge og i de øvrige skattlandene, eksempelvis på Færøyene.

Mellom John Sinclairs død, trolig tidlig i 1420-årene, og pantsettingen av øyene til den skotske kongen i 1469 vet vi svært lite om hvordan øyene ble styrt. Mye tyder på at Shetland etter Johns død i administrativ forstand er blitt betraktet som et vanlig len. Over hele kongens rike ble det gammelnorske embetsstyret erstattet av det vi kaller et lensstyre. Det dreide seg altså ikke om noen slags føydalisering av riksstyret. Lenene var forvaltningsenheter hvor de kongelige lensmennene, eller lensherrer, som de gjerne kalles av norske historikere, styrte etter klart definerte betingelser, som også er blitt skriftfestet i det som seinere ble kalt slottslover. Den administrative terminologien i seinmiddelalderens Norge er imidlertid vekslende og til dels inkonsekvent. Også de fremste kongelige lensmennene kalles ofte fogder eller høvedsmenn, og vi må derfor passe oss for ikke å forveksle dem med de fogdene vi møter som lensherretjenere ute i distriktene.

Et dokument datert Kaldbakk 28. juni 1431 angående en lokal eiendomstvist ble beseglet av Thomas Håkonsson, som kalles «syslumaðr in Meginlandi i Hetlandi» (Ballantyne & Smith 1999: 14–16). Mainland var hovedøya på Shetland. Det kan derfor ha vært flere sysselmenn samtidig på Shetland i tida før pantsettingen. I så fall ligner styringsordningen på Shetland den vi finner på Færøyene utover 1400–1500-tallet. Også der var det en rekke sysselmenn rundt om på øyene, som mest svarer til det vi Norge dels kalles bygdelensmenn og dels fogder i seinmiddelalderen, og som utgjorde det nederste trinnet i forvaltningssystemet (Grohse 2021: 213–214). De har igjen stått under en kongelig lensherre. Hvem som i så fall har hatt det overordnede ansvaret for styret av Shetland er, liksom tilfellet med Færøyene, uklart.

Den kongelige lensherren har neppe oppholdt seg i Shetland eller på Færøyene. Sannsynligvis har høvedsmannen i Bergen hatt ansvaret for styret av de to skattlandene, som også i mange andre forhold var nær knyttet til vestlandshovedstaden. Således fungerte Olav Nilsson (ca. 1440) både som høvedsmann på Bergenhus og øverste hirdstjore, det vil si lensherre, over Island (Imsen 2014: 61). Det var også høvedsmannnen i Bergen som gjennom hele seinmiddelalderen hadde ansvaret for å kreve inn og holde regnskap over kongens inntekter fra skattlandene, og særlig har man vært opptatt av at drapsbøtene skulle gå uavkortet inn i kongens kasse i Bergen. Det ble tydelig markert både da Alexander le Ard ble utnevnt til sysselmann på Orknøyene i 1375 og da Alexander van Klapam ble forlent med kronens inntekter av Northmavine i 1412 (Imsen 2007: 214–216). Vi ser også at drapsbøtene fra Island er blitt betalt til en høyere øvrighetsinstans i Norge (trolig Bergen), og at drapsmannen har måttet framstille seg personlig for kansleren i Oslo (Imsen 2014: 64–69).

Landet

Vi vet lite om hvordan kongemakten innrettet seg på Shetland før slutten av 1200-tallet. Vi kjenner navnet på én sysselmann tidlig i århundret, trolig har det vært flere etter Gregorius Kik, og vi må anta at kongen har hatt et apparat for innkreving av skatt og avgifter, samt utøvd politi- og en viss straffemyndighet. Landet har også hatt en erkedekan, han var førstemann ved domkapitlet i Kirkwall og nest etter biskopen i bispedømmet. I 1273 hadde Magnus Håkonsson Lagabøte bestemt at den eldste av hans sønner, Eirik, skulle etterfølge ham som konge, mens den yngste sønnen Håkon skulle bli hertug med et eget hertugrike, som besto av området rundt Oslo, deler av Sør- og Sørvestlandet, samt Shetland og Færøyene. Delingen var nok hovedsakelig diktert av dynastiske interesser, men strategiske motiver kan ikke utelukkes. Således sier Ronald G. Cant at: «In the thirteenth century, indeed, Shetland tended to be grouped with Faroe in the pattern of Norwegian imperial administration as a kind of deliberate buffer-zone between the Earldom of Orkney to the south and the Commonwealth of Iceland to the north» (Cant 1983: 178). Hva slags strategiske interesser Cant sikter til, utdyper han ikke. Imidlertid føyer han til: «Here local autonomy might be tolerated, and even encouraged, because it ensured social and economic stability and held no threat to the supremacy of the Norwegian crown.» Da Eirik døde i 1299 overtok hertug Håkon Magnusson tronen som Håkon V. Han var en geskjeftig og styringsglad mann som har satt spor etter seg i alle delene av hertugdømmet, og som konge i hele sitt vidstrakte kongerike.

I 1298 finner vi lagmannen på Shetland sammen med biskopen på Færøyene på oppdrag for hertug Håkon. De skulle utarbeide en retterbot tilpasset Færøyenes

spesielle næringsforhold, noe som hadde vist seg nødvendig ved innføringen av den nye fellesloven for Norge, *Magnus Håkonssons landslov* (1274–1276), også i skattlandene. Året etter rapporteres det at hertugelige sendemenn stadig har vært på farten mellom Norge og Shetland. Det gjaldt trolig den nye skatteordningen, som ble innført på Shetland det året, og som innebar at det norske markebolet erstattet takseringssystemet fra jarletida med eyrisland og penningland. Shetland skulle bli det eneste skattlandet som innførte det norske markebolet, skjønt Andreas Mortensen har sannsynliggjort at en tilsvarende reform ble innført på Færøyene i 1298. Mortensen hevder også med god grunn at Færøyene og Shetland fiskalt sett er blitt behandlet under ett i Håkon Magnussons tid, både som hertug og konge. Blant annet viser han til Håkon Vs testamente hvor alle de kongelige inntektene av Shetland og Færøyene skulle gå til Apostelkirken i Bergen så lenge byggearbeidene pågikk (Smith 2000; jf. Smith 2002; Mortensen 2023: 51 og 42). Det er også grunn til å anta at domkirken i Kirkjubøur har vært under bygging i tiårene rundt 1300, selv om vi ikke har noen sikker datering. Ellers er det uvisst om kirken noen gang ble ferdig. I vår sammenheng er det imidlertid interessant at klebersteinen i domkirken trolig er hentet fra Shetland (Eliasen & Stige 2024: 228).

Brian Smith har trolig rett i at den lokale tingordningen, som i dag speiles i stedsnavn med suffikset -ting, som Nesting, Lunasting m.fl., og som det ikke finnes maken til andre steder, har sammenheng med innføringen av Magnus Håkonssons landslov (Smith 2009). Det kan imidlertid ikke utelukkes at nydannelsene i rettsvesenet skyldtes det reformarbeidet som kong Magnus gjennomførte i slutten av 1260-årene, og som var motivert av Håkon IV Håkonssons planer om reviderte lovbøker for de norske lagdømmene. Både på Island og Færøyene ble nemlig den reviderte lovboka for Gulatingslagen fra 1269 innført i 1271, og med den også lagmannsembete og ny tingordning. Uansett tidfesting av reformene, ser vi at Shetland ved slutten av århundret har fått et lagting med sete på Tingvoll og altså egen lagmann.

Lagmannen var embetsdommer og ble utnevnt av kongen. Trolig ble lagmennene på Shetland som i de andre skattlandene rekruttert lokalt. Seinere er de blitt valgt av landsfolket, men sannsynligvis godkjent av en sentral instans i Norge. Hvordan det var med godkjenningen etter pantsettingen i 1469 vet vi ikke, men lagmannsstillingen besto til inn på 1500-tallet. Ennå så seint som i 1539 har kong Christian III utnevnt lagmann til Shetland, skjønt det var et slag i lufta (NRR I, s. 57). Til lagtinget sendte de lokale tingkretsene lagrettemenn, det vil si autoriserte lekdommere, som skulle dømme sammen med lagmannen. Også kongens hirdmenn på øyene var pliktige til å møte på lagtinget. Lagmannen og lagtinget med de lokale delegatene tegnet landet,

kan vi si. Reformene førte til at Shetland fikk status som eget rettssubjekt, eller sagt på en annen måte, øyene ble offisielt godkjent som et land i korporativ forstand. Vi kan heretter kalle Shetland for en landskommune. Om Shetland også har fått sitt eget landssegl liksom de andre skattlandene, er likevel uvisst, men Barbara Crawford har argumentert godt for at et slikt segl har eksistert (Crawford 1978; jf. Imsen 2014: 39).

Selv om reformene i rettsstell og administrasjon signaliserte sterkere kongemakt, har menige shetlenderes stemme blitt hørt. Det magre brevmaterialet vi har bevart fra tida rundt århundreskiftet vitner om det. Både i 1299 og i 1307 har modige kvinner stått opp mot øvrigheten. Beskyldninger om uregelmessigheter i forbindelse med omlegningen til markebol, som Ragnhild Simonsdatter framsatte mot sysselmannen Torvald Toresson, ble tatt så pass alvorlig at Torvald måtte be lagtinget om å granske saken, og granskingsrapporten ble sendt videre til kongen selv. Få år seinere fikk Torvald nok en klage mot seg. I 1307 ble han stevnet inn for lagtinget av Bjørg fra Kollavåg, som mente å ha blitt gjenstand for urimelig bøteleggelse. Før endelig avgjørelse ved lagtinget er saken blitt drøftet med gullatingslagmannen i Bergen. Og selv om denne konsultasjonen førte til nedsettelse av bøtene og rett til innløsning av tapt jord, sto Bjørg på sitt (Imsen 2002).

Vi ser altså at lagmannen på Shetland i vanskelige saker har søkt råd hos sin kollega i Bergen, en tradisjon som fortsatte til utpå 1500-tallet. Det kan derfor ikke utelukkes at Gulatinget har hatt en slags overordnet posisjon i forhold til lagtingene i de nærmeste skattlandene, Shetland og Færøyene. Dette styrker antakelsen om at skattlandene fra gammelt av er blitt betraktet som tilhørende Gulatingets lovområde. Tilsvarende ser vi at både Jemtland og Hålogaland med sine egne lagmenn og landsting likevel regnes som tilhørende Frostatingslagen, og seinere ser vi at det er frostatingsversjonen av Landsloven man har forholdt seg til både i Trøndelag, Nordmøre, Romsdal, Jemtland og Hålogaland (f. eks. Imsen (red.) 2014: 356). På samme måten ser vi at man på Færøyene har brukt gulatingsversjonen av lovboka. Vi har dessverre ikke bevart noe eksemplar av shetlendernes lovbok, men det er ikke urimelig at de også har fått gulatingsversjon av loven, liksom Færøyene (A. Mortensen 2003).

Samlet sett kan vi si at den norske kongens rike ved Håkon Vs død i 1319 framstår som et samvelde med en fastlandsdel og en rekke landskommuner i rikets periferi. At Shetland også sett fra de andre skattlandene er blitt forstått som et land for seg framgår blant annet av islendingenes store lovbok, *Grágás,* hvor Islands lover før innføringen av *Landsloven* tilpasset islandske forhold (*Jónsbók*) er kodifisert. Der opp-

regnes den norske kongens skattland som følger: Øyene, Grønland og Shetland.[17] Det er også blitt foretatt separate kongehyllinger for de enkelte skattlandene.

