

HEROES AND MONSTERS

The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature



M.A. In Medieval Studies

Tutor: Dr. Isabel de Riquer Permanyer

Author: Roger Loscertales Macià

2012

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Cover photography by Roger Loscertales

Recreation of a decorated Viking Age round shield with polished iron boss.

The motif depicted is two intertwined *lindormar* copied from side A of the Ardre III image Stone found in Ardre Church, Gotland (Sweden) dated between the 8th and 11th centuries.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Aquesta tesina de màster, presentada el 2012, està dedicada al meu tutor de doctorat,
el Dr. Prim Bertran Roigé (1948-2014).

Esta tesina de master, presentada en 2012, está dedicada a mi tutor de doctorado,
el Dr. Prim Bertran Roigé (1948-2014).

This MA dissertation, presented in 2012, is dedicated to my PhD tutor,
Dr. Prim Bertran Roigé (1948-2014).

Dieser MA Dissertation, 2012 vorgestellt, ist meinem Doktorvater gewidmet,
Dr. Prim Bertrán Roigé (1948-2014).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON OLD ENGLISH AND OLD NORSE PRONUNCIATION	7
RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS AND STATE OF AFFAIRS	9
HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE	13
Writing in the ancient Germanic world.	13
England	14
Scandinavia	18
THE TEXTS	24
The Anglo-Saxon texts	24
The Scandinavian texts	26
ANALYZING THE HEROES AND MONSTERS	30
Introduction	30
Negative Attributes	34
Destruction of life, wealth and honor: Dragons, sea monsters, trolls and giants.	35
Recklessnes	41
The leader of men that should not be	43
Positive Attributes	45
Inspirational leadership	45
Self-sacrifice	46
Comradeship	50
Generosity	53
THE LEGACY OF GERMANIC HEATHEN HEROES IN MODERN TIMES	57
Regarding the Creatures	57
Dragons	57
Draugar - The undead	58
Regarding the Heroes	60

CONCLUSIONS	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
Editions	68
Translations	68
Works cited	69
Dictionaries and Linguistic references	70
General references	71
Documentaries	75
WWW Resources	75

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following list contains all abbreviations used throughout this dissertation

AD	Anno Domini (Christian Era)
BC	Before Christ
Cf.	See for reference (Lat. <i>Confere</i>)
Is	Icelandic
Lat	Latin
ModE	Modern English
ModHG	New High German (Neuhochdeutsch)
OE	Old English
ON	Old Norse (no distinction made between Old East Norse and Old West Norse)
Swe	Swedish

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON OLD ENGLISH AND OLD NORSE PRONUNCIATION

Although the texts analyzed in this dissertation have been normalized there are some characters, used in Old English and Old Norse texts which, except in the case of modern Icelandic and Faroese, are no longer used in the modern versions of the languages. Thus a phonetic transcription is provided for most characters that can be found throughout this dissertation. Some of the characters included were not actually found in the original manuscripts, however a phonetic transcription has been provided as well in order to ease the reading of the excerpts present in this dissertation. These characters will be marked with an asterisk (*).

Old Norse character	Phonetic equivalent
á	/a:/ - /aw/**
æ	/æ/ - /aj/**
é	/je/
í	/i:/
ó	/o:/ - /ow/**
ö *	/œ/-/ø/
ú	/u:/
γ	/y/
ý	/y:/
ai	/aj/
au	/øj/
ei	/ej/
ey	/ej/ - /øj/
þ	/θ/
ð	/ð/

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Old English character	Phonetic equivalent
ā *	/ɑ:/
æ	/æ/
ǣ *	/æ:/
ē *	/e:/
ea	/æa/
ēa *	/æ:a/
eo	/eo/
ēo *	/e:o/
ī *	/i:/
ō *	/o:/
oe	/œ/
ū *	/u:/
ý *	/y:/
f	/f/ - /v/
þ	/θ/ - /ð/
ð	/θ/ - /ð/
h	/h/ - /χ/
cg	/tʃ/
sc	/ʃ/ - /sk/

1

* These characters were created for normalized editions.

** Modern pronunciation in Is.

¹ For Old Norse cf. Nahl, A. von, *Einführung in das Altisländische*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2003
For Old English cf. Marsden, R., *The Cambridge Old English Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS AND STATE OF AFFAIRS

The idea behind this research came from an unexpected thought: what if all the monsters, beasts and non-human creatures in ancient Germanic² tales were not just images created for the sake of bettering the story and the characters within but allegorical descriptions of the behavior expected from someone respectable at the time. Often enough studies have been conducted on the text analyzing them under a religious scope in order to see whether the creatures are a representation of the Christian Devil³.

“Each time period in history brings with it challenges. It is these challenges that shape the values of each culture. In turn, these ideals shape their literature and subsequently their heroes.”⁴

Still, usually studies on Germanic literature often have a tendency to favor language analysis from a diachronic perspective in order to better determine the date of creation of the written source rather than to actually analyze monsters on a parallel scale, as if in a parallel universe. Mainly, research papers dealing with Germanic texts are aimed at looking at the text from a historical point of view where what matters is finding out whether the main character or the events in the texts were or could have been real, as well as the implications in their time; or, in other cases, the aim lies in trying to strip the texts of all (possibly) later influences in order to try and grasp the “original”. Other researches provide a study of the beasts as if presenting an anatomical reading of the creatures as well as of their function in the text. There are even research paths that may even lead to the destruction of the characters in favor of historical truth which often leaves aside literary truth...

² The term *Germanic* in this dissertation will be used as an umbrella term which is to be understood as of the sum of all tribe cultures, saving the political and territorial differences that could be described as Germanic from a linguistic perspective; that is, belonging to the family of Germanic languages, which is itself a branch of Indo-European languages.

³ “The stories Christian literature deployed served as tools in regulating the society at large and thus functioned as ‘structure-maintaining narratives’”
Moilanen, I., *Writing the Order: Religious-Political Discourses in Late Anglo-Saxon England*. pp.13-14 quoting pp.92–93 from Cameron, A., *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

⁴ Lowrey, H., *The Hero as a Reflection of Culture*. pp.11

Yet the question “what if” remains and grows larger. What if the beasts and dark creatures are not the only aspect these texts try to put forward but rather the situations and the ways they are described as well? What if the texts themselves are, thanks to age-long oral tradition, a set of rules for guidance in social behavior that was acceptable at the time? Thus, it is maybe then that, profiting from previous research in the various fields of historical linguistics, historical research, comparative linguistics and literary theory; it might be possible to see those old texts in a different light, one that is not as magical but as challenging and interesting as in any previous research on the texts themselves.

This dissertation will provide excerpts of the texts dealt with. Unless specified otherwise, all translations are the work of the author. If, however, the translations have been taken from other authors, it shall be duly specified by means of footnotes.

All the names of the characters and mythological beings in this dissertation are written, for stylistic purposes, in a close-to-the-original form given that it was impossible due to technical difficulties to use several of the original characters found in the sources such as yogh⁵, wynn⁶ and “o” with ogonek used in Old Norse⁷. These special characters required an extra coding following the Unicode protocols⁸. However most of the excerpts of the texts used

⁵ 3, 3.

Yogh was a character used in both Old and Middle English for the sounds /j/ and /g/. The accepted scholarly transcription is “g”. Example: OE combat: *ȝefeoht* -> *gefeohht* /*jefeoht*/
It corresponds to range 01B7 in Unicode Standard 6.1, Latin Extended-B.

⁶ þ, p.

Wynn or **wunjo* is the name of one of the runes of the Futhark alphabet. Its phonetic equivalent is /w/, a glide or semi-vowel, and the accepted scholarly transcription is “w”.
Example: OE destiny: *pyrð* -> *wyrð*
It corresponds to range 01BF in Unicode Standard 6.1, Latin Extended-B.

⁷ ō, ǫ

Its phonetic equivalent is approximately /œ/ - /ø/.

Example: ON sagas: *sǫgur* → *sögur* /*sœgur*/

It corresponds to range 01EB in Unicode Standard 6.1, Latin Extended-B.

⁸ Unicode is a character encoding system provided by the Unicode Consortium which “provides the basis for processing, storage and interchange of text data in any language in all modern software and information technology protocols”.

Cf. http://www.unicode.org/faq/basic_q.html

have already been normalized to standard Latin characters, and the characters used have been written as “g”, “w”, and “ö”⁹. Still, characters such as *eth* (“ð”) and *thorn* (“þ”) have been favored instead of either “th” or even “dh”. Thus we have the names Byrhtnōþ and Óðinn. The author is however aware that scholars also make use of the names in a normalized form such as Byrhtnoth, Hroþgar, Odin,... When mentions and references to other texts are made, including some of the translations, the way the authors wrote the names has been kept as deference for their work and contribution to the field.

Cf. <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0180.pdf>

HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

Writing in the ancient Germanic world.

Both the Anglo-Saxons as well as the ancient Scandinavians came from a culture, or rather group of cultures which were mainly oral. However they did possess writing, which was more or less common to all Germanic tribes before the three branches of West Germanic, East Germanic and North Germanic languages spread apart from their common root. Their alphabet, the runic alphabet¹⁰, also known as *Older* or *Elder Futhark*, was based on the Old Italic alphabet and it contained about 24 symbols which in turn had a meaning (as in e.g. the ancient Phoenician alphabet). These symbols were organized into *ætts* (groups) which resulted in the following correspondences to the Latin alphabet¹¹:

<i>Ætt 1</i>	f u þ a r c	ƒ ᚱ ᚦ ᚦ ᚷ ᚨ
<i>Ætt 2</i>	h n i j i p z s	ᚨ ᚠ ᚢ ᚦ ᚷ ᚨ ᚱ ᚲ
<i>Ætt 3</i>	t b e m l ŋ d o	ᚠ ᚷ ᚨ ᚱ ᚲ ᚷ ᚨ ᚱ ᚲ

¹²

The degree of literacy among the ancient Germanic population is unknown but apparently the alphabet was widespread and known to many, even if to a limited extent. However, as the Anglo-Saxons, as well as the ancient Scandinavians, got separated from their common root and began their separate evolutions, so did their alphabet.

¹⁰ Cf. Owen, F. *The Germanic People*. pp.209-225

¹¹ Nahl, A. von, *Einführung in das Altisländische*. pp.6 and Ranke, F. & Hofmann, D., *Altnordisches Elementarbuch*. pp.9-10

¹² Font used: Rune_G.ttf

England

England and the English

England was originally settled by several Germanic tribes which inhabited parts of Northern-, central- and Southern Jutland, as well as the neighboring parts of Northern Germany which lay on to the East and the West of the Jutland peninsula, between the 5th and 6th centuries. These peoples possessed a similar language and culture, with certain specific geographic and tribal differences. However it is important to note that these peoples shared a common system of beliefs with a polytheistic religion. Their system of beliefs and social organization they brought with them to England as they progressively settled. However, they did not settle in one turn but in two separate and distinct waves. The time that passed between waves allowed for external influences to take grip on the peoples, their language and their cultures. This, in the long run, provided a great “primordial soup” which became the basis for their cultural expressions as they settled in England: they talked of the tales of the first settlers, of heroes long gone in times before their kin left their homelands for England.

For a while it was the Anglians who played one of the leading roles in the conquest of the new lands, just like the toponyms of the modern name of England show: *Anglaland* (land of the Angles) and *Angel cynnes land* (Land of the Anglian kin). It is important to bear in mind that during the reign of the Anglian kings (In conjunction with the Kentish peoples), before their demise and up until the rise of Wessex within the Heptarchy, their beliefs were still heathen (Germanic heathenism, but the insular variant): they had maintained the religion of their forbears and with it a system of beliefs which had remained quite unaltered through time and was quite similar to that which the heathen Scandinavians had at the time, such as shown in the Sutton Hoo¹³ burial¹⁴ site of an Anglian king which bears enormous similarities to those in Vendel, Sweden.

¹³ “En 1938 (...) le lieu-dit Sutton Hoo livrera à l'archéologue Basil Brown les restes d'une grande barque de 27 mètres, à longue proue courbe et effilée et à dix-huit paires de rames. Ce bateau dormait depuis treize cents ans sous un tumulus (...). Parfaite évocation du poème Beowulf (...). La datation (...) fera attribuer ce navire funéraire soit au roi Redwald, mort vers 625, soit au roi Aethelhere, mort en 655”.
Louth, P., *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*, pp.113-114

¹⁴ Cf. Mitchell, B., *An invitation to Old English & Anglo-Saxon England*. pp.102-105

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

The heathens in England were christened between the late 6th and 7th centuries. This fact triggered the end of many aspects which had kept their ties close to their roots, such as the heathen-god-based toponymy as well as war-like aspects of the Germanic inhabitants of England. Their christening ultimately made them turn away from their heathen roots in the continent and the little that was kept was adapted to their new faith.

England and Politics

England changed gravely from the 5th to the 11th centuries: the land, originally inhabited by Celtic population and later colonized by the Roman Empire as far as Southern Scotland was, around the 5th century, being invaded by groups of raiders and ultimately settlers of Germanic descent which originally had been invited by the Roman Empire in a manner of foederati, just like the Visigoth hordes that later swept Southwestern Europe.

Once the Germanic invader settled, several petty kingdoms were established throughout the island but this rapidly changed toward the 7th and 8th centuries in which the number of petty realms decreased in favor of larger political entities which formed the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: the realms of Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex and Kent¹⁵.

From the late 8th century until well past the first half of the 11th century, the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy suffered a great deal of changes which resulted in two larger realms: In the South, the kingdom under the rule of the House of Wessex, which comprised the territories of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, Essex and part of modern Cornwall and Wales; and in the North, a kingdom under Scandinavian rule, known as the Danelaw (*Dena Lagu* in OE) which comprised a good deal of lands that had previously belonged to the Northumbrian, Mercian and East Anglian petty kingdoms. Towards the early 11th century the land was virtually unified under a “new” royal line, which fed on the dynasties of Wessex and that of the royal house of Denmark, whose first member was Knut, crowned king of England in 1016. The end of the Anglo-Saxon rule, including that of its language, officially came in the year 1066, after the

¹⁵ “L'unité ethnique des VI^e et VII^e siècles correspond à une fusion des peuples envahisseurs après la conquête: d'où l'homogénéité du vieil anglais et la transformation de la <<démocratie germanique>> des Saxons poussière de dynasties, comparable à la mutation franque de l'époque mérovingienne”.
Louth, P., *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*, pp.114

defeat of king Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings and the accession to the throne of William Duke of Normandy on Christmas Day that same year.

England and Language

Old English¹⁶ was West Germanic language, just like Dutch and German, which was spoken approximately between the 6th and 12th centuries in England. The “death” of the language was actually the evolution to a clear-cut distinct language, heavily-influenced by Norman French, which retained much of the original characteristics of the language but suffered deep alterations in grammar for example such as a progressive loss of the case system which was typical of Germanic languages.

