

Faculty of English  
(Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic)

**Birds and Humans in the Old Norse World, c. 600–  
1500 AD**

Kathryn Ania Haley-Halinski

Pembroke College

University of Cambridge

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy July 2021



## DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the English Degree Committee. (80000 words plus an additional 9000-word extension granted for an appendix of Old Norse bird names, their etymologies, translations, and uses.)

## ABSTRACT

### BIRDS AND HUMANS IN THE OLD NORSE WORLD, C. 600–1500 AD

Kathryn Ania Haley-Halinski

The central aim of this thesis is to explore the complexities of human-bird coexistence in Scandinavia and the Norse North Atlantic from 600-1500 AD, primarily focusing on the period c. 800-1400 within this time period. In particular, this thesis explores if and how literary representations of birds correlated in any way with zooarchaeological sources concerning human-bird interactions. To explore this central question, I employ an interdisciplinary methodology that combines literary analysis of textual sources with interpretation of archaeological reports that include bird bones. I also employ the theoretical lens of Human-Animal Studies, as it centres the lives of animals and the interactions of humans and animals, rather than considering animals a ‘blank canvas’ for human desires, needs, and meanings.

There are three key sections of this thesis. The first section is in a chapter on folk taxonomies, which explores one possible methodology for studying how medieval Icelanders understood and categorised the entities they referred to as *fugl* (‘bird’). The second section is a series of case studies concerning humans’ coexistence with specific kinds of birds: domesticated birds, wild waterfowl and songbirds, hawks and falcons, eagles, ravens, and swans. These case studies analyse literary sources, documentary sources, and archaeological reports to build a multifaceted look at these birds and how they were understood, interacted with, and thought about. In many cases, the imaginative uses of these birds appear to have been at a remove from human-bird interactions, but in some cases there was a significant overlap. For instance, ravens appear to have been held in relatively low esteem despite their mythological and literary significance, whereas the literary uses and real-life treatment of hawks and falcons appear to have been more closely related. The final section consists of a chapter on human-bird transformation and communication in Old Norse literature. This chapter considers the wider questions regarding how human and animal were defined. While pre-Christian concepts of human and animal are briefly considered, the majority of this chapter considers how Old Norse peoples reconciled Christian theological perspectives on what defines a

human with their own pre-existing narrative traditions concerning human-animal transformation and interaction.

This thesis is also accompanied by a list of Old Norse bird names and, where possible, their Modern English translations, etymologies, Modern Icelandic equivalents, and notes on their uses and attestation. This not only functions as a companion piece to the thesis, but is aimed to aid future research on birds in Old Norse textual sources by providing a collected vocabulary of bird names, a project that has not yet been done in Old Norse.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my supervisors, Dr Judy Quinn and Dr James Barrett, for their feedback and guidance over the years. I would also like to thank my advisor, Prof. Richard Dance, for pastoral and academic support.

Beyond Cambridge, I would like to thank Dr Sam Walker and Albína Hulda Pálsdóttir for their correspondence regarding archaeological sources, Lee Colwill and Basil Price for their help in locating citations, and my friends and family for encouraging me to take up this doctoral offer.

Finally, I would like to thank James McIntosh for his endless support and encouragement, and the pigeons of Jesus Green lock and footbridge for being friendly faces during lockdown.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Image illustrating taxonomic classification of the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) in the biological sciences.

Figure 2: Image illustrating vernacular Modern English folk taxonomy of duck and raven, after the model of folk taxonomic classifications proposed by Berlin et al.

Figure 3: Sixth-century silver bracteate of C-type, found in Bridlington, Yorkshire, England, acquired 2014. British Museum number 2014,8015.1. British Museum image, asset number 1538311001, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license for non-commercial thesis.

Figure 4: Seventh-century Style II copper alloy shield mount in the form of a ‘Vendel Raven,’ found in Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England, acquired 1939. British Museum number 1939,1010.94.C.1. British Museum image, asset number 6724001, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license for non-commercial thesis.

Figure 5: Sixth-century Merovingian silver-gilt bird brooch of North French/Middle Rhenish type, found in Walthamstow, London, England, acquired 1903. British Museum number 1903,0214.9 British Museum image, asset number 1613278068, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license for non-commercial thesis.

Figure 6: Sixth-century gold bracteate of C-type, found in Lessingham, Norfolk, England, c. 1987. Portable Antiquities Scheme unique ID number NMS-A13EDD. Rights held by Norfolk County Council, used under CC BY-SA 4.0 license for non-commercial thesis. Image taken from Portable Antiquities Scheme website <<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/647009>>

## LICENSE INFORMATION

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0: <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>>

CC BY-SA 4.0: <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Folk Taxonomies in Old Norse

Table 2: Swedish Falconry Graves after Vretemark, ‘Birds of prey as evidence of falconry’, pp. 829–32

# Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	5
List of Figures.....	6
License Information.....	6
List of Tables.....	6
Contents.....	7
List of Abbreviations.....	11
1 Introduction.....	12
1.1 Opening.....	12
1.2 Research Questions.....	12
1.3 Scope and Aims.....	13
1.4 Previous Scholarship.....	14
1.5 Methodology.....	18
1.5.1 Defining the Literary Corpus.....	18
1.5.2 Archaeology.....	20
1.6 A Note on Ornithological Orthography and Terminology.....	22
1.7 Human-Animal Studies and Other Theoretical Considerations.....	22
1.8 Overview and Rationale Behind the Thesis Structure.....	25
1.8.1 The Structure of the Thesis.....	26
1.9 Conclusion.....	27
2. Old Norse Avian Terminology and Taxonomies.....	28
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 Introducing Ethnotaxonomies and Folk Taxonomies.....	30
2.2.1 Medieval Folk Taxonomies.....	35
2.3 <i>Fugla heiti</i> : An Old Norse Diagnostic Text.....	38
2.3.1 Basic Terms in <i>Fugla heiti</i> .....	43



2.4 Folk Taxonomic Categories Beyond <i>Fugla heiti</i> .....	47
2.5 The Category of <i>Fugl</i> in Old Norse Written Sources .....	53
2.6 Conclusion .....	58
3. Subsistence and Proximity I: Domestic Birds .....	61
3.1 Introduction.....	61
3.1.1 Domesticated, Tamed, and Wild.....	62
3.2 Chickens.....	63
3.2.1 Chickens in Mainland Scandinavian Archaeology .....	66
3.2.2 Chicken in Norway .....	70
3.2.3 Chickens in the North Atlantic .....	72
3.2.4 Chickens in Norse and Scandinavian Latin Literature .....	76
3.2.4.1 Cockerels: Awakening and/or Resurrection .....	79
3.2.4.2 Chickens and Human Sexuality .....	84
3.2.4.3 Chickens as a Luxury .....	86
3.3 Domestic Geese .....	89
3.3.1 Domestic Geese in Mainland Scandinavia .....	91
3.3.2 Domestic Geese in the North Atlantic .....	92
3.3.2.1 Geese in <i>Íslendingasögur</i> .....	94
3.3.2.2 Guard Geese in Eddic Poetry .....	96
3.4 Domestic Birds: Conclusion .....	98
4 Subsistence and Proximity II: Wild Birds .....	99
4.1 Introduction.....	99
4.2 Wild Birds as Food: Archaeological Evidence .....	99
4.3 Wild Birds as Raw Materials: Feathers and Down.....	103
4.4 Wild Birds in Literature and Law .....	105
4.4.1 Wild Birds in Icelandic Law .....	105
4.4.2 Wild Birds in Literature .....	108

4.5 Fowling Methods in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic.....	110
4.6 Wild Birds: Conclusion.....	114
5 Hawks and Falconry .....	115
5.1 Introduction.....	115
5.1.1 Falconry and Human-Animal Studies.....	115
5.2 Falconry in the Archaeological Record .....	119
5.2.1 The Swedish Falconry Graves .....	120
5.2.2 Conclusion to Falconry in the Archaeological Record.....	127
5.3 Gyrfalcons in Scandinavia and Iceland.....	127
5.4 Hawks and Falconry in Medieval Icelandic Literature.....	130
5.4.1 <i>Hauks heiti</i> and Observation of Hawk Behaviour .....	130
5.4.2 Raptors and/as Noblemen .....	133
5.4.3 The Inner Lives of Raptors in Medieval Icelandic Literature.....	138
5.5 Conclusion .....	141
6 Birds and Symbolism.....	142
6.1 Introduction.....	142
6.2 The Birds of Battle.....	143
6.3 Ravens.....	148
6.3.1 Ravens in Literary and Mythological Sources.....	148
6.3.2 Ravens in the <i>Pulur</i> .....	154
6.3.3 Ravens in Zooarchaeology and Law Codes.....	157
6.4 Eagles.....	161
6.4.1 Identifying Eagles .....	161
6.4.2 Eagles in Literary and Mythological Sources.....	162
6.4.3 Eagle-Iconography in Archaeological Sources.....	167
6.4.4 Eagles in the <i>Pulur</i> .....	173
6.4.5 Eagles in Law Codes and Zooarchaeology.....	176

6.5 Swans .....	178
6.5.1 Swans in Literary and Mythological Sources .....	178
6.5.2 Swans in Zooarchaeology and Law Codes .....	185
6.6 Conclusion .....	187
7 Human-Bird Transformation and Communication .....	188
7.1 Introduction .....	188
7.2 Introduction to Transformation .....	189
7.2.1 Human-Animal Transformation in Late Iron Age Scandinavian Archaeology ....	189
7.2.2 Human-Animal Transformation in Old Norse Literature .....	193
7.2.2.1 Human-Animal Transformation in Old Norse Mythological Literature .....	194
7.2.2.2 Human-Animal Transformation in Non-Mythological Literature .....	196
7.2.2.3 <i>Berserker</i> , Wolf-men, and Bear-men .....	198
7.2.3 Human-Bird Transformation in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature .....	202
7.2.4 Human-Animal Transformation: Conclusion .....	207
7.3 Human-Animal Communication: Introduction .....	207
7.3.1 Human-Animal Communication in Old Norse Narrative Literature .....	210
7.3.2 Communication, Speech, and Language .....	214
7.4 Human-Animal Communication: Conclusion .....	218
8 Conclusion .....	219
9 Appendix: Lexicon of Old Norse bird names .....	222
Bibliography .....	269
List of Abbreviations .....	269
Dictionaries and Databases .....	269
Manuscripts .....	270
Printed Works .....	271

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ÁBM	Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, <i>Íslensk Orðsifabók</i>
CV	Cleasby, R., and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, <i>An Icelandic-English Dictionary</i>
<i>Edkv</i>	Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., <i>Eddukvæði</i> , 2 vols.
FJ	Finnur Jónsson, <i>Lexicon Poeticum</i>
GFH	Gurevich, E., ed., <i>Fugla heiti</i> (commentary and text)
<i>GráK</i>	Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., <i>Grágás. Elzta lögbók íslendinga</i>
<i>Grás</i>	Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., <i>Grágás. Staðarhólsbók</i>
<i>Gylf</i>	A. Faulkes, ed., <i>Gylfaginning</i>
ONP	<i>Dictionary of Old Norse Prose</i>
<i>Skm</i>	A. Faulkes, ed., <i>Skáldskaparmál I</i>

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Opening

As is the case today, birds were a common feature of everyday life and imaginative works in medieval Iceland and Scandinavia. However, while some topics such as the Norse peoples' representations of ravens have been frequently addressed in scholarship, many birds of medieval Scandinavia and Iceland have been neglected, and the very question of what made a bird a bird in this period has likewise been overlooked. This thesis seeks to treat birds in a more interdisciplinary and holistic manner than has been the case in previous scholarship. The resulting thesis takes the form of a collection of case studies, interconnected by the desire to understand how humans understood birds in everyday and symbolic senses.

While there was no single meaning of birds in Old Norse culture, there were many ways that humans used birds to explore what it meant to be human, and by the same token there were many ways that birds affected the culture and material circumstances of the humans that lived alongside them. Rather than treating medieval attitudes toward non-human animals as purely imaginative and detached from modern attitudes, I will approach them not as direct ancestors of modern beliefs, but as contributing factors and histories that have had their own influences on the current era of climate change, often termed the 'Anthropocene.'

## 1.2 Research Questions

There are five interconnected research questions behind this thesis. First and foremost, I wanted to investigate how Old Norse literary texts represented birds, and how archaeological sources and documents such as law codes indicate that humans treated birds. Following on from this, I wanted to examine if human-bird interactions influenced the representation of birds, and conversely, if representations of birds influenced how humans treated them in real-life encounters. These two pairs of issues lead to the final research question, namely how human attitudes toward and interactions with birds changed over time and between regions based on factors such as religion, scholarship, and climate. Each chapter of this thesis addresses these questions in different ways and to different degrees, but all the questions drove the research behind each chapter.

### 1.3 Scope and Aims

Given that the textual and archaeological sources for human-bird interaction, or indeed sources dealing with birds in any substantial way at all, are relatively few and far between, this thesis takes into account a broad overview in terms of both geographical and chronological scope. The geographical scope of this thesis will focus upon what is now Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) and the North Atlantic Islands (Iceland, the Faroes, and the Orkneys). The term ‘Norse peoples’ will be used throughout as a shorthand for ‘Norse-speaking peoples,’ to differentiate these populations from the Sámi peoples who also live in Scandinavia.

The boundaries of the Viking Age and medieval period followed in this thesis are those outlined in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, with the Viking Age starting c. 800 AD and ending c. 1000 AD, and the Scandinavian Middle Ages spanning from c. 1000 AD to 1520 AD.<sup>1</sup> Where relevant (primarily §5.2 and §7.2.1), this thesis will touch upon the Migration Period and the Merovingian/Vendel Period (c. 400–600 AD and 600–800 AD respectively). In some cases, post-medieval sources will be referred to, particularly if they provide information on words or concepts that are present in medieval texts (§9). Generally speaking, textual sources will be used primarily to address questions about the medieval period, while archaeological sources will be used to address questions pertaining to both the Viking Age and medieval period.

While some ideas discussed in this thesis may be applied broadly across Norse-speaking Scandinavia and the North Atlantic, there are other factors that must be taken into account when discussing ‘the Norse peoples’ as a group of communities, rather than a singular entity. As early as the sixth century, the Norse language diverged into two separate dialects. In simplified terms, East Norse/East Nordic was the variant spoken in what is now Denmark and Sweden, and West Norse/West Nordic was the variant spoken in what is now Norway and the North Atlantic Islands.<sup>2</sup> While the language barrier was not insurmountable, there were likely substantial cultural differences between these two regions, albeit with frequent contact and transmission between them.

With this in mind, it is important to note that the majority of Old Norse vernacular literature was recorded in Iceland. Some skaldic verse, particularly skaldic verse thought to

---

<sup>1</sup> Helle, pp. 5–6.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes, pp. 100–1.

be older, has been attributed to Norwegian skalds, and Icelandic skalds frequently composed verse for Norwegian patrons, so the extant literature is not solely the preserve of Iceland. Furthermore the oral traditions that informed the written literature, particularly eddic poetry, *fornaldarsögur* (sagas concerning the distant/legendary past, usually set in Scandinavia and continental Europe), and *konungasögur* (sagas concerning Scandinavian kings during the early medieval period), may well have been shared by Norse-speaking peoples over a wide geographical area. However, it should still be kept in mind that the recording and preservation of a considerable amount of Old Norse-Icelandic literature was guided by the interests of a relatively small demographic, namely learned Icelanders of the High and Late Middle Ages.

While I do perform some extrapolation of medieval Icelandic textual sources to earlier periods and to other Norse populations, I try to avoid treating the evidence about Norse peoples as monolithic. Instead, I frequently treat sources pertaining to present-day Denmark and Sweden separately from those from Norway and Iceland. For instance, the keeping of domesticated birds (§3.2) and falconry (§5) played out differently in the different regions of Scandinavia and the North Atlantic, depending on factors such as trade connections and climate, as Denmark and southern Sweden were more temperate and had more direct connections to the Frankish Empire and the Baltic region.

#### **1.4 Previous Scholarship**

Scholarship on animals in Old Norse literature and in medieval Scandinavian history is still a developing area. Many twentieth-century publications discussed animals primarily in relation to pre-Christian Norse religion, and used a combination of textual sources – notably the Prose and Poetic Eddas – and a small number of artefacts.<sup>3</sup> However, in the past twenty years this has changed, as scholars have shifted toward a greater emphasis on the everyday relationships between humans and animals, and how these relationships coexisted with the representations of animals found in art and literature.

Swedish archaeological and interdisciplinary publications have played a large role in this shift. Ericson and Tyrberg's *Prehistory of the Swedish Avifauna*, published in 2004, is an important overview of birds in Swedish archaeological finds from the Ice Age to the early modern period, and provides a brief discussion of the geographical and chronological range of a species as well as a list of published and unpublished archaeological reports that mention

---

<sup>3</sup> For instance, E. O. G. Turville-Petre; von Hofsten.

a given species. Many of the more interdisciplinary publications that address humans and animals in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia have come out of the *Vägar till Midgård* ('Paths to Midgard') series, which addresses Old Norse pre-Christian religion and mythology in a 'long-term perspective,' taking into account not only the Iron Age beliefs and practices that can be gleaned through the archaeology of religion, but the echoes, representations, and understandings of such in the medieval and modern period.<sup>4</sup>

The two publications in this series most relevant to the current thesis are the edited collection of essays titled *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives*, and Kristina Jennbert's monograph *Animals and Humans: Recurrent Symbiosis in Archaeology and Religion*. This 'long-term perspectives' approach is indebted to the study of what Jacques Le Goff termed *mentalités* ('mentalities'), broadly characterised as collective or 'popular' ideas, practices, and knowledge-systems rather than the scholarly 'ideas' that characterise many written texts of the medieval period.<sup>5</sup> For instance, while Jennbert does not directly cite Le Goff, she uses the term 'Midgard mentality' to refer to the system of broadly-conceived and collectively-held beliefs and practices of the average person in pre-Christian Scandinavia.<sup>6</sup> Both *Old Norse religion in Long-Term Perspectives* and *Animals and Humans* not only discuss the presence of animals in pre-Christian Norse belief and ritual, but emphasise the role of everyday human-animal interactions that shaped these beliefs. However, both publications do, at times, draw uncritical parallels between literary and archaeological sources without fully exploring differences in context and culture.

Outside of the study of pre-Christian Norse religion, Lena Rohrbach's *Der tierische Blick* represented an important step in scholarship, as it was one of the first works to highlight the importance of human-animal relationships in saga literature.<sup>7</sup> Harriet Jean Evans' PhD thesis, 'Animal-Human Relations on the Household-Farm in Viking Age and Medieval Iceland', also looks at how human-animal relationships played out in Icelandic literature and reality.<sup>8</sup> Lara Hogg's PhD thesis, 'Humans and Animals in the North Atlantic', takes the same subject, humans and domestic animals in Viking Age Iceland, but approaches it from a

---

<sup>4</sup> See Andréén, Jennbert and Raudvere, pp. 13–4. *Vägar till Midgård* has been published by Nordic Academic Press since 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Le Goff, pp. 228–29.

<sup>6</sup> Jennbert, *Animals and Humans*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Rohrbach.

<sup>8</sup> Evans.



zoarchaeological perspective, investigating how zooarchaeology can be used to explore human-animal relationships.<sup>9</sup>

However, there has not yet been a sustained study of birds in Old Norse culture. Some Masters theses from the University of Iceland, including Timothy Bourns' 'The Language of Birds in Old Norse Literature' and Karin Bellamy-Dagneau's 'The Falconer's Ritual' have approached aspects of the subject that I treat in this thesis, namely the questions of avian speech (§7.3) and of falconry (§5). Chapters concerning birds in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic islands have also appeared in edited volumes, most notably the four-volume set *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale* edited by Karl-Heinz Gersmann and Oliver Grimm. Perhaps the most holistic and extensive treatment of humans and birds in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic islands, however, is Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck's 2013 article 'Exploitation of Wild Birds in Iceland from the Settlement Period to the 19th Century and its Reflection in Archaeology', which combines ethnographic, archaeological, and documentary sources.

However, in other areas of medieval studies, far more work has been done. The historiography of falconry has been an area of interest for much of the second half of the twentieth century, starting with Hans J. Epstein's 1943 article, 'The History and Origins of Falconry'. While Gunilla Åckerström-Hougen sought to challenge some of Epstein's theories by positing that falconry was introduced to Scandinavia through connections with Western, rather than Eastern, Europe and Asia, this has not been widely accepted.<sup>10</sup> It was only in 2004 that Robin Oggins' *The Kings and their Hawks* provided another comprehensive work on falconry history, although Oggins primarily focuses on medieval England. T. T. Allsen's 2006 monograph *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* treats falconry only briefly, but Allsen does address falconry as a more globalised phenomenon and gives a good account of discoveries made after the publication of Epstein's article.

The two most extensive projects that address falconry and medieval hunting practices more broadly, however, have come from the work undertaken at the Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische Archäologie (Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology) based in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. The 2015 conference proceedings *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD* contains many chapters on falconry, including one by Wietske

---

<sup>9</sup> Hogg.

<sup>10</sup> Åckerström-Hougen, 'Falconry as a Motif in Early Swedish Art'.

Prummel where she discusses a group of criteria for the evidence of falconry in archaeological sites that she had previously outlined in her article ‘Evidence of Hawking (Falconry) from Bird and Mammal Bones’. A chapter by Maria Vretemark on a Vendel-period grave that includes many animals as grave goods is also of considerable interest, and builds upon her earlier work, including that written in collaboration with Sabine Sten.<sup>11</sup> The publication of the four volumes of *Raptor and Human* in 2018 has provided further historical and archaeological materials in this area, as well as a comparative angle that takes into account historical and current falconry practices in Asia.