Ved omdannelsen av skattlandene til landskommuner må vi tro at kongemakten har hatt to sammenhengende mål, å lette styret av disse perifere landene og samtidig sikre kongemaktens grep om det insulære riket utenfor Norge. Lovboka skulle binde det hele sammen og gi kongens velde et mer ensartet preg. Håkon V har nok også tenkt at nyordningen skulle tjene som et redskap for å styrke kongemakten. Det ser vi demonstrert blant annet på Island før 1320 og som vi har sett på Shetland i Håkon Vs tid. Men på lenger sikt skulle ordningen bidra til sterkere provinsielt selvstyre, noe som ikke minst skyldtes dannelsen av nordiske kongefellesskap og en kongemakt som i seinmiddelalderen prioriterte Østersjøen og Baltikum framfor de norske kongenes tradisjonelle interessesfære i vest.

Orienteringen nordover mot Færøyene som hertug Håkons rikskonstruksjon innebar, og som han videreførte som konge, ble trolig forsterket seinere på 1300-tallet. På sett og vis ble hans hertugrike gjenskapt ved midten av 1300-tallet, da kong Magnus Eriksson delte sitt norsk-svenske rike mellom sønnene Håkon og Erik. Magnus beholdt skattlandene, jarledømmet Orknøyene unntatt, for seg selv. Han døde i 1374, men først i 1377 ble Håkon hyllet i skattlandene. Det sparsomme færøyske brevmaterialet fra begynnelsen av 1400-tallet vitner om fortsatt kontakt mellom Shetland og Færøyene (Jakobsen 1907: 38–43, 45–47).

Orknøykirken var det eneste formelle bindeleddet mellom Shetland og Orknøyene etter 1195. Det kirkelige felleskapet innebar imidlertid mer enn bare geistlige embetsrelasjoner. Et brev utstedt i Kirkwall i 1369 illustrerer hvordan de to delene av det gamle jarledømmet nå kunne operere sammen som separate land. Da ble representanter fra begge øygruppene trukket inn for å løse en konflikt mellom biskop Vilhelm i Kirkwall og kongens styringsmann på Orknøyene, Håkon Jonsson. I forliksbrevet, som ble utstedt av landsdelegatene og beseglet av partene samt utstederne. heter det: «Det ble også bestemt og samtykket i at biskopen og de mektigste mennene i Orknøyene og Shetland heretter skal være først og veie tyngst i alle råd som angår kongen, kirken og folket i samsvar med landets lover og sedvaner. Og at biskopen skal bruke gode innfødte menn fra Orknøyene og Shetland i sin tjeneste, slik biskopene har det ellers i den norske kongens rike (DN I, nr. 404).

Brevet vitner om at elitene på Orknøyene og Shetland fortsatt har vært i stand til å samarbeide i politiske spørsmål med hjemmel i felles lov og sedvaner. Dessuten har spørsmålet om innfødsrett til lokale stillinger i kirke og stat vært like viktig for

[17] Gunnar Karlsson et al. 1992: 53, 479. Denne samlekodeksen er trolig blitt til etter midten av 1200-tallet, og må ses i sammenheng med lovrevisjonene på Island i 1271 og 1281 (Rohrbach 2014: 125).

folkene på Nordøyene som for islendingene i begynnelsen av 1300-tallet, eller for den saks skyld nordmennene i 1420-årene og seinere. Utstedernes navn vitner om både skotsk og norrønt opphav, og om en felles insulær identitet. Ennå så seint som i 1430-årene karakteriseres skottene som utlendinger av orknøyingene og shetlenderne, selv om mange av brevets utstedere bærer skotske navn (Imsen 2012). Særlig på Orknøyene ser det ut til å ha vært mange slike naturaliserte skotter. Vi skal ikke her drøfte det evinnelige spørsmålet om 'skottifisering' av Nordøyene. Det er et spørsmål som har preget vår tids nasjons-orienterte historiografi, skotsk så vel som norsk, men som nok var lite relevant for datidens orknøyinger eller shetlendere, som hegnet om sitt eget.

Epilog

Lite endret seg de første par generasjonene etter pantsettingen til Jakob III i 1469 og annekteringen av Nordøyene i det skotske parlamentet i 1472. Jarledømmet på Orknøyene ble også avskaffet det året og lagt direkte under den skotske kongen, men det betydde likevel ikke at Sinclairenes tid på Nordøyene var over. Etter hvert kom de tilbake som forpaktere eller kongelige ombudsmenn både på Orknøyene og på Shetland. Dessuten eide de store gods på øyene. I 1488 var David Sinclair til Sumburgh, uektefødt sønn av den siste sinclairjarlen på Orknøyene, William, og stor jordegodseier på Shetland, kongelig skotsk styringsmann på øyene. I samsvar med dansk-norsk terminologi kalles han henholdsvis fogd (foud of Yetland) eller høvedsmann (hotzman of Hietland), men sheriff forekommer også i de skotske kildene. Samtidig var han fra 1491 i kong Hans tjeneste. Kong Hans beæret ham også med riddertittel og omtalte ham som sin «beloved man and servant". I 1496-97/98 var David til og med høvedsmann på Bergenhus samtidig som han ble kalt «landz høfdinghie i Hjaetland." Dessuten ble David i 1490-årene innvilget kongelige rettigheter over Orknøykirken både av kong Jacob IV av Skottland og kong Hans.[18] Det ser ut til at han har forsøkt å ri to hester samtidig. Og i 1501 deltok David på Knut Alvssons side i opprøret mot kongen (Taranger 1917: 221, 223). På sett og vis ligner David Sinclairs posisjon på Shetland Malises Sperras i slutten av 1380-tallet, begge er de blitt slått til riddere av den norske kongen, og begge er blitt oppfattet som guvernører på øyene. Etter David ble Thorvald Hendriksson of Brough i Nesting den skotske kongens hovedfogd og guvernør på Shetland. Han hadde rot i det lokale aristokratiet, som gjennom flere generasjoner hadde dannet det sosiale grunnlaget for shetlandskommunen (Smith 1995: 93–97). Hva som fulgte etter ham, vet jeg ikke.

[18] Crawford 1977: 96–98. I 1472 var bispedømmet på Orknøyene blitt lagt under det nyopprettede erkebispedømmet i St. Andrews, men under protest fra erkebispen i Nidaros, som fortsatte å kreve bispestolen tilbakeført til Nidaroskirken.

Vi skal ikke dvele ved tida etter 1469 eller David Sinclairs rolle i skotsk og norsk politikk. Den landskommunale styringsordningen med lagmann og lagrettemenn var intakt fram til 1540-årene, da skotsk sheriffstyre gradvis ble innført. *Landsloven* ble likevel ikke avskaffet før i 1611. Trass i skotsk overtakelse orienterte shetlenderne seg som før mot Vestlandet og Bergen, i alle fall fram til 1600-tallet. Og det gamle norrøne språket, kalt norn, holdt seg lengst på Shetland, hvor gamle folk fortsatt behersket forfedrenes språk i andre halvdel av 1700-tallet (Barnes 1998: 22–27).

Bergen hadde siden 1100-tallet fungert som en slags hovedstad for skattlandene. At Bergen ved slutten av 1200-tallet fikk monopol på all handel mellom skattlandene og Norge bidro ytterligere til å styrke det økonomiske hopehavet. Og Bergen beholdt sin sentrale stilling i handelsnettverket, selv om stapelmonopolet ble svekket utover i seinmiddelalderen da mange tyskere, og da særlig kjøpmenn fra Hamburg, begynte å seile direkte på Shetland og Færøyene. Jørn Øyrhagen Sunde hevder at inntil «the second half of the 16th century Shetlanders, like Orcadians, were counted as Norwegians and do therefore not appear in Norwegian custom records» (Sunde 2009: 12). Shetlenderne og orknøyingene har med andre ord nytt særordninger med hensyn til toll og avgifter når de brakte sine varer til Bergen, sannsynligvis fordi de i prinsippet var hjemmehørende i et av rikets biland. Det var fortsatt slik at man fra norsk side regnet med at pantene fra 1468 og 1469 skulle innløses. Folk fra Nordøyene ble med andre ord ikke betraktet som utlendinger, men de var heller ikke nordmenn. Det kan føyes til at man i Bergen skilte mellom orknøyinger og shetlendere. Orknøyingene ble snart omtalt som skotter, mens folk fra Shetland fortsatt ble kalt hjelter (Helle 1982: 804–805, 828, 852). Navnet Hjeltefjorden ved innseilingen til byen forteller sitt om det nære forholdet mellom øyboerne i vest og vestlandshovedstaden.

Referanser

Forkortelser
DD = Diplomatarium Danicum
DN = Diplomatarium Norvegicum
HN = Historia Norwegie
NgL = Norges gamle Love
NRR = Norske rigsregistranter
RN = Regesta Norvegica

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Book review

Anne Pauline Grøgaard, Sigurd Hareide og Henning Laugerud (red.), *«Våre forfedres kirke». Tekster av, om og til Klosterlasse.* Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning. Serie B: Skrifter CXII. St. Olav forlag 2023. 446 sider.

Anmeldelse av Øystein Rian

I intet annet europeisk land er skillet mellom middelalderen og tidlig nytid skarpere enn i Norge. Tidlig nytid kom som et kirurgisk inngrep politisk og religiøst, med selvstendighetstapet og reformasjonen, gjennomført etter et dansk vedtak 30. oktober 1536, i *norgesparagrafen* i Kristian 3.s danske håndfestning. Tapet av offentlige norske arkiv, kirkelige og verdslige, ble ødeleggende for minnet om seinmiddelalderen, og de materielle minnene ble så desimert at det var ruinene som gjorde mest inntrykk på ettertiden. Reformatorene sørget for at middelalderens ettermæle ble svertet av fordømmelser, mens det overveldende flertallet av folket ikke etterlot seg skriftlige utsagn om hvordan de opplevde det som hadde skjedd. Under påvirkning av historiematerialismen var historikerne fra 1910 til 1980 tilfreds med å beregne jordeiendomsfordelingen, mens den politiske historien og kirkehistorien ble liggende i det halvmørke som kildetapet syntes å dømme dem til. I de siste tiårene har dette endret seg, og boken om Laurentius Norvegus bidrar sitt til å bygge bru mellom tidlig nytid og middelalderen.

Denne boken er halvveis en antologi, halvveis en kildeutgave. Antologien omfatter snaut halvparten av boken, sju nyskrevne artikler om motreformasjonen og dens hovedperson i Norden, i boktittelen omtalt med sitt mest kjente navn, *Klosterlasse*. Han ble født i Tønsberg i 1538–40 og døde i Vilnius i 1622. Klosterlasse var et fyndig økenavn som hans svenske fiender satte på ham i hans tid i Stockholm i 1576–80. Det skygget for hans egentlige navn. Som jesuittpater het han *Laurentius Nicolai Norvegus*, avledet av hans norske navn som noe vaklende ble skrevet Lauritz/Laurits Nielssøn/Nielssen i fordansket versjon. Adjektivet *Norvegus* betyr 'norsk' og tilsvarer 'af Norrige' på folkespråket (se nedenfor). Trolig har han under sin oppvekst i Tønsberg hett Lars Nilsson. Artiklene er bearbeidde foredrag, holdt på et seminar arrangert av Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge 6. mai 2022, ved 400-årsjubileet for Laurentius Norvegus' død.

Kildeutgaven utgjør godt og vel halvparten av boken og inneholder tilrettelagte kildetekster, forfattet av Laurentius Norvegus, i tre bolker. Her er hans teologiske tekster mest i fokus, mens hans innsats som forfatter av embetsskriv og brev i mindre grad blir presentert. Vi må ikke glemme at fra før 1700 har vi ikke så omfattende kilder etter virksomheten til noen andre nordmenn enn Laurentius Norvegus, erkebiskop Olav Engelbrektsson og Norges rikes kansler Jens Bjelke (1580–1659). Redaktørene, Anna Pauline Grøgaard, Sigurd Hareide og Henning Laugerud, har forsynt hver bolk med innføringer i omstendighetene bak de presenterte kildene. Det er god og nyttig lesning, de besvarer mange spørsmål leseren trolig vil ha til kildene, men ikke alle.