The name Old English is to be understood as a linguistic conglomerate which comprises several stances and dialects of the languages of the peoples which ultimately formed the English such as the Angles, the Frisians, the Saxons, the Jutes and and, to a lesser extent, some other Germanic tribes. In the time we are to debate, which is mostly around the late 8th century onwards, it is widely accepted amongst language historians of English that, according to written records there were several clearly distinct dialects which conformed what we nowadays know as Old English; these were Mercian, West Saxon, Kentish, and Northumbrian. Although there were these possibly dialects, the political evolution of the territory allowed for a greater development/spreading of West Saxon versus other dialects which were found in territories under Scandinavian rule.¹⁷

The Anglo-Saxons and writing

As the Angles, Saxon, Jutes and Frisians (among others) left their continental roots when they got to the British Isles, their language began to change due to mixture in their dialects. This resulted in a language with a greater degree of sounds than the Germanic mother language. The *Elder Futhark* evolved from the original 24 symbols to a larger entity known as the *Anglo-Saxon Runes*, *Anglo-Frisian Runes* or *Futhorc*, which contained between 26 and 33

¹⁶ ModE *Old English*, OE *Ænglisc*, ModHg *Alt Englisch*, Bokmål Norwegian *Altengelsk*, Danish *Angelsaksisk*, Swe *Fornengelska*, Icelandic *Fornenska*

¹⁷ Cf. Nahl, A. von, *Einführung in das Altisländische*. Chapter 1

Scandinavia

Scandinavia and the ancient Scandinavians

Scandinavia was already inhabited in the 4th and 5th centuries AD. However, they were not one single political entity nor were they one homogeneous people. During the late Iron Age, which is also regarded by scholars as either the Germanic Iron Age or the Migration Period, the first milestones of the latter evolution of the tribes in Scandinavia began.

Already in the 1st century BC the Teutones and the Cimbri (early inhabitants of modern-day Denmark) had wandered southwards. Between the 4th and 5th centuries similar population mass movements took place with the spreading of the Goths (as attested by Jordanes for example) and other tribes that dwelt deeper in Germania. However, most of the population remained in Scandinavia and continued with their traditional way of life.

Between the 6th and late 8th centuries, according to Swedish scholars, we find the Vendel Period. It is the first landmark of a process of evolution of the Northern tribes the result of which will be the Viking Age. Unlike many other Germanic peoples, such as the Franks, the Alamanni, the Longobards, the Visigoths... early Scandinavians kept their heathen gods and their tribal way of life, although they did receive influence to some degree from Christian missionaries, often from the Hamburg-Bremen Bishopric in the German Empire.

Around the late 8th century the Viking Age began (the date generally accepted is AD 793²²). No conclusive evidence has yet been found which can explain the reason or reasons for this era of war and conquest throughout Europe. Scandinavians remained heathen through mostly the entire length of the Viking Age, however this was not the same in all of the Scandinavian countries: Denmark had the greater population of Christians yet depending on the king the realm would be considered Christian, and would thus tolerate missionaries, whereas other kings would prosecute and slaughter Christians (Danish) and missionaries from the German Bishopric. Iceland, although populated later than the rest of the Scandinavian countries (early-to-mid 10th century) was the first country to be officially christened whereas Sweden was the last stronghold of paganism and resisted well into the early 12th century. The matter of the gods also differed depending on the territory: The Danes preferred Óðinn,

²² The first viking attack ever recorded, and which is found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, took place in 789 in Portland Bay, Dorset. A local reeve was killed by Danes whom he mistook for lost merchants.

whereas Norwegians mostly favored Þórr and the Swedes mainly Freyr. However, although those were the chief gods they all still followed most of their pantheon.²³

During the Viking Age Scandinavians expanded westwards and eastwards, what is known as the *Vestrvegr* and the *Austurvegr*. This expansion by means of trade and conquest brought back to Scandinavia many foreign influences, as well as goods, which were otherwise totally unheard of. However, unlike other conquering cultures, the Scandinavians, given their individualistic nature, tended to blend in wherever they went and within a few generations they had become genetically and linguistically nearly indistinguishable from the original dwellers of the lands they sailed towards. Such an example we find in the West Route, the *vestrvegr*, in the Anglo-Danish population of the Danelaw in England, or, in the East Route, the *austurvegr*, the Rus peoples (mainly Swedes in origin) in what later became the principality of Moscow and the grand duchy of Kiev. We can find an example in the modern-day Russian names of Oleg and Igor which were originally the Scandinavian names Helge and Ingvar.

At the end of the Viking Age, and coinciding with the greater christening of the Scandinavians, their many petty kingdoms were slowly united in favor of larger realms which are the basis of modern-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Scandinavia and Politics

The Scandinavian territory that was inhabited between the 5th and 13th centuries was quite small in comparison to modern-day Scandinavian countries. The land was mainly inhabited around the coastline and toward the Southern part of the peninsula the inhabitants dwelt a little farther inland. Unlike the rest of their peers at the time, such as the Franks or the Anglo-Saxons, there were few kingdoms or petty realms and (such as those of the Svear, the Geats or the Danes). At the brink of the Viking Age the land still consisted mainly of farmhouses, few villages and several large trading points such as, among others, Birka²⁴, Hedeby²⁵ or Uppsala²⁶.

²³ Cf. Davidson, H.R.E., *Gods and myths of Northern Europe*.

²⁴ Birka and Hovgården, in the island Björkö in Lake Mälaren, in Värmland, Sweden.

²⁵ ON *Heiðabýr*, ModE *Hedeby*, NHG *Haithabu*; in the Jutland Peninsula, on the outskirts of modern-day Schleswig, in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

There were no greater feudal lords and their system was just a continuation of the old Germanic power structure with local chieftains, *hofðingjar*²⁷, or, as time advanced, *hersar*²⁸ which led in the end to the first Scandinavian monarchies in larger portions of land, the origin of the medieval kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. This greater change already began in the mid-to-late Viking Age, from the late 9th century onwards²⁹. This evolution of their political structure led to the creation of protectorates or just conquered realms such as the conquest of Normandy (which was given by the Frankish emperor to the fleet of Rollo in the early 10th century) or the establishment of the Danelaw in England (which ultimately produced a hybrid Anglo-Danish monarchy with king Knut as the first great “overking” of both England, Denmark and Sweden)

The clan system was in time overthrown by monarchies and also by the creation of the first people's parliaments such as the *Alþing* in Iceland which were derived from the ancient local and regional assemblies held by Germanic peoples³⁰.

²⁶ *Gamla Uppsala*, on the outskirts of modern-day Uppsala, in Värmland, Sweden.

This city is also mentioned by Adam of Bremen, in his 11th century *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, in which he states that there lay the main center of heathen prayer, devotion and pilgrimage (to be understood as for example Jerusalem in the Christian faith).

²⁷ ON *hofðingi* – pl. *Hofðingjar*

Local autonomous chieftain, generally a clan leader with limited territorial authority, both social, political and military, in charge of the *hundred* (territorial division of approx. 100-120 men), who owed allegiance to a *jarl* (earl, or count-like figure chosen among other chieftains for military and political purposes).

²⁸ ON *hersir* – pl. *hersar*

Local chieftain, often linked to a feudal lord. The term appears around the 12th century, in a context of a newly Christianized society (particularly in Sweden) that is adopting new continental European political customs and social structures.

²⁹ Cf Sawyer, P.H., *Kings and Vikings*. Chapter 5.

³⁰ ON *þing*, it is, in function, equivalent to the OE *Folcmōt*.

In the Scandinavian context, it was the meeting of all local free men, and also liberated slaves, on whom the power of the territory resided. The greater *þing*, that is, the reunion of all territorial leaders, was known as *Alþing*, which was the foundation for the later national assembly the Icelandic Parliament consists of.

Scandinavia and language

Old Norse³¹³² was a North Germanic Language which later fathered Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Guthnic and was the language of the pre-medieval Scandinavians. In written records it has been possible to establish linguistic geographic differences which have provided a sub-classification within the mother term Old Norse: Old West Norse, which comprises Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese; and Old East Norse, which would include Swedish, Danish, as well as Geatish, Guthnic and Gothic.

This language, just like Old English, was affected by the First Germanic Sound Shift³³ which differentiated it from the original Indo-European root, thus bearing great similarity with its Western relative, Old English. It is important to bear in mind that from around the 4th – 5th until the 8th-9th centuries the language evolved in such a manner that was completely different from its Germanic root, this including greater vowel variation (such as “au” to “ey” and “ø”, “ai” to “ei” and “æ”).

Its lifespan was between around the 4th century until well into the 14th-15th centuries when the Scandinavian languages began to differentiate from the mother language due to, among other things, the loss of their case system and greater changes in pronunciation which may be understood as the birth of the next stage of the Scandinavian languages and their thus more or less independent evolution³⁴.

In this dissertation, the name or designation Old Norse is to be understood as the linguistic conglomerate which comprises several stances and dialects of the languages of the peoples of Scandinavia such as the Icelanders, Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, Geats and other Scandinavian tribes and ethnic groups of Germanic origin. The debate here will be centered around the time of the writing of the sagas as well as that of the ancient dwellers of Southern Scandinavia that are important to us in relation to the epic poem *Beowulf*.

³¹ ModE *Old Norse*, ModHG *Altnordisch*, Danish & Bokmål Norwegian *norrønt*, Swe *fornordiska*, Icelandic *norraent mál /dǫnsk tunga*

³² Cf. Palm, R., *Vikingarnas Språk*. 750-1100.

³³ Grimm's Law (NHG Erste Lautverschiebung)

³⁴ Unlike other Germanic languages, Scandinavian languages are intelligible for native speakers to a greater degree of understanding than for example West Germanic languages among themselves. It is also important to note that in comparison with other Germanic languages, Scandinavian languages have a greater degree of similarity to their mother language, Old Norse, than Germanic languages with their prior stages of language evolution.

The Scandinavians and writing

Scandinavians evolved rather untouched by Latin literacy and influence well after the migrations and into the Vendel Period. However, during the latter part of this stage, prior to the beginning of the Viking Age, the language had already begun to change. The *Elder Futhark* was still used but, curiously enough, unlike its distant relative Old English, the runic alphabet used in Old Norse was reduced although the language had a greater amount of sounds. This implied that writings were no longer clearly intelligible but actually had to be interpreted by the reader. Thus, the alphabet was reduced from 24 symbols to only 16 and it is known as the *Younger Futhark*³⁵. Its lifespan was between the 8th and the 12th centuries when a much broader alphabet (that already began to appear in the late 11th century), the medieval runes, which provided a symbol for every Latin character, came into use until well into the 14th century.

Bearing in mind that the Norse had mostly an oral culture, this freedom of use enabled a greater variety of symbols which in most cases coincided among all the regions in Scandinavia but, in other cases did not. Not only that, but the symbols could also be found inverted or placed in the opposite direction. Thus we find variations in the *Younger Futhark* from Scandinavians that came from Denmark from those that came from Norway or Sweden³⁶. Most of their writing was done on household items (the handle of a knife or axe which would be both a tool and a weapon) and especially on runestones. Runestones were stones with runes carved (often within a shape of a carved lindworm³⁷) set by the roads they travelled in and were often set in memory of a deceased relative or expedition companion. Some of the most famous are found throughout southern Scandinavia³⁸ as well as in the lands that once were part of the *austrvegr* which the Norse followed to Constantinople. Moreover there is

³⁵ Palm, R., *Vikingarnas Språk. 750-1100*. pp.100-105

³⁶ Cf. Palm, R., *Vikingarnas Språk. 750-1100*.

³⁷ OE *Lindwyrn*, ON *Lindormr*

Lindworms are serpent-like dragons that only have rear extremities. They might, or might not, have wings (although they would not count as extremities per se).

The idea and imagery of lindworms was widespread in the late Germanic World and lindworm designs can be found in Norse runestones.

³⁸ For example the *Rök Runestone*, found in Rök, Östergötland, Sweden, which contains the longest runic inscription on stone preserved. It is runestone *Ög 136* according to Rundata (The runestone database of the University of Uppsala)

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

even evidence of runic “graffiti” done by the Norse on the Piraeus Lion at the Arsenal of Venice³⁹.

The following chart shows the symbols that were mostly common to all.

Ætt 1	f u þ o r k	ƿ ʀ þ ʀ r ƿ
Ætt 2	h n i a s	* ʀ ʀ ʀ ʀ
Ætt 3	t b m l R	ʀ B ʀ ʀ ʀ

³⁹ The Piraeus Lion was to be originally found in the harbor of Athens.

The carving was done by Norsemen on account of another Norseman, where they recorded certain acts of war, probably during their service as members of the Varangian Guard in Constantinople.

The Piraeus Lion was taken as war-plunder during the war against the Ottoman Empire and was brought to Venice by the naval officer in command in 1687.

THE TEXTS

This is a brief introduction to the historical literary texts that will be analyzed in this dissertation.

The Anglo-Saxon texts

All of the Anglo-Saxon texts used in this research share two characteristics: they are anonymous and they were written down in Christian Anglo-Saxon England.

The first text is *The Dream of the Rood*, an OE poem in alliterative verse which tells the story of a monk who falls asleep and dreams of a wooden cross, a rood⁴⁰, which, in turn, tells him the story of a man, a captive, who is then hung on that very same cross. The cross, however, will endure the pain of the captive and suffer for what is being done to him although the cross itself is no man. The story is actually an early Christian reinterpretation of the passion of Christ, his crucifixion and how he is later carried down. It is noteworthy that the manner in which Jesus faces his death differs strongly with the manner depicted, for example, in the gospel according to Matthew.

Regarding its authorship, up to this date no authors have been identified although it is heavily argued among scholars that there are two possible candidates, Caedmon and Cynewulf⁴¹. Little is known about the time of its creation but the text bears strong resemblances to the inscriptions in the 8th century Ruthwell Cross. The original manuscript is kept in the 10th century *Vercelli Book*⁴².

⁴⁰ OE *rōd*

⁴¹ The earliest writers in Old English currently known and acknowledged as such by most scholars.

⁴² The *Vercelli Book* is a codex which contains homilies as well as several non-secular OE poems. It is preserved in the Cathedral Library in Vercelli, Italy, under number CXVII.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

The second OE text is the epic poem *Beowulf*. The poem tells the story of the Geatish hero Beowulf, accompanied by his war band, which travels to Denmark, king Hroðgar's⁴³ mead-hall Heorot, in order to aid him in his fight against a beast that kills Danes: Grendel. Beowulf single-handedly kills the beast and then faces Grendel's mother, a sea monster. After this victory Beowulf returns to Geatland⁴⁴ where he is crowned king and there he rules for fifty years. Fifty years after, a dragon threatens Beowulf's realm. Beowulf seeks out and fights the dragon and kills him, but he himself is fatally wounded and dies. His comrades bury him in a mound.

The poem is found in the *Cotton Vittelius* manuscript, kept in the British Library in London. Its authorship and the place where it was written are unknown. The poem contains another passage which is scholarly believed to be or have been at some point part of the whole of the text of *Beowulf*, the *Finnsburh* fragment.

The last Anglo-Saxon text used is *The Battle of Maldon*. The poem is about an actual historical battle that ensued in August in AD 991 in the coasts of Essex. The exact location was at the estuary of river Blackwater (Called *Pante* in OE), by the town of Maldon. There was a narrow causeway that could be walked on, which connected the shore to the small island of Northey.

The events that took place consisted of a band of Vikings (*wicingas* in the text) which were anchored in Northey Island and threatened the nearby town of Maldon. A group of armed Anglo-Saxons faced the Norse invaders. The leader of the Vikings was, according to many scholars, and with a great degree of probability, the Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvasson (*Anlaf* in the text⁴⁵⁴⁶). This most probably implied that his men were weathered in war unlike

⁴³ The king's name is written as *Hroðgar* or *Hroþgar* indistinctively throughout the poem.

⁴⁴ *Swe Götaland*.

Götaland was a territory comprised within modern-day Swedish provinces of Västergötaland, Östergötaland, Halland and Skåne, all in Southern Sweden. It was mostly inhabited around the coastline.

⁴⁵ Cf Campell, Alan. "Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*. Vol. 6. nr. 2, Cambridge (MA): Medieval Academy of America 1987

⁴⁶ Cf "Olaf Tryggvason" and "The Battle of Maldon". *Encyclopædia Romana*. University of Chicago. Online Resource

the freshly harvested Anglo-Saxon troops under the command of earl Byrhtnōþ⁴⁷. The Vikings apparently wanted *danegeld*⁴⁸ to be paid to them in order to confirm peace. However, most defiant Byrhtnōþ appears to have refused payment and opposed the Norse warriors with a most dreadful result: both he and the majority of his men were slaughtered leaving the town free to fall on the hands of the Vikings.