Another area that has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years is the representation of birds in medieval English literature, both in Old and Middle English. This includes philological studies of bird names in the Germanic languages, which often draw heavily on Old English. The groundwork was arguably laid by C. H. Whitman’s 1898 article ‘The Birds of Old English Literature’ and Hugo Suolahti’s monograph *Die deutschen Vogelnamen*, while Peter Kitson’s 1997–8 series of articles re-evaluated and added to these older works. While these studies do, to some extent, draw upon Old Norse as a cognate language, there has not been a comparable work. Jan de Vries’ *Altnordisch etymologisches Wörterbuch* contains some Old Norse bird names, but it is a dictionary, not a study of bird names. The most recent sustained scholarly attempt to discuss Old Norse bird names is arguably Elena Gurevich’s commentary on *Fugla heiti* as part of the new Skaldic Poetry of the Middle Ages edition of this text. While this commentary focuses upon one primary source, it draws together multiple scholarly works on Old Norse, Modern Icelandic, and Norwegian Nynorsk to provide the translations of the names in this poem. The discussion of Old Norse bird names and the taxonomic links between said names in Chapter 2 of this thesis builds upon Gurevich’s commentary.

In addition to philological work, there has been a considerable amount of literary scholarship that focuses specifically upon birds in the field of medieval English literature. Most notable in recent publications has been Michael Warren’s *Birds in Medieval English Poetry*, which covers poetry in Old and Middle English, and explicitly considers the relationships between humans and birds in its discussion of poetic representations of birds. Eric Lacey’s PhD thesis, ‘Birds and Bird-Lore in Old English Literature’, is also an important

---

<sup>11</sup> Vretemark, ‘Human Remains and Animal Offerings’; ‘Evidence of Animal Offerings in Iron Age Sweden’; ‘The Vendel Period Royal Follower’s Grave at Swedish Rikeby as Starting Point for Reflections about Falconry in Northern Europe,’; Sten and Vretemark.

resource, and goes into a great deal of philological, literary, and ethological<sup>12</sup> analysis regarding birds in textual sources from early medieval England. In the same vein as these studies, this thesis is intended to draw together sources and scholarship to create a sustained interdisciplinary analysis of birds in Norse culture that incorporates both human culture and the behaviour of living birds.

## **1.5 Methodology**

Methodologically, this thesis combines analysis of literary and documentary sources with discussion of archaeological reports, particularly zooarchaeological materials. The primary reason for this combination is that it allows for a greater understanding of human-animal relationships. While textual sources give far greater detail than most zooarchaeological sources, they are by nature anthropocentric, created by and for humans, and leave out a considerable amount of animal-related details. In addition to this, animals can be used to create human meaning through symbolism, which may be linked to animal behaviour, but may equally obscure aspects of human-animal relationships. By the same token, while zooarchaeological materials may provide a more direct link to the animals of the medieval period, they can be hard to interpret, particularly if they are poorly preserved. By using multiple sources and disciplines, I aim to achieve a holistic approach to the study of birds in the Norse world.

### **1.5.1 Defining the Literary Corpus**

Defining the corpus of sources that I work with in this thesis has been complex. As already mentioned, sources do not generally discuss birds at great length, so the initial gathering of sources involved searching for bird-names and other bird-related terms in resources such as the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose (ONP), and then seeking out each word in context. In many cases, birds are mentioned only in passing, and so while extended portrayals of birds in Old Norse literature receive more detailed attention in my study, at many points analyses are created from the synthesis of multiple fleeting references to birds in a large corpus of texts. A further issue in establishing the corpus of texts was vocabulary. There are no extant medieval texts from Scandinavia or the North Atlantic that deal extensively with local birds and provide Latin and Old Norse names, making the identification of some species difficult. As such, a handful of early modern texts that do so have been included where relevant to aid the identification of birds (§2 and §9).

---

<sup>12</sup> Ethology is the study of animal behaviour, not to be confused with ethnology. See Hine, s.v. 'Ethology'.

One literary source that has proven invaluable in this thesis has been the so-called *Anonymous þulur*, a collection of metrical lists of *heiti* ('poetic bynames') found in two Icelandic manuscripts: the fourteenth-century AM 748 I b 4to and the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century AM 757 a 4to, although the *þulur* themselves may be older. The *Anonymous þulur* are composed about a range of topics, and among the topics are hawks (§5.4.1), eagles (§6.4.4), ravens (§6.3.3), chickens (§3.2.4), and birds in general (§2.3). While these texts are by no means ornithological treatises, the *heiti* given to each bird can be used to understand the culturally-salient features of the birds in question, from physical features to behavioural traits. The exception to this is *Fugla heiti* ('Birds' Names'), which does not, strictly speaking, give a list of poetic synonyms for birds, but rather lists different types of birds.

Most other genres that are drawn on in this thesis have less sustained engagement with birds but are nonetheless notable. The modern generic classifications imposed upon Old Norse literature as a rule map onto specific times and places, and these tend to inform approaches to birds in these texts. More 'fantastical' genres tend to engage with birds in a more symbolic manner. *Fornaldarsögur* take place in pre-Icelandic-settlement Scandinavia and concern the ancestors of Icelanders, and they tend to include birds that were engaged with on more symbolic levels, such as ravens and eagles. *Riddarasögur*, prose narratives concerning knights, may take place in Europe or Western Asia, and their chronology is loose but often said to be contemporary with King Arthur. They similarly tend to employ birds in more symbolic ways, although the genre's investment in nobility and chivalry means that noble practices involving birds, such as falconry, are disproportionately represented compared to other interactions with birds.

Texts set in more contemporary time periods tend to be more concerned with the real-life relationships between birds and humans. *Konungasögur* are concerned with the rulers of Norway, and to some extent Denmark and Orkney, from the Viking Age to the 1300s, and occasionally these texts will deal with rulers' journeys into Europe and the Middle East. Again, they tend to portray the relationships between birds and aristocrats, although occasionally mythological or fantastic tales were incorporated into these texts. *Íslendingasögur* and *samtíðarsögur* both focus upon Icelanders, with *Íslendingasögur* recounting the history of the generations immediately preceding and following the settlement of Iceland and occasionally following some characters to more peripheral locations such as Greenland, Norway, the British Isles, and the Middle East; and *samtíðarsögur* recording the

dealings of prominent Icelandic families in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Along with law codes, these two genres are more concerned with the day-to-day interactions of humans and birds. There are of course borderline cases and texts that occupy multiple genres, as well as sagas with unusual settings.<sup>14</sup>

Poetic genres, meanwhile, use birds in a less concrete manner. While skaldic verse quoted within sagas or other texts often relegates birds to little more than ornaments, the vocabulary used in kennings for birds can reveal more about how birds were perceived and understood by speakers of Old Norse. Meanwhile, eddic poetry, here defined as anonymous poems that deal with legendary and mythological subjects, likewise engages with birds in more symbolic and imaginative ways. Yet all of these symbolic engagements can still reflect real life attitudes toward and observations of birds.

Legendary and mythological texts, while recorded in Christianised contexts, are often thought to incorporate elements of pre-Christian beliefs and/or secular folklore. While this may be true, these texts are always at a remove from pre-Christian Scandinavia, and so should be interpreted as representations of an idea of paganism, rather than necessarily reflecting ‘authentic’ beliefs and practices. As a general rule, texts that deal with the distant past, especially *fornaldarsögur*, do not relay the attitudes and events from the time period they claim to relate so much as medieval attitudes toward the past, and frequently toward the present, even if they also contain older motifs and narratives as well.

### **1.5.2 Archaeology**

While literary depictions of birds often were and still are at least partially based in real-life observations of birds, it is unavoidable that most medieval depictions of birds were framed by writers’ agendas. Therefore I also engage with archaeological sources in this thesis. The majority of these sources are reports from excavations in Scandinavia, Iceland, the Faroes, the Orkneys, and the far north of Scotland. Comparative materials from elsewhere in Britain are also examined. In cases such as Sweden and the North Atlantic islands, this is a way of filling in gaps as there are few textual sources from these regions that specifically deal with birds. There are further reasons for employing a wider geographical scope. In areas of England that were settled by Scandinavians, a diachronic approach can be employed to see if there were significant changes to the rearing, hunting, and/or general consumption of birds

---

<sup>13</sup> See Clunies Ross, *Cambridge Introduction*, pp. 72–3.

<sup>14</sup> Rowe, pp. 539–44.

pre- and post-Scandinavian settlement. Such a perspective can also help to establish whether patterns of bird-use were primarily utilitarian or cultural in nature.

The use of zooarchaeological sources requires a degree of specialist vocabulary. Number of identified specimens (NISP) refers to the number of skeletal elements found, even if they are fragmentary. Minimum number of individuals (MNI), meanwhile, refers to the minimum number of animals that could account for all the skeletal elements in a find.<sup>15</sup> The term ‘long bones’ refers to the leg and wing bones of a bird. ‘Taphonomy’ is, according to R. L. Lyman’s introduction to the subject, ‘the study of the transition, in all details, of organics from the biosphere into the lithosphere or geological record.’<sup>16</sup> Taphonomic considerations are important, as the remains of organisms are not simply absorbed into the ground after an organism’s death. For example, a bird’s bones may exhibit teeth marks, suggesting it was eaten by a human or non-human animal, or tool marks (also called ‘cut marks’), which could suggest human consumption and/or the use of a bird’s carcass in crafting something.<sup>17</sup>

Bird bones also have taphonomic concerns of their own. Although bird bones may be structurally denser and harder than mammal bones, they are also very small, and so without bulk sieving using a mesh 5mm or smaller, many bird bones are not detected in archaeological digs.<sup>18</sup> The taphonomic effects of bird bones being hollow were historically viewed as a hindering factor in the preservation of bird bones, although current research indicates that bird bones may survive better than mammal bones in the initial stages of weathering, but mammal bones survive better in the later stages of weathering.<sup>19</sup> This is the case in many climates, although arguments have been made by Gardner et al. that warm, humid climates are better for avian bone preservation than cold, dry ones.<sup>20</sup> Factors such as soil pH and protection from weather and solar radiation also play a role in bone preservation.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while bird bones may be more likely to survive than mammal bones under certain conditions, their small size and tendency to fragment mean that in many excavations they were lost or overlooked in the zoological record, particularly in older excavations where sieving with a <5mm mesh was not yet a common practice.

---

<sup>15</sup> Lyman, *Quantitative Paleozoology*, pp. 27, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Lyman, *Vertebrate Taphonomy*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Serjeantson, *Birds*, p. 99.

<sup>18</sup> Serjeantson, ‘Food and a Mark of Status’, p. 133. For a thorough overview of the features of bird bones, their taphonomic effects, and human-made vs. non-human-made marks on bird bones, see Higgins, pp. 1450–54.

<sup>19</sup> Gardner et al., p. 178; Behrensmeyer et al., pp. 56–9; Bochenski et al., p. 865; Serjeantson, *Birds*, pp. 105–15.

<sup>20</sup> Gardner et al., pp. 194–96.

<sup>21</sup> Bochenski et al., pp. 860–61, 865.

Another term that is common in archaeology is ancient DNA, typically abbreviated to aDNA. As the name suggests, aDNA research extracts, manipulates, and analyses the DNA found in the remains of once-living creatures. While it is not used frequently on avian remains from medieval Scandinavia, aDNA analysis can provide useful information, for example in differentiating wild and domestic subspecies of birds where the subspecies are not consistently identifiable through osteological analysis (the study of the size and shape of bones) alone. However, aDNA studies are still of limited use as very little DNA survives posthumously, and so studies typically need to incorporate more conventional methods such as osteological analysis.<sup>22</sup>

### **1.6 A Note on Ornithological Orthography and Terminology**

In keeping with the guidelines set by the International Ornithologists' Union and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the first mention of a species will provide its common name in English and its Latin binomial name, with the common name used thereafter, and common names will be capitalised.<sup>23</sup> Due to the large number of bird names in *Fugla heiti* (§2.3), 'first mention' here does not count mentions in the translation of *Fugla heiti*. In addition to this, the common names of species will be capitalised, whereas generic names for a type of birds will be rendered in lower case. For example: The White-Tailed Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) is a species of eagle found in Northern Europe and Asia that is thought to have been prominent in Old Norse literature (§6.4.1). In some cases, a bird will have multiple common names. The most prominent example in this thesis is the Domestic Fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), also referred to as the chicken. While Domestic Fowl is often favoured in scientific literature, 'chicken' will be used here as it is more recognisable to a wider readership.

### **1.7 Human-Animal Studies and Other Theoretical Considerations**

The theoretical framework that informs this dissertation is Human-Animal Studies (HAS). Human-Animal Studies is a cross-disciplinary approach that seeks to analyse how humans and animals exist alongside one another and exert mutual influence upon one another. Rather than viewing humans as the only *subject* of research, with animals relegated to being *objects* of study, Human-Animal Studies investigates non-human animal subjecthood and agency, as

---

<sup>22</sup> Shapiro, pp. 477–78.

<sup>23</sup> See ZSL, 'Author Guidelines' §Conventions <<https://zslpublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/14697998/author-guidelines>> [Accessed 25th July 2018]; IOC World Bird List, 'Capitalization' <<http://www.worldbirdnames.org/english-names/spelling-rules/capitalization>> [Accessed 3rd September 2018].

well as the ways that humans have co-existed with, controlled, and represented non-human animals.<sup>24</sup> This approach is part of a wider scholarly movement that has been termed the ‘animal turn,’ and which includes Human-Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, and to some degree Posthumanism, although the latter predates the animal turn.<sup>25</sup> While the field is commonly claimed to be rooted in the thought of figures such as Jacques Derrida, many of its approaches and ethical concerns are far more indebted to ecofeminism, an erasure that reflects wider issues concerning the treatment of women and other marginalised groups within academia.<sup>26</sup> The categorisation of marginalised persons as pseudo-, less-than-, or even non-human (see §7.2.3) is important to note in this respect, and Human-Animal Studies is in need of remaining aware of wider scholarly and activist work centred around marginalised groups.

While Human-Animal Studies is more concerned with the human than most other strains of the animal turn, it takes its cues from Critical Animal Studies in recognising that the ‘human’ relies upon the ‘animal’ to exist: humans have historically relied upon animals for food, materials, and labour, and the very concept of the human depends upon its being contrasted with the concept of the non-human animal.<sup>27</sup> While this thesis relies upon textual sources created by humans and therefore centres the human subject, the ways that birds shaped not only art but the history of humans in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic will be explored. Similarly, this thesis takes its cues from posthumanism in acknowledging forms of personhood, here defined as the state of being or being perceived to be a cohesive, identifiable entity with a life history and protections based on its perceived personhood,<sup>28</sup> beyond the traditional humanist subject.

While Human-Animal Studies is a rich and growing field, the majority of work undertaken has focused upon the relationships between human and non-human animals in present-day Western Europe and the USA. Kristina Jennbert has noted this, commenting that ‘[t]he human-animal research field needs to incorporate a sense of the past and of other cultural norms and values.’<sup>29</sup> This is starting to change: Jennbert has published a monograph

---

<sup>24</sup> Marvin and McHugh, pp. 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfe, pp. 1–3. For a history of posthumanism, see Ferrando, pp. 26–7, 29–30.

<sup>26</sup> Discussed in Fraiman; Probyn-Rabsey et al.

<sup>27</sup> Steel, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> This definition of personhood relies upon OED Online, s.v. ‘person’, §II.2.c, ‘an individual regarded as having human rights, dignity, or worth’, and §II.5, ‘a conscious or rational being’

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141476#eid30948551>> [Accessed 25th June 2018]. For other forms of personhood, see §5.4 and Appell-Warren, pp. 168–96.

<sup>29</sup> Jennbert, ‘Certain Humans, Certain Animals’, p. 183.



on the subject of animals in Old Norse pre-Christian religion, and Bo Jensen has also published a well-constructed article on the chronological and geographical specificities of Old Norse attitudes to animals and their relationship with mythology and belief systems.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to scholars who specifically look at Old Norse culture, there have been many methodologically and theoretically significant publications concerning animals and humans in the medieval period. One of the early monographs in the medieval studies ‘animal turn’ was Joyce E. Salisbury’s *The Beast Inside*, which considers the ways that non-human animals were used to construct the human in medieval western Europe. Since then, Susan Crane’s *Animal Encounters* has taken an explicitly HAS approach to medieval England, while Karl Steel’s *How to Make A Human* is more international in scope and incorporates biopolitical considerations. While these publications have different focuses, they tend to share a common aim: to synthesise a discussion of medieval animal symbolism with analyses of the real-world relations between humans and non-human animals.

Many twentieth-century studies on animals in medieval culture focus upon the symbolic power of animals in medieval art and literature. For instance, Francis Kingender’s 1971 monograph *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages* attributes Germanic animal art to the borrowing of Scytho-Sarmatian and Roman art, which was infused with Germanic religious symbolism.<sup>31</sup> When it comes to discussing birds specifically, earlier scholars were likewise quite dismissive of the idea that medieval people had any interest in animals, particularly birds, beyond their use in symbolism. Beryl Rowland, for instance, has argued that medieval writers were interested ‘not, of course, with birds as they are in nature but as they exist in the mind,’ and Roberta Frank has similarly argued that in skaldic verse, ‘it is never the bird that gives the thought; it is the thought that produces the bird.’<sup>32</sup> Symbolic representations and interpretations of animals were widespread in medieval Europe and were a vitally important part of many cultures in the Middle Ages, and can provide insight into aspects of culture from exegesis to humour, as well as being a window into how many people in medieval Europe thought about animals, and how they drew divisions between human and animal.

However, on the other hand, to see medieval animals only as human symbols is to strip them of any power they may have had, and to impoverish present-day understandings of how

---

<sup>30</sup> Jennbert, *Animals and Humans*; B. Jensen, pp. 208–21.

<sup>31</sup> Kingender, pp. 103–41.

<sup>32</sup> Rowland, p. viii; R. Frank, ‘Ornithology’, p. 83.

we, as humans in the world, exist in symbiosis with every living and non-living thing on this planet. In her monograph on animals in early Christianity, Laura Hobgood-Oster outlines this issue:

Central to my thesis is the idea that reading animals as only and always symbol is escapist and serves to reinforce human superiority and dominance. Animals, as real in history and in body, can be denied reality as fully living beings because they can be relegated to the powerful but disempowering category of symbol.<sup>33</sup>

The contradiction in ‘powerful but disempowering’ symbols is important: on the one hand, animal symbols were powerful and had both spreading and staying power. Yet to only acknowledge the symbol disempowers the animal behind it. The animal neither created nor disseminated the symbol. In bestiary literature especially, the animal’s presence is not acknowledged beyond a likeness or a few sentences describing its supposed behaviour and the meaning of this behaviour as it pertains to human conduct. At no point is animal agency addressed. At no point are the many effects that animals’ presence and absence have upon humans addressed. Thus, to treat animals as pure symbol is, in many ways, to pretend that animals do not exist beyond the human imagination.

To take the position that medieval people were not concerned with the animals around them is not only to dismiss a body of evidence concerning human-animal relationships as unimportant or irrelevant, but it does a disservice to medieval people by playing into the idea that they were too superstitious to engage with the world around them. As this thesis will argue, such a position is untenable: while animal symbolism was indeed immensely important when it came to the position of birds in medieval Scandinavia, such symbolism was frequently influenced by the behaviour of real birds.

## **1.8 Overview and Rationale Behind the Thesis Structure**

My initial research interest was in birds that had, or are perceived by scholars as having had, significant literary and/or pre-Christian religious significance: eagles, ravens, and swans. However, as my PhD research progressed, it became clear that there was comparatively little evidence for human interaction with ravens, eagles, and swans beyond observation and practical matters such as occasionally killing the predatory birds to protect livestock (§6). Thus, in order to better investigate the relationships between material human-bird interaction,

---

<sup>33</sup> Hobgood-Oster, p. 15.

human-bird coexistence, and human representations of birds, the research focus was expanded to include domesticated birds such as geese and chickens (§3). A preceding research project of mine on the gold bracteates of the Migration Period<sup>34</sup> had also highlighted the importance of falconry (§5) in human-animal relationships from as early as the Vendel Period in some parts of Sweden. My work on establishing the literary corpus concerning birds also highlighted the scarcity of many birds in textual sources, as well as the comparative lack of philological work done on Old Norse names for birds compared to that on cognate languages. As such, the first chapter (§2) is devoted to a discussion of the sources for Old Norse bird names, and how these sources can be used to create ‘folk taxonomies’ of birds, as well as other ways of investigating how birds were categorised and differentiated in Old Norse-speaking communities.

### **1.8.1 The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis falls into three main sections: Part I is comprised of this introduction and a chapter on the vocabulary and taxonomy of birds in Old Norse, as modelled from the textual corpus. This first chapter not only looks at which birds were written about in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland, but also looks at how they were grouped together, and how they were spoken about. It also determines which birds were ‘culturally salient,’ i.e. which birds were considered important, by determining which birds were mentioned the most and/or used to name other birds, based on perceived similarities.

Part II of this thesis presents a series of case studies on particular categories and species of birds. These are arranged as three sub-sections: Subsistence and Proximity, Falconry, and Birds and Symbolism. Subsistence and Proximity deals with chickens and the domestic subspecies of goose (§3), as well as the wildfowl of Scandinavia and the North Atlantic (§4). These birds have been grouped together as while they do not have the literary and iconographic prominence of some of the other species of bird discussed in this thesis, they constitute the majority of zooarchaeological finds in human settlements. Thus, they form a significant portion of what is known about human-bird interactions for the Norse-speaking peoples.

Falconry forms its own section, as while it is a form of hunting, it served as a status symbol rather than as a form of subsistence hunting. While the remains of hawks and falcons are quite frequently found in human settlements, particularly elite or trade settlements, these

---

<sup>34</sup> Undertaken at the Department of the Study of Religion, Aarhus University, September–December 2017.

birds also feature in literature and visual art to a greater extent than geese, chickens, or wildfowl. Thus, they form a kind of midpoint in the material and in the imaginative relationships that the Norse peoples had with birds. The close relationship that humans had with hawks and falcons, as a result of the training process needed to produce a successful hunting bird, is arguably remarkable in human-bird relationships both then and now, and as such falconry requires discussion as a distinct human-bird phenomenon.