Den første bolken i kildeutgaven er viet det såkalte *Studentbrevet*. Det ble utgitt på latin i 1602 og på dansk i 1608. Her stod det at brevet var fra danske og norske studenter i utlandet, stilet til professorene ved universitetet i København. Men ikke bare til professorene: 'Alle erlige oc fromme Danske mend tilschrefuit af Lauritz Nielsson af Norrige', trykt i Braunsberg. I virkeligheten var det altså Laurentius Norvegus som hadde skrevet brevet, kanskje i samarbeid med sine danske og norske studenter. Her er den danske versjonen gjengitt, delvis tilpasset moderne norsk. Det er en lang artikkel som først forsvarer den katolske kirken og dens lære mot protestantiske anklager. Dernest går forfatteren over til å liste opp ankepunkter mot reformasjonen.

Den andre bolken dreier seg om en langt større tekst, opprinnelig utgitt på latin i Krakow i 1604, under tittelen *Confessio Christiana*, av Laurentius Nicolai Norvegus. Året etter (1605) ble den utgitt på dansk i Braunsberg, med tittelen *Den kristne bekjennelse*, av 'Laurits Nielssen af Norige'. Boken på latin omfatter snaut 300 sider, det er akademisk latin på et høyt nivå.[1] Den danske oversettelsen er på over 300 sider i et omstendelig og haltende språk, mindre lesbart enn studentbrevet. Her er gjengitt et forkortet utvalg av den danske versjonen, til dels tilpasset moderne norsk. Det er å håpe at *Confessio Christiana* i et seinere prosjekt kan bli oversatt i sin helhet direkte fra originalen. Det tematiske innholdet i denne boken er uhyre interessant, ordnet systematisk og pedagogisk i 500 spørsmål og svar. Spørsmålene tar utgangspunkt i protestantiske påstander om og anklager mot den katolske læren og behandler alle sentrale spørsmål i dogme og tro. Slik framstår verket som en omfattende katolsk apologi. Denne apologien bygger på en katolsk katekismetradisjon som ble fornyet i årene etter det store kirkekonsilet i Trient/Trento.

Den tredje kildebolken har tittelen 'Latinske tekster i oversettelse' og inneholder dokumenter om Laurentius' karriere i jesuittordenen, med viktige biografiske opp-

[1] E-post fra Espen Due-Karlsen, 8. august 2024.

lysninger, samt rekonstruksjoner av brev til og fra faren i Tønsberg og fullstendige brev til og fra kardinal Robert Bellarmin, den viktigste av Laurentius´ foresatte i det jesuittiske og romerske hierarkiet. Oversettelsene fra latin er utført av Victoria Marie Mostue. Dette er nyttige smakebiter for interesserte lesere, nødvendigvis et lite utsnitt av det store brevmaterialet som den flittige og utholdende norske jesuittpateren etterlot seg og som den katolske kirkens arkivskapende og –bevarende evne har reddet for ettertiden.

Hele boken er en innføring i Laurentius Norvegus' univers. Dette er tidligere detaljert dokumentert i stort omfang av Oskar Garstein i hans monumentale verk om motreformasjonen i Skandinavia: *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia*, Vol. 1–4, Oslo/Leiden 1963–1992, supplert med Garsteins like grundige biografi med den poetiske tittelen *Klosterlasse. Stormfuglen som ville gjenerobre Norden for katolisismen*, Oslo 1998. En bearbeiding av dette omfangsrike stoffet er absolutt på sin plass, men redaktørene burde ha koordinert bedre opplysningene de gir i innledningene til kildene med de sju artiklene i antologien. For leseren har dette blitt mer tungvint å sette seg inn i ved at boken mangler personregister. Jeg måtte lete meg fram til utdypende opplysninger om Robert Bellarmin i Laugeruds biografiske artikkel – i tillegg til leksikonartikler om ham. Bellarmin var Laurentius' veileder i universitetet i Leuven/Louvain på 1560-tallet. De var jevnaldrende, men Bellarmins vei til en akademisk karriere i jesuittordenen var lettere og raskere enn nordmannens. Bellarmin betydde svært mye for Laurentius også etter studieårene. Da ble Bellarmin blant annet erkebiskop i Italia og en innflytelsesrik kardinal i Roma.

Bellarmin var italiener og bør egentlig bli omtalt som Roberto Bellarmino, han er allment anerkjent som en av Kirkens store teologiske lærere, med varig ry også i ettertiden. Han var også ellers en mann med beundringsverdige egenskaper, i 1933 ble han kanonisert som helgen, og en kirke i Roma ble viet til ham. Bellarmino er skytshelgen for kateketene i Kirken, det grunnfester hans ry som teologisk lærer og veileder. At Laurentius Norvegus stod ham nær, forteller hvor betydningsfull også Laurentius var. Ikke minst med hensyn til akademisk nivå i teologi og pedagogikk, men også når det gjaldt strategi og taktikk i forsøkene på å rekatolisere de nordiske landene. Bellarmino var en klok mann, og i brevvekslingen med den norske jesuitten får man inntrykk av at Laurentius delte denne egenskapen, stikk motsatt det ryktet motstanderne klistret på ham under den bitre religionsfeiden han deltok i fra 1576 til 1622.

Laurentius Norvegus tok et appellerende hovedgrep både i Studentbrevet og i Bekjennelsesboken. Det var å vekke lesernes pietetsfølelse for sine forfedre: Å tale nedsettende om den katolske tro var å miskjenne forfedrene som hadde denne troen.

Mot Luthers parole om skriften alene, mobiliserte Laurentius 1500 års kirkehistorie: Det var Kirken som hadde utformet troen i alle sine deler, med stor innsikt og omtanke. Dette var en helhet som møysommelig var blitt skapt av lærde menn og vedtatt på alminnelige kirkemøter. Dermed var det noe som ikke enkeltpersoner hadde rett til å rive i stykker. Se hva det førte til, skrev Laurentius Norvegus: stadig mer splittelse og strid! Kristus, apostlene og kirkefedrene hadde derimot manet til enhet. Denne enheten stod Kirken for, den var en enhet i tid og rom.

Særlig i Bekjennelseboken var argumentene på et høyt intellektuelt nivå og med subtile redegjørelser for vanskelige dogmatiske spørsmål. For eksempel når det gjaldt forholdet mellom gode gjerninger og Guds nåde. Laurentius Norvegus avviste blankt at den gudommelige nåden ikke var avgjørende ifølge katolsk lære. At mennesker kunne kjøpe seg til frelse var den mest fundamentale anklagen fra protestantisk hold. Men Laurentius gav likevel ikke etter for kritikken mot gjerningskristendommen. De gode gjerningene hadde sin selvstendige plass i frelsesverket, i et vekselspill med Guds nåde som bare en teolog kan fatte (min merknad). Enkelt gjenfortalt ble gjerningene stimulert av nåden, og nåden ble påvirket av gjerningene. Laurentius redegjorde også inngående for hvilken positiv rolle helgener spilte i de troendes forhold til Gud.

De 500 spørsmålene og svarene konstruerte et nøye gjennomtenkt byggverk. Laurentius lærte denne kirkelige ingeniørkunsten i det stimulerende jesuittmiljøet som han deltok i med stor og utholdende iver i 60 år, fra tidlig på 1560-tallet til han døde i 1622. I storparten av denne tiden var han professor, veileder og administrator ved jesuittiske sentra og læresteder i Leuven, Roma, Wien, Olmütz, Praha, Graz, og Braunsberg. Et viktig trekk ved hans personlighet var det sterke inntrykket han gjorde på studenter. Hans liv var omskiftelig og dramatisk, særlig i 1576–80 da han ledet rekatoliseringsarbeidet i Sverige. Da virket han som lærer og organisator i full storm, kraftig motarbeidd av det lutherske presteskapet som i økende grad hadde myndighetene i ryggen. Selv under disse ekstreme vilkårene fikk den forhatte Klosterlasse mange tilhengere blant de unge mennene som han rekrutterte til sin skole på Gråmunkeholmen i Stockholm. Flere av dem fulgte med Laurentius Norvegus ut av landet, da han ble presset til å forlate Sverige og gjenopptok virket ved universiteter i katolske land, alltid med nye oppgaver og planer for framstøt i Norden. Ifølge Laugerud oppsøkte i alt 60 svensker Laurentius i utlandet. Over 40 år seinere, i Riga i 1621, møtte oldingen Laurentius Norvegus den seierrike hærføreren Gustav 2. Adolf og svarte djervt på svenskekongens rasende utskjelling før han ble deportert fra byen.

I ettertid har Laurentius Norvegus' nederlag i de stadige framstøtene for å rekatolisere Norden preget ettermælet. Fra han døde i 1622 og i 300 år etterpå bar

han nederlagets stigma, og navnet Klosterlasse gav ham et latterlig ettermæle: Han var en virkelighetsfjern tosk som gjentatte ganger ble satt ettertrykkelig på plass av myndighetene i Sverige og Danmark når han prøvde å innynde seg med sin frekke, farlige, men foreldede papisme. Taperstempelet ble dessuten forsterket av den interne frustrasjonen blant jesuittene som strevde med å få innpass i de nordiske landene. Som en utpreget intellektuell organisasjon var jesuittordenen breddfull av diskusjoner og uenigheter om strategi og taktikk. Dette går fram i to av bokens artikler, av Henning Laugeruds biografiske artikkel og av artikkelen til Fredrik Heiding SJ. om Stockholm-tiden. Heiding nyanserer riktignok konfliktbildet. Han skriver at de interne motsetningene blant jesuittene har blitt overdrevet. At Laurentius Norvegus ikke ble rammet av noe stigma internt i jesuittordenen, ble da også bekreftet av hans langvarige karriere i den.

I virkeligheten hadde Laurentius en realistisk oppfatning av hva som skulle til for å få fortgang på motreformasjonen i Norden. Denne realismen øste vann fra to kilder: fra folket og fra eliten.

Som det framgår av Henning Laugeruds biografiske artikkel om ham, hadde Laurentius Norvegus kontakt med nordmenn, dansker og svensker som oppsøkte katolske miljøer og institusjoner utenfor Norden. At de gjorde dette, viste at det fantes grobunn for katolisismen, særlig ettersom det her dreide seg om unge menn. Mange av dem gjennomførte prestestudier ved jesuittiske læresteder, vendte tilbake til sine hjemland og fikk presteembeter i den lutherske kongekirken der. De stod i brevveksling med katolikker i utlandet og kunne fortelle om undergrunnskatolisismen de selv hadde kjennskap til. Dette fenomenet synes å ha gjort seg sterkest gjeldende i Norge, ikke minst i Laurentius' hjemtrakter i Tønsberg-distriktet, noe som framgår av Henning Laugeruds andre artikkel i antologien, om Tønsberg og katolsk misjon etter reformasjonen. Før reformasjonen hadde Tønsberg vært en kirkeby med et titall kirker og klostre. Av dem overlevde to kirker. I et møte med Kristian 4. i Bergen i 1604 klagde superintendentene i Norge over at unge nordmenn oppsøkte katolske læresteder. Etter dette møtet utstedte kongen et forbud mot at nordmenn drog til jesuittiske læresteder, i første omgang med liten effekt.