The text itself is incomplete and lacks a beginning and an end. It is a late 10th - early 11th century Old English poem in alliterative verse and it is believed by scholars that the author might have been present during the actual events of the battle. The original manuscript was however lost in a fire in the 17th century and only some later copies of the original text are preserved.

The Scandinavian texts

The Scandinavian texts analyzed in this research mainly come from a compendium of old heathen lore and sagas⁴⁹ collected and written down in 13th century: the *Older Edda* or *Poetic Edda* (*Sæmundar Edda*) and the *Younger Edda* or *Prose Edda* (*Snorra Edda Sturlusonar*). Both texts are written in Old Norse, the Western variant (different for example from the Eastern ON variant found in the *Ancient Law of the West-Geats*⁵⁰).

⁴⁷ The name is often spelled in OE as either *Byrhtnōþ* or *Byhtnōð* indistinctively.

⁴⁸ OE *Danegeld*: it means Danish gold/tax.

It was a "revolutionary tax" imposed by Norse raiders on the Anglo-Saxons in exchange of which the raiders would not attack their main land objective but would follow their way on board their ships. However, the words originally used were *geld* (gold/tax) and *gavol* (gift); the adjective was added around the 12th century, well after the Viking Age. The earliest attestations of payment or requirement for payment of *danegeld* is actually after the Battle of Maldon in August AD 991. In the poem the Vikings require the Anglo-Saxons to buy off peace with wealth so they may be off safe and sound.

⁴⁹ OE *Saga*: Tale, story.

There are five types of sagas, four of which are originally Norse. These are the *Sagas of Kings* (*Konungasögur*), the *Sagas of the Icelanders* (*Íslendinga sögur*), The Tales of the Icelanders (*Íslendingaþættir*), the *Contemporary Sagas* (*Samtímasögur*), the *Sagas of Earlier Days* (*Fornaldarsögur*), *Sagas of the Greenlanders* (*Grænlandingsögur*). The fifth type, the *Sagas of Chivalry* (*Riddarasögur*) are mainly translations and rewritings of Latin and French epic texts and, to a lesser extent, Norse texts.

⁵⁰ Swe *Äldre Västgötalagen*.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

The author of the *Poetic Edda* is unknown and little is known of its whereabouts until the 17th century. The text is found in the *Codex Regius*⁵¹ and in the *Hauksbók*⁵². Among the several texts in the Poetic Edda, the texts used in this research are the *Völuspá* (*The Völva's Prophecy*⁵³), the *Hávamál* (*The Sayings of the High One*), the *Vafþrúðnismál* (*The Sayings of Vafþrúðnis*) and the *Hýmiskviða* (*The Poem of Hymir*).

The *Völuspá* is the tale and prophecy a *völva* gives the god Óðinn⁵⁴. In this prophecy she explains the beginning of the universe, the heathen Norse cosmogony, as well as the description of the nine worlds and some past and future events. The *völva* then gives a few hints about the events that are to unfold in Ragnarökr⁵⁵ just as before she comes out of her trance.

The *Hávamál* is collection of Old Norse poems dedicated to giving advice for conduct and proper living as well as some parts devoted to mythology. This text is traditionally divided into four sections according to scholars: the *Gestapátttr*, *The Guest's Tale* (Also generally known as *The Hávamál* itself), which goes from stanza 1 to 80. It is a compendium of rules and guidelines of proper behavior in private as well as in public. There are then two shorter poems on women and two stories of Óðinn, which span altogether from stanza 81 to 111. The *Loddfáfnismál*, *The Speech of Loddfáfnir*, which spans in stanzas 111-138, is a set of verses similar to those in the *Gestapátttr* but aimed at Loddfáfnir. The *Rúnatal*, *The Tale of the Runes*,

The legal code for Västgötaland, Sweden, written down in Old Swedish between 1225 and 1285.

⁵¹ Is *Konungsbók*.

The manuscript (Signature GKS 2365 4to) is preserved in the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík

⁵² The manuscript (*AM 371 4to*) is preserved in the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies of the University of Iceland in Reykjavík. This manuscript was written in the early 14th century and it preserves some versions of the texts found in the *Codex Regius*.

⁵³ ON *Völva*: seeress, also known as *seiðkona*, which means woman (*kona*) that can say *seiðr* (prophesize).

⁵⁴ OE *Wōden*, ON *Óðinn*, ModHG *Wotan*.

He is also known as *Alfaðer*, father of all; and *Valfaðer*, father of the slain in battle and chosen to accompany him in Valhalla (Hall of the slain).

⁵⁵ ON *Ragnarökr*: Twilight of the Gods

It is the end of the universe in the heathen Scandinavian tradition. A series of events will cause a final battle between gods, men, giants and other beings. The war will end with the destruction of the gods and their foes, the giants and trolls, as well as men, but then the sons of the gods shall inherit what is left and will create a new, more equal universe without the giants.

stanzas 139-146, is the story about how the god Óðinn won the runes. The last part is the *Ljóðatal* (stanzas 147-165), a collection of charms which is already introduced in the last verses of the *Rúnatal*.

The *Vafþrúðnismál* is a verse conversation between the gods Óðinn and Frigg and later between Óðinn and the giant Vafþrúðnir, whom Óðinn outwits during a wisdom contest.

The *Hýmiskviða* is a poem that tells the story of a visit of the Æsir⁵⁶, the high gods, to the giant Ægir and later to the giant Hýmir. During a feast in Hýmir's hall, Þórr eats so much that the guests are left without food so both he and Hýmir are to go fishing. While at sea, Þórr catches something big which is actually the Midgard Serpent. Instinctively he seeks his hammer in order to kill the beast but the panick-stricken giant Hýmir cuts the beast loose. Þórr is enraged due to the beast escaping so in revenge he clubs Hýmir on the head with his hammer Mjöllnir.

The *Younger* or *Prose Edda*, was written down in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson, a poet, historian and politician from Iceland. Among other works, Snorri Sturluson was also author of the *Heimskringla*, which is the history of the Norwegian kings. This Younger Edda is organized in three blocks and it contains the myth of the creation of the universe and the worlds within as well as a linguistic/literary treatise. The blocks are the *Gylfaginning* (*The tricking of Gylfi*), the *Skáldsakaparmál* (*The Language of Poetry*) and the *Háttatal* (a list of Old Norse verb forms). For this dissertation only parts of the *Gylfaginning* have been used.

The *Gylfaginning* is the tale of Gylfi, king of the Svears (Swedes), and how he was tricked by the Æsir. He then set to go to Asgarðr to see the gods but he is tricked again and lands somewhere else before a palace. Upon his entry he is met by a man, Gangleri, who takes him inside where he finds three men: High (*Hár*), Just-as-High (*Jafnhár*) and Third (*Þriði*). Gylfi enters then a wisdom contest through which he learns of the destiny of the gods, men and the universe, the ultimate destruction at Ragnarökkr. Shortly after, the hall and the men disappear all together and Gylfi returns to his lands to tell the people what he has heard and learned.

⁵⁶ ON *Áss* (sing) – *Æsir* (plur), Swe *Asar/Asagudar*, ModE *Aesir* or *Asagods*.

They were the high gods in Scandinavian mythology. They lived in one of the nine worlds, called Asgarðr (the fortress/garden/land of the Aesir). They shared their world above Miðgarðr (the world in the middle where men dwelt) with the Vanir (ON *Vanr* – *Vanir*, Swe *Vanar/Vanagudar*, ModE *Vanir*), fellow gods with whom in days of old they had quarreled and that lived in a separate world *Vanaheimr* (Home of the Vanir).

ANALYZING THE HEROES AND MONSTERS

Introduction

“The mythology of a people (...) is the comment of men of one particular age or civilization on the mysteries of human existence and the human mind, their model for social behavior, and their attempt to define in stories of gods and demons their perception of the inner realities.”⁵⁷

In the ancient Germanic World it was expected from leaders to possess certain qualities. These were preserved in oral tradition through ages mainly in the guise of heroic lays and poems. The texts have thus a tendency to emphasize certain aspects of the characters in them depicted⁵⁸. A clear example is how, even up to this date, the ancient leader of the Cherusci that defeated several legions of the Roman Empire⁵⁹⁶⁰ under direct command of

⁵⁷ Davidson, H.R.E., *Gods and myths of Northern Europe*. pp.II

⁵⁸ “Towards the end of the 5th century B.C., Roman civilization collapsed and Germanic tribes supplanted Roman governments. These tribes had a warrior culture and no strong centralized government. This led to the development a society of warriors who owed loyalty only to their lord.” Lowrey, H. quoting Krieger, L.S.; Jantzen, S.L. and Neill, K., *World History*. Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992. pp. 201-203

“A Germanic leader was expected to be a strong warrior and had to prove himself in battle. An important part of their culture was the relationship between “thanes” (warriors) and their “ring-giver” (lord). Thanes aided their ring-giver in battle and, in return for their loyalty, the ring-giver rewarded his thanes with gifts. Gift giving was central to their society because it symbolized the commitment of a thane to his lord, and of the lord to his thanes. Because the Germanic culture was warrior based and was centered around a lord, strength and courage in battle, as well as loyalty were highly valued traits in a hero.”

Lowrey, H. quoting Lawall, S. (Ed), “Introduction to Beowulf.” *The Norton Anthology of Western Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006. pp.1174-1179.

⁵⁹ ModE *Battle of the Teutoburg Forest*, NHG *Schlacht am Teutoburger Wald, Varusschlacht, Hermannsschlacht*

It is a battle that took place in AD 9 in the outskirts of modern-day Osnabrück in Lower Saxony, Germany. The battle ended in complete disaster for the Roman Empire as they lost three whole legions (never to be replaced, unlike what was customary for decimated legions), and several cohorts of

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Quintilius Varus, Arminius, has a legend attached to his name: This historical figure has remained in the minds of later generations and still much is being debated of his figure⁶¹. In this case his deeds not only remained in the Roman chronicles but in the general consciousness and imagery of the German people and, apparently, with versions not too prone to exaggeration. In other cases however, as is the case of Odoaker⁶² or Theodoric the Goth⁶³ or even Brunhild of Austrasia⁶⁴, have become characters in great epics and their historical deeds have become mere fragments that are embedded in epic narratives. The characters based on them acquire then a mystical/magical dimension that they most probably never had in life such as in the texts of the cycle of the Nibelungs in Old High German or in Old Norse texts of later writing⁶⁵. These characters become “infected” or simply updated with godlike characteristics which then are remembered and retold through the ages.

auxiliary troops as well as cavalry. The Roman legions were ambushed by a confederacy of several Germanic tribes (Cherusci, Sycambri, Chatti,...) under the lead of Arminius the Cherusci.

⁶⁰ Cf. Louth, P., *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*, pp.26-27

⁶¹ “In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Germanic scholars tried harder and harder to glorify their languages. (...) In order to reinforce their self-image in the face of the heroic legends of the Greeks and Romans, such scholars began at the same time to glorify and exaggerate the importance of Germanic heroes, especially the chieftain Arminius, who, according to Roman histories, defeated the Roman legions at the renowned Battle of Teutoburger Wald in AD 9. In the mid-sixteenth century his name was Germanicised to create the national hero Hermann. He became a symbol for resistance to the power of southern Europe and when King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in the early seventeenth century intervened in the Thirty Years' War between Catholics and Protestants, this was interpreted as a repetition of the triumphal march of the ancient Germanic Goths against the decadent Roman Empire (Magnus 1554; Lohenstein 1689; Bödl 2000, 17–23).”

Björnsson, A., *Wagner and the Wolsungs. Icelandic Sources of Der Ring des Nibelungen*. pp.71

⁶² *Otaker* in the *Hildebrandslied* (Lay of Hildebrand). Odoaker, ruler of the Heruli, conquered Rome in AD 476 by deposing Romulus Augustus and thus officially bringing the Western Roman Empire to an end.

⁶³ *Þiðrek* in the Old Norse *Þiðrekssaga*, *Dietrich von Bern* in the *Lay of the Nibelungs* (ModGer. *Das Nibelungenlied*). He is also named in the *Hildebrandslied*.

⁶⁴ *Brunhilde* in the *Nibelungenlied* (ON *Brynhildr*). Was the probably the Visigothic princess of Austrasia married to king Sigebert 6th century.

⁶⁵ The characters of the cycle are found in the Latin text *Waltharius*, of German origin, the MidHG *Nibelungenlied*, and in the Norse texts *Atlakviða*, the *Þiðrekssaga*, *Atlamál* and the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* among others.

“Every culture has heroes. In works of literature, is an individual to be admired and emulated, and because of this he is the embodiment of the greatest virtues of the culture that created him. The ideals of every culture were shaped by the social conditions of the time and therefore different attributes became valued. To different degrees, the hero in a work is a result of not only the culture from which the hero comes, but also the culture of the author. Cultural values are reflected in both the actions of a hero and his motivations. As heroes, Achilles, Aeneas, Beowulf, and Roland reflect the values of the societies that created them.”⁶⁶

However, not only do these changes reflect a great imagination but they also depict the consciousness of the time when it comes to naming and even wishing for a leader: the way they are in the stories is the way they ought to be in real life. In the words of H.R.E. Davidson (1964) “We learn from their literature that they had a keen sense of dignity of man, and of sanctity of human relationships”. Thus, these texts also become educational for those peoples whose common history is being continuously retold, enlarged and updated and especially for those who either aim at or do become leaders of either small war-bands or of great kingdoms. It is then that the foes that appear in the stories are no longer mythical beasts or utterly evil, depraved, ruthless men but actually they can be understood as allegories of those things and those deeds that are or should not be done by a respected Germanic leader of its people.

“The old man recounts the tale of his ancestors who fought valiantly against the Celtic tribes in Ireland; of how they interacted with the gods in attempt to seal their victory in battle; of how they drank every night with Odin in the halls of Valhalla. The storyteller is animated, throwing his arms through the air like flesh-bound specters. He uses his polytonous voice to add emphasis to the parts of the story he wants his audience to remember the most. He is the living and breathing history of his kinsmen; he is their link to the past and their hope for the future. The wrinkled and tired old man is a storyteller.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Lowrey, H., *The Hero as a Reflection of Culture*. pp.1

⁶⁷ Knitt, J., *Preservation and Immortality: The Transition from Oral to Written Culture in Iceland*.pp.63

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

This educational stance of the Germanic epic is, in the early Middle Ages, reprocessed under the scope of Christian clerics in christening missions⁶⁸ in heathen lands⁶⁹ who, by understanding the educational function of the folklore, re-adapt some of the stories under their own non-heathen light and, in cases, they re-adapt the biblical stories so that the heathens may grasp the grace of God and thus repent and join the flock. But the ideals for leadership and kinship found in the texts remained, even through latinization and christening. An example of this reworking of the old customs is found, for example in the *Hávamál*, in the *Edda*, specifically the *Gestabáttir*, which gives a set of rules or guidelines people are to follow or take into consideration with regards to how they should act towards others as well as themselves. Now, although this is a 13th century text, many aspects presented do certainly give us a glimpse of the heathen Germanic mindset which often coincides with our modern Western Christian/post-Christian view of the world and life within and, at some points it strikes us as it would have non-heathens in the early days of Christianity in the North. Thus, and taking the sayings in the *Hávamál* as the conceptual backbone, we shall proceed into briefly analyzing certain aspects, mainly a few negative and positive attributes the surviving epic texts may provide us on the mindset of leadership and good acting in late heathen and early Christian Germanic lands.