Birds and Symbolism looks at birds that are typically more prominent in literature and iconography than they are in the zooarchaeological records of settlements. These birds are ravens, eagles, and swans. Both ravens and, to a lesser extent, eagles, are prominent in the mythological texts that describe the mythology of the Norse-speaking peoples, and both birds are used in poetry and prose to indicate battle and death. Due to this prominence in myth and literature, eagles and ravens are perhaps the birds most associated with ‘the Vikings’ in popular culture, and this chapter seeks to investigate where the material and imagined relationships between humans, eagles, and ravens fed into one another, and where they differed. Swans are slightly anomalous, as they were not afforded quite the same level of prominence in mythology as the former two birds. However, they do appear multiple times in texts and in often quite diverse contexts.

Part III of this thesis looks at two ways that the human imagination responded to sharing a world populated with birds: human-bird transformation, and human-bird communication. While these phenomena occur on a primarily imaginative level, they were connected not only to bird behaviour, but to shifting ideas of what was and was not human in medieval Iceland.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

Overall, this thesis does not seek to produce a singular, cohesive reading of birds in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland, primarily because such a simplistic interpretation is not feasible – then, as now, birds perform a variety of cultural roles, from the mundane to the symbolic. Instead, it presents a series of case studies concerning how birds were understood, how they were interacted with, and how they were represented by humans. In doing so, I hope to create a nuanced and wide-ranging discussion of sources and ideas that have previously been overlooked. Human-bird relationships in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and Iceland were as complex as they are in the present day, and just as rich with symbolism and ornithological understanding, points I will return to in §8.

## 2. Old Norse Avian Terminology and Taxonomies

### 2.1 Introduction

One of the aims of this thesis is to deepen present-day understanding of how Old Norse peoples perceived and understood birds. As such, this chapter will take an ethno-ornithological approach to Old Norse sources that mention birds. Ethno-ornithology, also known as folk ornithology, pertains to local, indigenous, and/or traditional forms of knowledge concerning birds. In their introduction to ethno-ornithology, Tidemann et al. describe it as follows:

[Ethno-ornithology is] more than ornithology or just “the study of” birds in cultures [...] it refers broadly to the complex of inter-relationships between birds, humans and all other living and non-living things, whether in terrestrial or extra-terrestrial spheres or in body or in spirit.<sup>35</sup>

To illustrate this difference in practical terms, while ornithology in present-day Western science, is defined as research of the ‘ecology, population biology, behaviour, functional morphology, physiology, speciation, phylogeny, migration and orientation of birds.’<sup>36</sup> Ethno-ornithology as Tidemann et al. define it encompasses ‘[p]ortrayals of birds through art, patterns of utilization, language, life from creation to death, bearers of messages and interactions in everyday life,’ among other bird-related matters.<sup>37</sup> As such, ethno-ornithology has considerable overlap with Human-Animal Studies and the wider ‘animal turn’ in scholarship, as all three are concerned with the enmeshing of human and non-human animal that takes place in spaces – both material and imaginative – where humans and animals coexist.

One of the issues faced by ethno-ornithology and other branches of ethnoscience, such as ethnozoology and ethnomedicine, is the history of colonial thought that underpins them. When ethnozoology was first coined, it was defined as ‘zoology of [a] region as recounted by the savage.’<sup>38</sup> While colonialism and white supremacy are not always so explicit in present-day discussions of ethnoscience, this does not mean that they are no longer present in the field. Ornithology as a discipline is currently debating the renaming of birds with names derived from racist or colonialist terminology, and those named after people who

---

<sup>35</sup> Tidemann et al., p. 5

<sup>36</sup> Haffer, p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> Tidemann et al., p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Mason, p. 50.

were involved in colonialism and the slave trade.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Tidemann et al. note that '[t]he terms *legends, fables, tales, myths* and *stories* are frequently used for indigenous knowledge, but not always in a way that engenders respect or an understanding of the place of birds in cultures.'<sup>40</sup> As such, discussions of ethno-ornithology, folk ornithology, and what constitutes ethnoscience need to be conducted with such matters in mind.

The question of whether medieval knowledge of birds and vernacular taxonomies of birds constitute 'ethno-ornithology' is also one that requires consideration. On the one hand, medieval knowledge-systems, whether operating at a 'folk' or learned level, are very different to those of present-day Western science, and have often been portrayed as superstitious and primitive in comparison to both antiquity and modernity.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, to argue that the colonial structures of oppression that have worked to belittle indigenous knowledge systems precisely mirror the dismissal of medieval knowledge-systems would be inaccurate and risks re-labelling Indigenous Knowledge Systems (also referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Native Science) as a 'backward' Other in relation to Western scientific discourses.<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I am using 'ethno-ornithology' and related terms in so far as they are useful language to frame discussions of knowledge-systems that exist outside of/parallel to present-day Western science and encode large amounts of specialised information about humans, birds, and the world at large.

In his work on Nage ethno-ornithology, Gregory Forth identified two ways in which birds can be central or peripheral within traditional knowledge-systems. They may be 'ethno-taxonomically central,' meaning that they are used to group and order other birds into categories and subcategories based upon appearance, behaviour, and other observable features; and they may be 'symbolically central,' meaning that they hold symbolic significance and may therefore be placed in symbolic categories as well as their taxonomic categories.<sup>43</sup> The two axes of centrality/peripherality are not mutually exclusive. A bird may be both ethnotaxonomically central and symbolically central, central on one axis and peripheral on another, or peripheral on both.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Bird Names for Birds* <<https://birdsnamesforbirds.wordpress.com>> [Accessed 28th September 2020]; Driver and Bond.

<sup>40</sup> Tidemann et al., p. 5. Italics in original.

<sup>41</sup> Shank and Lindberg, pp. 1–5.

<sup>42</sup> Agrawal, pp. 420–27; Cajete, pp. 15–26.

<sup>43</sup> Forth, p. 142.

The term ‘ethnotaxonomy’ in Forth’s article refers to a specific branch of ethnoscience, which is also called ‘folk taxonomy.’ The modelling of ethnotaxonomies is a useful tool, as it not only grants insight into the entities within a culturally-specific knowledge-system, but the categories and hierarchies that are used to define and distinguish these entities. Old Norse sources concerning birds are sparse and frequently quite brief in nature, meaning that extensive ethno-ornithological discussion is very difficult in many cases, but the appearance of Old Norse bird names in and as of themselves means that some ethnotaxonomic modelling is possible.

## 2.2 Introducing Ethnotaxonomies and Folk Taxonomies

As defined in the biological sciences, ‘taxonomy’ is ‘the study of the theory, practice, and rules of classification of living and extinct organisms.’<sup>44</sup> The taxonomic system used in present-day biological science is arranged by investigating the physical characteristics of individual beings and using taxonomic concepts such as homology (shared ancestry), parallelism (parallel evolution), primitiveness (resemblance to earlier evolutionary steps) and specialisation (adaptation to a particular environment) to infer evolutionary patterns and relationships.<sup>45</sup> The hierarchies run as follows: the highest category is kingdom, which is split into phyla. These are then split into multiple classes, each of which is formed of multiple orders, and so on through family, genus, species, and subspecies.<sup>46</sup> Linnaean binomials give the genus and species of an organism. This hierarchy is illustrated in Figure 1, where the taxonomic place of the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) is given, including two of its subspecies: *varius*, which is found in Iceland, and *tibetanus*, which is found in the Himalayas.

---

<sup>44</sup> Hine, s.v. ‘Taxonomy’.

<sup>45</sup> Scott–Ram, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup> Linnaeus, p. 6; Martin, s.v. ‘Taxonomy’.

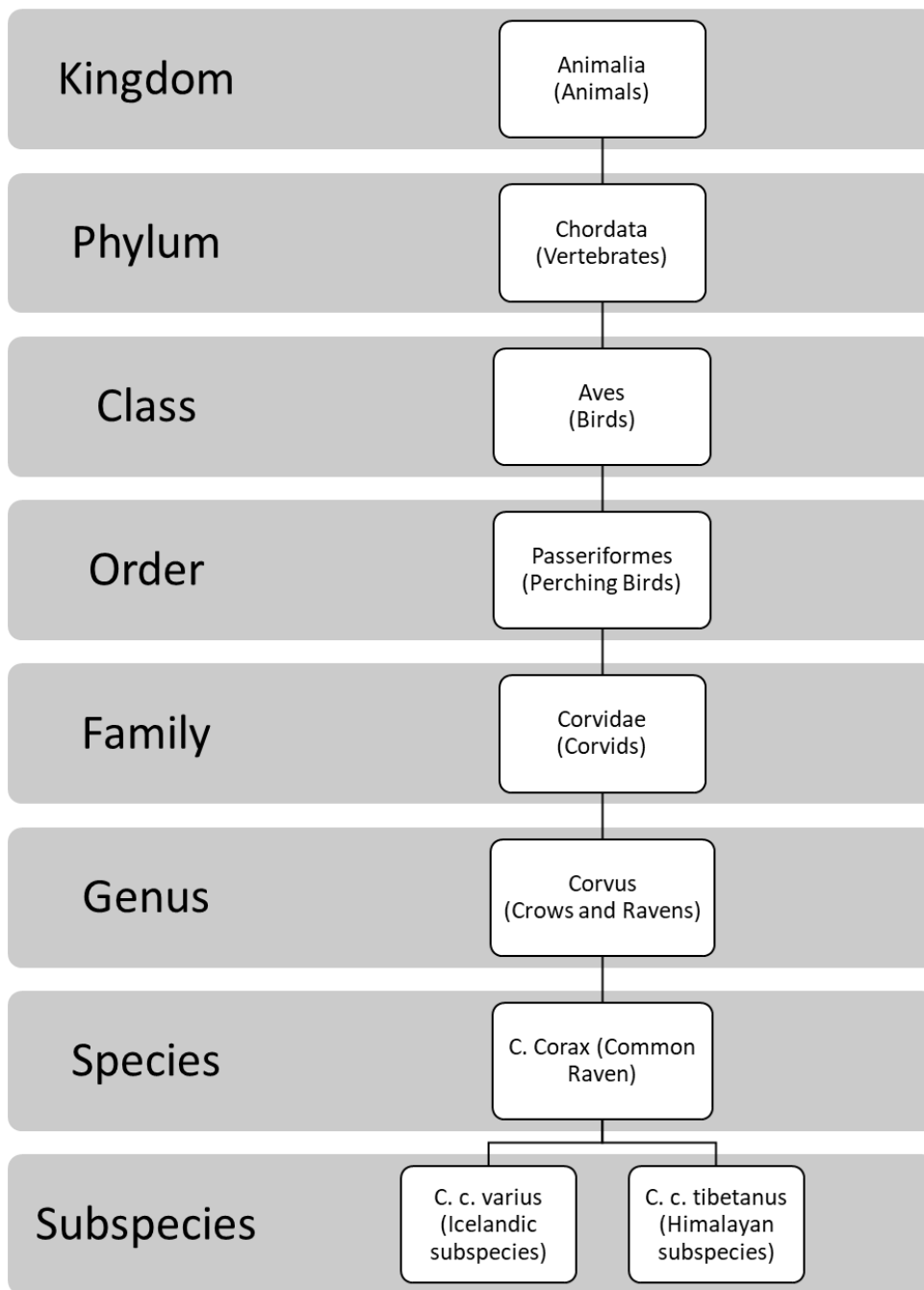


Figure 1: Taxonomic position of the Common Raven

While the Linnaean binomial taxonomic system has many uses, its use in scientific discourses has caused it to be perceived as a kind of natural order. However, as Susan Crane points out, it is ‘post natural,’ meaning that it has been artificially imposed upon the world by humans in order to make sense of it, rather than arising from the essential nature of the world.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Linnaeus’ original taxonomic scheme was heavily influenced by his wish to find a divine ordering principle in nature: its very existence was culturally contingent on

<sup>47</sup> Crane, p. 73.



Linnaeus' Christian beliefs.<sup>48</sup> While the binomial taxonomic system initially started as a static conception of the world as divinely ordained, it has since been adapted to accommodate the Theory of Evolution and other developments in biological and ecological sciences, such as cladistics, a method of grouping living beings through shared ancestry.<sup>49</sup> Thus, while the Linnaean taxonomic system may be positioned as an objective system by some media, it has been shaped by the cultural attitudes of Europe from the eighteenth century onwards.

Furthermore, while the Linnaean taxonomic system has been influenced by Western religious and scientific culture on a general scale, it lacks information regarding an animal's significance in a given local culture that may be provided by vernacular or dialectical names. For such culturally-specific information, a researcher can use folk taxonomies. As defined by Earl R. Anderson in his monograph on folk taxonomies in Old and Middle English, a folk taxonomy is 'a hierarchical semantic system that lexicalises a domain in human experience or in nature.'<sup>50</sup> In other words, a folk taxonomy consists of the names given to entities and/or concepts within a given language, as well as the organisational principles that turn these words from a collection of words into a structured system of interrelated groups, sub-groups, and individuals.

Such patterns of thought appear to be a near-universal cognitive phenomenon in humans, something that Anderson as well as others have suggested may be 'a strategy for imposing order on an array of experiences and sense impressions that otherwise would seem infinite and impossible to process cognitively.'<sup>51</sup> In addition to this, cognitive studies into the linguistic and iconographic representation of animals illustrate that while morphological differences may underpin many folk taxonomies, cross-hierarchical categories can also group animals together in culturally-specific ways that go beyond 'folk biology' in the strictest sense.<sup>52</sup> This idea loosely tessellates with the ethnotaxonomic and symbolic positioning of terms discussed by Forth,<sup>53</sup> as a term may belong to a folk-biological ethnotaxonomic classification, as well as other folk taxonomic categories that possess more symbolic significance.

---

<sup>48</sup> Raven et al., p. 1211. See also Linnaeus, pp. 1–7.

<sup>49</sup> See Panchen, pp. 109–31; Egerton, pp. 80–4, 130–35.

<sup>50</sup> Anderson, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> VanPool and VanPool, pp. 529–54.

<sup>53</sup> See above, §2.1.

A folk taxonomy is in no way a primitive or failed attempt at scientific classification. Anderson tries to avoid unfavourable comparisons between folk and Linnaean taxonomies, stating that '[t]o regard folk-taxonomy as protoscience is to misunderstand its linguistic nature. In those cultures that have developed scientific traditions, folk-taxonomies coexist with scientific taxonomies in language, with little influence of one on the other.'<sup>54</sup> However, this is not a position held by other scholars who work with folk taxonomies. Eric Lacey argues that while Anderson's statement contains a degree of truth, 'folk-taxonomy is a protoscientific classification: it is categorisation based on the identification of observed characteristics.'<sup>55</sup> Other researchers who conduct ethnographic work concerning folk biology and ethnozoology have observed that while there are differences in how cultures classify the animals they encounter, the divisions within folk taxonomies often have a high level of compatibility with Linnaean taxonomies, suggesting not only a cognitive tendency toward classification among humans, but also a rigorous engagement with and observation of the natural world.<sup>56</sup> Thus, while to call folk taxonomy a 'protoscience' invites unfavourable comparisons with scientific disciplines, folk taxonomy and science share many methods, aims, and outcomes as they are used to organise and comprehend the world as it is experienced.

To create a cross-cultural framework for modelling folk taxonomies, scholars have produced sets of standardised taxonomic levels, which provide generalised hierarchical principles that categories and entities can be slotted into. The folk taxonomic structure proposed by Berlin et al. and used by Anderson runs as follows: at Level 0 there is the *taxonym* or *unique beginner*, which is the broadest and most basic category. The next step is Level I categories, based upon 'natural' discontinuities in the characteristics of the members of the Level 0 taxonym. These are sometimes called 'life forms.' Level Ia 'functional' categories may exist and are a subdivision of the Level I group based upon the culture of the people creating the taxonomy. For instance, 'game birds' and 'domestic birds' can be considered Level Ia functional categories of bird based upon their culinary use and level of domestication. Level II species categories are again based upon perceived differences within Level I groups. These frequently map on to Linnaean taxonomy, although this is not always the case. Level II terms are usually referred to as 'folk generics,' and are the most common

---

<sup>54</sup> Anderson., p. 54

<sup>55</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', p. 32.

<sup>56</sup> See Hunn, 'Ethnozoology', pp. 83–4.

and generally-recognised terms. Related to Level I and II taxons is the ‘basic term.’ A basic term is one that is relatively common in a language, and which is morphologically modified to produce more terms.<sup>57</sup> A basic term is frequently monolexemic and cannot be separated into smaller, component pieces, although this is not always the case.<sup>58</sup> Basic terms are useful as they help illustrate certain focal points in perception and categorisation; i.e. things which have ethnotaxonomic and/or symbolic significance.<sup>59</sup>

Level III categories refer to more specialised divisions within folk generics, and are sometimes called ‘folk species’ or ‘folk specifics.’ Finally, there are Level IV categories, or ‘folk varietals,’ which refer to highly-specific identifiers that are often limited in their use and their longevity beyond the immediate context of their creation.<sup>60</sup> In his discussion of folk taxonomies, Eric Lacey uses distinct species/subspecies such as Levant Sparrowhawk to illustrate Level IV,<sup>61</sup> but a slightly more apt example may be pedigree breeds in domestic animals. For example, ‘Balinese’, ‘Javanese’, and ‘Oriental Longhair’ are terms used in the Anglophone cat fancy to distinguish between visually- and genetically-similar kinds of domestic cat that are distinguished by whether or not their coat colour is considered a ‘traditional’ colour within the breed standard.<sup>62</sup> While these terms have immediate relevance in certain circles of cat breeders, the definitions and uses of the terms differ between breeders’ organisations, and they are largely meaningless in other contexts. Figure 2 illustrates a Modern English vernacular folk taxonomy that fits this framework.

---

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, pp. 31–2.

<sup>58</sup> Berlin et al., ‘General Principles’, p. 217.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Berlin et al., ‘General Principles’, p. 215; Anderson, pp. 21–5; Rea, pp. 32–3.

<sup>61</sup> Lacey, ‘Birds and Bird Lore’, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> CFA, ‘Balinese Point Score’ <<http://cfa.org/Portals/0/documents/breeds/standards/balinese.pdf>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]; GCCF, ‘Balinese (BAL)’, <<https://www.gccfcats.org/Portals/0/Balinese.SOP.Template.pdf?ver=2018-06-30-232414-717>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]; CFA, ‘Oriental Point Score’, <<http://cfa.org/Portals/0/documents/breeds/standards/oriental.pdf>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]; GCCF, ‘Oriental Longhair (OLH)’, <<https://www.gccfcats.org/Portals/0/Oriental.LH.SOP.Template.pdf?ver=2018-08-28-154300-277>> [Accessed 31st January 2019].

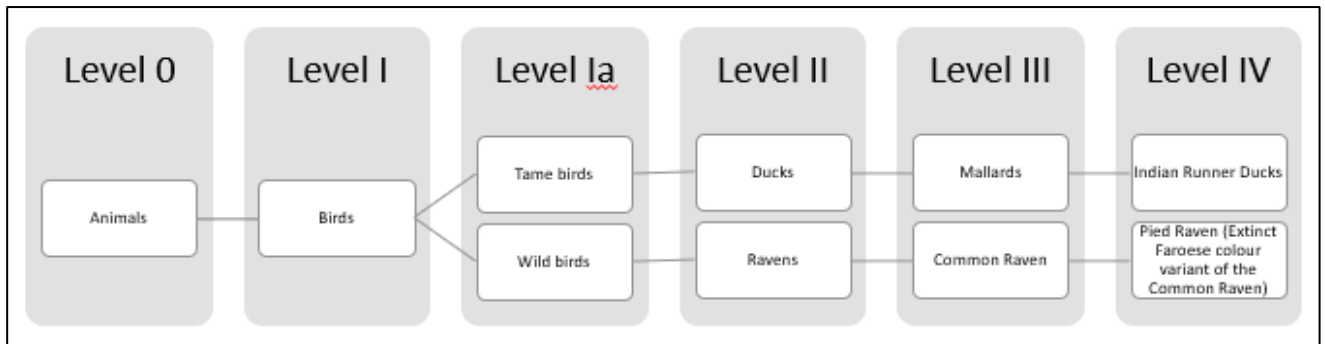


Figure 2: Vernacular Modern English folk taxonomy of duck and raven, after model proposed by Berlin et al.

### 2.2.1 Medieval Folk Taxonomies

When modelling folk taxonomies using living languages, researchers typically interview native speakers of the language to compile lists of terms and their meanings, which are then used to create the taxonomy.<sup>63</sup> For researchers working on languages with no living speakers, such as Old Norse, this is not an available option. However, this does not mean that it is impossible to model folk taxonomies for historical languages. When outlining his own methodology, Anderson provides seven ways scholars can try to approach a native speaker's understanding of terms:

- 1) Be aware of philological traditions of analysis when modelling historical folk taxonomies to avoid false etymologies;
- 2) Try to sort 'learned' and 'popular' texts, to see how these sociological divisions affect lexical choices;
- 3) Adopt and adapt encoding sequences based upon anthropological linguistics, meaning that the hierarchical structures of historical folk taxonomies should be made with awareness of those found in modern languages, although caution should be exercised to prevent distortion of the historical folk taxonomy;
- 4) Take relative frequency as an indicator of whether a term is 'basic', meaning a foundational element of a folk taxonomy lexicon. This is more a guideline than a rule, particularly when a folk taxonomy is based on a partial corpus;
- 5) Take into account the etymological past and future of words;
- 6) Use diagnostic morphological patterns to determine how basic a term is. For instance, if a word appears in compounds with modifiers, then the term is basic;

<sup>63</sup> Berlin et al., 'Folk Taxonomies', p. 273.

- 7) Use diagnostic texts. These are texts that contain a large amount of lexical data and/or can be used to narrow down the semantic field of a term.<sup>64</sup>

Even with these methodological considerations in place, a historical folk taxonomy will not be as complete as one made from a present-day living language as textual sources only record the names of things that people at the time considered worthy of being recorded.

Additionally, preservation of these records is far from complete due to the loss of sources over time, meaning that historical folk taxonomies are almost always created from incomplete data sets. Yet this does not prevent historical folk taxonomies from providing insight into the perceptions and understandings of a given group of entities in a historical culture.