Anna Pauline Grøgaard gir i sin artikkel en samlet redegjørelse for Laurentius Norvegus' forhold til Oslo-humanistene, først som elev ved Oslo katedralskole i 1550-årene, så som professor for oslohumanistenes sønner ved akademiet i Braunsberg 1601–1610, og endelig forteller hun om den dramatiske historien i tiden etter, særlig belyst av dokumenter fra den store prosessen mot kryptokatolske prester i Gjerpen i 1613, den endte med landsforvisning av de dømte prestene. Denne artikkelen er et

godt eksempel på hvordan en masteroppgave kan danne grunnlag for en fin artikkel. Grøgaard baserer seg på sin masteroppgave om oslohumanistene fra 2021.

Alt dette må ha bekreftet en grunnholdning hos Laurentius: at nordmennene selv ikke hadde villet ha den nye vranglæren. Fedrene og deres forfedre hadde tvert imot vært trofaste katolikker i 600 år. Dette poenget gjorde han et stort nummer av i Studentbrevet i håp om at det skulle appellere til mottakernes slektsfølelse. Riktignok var Studentbrevet stilet til danske menn, og Laurentius Norvegus må ha visst at det i Danmark hadde vært en reformatorisk bevegelse for 70–80 år siden — i motsetning til Norge. Han nevnte ikke denne kontrasten mellom Danmark og Norge med ett ord, det er et symptom på hans taktiske evner: Å nevne det ville ha virket provoserende på danskene og vekket deres frykt for norsk separatisme. Egentlig ville han helt fra 1570-tallet helst reise til Norge, men han avstod fra å gjøre det. Han overlot til mindre profilerte norske jesuitter å reise tilbake til fedrelandet. Han siktet seg i stedet inn på det overordnede riket, Danmark, der makten var konsentrert – også over lydriket Norge.

Den andre kilden til Laurentius Norvegus' realisme var den vekt han la på å appellere til toppfolkene i monarkiet: sine professorkolleger ved universitetet, adelen og kongen selv. Hvis han ikke klarte å gjøre inntrykk på dem, visste han at man ikke kom noen vei. Dette var i tråd med den strategi som jesuittene ble berømt/beryktet for: å vinne for seg fyrstene og elitene i samfunnet. Det var de som avgjorde folkenes tro: *Cujus regio, eius religio*, som det het i fredstraktaten for det tyske riket i Augsburg i 1555. At Laurentius oppsøkte løvens hule i København i 1606, har blitt oppfattet som dumdristig. Men det var et nødvendig ledd i denne elitestrategien, som i 1602 gav seg uttrykk i Studentbrevet til professorene ved Københavns universitet og andre danske menn. I 1606 lot Laurentius studentbrevet ligge og tok i stedet med seg den store konfesjonsboken i noen eksemplarer. Den forelå da på latin, men ikke på dansk. Å legge fram en slik avhandling på de lærdes språk var da også mest hensiktsmessig og prestisjefylt i forhold til den eliten han appellerte til.

Dessuten var Laurentius Norvegus' opptreden et uttrykk for en sterk selvbevissthet. Alt som ung mann hadde han stått i et fortrolig forhold som rådgiver til den svenske kongen Johan 3. Nå var han en merittert og erfaren teolog innenfor Europas ledende akademiske organisasjon. Nettverket av jesuittiske universiteter hadde langt større akademisk ry enn det provinsielle universitetet i København – strømmen av studenter fra de protestantiske landene bekreftet dette. Når kongen sørget for å få Laurentius raskt utvist, var det en maktdemonstrasjon, men det var også for å forhindre en disputas som Laurentius oppfordret til. Trolig har miljøet i København vært urolig for en disputas på latin med en så skarpskodd og erfaren jesuittprofessor.

At Laurentius Norvegus' strategi rettet mot toppene i samfunnet ikke var virkelighetsfjern, gir Bjørn Bandliens artikkel om den danskfødte dronning Anna av Skottland og England belegg for. Hun var søster av Kristian 4., men som skotsk og engelsk dronning var hun klart katolsk til tross for protestantismen i disse landene. Bandliens artikkel drøfter strengt tatt ikke i hvilken grad Laurentius kan ha fanget opp informasjon om sympatier for katolisismen i protestantiske fyrstehus, men det er høyst sannsynlig at han visste om det. Bandlien selv legger for dagen en sterk interesse for flere tilfeller av dette fenomenet i fyrstehus som stod det danske nær. Det må da sies at dette var en trend som møtte voldsom motbør i form av antikatolisisme og antijesuittisme, ja, som forsterket dette hatet, slik at det ble et viktig trekk ved protestantismen i de følgende århundrene.

Laurentius Norvegus og jesuittene oppbyr et sjeldent instruktivt eksempel på hvordan sterke antipatier kan prege historiske framstillinger. Her spiller det også en rolle at kirkehistorie i Norge så lenge har blitt overlatt til teologene: Dermed har teologiske og konfesjonelle standpunkt farget historieskrivingen, samtidig som historikere lenge har vist en forbløffende mangel på interesse for kirkehistorien som *religionshistorie* etter reformasjonen. I middelalderhistorien har det vært annerledes. Der har det vært innlysende at kirken var en dominerende kraft i samfunnet. Men selv om den lutherske kirken var en integrert del av staten, har mange historikere abstrahert dens religions- og mentalitetshistoriske rolle ut av denne staten og overlatt dette til de teologisk skolerte og luthersk forankrede kirkehistorikerne. I den historieoppfatning disse etablerte ble jesuittene tildelt en lite flatterende rolle.

De jesuittfiendtlige holdningene er tema for to artikler i boken, Amund Børdahls artikkel om motstanden mot motreformasjonen i Danmark-Norge og Frode Ulvunds artikkel om jesuittforbudet i grunnloven helt fram til 1956. Børdahl tar utgangspunkt i reformasjonsjubileet i København i 1617, der en annen nordmann, professor Kort Aslakssøn, holdt en tordentale rettet mot katolisismen og spesielt mot jesuittene, med Klosterlasse som foraktelig skyteskive. Dette dannet utgangspunkt for en trykt kirkehistorie i samme ånd. Videre legger Børdahl vekt på at oppfatningen av jesuittfaren utløste reformer av de danske og norske latinskolene, i forsøk på å redusere deres pedagogiske underskudd sammenliknet med jesuittenes akademier. Alt dette ble drevet fram av en fornyet luthersk-ortodoks nidkjærhet ledet av ortodoksiens sjefsideolog Hans Poulsen Resen, biskop i København og professor ved universitetet. Til slutt gis et referat av Klosterlasses besøk i København i 1606, der han ble møtt med strenge, refsende ord, som altså ble fulgt opp i den antijesuittiske kampanjen i tiden som fulgte.

Ulvund viser at den første norske boken om Klosterlasse i nyere tid ble brukt agitatorisk langt inn på 1900-tallet som et viktig belegg for hvor skadelige og farlige jesuittene var: De var maktsyke, intrigante, løgnaktige, og umoralske og handlet etter devisen 'hensikten helliger middelet'. Forfatter av denne boken, som kom ut i 1895, var teologiprofessor Andreas Brandrud. Han kalte boken *Klosterlasse. Et bidrag til den jesuittiske propagandas historie i Norden*. Brandruds kampskrift bidrog til at Stortinget i 1897 og 1925 avviste å oppheve grunnlovens jesuittforbud og til at et betydelig mindretall stemte mot opphevingen da dette ble vedtatt i 1956. Kampen mot jesuittene ble (til dels i kombinasjon med antijudaismen) en fanesak for bibelfundamentalister i og utenfor den lutherske statskirken: konservative prester, misjonærer, bedehusfolk og andre radikale protestanter. Beskyldningene toppet seg i 1956, da den aldrende høyrelederen C. J. Hambro i en tale på Stortinget øste av århundrers beskyldninger mot jesuittene som maktsyke manipulatorer. Hambro hevdet at verken den tyske nazismen eller den italienske fascismen hadde vært mulig uten jesuittenes støtte. Dessuten var motstanderne og tilhengerne av å oppheve jesuittforbudet enige om at det ville være meget uheldig for landet om jesuittene kom til å opprette skoler her. Dette til tross for, eller snarere på grunn av, at det dreide seg om en av verdens ypperste pedagogiske institusjoner. Politikerne hadde ikke trengt å bekymre seg: Jesuittene har aldri etablert seg i Norge etter 1956. Jeg har i min bok *Sensuren i Danmark-Norge* (Oslo 2014) konkludert med at den kongelige lutherske ensrettingen etter 1537 utløste en dramatisk seinvirkning i Norge på 1800-tallet med ringvirkninger inn på 1900-tallet: Seinvirkningen var den bibelfundamentalistiske pietismen med antijesuittismen som det mest eksotiske utslaget av 300 års hatpropaganda.

De lavkirkelige antikatolikkene på 1800–1900-tallet ville ha det til at katolikkene, og særlig jesuittene, var unorske, eller 'antiborgarar', som Ulvund uttrykker det. De hørte ikke til det norske nasjonale fellesskapet. Dette hadde antikatolikkene rett i, ettersom det da var meget få norske katolikker, de fleste av utenlandsk opphav. Det var i praksis forbudt å være katolikk i Norge til 1840-årene, i forlengelse av den kongepåbudte reformasjonen 300 år tidligere, og supplert med strenge forbud mot munkeordener. Alt for å hindre at nordmennene fulgte Norvegus' oppfordring om å vende tilbake til fedrenes tro. Beskyldningene mot Klosterlasse tidlig på 1900-tallet var spekket med historisk ironi, ettersom Laurentius Norvegus hadde videreført den kirkelige norske patriotismen fra seinmiddelalderen. Den hadde hatt den katolske kirken som sin sterkeste forkjemper, mot den fremmede, unorske protestantismen, og med klimaks i erkebiskop Olav Engelbrektssons selvstendighetskamp 1524–1537. Faktisk fantes det katolske levninger i befolkningen gjennom hele den 300 år lange forbudstiden. To fremragende lutherske geistlige bekreftet dette. På slutten av 1700-

tallet skrev Johan Nordahl Brun at norske bønder hadde bevart katolske levninger i atferd og mentalitet. Og på midten av 1800-tallet skrev Eilert Sundt at den katolske gjerningskristendommen hadde holdt seg i norske bygder.

I skyggen av Brandrud og andre toneangivende norske teologer, og av legpredikanter, misjonærer og politikere, strevde nøkterne protestantiske kirkehistorikere med å bringe omtalen av Laurentius Nicolai Norvegus og jesuittene inn i et faglig forsvarlig spor, og på lang sikt lyktes de med det, på grunnlag av en møysommelig innsamling og bearbeiding av dokumentene etter Laurentius og jesuittene. Det var en kompilasjon og forfattervirksomhet som ble utført i to mannsaldre av Oluf Kolsrud (1885–1945), Oskar Garstein (1924–1996) og Vello Helk (1923–2014).

Den katolske kirken i Norge har i de siste 50 årene vokst fra 10.000 til 170.000 medlemmer. Samtidig har den norske kirke tatt opp igjen mange katolske tradisjoner (prosesjoner, lystenning, pilegrimsvandringer, retreater, feiring av olsok, jubileer for kristningen av Norge i middelalderen m.m.). De som ivrer for å omtale Norge som en kristen nasjon, forankrer påstandene om det i at det dreier seg om en sammenhengende historie i tusen år. På 1700-tallet kalte lutherske prester stavkirkene foraktelig for 'munkekirker'. Slik er det ikke i dag. Stoltheten over levningene fra middelalderen i kirkekunst og i kirker av stav og stein trives i forening med et godt og nærmest beundrende forhold til den katolske kirken. Alt dette har bidratt til igjen å gjøre katolisismen norsk i nordmenns øyne, og også til at katolikker har gjort seg gjeldende som forskere og forfattere av norsk kirkehistorie.