“The natural hero was the warrior chief with his little band of faithful followers, ready to take chances, to trust their luck with spear and sword, and to risk losing all that they had gained if the fight went against them. Lands, homes, and wives had often to be won by the sword, and always to be defended by it.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ For example the missions of Saint Ansgar in order to convert the heathen Swedes into Christianity in the late 9th century, as attested by archbishop Rimbert in his *Vita Anskarii*.

⁶⁹ Cf. Louth, P., *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*, pp.171-172

⁷⁰ Davidson, H.R.E., *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. pp.71

Negative Attributes

The creatures found in both *Beowulf* and in the Eddas are evil, bad for and to humans. Evil in the Germanic world, however, is not to be understood from a binary or manicheistic perspective as a “good-versus-evil” system.

“The battle between cosmic forces of universal ‘good’ and ‘evil’ has permeated fantasy works from time immemorial, and the oversimplification of a morally complex world into dramatically polarized binary oppositions is probably one of the reasons for the genre’s enduring appeal.”⁷¹

Evil is that which is against or contrary to the good of the peoples, the correct behavior of those peoples. This implied, for example, that death was not completely “evil”, because it did not mean loss of all, life included, but it was the gateway to a life beside the gods, if it was indeed deserved. This also implied that, unlike in christian countries at the time, killing someone was not all too evil (it was undesired, though), instead, not paying the fine for committing a murder was really bad.

The boundaries we apply nowadays in order to discern between good and evil are not completely in line with theirs and, although there are certain conducts we find proper or good, there are things that were mandatory in their societies and are just a plus to us, such as the concepts of honor, friendship and being consequent with one's actions. These old-fashioned concepts, especially honor, possibly outdated in our times, often constituted the backbone to stories the Germanic peoples created⁷². Thus, the creatures found in these texts actually depict certain aspects or characteristics a leader should avoid and not possess. These flaws are either

⁷¹ Byrne, D., *Dragons: Ancient Creatures in Modern Times*. pp.1

⁷² “Through the centuries, the idea of a hero has evolved. In Dark Age Greece, the qualities of a hero were very well-defined. He was a strong warrior, able to lead the people and excel on the battlefield. (...)

For the Romans, the ideal leader was one who accepted fate, showed fortitude, and would sacrifice his own happiness for the good of the empire. Similar to the ancient Greeks, the Germanic tribes valued physical strength and also the strengthening of the relationship between a lord and his thanes. These values are clearly defined, and the hero that represents each culture is a model of these admired behaviors.”

Lowrey, H., *Hero as a Reflection of Culture*. pp.9-10

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

presented through mythical characters or creatures or through the deeds of those that take part in the story beside the main character.

“Insofar as the audience thought of the monsters allegorically, Grendel and his mother are possessed by the invidia which leads to violence and feud, the curse of heroic society.”⁷³

Destruction of life, wealth and honor: Dragons, sea monsters, trolls and giants.

<i>Vápnunum sínum</i>	<i>Leaving in the field his arms,</i>
<i>skal-a maðr velli á</i>	<i>let no man go</i>
<i>feti ganga frammar,</i>	<i>a foot's length forward;</i>
<i>því at óvíst er at vita,</i>	<i>for it is hard to know</i>
<i>nær verðr á vegum úti</i>	<i>when on the way</i>
<i>geirs of þörf guma.</i>	<i>a man may need his weapon.</i>

74

The first creature of mythical or mythological origin we find is that of the dragon. Dragons however are not to be understood in our own visual concept of dragon that comes directly from the Mid-to-High Middle Ages and from later Romantic and Gothic literature with strong classical influence⁷⁵⁷⁶: fire-breathing dragons which are not more than over-sized, bat-winged, lizard-like creatures which, in many cases, are mankind's punishment from God for

⁷³ Alexander, M. (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*, pp.XVII

⁷⁴ *Gestapáttir*, stanza 38 of the *Hávamál*.
Translation by Thorpe (1866)

⁷⁵ “Reptilian fire-breathing treasure-guarding dragons were met by such classical heroes as Jason. (...) Bible commentaries had linked the serpent of Eden with the dragon of the Apocalypse. In the popular scene of the harrowing of hell, Satan is a dragon. St. Michael and St. George slay dragons.”
Alexander, M. (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*, pp.XVI

⁷⁶ “The conception of the flying dragon undoubtedly came from the East, and to some extent we can even trace the road by which he travelled, in the company of the Roman armies who carried the flying dragon as their banner and brought it into Roman Britain. But the dragon would not have been welcomed and endowed with such vigorous life had he not fitted in with existing ritual concerning the dead.”

Davidson, H.R.E., *Gods and myths of Northern Europe*. p-161-162

continuous sins. These stinking dragons, as found for example in the *Legenda Aurea*⁷⁷, are creatures that devour, besides all that they find in their way, “innocent” creatures: women, and specifically maidens. On the other hand, Germanic dragons⁷⁸, or dragon-like creatures, such as the one we find in *Beowulf* are, firstly, called either dragon (OE *draca*, ON *drak*) or worm (OE *wyrm*, ON *orm*). These creatures, unlike later medieval dragons, have more of a serpent-like appearance, often slim and long and not always winged. The dragon in *Beowulf*, for example, breathes fire, but the words *draca* and *wyrm* are both used to describe it whereas in, for example the Norse texts, we find the Serpent of Midgard, *Jörmungandr* (ON *Miðgarðsormr*), which truly is a mighty sea-snake and not precisely a dragon; and *Niðhöggr*, the dragon (*dreki*) which gnaws on the roots of the World Ash⁷⁹, *Yggdrasil*⁸⁰.

*Þar kemr inn dimmi
dreki fljúgandi,
naðr fránn, neðan
frá Niðafjöllum*

*There came the dark one
dragon flying
from under, below
from Niðafjöll*

81

⁷⁷ “Dragon-slayers in narratives like the legend of St George and the myths of Marduk and Sigurd were understood to be able to dispatch, not only exoteric threats to their communities, but also intra-psychic threats such as their own fears, doubts and lower impulses, which were all externalized in the fearsome figure of the chthonic dragon.”

Byrne, D., *Dragons: Ancient Creatures in Modern Times*. pp.16

⁷⁸ “The Northern dragon dwelt in a mound, jealous of his gold. Beowulf’s killer is a classic dragon, more visible than Grendel, and more symbolic.”

Alexander, M. (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*, pp.XVI

79

<i>Ask veit ek standa, heitir Yggdrasil, hár baðmr, ausinn hvíta auri; þaðan koma döggar, þærs í dala falla, stendr æ yfir grænn Urðarbrunni</i>	<i>I know an ash standing Yggdrasil high, a lofty tree, laved with limpid water: thence come the dews into the dales that fall ever stands it green over Urd’s fountain</i>
--	---

Völuspá, stanza 19.

Translation by Thorpe (1866)

⁸⁰ *Yggdrasil*, literally Ygg’s Stallion. (*Yggr* is another name for the god Óðinn). It’s the World Tree or World Ash which keeps the nine worlds of the Germanic (and later Scandinavian) mythology together.

⁸¹ *Völuspá*, stanza 66.

Now, these creatures, together with trolls and giants⁸², are of great importance because they depict negative characteristics in the ancient Germanic world, which have always been present since the beginning: they are generally in opposition to life, honor and the people's wealth and well being.

<i>Betra er lifðum</i>	<i>It is better to live,</i>
<i>en sé ólifðum,</i>	<i>even to live miserably;</i>
<i>ey getr kvíkr kú;</i>	<i>a living man can always get a cow.</i>
<i>eld sá ek upp brenna</i>	<i>I saw fire consume</i>
<i>auðgum manni fyrir,</i>	<i>the rich man's property,</i>
<i>en úti var dauðr fyr durum.</i>	<i>and death stood without his door.</i>

83

Dragons are hoard-keepers: they acquire and amount gold and riches only to sleep on them in their dens. However, it is important for leaders to spread and share wealth and treasures among their peers in order to ensure a certain degree of well-being and happiness which is exactly the opposite of what dragons do⁸⁴. This, of course is the case of both the dragon in *Beowulf* or Fafnir in the *Völsungasaga* and the *Niflungasaga*. Riches are always sought by men and those that can be acquired by stealing from a dragon are much greater than those normally made through war, especially given the fact that dragons are often asleep in their dens whereas in war the chances of survival are much dimmer.

⁸² Giant: OE *ent*, ON *jötun*

⁸³ *Gestaþátr*, Stanza 70 of the *Hávamál*.
Translation by Thorpe (1866).

⁸⁴ "Fafnir was overwhelmed by the lust for gold and killed his father to gain it. For his greed, he was transformed from a dwarf into a dragon, and so he lived in cave-dwelling seclusion for several centuries, guarding the gold.

This went on until the appearance of a dragon-slayer. Sigurd was nobly born, bore his father's magical sword (which was pulled out of a stone in a manner reminiscent of King Arthur's Excalibur) and was trained by Fafnir's brother, the dwarf Regin, who sought to use the young hero to gain the gold. Guided by Regin, Sigurd killed Fafnir by stabbing him through the heart. Regin then roasted the heart, but Sigurd licked of the roasting meat and so imbibed the dragon's blood. With it, he gained the power to understand birdsong and so learned that Regin was planning to kill him and keep the gold for himself." Byrne, D., *Dragons: Ancient Creatures in Modern Times*. pp.3-4

<p>(...)Hordwynne fond, eald útsceaða opene standan sē ðe byrnende biorgas sēceð nacod níðdraca nihtes flēogeð fýre befangen hyne foldbúend</p> <p>(...) Hē gesēcean sceall hearm on hrúsan þaēr hē haēðen gold warað wintrum frēd ne byð him wihte ðý sēl.</p> <p>Swā se ðēodsceaða þrēo hund wintra hēold on hrúsan hordærna sum ēacencræftig</p>	<p>(...) Hoard-joy he found the old twilight-scather, standing open, he who, burning, seeks barrows, the naked malevolent dragon; he flies by night, encircled in fire; him earth-dwellers</p> <p>(...)He has to seek harm in the ground, where he heathen gold guards, wise in winters; he is not a bit better for that.</p> <p>So the people-scather three hundred winters ruled in the earth of one of the hoard-halls, vastly powerful</p>
---	--

85

However, dragons are not the only hoard-keeping dark beings in the world. It is important to bear in mind that another dark force found in Germanic mythology are the *draugar* or *aptrgangar*: the undead, ghosts. These beings are the bodies of the dead coming back to life to guard their own hoards and they do attack the living that seek and try to get their hands on those treasures. In the words of Alexander (1995) “the beast Grendel is a house-troll promoted from folk tales: the ghost of the unburied who haunts Icelandic farm-houses”⁸⁶. This would of course mean that Grendel is then in line with hoard-keeping and this would give a hint to the motive behind his attacks on Hroþgar and his people. If that be so, an important lesson that was to be learnt was that no worthy leader should try to steal from a dead man.

Another aspect which dragons represent is, of course, destruction. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle there is an entry that makes reference to a dragon being seen in the sky⁸⁷ prior to

⁸⁵ *Beowulf*, vv.2270-2279.
Translation by Slade (2011)

⁸⁶ Alexander, M. (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*, pp.XVI

⁸⁷ “793 Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norðhymbra land, 7 þæt folc earmlic bregdon, þæt wæron ormete þodenas 7 ligrescas, 7 fyrenne dracan wæron gesewene on þam lifte fleogende. Pam tacnum sona fyligde mycel hunge”

the Viking assault of the monastery on Lindisfarne in AD 793. It was believed to foreshadow the cruel events that would take place: the Viking invasions.

Looking back at Germanic mythology we find that in their heathen nine-world-cosmos there was a brutish, ever-present force that threatened life constantly: this was Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent. Be that a dragon or serpent, they both represent destructive powers that threaten the status quo of mankind and, in the case of Jörmungandr, even that of the heathen gods. However, unlike war, which is a “clear-cut” destructive force⁸⁸, these evils possess special non-human devices of destruction, inherent to their selves, which make the battle completely unequal and lacking any form of honor possible. Beowulf's foe breathes fire, which engulfs and consumes everything on its path and ultimately causes the hero incurable injuries. On the Norse part, Jörmungandr may swallow ships whole and during Ragnarökkr it is to poison the god Þórr with its bite. However, there is also an echo of other destructive forces besides venom, although they do not come from dragon-like creatures: fire (the sons of Surtr, coming from Muspellheim) and ice (the frost giants).

*Vígríðr heitir völlr,
er finnask vígi at
Surtr ok in svásu goð;
hundrað rasta
hann er á hverjan veg;
sá er þeim völlr vitaðr.*

*Vigrid the plain is called,
where in fight shall meet
Surt and the gentle Gods;
a hundred rasts it is
on every side.
That plain is to them decreed*

89

“This year came dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the firmament. These tremendous tokens were soon followed by a great famine”

Worcester Chronicle, entry for AD 793.

Translation by Ingram, J. and Giles, J.A. (1912)

⁸⁸ Clear-cut meaning that it is mainly man-made and clearly visible.

⁸⁹ *Vafþrúðnismál*, Stanza 18. *The Poetic Edda*.

Translation by Thorpe (1866)

A third aspect that these creatures represent is the lack of honor in battle. It is important to bear in mind that Germanic societies thrived on war, they were warlike peoples until their christening and the later abandonment of their prior system of beliefs. However, as long as their system stood, war was to be fought with a certain degree of honor, head on. Now, we find that in the case of *Beowulf* neither foe does so. The beast Grendel attacks the unaware Danes in Heorot in the midst of the night, under the cover of darkness. This is also done later by the dragon, burning villages at night. Night of course is the time for people to stay indoors and rest, and it was the same way back then. However, there are accounts on berserkers⁹⁰ going into frenzy at night⁹¹ and attacking and even possibly destroying villages at night under the cover of darkness, which was probably regarded by others as honor-less behavior.

Getting back to matter of honor, the time on which the attack is done is not the only characteristic in this sense. The dragon Niðhöggr is constantly attacking the roots of Yggdrasil by gnawing them, ultimately and continuously endangering existence, for the death of the World Ash means the death of that which holds the universe together. Jörmungandr in Ragnarökkr attacks Þórr during the final battle and poisons the god by biting him, a

⁹⁰ ON *Berserkr*: bear-skin or bear-shirt. There is also a scholarly debate about the possibility of the word meaning bare shirt, as in shirtless, undressed from the waist up.

Berserkers were a kind of elite warrior during the Viking Age which reportedly went into a frenzy (the *berserkergang*) during which they felt no pain from any wounds inflicted on them during battle.

Akin to the berserkers were the *úlfheðnar* (sing. *úlfheðinn*) who were said to be the same type of battle frenzied warriors cloaked with wolf skins.

“The idea of a warrior such as a berserk, who fought in a state of frenzy, being accredited with invulnerability is hardly surprising. During a frenzied fighting fit (*berserksgang*) such a warrior would likely be unaware of pain; and it is a short step from the idea of a warrior who cannot feel pain inflicted by weapons to the idea of a warrior who cannot be harmed by weapons.”

Beard, D.J., *Á þá bitu engi járn: A Brief Note on the Concept of Invulnerability in the Old Norse Sagas*. pp.13-14

“It is clear from the sagas that this type of limited invulnerability was believed to be a gift from Othin. As members of an elite warrior class, the berserks naturally had special affinities with the war-god.”

Beard, D.J., *Á þá bitu engi járn: A Brief Note on the Concept of Invulnerability in the Old Norse Sagas*. pp.14

⁹¹ For example the character Kvelðulf in the *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* is an *úlfheðinn*, a later form of berserker who goes into frenzy at night, hence his name.

treacherous blow. This lack of honor is also shown when, in the *Gylfaginning*⁹², Þórr travels to Jötunheimr⁹³ to the hall of the giant Útgarða-Loki who tricks Þórr thrice and, once his mischief is done, he simply and without consequence vanishes into thin air with his court, leaving the god confused and in anger as a result of the deception he has suffered (a way of acting which was also regarded as behavior without honor).