Another issue that arises is that medieval bird names do not always map on to present-day bird species. In some instances, scholars have dismissed this as ‘the vagueness of early bird-watchers.’<sup>65</sup> However, as Lacey points out, these criticisms are anachronistic, and scholars should be careful not to assume that Linnaean taxonomy is the ‘more correct’ method of identifying living things.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, scholars such as Christine and Todd VanPool have pointed out that there is ‘no necessary conceptual difference between folk and Linnaean classifications,’ beyond the latter’s use in the biological sciences.<sup>67</sup> However, the fact remains that some historical terms are hard, if not impossible, to identify and what may be considered a species or folk generic in present-day Linnaean or Modern English folk taxonomies may not have been considered as such by somebody in medieval Scandinavia.

Many considerations may be behind the choice of name given to a bird. In her ethnographic article on the names of birds in Faroese ‘sea-language,’ Simone Kotva gives an overview of scholarly theories regarding why Faroese has multiple names for birds. One of the earlier and quite widely-accepted theories was that of William Burley Lockwood, who used James Frazer’s theories regarding connections between name and thing in certain societies, and argued that the multiple names of birds among Faroese fishermen was a practice to confuse or avoid summoning malignant entities, as they would not be able to make the connection between word and thing that speaking a being’s true name would allow.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, pp. 32–45.

<sup>65</sup> Goldsmith, p. 226.

<sup>66</sup> Lacey, ‘Birds and Bird-Lore’, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> VanPool and VanPool, p. 533.

<sup>68</sup> Lockwood, pp. 1–2; Frazer, p. 244. Discussed in Kotva, pp. 26–7.

However, Kotva's interviews with Faorese fishermen bring forth another possibility: rather than attributing the variety of names to superstitions, the name of a bird depends on the context of encountering it. Aksal Poulsen, one of Kotva's interviewees, states that 'Birds have different names depending on when they are seen, how old they are, where they are found. There is no correct name, only many names.'<sup>69</sup> Kotva herself notes that only one of her interviewees, one that was too young to have used sea-language as a living language, believed it was rooted solely in superstition. The others seem to link it to knowledge of birds, and to an appreciation of mental and verbal dexterity displayed in the renaming of birds.<sup>70</sup> She then links this sea-language to indirect signification in semiotics:

In semiotic terms, what makes the name *súlukongur* [lit. 'gannet-king'] similar to the female black-browed albatross is not a bird-shaped thought in the head of the viewer, but an experience (or "affection", to use the classical term) that coincides with the sighting of the bird. The significance of this gloss becomes evident in practical terms when we consider that *súlukongur* could not signify the albatross directly, because the name would not be generally applicable to all albatrosses. Nor does the name signify directly the particular female albatross that accompanied the gannets between 1860–1864, since in order to earn its name this bird depended on a context of gannets and would not have been called *súlukongur* if sighted when flying solo.<sup>71</sup>

There are some clear examples of such phenomena in Old Norse, particularly in the *heiti* and falconry vocabulary attached to hawks (§5). Other birds that did not live so close to humans also seem to have multiple names attributed to them (§9). These names may be contextual, superstitious, or dialectical, and unfortunately the names appear in too few sources to give a definitive answer. The important thing to take on board from Kotva's research is that rather than superstition or misunderstanding, there could be many complex factors at play behind folk names and folk taxonomies.

Although this chapter discusses folk taxonomies, the aim is not to create a comprehensive lexicon of Old Norse bird names. No such work exists yet, although as discussed in §1.4, philological works on Old English and German bird-names by Whitman, Kitson, and Suolahti all touch upon Old Norse cognates. None of these works are without

---

<sup>69</sup> Aksel Poulsen, quoted in Kotva, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Kotva, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

flaws, and Lacey's critical discussion highlights their usefulness, as well as tendencies to use philology as a way to dismiss or otherwise avoid addressing potential methodological issues.<sup>72</sup> While §9 provides a provisional lexicon of Old Norse bird names attested in medieval textual sources, my focus is on using folk taxonomies to understand how birds were perceived and understood in Old Norse cultures: what aspects were noticed by Norse peoples, and how they were identified, categorised, and placed into hierarchical systems. Thus, it is not only the names which need to be analysed, but the contexts in which these names are mentioned need to be analysed to find any further information regarding the ethnotaxonomic and/or symbolic positions of these birds in Old Norse thought.

### **2.3 *Fugla heiti*: An Old Norse Diagnostic Text**

As discussed in §1.3 and §1.6.1, the nature of the Old Norse written corpus means that the majority of textual sources are learned in nature, and furthermore, they largely come from Iceland and Norway. While literacy may have been more widespread in Iceland than it was elsewhere in Western Europe during the medieval period, the majority of those who could read and write still would have belonged to the clergy and/or the social elites.<sup>73</sup> Outside written sources in manuscripts, some runic inscriptions attest to bird-names, such attestations are few and far between, and the epigraphic nature of runic inscriptions mean that any mentions are often decontextualised, highly allusive and require considerable background knowledge to be interpreted.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the distinction between 'popular' and 'learned' inscriptions is difficult to ascertain. As such, this discussion will be restricted to manuscript sources and the assumption will be made that, unless there is substantial evidence to the contrary, the available sources are learned in nature,<sup>75</sup> but nonetheless they may have been grounded in popular perceptions of birds that were the basis for vernacular bird-names.

---

<sup>72</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird-Lore', pp. 38–9.

<sup>73</sup> For the comparatively widespread nature of literacy in medieval Iceland, see Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, pp. 155–62. For the argument that this would not have prevented the majority of manuscripts from being elite and/or clerical productions, see Louis-Jensen, pp. 477–81.

<sup>74</sup> Examples include the Viking Age Swedish inscription U Fv1912;8, which states that 'fann gauk á nás au[k]a' ('One saw the increase in the corpse's cuckoo'), which appears to be playing with the common [RAVEN/EAGLE] kenning, <bird> of <battle/corpses>. Another example is the early fourteenth-century inscription N 298 M from Hamre Kirke, Norway, which reads 'Illu vinnr dúfan þar hvolf óisk ok fugl þar teku þokr.' ('The dove resists evil there [where] it fears [the sky's] vault [HEAVEN], and the bird takes shelter there.') Both inscriptions rely upon contextual knowledge of skaldic verse and cultural/religious symbolism for their interpretation. Normalised Old Norse-Icelandic transcriptions and location/dating taken from *Rundata* (Scandinavian Runic-text Database) <<http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm>>.

<sup>75</sup> In the case of the poems of the Codex Regius, also known as the Poetic Edda, they are likely to have a long tradition of oral transmission, and probably were not originally learned texts. However, the context of their being recorded in manuscript form was probably that of learned antiquarianism, similar to that of the *Prose Edda*.

There are, unfortunately, no extant ornithological texts in Old Norse. However, this does not mean that there are no diagnostic texts for a lexicon of Old Norse bird names. One vital diagnostic text is a *pula* named *Fugla heiti* ('Birds' Names'). This text is found alongside other anonymous *pulur* in AM 748 I b 4to. As a genre, the *pula* can be defined as a metrical list of names, particularly *heiti* ('poetic synonyms'), and it is thought to have originated as a way for Old Norse poets to memorise and recall names, places, and important figures.<sup>76</sup> However, the anonymous *pulur* contain several Latin and Greek words, and scholarly consensus is that these particular *pulur* were the product of a learned twelfth-century Icelandic environment, even if some or most of the *heiti* they provide may have had their roots in oral traditions.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the *Anonymous pulur* contain a wide variety of lexical and conceptual information regarding their subjects.

As I will discuss at various points in this thesis, the *Anonymous pulur* that concern birds almost always contain at least some terms for their subjects that appear to be drawn from observation in life, commenting on aspects such as anatomy or behaviour. In addition to this, they also frequently contain terms that appear to be derived from mythology, foreign languages, or learned sources. This is particularly the case in the *pulur* for chickens (§3.2.4) and eagles (§6.4.4). There are likely to have been, therefore, a diverse range of scholarly practices at play behind the *Anonymous pulur*. While there may be an argument that mythologically-derived *heiti* may be older than the observational *heiti*, based on the theory that *pulur* were initially part of a ritual, it is hard to say with certainty that this was the case, especially given the lack of earlier recensions of any of the bird *pulur*. As such, it is best to view the *Anonymous pulur* as the product of a fourteenth-century milieu, even if the words that they contain may be much older. The process by which *heiti* were selected for the *Anonymous pulur* likewise seems to have varied, and may have been driven by the words and information available: *Hauks heiti* (§5.4.1) and *Hana heiti* (§3.2.4), for instance, seem to have a larger proportion of observed *heiti* than *Ara heiti* (§6.4.4), although if this represents a lack of data based upon the observed behaviour and appearance of wild eagles or an unusually large amount of mythological and literary data concerning eagles, or is simply a coincidence, is unclear.

---

<sup>76</sup> Clunies Ross, *A History*, p. 31.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9n7. However, Abram, 'Einarr Skúlason', pp. 56–61, claims that at least some of the anonymous *pulur* may postdate the work of Einarr Skúlason.



The *pulur* of the anonymous group, as well as others associated with the Prose Edda, have occasionally been called ‘taxonomic poems,’<sup>78</sup> and in the case of *Fugla heiti*, this is apt. *Fugla heiti* does not record *heiti* for birds in the strictest sense, but rather consists of a metrical list of different bird names.<sup>79</sup> Thus, it joins *Fiska heiti* (‘fishes’ names’), *Hvala heiti* (‘whales’ names’), and *Viðar heiti* (‘trees’ names’) as *pulur* that list types of entity within a category, rather than *heiti* in the conventional sense.<sup>80</sup> As Gurevich notes, while the *pula* as a form is most associated with skaldic *heiti*, many of them ‘must have been of little or no value to the skalds,’ as many of the *heiti* they record are not attested in any extant skaldic verse.<sup>81</sup> As such, these *heiti* may have been influenced by Latin encyclopaedic works as well as by traditional skaldic practices;<sup>82</sup> something supported by the Latin terms included in several of these *pulur*.

All the extant stanzas of *Fugla heiti* are preserved in AM 748 I b 4to, and the title *Fugla heiti* and the first four lines of the first stanza are found in AM 757 a 4to. While it is not preserved in *Laufás Edda*, *Fugla heiti* is found in another seventeenth-century paper manuscript made by Peder Hansen Resen.<sup>83</sup> Although the Resen Edda contains some Latin glosses, its readings frequently appear to be corrupt and therefore are of little use. Gurevich’s edition is as follows:

Gammr, grípr gaukþjórr, gaukr, sviplækja,  
grágás, heimgás, gagl ok helsingr,  
geirfugl, geitungr, gleða, doðrkvisa,  
ari, nagr, arta, ǫlpt, már ok haukr.

Óðinshani, alka, ǫnd, hrossagaukr,  
hrafn, hæns, himbrin, hryggjarstykki,  
heri, hani, hæna ok hilduri,  
úfr, valr, smyrill, ugla, skurfir.

<sup>78</sup> Hughes, p. 218.

<sup>79</sup> The word ‘type’ is used to refer to the different birds indicated by Old Norse terms in order to prevent confusion with the ‘species’ found in present-day biological taxonomies.

<sup>80</sup> *Fiska heiti* 1–4 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 852–7); *Hvala heiti* 1–2 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 857–60); *Viðar heiti* 1–3 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 880–84).

<sup>81</sup> Gurevich, ‘Anonymous *Pulur*’, p. 653. It must be noted that the extant corpus of skaldic verse is thought to be a small fragment of the total amount of skaldic compositions that have existed over time, and so lack of attestation does not necessarily indicate that a *heiti* was never used in composition.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Edda Islandorum*, §Fuglar, §Fugla heite kvennkiend, §Fugla heite kallkiend (ed. Faulkes).

Svorr, storkr, súla, svarr, skjór, sparrhaukr,  
stelkr, sporr, svala, steindelfr, spiki,  
skúfr, spói, sæðingr, skarfr ok svartbagr,  
skeglingr, skíði, skjöldungr, pái.

Kárn, igða, kjalarfugl, kráka, dúfa,  
þrøstr, þiðurr, þerna, þeisti, dunna,  
trana, tjaldr, titling, tyrðilmúli,  
lómr, lævirki ok leðrblaka.

Langvé, lundi, lóa, fjölmóði  
fýling, lóþræll, friggjarelda,  
rindilþvari, líri, rjúpa, fjallrota,  
jarpi, ertla ok jaðrakárn.

Akri, doðka, æðr ok nætingr,  
kreppingr, flóðskítr, kjarfilki, spætr,  
meisingr, ýfingr, mýrisnípa,  
rytr, hængivagr, rifanskinna.

Hrókr, gjóðr, hegri ok haftyrdill,  
brandgás, hroðgás, brimorri, már,  
sendlingr, skrýtingr, snæfugl, skári,  
vagr, valr, dúfa, vallófr, stari.<sup>84</sup>

(Vulture, griffin, wryneck, cuckoo, *sviplækja*, grey goose, Domestic Goose, gosling and Barnacle Goose, Great Auk, wasp, kite, *doðrkvisa*, eagle, *nagr*, teal, swan, seagull and hawk.

Red-necked Phalarope, auk, duck, snipe, raven, poultry, Great Northern Diver,  
*hryggjarstykki*, *heri*, rooster, hen and *hilduri*, eagle owl, falcon, merlin, owl, *skurfir*.

*Svorr*, stork, gannet, *svarr*, magpie, sparrowhawk, Redshank, sparrow, swallow,  
wheatear, *spiki*, skua, curlew, gull, cormorant and Great Black-backed Gull, [young]  
kittiwake, *skíði*, Shelduck, peacock.

---

<sup>84</sup> GFH 1–7, pp. 952–59. A full discussion of the translations provided by Gurevich and by Old Norse-English dictionaries, as well as later Icelandic vocabulary concerning birds and the interpretation of *hapax legomena* in this *pula* will be provided in §9.

*Kárn*, small songbird,<sup>85</sup> *kjalarfugl*, crow, dove, thrush, Capercaillie, tern, guillemot, duck, crane, Oystercatcher, sparrow, Razorbill, loon, lark and bat.

Guillemot, Puffin, Golden Plover, sandpiper, fulmar, dunlin, white wagtail, wren, shearwater, ptarmigan, *fjallrota*, Hazel Grouse, wagtail and whimbrel.

*Akri*, *doðka*, eider duck and *nætingr*, *kreppingur*, grebe, *kjarfilki*, woodpecker, (young) tit, young eagle owl, snipe, kittiwake, *hængivakr*, *rifanskinna*.

Shag, osprey, heron and Little Auk, Shelduck, Barnacle Goose, Velvet Scoter, gull, sandpiper, *skrýtingr*, Snow Bunting, young seagull, buzzard, falcon, dove, *vallófr*, starling.)

This is the most extensive list of birds found in the Old Norse corpus, although it is by no means exhaustive. Many birds mentioned here, particularly sea, shore, and wading birds, have no medieval attestation apart from *Fugla heiti*, or appear very rarely. However, they are mentioned in Early Modern Icelandic texts such as the late-sixteenth-century *Qualiscunque Descriptio Islandiae*, attributed to the bishop Oddur Einarsson.<sup>86</sup> These include *jaðraká[rn]*, *spói*, *lóa*, *lóþræll*, *hrossagaukr*, *Óðinshani*, *stelkur*, *himbrin*, *lómr*, *fjqlmóði*, *tjaldr*, *svartbakr*, *maríuertla*, *steindelfa*, *tíling*, *skarfr*, *rytr*, *fýlingr*, *langvé*, *álka*, *lundi*, *æðr*, *súla*, *haftýrðill*, and *skúmr*.<sup>87</sup>

Some of these birds, such as *lundi* ('Puffin,' *Fratercula arctica*), would have been useful sources of feathers and eggs (see §4.2). However, this practical utility and common appearance in everyday life did not always translate into symbolic or ethnotaxonomic centrality in the Old Norse worldview. However, the list of names found in *Fugla heiti* still provides a wealth of information and can be used to model the ethnotaxonomic positions of several types of bird. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this is the inclusion of *geitungr* ('wasp') and *leðrblaka* ('bat'), animals that would not be considered birds in Modern English or Linnaean taxonomies. The rest of this chapter will use *Fugla heiti* as a diagnostic text from which to build a discussion of Old Norse folk taxonomies.

---

<sup>85</sup> Possible translations of *igða* are discussed in §9.

<sup>86</sup> The attribution of this text is discussed in Jakob Benediktsson, 'Formáli', in *Íslandslýsing*, (ed. and transl. Sveinn Pálsson, pp. 8–12).

<sup>87</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, pp. 20–1; *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, pp. 49–51).

### 2.3.1 Basic Terms in *Fugla heiti*

Assuming *fugl* to be a Level I taxonomic term, there are several terms in *Fugla heiti* that appear to be Level II basic terms. These are *gás* ('goose'), *gaukr* ('cuckoo'), *haukr* ('hawk'), *erla* ('wagtail'), and *hani* ('rooster'). These terms are all monolexemic and morphologically generative in both this text and elsewhere in the corpus. As a general pattern in Old Norse, in bird names that are formed of two or more elements the last element is the most taxonomically significant. The other element(s) are, however, still significant and help to narrow down or modify the other parts of the name, and so will still be considered.

Perhaps the most immediately evident basic term is *gás* ('goose'). It appears as the last element in four bird-names in this *þula*: *grágás* ('grey goose'), *heimgás* ('Domestic Goose'), *brandgás* ('Shelduck,' *Tadorna tadorna*), and *hroðgás* ('Barnacle Goose,' *Branta leucopsis*). The taxonomising of Shelducks as geese in Old Norse folk taxonomy may appear incorrect by Modern English standards, but it may be related to their relatively large size compared to most European ducks, and the distinctive knob above the bill of an adult male Shelduck,<sup>88</sup> which could be seen to resemble the thicker bill of a goose, as opposed to the flatter bill of a duck. Thus, *gás* appears to refer to a medium-to-large bird with a long neck and webbed feet, similar but not necessarily identical to the Modern English goose. As will be discussed in §3.3, both wild and tame/domesticated geese were a commonplace aspect of medieval Icelandic life. This level of proximity and familiarity likely caused these birds to be ethnotaxonomically central in Old Norse-Icelandic thought.

Another term that appears ethnotaxonomically productive in *Fugla heiti* is *gaukr* ('cuckoo'). As well as on its own, it appears in *hrossagaukr* ('Common Snipe,' *Gallinago gallinago*, lit. 'horses' cuckoo') and *gaukþjórr* ('wryneck,' lit. 'cuckoo-bull'). *Gaukr* itself appears to be imitative in nature, and the association between *gaukr* and bird calls appears to have persisted beyond this initial stage, as Cleasby and Vigfússon and Gurevich agree that the *hrossagaukr* was named due to its 'neighing cry', although they believe it to be different species. Cleasby and Vigfússon state that it is a Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*), while

---

<sup>88</sup> Patterson, pp. 5–6 states that Shelducks are currently considered 'intermediate between true ducks and the geese.' This does not mean that the Norse taxonomic positioning of Shelducks as geese is any more or less correct than the Modern English categorisation of them as ducks, but it illustrates how cultures may pick up on different aspects of an indeterminate entity.

Gurevich identifies it as the Common Snipe.<sup>89</sup> As the Common Snipe is named for having a bleating or neighing cry in several other languages,<sup>90</sup> the latter is more likely.

*Gaukþjórr* may seem like an unusual name for a small bird, given the latter element -*þjórr* ('bull'). Gurevich's translation follows that of Heggstad et al, and is based on the Nynorsk word for the Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*), *gauksjor*.<sup>91</sup> The Modern Icelandic word for the Wryneck, *gauktíta*, retains the connection to cuckoos, but appears to group Wrynecks among Snipes, based on *títa* ('snipe').<sup>92</sup> While the -*þjórr* element of the Old Norse name remains enigmatic, both Welsh and English folk-names for the Wryneck, such as Cuckoo's Mate, Cuckoo's Messenger, and *Gwas-y-gog* ('cuckoo's knave'), all allude to the fact that Wrynecks usually arrive at the same time as, or slightly before, the Eurasian Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in spring.<sup>93</sup> As such, the *gauk*- element is perhaps not a strictly taxonomic connection, but rather a symbolic one.

The symbolic aspect of *gaukr* is preserved elsewhere in the Old Norse language. *Gaukr* also appears in terms such as *gaukmánuðr* ('April-May') and *gauk[s]messa* ('the 1st of May'), presumably because it was at this time of year that cuckoos were first heard.<sup>94</sup> The Eurasian Cuckoo is incredibly rare in Iceland, but are otherwise widespread throughout Europe, Britain, and Scandinavia.<sup>95</sup> However, the connection between *gaukr* and spring may have been preserved in Iceland as the arrival of the *hrossagaukr* was, at least in the nineteenth century if not earlier, often viewed as a herald of spring in Icelandic folk traditions, replacing the cuckoo's symbolic role in that respect.<sup>96</sup> Overall, while cuckoos were likely still known about in medieval Iceland, in terms of taxonomic and symbolic importance, it was their seasonal appearances and the possession of a distinctive cry that marked out the taxon of *gaukr* in Old Norse.

Another possible basic term that appears in this *pula* but does not seem to occur elsewhere in the Old Norse corpus is *erla*. Two variations appear in *Fugla heiti*: *ertla* and

---

<sup>89</sup> CV, s.v. 'hrossagaukr'; GFH, p. 953.

<sup>90</sup> Bahr, p. 12. The Common Snipe has many Icelandic folk-names, including *hneggsnípa* ('neigh-snipe'). See Sigurður Ægisson, p. 154

<sup>91</sup> GFH, p. 952; following Heggstad et al., s.v. 'gaukþjórr'.

<sup>92</sup> Bjarni Sæmundsson, p. 266.

<sup>93</sup> Swainson, p. 103.

<sup>94</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird-Lore', pp. 11-2.

<sup>95</sup> Bjarni Sæmundsson, p. 260; Beaman and Madge, p. 481.