Dette er den samtidige konteksten som boken om Laurentius Norvegus har kommet ut i. I dag ville det være utenkelig at en norsk biskop refset en katolskvennlig protestantisk kirkehistoriker, slik biskop Eivind Berggrav i 1937 irettesatte professor Oluf Kolsrud for en tale han holdt på jubileumsmøtet for reformasjonen i Norge i Universitetets aula i Oslo. Kolsrud sa da at nordmennene hadde vært kristne før reformasjonen og at middelalderkirken var mye bedre enn sitt rykte. Innenfor protestantiske miljøer har Kolsrud og Garstein i dag blitt langt mer representative for protestantiske kirkehistorikere enn de nå eksotiske holdningene til konservative og radikalprotestantiske jesuitthatere. Og i bibelfundamentalistiske miljøer har andre fiendebilder overtatt den dominerende plassen. Men det er en annen historie.

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Egil Kraggerud: *Latinske tekster i Norge mellom 1152 og 1230*. 2 bind. 1. *Tekstkritisk samling med norske parallelloversettelser*. 2. *Kommentar til Latinske tekster i Norge.* Oslo: Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning & Novus, 2023. 624 sider. ISBN: 978-82-8390-123-8.

Anmeldelse ved Gottskálk Jensson

Med nærværende udgave har professor emeritus Egil Kraggerud, som næppe behøver introduktion for læserne af dette tidsskrift, gjort 12 latinske tekster fra perioden omkring 1200 (præcist afgrænset til 1152–1230) tilgængelige i to bind med norsk oversættelse og kommentarer til glæde for entusiaster inden for nordiske middelalderstudier. Teksterne er følgende: I. *Passio Olaui*, II. *Miracula Olaui*, III. *Legenden om Sunniua*, IV. *Legenden om Halvard*, V. *Magnus Erlingssons kroningsed*, VI. *Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev*, VII. *Theodoricus: De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, VIII. *Profectio Danorum in Hierosolymam*, IX. *Historia Norwegie*, X. *Lux illuxit letabunda*, XI. *Postquam calix Babylonis*, og XII. *Veneremur sanctum istum*. Fire af disse tekster har en vis længde, 23–46 sider i udgaven (I.+II., VII., VIII. og IX.), mens resten består af dokumenter, korte legender og vers. Korpus udgøres, ifølge udgiveren, af omkring 40.000 ord, svarende til 110 A4-sider.

I første binds 'Orienterende forord' omtaler Kraggerud sin udgave som en 'opdatering' af ældre udgaver, 'tilsvarende' Gustav Storms fundamentale *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, der udkom i ét bind i 1880. Han understreger dog, at der ikke er tale om samme udgavetype, hovedsageligt fordi Storms *Monumenta* var tiltænkt 'de lærde på hans eget niveau' (s. VII) og derfor ikke indeholdt oversættelser til moderne sprog. Fraværet af oversættelse beskriver Kraggerud som 'den vigtigste innvending mot den gamle vitenskapelige utgaveform' (s. IX). I det 21. århundrede er der næppe nogen, der vil betvivle nødvendigheden af ledsagende oversættelser til moderne sprog i udgaver af originaltekster på latin. Man kunne tilmed forestille sig at udelade latinen og derimod nøjes med oversættelsen, som man tidligere har gjort i enkelte udgaver, der har været rettet mod en bredere norsk læserkreds.

Andre nye udgaver af de samme tekster, herunder Kraggeruds egen udgave af Theodoricus (2018), er blevet forsynet med paralleloversættelser til engelsk. At oversætte historiske tekster fra de nordiske lande til engelsk er, især efter Anden Verdenskrig, blevet betragtet som en fornuftig strategi for at sikre en bredere international tilgængelighed. Men dette har sin pris. Ved at tilpasse sig ikke-nordiske

specialisters behov – som i dag til gengæld gør mindre for at lære de nordiske sprog – forsømmer man den (også alment interesserede) nordiske læser, der indtil for ganske nylig udgjorde den primære målgruppe for oversættelser af historiske kildetekster på latin. Jeg har fuld forståelse for, at forskere er nødt til at imødekomme de statslige og private fondes krav om internationalt engagement for at sikre ekstern finansiering – hvad de ressourcehungrende administrationer ved de nordiske universiteter er begyndt at se som forskningens egentlige formål – men spørgsmålet er, om der reelt er tale om internationalisering, eller om det snarere er en form for 'netflixificering' af forskningen, en ureflekteret forkærlighed for den dominerende anglo-amerikanske kultur og en implicit foragt for sin egen?

Akademiske publikationer af kildeskrifter som dem, der diskuteres her, kan nemlig sagtens have en bredere offentlig interesse, også i dag. Derfor anser jeg det for prisværdigt, at Kraggerud har forsynet sine latinske tekster med norske oversættelser. Ved at begge bind nu er tilgængelige på internettet som digitale dokumenter, vil endnu flere videbegærlige nordmænd – og andre nordisktalende – kunne drage nytte af dem.

De tidligste historiske skrifter i Norden har længe været i høj kurs, ikke kun blandt historikere og filologer, men også hos den dannede almene læser. Få emner inden for nordiske studier har tiltrukket sig så stor opmærksomhed og været så kontroversielle. Når man læser nogle af forskerne, særligt i det turbulente 20. århundrede, kan man få den mistanke, at deres tolkninger af de gamle skrifter er påvirket af samtidens ambitioner. Derved udviskes forskellen mellem specialisten og den ikke-specialiserede læser.

For eksempel mener jeg, at det er svært at forstå den københavnske professor Sven Ellehøjs udsøgte argumenter imod, at Theodoricus skulle have brugt islandske kilder – noget, Theodoricus selv gentagne gange fremhæver – uden at se det i lyset af de politiske spændinger, der opstod i Danmark i 1944, da Island erklærede sig selvstændig republik, og den efterfølgende håndskriftsag, som i størstedelen af Ellehøjs professionelle liv belastede forholdet mellem Københavns og Islands universiteter. Af grunde som disse har jeg respekt for Kraggeruds integritet, selvom han indimellem er begejstret for de tekster, han udgiver, for han har det videnskabelige mod til at følge de klare indicier, der peger på, at *Historia Norwegie*s forfatterskab bør placeres på Orkneyøerne.

I det 21. århundrede har nogle af de latinske tekster, som udgives her, igen været i forskernes fokus, hvad denne udgave også har nydt godt af, som Kraggerud åbent indrømmer. Nye tekstkritiske udgaver af høj kvalitet er blevet udgivet, blandt de vigtigste er Inger Ekrem og Lars Boje Mortensens udgave af *Historia Norwegie* (2003)

og Lenka Jiroušková storslåede udredning af tekstmaterialet om Sankt Olav (2014), samt Kraggeruds egen udgave af Theodoricus' *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (2018), som blev omtalt før. Disse latinske tekster er nu bedre etableret end tidligere, hvori denne moderne forsknings styrke tydeligvis ligger. Dens svaghed, derimod, er forskernes behandling af de latinske teksters forhold til det norrøne tekstmateriale. Her kunne man godt have ønsket en større opmærksomhed. På dette område mener jeg, at der ligefrem har været en tilbagegang, når man sammenligner de nye udgaver med dem fra Storm og hans samtidige, som, ud over det latinske materiale, også udgav og fordybede sig i kildetekster på norrønt.

En så kritisk påstand bliver jeg i sagens natur nødt til at bakke op med et eksempel: I *Historia Norwegie*, kap. II.14–16, nævnes tre typer hvaler eller havmonstre, *hafstrambus*, *hafguva* og *hafkitta*, som købmænd siges at støde på, når de sejler til Grønland. Disse tre typer forekommer ellers næsten kun i det folkesproglige *Kongespejlet* (ca. 1250; Holm-Olsen 1945: 16–17, 27), hvor de er skrevet på samme måde. Den ukendte forfatter til *Kongespejlet* har tydeligvis arbejdet med en kilde til disse hvaltyper, hvilket ses af hans formuleringer, men han har haft vanskeligheder med at bekræfte deres eksistens, da hans andre kilder ikke kendte dem. Hans overvejelse om, at der måske kun fandtes to hafguva'er i havene, og at det måske altid var de samme to, der blev observeret (af hvem?), virker komisk desperat. Om denne art udtrykker han sig dog med en ret ubegrundet bedrevidenhed: 'vér köllum hann optast á vora tungu hafguvu' [vi kalder den oftest på vores sprog 'hafguva'] (s. 17). Der nævnes ikke et eneste latinsk navn på hvaler i *Kongespejlet*, så hvorfor 'á vora tungu' [på vores sprog]?

Dette overflødige udsagn virker ret uforståeligt, medmindre vi forestiller os, at forfatteren sad med *Historia Norwegie* foran sig, hvor der midt i den latinske tekst gives tre norrøne navne på ellers ukendte hvaltyper – oplysninger, som han følte sig forpligtet til at indarbejde i sin egen tekst.

Den utvetydige henvisning i samme værk, kap. VIII.10–11, til noget så sjældent som et undersøisk udbrud i havet ved Island, der ifølge forfatteren skete i hans egen samtid (*quod nostra etate inibi accidisse*), afvises kategorisk som dateringskriterium af tekstens sidste udgivere. Præcis den samme geologiske begivenhed er dog fremtrædende i flere islandske annaler og sagaer, og moderne geologiske studier bekræfter dens faktualitet. Der fandt spektakulære udbrud sted i havet syd for Reykjaneshalvøen i årene 1211, 1226, 1231, 1238 og 1240. Ved disse vulkanudbrud opstod nye øer (som passende blev kaldt Eldeyjar, dvs. Ildøerne), mens andre atter forsvandt under havets overflade (selvom de stadig kan observeres ved undersøiske undersøgelser). Som det ofte ses i dette vulkansk aktive område i Island, forekommer der ud-

brud gentagne gange med korte mellemrum. I 2021 begyndte en ny serie af denne slags geologiske begivenheder, og siden da har der været ti udbrud i det samme område. Men Kraggerud håndterer denne problematik eksemplarisk. Efter min mening har han gjort helt ret i ikke at trivialisere betydningen af denne henvisning for værkets datering. *Historia Norwegie* kan derfor med stor sandsynlighed dateres ikke blot til før 1250 (*Kongespejlets* omtrentlige affattelsestidspunkt), men også til efter 1211. Dette er imidlertid ikke en ny opdagelse, eftersom Sophus Bugge nåede til samme konklusion for længe siden.

Kraggerud omtaler sit værk, *Latinske tekster i Norge mellom 1152–1230*, som afløser af tidligere udgaver af de samme tekster. I første bind præsenterer han for læseren en liste over disse udgaver, som indledes således: 'Tekstene har frem til vår utgave vært best representert ved følgende utgaver og oversettelser' (s. XX). Det lyder hermed, som om hans eget arbejde har gjort de andres forældet. Men måske læser jeg for meget ind i ordene, for så meget er sikkert, at han omtaler andre udgivere af samme tekster med respekt og henviser til dem for yderligere diskussion af enkelte problemstillinger. Men hvis man tager det alvorligt, når Kraggerud sammenligner sin udgave med Gustav Storms *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ*, må det også være rimeligt at forsøge at trække nogle tråde imellem dem.

Kraggerud bruger Storms udgave som en slags skabelon for sin egen, for eksempel ved at udgive præcis ét dusin norske middelaldertekster på latin. Det er dog ikke de samme tolv tekster, han udgiver. Ifølge sit forord fik Storm af offentlige embedsmænd til opgave at genudgive (næsten alle var tidligere blevet trykt) 'en Samling af de latinske Krøniker og øvrige historiske Kilder fra Norges Middelalder, der kunde betegnes som norsk historisk Litteratur paa Latin' (s. I). I den ånd placerede Storm Theodoricus' *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* først, efterfulgt af den anonyme *Historia Norvegie* (henholdsvis som skrift I og II i udgaven). Disse to kunne med god ret betragtes som historiske værker, på anden måde end de mindre sandhedssøgende (for ikke at sige decideret løgnagtige) hagiografiske tekster. I årtierne før og efter 1900 herskede der en nøgtern og sekulær tone i de nordiske lande.