Recklessnes

<i>Mildir, frækknir</i>	<i>Liberal and brave men live best,</i>
<i>menn bazt lifa,</i>	<i>they seldom cherish sorrow;</i>
<i>sjaldan sút ala;</i>	<i>but a base-minded man</i>
<i>en ósnjallr maðr</i>	<i>dreads everything;</i>
<i>uggir hotvetna,</i>	<i>the niggardly</i>
<i>sýtir æ glöggr við gjöfum.</i>	<i>is uneasy even at gifts.</i>

94

It is important to note that these creatures, dragons, giants and the like, are not the only means used in order to depict unwanted or undesired behavior in the texts. There are also clear examples, with men instead of beasts, which reveal further that aspects men, and ultimately their leaders, should pay attention to.

Recklessness is a quality, or rather a flaw, no man and especially no leader should possess. Recklessness meant being closer to the destructive force dragons represent, it meant losing sight of the boundaries which hold society together. This precisely meant that whereas leaders are expected to be valiant they should never be reckless for their mistakes are to be paid off by those they led in everyday life and even into battle, and it meant pointless death

⁹² *Gylfaginning*, the Prose Edda. It is the tale of Þórr and Loki and two mortals, Þjálfi and Röskva who after being deceived by Loki, as a punishment for not heeding to the order given by the god, are to serve and follow Þórr around.

⁹³ ON *Jötunheimr*: Home of the giants. It is one of the nine worlds in Scandinavian mythology.

⁹⁴ *Gestapáttir*, Stanza 48 of the *Hávamál*. Translation by Thorpe (1866).

and suffering. However, a certain degree of recklessness or even daredevilish attitude is expected of these individuals. Beowulf and even Þórr are quite reckless characters for they often behave as a child would, driven by their passion for what they are doing: Beowulf travels to Geatland and is set on killing the beast Grendel. Not only that, but he also strips himself of his weapons to meet the beast in equal terms. But this is not the case we find in *The Battle of Maldon*. The earl Byrhtnōp faces a host of viking raiders who are slightly fewer in number than his own *hirðmen*. Instead of paying the danegeld required, he threatens the invading host and thus invites them to battle. It is important to mention that settling for peace was the desired path due to the high costs of war⁹⁵. Still, not only does Byrhtnōp ready himself for the fight but then, in a twist of recklessness, he invites the vikings to cross the narrow causeway so their hosts can meet at the beach. Often enough it has been debated what the term *ofermōde*, applied to Byrhtnōp in that part of the poem, meant: reckless confidence would be a way to sum up the intention behind the word. It is also possible to describe *ofermōde* as arrogance or even daring.

<i>þæt hi þær bricgweardas bitere fundon,</i>	<i>that they found the bridge-wards there bitter,</i>
<i>ongunnon lytegian þa laðe gystas,</i>	<i>those loathly strangers began to use guile,</i>
<i>bædon þæt hi upgang agan moston,</i>	<i>asked for free landing, passage to shore,</i>
<i>ofer þone ford faran, feþan lædan.</i>	<i>to fare over the ford leading foot-troops.</i>
<i>ða se eorl ongan for his ofermode</i>	<i>Then the earl for his arrogance</i>
<i>alyfan landes to fela laþere ðeode.</i>	<i>left too much land to a hostile people.</i>

96

⁹⁵ “Los vikingos (...) sin duda organizaron un gran número de razzias contra objetivos débiles y mal defendidos, y sacaron grandes provechos de ellas; pero cada vez que hubieron de disputar una línea y enfrentar sus murallas de escudos contra unos antagonistas bien equipados sintieron que pisaban un terreno mucho menos firme. A menudo trataron de engañar a sus adversarios con argucias para salir del paso o -y asumiremos que no se trata de lo mismo- se contentaron con entablar negociaciones diplomáticas que podían finalizar o no con el pago de un *geld*. La mayoría de las veces se limitaron a efectuar maniobras intimidatorias seguidas de un distante y relativamente poco peligroso intercambio de proyectiles e invectivas, Y cuando se decidieron arriesgar grandes envites cuerpo a cuerpo su balance fue, en el mejor de los casos, equilibrado, ya que en términos generales su armamento y sus métodos no se distinguían demasiado de aquellos de sus oponentes.”

Griffith, P., *Los vikingos. El terror de Europa*. pp.269-270

⁹⁶ *The Battle of Maldon*, vv 85-90

It was a small great mistake, for the raiders were already “trained” in combat unlike most of the Anglo-Saxon army which consisted mainly of farmers and townspeople levied for combat. In the end, Byrhtnōþ's forces are annihilated, and those who are able to survive the onslaught flee to safer grounds.

*Ósnjallr maðr
hyggsk munu ey lifa,
ef hann við víg varask;
en elli gefr
hánum engi frið,
þótt hánum geirar gefi*

*A cowardly man
thinks he will ever live,
if warfare he avoids;
but old age will
give him no peace,
though spears may spare him*

97

The leader of men that should not be

*Sá er sæll
er sjalfr of á
lof ok vit meðan lifir
því at ill röð
hefr maðr opt þegit
annars brjóstum ór*

*He is happy,
who in himself possesses
fame and wit while living;
for bad counsels
have oft been received
from another's breast.*

98

Fame is rather easily achieved when it is by feats in combat, be that single-combat or leading large hosts. Its arrival is often swift, yet unsteady, and not everything can be accomplished by warring. This brings up a further element presented in these texts which is one great flaw: lacking people of confidence, people whom the leader trusts and can turn to

⁹⁷ *Gestapáttir*, Stanza 16 of the *Hávamál*. The *Poetic Edda*. Translation by Thorpe 1866.

⁹⁸ *Gestapáttir*, Stanza 9 of the *Hávamál*. The *Poetic Edda*. Translation by Thorpe 1866.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

when in need. Leaders need counselors, but not only, they also require their *Gefolgschaft*⁹⁹ who are set at achieving the same goal as the leader and who are willing to do all that is required of them in order to honor their bond to their leader.

“La hiérarchie est cimentée par le compagnonnage guerrier (Gefolgschaft, comitatus), qui lie au chef, par serment, un groupe de jeunes combattants. (...)

En guerre, et dans les limites costumières, le chef – héréditaire ou élu – détient un pouvoir presque absolu.”¹⁰⁰

Leaders are thus to guard themselves from a pretended following and choose only those who will be loyal. In this sense we find the character of Hagen in the *Nibelungenlied* who sells out to the Huns by destroying the palace in order to ready the arrival of the Huns and save his neck.

In *Beowulf*, and in *The Battle of Maldon*, we find perfect examples of what should not happen to a leader regarding their *Gefolgschaft*. Both Beowulf and Byrhtnoþ suffer, at the time of dire need, the sight of their men fleeing from the field of battle: when about to confront the dragon, and before entering the den, nearly all his men and trusted followers leave Beowulf on the count that they fear for their lives, and they do the opposite of what is expected of them: they leave their leader behind. Byrhtnoþ does not have a better army himself and, although he is a historical figure and thus a lesser degree of morality is avoided, he finds himself overrun by the raiders and is consequently abandoned by his own men at the sight of certain death.

Even the mighty god Þórr is afflicted by this coward-like, shifty behavior when, for example, in the company of Hymir in the *Hýmiskviða*. He catches the Midgard Serpent and is looking for his hammer so he may strike it once and for all, but the giant Hymir panics and cuts

⁹⁹ *Gefolgschaft* is an umbrella term which, for the purpose of this research, implies both the kinsmen as well as sellswords and hirðmen; in order to differentiate it from “followers” which, in this case, are only those that back the leader up but do not take part in his deeds.

¹⁰⁰ Louth, P., *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*, pp.40

the beast loose. Of course this could be expected as Hýmírr is a giant but Loki, the god, recurrent in many of the stories, also plays a part against the thundergod instead of helping him: in one occasion after both Loki and Þórr have consumed the meat of Þórr's chariot-pulling-goats in the company of simple farmers, Loki tricks one of the farmers into cracking one of the bones of the goat in order to suck the marrow out of it. The result is that on the next day, as Þórr revives his goats, one of the goats is found lame. The farmers' children are then punished by serving the thundergod although it was Loki's wrongdoing, who, in turn, was also closest to the god¹⁰¹. This all meant that a leader was not only expected to lead but also to watch his back and pay attention to whom he was leading. This was particularly clear in the case of Þórr and Loki because it is known that at Ragnarökkr (and after enduring age-long torture, taken care of only by his wife Sýgin), Loki sides with all destructive forces of the universe in order to destroy the gods who had at some point trusted him.

Positive Attributes

Beside all the negativity or the negative images that can be found in these texts, positive attributes were also presented. These were characteristics a leader should possess or were expected of him to possess in order to better serve and rule those under him.

Bearing in mind the good-versus-evil opposition in the heathen Germanic context we find that the allegorical characters (or those traits) in these texts should work as inspirational input for the leaders as well.

Inspirational leadership

Leaders are to be able to inspire their people, their kin. Heroes are to be the guiding inspirational model leaders should follow in order to provide good government. This is found for example in *The Battle of Maldon* simply through the fact that Byrhtnoþ has readied an army to defend his homeland and ultimately the land of his lord (although he himself already is a landowner). If any leader of a warband who has sworn fealty to a higher lord fulfills his vows

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Gylfaginning*

he will be better regarded among his men and this will, in its turn, mean a greater deal of loyalty from the troops and from those under his direct responsibility. However, inspiration of the troops does by no means imply disregarding real danger, and should not imply asking the men to forget themselves. In *The Battle of Maldon*, those that are truly inspired by Byrhtnōþ, and ultimately by his point of view and/or discourse, are the men of his hearth troop for, as the Vikings raiders close in on them and their leader is killed, they stand their ground until they meet untimely death, whereas the rest of the *hirð* disbands fearing for their lives.

In *Beowulf* we find this aspect of the *Gefolgschaft* through a double perspective: the leader of the Danes, king Hroþgar, who is unable to inspire his troops to better shield Heorot against the beast Grendel and is forced to step aside so a “foreigner” may take responsibility in his shoes and rid the Danes of the ordeal. It is important that, once in Heorot, as Beowulf has stripped himself of his arms and armor his *Gefolgschaft* stands by him and they do not flicker when Grendel enters. Such was his inspiration. This inspiration for battle can also be found in the *Voluspá* when it is spoken about Ragnarökkr and the fact that the gods shall lead armies of men. Þórr himself is not the main inspiration but at the time of the battle he takes on a foe much greater than himself, the Midgard Serpent, which puts him at the same level as Óðinn and thus becomes an inspiration to the *einherjar*¹⁰² as well as to men.

Self-sacrifice

*“Indeed, the dragon proves to be the hero’s final destiny: in a last, apocalyptic battle, the dragon and Beowulf kill each other. They each wield their ultimate weapons. Beowulf brings social power to the combat through Wiglaf’s loyalty to his king, while the dragon uses venom derived from his kinship with snakes to lay the hero low.”*¹⁰³

¹⁰² The *einherjar* were the warriors fallen in battle and chosen by the valkyries, Óðinn’s swan-cloaked shieldmaidens, to take a place in Valhalla, Óðinn’s hall. Once in Valhalla, the *einherjar* would feast on meat and mead, fornicate all night and, during the day, they would fight amongst them, which is ultimately to be their training before Ragnarökkr.

On the other hand, those that died of old age, illness or had an honorless death were believed to go to Hel or to other halls of residence throughout the worlds depending on the way they had led their lives.

¹⁰³ Byrne, D., *Dragons: Ancient Creatures in Modern Times*. pp.2

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Leading men is a hard job which requires sacrifice, but not that of animals or goods, sacrifice of the self. A good leader is to inspire his people but inspiration often comes from learning. Thus is the sacrifice of Óðinn. He, as leader of gods and men sacrifices himself, but the tricky part is that he sacrifices himself to himself. This is not by any means cowardice: in Óðinn's case the god sacrifices his own existence for knowledge, for the runes. The runes are to serve him, and ultimately the gods (and later, as these are stolen, humans as well), but knowledge is only achieved through suffering and thus requires sacrifice. The manner in which this is achieved is by opening himself, and hanging on Yggdrasil by his own bowels. Once this ordeal is over, Óðinn packs his guts back in and goes about his business as if nothing happened.

<i>Veit ek, at ek hekk</i>	<i>I know, that I hung</i>
<i>vindga meiði á</i>	<i>on a windswept tree</i>
<i>nætr allar níu,</i>	<i>nights all nine</i>
<i>geiri undaðr</i>	<i>by spear undone</i>
<i>ok gefinn Óðni,</i>	<i>and given to Óðinn,</i>
<i>sjalfr sjalfum mér,</i>	<i>me to myself,</i>
<i>á þeim meiði,</i>	<i>on that same tree</i>
<i>er manngi veit</i>	<i>of which is by many known</i>
<i>hvers af rótum renn.</i>	<i>where its roots run.</i>

104

In the *Dream of the Rood*, which is the story of the passion of Christ told by the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus at the cross is to remind the reader/listener about the story of Óðinn hanging on Yggdrasil.

<i>Ongyrede hine þā geong hæleð, þæt wæs god</i>	<i>He stripped himself then, young hero - that</i>
<i>æلميhtig,</i>	<i>was God almighty,</i>
<i>strang ond stiðmōd. Gestāh hē on gealgan</i>	<i>strong and resolute; he ascended on the high</i>
<i>hēanne,</i>	<i>gallows,</i>
<i>mōdig on manigra gesyhðe, þā hē wolde</i>	<i>brave in the sight of many, when he wanted</i>

¹⁰⁴ *Runatal Páttr*, Stanza 138 of the *Hávamál*. *Snorra Edda Sturlusonar*

The degree of resolution toward imminent pain is similar: whereas Óðinn cuts himself open without flickering, Jesus confronts the Romans head on, bare-breasted and willing to die. However, being this an adapted text from an older original, the situation then suffers a certain degree of change for, in the original Bible text, the longer Jesus hangs nailed to the cross the more he doubts his action is the right one and even calls to God for he feels cast away. However the Anglo-Saxon poem omits this part and, once his is recovered from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea it is said that Jesus had endured a battle (which bears similarity to Óðinn's ordeal as both characters were pierced by spears).

*Et circa horam nonam clamavit Iesus voce magna, dicens: Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani?
hoc est: Deus meus, Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me?*

(...)

*Iesus autem iterum clamans voce magna, emisit spiritum.*¹⁰⁶

There is a further detail still; Óðinn is able, after nine days and nights, to climb off the tree before he gets back to business unlike Jesus who is to be borne down from the cross. In any case, the sacrifice of Jesus is that of himself for the redemption of mankind unlike that of Óðinn which serves only himself (but as far as stories go he thus serves mankind).

Then we find in *Beowulf* and *Þórr*, and even *Byrhtnoþ*, leaders who struggle for survival and existence and challenge their own existences for those whom they rule upon.

¹⁰⁵ Dream of the Rood, v. 39-41

¹⁰⁶ “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

(...)

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”

Gospel according to Matthew 27:46 and 27:50. King James Bible.

Byrhtnōp challenges an enemy that is better prepared than his own forces so, even probably knowing certain death awaited him, and without doubt he attacks, for he is committed to sacrificing life and limb in order to ensure the protection of the land. Still, his sacrifice is in vain for the Danes kill him and his thegns¹⁰⁷ and take the town. What matters is that he is willing to endure the sacrifice.