<sup>96</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, pp. 154-56.

*Friggjarelda*, the latter of which Gurevich interprets as a variation on *erla*.<sup>97</sup> The interpretation of *Friggjarelda* as the White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) is due to the bird's current name, *Maríuerla*, as some have argued that Frigg was substituted by the Virgin Mary in the bird's name at some point after the Christianisation of Iceland.<sup>98</sup> However, despite associations with Frigg and the Virgin Mary, the *erla* is only attested in *Fugla heiti* and has no presence in mythological or religious texts.

Despite scarce attestations in medieval sources, the *maríuerla* is discussed in early modern sources. The sixteenth-century Icelandic writer Oddur Einarsson states that '*marjatla uulgo putatur efse hirundo*,'<sup>99</sup> a translation not supplied in any other source. He also comments at length on the bird's seasonal residence in Iceland.<sup>100</sup> Oddur also distinguishes these birds from *titlingur*, which he states is 'a nostratibus indifferenter appellatur omnis pafserculus exceptibus quibusdam syluestribus,'<sup>101</sup> so it would be safe to say that the *maríuerla* was particularly distinctive compared to most small birds. One possible explanation for this apparent misidentification is raised by Sigurður Ægisson, who points out that both the White Wagtail and the Swallow are connected to the Virgin Mary in folk beliefs, the former in Iceland and the latter in Germany.<sup>102</sup> Another possible reason for the translation of *maríuerla* as 'swallow' could be that as swallows also have a long and distinctively-shaped tail, the Latin *hirundo* here may have been a translation of *erla* based upon descriptions of *hirundo* as a small bird with a long, distinctive tail. This is worth considering, as in Modern Icelandic, *-erla* also appears in *gulerla* ('Yellow Wagtail,' *Motacilla flava*), *flóðerla/fóerla* ('Long-tailed Duck,' *Clangula hyemalis*), and *sanderla* ('Sanderling,' *Calidris alba*),<sup>103</sup> of which the latter two possess a distinctive long tail.

The fourth basic term in *Fugla heiti* is *hani* ('rooster'), which is one of three words in this *pula* that refers to chickens. The other two are *hæna* ('hen'), and *hæns* ('poultry'). These all share the same root, with the latter two being derived from *hani*.<sup>104</sup> Apart from the three related poultry-terms mentioned above, only one term derived from *hani* is given in *Fugla*

---

<sup>97</sup> GFH, pp. 956–57. Gurevich notes that some previous editors have considered *Friggjarelda* to be two separate bird names.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 49). 'Marjatla is what is commonly called a swallow.'

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49. 'Titlingur is the name of all small perching songbirds that cannot be told apart, except from certain forest birds.'

<sup>102</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 230.

<sup>103</sup> Bjarni Sæmundsson, pp. 179, 389, 565.

<sup>104</sup> See §9.

*heiti*: *óðinshani* ('Red-necked Phalarope,' *Phalaropus lobatus*). The reasoning behind this theophoric name is, like the *friggjarelda*, unknown. The *-hani* element may have some connection either to the red-brown colour of this bird's summer plumage, or to the rapid clucking chirrup that the bird makes when it is in flocks. While this small handful of words is the only indication of ethnotaxonomic centrality in Old Norse, the presence of a *þula* of chicken *heiti*, *Hana heiti* (discussed in §3.2.4), in the same manuscript as *Fugla heiti* suggests symbolic centrality and cultural importance.

Another related term found in Old Norse is *akrhæna* ('quail'). Although this does not appear in *Fugla heiti*, it does appear elsewhere in the Old Norse corpus. In the *Æventyri af kóngsyni ok kóngsdóttur*, preserved in a fourteenth-century manuscript, a character states that *akrhæna* is 'hinn ágjæstazti höfðingjarétt'.<sup>105</sup> In *Stjórn*, an Old Norse adaptation of parts of the Old Testament, a Latin translation is provided, as it is described as 'sa fugl sem coturnix heitir. ok uær kollum akrhænu.'<sup>106</sup> This is contradicted by the seventeenth-century Résen Edda, which glosses the Latin *perdix* ('partridge') as *riupa* and *agerhone*.<sup>107</sup> Quails are not native to Iceland, nor are partridges, but both are comparable to Iceland's Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*). Overall, based on the attestations of *akrhæna*, it would seem that while a quail may have been classed alongside chickens due to traits such as roundness and docility, as well as its use on the dining tables of the nobility, as chickens appear to have been a prestigious food in medieval Iceland, even if they were relatively commonplace elsewhere in Scandinavia and Europe (§3.2). Even more interesting is that despite chickens being an introduced species, they attained such cultural importance that they became a productive Level II taxon that was applied to wild birds to indicate shape, temperament, and/or culinary use, despite the presence of native game birds that could occupy a similar conceptual and linguistic niche. As with geese, part of this may be due to the increased familiarity with domesticated birds' salient features compared to wild birds.

The last basic term attested in *Fugla heiti* is *haukr* ('hawk'). In the *þula* itself, only one term derived from it, *sparrhaukr* ('Eurasian Sparrowhawk,' *Accipiter nisus*), is given. Yet elsewhere in the Old Norse textual corpus, the element *haukr* can also be found in *gáshaukr* ('Northern Goshawk,' *Accipiter gentilis*) and possibly in the etymology of *valr* ('falcon'), if the word is a contraction of *\*valhaukr* (§9). In addition to words derived from *haukr*, there

<sup>105</sup> 'Af kóngsyni ok kóngsdóttur' (ed. Gering, p. 213). 'The noblest of rulers' meals.'

<sup>106</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 91 (ed. Unger, p. 292). 'That bird which is called quail, and which we call *akrhæna*.'

<sup>107</sup> *Edda Islandorum* §F. *Fugla heite kvennkiend* (ed. Faulkes).

are many words relating to hawks that are loan-words, such as *mútaðr/mútari* (‘a moulted hawk’) and *fálki* (‘falcon’), and there is also an anonymous *þula* of hawk-*heiti* (§5.4.1). This combination of morphological derivations and loanwords, as well as *heiti*, used to refer to hawks show two things. Firstly, *haukr* was a basic term. Secondly, while distinctions between hawks and falcons, and between different species of each, were often treated in a looser manner than in present-day ornithology, a complex vocabulary concerning hawks did exist. Overall, these linguistic factors alongside wider cultural phenomena such as the use of hawks to symbolise noble humans all serve to illustrate that hawks held both ethnotaxonomic and symbolic centrality.

While *Fugla heiti* is not comprehensive and contains many *hapax legomena*, it is useful in that it may represent a more everyday view of the birds of medieval Iceland and Scandinavia than most contemporary texts. While mythological and exotic birds such as gryphons, ravens, and vultures are present, most of the birds listed did live in Scandinavia and Iceland. Thus, while it does not give a lot of additional information, it does provide a valuable list of the birds that medieval Icelanders knew of and interacted with, many of which are not attested elsewhere in medieval Norse literature. Most of the birds discussed in this thesis are symbolically central, although *haukr*, *gás*, and *hani/hæna/hæsn* appear to have been both symbolically and ethnotaxonomically important, while many of the wild birds discussed in §4 may have been neither.

## 2.4 Folk Taxonomic Categories Beyond *Fugla heiti*

While *Fugla heiti* contains the largest amount of Level II and III taxons in any Old Norse texts, it doesn’t contain much information concerning Level Ia taxons. However, this does not mean that there were not Level Ia bird taxons in Old Norse. Instead, there were many that, while sporadically used, give further insights into how birds were perceived and categorised in medieval Iceland and Scandinavia.

Some of these terms appear to have been predicated on birds’ physical appearances. One of these terms *klófugl* (‘claw-bird’). This term is attested in the Icelandic law-code *Grágás*, where it is said that Icelanders may not eat ‘klófuglar þá er hræ kló er á.’<sup>108</sup> This law appears to be derived from the dietary laws in Leviticus, where it is stated that one must not eat ‘aquilam et grypem et alietum, milvum ac vulturem [...] et accipitrem iuxta senus

---

<sup>108</sup> *Grágás* §32, p. 43. ‘Claw-birds: those which possess carrion claws.’



suum.<sup>109</sup> The designation *klófugl* is only found in *Grágás* and *Kristinn rétrr Árna byskups*,<sup>110</sup> which supports the notion that this term may be based upon Leviticus, rather than pre-Christian taboos. The biblical prohibitions, interestingly enough, may themselves have had their roots in folk-taxonomies. As discussed by both Mary Douglas and Jonathan Burnside, those animals that may be eaten are frequently those that fit a taxonomic category, while those which transgress it in some way are labelled unclean. The ideal bird was one that flies and eats grain.<sup>111</sup> By eating meat, birds of prey transgress the category ‘bird’ and are therefore impure. Overall, then, it is hard to say from the attestations available as to whether *klófugl* existed as a taxon prior to the introduction of dietary laws based upon Leviticus, or how much currency it had beyond Icelandic law codes.

Despite the limited application of *klófugl*, the similar/opposing term *fitfugl* (‘webbed-foot-bird’) suggests that birds could be categorised by anatomical features such as foot structure. *Fitfugl* is only attested in *Konungs skuggsjá*, where a description of a *margýgr* (creature akin to a mermaid) states that they ‘[eru] æigi mæð sunndr slitnum fingrum hælldr mæð þpilicri fit sæm (tær) tóngiaz saman afit fuglum.’<sup>112</sup> But while this is the only attestation of the term, several texts refer to water birds as having *fitjar*.<sup>113</sup> Thus, while the terms *klófugl* and *fitfugl* are relatively rare, it appears that Old Norse did make Level Ia distinctions between birds based upon their anatomical features.

Another taxonomic term based upon birds’ anatomy is *smáfugl* (‘small bird’). The most detailed attestation of this term is arguably that in *Morkinskinna*. This episode will be discussed in more detail in relation to fowling techniques (§4.5), but the outline of the story is that Haraldr harðráði observes *smáfuglar* nesting in the walls of a city currently under siege. He orders men to attach incendiary parcels to these birds, and these set the city on fire when the birds go back to nest.<sup>114</sup> The identity of these small birds is uncertain, although the description of their nesting behaviour suggests they would be cavity-nesting birds, which

<sup>109</sup> Leviticus 11.13–16. ‘The eagle and the griffon and the osprey and the kite and the vulture [...] and the hawk according to its kind.’ References to the Bible use the Latin Vulgate (ed. Weber and Gryson), list the book, chapter, and verse. English translations are from the Douay-Rheims translation (ed. Edgar and Kinney).

<sup>110</sup> *Biskop Arnes Kristenret*, §39 (ed. Storm, p. 50).

<sup>111</sup> Douglas, pp. 48, 56; Burnside, pp. 231–33. Leviticus also forbids the consumption of water birds, but the Icelandic law codes do not, presumably because as these birds were an important food source.

<sup>112</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá* (ed. Holm-Olsen, p. 27). ‘[D]o not have separate fingers, but rather they have flippers so that the toes are joined together as they are on birds with webbed feet.’

<sup>113</sup> *Grák* §225, p. 155; *Grás* §188, 437, pp. 230, 508; *Jónsbók*, §57 (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (1), p. 191).

<sup>114</sup> *Morkinskinna* I, ch. 14 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson, pp. 99–101); *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 6 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, pp. 76–7).

could be anything from a swift to a sparrow.<sup>115</sup> The salient feature of *smáfuglar*, as the name suggests, was likely size, although given this episode, behavioural features such as tree- or cavity-nesting may have also been important.

This behaviour-and-size hypothesis is supported elsewhere. In the Staðarhólsbók redaction of *Grágás*, it is stated that ‘Rétt er manne at veiða í aNars manz lande [...] alla smá fugla þa er eigi fliota a vatni nema riupor.’<sup>116</sup> From this, it would appear that the taxon appears to include birds up to and including Rock Ptarmigan, which at 34–36cm long with a 54–60cm wingspan is larger than the average Merlin (*Falco columbarius*),<sup>117</sup> which appears to not be classed as a *smáfugl*. As such, while a key diagnostic element of *smáfugl* was size, it would appear that behaviour and/or diet were also important, as while game birds were classified as *smáfuglar*, small birds of prey were not.

Another way in which Level Ia categories appear to have been established is through birds’ relationships with humans and where they live in relation to human habitation. When it comes to birds that live alongside or inside human settlements, there is only one term, *alifugl* (‘tame bird’), which was used to denote a tame or domesticated bird that was raised for human consumption.<sup>118</sup> The majority of attestations of *alifugl* in Old Norse are found in religious literature. In *Stjórn*, *alifuglar* are said to be present on King Solomon’s dining table; a detail not found in the Latin Vulgate.<sup>119</sup> While some medieval Hebrew and Arabic traditions stated that King Solomon practiced divination by observing birds and could sometimes even speak with them, there are no indications such traditions were known in Iceland.<sup>120</sup> As such, it is more likely that this was a culturally-familiar way of expressing Solomon’s richness, given the scarcity of domestic birds in Iceland (§3).

---

<sup>115</sup> For examples of cavity-nesting birds living in or being encouraged to live in human buildings, see Morell and Suárez; Tomasevic and Marzluff, p. 437; Brede, ‘Building new homes for swifts and communities’, <<https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/building-new-homes-for-swifts-and-communities/#pPJ6PwvhRzHKvWvF.99>>; J. Day, ‘Swift advice for ecologists’, <<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/news/stories/swift-advice-for-ecologists/#MdZpQM82OXurq1Ym.99>>.

<sup>116</sup> *Grágás* §436, p. 507. ‘On another man’s land it is permitted to hunt [...] all small birds that do not float upon the water apart from ptarmigan.’ In this instance, *smá fuglar* (‘small birds’) is orthographically ambiguous, but is generally interpreted as a single term, similar to how ‘á fitfuglum’ is rendered ‘áfitfuglum’ in *Konungs skuggsjá*.

<sup>117</sup> Beaman and Madge, pp. 207, 254.

<sup>118</sup> CV, s.v. ‘ali-’.

<sup>119</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 299 (ed. Unger, p. 560).

<sup>120</sup> Shemesh, pp. 4–7. The Latin Vulgate simply states that King Solomon was granted knowledge of birds by God (3 Kings 4:33).

The most extensive of the religious attestations is found in the Icelandic *homíliubók*, where it is said that ‘hvat merkia alifoglarnir nema feþr ens nyia laga haLz. þeir er girnþir sínar hafa til guþs. oc fliúga með helgom skilningom oc guþs boþorþa óst. svasem með vængiom til.’<sup>121</sup> Here, then, the idea of *alifugl* as gentle and obedient is emphasised. This same characteristic is also prominent in the only secular attestation of *alifugl*, which occurs in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*. In this, the character Velent forges a powerful sword by making a sword, filing it down, mixing the filings with grain and feeding it to *alifuglar*, collecting the droppings, smelting the iron from them, and using this to make another sword.<sup>122</sup> Again, these birds appear only briefly, but their defining traits are being close to humans, being docile, and being biddable.

The terminology for wild birds as wild birds is similarly brief and sparse in its attestations. *Villifygli* (‘wild bird’) is attested only in *Karlamagnúss saga*, as one of the parts of a feast that includes a wide variety of meats from different animals, indicating richness and prestige.<sup>123</sup> *Útifugl* (‘outdoor bird’) is slightly more well-attested, as it appears in the skaldic poem *Hákonarkviða* by Sturla Þórðarson and in the *Strengleikar*.<sup>124</sup> In both instances, these birds are linked to notions of prosperity and fertility: in the former, it describes a preternatural level of prosperity in the rule of King Hákon, and in the latter, the song of the *útifuglar* heralds the arrival of spring. Overall, it would seem that the division between wild and domestic birds was both symbolically and ethnotaxonomically significant. Not only was it a useful metric for dividing the birds encountered in everyday life, but it also furnished metaphorical thought in homiletic literature, indications of courtly wealth, and suggestions of natural wealth and/or divine favour.

In addition to these tame/wild distinctions, wild birds were also categorised by their habitats. One is *sæfugl* (‘seabird’), found in *Grágás*, where it is stated that ‘Sæ fugla *scal hann engi taca i aNars lande eða i veiðe stavð*.’<sup>125</sup> The other is *skógarfugl* (‘forest bird’), which appears only in passing in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, where ‘villi dyr oc [...] skogar fugl.’<sup>126</sup> Based upon the bird bones found in medieval Icelandic settlement sites, *sæfugl* could

<sup>121</sup> *Íslensk homíliubók*, §Á jóladaginn (ed. de Leeuw van Weenen, 74v). ‘What do edible birds betoken but the Father of the New Testament? Those which have their desire for God and fly with divine understanding and love of God’s commandments, as if on wings, to God.’

<sup>122</sup> *Þiðreks saga af Bern* I, ch. 104 (ed. Bertelsen, pp. 98–9).

<sup>123</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga*, §Jorsalaferð, (ed. Loth, p. 261).

<sup>124</sup> Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonarmál* 4:6 (ed. Gade, p. 702); *Jonet* (ed. Cook and Tveitane, p. 230).

<sup>125</sup> *Grágás* §436, p. 507. ‘One will not take seabirds in another’s land or hunting place.’

<sup>126</sup> *Þiðreks saga* II, ch. 344 (281) (ed. Bertelsen, p. 165). ‘Wild beast and [...] forest bird.’

include guillemots, auks, Puffins, gulls and/or terns.<sup>127</sup> *Skogarflugl*, meanwhile, might be a term evoking the kinds of wildlife found in German forests, as opposed to the less forested Icelandic landscape.<sup>128</sup> While these terms are rare, they do suggest that another way Old Norse peoples categorised and understood birds was through grouping them by habitat.

As this discussion has illustrated, Level Ia taxons are extremely rare in the corpus of Old Norse literature, and most are only attested once. Yet from these it would appear that salient features of birds included their physical appearance, their habitat, and their relationship(s) to and with humans. These methods of categorising birds also appear operative in early modern Icelandic texts, some of which are more detailed in their discussions of wild birds in Iceland. *Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiae* almost always mentions size and plumage colour when describing birds. For instance, the description of falcons states that ‘*Falco, Islandice falke, magnitudinem corui habet, sed colore est cineraceo,*’<sup>129</sup> prioritising size and colour as identifying features of these birds. Wading birds are discussed in a similar manner, as it is stated that ‘*Spoë et Stelkur colore sunt cinereo et a se invicem parum different, nisi quod hic rubris pedibus, ille oblong rostro insignis est.*’<sup>130</sup> While the *spói* (‘curlew,’) and the *stelkur* (‘Redshank,’ *Tringa totanus*), are similar in size and plumage, their legs and bills allow observers to tell them apart.

Birds were also defined by their habitat and their cries, as shown in the discussion of *tittlingur*. Here, Oddur Einarsson states that ‘*Tytlingur a nostribus indifferenter appellatur omnis passerculus exceptis quibusdam syluestribus, quos Solskrijkiur nominamus et Skogarprefte, quod in syluis et arbustis ad solem dulcissimis cantibus indulgeant.*’<sup>131</sup> Firstly, the use of *passerculus* indicates the continued use of anatomical classifications, as in its narrow sense, the Latin word means ‘small sparrow,’ from *passer* (‘sparrow’), although the word was often used in a broad sense meaning small perching birds or songbirds. Here,

---

<sup>127</sup> Solveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 32–3, 36–7; Zori et al., pp. 164–67, 170.

<sup>128</sup> The only other attestation of *skógarflugl* is in Jón Guðmundsson, §Fugla kyn nockur (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20). Mentioned as members of this taxon are *skógarprösturinn* (Redwing, *Turdus iliacus*), *raudkollur* (Modern Icelandic *rauðkollur* refers to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus calendula*), and *raudbrýstingurinn* (Modern Icelandic *rauðbrýstingur* refers to the Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*, but this is a shoreline wader).

<sup>129</sup> *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 48). ‘The falcon, *fálki* in Icelandic, is the size of a raven, but is the colour of ashes.’

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49. ‘*Spói* and *Stelkur* are both ashen in colour, and can scarcely be differentiated, except the latter by its red feet, and the former is distinguished by its somewhat long bill.’

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘*Tittlingar* is the name we give to all small sparrows that are indistinguishable to us, apart from certain forest birds, which we name *sólskríkjur* (‘sun-shriekers’) and *skógarpresti* (‘Redwing’), because in forests and wooded places they may bestow the sweetest song to the sun.’

*titlingr* seems to play a similar role as a ‘wastebasket taxon’ for small songbirds,<sup>132</sup> apart from those that are remarkable based upon distinctive songs or their living in forests.

As well as offering descriptions of the birds of Iceland, Oddur Einarsson also provides examples of what could be described as folk-genera, as he groups birds into being of certain types. For instance, he states that ‘*Smýrill* auis est in Islandia ex accipitrum genere, sed multo minor uulgaribus falconibus.’<sup>133</sup> Here, it would appear that rather than comparing Merlins to falcons as similar, but unrelated birds, Oddur Einarsson is suggesting that Merlins and what he calls ‘common falcons’ both belong to the category *accipiter*, which is used in the present day to indicate hawks, but here is operating as a folk generic, encompassing hawks and falcons.

In Oddur’s description of *gás*, while he does not use *genus*, he speaks of *gás* as another category with multiple subtypes:

Anseres domestici, quos *heimgiǫfir* dicimus, apud paucos quosdam insulanos reperiuntur, nec ullas alias aues domesticas norunt Islandi gillinis exceptis quæ tamen non aliuntur nisi in domibus opulentorum. Agrestes uero anseres, quos a cinereo colore appellamus *gragas*, infinito numero habet Islandia quibus cognatum est illud auium genus, quod uulgo dicitur *helfinge*, de cuius generatione nostrates fere eadem referent, quæ olim de brenta uel bernicula scripsit Petrus Pomponatius. Sunt et anatine generis auiculæ in Islandia plurimæ, quarum species colouribus suis et cognominibus discernuntur.<sup>134</sup>

(Domestic Geese (*Anser anser domesticus*), which we call *heimgæsir*, are found on a certain few islands, and not any other domestic birds are known of in Iceland apart from chickens, which are reared only in the houses of the rich. Iceland has an infinite number of wild geese, which we call *grágás* due to their grey colour, from which that kind of bird is named, which is commonly called *Helsingr*. About the generation of this bird, countrymen almost repeat what Peter Pomponatius once wrote of the Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla*) or Barnacle Goose. Also there

---

<sup>132</sup> A wastebasket taxon is one that is largely used as a place to put entities that don’t clearly belong to another taxon. See Naish and Martill, p. 620; Naish and Sweetman, p. 464; Witton, ‘*Baryonyx* Begins’, <<http://markwitton-com.blogspot.com/2014/01/>> [Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020].