Først i forlængelse af de historiske tekster satte Storm det hagiografiske tekstmateriale om de norske helgener, Olav, Sunniva & de hellige på Selja, samt Halvard (III–V), efterfulgt af legenden om Kristi tornekrone (nr. VI). Den sidste tekst er bevaret i det for mange teksters overlevelse vigtige *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, som ærkebispen i Nidaros, Erik Walkendorf (1510–1522), lod trykke i Paris 1519. Legenden omtaler et relikvie, som i 1274 blev foræret til den norske konge, Magnus IV, også kendt som Magnus Lagabøte, af den franske konge Filip III, kaldt Filip den Dristige (Philippe le Hardi), som regerede Frankrig fra 1270 til 1285. Man tillagde Frelserens tornekrone

så stor vigtighed i Bergen, at der blev bygget en kirke over den – hvad vi kun ved af de islandske *Annales regii*, som Storm udgav 1888. Kraggerud kunne have inkluderet denne tekst ved at udvide sin tidsramme, men har valgt ikke at gøre det.

Herefter trykker Storm, som sin VII. tekst, et fragmentarisk bevaret *Itinerarium in terram sanctam* om den norske lendermand Andres Nikolassons pilgrimsrejse fra Selje i 1270 til Det Hellige Land med sin huskapellan, broder Mauritius, en forhenværende munk i Minoriter-klostret i Bergen og tilsyneladende ikke af norsk oprindelse. Ifølge Storm var hensigten sandsynligvis at tilslutte sig det såkaldte ottende korstog med Ludvig IX af Frankrig, også kendt som Ludvig den Hellige, som var far til den ovennævnte Filip. Kong Ludvig døde i Tunis, og ifølge islandske annaler, *Lögmannsannáll* og *Flateyjarannáll*, blev det også Andres Nikolassons skæbne, at han 'andadizt í Jórsalahaf 1273' ['døde i Middelhavet i 1273']. Spændende materiale, som dog udelades i Kraggeruds udgave.

Modstykket til dette hos Kraggerud er et næsten hundrede år ældre skrift om et lige så mislykket korstog, *Profectio Danorum in Hierosolymam*, som man på Storms tid mente var dansk, indtil Kristian Kaalund, den dygtige bibliotekar på Den Arnamagnæanske Samling i København, påviste, at forfatteren måtte være norsk. Skriftet blev endda udgivet af den københavnske professor M. Cl. Gertz som et bilag til danske middelaldertekster på latin med følgende begrundelse: 'Skriftet tilhører altsaa ikke den danske Litteratur; men da det dog er skrevet paa Opfordring af danske Mænd, særlig bestemt til Læsning for Danske og for største Parten handler om Danske, er dermed vel Berettigelsen given til at optage det i dette Appendix' (*Scriptores minores Historiæ Danicæ medii Ævi* [1918–1920] bd. 2: 455). Som tekst nr. VIII i sin samling, placerede Storm den korte *Fundatio Lysensis Monasterii*, et enestående grundlæggelsesdokument for Lyse Kloster ved Lysefjorden, lidt syd for Bergen, der blev grundlagt i 1146 af engelske cisterciensere fra Fountains Abbey.

Storms udgave afsluttes med nogle korte dokumenter, heriblandt kongerækker og ærkebisperækker på latin, samt et langt tillæg indeholdende forskellige kortere liturgiske tekster og fragmenter. Under nr. X, som Storm giver titlen *Series Regum*, skjuler der sig tre forskellige kongerækker, hvis 'Betydning ligger deri, at de viser den litterære sammenhæng med de islandske kongesagaer' (s. LI), som Storm bemærker. Til sidst i denne anmeldelse vil jeg komme tilbage til disse kongerækker og forklare Storms udsagn.

Selve strukturen i Kraggeruds *Latinske Tekster i Norge mellom 1152 og 1230* er meget enkel: Første bind præsenterer de latinske tekster med norske parallelloversættelser og et minimum af indledende materiale, mens andet bind indeholder kommentarer, diskussioner og supplerende oplysninger til teksterne. Kraggerud lægger

vægt på at levere en nøjagtig og fuldstændig tekstkritisk samling, men kommentarerne er selektive og dækker ikke alle aspekter. I stedet henviser han ofte til andre udgaver for mere omfattende analyser og nævner, at internettet kan anvendes som en ressource til yderligere information. Alt ud over de latinske tekster og deres norske oversættelser synes i denne udgave at være anset for at være 'supplerende', hvilket betyder, at udgiveren selv vælger, hvilke emner han ønsker at behandle. Som eksempel kan nævnes, at man forgæves leder efter en præcisering af, hvilket af Horats' værker Theodoricus citerer i sit kapitel XV. Sådanne oplysninger er ganske rigtigt lette at finde på internettet, hvis man da ved, hvad man skal lede efter, og har evnen til at sortere i søgeresultaterne. Jeg mindes ikke en anden udgave, som ligefrem forventer, at de basale oplysninger om værket og forfatteren skal hentes på nettet og overlader det til læseren at skaffe sig disse.

En åbenlys begrænsning ved udgaven som trykt bog er fraværet af et register. Læseren mangler en oversigt over centrale temaer, personer og begreber i teksten. Der findes ganske vist en 'Index verborum' bagerst i andet bind (s. 265–274), men som forfatteren selv siger, er den 'selektiv' og blot en 'orienteringshjelp', snarere end et fuldt register. Bibliografiske oplysninger er ikke samlet ét sted, men er spredt rundt omkring i udgaven. Man kan også se Kraggeruds ganske nyskabende tilgang til udgaveformatet ved, at han typografisk med halvfed skrift og understregning fremhæver ord, 'som har fremstått som vigtige for udgiveren under arbejdet med kommentaren'. Dette er måske ikke anderledes end, hvad alle udgivere og forfattere af kommentarer til latinske tekster altid har gjort, men det er usædvanligt at finde én, der går så nonchalant til værks og åbent indrømmer, hvordan det forholder sig.

Til trods for denne bevidst ufuldstændige og selektive tilgang til kommentaren – noget der kan virke lidt pudsigt for læsere af gammeldags klassiske udgaver – finder man i andet bind et 'Mer personlig forord' (s. 7–14), trykt i mindre typer, som indeholder elementære og, for min smag, lidt pedantiske diskussioner af 'fremmedord' såsom *antologia*, *commentarius*, *gratias* m.fl. — materiale, som man kan tvivle på hører hjemme i en udgave af krævende historiske tekster, som forudsætter, at læseren har en vis baggrund i historie og latin for overhovedet at kunne forstå indholdet. Denne lidt løsslupne stil fortsætter i den sammenstøbte 'Prolog og Innledning til Bind II', som danner optakten til de egentlige kommentarer til individuelle tekster, der oftest behandles hver for sig i en 'Innledning' og 'Kommentar'. Den samme frie stil tages op igen efter kommentarerne i et miskmask af overvejelser under titlen 'Bibliografisk Etterord (Om referanser og boklige hjelpemidler)', s. 237–255. Det mest interessante i alt dette materiale er, efter min mening, Kraggeruds sporadiske udsagn om andre forskere og forskningshistorien, hvor han formidler viden fra et livslangt virke i faget.

Lad os bare sige det, som det er: Der er her tale om en forrygende excentrisk udgave, som bl.a. forudsætter, at den vil blive et tilgængeligt digitalt dokument på internettet, fordi, som Kraggerud siger, vi lever i 'den digitale æra, hvor bøger lægges ud på nettet som søgbare størrelser'. Det er også grunden til, at udgiveren tillader sig at undlade registre og andre værktøjer, som af andre udgivere anses for obligatoriske. Alligevel vil mange læsere stadig foretrække at have bøgerne i hænderne, når de læser, fremfor at læse dem på skærme.

Sådanne og lignende problemstillinger melder sig straks, når man læser paratekssterne og udenværkene i Kraggeruds to bind. Der sættes flere steder spørgsmålstegn ved selve udgivelsesformatet, hvilket er forståeligt i vores tid. Det usædvanlige her er dog, hvor åbent det gøres. Bevidstheden om de udfordringer, som faglitteratur på papir står overfor i den digitale tidsalder, særligt når det gælder litteratur på andre sprog end engelsk, fører hos Kraggerud til en omkalfatring af det hæderkronede og ældgamle format, som den klassiske tekstudgave med kommentarer udgør.

Når dette er sagt, vil jeg understrege, at selvom andet bind i Kraggeruds udgave i sin form er usædvanligt og indimellem har en snakkesalig tone, er der ingen grund til at betvivle kvaliteten, hverken af de latinske tekster eller de norske oversættelser. Udgaven udmærker sig ved en uovertruffen tekstkritisk præcision og viser en dybtgående forståelse af latinen og hvordan den bedst skal oversættes og tolkes. Kraggeruds filologiske indsigt og hans bestræbelser på at finde frem til 'den beste tekst i lys av overleveringen' (s. XII), samt hans ofte skarpe 'konjekturale emendasjoner' (en sammenstilling, som han foretrækker frem for at skelne mellem 'konjekturer' og 'emendationer'), demonstrerer en forbilledlig videnskabelig grundighed.

Nu vil jeg, inspireret af Egil Kraggeruds frie ånd, tillade mig at gå lidt i dybden med udgavens tekstmateriale og levere et andet syn på årtierne omkring 1200, den nordiske 'renæssance i det tolvte århundrede', for at bruge den amerikanske historiker Charles Homer Haskins' (d. 1973) formulering, end det, man præsenteres for i Kraggeruds udgave. Perioden mellem 1152 og 1230 forstås af Kraggerud i udgavens sammenhæng som 'et avgrenset tidsrom av største viktighet i Norges historie', inden for hvilket han udvælger tekster af forfattere, der 'synes å høre hjemme innen 'Noregsveldet', eller som ved sin bruk av latinen reflekterer og anerkjenner kirkens overhøyhet samt dens eget hierarki' (s. X). For Kraggerud er særligt en historisk personlighed i centrum i denne periode, og det er ærkebispen i Nidaros, Øystein Erlendsson (i embede fra 1161 til sin død i 1188). Kraggerud ser ærkebispens fingeraftryk på hele perioden, selvom ingen af de tekster, der behandles, kan tilskrives ham som forfatter. Det er det tætte samarbejde mellem kirke og stat, hele denne imperiebyggeri, der

fandt sted i perioden, som tydeligvis fascinerer Kraggerud, men han maler et billede af perioden, som det kan være svært for en islænding at genkende.

For den forholdsvis fredelige og lærde islandske elite, *goðarnir*, fremstod det, der foregik i Norge, som en fortsættelse af den brutale opfindsomhed, der længe havde præget borgerkrigen dér. To af disse *goðar* spillede en særlig rolle i norsk politik. Den ene var Jón Loptsson i Oddi (1124–1197), sønnesøn af Sæmundr Sigfússon (1056–1133), Nordens første historiker, som for Sigurd Jorsalafar etablerede kronologien og rækkefølgen af Harald Hårfagres slægt. Jón, der var søn af Sigurd Jorsalafars søster, Þóra, blev født og voksede op i Konghelle ved Sigurds hird, hvor han blev opdraget og undervist af slotspræsten Andreas Brunason. I 1181 tog Jón Loptsson på sin gård i det sydlige Island på lignende vis en treårig dreng ved navn Snorri under sine vinger, som senere skulle blive en af Nordens mest betydningsfulde middelalderforfattere — hvis jeg må sige det, uden at det lyder for patriotisk. Den anden *goði* af interesse her er Gizurr Hallsson (ca. 1115–1206), lovmand i Island 1181–1200, og senere forfatter til bispestolen Skálholts bispekrønike på latin, *Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* (ca. 1195), der ud over et lille fragment kun er bevaret i islandsk gengivelse under titlen *Hungrvaka*, sandsynligvis skrevet af hans søn Magnus, som var biskop i Skálholt (1216–1237). Det sydlige bispesæde var denne slægts gamle ejendom og donation til kirken, som stadig blev styret af slægtens overhoveder gennem tidens løb.