Beowulf, on the other hand, endures a similar ordeal when facing Grendel, Grendel's mother (in the first part of the poem) and the fire-breathing dragon (in the second part of the poem). Grendel and Grendel's mother are small destroyers and the sacrifice is little when compared to him fighting a fire-breathing dragon after fifty years ruling over Danish lands: that battle is to be his last for this creature not only has wings but life-taking fire as well, and Beowulf has neither special arms nor armor that might shield him from the beast, to him a newer form evil.

“For the hero himself, the dragon represents death, a terror from which he does not flinch.”¹⁰⁸

This form of ultimate sacrifice is also found in the figures of both the Æsir as well as the Vanir gods at Ragnarökkr. The gods shall fight the frost giants, the flaming sons of Surtr, the dead and tormented from Helheim that sail in the ship Naglfar, the hellhound Garm, the sons of Loki (the wolf Fenrir and Jörmungandr). But the gods (male and female) are not alone in this battle that will be their ultimate sacrifice: they are leaders of the einherjar, they lead their own servants and “private” hirðmen into battle, even their own sons (Moði and Magni, shall avenge and survive their father Þórr¹⁰⁹; Viðarr, son of Óðinn, shall avenge him as well¹¹⁰). Even with

¹⁰⁷ OE *þegn*/*ðegn*, ON *þegn*. *Thane* or *thayn* in Early Modern English.

Aristocratic retainer, one of those closest to a an *eorl* (OE) or a *jarl* (ON) which form up the hearth troop. Cf. Note 111.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander, M. (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*, pp.XVII

¹⁰⁹

<i>Moði ok Magni</i>	<i>Moði and Magni</i>
<i>skulu Mjöllni hafa</i>	<i>shall have Mjöllnir</i>
<i>vignis at víproti</i>	<i>and warfare strive to</i>
	<i>end</i>

Vafprúðnismál, Stanza 51. The *Poetic Edda*

“Another important quality in a thane was loyalty to his lord. Beowulf shows loyalty to his lord, Hygelac, when he returns with the treasures he has won. He tells Hygelac: These, King Hygelac, I am happy to present to you as gifts. It is still upon your grace that all favor depends. I have few kinsmen who are close, my king, except for your kind self. (ll.2148-51) Beowulf is shown to be strong and courageous and demonstrates his continued loyalty to his lord by delivering to Hygelac the gifts he has won.”¹¹²

We find this aspect present for example in *Beowulf*: Although Beowulf strips himself in order to fight in equal terms with the beast Grendel, his men stand by him within the walls of Heorot even knowing that all of those who spend the night there are slaughtered by the ravenous beast. And yet they stand by his lord for that is the part they are to play as proud thegns of the hero.

“After the battle with Grendel’s mother, Hroþgar tells Beowulf an essential part of being a king is defense of the community (1770-2). As king, Beowulf shows his commitment to the safety of his community in personally attempting to fight the dragon that threatens his people (2399-402). Beowulf also demonstrates the other side of being a good king.

As Wiglaf admonishes the other thanes for deserting Beowulf, he reminds them Beowulf was a generous giver of gifts, expecting in return the loyalty of his thanes (2634-40). Through the course of the epic, Beowulf evolves from a brave warrior to a strong king, displaying Germanic society’s ideals of both.”¹¹³

This idea of the hearth-band standing by his lord is also found in *The Battle of Maldon*. Byrhtnōþ dismounts his horse to stand by them but, once the Vikings have killed him, some of his loyal hearth-troop stand by him, Ælfnōþ and Wulfmær, knowing that it is certain death which awaits them, still remain for it is expected of them: it is what they owe to their lord in

¹¹² Lowrey, H., *The Hero as a Reflection of Culture*. pp.7

¹¹³ Ibid. pp.8

exchange for a place at his side. This of course differs strongly from other characters such as Godric, who steals Byrhtnoþ's horse in order to flee, or Godwin and Godwig who make a run for the woods. Still his hearth-troop will stand fast as it is their destiny.

<i>þa wearð afeallen þæs folces ealdor, æþelredes eorl; ealle gesawon heorðgeneatas þæt hyra heorra læg. þa ðær wendon forð w Lance þegenas, unearge men efston georne; hi woldon þa ealle oðer twega, lif forlætan oððe leofne gewrecan.</i>	<i>Then was the folk's prince fallen, Aethelred's earl. All saw there, his hearth-companions, that their lord lay. Then valiant thegns went forth there, men undaunted eagerly hastened: they all wished, then, one of two things-- to leave life or loved one avenge.</i>
---	--

114

This brings to memory the death of the last great Viking king, Haraldr Harðráði¹¹⁵, Harald the Hard-Ruler, who at the battle of Stamford Bridge, near York, in 1066 fought among his men until he himself was slain by king Harold Godwinson's Saxon army. Even at this point past the so-called Germanic Heroic Age we find a real character that did fight and die as the fallen hero Byrhtnoþ.

The last example of comradeship which owes allegiance to the lord or ring-giver is the einherjar at Ragnarökkr: when the doors of Valhalla burst open at the time of the gods dire need, around 150.000 einherjar (those fallen warriors chosen to stand by the gods, and are mainly Óðinn's army) will no longer feast and fight for fun, fornicating with Óðinn's valkyries,

¹¹⁴ *The Battle of Maldon*. Lines 202-208

¹¹⁵ Haraldr Sigurðarson (c. 1015-1066)

King of Norway (1046-1066) and claimant to the thrones of Denmark and England.

He is known for having participated in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 with his half-brother Ólaf Haraldson (Olaf II of Norway, later known as Saint Olaf). He was exiled and later became commander of the Byzantine Varangian Guard before returning to Scandinavia.

He won at the Battle of Fulford (York, England) in late 1066 against a Saxon army, but was later defeated that same month at the Battle of Stamford Bridge (York, England) against the army of king Harold Godwinson, only days prior to the Norman Invasion.

but they must fulfill their unspoken vow to their lord in the field Vigrið where they, in a position similar to the gods, shall also fight giants and the hosts of Hel¹¹⁶.

What the audiences would most probably get from these stories is that their lord is not only a sort of paternal figure that provides safety, he is also their master in war whom they are to trust and follow, and thus they would probably appreciate that the hosts of the heroes in the stories would do as expected of them as bound by oath.

Generosity

<i>Vápnum ok váðum</i>	<i>With weapons and gifts</i>
<i>skulu vinir gleðjask;</i>	<i>should friends themselves gladden;</i>
<i>þat er á sjalfum sýnst;</i>	<i>it is most obvious;</i>
<i>viðrgjefendr ok endrgjefendr</i>	<i>mutual givers and receivers</i>
<i>erusk lengst vinir,</i>	<i>are friends longest,</i>
<i>ef þat bíðr at verða vel.</i>	<i>if that is to be well</i>

117

Leaders are providers: they care for those whom they rule, they serve justice, they keep them safe and, especially, they reward all good deeds done for the common cause, be that the warband, the family, the tribe or a whole community. It was customary for leaders among Germanic peoples to divide the booty obtained by raiding and pillaging (typical activities of any war at the time) among their *Gefolgschaft* but also among their peoples. Wealth was supposed to be spread and used for the better, not hoarded senselessly. This aspect of sharing finds its complete opposite in dragons: the hoard-keeper, those that store wealth for no purpose but their own satisfaction.

¹¹⁶ Hel or Hela is a female being that rules the Old Norse underworld. She is probably linked to the ancient Germanic goddess Nerthus. She is mentioned in both the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* as well as in several other Icelandic works from the 13th century. However, it is widely debated whether she is indeed a goddess or a representation of a *dís*, a female spiritual being.

In Norse sources it is said that she will be one of the leading forces of doom alongside Loki in the Ragnarök, by leading the hosts of the dead out of Helheim and other nether realms, along with hosts of trolls and giants and other beings, across the Bifrost (the Rainbow Bridge) against the dwellers of Ásgarðr and Vanaheim.

¹¹⁷ *Gestapáttur*, stanza 41 of the *Hávamál*.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

It was possible to distinguish petty lords or warband leaders by the pieces of jewelry they had on them, for these were a display of power and also reassurance that it had been them who had been victorious. Apparently, a piece of jewelry rather sought after at the time was rings and ring-like objects (like torques): rings were easy to be carried, could not be split (unlike bracelets and belts). We find an example of these riches in *Beowulf*, when the king of the Scildings, Scyld Scefing, is taken to the boat that is to sail to open sea with the treasures he won in life.

<i>īsig ond ūtfūs æþelinges fær</i>	<i>icy and keen to sail, a hero's vessel</i>
<i>ālēdon þā lēofne þēoden</i>	<i>they then laid down the beloved prince,</i>
<i>bēaga bryttan on bearm scipes</i>	<i>the giver of rings and treasure, in the bosom of</i>
	<i>the boat,</i>
<i>maerne be mæste þaer wæs mādma fela</i>	<i>the mighty by the mast, many riches were</i>
	<i>there,</i>
<i>of feorwegum frætwa gelaēded</i>	<i>from far-off lands ornate armour and baubles</i>
	<i>were brought;</i>
<i>ne hyrde ic cýmlīcor cēol gegyrwan</i>	<i>I have not heard of a comelier keel adorned</i>
<i>hildewaēpnūm ond heaðowaēdum</i>	<i>with weapons of battle and war-dress,</i>
<i>billum ond byrnum him on bearme læg</i>	<i>bill-blades and byrnies there lay on his breast</i>
<i>mādma mænigo þā him mid scoldon</i>	<i>many treasures, which with him must,</i>
<i>on flōdes aēht feor gewītan</i>	<i>in the power of the waves, drift far off</i>

118

It is noteworthy that it is specified that he was a giver of rings (*bēaga bryttan*), or, as later used for *Beowulf*, a *hringa þengel*, a lord of rings. It is also said of king Hroþgar, in relation to his mead-hall Heorot, that he himself was quite generous at giving out his riches.

<i>(...) scōp him Heort naman</i>	<i>(...)he named it Heorot,</i>
<i>sē þe his wordes geweald wīde hæfde</i>	<i>he whose words weight had everywhere</i>

¹¹⁸ *Beowulf*, vv.33-43.

Translation by Slade (2011)

hē bēot ne ālēh bēagas daēlde

he did not lie when he boasted; rings he dealt

out

sinc æt symle.

riches at his feasts.

119

Of course this generosity was not done only because the leaders chose to give out their treasures for common welfare. The idea is that gold also entails a negative part; it promotes uncontrolled greed which is counterproductive. This we find in the *Sigurðarsaga en mesta*, where greed derived from gold brings the dwarves Andvari, Regin and Fafnir to becoming each other's enemies. Fafnir even goes as far as to adopt the shape of a dragon, which ultimately is the clear sign of corruption of power and utmost and pointless selfishness and greed.

As we have previously discussed, leaders had to keep themselves from untrustworthy companions that might endanger his life and missions, and buying them off was a solid bet. Thus, the *Hávamál* provides again an answer, just a few stanzas away from the one opening the section, as sort of a secondary counsel: what to do if betrayal is uncertain, for treasures cannot always save the hero's day.

*Vápnunum sínum
skal-a maðr velli á
feti ganga framar,
því at óvíst er at vita,
nær verðr á vegum úti
geirs of þörf guma.*

*Leaving in the field his arms,
let no man go
a foot's length forward;
for it is hard to know
when on the way
a man may need his weapon.*

120

¹¹⁹ *Beowulf*, vv.78-81.

Translation by Slade (2011)

¹²⁰ *Gestapáttur*, stanza 38 of the *Hávamál*.

Translation by Thorpe (1866)

THE LEGACY OF GERMANIC HEATHEN HEROES IN MODERN TIMES

The foes of old, as well as the guidelines for leaders, have not been completely lost in time. They have been redeveloped within the Christian scope and, to some extent and thanks to folklore, these have been kept alive. These aspects were most probably revived or re-implemented (some even without alteration) during the Romantic Period and the birth of modern nationalisms which often sought its roots in folklore, which is now one of the sources we drink from in modern-day society. The following section will briefly analyze a few aspects in modern fiction (literary or audiovisual) that coincide with those in the medieval texts.

Regarding the Creatures

Dragons

As previously discussed, dragons evolved during the Middle Ages and went from a serpentine-basilisk-ish appearance to a winged, lizard-like appearance. However there are certain representations of the dragon, beyond its destructive power, that are still present (if only as re-workings of the Germanic myths), including the shape or its gold-hoarding drive. In some cases the influence is clear-cut whereas in others it is only hinted.

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote several novels loosely based on, yet strongly influenced by, Germanic myths in which we find this sort of almost clear-cut heathen Germanic beasts. For example, in *The Hobbit*¹²¹ we find the dragon Smaug which resembles almost to perfection the dragon Fafnir in the *Nibelungenlied*. This dragon will feel disturbed as Bilbo Baggins enters his hoard-cave with gold-hungry dwarves (that are also reminiscent of the dwarves Andvari, Fafnir and Regin present in the *Völsungasaga*). In the texts of the *Silmarillion*¹²² another firebreathing dragon is found, Glaurung, but this one resembles in character the one found in *Beowulf*: a flying dread spawned from evil that is almost pure destructive power.

¹²¹ Cf. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit, or, There and back again*.

¹²² Cf. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*.

Dragons have been kept alive in Western imagery in many shapes but, unlike the dragon in *Beowulf* and Niðhöggr in the manner of the eddic texts, the dragons found in *A Song of Ice and Fire*¹²³ bear a strong similarity, in terms of “genetics”, with Jörmungandr. Those dragons are able to fly and, unlike lindworms, they have front and rear limbs, they fly and breathe fire. But apparently they can mate and produce human offspring just like humans of a dragon bloodline (such as the fictional Targaryen bloodline) may produce dragon offspring like we find in the character of Daenerys Targaryen. The offspring are produced by means of fossilized eggs but it cannot be said that these have no link with the princess for they are her inheritance. This of course reminds us of Jörmungandr and the wolf Fenrir, the Norse dreads of which little detail is given beyond the fact that they are begotten from the trickster god Loki. Just like there is this link between human and beast, the destructive power of fire that is inherent to the dragon in *Beowulf* is also found in the character of Mad King Aerys Targaryen¹²⁴: he is human, of dragon descent, but he cannot be burned and yet, just like the beowulfian dragon, he slaughters the victims of his choice by fire.

Draugar - The undead

The dead who were buried in the Germanic world (cremation was also customary) were buried with all their earthly possessions, or at least their most valuable. This was already customary in ancient Germanic burials as it has been archeologically attested for more than a century. In some archaeological finds the dead were found with swords the blades of which were folded on themselves. The reason behind this curious fact is that there was a widespread fear that the dead may rise and attack the living. This of course survived in folklore and, centuries later, is found in the Icelandic sagas in the *draugar*¹²⁵

The *draugar* that left the burial place at night but kept close in order to keep their treasures from the living. Surprisingly, these beings had the ability of shape-shifting and could grow larger than any man alive ever could. They also possessed an amazing strength. In some

¹²³ Cf. Martin, G.R.R., *A Game of Thrones*.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ ON *Draugr* or *aptrgangar*, OE *drēag*

It is the after-walker, the dead that has risen from the grave in order to protect that which was his in life. In origin it is similar to *revenant* (from French *revenir*, to come back) and ModHG *Wiedergänger*.

of the sagas, as in the *Grettis Saga* or the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, it is seen how they attack the living and, in some cases, the manner of the attack is not only hitting the living with blunt objects or throwing them by means of their strength but also biting the living and entering their dreams.