<sup>133</sup> *Qualiscunquæ* (ed. Burg, p. 49), ‘*Smyrill* is a bird in Iceland that is from the falcon-type, but it is much smaller compared to common falcons.’

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

are many small birds of the duck type, the species of which are differentiated by their colours and names.)

This passage exemplifies the taxonomy of geese discussed earlier in relation to medieval sources: *gás* appears as a generic term, divided along the lines of cultural use (wild/tame) and colour. Oddur observes that ducks are also categorised by appearance, although no further information is given.

Overall, while *Fugla heiti* provides many terms for birds in Old Norse, it is largely concerned with Level II or III folk-generics. For a broader overview of Level Ia and III terms and how they illustrate the salient features of birds in Old Norse culture, other sources need to be consulted. While these illustrate the limits of *Fugla heiti* as a diagnostic text, at the same time the features they highlight are consistent with those discussed in relation to *Fugla heiti*, suggesting that even if it was not recorded, there was a long-lived and widely-known ethno-ornithological practice among the Norse-speaking peoples that informed both stable and ad-hoc categorisations of birds.

## 2.5 The Category of *Fugl* in Old Norse Written Sources

As well as providing basic terms, *Fugla heiti* also illustrates how the Norse category *fugl* differed from the Linnaean order *Aves* and the Modern English taxon *bird*. Two entities included in *Fugla heiti* would not be considered part of *Aves*: *leðrblaka* ('bat') and *geitungr* ('wasp'). Analysing these and other atypical birds of the Old Norse corpus can help to establish how *fugl* and bird overlap and how they differ.

The grouping of bats together with birds was not uncommon in medieval Europe and beyond. Bats are grouped with birds in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, as well as other sources that were considered authoritative by medieval European writers.<sup>135</sup> Bats are also mentioned among the list of birds that it is forbidden to eat in Leviticus.<sup>136</sup> However, this categorisation is far from simple. The Old English words for bat, *hreaðemus* (lit. 'ornamented mouse') and *hreremus* (lit. 'rowing mouse') suggest that they were also classified as being close to mice in Old English folk taxonomies.<sup>137</sup> Unlike Old English, the Old Norse word for bat, *leðrblaka* (lit. 'leather-flapper'), does not give any information about higher taxonomic categories it may be put into, but *Fugla heiti* suggests that by the fourteenth century at the

---

<sup>135</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', p. 15; with reference to Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* XII.vii.36 <[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12\\*.html#7](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12*.html#7)> [Accessed 26th July 2020].

<sup>136</sup> Leviticus 11.19.

<sup>137</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', p. 15.

latest, they were considered to be at least taxonomically adjacent to *fugl*, presumably due to their ability to fly.

The classification of bees as birds likewise is seen in other medieval sources. Eric Lacey notes that in English sources, the earliest attestation of classing bees as birds is the thirteenth-century *De proprietatibus rerum*, but it is also attested in less scholarly works from at least the fourteenth century onwards, such as Chaucer's *Parliament of Foules*.<sup>138</sup> The earliest attestations of *geitungr* as a bird in Old Norse, meanwhile, are verses attributed to the eleventh-century skald, Halldórr ókristni, and the twelfth-century skald and priest, Einarr Skúlason.<sup>139</sup> In both cases, *geitungr* appears as a base-word for eagle or raven kennings.<sup>140</sup> The rule for making such kennings, according to *Skáldskaparmál*, is that 'Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn orn eða hrafn.'<sup>141</sup> Both kennings pre-date the creation of *Skáldskaparmál*, so the rules found in that text may not have been as set in stone as it makes them seem, but given that all other extant examples of raven/eagle kennings use birds as the base-word, it would be reasonable to assume that *geitungr* was considered bird enough to be included. This raises some issues, as it suggests that either the classification of bees and/or wasps as birds was imported to Iceland prior to its written attestation in Europe, or else the category *fugl* already could encompass *geitungr* without influence from European scholarly sources.

Kari Ellen Gade, editor of both verses mentioned above, has used these kennings to argue that while *geitungr* initially meant 'wasp,' it then shifted to indicate some type of bird.<sup>142</sup> However, this would require *geitungr* to have gone from meaning 'wasp,' to meaning 'bird,' and then back to meaning 'wasp.' Instead, perhaps what was considered a *fugl* in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and Iceland needs to be re-analysed. While *geitungr* may appear anomalous, it is in fact one of a number of large or noticeable flying insects that are called *fugl* in Old Norse literature, and when these are accounted for, the inclusion of

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, XII.4 (Impressus Argentine); *De proprietatibus rerum*, XII.5 in the Middle English translation by John Trevisa (ed. Seymour, pp. 609–14); Chaucer, *Parliament of Foules* 353–54 (ed. Benson, p. 390).

<sup>139</sup> Einarr Skúlason, *Haraldsdrápa II* 3:2 (ed. Gade, p. 546); Halldórr ókristni, *Eiríksflokkur* 1:6 (ed. Gade, p. 471).

<sup>140</sup> A base-word is one of three key elements of a kenning. The referent is the thing that the kenning is referring to. The base-word is typically metaphorically substituted for the referent, and the determinant narrows down the metaphorical potential of the base-word, usually through metonymic associations with the referent. See Levin, p. 93; Clunies Ross, 'Cognitive Approach', p. 276; Holland, pp. 123–30; Schulte, pp. 17–32.

<sup>141</sup> *Skm*, p. 90 (ch. 60) 'All other grammatically-masculine birds may be put in a kenning with blood or corpses and that is then the name of the eagle or raven.'

<sup>142</sup> Gade, Commentary on *Haraldsdrápa II* 3, pp. 546–47.

wasps among birds in *Fugla heiti* may indicate a more expansive category of *fugl*, rather than Gade's proposed semantic widening and narrowing of *geitungr*.

One of the insect *fuglar* that is attested outside *Fugla heiti* is *locusta/locusti* ('locust'). This appears in religious literature, such as one of the Icelandic Homilies, where John the Apostle hunts locusts to survive, and it is said that 'Fogla þa véidde han sér til handa er locuste ero kallaper.'<sup>143</sup> While unusual, this is not an unprecedented categorisation of *locusta*. The same occurs in the Old Norse translation of Leviticus 11 found in *Stjórn*. Here, *locusta* is classed as *fuglakyn* ('bird-kin'), alongside birds and a small number of other large insects:

Þessar eru þeir hlutir i fuglakyni er eigi er lofat at eta. Aurn ok gafe ok vkitum  
giod dulcorem. ok allt kyn þeirra skal eigi eta. skruccionem ok noctuam ok latum  
ok onoctutulam ok persiconem heredionem ok caradrionem. ok allt þeirra kyn.  
Vpupam ok uespertilionem ok allt fuglakyn þat sem fíora fætr hefir. þat skal eigi  
eta. Huatki er yfir fíora fætr gengr ok hefir leingri ena eþri leggi. ok hleypir þat  
yfir þa um iordina. þat skulu þer eta. sem er hrutus ok hans kyn. ok attackus ok  
oformatus ok locusta i sinu kyni.<sup>144</sup>

(These are those members of the bird family that one is forbidden from eating. One may not eat eagle and *gafe* and kites,<sup>145</sup> osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), *dulcorem*, and all their kin. *Skruccionem* and *noctuam* and *latum* and *onocutulam* and *persiconem*, *heredionem* and *caradrionem* and all their kin. One should not eat the hoopoe and bat and all types of bird that have four feet. Whatever walks on four feet and has longer hind legs, and leaps over the earth, one may eat. Such as *hrutus* and his kind, and *attackus* and *oformatus* and locust in its kind.)

In many ways, this follows the corresponding passage of the Latin Vulgate Bible, which runs as follows:

Haec sunt quae de avibus comedere non debetis et vitanda sunt vobis aquilam et  
grypem et alietum. Milvum ac vulturem iuxta genus suum et omne corvini generis  
in similitudinem suam. Strutionem et noctuam et larum et accipitrem iuxta genus  
suum. Bubonem et mergulum et ibin. Cycnum et onocrotalum et porphirionem.

---

<sup>143</sup> Stockholm, Royal Library, Perg. 4to No. 15, 6r7–8 (Iceland, s. xiii<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>144</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 114 (ed. Unger, p. 316).

<sup>145</sup> *Vkitum* is not attested elsewhere in Old Norse but appears to be a gloss of Latin *milvus* ('kite'), based upon the Old English *cȳta* or Middle English *kīte*.



Erodionem et charadrion iuxta genus suum opupam quoque et vespertilionem. Omne de volucris quod graditur super quattuor pedes, abominabile erit vobis. Quicquid autem ambulat quidem super quattuor pedes, sed habet longiora retro crura, per quae salit super terram, comedere debetis, ut est bruchus in genere suo, et attacus atque ophiomachus, ac locusta.<sup>146</sup>

(Of birds these are they which you must not eat, and which are to be avoided by you: The eagle, and the griffon, and the osprey. And the kite, and the vulture, according to their kind. And all that is of the raven kind, according to their likeness. The ostrich, and the owl, and the larus [gull], and the hawk according to its kind. The screech owl, and the cormorant, and the ibis. And the swan, and the bittern, and the porphyrion [swamphen]. The heron, and the charadrion [plover] according to its kind, the houp [hoopoe] also, and the bat. Of things that fly, whatsoever goeth upon four feet, shall be abominable to you. But whatsoever walketh upon four feet, but hath the legs behind longer, wherewith it hoppeth upon the earth, that you shall eat, as the bruchus [leaf beetle] in its kind, the attacus [atlas moth], and ophiomachus [locust], and the locust.)

In the Latin, there is a clear semantic distinction being made between *avis* ('bird') and *volucris*, a term meaning 'winged thing' that could encompass birds but also included other winged beings. In *Stjórn*, however, such a distinction is not provided and both words are translated as *fugl*. An argument could be made that this may be due to a lack of skill on the part of one or more translators or copiers, as many Latin bird and insect names are left untranslated and/or garbled in *Stjórn*. Readings such as *latum* for *larum* ('gull') and *hrutus* for *bruchus* ('leaf beetle') show confusion between r/t/c and h/b, while in some instances words are simply muddled, such as *persiconem* for *porphirionem* ('swamphen'), or left out altogether, such as the list of birds from *accipitrem* (hawk) to *cycnum* (swan). This suggests that as well as possible eye-skip or abbreviation taking place, many of the Latin terms were unfamiliar and/or translated or copied from a corrupted source.

Perhaps most interesting, however, is this merging of *avis* and *volucris* into *fuglakyn*. There may be a few possible reasons for this. Firstly, none of the insects classed as *volucris* are translated into Old Norse in *Stjórn*. It is therefore arguable that the translator(s) of this passage may have not known what these words referred to, and as some of the animals listed

---

<sup>146</sup> Leviticus 11:13–22.

under *avis* were recognised, those under *volucris* were simply interpreted as more birds. Another possibility is that the Old Norse taxon *fuglakyn* and perhaps even the Old Norse taxon *fugl* may have been more expansive than their generally-accepted English translations, which map on to the Modern English taxon ‘bird,’ suggest, and could encompass not only birds, but larger flying beings more broadly including locusts, as well as wasps and bats.

The second possibility is also suggested by some comments on a byname in *Fljótsdæla saga*. In this saga, the character Þorgrímr torðýfill, whose byname translates to ‘dung beetle,’ is captured and his captors mockingly refer to him as *skítflugl* (lit. ‘shit-bird’).<sup>147</sup> In addition to this, a conversation between Þorgrímr’s captor, Helgi, and Helgi’s mother plays on this insult, as Helgi’s mother asks Helgi if he has hunted anything, to which Helgi replies that he caught a *torðýfill*. Helgi’s mother then responds, saying ‘*þad er lijtil veidur, þuiat þad er lijtil fugl.*’<sup>148</sup> While the species that are generally thought of as ‘dung beetles’ in popular imagination are native to Africa, a number of large and small beetles live and likely lived alongside and benefitted from human habitation in Iceland, and many of these favour habitats rich in livestock dung.<sup>149</sup> As such, the language in this episode suggests that in at least some cases, these beetles could be a kind of *fugl*.

It should be noted that there was a separate Old Norse term for flying insects, *fluga*, which is reasonably well-attested across the corpus of medieval texts.<sup>150</sup> While medieval sources are fairly unconcerned with discussing *flugur*, Jón Guðmundsson’s early modern text on Icelandic nature does go into some detail. Among *flugur*, he lists the *hunangsfluga* (‘bee’), which ‘*verpur hunangseggjum án skurns og kviknar þar ungur af.*’<sup>151</sup> The *flugur* are described in the section directly following birds, but there isn’t any comment made to suggest they are conceptually connected. So while flying insects including wasps/bees could be taxonomised under *fugl*, it is important to note that this was not necessarily a hard and fast rule, and that flying insects did have a taxon of their own.

The precise definitions of *fugl* and *fuglkyn* likely varied across time and between different communities and different social strata. However, it would appear that as far as learned fourteenth-century Icelanders were concerned, locusts, wasps, and bats could be

---

<sup>147</sup> *Fljótsdæla saga*, §38a (ed. Kålund, p. 44).

<sup>148</sup> *Fljótsdæla saga*, §38b (ed. Kålund, p. 45). ‘That’s a small quarry, as it’s a small bird.’

<sup>149</sup> Forbes et al.

<sup>150</sup> ONP, s.v. ‘fluga’ <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o22091>> [Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020].

<sup>151</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Wm flugur og orma (ed. Halldór Hermansson, pp. 21–2) ‘lays honey eggs without shells and bring their young to life in them.’

considered *fuglar*. While this may have been influenced by taxonomies found in imported Latin texts, the use of *geitungr* in bird kennings from an eleventh-century skaldic praise poem alongside the other attestations of insects as birds raises the possibility that, at least in some cases, the Old Norse taxon *fugl* may, semi-independently of Latin scholarly influences, have at least occasionally expanded from birds in the strictest sense to also incorporate flying animals more broadly, such as bats and flying insects.

## 2.6 Conclusion

To visualise some of what has been discussed here, I will provide a table that models some ethnotaxonomic categories in Old Norse. In many cases, Level Ia taxons cannot be supplied, as Level II taxons may belong to multiple Ia categories, and there are almost no sources that explain which birds belong to which Ia taxon, and no clear lexical clues either. The exception to this is *klófugl*, which does have a small list of members provided. I have added *úfr* to this, although this is conjectural and based upon the presence of hunting claws.

Table 1: Folk Taxonomies in Old Norse

Level Ia Taxon	Level II Taxon	Level III Taxon	Level IV Taxon
	Gás	Grágás	
		Heimgás	
		Brandgás	
		Hrótgás/Hróðgás	
		<i>Gagl</i>	
		<i>Helsingr</i>	
	Qnd	<i>Dunna</i>	
Klófugl	Haukr	<i>Valr</i>	<i>Grávalr</i>
		Gáshaukr	
		Sparrhaukr	
		<i>Fálki</i>	<i>Geirfalki</i>
		<i>Mútaðr/Mútari</i>	
	Hrafn	Nátthrafn	
	Qrn		
	Smyrill		
<i>Úfr</i>		<i>Ýfingr</i>	
	Erla	Friggarelda	

	Gaukr	Hrossagaukr	
		<i>Gaukþjórr</i>	
	Hani, Hæna, Hæns	Óðinshani	
		Akrhæna	
	Orri	Brimorri	
	Doðra	<i>Doðrkvisa</i>	
	Snípr	Mýrisnípr	
	Lóa	<i>Lóþræll</i>	
		<i>Heiðló</i>	
	Kárn	Jaðrakárn	
	Rindill	<i>Rindilþvari</i>	
	Rjúpa	Skógarrjúpa	

I have not included many Level II and/or III taxons attested in the Old Norse corpus, as many attested taxons do not have higher or lower taxons attached to them. The ones I have included are ones that are attached to other taxons, either through lexical connections or through sources stating connections. When it comes to lexical connections, the latter element of a two-element name takes precedent over the former. For instance, the *-haukr* in *gáshaukr* takes precedent over *gás-*. However, the first element has also been taken into consideration in cases where the first element is a recognisable taxon and the latter part may express a relation to the taxon. I have italicised the ‘lower’ taxons in instances where the connection between taxonomic levels is conjectural, based upon first elements in names or non-lexical connections made in written sources.

By analysing Old Norse bird names with methodologies used in the modelling of folk taxonomies, several insights can be gathered regarding the perception and understanding of *fuglar* in medieval Scandinavia and the North Atlantic. While the textual sources pertaining to birds are usually perfunctory in nature, an overview of the different birds they mention show that while bird lore is rare, this did not mean that the Old Norse peoples were unaware of or uninterested in birds. On the contrary, they had a rich vocabulary of bird names, as well as multiple ways in which birds could be categorised, depending on the relevant information needed at a given time.

While many Old Norse bird names, such as *hrafn* and *hani*, may have had their etymological roots in older Germanic words that imitated birds' calls,<sup>152</sup> the ways that these birds were categorised and arranged according to medieval and early modern Icelandic texts frequently appear to use visual aspects of birds, such as plumage colour or anatomical features, to identify and categorise birds. Another common element in the categorisation of birds in Old Norse was their relationship with humans. These patterns of identification and categorisation are not only identifiable in the names of the birds themselves; they also appear to underpin post-medieval categorisation systems.

The analysis of the textual corpus also shows that while wild birds were common in Iceland and Norway and played a significant role in subsistence and commerce, most wild birds appear to have been neither ethnotaxonomically nor symbolically central. The few wild birds that did become ethnotaxonomically significant, such as *erla* and *gaukr*, appear to have become so on the basis of one or two striking features, such as their cries or their long tails. Birds that had been domesticated (*hani/hæna/hænsn* and *gás*) were also ethnotaxonomically significant, most likely due to their close proximity to humans, which enabled humans to familiarise themselves with these birds' physical and behavioural traits. A similar phenomenon is arguably at play with *haukr*. While the birds used for falconry were treated in a very different manner from the birds raised for food and feathers, the proximity between human and animal is arguably the reason that they became a basic term in Old Norse folk taxonomies.

In many ways, the Old Norse category *fugl* maps closely on to the Modern English bird and the taxonomic designation *Aves*, although there are some exceptions. In cases such as *leðrblaka*, *geitungr*, and *locusta*, it would appear that the category of *fugl* expanded beyond the Modern English 'bird' and could encompass other flying animals, particularly in instances where Latin texts described a creature using a term that designated a winged or flying being. This indicates that while Old Norse folk taxonomies were not dissimilar from those found in Modern English, they could have been slightly more expansive and flexible than current popular conceptions of folk and scientific taxonomies. Thus, *fugl* as it is found in the medieval textual sources is a dynamic category, based upon a combination of observation and the (proto-)scientific knowledge systems of the time.

---

<sup>152</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', pp. 40–3, 71–2.

## 3. Subsistence and Proximity I: Domestic Birds

### 3.1 Introduction

Perhaps some of the most prominent relationships between humans and birds in any culture are the relationships between humans and the birds they rely upon for food and raw materials. Many of these species are quite prominent in the archaeological record, as their bones are often found near settlements, particularly in middens (rubbish heaps) where domestic waste was deposited. However, while many wild and domestic species had a widespread material presence in Scandinavian and North Atlantic households, they are rarely mentioned in textual sources. In this and the following chapter, I will discuss these important but elusive birds, which formed key links between humans and birds.

The domesticated birds discussed here consist of two key species: Domestic Geese and chickens. While domesticated ducks may have existed in medieval Europe, including Scandinavia, the remains of Domestic Ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos domesticus*) are difficult to distinguish from those of their wild ancestors, Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and neither textual nor pictorial sources from the areas and periods discussed give clear information on whether domesticated ducks were kept.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, the overall economic importance of Domestic Ducks in high and late medieval Europe appears to have been considerably less than that of wild ducks and geese, chickens, and Domestic Geese.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, while there is evidence from Britain and Europe that domesticated doves were raised for food,<sup>155</sup> there is little evidence that doves were kept in medieval Scandinavia.

The environmental differences between Europe, Scandinavia, and the North Atlantic Islands affected both the keeping of domesticated birds and the interactions between humans and wild birds. Agricultural practices that were possible in continental Europe and the more temperate regions that constitute present-day Denmark, southern Sweden and southern Norway were not necessarily possible in harsher climates such as those found in Iceland, northern Norway and Sweden, and the North Atlantic islands. In addition to the animals' own ability to withstand low temperatures, food shortages and harsh winds made raising domestic birds far more difficult. As will be discussed in §4, difficulties in keeping domesticated birds had a knock-on effect on relationships between human and wild bird populations in the medieval North Atlantic. However, the relationships between humans and domesticated birds

---

<sup>153</sup> Yapp, p. 492.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Serjeantson, 'Food and a Mark of Status', pp. 141–42, 145.

in Scandinavia and Iceland were interesting in and as of themselves, as well as for how they informed literature and symbolism.