Hverken Jón eller Gizurr ser ud til at have sympatiseret med det, der foregik i Norge mellem 1161 og 1177, og da kong Sverre begyndte sin kamp mod de danskstøttede allierede, Øystein og Erling Skakke, og deres forsøg på at overtage kongemagten i Norge, bidrog islændingene ivrigt med det middel, de havde: litteraturen. Selvom vores kilder om perioden er begrænsede, vides det med sikkerhed, at to sortbrødre fra Þingeyrar-abbediet i det nordlige Island, Karl Jónsson og Oddr Snorrason, skrev historiske værker, som fik stor betydning for udviklingen af norsk historieskrivning. Det første er den suveræne *Sverris saga* på norrønt, uden hvilken norsk historie i denne periode næppe ville eksistere. Den blev skrevet i Norge af abbed Karl i samarbejde med kongen selv. Det andet værk er *Acta Olavi filii Tryggva*, en slags pseudo-apostel-saga på latin, skrevet i Island af præsten Oddr på Þingeyrar, sandsynligvis som en reaktion på Øysteins antinorske *Passio Olavi*.

Forskere i 1800-tallet diskuterede den negative fremstilling af Norge og Norden generelt i *Passio Olavi*, og nogle konkluderede endda, at teksten måtte være forfattet af en udlænding. Men som Lenka Jiroušková viser i sin grundige gennemgang af Skt. Olavs tekster, henter forfatteren af *Passio Olavi* sit negative syn på Norge og Norden fra Ælnoth af Canterburys *Gesta et Passio sancti Canuti* (udg. Gertz): Der er tale om et fjernt og afsides land, der længe har været præget af troløshed, hedenske ritualer,

vranglære og afgudsdyrkelse. Al ondskab (*omne malum*) stammer fra Norden og spreder sig derfra over hele jorden. Hedningene heroppe har levet i stiv *torpor* og frossen uretfærdighed, indtil kristendommen og helgenerne bragte deres livgivende varme fra syd og smeltede deres kuldslåede sjæle. Denne teologiske foragt for det nordiske folk er lånt direkte fra Knud den Helliges legende, idet Olav den Hellige skulle opfattes som Nidaros' skytshelgen, ligesom Knud den Hellige var det for Lund, den første ærkestol i Norden, der fortsat defineredes som *primas* over for Nidaros og Uppsala.

Det er for indviklet at fortælle hele historien om, hvordan Gizurr Hallsson var Sigurd Munns staldmester (*stabularius*) i 1150'erne, mens Øystein var kapellan hos hans yngre bror, kong Inge Krokrygg, og allieret med den farlige rådgiver Gregorius Dagsson (ca. 1110–1161). Dette er heller ikke stedet til at udlægge islændingenes rolle i datidens faktioner. Det er dog velkendt, at skjalden Einarr Skúlason fremførte sit store digt om Skt. Olav, *Geisli*, i Nidaros ved oprettelsen af ærkebispesædet, mens kardinal Nikolaus, biskop af Albano og pavelig legat til Norden, fortsatte til Uppsala for at udføre samme opgave dér. Det nævnes sjældent, at Einarr også var kong Inges staldmester, på samme måde, som brødrene Ari og Ingimundrs roller altid glemmes, når perioden diskuteres; de opfostrede den senere religiøst fanatiske biskop Guðmundur Arason. Disse mænd støttede Inge Krokrygg, ligesom den unge Øystein Erlendsson, der omkring 1157 blev udnævnt til ærkebiskop i Nidaros og rejste sydpå for at blive viet og forberedt til rollen. Da Øystein endelig vendte tilbage til Norge i 1161, var alle tre kongebrødre, Sigurd Munn, Inge Krokrygg og Øystein Haraldsson, blevet dræbt, og det samme gjaldt Gregorius Dagsson. Kun Erling Skakke havde overlevet brutaliteten og sad nu alene ved magten, uden nogen legitimitet i henhold til norske traditioner. Han var blot jarl i Viken og vasal af Valdemar den Store af Danmark. På dette tidspunkt må Erling Skakke og Øystein Erlendsson have indledt deres teokratisk-politiske projekt, baseret på myten om Olav den Hellige som Norges evige konge (*Rex perpetuus Norwegie*).

At sætte en dreng på tronen var på sin vis ikke nyt, for allerede i december 1136, da Harald Gille blev dræbt, gjorde kongens rådgivere og venner hans tre små sønner til konger og styrede riget i deres navn. Morderen, Sigurd Slembe, der var ankommet til Bergen fra Island efter at have overvintret dér, og som før havde været i Jerusalem, havde en del islandske krigere med sig. Hans udåd var dog forgæves, for som hævn blev han selv langsomt og smertefuldt henrettet. Islændingen Eiríkr Oddsson skrev om disse dramatiske begivenheder i den første samtidshistorie i nordisk litteratur, kendt som *Hryggjarstykki*. Den har sandsynligvis dannet forbillede for *Sverris saga* og

måske også for *Profectio Danorum in Hierosolymam*, hvor Sverre også optræder i en mindre rolle.

Meget lidt ved Øystein og Erling Skakkes imperiebyggeri lader til at have været gennemtænkt. Magnus var ingen kongesøn; ifølge norske regler var det ikke nok, at hans mor, Kristin, var datter af Sigurd Jorsalafar. Han havde ikke større ret til tronen end Jón Loptsson, hvis mor Þóra var datter af kong Magnus Barfod, der regerede Norge fra 1093 til sin død i 1103. Alle — inklusive ærkebispen og jarlen — vidste, hvor vanvittigt et komplot de var i færd med at udføre. Olav den Hellige, *Rex perpetuus Norwegie*, Nidaros-domkirkens totemfigur — eller måske snarere, for nu at bruge en mere tidssvarende terminologi, ærkebispesædets skytshelgen — kunne aldrig i praksis fungere som en feudal overkonge, selvom man forsøgte at lancere ideen ved en kompliceret ceremoni i Bergen i 1163/64. På Island huskedes denne begivenhed blot som århundredets skandale, hvilket tydeligt fremgår af Snorri Sturlusons *Heimskringla*, som fremstiller Øystein og Erling som et par machiavelliske sammensvorne — hvilket de også var. Kraggerud og andre nævner, at en legat fra pave Alexander III var til stede ved ceremonien i Bergen, hvad man selvfølgelig skal huske, men man skal heller ikke glemme, at Jón Loptsson og flere andre islændinge også var til stede. Disse mænd havde langt større indflydelse på nordisk historiskrivning end den pavelige legat. Ifølge de islandske kilder blev Jóns nære slægtskab med usurpatoren Magnus Erlingsson anerkendt ved denne lejlighed. Hans farfar Sæmundrs norske kongekrønike må have været fremme på bordene.

Som Kraggeruds udgave minder os om, skrev nordmænd i denne periode nogle originale værker på latin, ikke kun hagiografier, men også historiske værker. Dette har været kendt længe, men det, der ofte overses, er, hvor produktive de islandske forfattere i denne periode var — ikke kun på islandsk, men også på latin — og hvordan de islandske tekster på latin og folkesproget danner baggrund og kontekst for de norske. Uden Sæmundrs synoptiske historie om en række norske konger, uden islændingenes stort set fiktive historier om kong Olav Tryggvason, havde Theodoricus og forfatteren til *Historia Norwegie* ikke kunnet skrive deres værker.

Vi har stadig fragmenter af bispesædet Skálholts ældste historie, *Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum*, fra slutningen af 1100-tallet, som jeg nævnte tidligere, samt nogle latinske rester om den hellige Þorlákr, der netop var til stede i Norge og mødte Øystein, Erling Skakke og usurpatoren Magnus, da Sverre Sigurdsson stillede op som den legitime konge af Norge, og begyndte at bekrige dem. Man må huske, at det blev Sverres efterkommere, ikke Magnus', som skabte og regerede 'Norgesveldet', som Kraggerud ville kalde det, i dets guldalder i 1200- og 1300-tallet. I begyndelsen af 1700-tallet, på en embedsrejse i Island, opsporede Árni Magnússon (d. 1730), pro-

fessor og kongelig arkivar i København, de sidste fragmenter af original islandsk latinlitteratur. Hvis man samler alle de islandske fragmenter, og tager de islandske annaler på latin med, tæller disse tekster kun omkring 10.000 ord, hvilket udgør en fjerdedel af de norske tekster, som Kraggerud har udgivet. Den norske latinlitteratur ville have lidt samme skæbne, hvis man ikke havde fundet kopier af teksterne i udlandet – nogle af dem i Island. Som Kraggerud nævner i sit kommentarbind (s. 120–121) med henvisning til en nylig publikation af Espen Karlsen, gik de danske lutheranere grundigt til værks og tøvede ikke med at brænde bøger og dokumenter, hvis de fandt dem uforenelige med deres purificerede verdenssyn. Islændinge har derimod ikke haft held til at finde et eneste fragment af deres tabte latinlitteratur i udlandet. Legenderne om Skt. Þorlákr, som findes trykt i *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, er tillige bevaret i Den Arnamagnæanske Samling i København, AM 386 II 4to (1200–1250).

Alene broder Oddrs *Gesta Olavi filii Tryggva* har formentlig udgjort omkring 50.000 ord, baseret på den islandske oversættelse, som synes at følge den oprindelige latinske tekst tæt. Kun når man medregner de mange tabte islandske værker på latin, hvoraf langt de fleste er overleveret i oversættelser, forstår man de norske historieværkers sammenhæng, og kan medregne islændingenes afgørende bidrag til Nordens historieskrivning – ligesom til den historiske digtning på modersmålet. Af denne grund bliver islændinge da også rost i superlativer af Saxo Grammaticus og Theodoricus, mens Sven Aggesen brugte deres digte, og forfatteren til *Historia Norwegie* hentede sin norske historie i islandske kilder. Dette vidste Storm og hans generation godt. De havde læst, studeret og selv udgivet mange af de islandske kilder. Men det er, som samtidens forskere i den nordiske litteratur på latin ikke synes, at kendskab til dette materiale, som er langt større end den latinske, har relevans for deres studier, at det er nok at kunne læse latin.

Ligesom i Norge blev der i Island forfattet tre helgenlegender med mirakler, men de islandske tekster var af større omfang end de norske. Det gælder den anonyme *Vita et miracula s. Thorlaci*, hvoraf der findes begrænsede fragmenter, men også en komplet oversættelse eller bearbejdelse på folkesproget – hvilket, som nævnt, også gælder de øvrige værker. Derudover skrev broder Gunnlaugr på Þingeyrar (d. 1218/19) en *Vita et miracula s. Johannis* og broder Arngrímr Brandsson (d. 1361/62), ligeledes på Þingeyrar, en *Vita et miracula Godemundi boni*. Jeg har allerede nævnt Sæmundr Sigfússons norske kongehistorie fra begyndelsen af det 12. århundrede og kan derfor springe de øvrige værker skrevet af broder Gunnlaugr over for at komme til det værk, der er et direkte svar på *Passio Olavi* og danner en forudsætning for Theodoricus' *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* – nemlig Oddr Snorrasons latinske

værk, som er bevaret og kendes i en islandsk oversættelse som *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, og hvis latinske forlæg næsten altid dateres forkert i forskningen.