We are able to find these characteristics, first of all, in Alexander, regarding Grendel (2002), but folklore and popular myth have evolved with these ideas and given us the creature we know nowadays as zombies¹²⁶. For example in the Norwegian horror/splatter film *Død snø* (*Dead Snow*)¹²⁷, a group of nazi soldiers come back to life as zombies in modern times in order to protect a treasure they stole during World War II. Still, the idea of biting the living is also clearly found in many zombie films, for example in *The Dawn of the Dead*¹²⁸, where a bite is enough to “haunt” or pollute the living until they themselves become, after a real death, undead. In the case of the *Dawn of the Dead*, although “lacking intelligence”, the undead show unusual strength, which is also consistent with the idea of the *draugar* as hoard-keeper when fending off the living.

However, the *draugar* do not only attack physically. The idea of an undead haunting the dreams of the living, as found in the sagas, can also be found, redeveloped and updated in

¹²⁶ The Word “zombie” apparently comes from Haitian creole “zonbi” which was a corpse reanimated by means of magical/mystical powers.

The first written record of the word being used in English was in an 1819 history of Brazil written by Robert Southey. However, it is first attested in popular culture between the late 1920s and early 1930s in William Seabrook’s novel *The Magic Island* (1929) and in the film *White Zombie* starring the Romanian actor Bela Lugosi, also known for his role as the first Dracula in cinema.

¹²⁷ *Død snø* is a Norwegian horror/splatter film directed by Tommy Wirkola in 2009.

The film is about a group of friends on a weekend out in the mountains for some skiing that happen to stumble upon a treasure that dated back to World War II. As the treasure is compromised the dead Nazis that had been responsible for the treasure rise up in order to preserve it and punish those that disturbed them.

Død snø in the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1278340/>

Død snø in Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Snow

¹²⁸ *Dawn of the Dead* is an American horror/splatter film directed by Zack Snyder in 2004. This film is a remake of the 1978 film of the same name directed by George A. Romero.

The film is several about people that survive during a zombie outbreak and protect themselves in a shopping mall which is surrounded by hundreds of zombies. They end up fleeing, decimated, making a run on a boat to some unknown island which is itself swarming with zombies.

Dawn of the Dead in the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0363547/>

Dawn of the Dead in Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawn_of_the_Dead_%282004_film%29

the 1980s *Nightmare on Elm Street* film franchise¹²⁹. The idea was that a killer that had died in a fire in a factory came back to haunt the living but, lacking physical form (as some *draugar* in the sagas that move as a mist), he can harm the living in real life as long as they are dreaming, which is the link to the real world, thus forcing the living to struggle to stay awake.

The *draugar* reminiscent and even almost completely equal to the Icelandic creature can also be found in novels as for example the harrow-wights that capture Frodo Baggins and his comrades early in *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, only to be set free with the help of Tom Bombadil¹³⁰. Even in George R.R.Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* *draugar*-like creatures can be seen when spoken about the white walkers that dwell beyond the Wall: they also arise when dead, and must be put down by fire (as done by Jon Snow in Castle Black¹³¹).

Thus, it is clear, even with these recent examples, that the fear of the dead rising from the graves the Germanic peoples had is still alive, even if only in fiction. However it is important to bear in mind that Christianity has played a part in keeping the myth alive for Jesus himself comes back to life after three days dead. But the dread of the *draugar*, the undead can be felt in the *Book of Revelations* by John the Apostle in which it is stated that the dead shall rise (which in a way also reminds us of *Ragnarökkr*, though slightly colder)

Regarding the Heroes

Much of their heroic aspects have been lost in time, but there is still a tendency found in modern stories. Heroes, even in late 20th century cinema, are never alone: the idea of the *Gefolgschaft* still exists as the group that sticks together with the leader. However it is the

¹²⁹ The *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise includes 9 horror films, made in the 1980s and 1990s, in which the chief character is the undead nightmare-bringer, Freddy Krueger.

Nightmare on Elm Street franchise in Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Nightmare_on_Elm_Street_%28franchise%29

¹³⁰ Cf. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

¹³¹ Cf. Martin, G.R.R., *A Game of Thrones*.

aspect of self-sacrifice for a given cause which is permanent and has never been erased. It is often found in action movies that the hero sacrifices himself in order to save someone else, the idea being that his sacrifice is for a common good. But this sacrifice comes with a high price in blood and pain before the end-battle is over. We find an example in Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*¹³², where the main character is caught and fights until his last breath is drawn out of him, loyal to his principles. This apparently senseless sacrifice is then translated as the final push the Scots needed to truly rebel and fight off the English.

In *Braveheart* we also have a clear example of the inspirational leader, according to the depiction of the character in the film¹³³: he comes from humble origins and rises up to certain power with his own strength, giving example by doing first what he says that can be done. This is then translated into the rumors people spread of him about killing hundreds single-handedly. Moreover, this film provides a great example of comradeship and false comradeship for as *Braveheart* enters the battle at Falkirk he is certain Robert The Bruce is on his side. As he engages in pursuit of the English king, wounded, he meets an English knight which throws him off the horse and when he unmask him he sees he has been betrayed. A true leader must pay attention to his friends, companions, and trusted few to ascertain if they truly are as they say they are.

Lastly, the matter of a leader's generosity can be found in some of the books of the saga *A Song of Ice and Fire*. In *A Game of Thrones*, we find King Robert Baratheon, who happens to be the antithesis of a ring-giver: he indulges in feasts for himself, spends the money of the realm irresponsibly and has debts with many across the realm. In his youth, the character was the inspirational leader, but just like Fafnir was corrupted by gold, Robert Baratheon is corrupted by power. However, there is a character that displays a true leader's characteristics: Tyrion Lannister, the Imp. The character comes from a family whose motto is "A Lannister always pays his debts" and his vows are fulfilled constantly. This little man spreads wealth with quite a specific aim: to reinforce his position, although pretending to give it out for giving's sake, thus fending off possible traitors. And, as a true leader should, he hardly trusts anyone who is not of his own blood (which in itself represents a modern depiction of the tribal feeling typical of Germanic peoples that was later lost).

¹³² *Braveheart* in the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112573/>

¹³³ The main character of the film, William Wallace, as depicted in the film, actually differs greatly from the historical person.

Sir William Wallace (c.1270-1305) was a Scottish petty-noble, probably (albeit still uncertain) of Anglo-Norman descent who fought in the First Scottish War of Independence (1298-1328).

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

As a last note, it is important to mention *The Lord of the Rings*. The title echoes in memory to one of the descriptions given to Beowulf, *hringa þengel*, lord of rings, he who shares his treasure, his rings, with his kin. With a precise and surprising twist, Tolkien presents us with a corrupt form of a ring giver: he who gives out rings does not give them in order to reward service and bribe in order to avoid betrayal, instead, the Dark Lord Sauron gives out rings for the mere will to control, to seize power over all of Middle Earth. This corruption of power, that begun with a magic ring such as Andvari's ring, has an even darker twist for he who has worn the ring is captured and tormented by it. This of course finds an echo in the *draugar*: those that haunt and harm the living because they are protecting their hoard. But in this case they themselves are part of the hoard, a fleshy, living hoard, and Sauron is a stylized, darkened creature that is half-way between Fafnir and an ever-haunting *draugr*. He is the Dark Lord, the heathen leader that should not be, the leader that cares only about himself and his greed, regardless of anybody else.

Our modern heroes have lost much of the magic aura the heroes of old possessed in the time when *Beowulf* was be recited in long halls, But in many aspects, those heroes never left the realms of fiction and set the rules for their ideal world to take place. And yet, in times of need, people still look at fiction and heroes and fantasize about what it would be to become like them... just as a thousand years ago our forbears did.

CONCLUSIONS

<i>Deyr fé,</i>	<i>Cattle die,</i>
<i>deyja frændr,</i>	<i>kindred die,</i>
<i>deyr sjalfr it sama,</i>	<i>we ourselves die the same,</i>
<i>en orðstírr</i>	<i>But the good name</i>
<i>deyr aldregi,</i>	<i>never dies</i>
<i>hveim er sér góðan getr</i>	<i>of he who has done well.</i>

134

The medieval heathen and post-heathen Germanic world kept its world of wonders in some instances even under the sharp claws of Christianity. Heroes began to fade away, the gods were put aside, yet they survived. Most literary studies tend to forget these beings that once were key elements in a system of values that, among other things, valued personal effort toward kindred, the people akin to oneself. Reward was not quite for the leader alone, it would be those underneath him who would profit from all the effort and painstaking actions of the leader. As Christianity marched into the North and swept this system of beliefs, sheepish behavior became the order of the day. The feudal system had begun and leaders were no longer as they used to make them: they sought their own comfort and well-being because the well-being of his subjects was to be taken care of by the church. In a Christian world, human-like gods like Þórr fighting giants had no place; farmers were needed to raise crops and pay their taxes...

In the Christian world, a hero like Beowulf had no place to be: he was a relic of old, the barbarian that kept an obsolete, “narrow-minded” system of beliefs away from the light of God. But Beowulf had been much more, he had been a demigod to the people, he had risen at some point as Jesus had, and his fight for survival was mankind’s own fight for survival.

The heroes of old were hidden from sight, and in time they became the spirits in the forest, the prank-playing house-elves... or did they? Although the heathen system of beliefs, mostly based on the individual to-and-for-the-kin relationship was replaced, ultimately the will to keep the olden ways was stronger, and in time evolved: No longer were the heroes gods of old and mighty all-powerful men that sacrificed life and limb for their community. No, they

¹³⁴ *Gestaþátr*. Stanza 76 of the *Hávamál*.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

became the clear-sighted leaders, those that in a feudal system sought to lessen the differences in status that Christianity had drawn. When in darker days people sought solace, most would turn to God, but not for He himself made man through Jesus, but because they sought a just leader. However, the ancient evils mutated in a thousand ways, and while many became the scourge of God, others, in a clear display of keeping the part of the hero which belonged to them, the good part, kept their fierce and untamed looks but with softened, sweetened hearts that strived to better the peoples, as in the case of Swedish trolls.

Historiography, especially the literary branch, has kept the heroes tied up, and their only deeds in our day are no longer to inspire generations into becoming worthy fighters that can keep those around them safe and who are aware that often sacrifice is best, not for oneself but for the community. After more than a century of looking for the real men that once were and that oral tradition turned into heroes, there is still much to be learned from those olden glories. Their battles are our own, daily battles, their thirst for glory and for justice for the community are still weak in us. Their honor we must regain. Perhaps the time has come to dive in those seas far in time and open our eyes to see beyond the written word, beyond “why this word”, beyond “what does this word imply”, beyond the “who was he in real life” and just see that we are still the same, only different in time, but our drives were theirs, our pain was as tough as theirs, our monsters haunt us as theirs haunted them.

It is my opinion, after this period of research, that all the research that has previously been done about these texts, the characters and the peoples who produced them, has brought back part of the magic of that world long gone. Now, after such lengthy time of research by many scholars perhaps a slight shift of focus (from form and function of the supporting material, i.e. language, the manuscript, who the author was, rhythm and inner structure of the text, place of composition,...) might be in order for there is still much to be learned: the sources have barely begun to open themselves to us. The readings so far have mostly been done separately or by blocks, that is, eddic text together, and so on. Dealing with texts that are 300 years apart is quite a gamble but it is important to bear in mind that in the period in question there was apparently a sort of global understanding, a common ground which, in time, has been lost, at least in everyday life. But this common Germanic ground could provide the foundations for further research aimed at trying to grasp the people that once were.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

Perhaps, after 800 years, the *Hávamál* can give us a hint so we may grasp that there is much to be learned from heroes and monsters of old: they are in us after all...

*At hárum þul
hlæ þú aldregi,
oft er gótt, þat er gamlir kveða;
oft ór skörpum belg
skilin orð koma
þeim er hangir með háam
ok skollir með skráam*

*To the aged speaker
you may never laugh;
it is often good, what the old speak.
Often from wrinkled skin
do sharp words come,
from those whose skin hangs
and is covered with scars*

135

¹³⁵ *Loddfáfnismál*, stanza 134 of the *Hávamál*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: all internet sites were last accessed on June 15th, 2012; 2:27-4:53 am.

Editions

- **Alexander, M.** (Ed.), *Beowulf: A glossed text*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- **Björnsson, Á.** (Ed.). *Snorra-Edda*. Reykjavík: Iðunn, 1975.
- **Jónsson, G.** (Ed.), *Eddukvæði. Sæmundar-Edda*. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1949.
- **Mortensson-Egnund, I.** (Ed.), *Edda-kvæde. Norrøne fornsongar*. Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1928. (2nd Edition)
- **Slade, D.** (Ed.), *Beowulf. A New Critical Electronic Edition of the Text, based on an examination of the original MS*. London: The British Library, 2011. Online Resource (Cf- WWW Sources)

Translations

- **Brate, E.**(Trans.), *Eddan. De nordiska guda- och hjältesångerna*. Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1913.
- **Byock, J.L.**, *The Prose Edda: Norse Mythology*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005.
- **Chickering, H.D.**, *Beowulf: A Dual-Language Edition*. New York: Anchor Books, 2006.
- **Garmonsway, G.N.; Simpson, J.**; *Beowulf and its analogues*. inc. Davidson, H.E. "Archaeology and Beowulf", London: Dent, 1980.
- **Heaney, S.**, *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*. New York: W.W.Norton Co, 2002.
- **Hollander, L.M.** (Trans.), *The Poetic Edda: Translated with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000. (2nd ed., rev.)
- **Larrington, C.**(Trans.), *The Poetic Edda*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999.
- **Lerate, Luis**, *Beowulf y otros poemas épicos antiguo germánicos, s. VII-VIII*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974.

- **Orchard, A.**, *The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore*. London: Penguin Classics, 2011.
- **Swanton, M.** (Ed.) *The Dream of the rood*. Exeter: University of Exeter, 1987.
- **Thorpe, B.**, *Edda Sæmundar hinns Frôða : the Edda of Sæmund the Learned*. London: Trübner & Co, 1866.