### 3.1.1 Domesticated, Tamed, and Wild

Birdkeeping in the broadest sense was a widespread phenomenon in medieval Western Europe. As well as the complex hunting practices of falconry (§5), songbirds and turtle doves were kept as ornamental pets, and could be locally caught, obtained as gifts, or purchased from professional bird-sellers.<sup>156</sup> Exotic birds such as parrots were also kept by the rich, and were part of the vast trade networks of luxury goods that wealthy Europeans had access to, particularly in the High and Late Middle Ages.<sup>157</sup> Finally, domesticated birds were kept by many households, primarily for their meat and eggs.<sup>158</sup>

The difference between a ‘tamed’ bird and a ‘domesticated’ one may appear relatively insignificant in everyday speech, but it is important in Human-Animal Studies. ‘Tamed’ can refer to any individual animal that has become accustomed to and obedient toward humans; this trait may be induced through purely environmental factors.<sup>159</sup> ‘Domesticated’, on the other hand, refers to animals that have gone through a process of domestication, which involves genetic changes occurring over multiple generations as well as the individual, environmentally-determined process of taming.<sup>160</sup> Usually, this is done to fulfil particular human desires, related to an animal’s temperament, aesthetic appearance, strength, milk/meat/wool/egg production, and/or breeding cycles.<sup>161</sup> A wild animal may be tamed, but that individual cannot be domesticated, even if its descendants may become domesticated.

The domesticated form of a species is often taxonomically designated as a subspecies of its wild form, indicated by their Latin binomial (e.g. the wild Greylag Goose is *Anser anser*, whereas the Domestic Goose, is *Anser anser domesticus*). This indicates that while there are still broad genetic similarities between the two, the domesticated form has significant genetic and phenotypical differences from the wild form. A domesticated subspecies is usually, but not always, easier to distinguish from a wild population than a tamed individual through visual, osteological, or genetic methods. Distinction may be harder

---

<sup>156</sup> Yapp, pp. 480–4. Walker-Miekle, pp. 15, 28.

<sup>157</sup> Yapp, p. 484; Walker-Miekle, pp. 15–6. For an account of how these networks enabled Frederick II of Hohenstaufen to obtain an Australasian cockatoo, see Dalton et al., pp. 35–60; see also clarifications on Europe-Indonesia connections by West.

<sup>158</sup> Serjeantson, ‘Food and a Mark of Status’, p. 147.

<sup>159</sup> OED Online, s.v. ‘Tame’, <[www.oed.com/view/Entry/197387](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/197387)> [accessed 9th July 2018].

<sup>160</sup> E. O. Price, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> MacHugh et al., p. 330; Trut, pp. 160–69.

in certain species in earlier stages of domestication or when frequent domesticated-wild hybridisation occurs (§3.3). Given that training, taming, and domestication all require sustained periods in which human and non-human animals exist together in close proximity, they are a key focal point for Human-Animal Studies.

As discussed earlier, the two types of domestic bird which had a significant presence in medieval northern and western Europe were the Domestic Goose and the chicken. While chickens and to a lesser extent geese are kept as both livestock and pets/companion animals in present-day Europe, in this thesis both will be treated from a livestock perspective, as there is far more evidence for these animals being used for food and materials. Both species have a relatively substantial presence in zooarchaeological and textual sources compared to many bird species, although there are differences in distribution depending on location and climate. While neither bird was a major agricultural staple, their histories as domesticated subspecies appear to have undergone some important changes during the medieval period. Furthermore, as discussed in §4, their presence or absence appears to have had knock-on effects regarding human relationships with wild birds.

### 3.2 Chickens

The first bird that will be discussed in this chapter is the chicken. While its precise origins are still debated, it is thought that the chicken is descended from the Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), possibly with some genetic influence from the Grey Junglefowl (*Gallus sonnerati*).<sup>162</sup> While previous scholarship has tried to find a single point of domestication, current hypotheses based upon archaeological finds and mitochondrial studies propose multiple localised points of domestication in Northeast Thailand, Northeast India, and Southwest China, with the oldest securely-identified specimen being from the Indus Valley and dated to c. 2500BC.<sup>163</sup>

There are two main hypotheses regarding the westward spread of chickens. One suggests a route from China, through Russia, to Europe, and a second posits that chickens arrived in the Roman Empire through Phoenician trade routes.<sup>164</sup> At any rate, while the presence of chickens in western Europe may pre-date Roman conquest, the Roman Empire appears to have popularised the keeping of chickens.<sup>165</sup> But while chickens are kept for meat,

---

<sup>162</sup> Stevens, pp. 6–7; Pitt et al., 1–2.

<sup>163</sup> Blench and MacDonald, p. 496; Stevens, p. 11; Pitt et al., p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> Pitt et al., p. 2.

<sup>165</sup> Maltby et al., pp. 1003–4.



eggs, and companionship in many present-day cultures, it appears that from the first stage of domestication until the end of the Iron Age one of the most common reasons for raising chickens was cockfighting: a blood sport in which two male fowl would be put into combat. Archaeological evidence for cockfighting in the form of metal spurs has been found throughout Iron Age Europe, including an iron spur attached to the leg bones of a chicken from a Romano-British settlement in Baldock, Hertfordshire.<sup>166</sup> Overall, find data from the Iron Age suggests that while the Roman Empire helped to spread the keeping of chickens as a source of food and eggs, the birds were not a widespread farm animal. Instead they were associated with status, entertainment, and ritual due to their small size and relatively rare and exotic nature.<sup>167</sup>

The post-Roman shift from viewing chickens as entertainment to viewing them as agricultural animals can be seen in sources such as the *Lex Salica*, a Frankish law code that was initially composed in late fifth/early sixth century, with modifications occurring throughout the sixth century and Carolingian period.<sup>168</sup> In the shortest and earliest redaction of its section concerning the theft of birds, dated to the late fifth/early sixth century, *Lex Salica* only addresses the theft of birds of prey used in falconry, with grades of fine depending on where the bird was taken from and whether it had been trained.<sup>169</sup> However, the laws from later in the sixth century had been considerably expanded, and they also address the theft of domestic birds. In this redaction, laws concerning the theft of birds state that the fine for stealing a chicken, a swan, a tamed crane, a Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), or a small bird that has been trapped should be equal to the fine for the theft of a nursing calf, a piglet up to a year old, a wether up to two years old, or an adult goat.<sup>170</sup> Thus, it would appear that, to the Salian Franks, chickens were classed among lesser agricultural animals and wildfowl, rather than as commodities or entertainment animals. Such attitudes toward chickens spread through Europe in the early medieval period, and while cockfighting was still practiced during the medieval period, chickens were increasingly kept as a ready supply of eggs, meat, and feathers. Quite what fuelled the shift from exotic commodity to agricultural staple is unclear, but it substantially altered the relationship between humans and chickens.

---

<sup>166</sup> Hingley, p. 231; Sykes, pp. 161–62.

<sup>167</sup> Maltby et al., p. 1014.

<sup>168</sup> Drew, *Laws of the Salian Franks*, pp. 52–5.

<sup>169</sup> *Lex Salica* §VII ‘De furtis avium’ (ed. Hessels and Kern, pp. 33–41).

<sup>170</sup> *Lex Salica* §VII ‘De furtis avium’, Add. 2–3 (ed. Behrend, p. 13); compare to *Lex Salica*, §II.1, 4, 9, §III.1, §IV.2, §V.1 (ed. Behrend, pp. 3–10).

This change in the relationship between humans and chickens in early medieval Europe had a deep and lasting impact on chickens not only in terms of their life courses, but also their genetics. Prominent features of the modern chicken such as docility, loss of seasonal reproductive patterns, and early onset of egg-laying after sexual maturity can be linked to a thyroid-stimulating hormone receptor (TSHR) gene variant widespread in chickens, but not in wild junglefowl.<sup>171</sup> Recent research into chicken aDNA suggests that a rise in this allele occurred in Western Europe during the tenth century, correlating with the rise in frequency of chicken finds in archaeological sites from the ninth century onward.<sup>172</sup> The research team who conducted this study suggest two possible reasons for this: the first is that Christian fasting practices and dietary rules, particularly those influenced by Benedictine Rules, forbade the consumption of four-footed animals but permitted the consumption of birds, fish, and eggs, which led to a rise in the rearing and consumption of chickens and their eggs. The second is that increased urbanisation throughout Northern and Western Europe created an increased need for high-yield livestock that could be successfully kept in small spaces. As the traits caused by this THSR allele were beneficial in both scenarios, birds with these traits were kept and thus bred, passing on these genes.<sup>173</sup> It is important to note that this does not mean that chickens were domesticated in Europe, but rather that an ‘improvement trait’ for poultry-rearing was established in medieval Europe.<sup>174</sup> Thus, the shift in the relationship between humans and chickens in early medieval Europe, caused by urbanisation and religious practice, had a profound effect upon chickens, both as a domesticated subspecies and as individual birds.

It can be argued then, at least in western and northern Europe, that the history of urbanisation and the history of the chicken are closely entangled, perhaps even inseparable. Rather than simply stating that chickens were selectively bred to produce docile birds with non-seasonal laying patterns to cater for urban populations, instead a process can be described whereby the existence of chickens as livestock facilitated the development of urban communities, and in turn humans showed a preference for birds with characteristics more convenient in these environments. Thus, the urban human-poultry relationship arguably helped to facilitate urbanisation.

---

<sup>171</sup> Loog et al., p. 1982.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., pp. 1985–86.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., pp. 1986–87; Caspermeier, pp. 2123–24.

<sup>174</sup> Irving-Pease et al., pp. 234–35.

This relationship between humans and chickens in medieval Europe was, to an extent, mirrored in Scandinavia, as these birds were primarily domesticated livestock that were relied upon for their eggs and meat. The North Atlantic environment, however, may have fostered a very different relationship between humans and chickens. Thus, Scandinavian chicken-keeping may be contrasted to North Atlantic chicken-keeping to illustrate how everyday human-bird relationships could vary dramatically, with effects on both wild bird and human populations.

### **3.2.1 Chickens in Mainland Scandinavian Archaeology**

It would appear from the archaeological record that chickens first arrived in southern Scandinavia (present-day Denmark and Sweden) in the Iron Age and spread northwards. Two specimens dated to the Pre-Roman Iron Age have been found in Skedemosse, Öland, and Malmö, Skåne,<sup>175</sup> but no other contemporary specimens have been found. Finds of chickens dated to the Roman Iron Age are primarily from the regions that now comprise Skåne and Denmark, spreading toward the Uppland area in eastern Sweden in the Migration Period, before becoming widespread across Norse and Sámi Sweden in the medieval period.<sup>176</sup>

As well as for entertainment, chickens and geese were used in Roman Iron Age burials in Denmark. In her discussion of six Roman Iron Age Danish human burials containing animals, including three which contained partial or whole chickens alongside other whole or butchered livestock, Anne-Brigitte Gotfredsen places emphasis on their role as luxury commodities that functioned as both status symbol and as food offering.<sup>177</sup> Gotfredsen does also mention that the cockerel was used as a ritual sacrifice in some religions practiced in the Roman Empire, such as Mithraism, and she does not discount the possibility that the sacrificial use of cockerels may have been imported alongside the birds themselves. However, she favours the argument that chickens were included in these graves as status symbols and/or food for the dead.<sup>178</sup> Outside of these burials, Gotfredsen notes that there are hardly any Danish chicken finds dated to the Roman Iron Age. Thus, she concludes that '[c]hickens were definitely not an everyday commodity for Roman Iron Age people in Southern Scandinavia and the inclusion of an entire cock or hen in a grave probably further added luxury and/or prestige to the offering.'<sup>179</sup> While their status as luxury goods may have

---

<sup>175</sup> Pitt et al., p. 6; Ericson and Tyrberg, p. 128.

<sup>176</sup> Ericson and Tyrberg, pp. 129–31.

<sup>177</sup> Gotfredsen, 'The Role of Birds', pp. 367–68.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., pp. 364, 368.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

prompted the owners of chickens to treat them better than everyday livestock, individual birds may equally have suffered neglect due to their owners not knowing how to care for them properly, and ultimately they were treated as livestock or commodities for human uses, including incorporation into human burials.

Gotfredsen has also discussed finds of birds in several sites in Denmark and Skåne dated to the Migration Period and Viking Age. Her findings in these sites suggest that as early as the fifth century chickens were present in elite residences such as Fredshøj and trading sites such as Sorte Muld. Gotfredsen's survey also demonstrates that by the Viking Age, chickens were present throughout Denmark, regardless of whether a site was urban, elite, rural, a stronghold, or a trading post. The only clear determining factor appears to be the permanence of the site: Gotfredsen notes that domestic species in general are proportionally lower at the seasonally-occupied Ribe sites compared to the other sites. Given the high NISP at all sites, chickens were presumably being kept as livestock.<sup>180</sup> Unfortunately, little information is available regarding the condition of these bones, which could indicate human actions such as provision of good/poor nutrition, or posthumous butchery and consumption. However, it would appear, given the increased number of finds, that the chicken had become a more commonplace livestock animal in Viking Age southern Scandinavia.

A similar phenomenon appears in chicken finds from the area of present-day Sweden: the small number of Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age finds increased greatly through the early Middle Ages. This appears to likewise be based in the increased use of chickens in agriculture.<sup>181</sup> For instance, the NISP of chickens in Eketorp Fortress is 323 for Phase II (fifth–eighth century), but that increases to 3380 for Phase III (eleventh–thirteenth century), with a further 446 specimens that could possibly belong to either phase.<sup>182</sup> While a small increase in specimens could be attributed to taphonomic factors, such a dramatic increase is unlikely to be purely taphonomic, and does suggest that the number of chickens in Sweden increased dramatically over the course of the early medieval period.

Chickens are also found in Swedish grave assemblages, notably in the Vendel Period and Viking Age Swedish cremation graves. In an overview of Swedish cremation graves from the fifth to the tenth century by Sabine Sten and Maria Vretemark, there were at least

---

<sup>180</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', pp. 367–70.

<sup>181</sup> Ericson and Tyrberg, pp. 128–31.

<sup>182</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch, pp. 219, 262–74.

fragmentary remains of chickens in every grave except the fifth-century Ottarshögen.<sup>183</sup> Interestingly, in her study of Vendel Period Swedish graves containing humans and animals, Hannah Strehlau remarks upon a phenomenon found in several graves, where a whole, unburnt chicken is placed upon or inside the urn of the deceased, which itself may also contain the remains of not only the deceased human being buried, but other animals that were also cremated.<sup>184</sup> A similar phenomenon occurs in Vendel Period boat graves.<sup>185</sup>

Strehlau does not offer an analysis of this phenomenon, but Anne-Sofie Gräslund has argued that chickens, eggs, and grains in these burials are not only food, but ‘from the point of view of magic [...] they all signify rebirth, fertility and life force.’<sup>186</sup> While Gräslund is not the only scholar to suggest a connection between chickens and fertility/rebirth in pre-Christian and Christian Norse contexts, these interpretations are more complex than they first appear (see §3.2.4). Thus, while it remains possible that there was a greater cosmological or religious significance behind the choice of bird in these graves, as with the Danish finds, it is probable that these chickens were added to these burials as status-markers and/or food offerings for the deceased.<sup>187</sup> Thus, once again, while there are suggestions as to how chickens were used in ritual contexts in Vendel and Viking Age Sweden, this gives little insight into the relationship between humans and chickens manifested in the more everyday aspects of life.

Textual sources for the early history of chickens in southern Scandinavia are both rare and written by non-Scandinavians. Two examples are the eleventh-century accounts of Scandinavian pre-Christian rituals written by Thietmar of Merseburg and Adam of Bremen. The earlier of the two is the *Chronicon Thietmari*, written by Thietmar of Merseburg in the second decade of the eleventh century. In the fourth book of the *Chronicon*, Thietmar describes a pagan ritual in what is now Lejre, Denmark:

Est unus in his partibus locus, caput istius regni, [Lederun nomine, in pago, qui Selon dicitur], ubi post VIII annos mense Ianuario, post hoc tempus, quo nos theophaniam Domini celebramus, omnes convenerunt, et ibi diis suimet LXXXX

---

<sup>183</sup> Sten and Vretemark, pp. 147, 150.

<sup>184</sup> Strehlau, pp. 60–2.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Gräslund, *Birka*, p. 54.

<sup>187</sup> Further discussion of secular and religious interpretations of grave goods can be found in §5.2.

[et VIII] homines et totidem equos, cum canibus et gallis pro accipitribus oblatis, immolant.<sup>188</sup>

(One place is in these parts, the capital of that kingdom, named Lejre, in a district named Seeland, where after nine years in the month of January, after that time, when we celebrate the theophany of the Lord [Epiphany], they all convened and there to their gods they burn [as offerings] 99 men and an equal number of horses, with dogs and roosters in the place of falcons.)

Certain aspects of this account are interesting, particularly the otherwise-unattested comment about sacrificing roosters in the place of falcons. Both chickens and birds of prey appear as grave goods in pre-Christianisation burials from southern Scandinavia (see also §5.2), but no archaeological find attests to a sacrifice of either bird on this scale. On the one hand, this piece of information doesn't seem to be taken from any other source, and Thietmar's discussions of pre-Christian and pagan beliefs and practices are often viewed as reliable compared to those of many of his contemporaries.<sup>189</sup> However, the *Chronicon Thietmari* was recorded several decades after Lejre was Christianised, and the first four books of the *Chronicon* were largely based upon pre-existing works.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, Thietmar was, according to David Warner, 'a militant Christian with a visceral hatred of pagans,' despite his apparent ethnographic interests.<sup>191</sup> Thus, while Thietmar may have been reporting true events, it may well be that this account of a pagan ritual was exaggerated to elevate King Henry I, who is credited in this chapter as Christianising the Danes.

While a late-eleventh-century account by Adam of Bremen of a pagan ritual held at Uppsala holds some parallels, the animals involved are not identified. Instead, it is stated that 'ex omni animante, quod masculinum est, novem capita offeruntur.'<sup>192</sup> While similarly intriguing, this account is again unreliable. As noted by Thomas Lindkvist, Adam of Bremen's account of this ceremony is told 'clearly with some exaggeration,' and eleventh-century runic inscriptions appear to attest to an acceptance of Christianity in the Uppsala area, even if the region was not itself officially Christianised.<sup>193</sup> Thus, as with the

---

<sup>188</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon Thietmari*, Book 1, ch. 17 (ed. Holzmann, pp. 22, 24). Text in brackets represents emendations in the edition.

<sup>189</sup> Warner, 'Introduction' in *Ottonian Germany*, p. 41.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>192</sup> Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, Book 4, ch. 27 (ed. Schmeidler, pp. 259–60). 'They sacrifice nine males of each living thing.'

<sup>193</sup> Lindkvist, pp. 228–29.

propagandist leanings of Thietmar's account of the Lejre ceremony, Lindkvist argues that the Uppsala ceremony was described in such grandiose terms to emphasise 'the contrast between the Christian (and royal) Sigtuna and the pagan Uppsala.'<sup>194</sup> Given the above discussion of chickens' possible use as ritual animals in certain Roman practices, these accounts may contain some echoes of real traditions. However, it is equally possible that both writers may have been working from a pre-existing models of how to describe a pagan ceremony.

Overall then, the sources concerning the early history of chickens in southern Scandinavia do not always offer large amounts of information, particularly regarding any symbolic or ritual meanings/uses of chickens. That being said, the sources do demonstrate a noticeable trajectory, as chickens went from elite commodity to a common livestock animal.

### **3.2.2 Chicken in Norway**

Until very recently, chickens were considered rare throughout other Viking Age Norwegian sites, especially given the lack of chicken specimens in famous, lavish burials such as the late ninth/early tenth century ship burials in Gokstad and Oseberg.<sup>195</sup> In their discussion of animal remains in the Viking Age trading settlement of Kaupang, Barrett et al. also comment on the relative lack of chicken specimens in Viking Age Norwegian sites in general, but they do acknowledge that at the very least chickens were available via trade with Sweden and Denmark.<sup>196</sup> Of course, taphonomic factors must be considered regarding Kaupang, as the faunal remains were generally in a poor state of preservation.<sup>197</sup> Yet the report still appears to support the pre-existing hypothesis that chickens were a relative rarity in Viking Age Norway.

However, recent re-evaluation of bird bones found in medieval Norwegian sites by Walker et al. has found that, while chickens was introduced to Norway slightly later than they were in Continental Europe, the popularity of keeping this particular domesticate rapidly expanded. According to the 2019 publication of this re-evaluation, while the NISP of chickens previously identified at medieval Norwegian sites was 556, the NISP from the re-evaluated sites is 2857 with a further 52 possible specimens. This gives a total NISP for chickens from medieval Norway of 3413, with a further 52 possible specimens; a sizeable

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>195</sup> Gansum, pp. 719, 721–22. Brøgger, pp. 21–90. It is worth noting, however, that these excavations were carried out before the widespread use of sieving with a fine mesh, and so smaller bird bones may have simply been overlooked. See §1.5.2.

<sup>196</sup> Barrett et al., p. 308. For brief discussions of abundant chickens at Birka, see Ericson et al., 'Animal exploitation', p. 86; Ericson et al., 'Retrieval of Faunal Remains', p. 85.

<sup>197</sup> Barrett et al., p. 283.

increase on previous data.<sup>198</sup> Most of these finds are from urban sites: 66% of the bird specimens at urban sites were identified as *Gallus gallus*, compared to 2% of the bird specimens from rural sites and 38% of the bird specimens from ‘supplementary rural sites,’ which had not been re-examined.<sup>199</sup> As discussed by Walker et al., such a pattern of distribution ‘likely reflects a focus on imports and domesticates within the towns and a reliance upon local resources on rural sites,’ as larger urban populations required a more stable source of food, and urban environments provided less opportunities for hunting.<sup>200</sup>

Of the chicken bones analysed for this publication, only 10% of specimens had butchery marks, although there was considerable regional variation between sites, from 4% to 25%. This, coupled with a predominance of mature birds, suggests that the primary focus of medieval Norwegian poultry-keeping was on egg-production.<sup>201</sup> Walker et al., suggest that this may be due to the chicken’s late introduction and high trade value, which would make the birds’ owners more likely to keep the birds alive for as long as was practical, compared to the meat-based poultry-rearing strategies in contemporary Europe.<sup>202</sup> In contrast, the rural Dovre sites, which had fewer chicken specimens, yielded an NISP of Ptarmigan (*Lagopus*) species that was roughly comparable to the NISP of *Gallus gallus* in Oslo and Bergen sites.<sup>203</sup> Thus, rather than use Domestic Geese, these rural areas relied on wild Galliform birds to provide meat, although given that chickens may have been kept primarily for eggs, this difference also suggests considerable regional differences in diet. This urban poultry-rearing boom in Norway also reflects the similar, if slightly earlier, phenomenon in mainland Europe discussed in §3.2.1, where chickens became popular urban livestock in the early medieval period.