I prologen til *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* af Oddr munkr, siger forfatteren, som skrev på bestilling af Gizurr Hallsson og Jón Loptsson:

> Hør, I kristne brødre og fædre! Jeg bekender for Gud og de hellige, at det glæder mig at ære den mest velsignede kong Olav Tryggvason, og jeg vil gerne fremme hans sag med mine ord. Gør I det samme for kong Olav, som er grundlaget for jeres frelse, dåb og al velfærd, og som er navnefælle til den hellige kong Olav, der opbyggede og forskønnede kristendommen. I det femte år af sin regeringstid døbte kong Olav sin navnefælle og skænkede ham af den hellige kilde, ligesom Johannes Døberen gjorde med Herren. Og som Johannes var hans forløber, således var kong Olav Tryggvason forløber for den hellige kong Olav. De bevarede deres slægtskab [dvs. det åndelige slægtskab, der opstod ved dåben; Olav den Helliges slægtskab til Harald Hårfagre, i gennem sin far Harald Grenske, var i bedste fald fjern] i deres hellige kraft og vidunderlige gerninger, og som Johannes sagde til Herren: 'Det passer sig for dig at vokse, og for mig at mindskes.' Det er velkendt, at den hellige kong Olavs mirakler strålede efter hans død, men den berømte kong Olav Tryggvason var ikke kendt for at udøve mirakler efter sin død. Dog tror vi, at han var en ædel og fremragende mand og en ven af Gud. Mens han levede, fandt alle ham uovertruffen i dygtighed. Selvom det efter hans død ikke blev åbenbaret, hvilke kræfter han havde, bør vi ikke nysgerrigt undersøge Guds skjulte ting. Lad os huske apostlen Peters ord: at ære vores konge og frygte Gud. Det er sandt, at disse ting hænger sammen: Lad os lovprise kongen, som gav os velsignelser, og takke Gud, som gav os en sådan leder. Det passer os at ære vores konge med menneskelig ros, da Gud har ophøjet ham med himmelsk ros. Og det er bedre at høre sådanne ting med glæde end stedmødrehistorier, som hyrder fortæller – historier, som ingen ved om er sande, og som altid i deres fortællinger fremstiller kongen som den mindste.

Kun *Passio Olavi*-teksten, med sin foragt for Norge og dets befolkning og sin totale mangel på viden om landets historie og kristendommens indførelse – som den erstatter med generiske fabler og homilier uden jordforbindelse, ja, fabler lig dem, hyrder fortæller hinanden, som broder Oddr sarkastisk beskriver – kunne provokere en så højtidelig lovprisning af Olav Tryggvason, som man i virkeligheden vidste meget lidt om. Sådan en tekst var i det mindste underholdende, som det siger i den sidste sætning citeret ovenfor: 'Ok betra er slikt með gamni at heyra en stjúpmæðra sögur

er hjarðarsveinar segja, er engi veit hvart satt er, er jafnan láta konunginn minnztan í sínum frásögnum.' Dette kunne nogenlunde have lydt sådan i Oddrs oprindelige prolog, hvis vi tillader os at lege lidt med emnet: *Melius est talia iocose audire quam novercarum fabulas quas pastores enarrant, quarum nemo scit an vere sint, qui semper regem minimum suis narrationibus exhibent.* Det er ikke fordi, broder Oddr her henviser til et bestemt bukolisk værk, men fordi han er virkelig skandaliseret over, hvor dum, unorsk, og antiroyal en tekst *Passio Olavi* er, dette konstrukt, der blev brugt af Øystein og Erling Skakke til at ydmyge den sande konge af Norges status i sit land og gøre ham til vasal af en helgen på en hidtil ukendt og uforståelig måde. Kun en tekst som *Passio Olavi* kunne provokere Oddrs *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, på latin.

Eftersom vi kan antage, at Øystein og Erling Skakke ikke forsøgte at gennemføre deres magtovertagelse i Norge uden en tekst som *Passio Olavi*, må denne tekst have eksisteret omkring tidspunktet for Magnus' kroning i Bergen i 1163/64. Da Oddr i sin fortælling om kong Olav Tryggvason inkorporerer tekst fra Sunniva-legenden og omtaler Sunnivas translation til Bergen (i 1170), må han have skrevet sit værk efter 1170. Der hersker også enighed om, at fordi Theodoricus i prologen til *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* adresserer ærkebiskop Øystein uden at nævne hans død, kan værket ikke være skrevet efter 1188, da Øystein døde.

Som dateringskriterium for Oddrs latinske skrift, *Acta Olavi filii Tryggva*, har man brugt det sted i dets islandske oversættelse, som overleveret i de to hovedhåndskrifter,[2] hvor kong Sverre citeres for at have ment, at det var uhørt for en konge som Olav Tryggvason at stå højt oppe på sit skib *Ormen Lange* og gøre sig synlig og sårbar under slaget ved Svold. Det er sjældent, at man i et middelalderskrift finder så direkte et bevis for, hvem der har læst det. Bemærkningen passer ikke ind i den øvrige kontekst, som ellers er koncentreret om fortiden, men den er utvivlsomt inkluderet, fordi kong Sverre ikke var hvem som helst. Det faktum, at han har læst og diskuteret værket, tilføjer det øget betydning og forbinder det med *Sverris saga*, som Oddrs abbed, Karl Jónsson, skrev i samarbejde med Sverre. Vi kender faktisk til to andre læsere af denne tekst, Jón Loptsson og Gizurr Hallsson, som fik den til gennemlæsning. Det kan derfor siges at være usædvanligt veldokumenteret, hvem der har læst dette værk.

I slaget ved Kalvskinnet den 19. juni 1179 fik Sverre dræbt Erling Skakke. Dette ændrede den politiske situation markant og sendte ærkebiskop Øystein, Erlings politiske makker, i landflygtighed til England. Da Øystein endelig vendte tilbage til sin ærkebispestol i Nidaros i 1183, lykkedes det Sverre, i slaget ved Fimreite den 15. juni 1184, også at dræbe kong Magnus. Først da må Øystein have mistet håbet og opgivet

[2] København, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 310 4to (1250–1275); og Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Isl. perg. 4to 18 (ca. 1300).

sin modstand mod Sverre. Denne ånd af forsoning gennemsyrer Theodoricus' skrift for Øystein. Karl Jónsson ankom til Norge i 1185 ifølge de islandske annaler og begyndte at arbejde på Sverris saga sammen med kongen. Det er sandsynligt, at Øystein fik kendskab til Oddrs værk, efter at abbed Karl bragte det til Norge, og da Øystein hørte om abbed Karls og Sverres projekt med at skrive kongens historie, gav ærkebiskoppen sandsynligvis Theodoricus opgaven at skrive *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*. Øysteins tanke bag værket kan opsummeres som: 'So ein Ding muss ich auch haben.' En tekst som denne kunne godt skrives på under tre år og være færdig inden Øysteins død i 1188.

Hvis Sverres bemærkning om Olav Tryggvason blev af abbed Karl noteret i Oddrs håndskrift med den latinske tekst, eller bragt mundtligt tilbage til Þingeyrar og noteret af Oddr selv, da abbeden vendte tilbage til sit kloster — måske så sendt som 1189 — kan den nemt senere været blevet en del af oversættelsen til islandsk. Vi ved ikke præcist hvornår den latinske tekst blev oversat, men man regner ofte med at dette har været tidligt i 1200-tallet. Det skete ikke fordi bemærkningen passer særlig godt ind i konteksten, men snarere for at vise, at kong Sverre havde læst værket. Hvis det foregik på denne måde, giver det os en *terminus ante quem* for Oddrs skrift, som dermed må have været færdigt før abbed Karl rejste til Norge i 1185. Vi har en lige så ude af kontekst bemærkning fra Sverre i den islandske oversættelse af *Vita s. Thorlaci*, hvor Sverre skal have sagt, at så længe Þorlákr var i Norge med Øystein, Erling Skakke og Magnus, i slutningen af 1170erne, gik det dem bedre i kampen mod ham selv. Dette bruges, efter tidens logik, som tegn på at Þorlákr var en rigtig helgen.

Der kan, som vi har set, ikke være tale om nogen anden tekst end Oddrs prolog, når Theodoricus i kapitel XIII henviser til kilder, der taler om Olav Tryggvesons dåb af sin navnefælle, Olav den Hellige, i en ung alder. Theodoricus afviser høfligt dette ved at henvise til, at Olav den Hellige ifølge Normannernes Historie blev døbt i Rouen. Som Kraggerud påpeger i en fodnote i sin studie af 'Hellig-Olavs dåp hos Theodoricus Monachus og i hans kilder', publiceret her i *Collegium Medievale* i 2012, har specialister i norrøn litteratur sporet kilden om mødet mellem de to konger tilbage til Oddr munks skrift om Olav Tryggvason. Faktisk kan man gøre mere end det, da næsten alt materialet om Olav Tryggvason hos Theodoricus, *Historia Norvegie* og Snorri Sturluson stammer fra Oddrs tekst. Det forklarer også hvorfor 8 ud af 34 kapitler i Theodoricus' Norgeshistorie handler om Olav Tryggvason, men kun 4 om Olav den Hellige, når *Passio Olavi*, Øysteins store skrift, ifølge Kraggerud, ikke engang ved at han eksisterede. Mange detaljer i Theodoricus bliver nemt forståelige, når man læser værket mod dets kilder og historiske bagrund.

Man kan ikke ignorere islændingenes bidrag til norsk historie, hvis man vil forstå denne periode i norsk litteratur på latin. Som nævnt tidligere udgav Storm i sit udvalg af norske tekster på latin, under titlen *Series regum*, en samling af tre forskellige norske kongerækker, hvis betydning for ham var, at de viste den litterære sammenhæng med de islandske kongesagaer. Den første af disse kongerækker stammer fra et pergamentblad, som Árni Magnússon købte på auktion i 1695. Ifølge Storm har bladet oprindeligt været en del af et Missale eller Legendarium, der tilhørte kendte gejstlige i Bergen i slutningen af 1300-tallet. Det, der vækker hans opmærksomhed, er, at Norges to missionskonger her beskrives som *Olauus rex Trygga son coronatus propter predicatione* ['Olav kong Tryggvason helgenkåret på grund af sin forkyndelse af troen'] og *Sanctus Olauus coronatus propter martirium* ['Sankt Olav helgenkåret på grund af sit martyrium']. Det sidste er ikke overraskende, men det første lyder præcist som argumentet i den islandske munk Oddr Snorrasons latinske skrift om kong Olav Tryggvason, reduceret til én sætning.

Den anden kongerække findes i et islandsk håndskrift fra 1200-tallet, som blandt andet indeholder Olav den Helliges saga. Håndskriftet endte i Sverige, men kongerækken er baseret bl. a. på den islandske *Sverris saga*, mener Storm. Endelig stammer den tredje kongerække fra samme skotske håndskrift som *Historia Norvegie*. Den ældste del af denne kongerække, fra Harald Hårfagre til Sverre, er, som den norske filolog Peter Andreas Munch (1810–1863) viste for længe siden, en ordret latinsk oversættelse af det islandske digt 'Noregs konunga tal', som blev digtet til ære for Jón Loptsson i 1190, og hvad angår den første del af rækken, fra Halfdan den Sorte til Magnus den Gode, bygger den på Jóns farfar Sæmundrs tabte skrift om de norske konger.

Gottskálk Jensson, doktor i klassisk filologi fra University of Toronto 1997. Siden 2013 har han været ansat som lektor på Den Arnamagnæanske Samling ved Københavns Universitet. Han har bl.a. udgivet bogen *The Recollections of Encolpius: The Satyrica of Petronius as Milesian Fiction* (2004) og skrevet artikler om latin i Island i middelalderen, fx oversigtskapitlet 'Latin Hagiography in Medieval Iceland' som udkom i Hagiographies (2017) i serien Corpus Christianorum.