Works cited

- **Bammesberger, A.**, "Das Futhark und seine Weiterentwicklung in der anglo-friesischen Überlieferung", Bammesberger, A., Waxenberger, G. & Derolez, R. (Eds), *Das futhork und seine einzelsprachlichen Weiterentwicklungen: Akten der Tagung in Eichstätt vom 20. bis 24. Juli 2003*. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.
- **Beard, D.J.**, "Á þá Bitu Engi Járn: a brief note on the concept of invulnerability in the Old Norse Sagas". *Saga Book*, Vol. XV. London: London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1957-1961.
- **Byrne, D.**, *Dragons: Ancient Creatures in Modern Times*. Lecture delivered at the University of South Africa on March 3, 2011.
- **Campbell, A.**, "Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*. Vol. 6. nr. 2, Cambridge (MA): Medieval Academy of America, 1987.
- **Davidson, H.R.E.**, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964.
- **Griffith, P.**, *Los vikingos. El terror de Europa*. Barcelona: A& M Graphic S.L., 2004.
- **Knitt, J.**, "Preservation and Immortality: The Transition From Oral to Written Culture in Iceland". *Oshkosh Scholar*, Volume 2, Oshkosh (WI): University of Wisconsin, 2007.
- **Looijenga, J. H.**, *Runes around the North Sea and on the Continent AD 150–700*. Doctoral Thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1997..
- **Louth, P.**, *La civilisation des germains et des vikings*. Genève: Editions famot, 1976.
- **Lowrey, B.**, "The Hero as a Reflection of Culture". *Sabiduría: The Honors College Journal*, Vol.1:1. Lake Worth: Palm Beach State College, 2009.
- **Marsden, R.**, *The Cambridge Old English Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- **Martin, G.R.R.**, *A Game of Thrones*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2003.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

- **Mitchell, B.**, *An invitation to Old English & Anglo-Saxon England*. Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishers, 1998. (3rd Ed. Rev.)
- **Moilanen, I.**, *Writing the Order: Religious-Political Discourses in Late Anglo-Saxon England*. PhD dissertation at the University of Bergen, 2011.
- **Nahl, A. von**, *Einführung in das Altisländische*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2003
- **Owen, F.**, *The Germanic People*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1960.
- **Palm, R.**, *Vikingarnas Språk 750-1100*. Stockholm: Nordstedts, 2004.
- **Sawyer, P.H.**, *Kings and Vikings*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- **Staver, R.J.**, *A companion to Beowulf*. Westport (CT): Greenwood Press, 2005.
- **Tolkien, J.R.R.**, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Boston: Houghton Mufflin, 1978.
- **Tolkien, J.R.R.**, *The Hobbit, or, There and back again*. Boston: Houghton Mufflin,
- **Tolkien, J.R.R.**, *The Silmarillion*. Boston: Houghton Mufflin, 1977.
- **Various Authors**, "Olaf Tryggvason" and "The Battle of Maldon". *Encyclopædia Romana*. University of Chicago. Online Resource (see WWW Resources)

Dictionaries and Linguistic references

- **Baker, P.S.**, *Introduction to Old English*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. (3rd ed.)
- **Bosworth, J & Toller, T.** *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898
- **Cameron, Angus, et al.** (ed.) *Dictionary of Old English*. Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies (University of Toronto), 1983.
- **Campbell, A.** *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Enlarged addenda and corrigenda*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- **Cleasby, R. & Vigfússon, G.**, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874. (Cf. WWW Resources)
- **Lass, Roger.** *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- **Marsden, R.**, *The Cambridge Old English Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- **Nahl, A. von**, *Einführung in das Altisländische*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2003.
- **Ranke, F. & Hofmann, D.**, *Altnordisches Elementarbuch*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988.
- **Various Authors**, *Old English-Modern English dictionary*. (Cf. WWW Resources)

General references

- **Abram, C.**, "Gylfaginning and early medieval conversion theory." *Saga Book*, Vol.33. London: London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2009.
- **Anderson, C.E.**, *The Runic System as a Reinterpretation of Classical Influences and as an Expression of Scandinavian Cultural Affiliation*. Published Online, 2005. (Cf. WWW Resources).
- **Antonsen E.H.**, *Runes and Germanic Linguistics*. Berlin: Walter d Gruyter, 2002
- **Belloni Du Chaillu, P.**, *The Viking Age: the Early History, Manners, and Customs of the Ancestors of the English-Speaking Nations: Illustrated from the Antiquities Discovered ... as from the Ancient Sagas and Eddas*. London: Murray, 1899.
- **Briggs, C.F.**, "Literacy, reading, and writing in the medieval West". *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2000.
- **Brink, S. & Price, N.**, *The Viking World*, New York: Routledge, 2008.
- **Bruc, P.**, "Noch Einmal 918-919: Of the ritualized demise of kings and of political rituals in general". *Veranstaltungen*. **Vienna**: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2002.
- **Byock, J.L.**, "Feuding in Viking Age Iceland's Great Village". *Conflict in Medieval Europe: Changing Perspective on Society and Culture*. Aldertshot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2003
- **Campell, A.**, "Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*. Vol. 6. nr. 2, Cambridge (MA): Medieval Academy of America 1987.
- **Carver, M.**, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?*, Philadelphia (PA): University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- **Chambers, R.W.** (Supplement by Wrenn, C.L.), *Beowulf: An introduction to the study of the poem with a discussion on the stories of Offa and Finn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959.
- **Choong, T.K.**, *Consorting with the Other: Reconstructing scholastic, Rhetorical and Literary Attitudes to Pagans and Paganism in the Middle Ages*. Master's Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2004. (Cf. WWW Resources)
- **Clemons, P. (Ed.)**, *Anglo-Saxon England I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- **Davidson, H.R.E.**, *Epic and saga : with introduction and notes*. New York: Collier & Son Corporation, 1938.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

- **Davidson, H.R.E.**, *Scandinavian mythology*. London: Hamlyn, 1969.
- **Dowden, K.** *European Paganism. The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- **Eigl, K.**, *Deutsche Götter und Heldensagen*. München: Südwest Verlag, 1985.
- **Estes, H.**, "Raising Cain in Genesis and Beowulf: Challenges to Generic Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon Biblical Literature", *The Heroic Age. A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe*, Vol.13. Saint John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2010.
- **Farrell, R.T.**, *Beowulf and the Geats*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research (University College London), 1972.
- **Faulkes, A & Perkins, R.** (Eds.), "Viking Revaluations". *Viking Society Centenary Symposium*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research (University College London), 1993.
- **Garrison, M.**, "The study of emotions in early medieval history: some starting points". *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol.10:2. Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishing, 2001.
- **Gelling, P. & Davidson, H.R.E.**, *The Chariot of the sun : and other rites and symbols of the Northern Bronze Age*. London: Dent & Sons, 1969.
- **Godden, M. & Lapidge, M.**, *The Cambridge companion to Old English literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- **Greenfield, S.B.; Gillmore Calder, D.; Lapidge, M.**, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.
- **Harbert, W.**, *The Germanic Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- **Hasenfratz, H.P.**, *Barbarian Rites: The Spiritual World of the Vikings and the Germanic Tribes*. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 2011.
- **Howe, N.**, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*. Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- **Kelchner, G.D.**, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and their affinities in folklore*, Norwood (PA): Norwood Editions, 1978.
- **Klein, S.L.**, *Christianization of the Norse c.900-c.1100: A Premeditated Strategy of Life and Death*. Master's Thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2011
- **Kratz, H.**, "The Proposed Sources of the 'Nibelungenlied'". *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 59, No. 4. Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press, 1962.
- **Leeming, D.**, *From Olympus to Camelot: The World of European Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

- **Lindow, J.**, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- **Liuzza, R.M.**, *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, Yale University Press, Yale (2002)
- **Mancho-Barés, G.**, “On bilingualism in the Danelaw”. *Some Sundry Wits Gathered Together. I Congreso de Filoloxía Inglesa*, Fernández-Corugedo, S.G. Ed.. A Coruña: Servizo de Publicacións (Universidade da Coruña), 1995.
- **Massullo, J.**, *Middle Earth from Middle Europe: Medieval Manuscripts and an Inspiration for Tolkien*. Online Publication, 2008. (Cf. WWW Sources)
- **McGillivray, A.**, *Mythic Transformations: Tree Symbolism in the Norse Plantation*. Master’s Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2011.
- **McKinnell, J.**, “Völuspá and the Feast of Easter”. *Alvíssmál. Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Kultur Skandinaviens*, Vol. 12. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2009. (Cf. WWW Sources)
- **Murdoch, B. & Read, M.K.**, *Early Germanic literature and culture*, Volume 1. Woodbrige: Camden House, 2004.
- **Nordby, C.H. & Mott, L.F.**, *The influence of Old Norse literature upon English literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1901.
- **North, R.**, *Heathen gods in Old English literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- **North, R.**, *The Origins of Beowulf from Vergil To Wiglaf*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2006.
- **O’Connor, R.**, “History or fiction? Truth-claims and defensive narrators in Icelandic romance-sagas”. *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, Vol.15. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005.
- **Orchard, A.**, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend*. London: Cassell, 1997.
- **Owen, F.**, *The Germanic People*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1960.
- **Piirainen, E.**, “Folk narratives and legends as sources of widespread idioms: Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units”. *Folklore*. Electronic Journal of Folklore, Vol.48. Tartu: FB and Media Group of Estonian Literary Museum, 2011.
- **Roe, T.**, *A Response to Anglo-Saxon Heroism and Fourteenth Century Chivalry: Ideals for the Warrior in the Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Senior Thesis, Hillsdale College, 2011.
- **Sarkar, R.N.**, *A Topical Survey of English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1991.
- **Sawyer, P.H.**, *Kings and Vikings. Scandinavia and Europe AD 700-1000*. London: Routledge, 1982.

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

- **Sawyer, P.H.**, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- **Short, W.R.**, *The Sagas of Icelanders as a Historical Source*. Hurstwic, 2005. Online Publication (Cf. WWW Sources)
- **Sinding, P.C.**, *History of Scandinavia : from the early times of the Northmen and Vikings to the present day*. New York: Sinding, 1866
- **Sinding, P.C.**, *History of Scandinavia: From the Early Times of the Northmen and Vikings to the Present Day*. Pittsburgh, Haven, 1863.
- **Spruit, A.**, *Judging Vikings: Ethics and morality in two Icelandic family sagas, Laxdaela saga and Vatnsdaela saga*. Master's thesis, Utrecht University, 2011.
- **Staver, R.J.**, *A companion to Beowulf*. Westport (CT): Greenwood Press, 2005.
- **Stenton, Sir F.**, (Ed. Clark, Sir G.), *Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. (3rd Edition).
- **Stjerna, K. & Hal, J.R.C.**, *Essays on questions connected with the Old English Poem of Beowulf*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research (University College London), 1912.
- **Sveinsson, E.**, "The Value of the Icelandic Sagas". *Saga Book*, Vol.15. London: Viking Society for Northern Research (University College London), 1957-1959.
- **Thörnemo, T.**, *Scandinavian Influences on the English Language*. Term paper, Mid-Sweden University, 2004.
- **Tolkien, J.R.R. & Tolkien, C.R.** (Ed), *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. London: Harper Collins, 2009.
- **Tolkien, J.R.R.**, *Beowulf : the monsters and the critics*. Folcroft (PA): Folcroft Press, 1969.

Documentaries

- **BBC** (Great Britain)
 - *In search of Beowulf* (2010) Running time: 90 minutes.
 - *A History of Britain* (2000). Running time: 59 minutes
 - “Episode 1: Beginnings”
 - “Episode 2: Conquest”
 - *Seven Ages of Britain* (2010). Running Time 60 minutes
- **The History Channel** (United States)
 - *Clash of the Gods* (2009) Running time 45 minutes
 - Episode 8: “Beowulf”.
 - Episode 9: “Tolkien’s Monsters”.
 - Episode 10: “Thor”.
- **ZDF** (Germany)
 - *Sturm über Europa- Die Völkerwanderung 1.*(2002) Running time 86 minutes
 - Kimbern und Teutonen
 - Varusschlacht und Gotensaga
 - *Sturm über Europa- Die Völkerwanderung 2.*(2002) Running time 106 minutes
 - Der Kampf um Rom
 - Das Erbe des Imperiums

WWW Resources

- **An Icelandic-English Dictionary**
 - http://lexicon.ff.cuni.cz/texts/oi_cleasbyvigfusson_about.html
- **Anderson, C.E., *The Runic System as a Reinterpretation of Classical Influences and as an Expression of Scandinavian Cultural Affiliation.***
 - http://www.carlaz.com/phd/AndersonCE_1999_Runes_and_Reinterpretation.pdf
- **Archive.org:** California Digital Library
 - <http://archive.org/>
- **Baker, P.S., *Introduction to Old English.*** Electronicversion
 - <http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/resources/IOE/index.html>
- **Beowulf on Steorarume** (Beowulf in Cyberspace) by Dr. Slade, B. (Ed.)
 - <http://www.heorot.dk/>
- *Encyclopædia Romana.* University of Chicago

heroes and Monsters: The path of the heathen leader through epic and saga literature

- http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/britannia/anglo-saxon/maldon/maldon.html
- http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/britannia/anglo-saxon/maldon/olaftryggvason.html
- **Handrit.is: Historical manuscripts**
 - <http://handrit.is/>
- **Heimskringla**
 - <http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Hovedside>
- **Icelandic Saga Database**
 - <http://sagadb.org/>
- **IMDb: Internet Movie Database**
 - www.imdb.com
- **Jónsson, G. (Ed.), *Eddukvæði. Sæmundar-Edda***
 - <http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Eddan>
- **Kirtley, D.B., *Game of Thrones Burns Brightest With Epic Battle of Blackwater***
 - <http://www.wired.com/underwire/2012/05/game-of-thrones-blackwater/>
- **Labrynth Library: Old English Literature**
 - <http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/medieval/labyrinth/library/oe/oe.html>
- **Manuscript Collections of the Uppsala University Library**
 - <http://www.ub.uu.se/en/Collections/Manuscript-Collections/>
- **Medievalists.net**
 - <http://www.medievalists.net/>
 - Accessed documents:
 - <http://www.medievalists.net/2011/08/24/judging-vikings-ethics-and-morality-in-two-icelandic-family-sagas-laxdaela-saga-and-vatnsdaela-saga/>
 - <http://www.medievalists.net/2011/09/28/voluspa-and-the-feast-of-easter/>
 - <http://www.medievalists.net/2011/12/07/christianization-of-the-norse-c-900-c-1100-a-premeditated-strategy-of-life-and-death/>
 - <http://www.medievalists.net/2011/12/27/history-or-fiction-truth-claims-and-defensive-narrators-in-icelandic-romance-sagas/>

- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/01/17/the-value-of-the-icelandic-sagas/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/01/22/the-sagas-of-icelanders-as-a-historical-source/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/01/29/feuding-in-viking-age-iceland%E2%80%99s-great-village/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/02/05/noch-einmal-918-919-of-the-ritualized-demise-of-kings-and-of-political-rituals-in-general/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/02/05/scandinavian-influences-on-the-english-language/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/02/19/literacy-reading-and-writing-in-the-medieval-west/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/02/29/a-response-to-anglo-saxon-heroism-and-fourteenth-century-chivalry-ideals-for-the-warrior-in-the-writings-of-j-r-r-tolkien/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/12/the-proposed-sources-of-the-nibelungenlied/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/18/folk-narratives-and-legends-as-sources-of-widespread-idioms-toward-a-lexicon-of-common-figurative-units/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/19/the-study-of-emotions-in-early-medieval-history-some-starting-points/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/19/writing-the-order-religious-political-discourses-in-late-anglo-saxon-england/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/22/middle-earth-from-middle-europe-medieval-manuscripts-and-an-inspiration-for-tolkien/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/03/27/the-hero-as-a-reflection-of-culture/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/04/22/the-runic-system-as-a-reinterpretation-of-classical-influences-and-as-an-expression-of-scandinavian-cultural-affiliation/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/04/24/preservation-and-immortality-the-transition-from-oral-to-written-culture-in-iceland/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/04/26/on-bilingualism-in-the-danelaw/>

- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/05/17/mythic-transformations-tree-symbolism-in-the-norse-plantation/>
- <http://www.medievalists.net/2012/05/20/a-tha-bitu-engi-jarn-a-brief-note-on-the-concept-of-invulnerability-in-the-old-norse-sagas/>
- **Mortensson-Egnund, I.** (Ed.), *Edda-kvæde. Norrøne fornsongar*
 - <http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Eddukv%C3%A6%C3%B0i>
 - <http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Edda-Kv%C3%A6de>
- **Old English-Modern English dictionary**
 - http://home.comcast.net/~modean52/oeme_dictionaries.htm
- **Rundata** (Scandinavian Runic-text Database). University of Uppsala, Sweden.
 - <http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm>
- **Slade, D.** (Ed.), *Beowulf. A New Critical Electronic Edition of the Text, based on an examination of the original MS*
 - <http://www.heorot.dk/>
- **The Battle of Maldon**
 - <http://www.lightspill.com/poetry/oe/maldon.html>
 - <http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/oecoursepack/maldon/index.html>
- **The Northvegr Center**
 - <http://www.northvegr.org/>
- **Unicode Consortium**
 - <http://unicode.org/>
- **Viking Answer Lady**
 - <http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/>
 - Runes
 - <http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/callig.shtml#RuneBibliography>
- **Wikipedia**
 - (English) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - (Swedish) <http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Huvudsida>
 - (German) <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Hauptseite>
 - (Bokmål Norwegian) <http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Forside>
- **Worldcat:** Library Catalogue
 - <http://www.worldcat.org/>