As far as documentary evidence is concerned, only two medieval Norwegian diplomas mention chickens. The first is from Bergen and is dated to 1329. Here, ‘xx hœns’ are among the animals and animal products listed.<sup>204</sup> The second is in another diploma from Bergen dated 1331, in which certain foreigners are forbidden from buying various goods and livestock, including chickens, in the district, and both Norwegians and foreigners are

---

<sup>198</sup> Walker et al., p. 9, Supplementary Table 2, 3. Twenty-one sites were re-examined. Grouped by region, there were three in Oslo, seven in Bergen, four in Tønsberg, one in Alstahaug, one in Røst, one in Borgund, Ålesund, one in Dovre, one in Trondheim, and one in Finnmark.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., pp. 25–6.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 15, 26.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>204</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* XV, §13 (ed. Unger and Huitfeldt-Kaas, p. 17). ‘Twenty chickens.’



forbidden from buying items from the same list of goods in certain parts of the town, apart from the square.<sup>205</sup> Given this discrepancy between the newfound archaeological data and the documentary evidence, it could be argued that while chickens may have been a relatively popular urban agricultural staple, people simply may not have been as concerned with recording such small, short-lived animals in comparison to the more expensive and long-lived cattle and sheep. Overall, while the introduction of chickens into Norway may have significantly post-dated its introduction into Europe and southern Scandinavia, this did not prevent the bird from becoming an important element of medieval Norwegian life, particularly in urban centres, where reliance upon wildfowling was less viable.

### 3.2.3 Chickens in the North Atlantic

While the introduction of chickens into mainland Scandinavia appears to have been quickly followed by a rise in their popularity, particularly in urban environments, the same cannot be said for Iceland and the North Atlantic islands. This is not to say that chickens were absent from Iceland. As Lara Hogg notes, chickens are often invoked as part of the ‘domestic package’ settlers brought to Iceland.<sup>206</sup> Due to this narrative, it is often claimed that the Icelandic breed of the chicken, the Landnámshæna (‘Settlement Hen’; English name: Icelandic Chicken), is directly descended from this ninth-century foundation stock. This is at least in part influenced by Stefán Aðalsteinsson’s genetic tests on Icelandic chickens, which showed links between older Norwegian and German poultry breeds.<sup>207</sup>

However, many factors suggest that this is a romanticised narrative: recent genetic testing has also shown connections between the Landnámshæna and Mediterranean and Middle Eastern/North African breeds, and furthermore the modern Landnámshæna breed is derived from birds selected by Stefán Aðalsteinsson himself and others for breeding in 1974–5.<sup>208</sup> As well as Stefán Aðalsteinsson’s own vested interest in the Landnámshæna as a commercial breed, it is important to note that chickens were imported to Iceland for commercial laying purposes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>209</sup> Thus, it is unlikely that the Landnámshæna developed solely from chickens taken to Iceland in the late

---

<sup>205</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* VII, §135 (ed. Unger and Huitfeldt-Kaas, p. 153).

<sup>206</sup> Hogg, p. 294.

<sup>207</sup> Stefán Aðalsteinsson, ‘Upprúni’, pp. 44–5; *ibid.*, ‘Sérstaða’, p. 27; Friðrik G. Olgeirsson, pp. 15–6; Lyimo et al., p. 843.

<sup>208</sup> Erfanefnd landbúnaðarins, pp. 17–8; Ólöf Ósk Guðmundsóttir, pp. 1–2; Stefán Aðalsteinsson, ‘Upprúni’, pp. 44–5; *ibid.*, ‘Sérstaða’, p. 27; Lyimo et al., p. 843; Rosenburg et al., pp. 704, 712.

<sup>209</sup> Ólöf Ósk Guðmundsóttir, pp. 1–2.

ninth century. Instead, there was a longer history of importing chickens into Iceland, even if such imports were not always affordable or frequent.

Regardless of the initial number of chickens imported by Scandinavian settlers, few chicken specimens have been identified at Icelandic sites, despite most recent Icelandic excavations dry-sieving with a 4mm mesh. No chicken specimens have been identified at Hofstaðir or most of the other nearby Mývatn sites in northeast Iceland, despite the sites being abundant in faunal remains.<sup>210</sup> Chickens were similarly not found at the tenant farm in Skuggi, north Iceland, or the medieval trading post at Gásir, northeast Iceland.<sup>211</sup> Finds from some sites, such as the medieval farm at Reykholt, have proven inconclusive, as no bird bones were preserved in an identifiable state.<sup>212</sup> There are two finds from Skútustaðir (Mývatn area) dating to the late thirteenth century, one dating to the ninth century, and a further single specimen from the sixteenth-century monastery at Skriðuklaustur, east Iceland.<sup>213</sup> While this is the currently available published data, there is an ongoing project to re-evaluate bird bones from Icelandic sites, and this may alter the NISP of chickens.<sup>214</sup> While issues of preservation must be considered when looking at these finds, it would appear that while chickens were present in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, they were likely to have been very uncommon.

Excavations in the Faroes and the Orkneys similarly suggest an absence of chickens in favour of Domestic Geese and wildfowling, the latter of which will be discussed in §4, suggesting the climate and agricultural practices bore resemblance to Iceland.<sup>215</sup> While Scandinavian settlements in some of the northernmost regions of the British Isles, such as Freswick Links in Caithness, likewise yielded very few chicken specimens,<sup>216</sup> other regions did not. For instance, the numbers of chickens in settlements on South Uist, Outer Hebrides, appear to increase considerably during the Norse period, and Best and Mulville hypothesise that chicken was likely ‘the main [avian] domesticate’ in Norse South Uist.<sup>217</sup> Similarly, chickens were abundant in Viking Age Scandinavian settlements in more mainland Britain

---

<sup>210</sup> McGovern et al., ‘The Archaeofauna’, pp. 172, 222–26.

<sup>211</sup> Harrison et al., ‘Gásir in Eyjafjörður’, p. 106; Harrison, ‘Gásir Area A Archaeofauna’, p. 22; Ibid., ‘Small holder farming’, p. 58.

<sup>212</sup> Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir et al., ‘High status Icelandic farm’, pp. 201–2; McGovern, ‘Animal Bone’, pp. 257–58.

<sup>213</sup> M. T. Hicks, p. 22; Hamilton-Dyer, pp. 4, 32; Sayle et al.

<sup>214</sup> Albína Hulda Pálsdóttir, pers. comm.

<sup>215</sup> Harland et al., pp. 156–57, 159; Church et al., p. 187.

<sup>216</sup> Rackham in Morris et al., pp. 85–7. Rackham comments that this may be due to taphonomic factors, rather than indicating an absence of chickens in the settlement.

<sup>217</sup> Best and Mulville, p. 387.

and Ireland.<sup>218</sup> Thus, while there may have been fewer chickens the further north in the North Atlantic area the settlement was, such a pattern is not universal. It may have been the case that while some North Atlantic islands may have been less favourable for poultry-rearing, other settlements, whether through climate, economic factors, or agricultural practices, faced fewer problems in rearing chickens.

As well as an apparent lack of chickens in the archaeological record of Iceland, there appear to be no extant medieval Icelandic diplomas that mention poultry. It is possible that chickens were included in the generic term *kvikfé* ('livestock'), seen in a number of Icelandic diplomas.<sup>219</sup> However, *kvikfé* appears to have had several definitions, some of which could include livestock as broadly defined, while others primarily concerned larger livestock, such as cattle.<sup>220</sup> One of the few non-literary texts from Iceland that mentions chickens is the Old Icelandic medical and culinary miscellany MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43, dated to the late fifteenth century. It includes several recipes involving chicken, such as:

Madur skal skera hæns j sma | stycki ok sioda þat j vatni. ok mala pipar canel sefram. ok hveiti braud. ok lifræna sodna. ok lata aptur j sodit med ediki. .ok. salltti matuliga.<sup>221</sup>

(Cut a chicken into small pieces and boil it in water. Then grind together pepper, cinnamon, saffron, wheat bread, and cooked liver. Put it back in the broth with vinegar, and salt moderately.)

However, two clear factors prevent this from being interpreted as an everyday Icelandic recipe. Firstly, the abundant spicing would be available only to rich and well-connected households.<sup>222</sup> Secondly, in his introduction Larsen notes that the manuscript displays aspects of both Danish and Norwegian language and orthography, and that 'Danish sources are extant for the Book of Simples, the Lapidary, and the Cook Book.'<sup>223</sup> Thus, such recipes most likely had a Danish origin and/or Norwegian intermediary, places where chickens were far more plentiful, as well as being intended for more affluent households.

---

<sup>218</sup> K. Poole, 'More than just meat', p. 151; Harland et al., p. 159.

<sup>219</sup> For example, *Íslandské Originaldiplomer* §47, (ed. Stefán Karlsson, p. 55).

<sup>220</sup> CV, s.v. 'kvik-fé'. ONP, s.v. 'kvikfé' gives a list of attestations, but does not discuss the definition <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o46522>> [Accessed 3rd October 2019].

<sup>221</sup> MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43, fol. S 29v, §17 (ed. Larsen, p. 133).

<sup>222</sup> Freedman, 'Scarcity and Value'; Ibid., 'Medieval Spice Trade', pp. 335–38; Nam, pp. 335–37.

<sup>223</sup> Larsen, 'Introduction', p. 19.

Early modern Icelandic texts also support the argument that chickens were scarce in Iceland. In the sixteenth-century *Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiae*, Oddur Einarsson states that ‘Anseres domestici, quos *heimgiǫfir* dicimus, apud paucos quosdam insulanos reperiuntur, nec ullas alias aues domesticas norunt Islandi gillinis exceptis quæ tamen non aliuntur nisi in domibus opulentorum.’<sup>224</sup> Similarly, P. H. Resen’s seventeenth-century description of Iceland states that ‘[a]ligæsir eru fáar á Íslandi eins og aðrir alifuglar, nema hænsni á efnaheimilum.’<sup>225</sup> These statements correspond to the lack of both archaeological and documentary sources for chickens in Iceland during the medieval period. Thus, while chickens were not absent from Iceland, they were hardly common and appear to have been a status symbol rather than an agricultural staple.

This lack of chickens in Iceland has a few possible explanations. Firstly, it could be that the climate was simply too harsh for the birds to survive without substantial shelter. This explanation has been suggested in relation to a similar lack of specimens at the medieval site in Quoygrew, Orkney.<sup>226</sup> Alexander Fenton’s ethnographic history of the Orkneys and Shetlands does occasionally mention chickens, but they are relatively few compared to geese, which get their own chapter.<sup>227</sup> Harland et al. comment that nineteenth- and twentieth-century poultry-keeping in Orkney was largely curtailed when storms in 1952 and 1953 blew a significant number of birds off the island.<sup>228</sup> Fenton does not mention this event, but it may provide a particularly dramatic illustration of why chickens were not common in medieval Orcadian and Icelandic settlements.

Another possibility that has been raised is that while the Icelandic climate was initially favourable for grain production, climatic shifts in the medieval period caused the average temperature in Iceland to drop considerably. The cooler temperatures meant that it was harder to grow grain, and as a result small livestock that was fed on grain, such as chickens, were no longer as economically viable.<sup>229</sup> This explanation has gained a reasonable

---

<sup>224</sup> *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, pp. 48–9). ‘Domesticated geese, which we call *heimgæsir*, are found on a certain few islands, and no other domestic birds are known of in Iceland, apart from chickens, which are reared only in the houses of the rich.’

<sup>225</sup> Resen, ch. 10 (ed. and transl. Jakob Benediktsson, p. 146). ‘There are few domestic geese in Iceland, just as with other domestic birds, apart from chickens in the homes of the rich.’ No edition of Resen’s Latin text has been published. (See Jakob Benediktsson, ‘Introduction’ to Resen, p. 14.)

<sup>226</sup> Harland et al., p. 159.

<sup>227</sup> Fenton, pp. 78, 147, 497, 507–8.

<sup>228</sup> Harland et al., p. 159.

<sup>229</sup> Friðrik G. Olgeirsson, pp. 21–2.

amount of traction, and is often used in discussions of the apparent lack of chickens in Icelandic archaeology and documents.

However, isotope analysis of the ninth-century chicken specimen from Skútustaðir has suggested that this may be an overly simplified narrative, as chickens raised in Iceland may not have been fed primarily on grain. According to Sayle et al., stable isotope analysis suggests that this bird's diet had been heavily supplemented with freshwater fish that was probably scraps from household waste.<sup>230</sup> Such economising practices were not unusual in medieval Europe: stable isotope analysis of the chicken specimens from Viking-Age Bishopstone (Sussex, England), for example, suggest that the birds were raised on an omnivorous diet that was likely to consist of household food waste and scraps.<sup>231</sup> This poultry-feeding practice challenges the lack-of-grain hypothesis as a reason behind the lack of chickens in Iceland and the North Atlantic: if chickens were fed with household food scraps, this would lessen the birds' grain requirements. This leaves two possibilities for the birds' unpopularity. The climate may have still been too unfavourable for chickens to be kept, and/or a typical household did not produce enough scraps to sustain a healthy flock of chickens.

Overall, it is hard to discern whether there was a definite scarcity of chickens in medieval Iceland. As with medieval Norway, current re-evaluations of archaeological sources may dramatically revise the image of poultry-keeping in medieval Iceland. However, the combination of documentary evidence, zooarchaeological evidence, and early modern descriptions of Icelandic life would suggest that chickens were at the very least significantly less common than they were in medieval Scandinavia.

### **3.2.4 Chickens in Old Norse and Scandinavian Latin Literature**

Despite the slightly patchy and late introduction to Scandinavia and the North Atlantic, chickens have a relatively large presence in Norse-Icelandic literature compared to many other birds. In part, this may have been due to the large amount of symbolism attached to chickens, particularly cockerels, in Christian and Classical traditions, which will be discussed in this section. However, while these traditions may have played a considerable role in shaping literary depictions of chickens from medieval Scandinavia and North Atlantic sources, this does not mean that such literary depictions of chickens were written at a

---

<sup>230</sup> Sayle et al., p. 540.

<sup>231</sup> K. Poole, 'Mammal and bird remains', pp. 152–53; Marshall et al., 201–2; Ibid., 'More than just meat', p. 152.

complete remove from human-animal relationships. While they are often symbolic and/or stereotyped, these literary tropes were often still attached to human observations of chickens, derived from lives spent in close proximity.

One of the most thematically-varied textual sources is the anonymous *þula*, *Hana heiti* ('Roosters' Names'). This is one of the group of anonymous, learned *þulur* recorded in AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to.<sup>232</sup> Unlike *Fugla heiti*, which is more like a list of species, *Hana heiti* is closer to the scholarly definition of a *þula* in that it lists a number of poetic synonyms that may be used for chickens. Only a single stanza is recorded:

Fegringr, hani, Fjalarr ok áslákr,  
kókr, Salgofnir, kambr, Viðofnir,  
gylmir, gallus ok gallína,  
hœna, keila, hábrók, kaða.<sup>233</sup>

(Handsome one, rooster, Fjalarr and *áslákr*, cock, Salgofnir, comb, Viðofnir, crower, *gallus* and *gallina*, hen, *keila*, high-breeches, **cackling one**.<sup>234</sup>)

This list, while short, alludes to many of the themes that are addressed in this chapter. Both Fjalarr and Salgofnir are the names of roosters found in eddic verse, at least one of which performs the duty of awakening the inhabitants of Valhøll (see §3.2.4.1). These, along with *gylmir* ('crower'), appear to be related to the crows of roosters and their role as the awakeners of humans in various traditions. In addition to the crowing-related *heiti*, there is one other sound-related *heiti*.<sup>235</sup> This is *kaða* ('cackling one'), which—as a feminine *heiti*—likely refers to the cackling noises made by hens after laying.<sup>236</sup>

As well as the aural aspects of chickens, three *heiti* appear to draw upon visual aspects. *Fegringr* ('handsome one'), *kambi* ('comb'), and *hábrók* ('high-breeches') all refer to their physical attributes: *kambi* refers to the fleshy comb found in all breeds, and *fegringr* may refer to chickens' colourful plumage. Gurevich suggests that *hábrók* was misattributed as a chicken-*heiti*, as it is more commonly used as a hawk name, and that the confusion

---

<sup>232</sup> Discussed in §2.3.

<sup>233</sup> *Hana heiti* (ed. Gurevich, p. 947). English translation follows the one supplied by Gurevich, with my own alterations in bold. This approach will be followed in other translations of *þulur*.

<sup>234</sup> With Gurevich's translation 'cackling bird' is technically accurate, there is no indication given as to why *kaða* would specifically refer to a bird.

<sup>235</sup> While *hani* and *gallus* have proposed etymological roots in a Proto-Indo-European word meaning 'to sing' (§9), this root is so distant that these names will not be counted in sound-related *heiti*.

<sup>236</sup> Thornhill; Pizzari and Birkhead.

occurred due to *hábrók* being a feminine noun, and was thus attributed to hens.<sup>237</sup> However, many breeds of Chicken have feathered legs, so to attribute this *heiti* to a grammatical confusion may be unnecessary.

One of the other prominent themes in this *þula* is gender. Despite *Hana heiti* being titled with the masculine term *hani* in both manuscripts, it covers both masculine and feminine *heiti*. However, instead of the grammatical genders being intermingled, there is a distinct structural split: all the *heiti* until *gallus* are grammatically masculine, while all the *heiti* from *gallina* onwards are grammatically feminine. Of the feminine *heiti*, *keila* further reflects this emphasis on binary gender, as while it can be a fish name, it also appears to be a generalised term for a non-human female entity.<sup>238</sup> Several possibilities may account for this unique structural divide. It may be related to the visible sexual dimorphism apparent in many breeds of chicken, as the rooster often has a larger, more developed comb and exaggerated, colourful tail feathers compared to the hen. It may also be a nod to bestiary literature, some of which notes the derivation of feminine names such as *gallina* from the masculine names in the entry for *gallus*.<sup>239</sup>

Finally, a considerable number of loanwords present in this *þula* may allude to the foreign associations of the chicken in Iceland. Two of these are Latin words: *gallus* ('rooster') and *gallina* ('hen'). *Kókr* also appears to be a loanword, possibly from Old English *cocc* ('rooster').<sup>240</sup> This may be the encyclopaedic tendencies of the anonymous *þulur* on display, but the presence of foreign loanwords may also be related to the fact that chickens were rare in Iceland compared to Europe and the Atlantic Archipelago, and may have been encountered through trade and foreign literature.

Of all of the *heiti* supplied in *Hana heiti*, only one appears to even vaguely allude to the role of chickens as a domesticated species. The name *Salgofnir* is derived from the word *salr* ('hall'), and a second element that has been proposed as meaning 'cowering,' 'shoulder-blade,' 'beak,' 'yawning,' or 'to hear.'<sup>241</sup> The uncontested first element does, however, indicate an animal that lives in close proximity to humans. If nothing else, the lack of domestic- or agriculture-linked *heiti* in this *þula* support the pattern found elsewhere in Old Norse literature: while birds were far from uncommon in the corpus, both wild and domestic

---

<sup>237</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hana heiti*, p. 949. For *hábrók* as a hawk-*heiti*, see §5.4.1.

<sup>238</sup> *Fiska heiti*, 4:2 (ed. Gurevich, p. 856); Gurevich, Commentary on *Hana heiti*, p. 949.

<sup>239</sup> Aberdeen Bestiary, fol. 39r < <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f39r> > [Accessed 12th August 2019].

<sup>240</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hana heiti*, p. 948.

<sup>241</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hana heiti*, p. 948; de Vries, s.v. 'Salgopnir'.

subsistence-related birds as categories in themselves were not necessarily a literary concern in the same way symbolic and leisure-related birds such as hawks, ravens, and eagles were. Chickens were one of the few birds that appears in both categories.

#### 3.2.4.1 Cockerels: Awakening and/or Resurrection

One of the most prominent themes involving chickens in medieval European literature more broadly is the link between cockerel crows, awakening, and resurrection. Crowing is a behaviour performed by most non-castrated male chickens. It appears to be triggered by circadian rhythms, but also plays a role in regulation and reiteration of social hierarchies, as dominant cockerels crow before non-dominant cockerels.<sup>242</sup> As it is regulated by circadian rhythms, which are in turn affected by daylight, cockerels often begin to crow early in the morning when the sun rises. It is easy to see, then, how cockerels became viewed as birds whose role is to awaken humans. The resurrection motif as a symbolic follow-up to awakening is not impossible to imagine, and it can be found in a variety of cultures.

One of the few references to chickens in south Scandinavian literature, found in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, follows this theme. The *Gesta* was written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and concerns the legendary kings and heroes of Denmark, as well as more recent historical figures.<sup>243</sup> This particular incident concerns the legendary Migration Period figure, King Haddingus. Haddingus has a vision of an old woman bearing hemlock, who takes him to an 'other world':

Prodeuntibus murus aditu transcensuque difficilis obsistebat. Quem foemina nequicquam transilire conata, cum ne corugati quidem corporis exilitate proficeret, galli caput, quem secum forte deferebat, abruptum ultra moenium septa iactavit, statimque reduius ales resumpti fidem spiraculi claro testabatur occentu.<sup>244</sup>

(Moving on, they found barring their way a wall, difficult to approach and surmount; the woman tried to leap over it, but to no avail, for even her slender, wrinkled body was not an advantage; she thereupon wrung off the head of a cock which she happened to be carrying and threw it over the enclosing barrier;

---

<sup>242</sup> Leonard and Horn, pp. 1287–89; Shimmura and Yoshimura, pp. R231–32; Shimmura et al., p. 2.

<sup>243</sup> For the dating of the *Gesta* through internal evidence, see Friis-Jensen, i, 'Introduction', p. xxxiv.

<sup>244</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, i. 8. 14 (ed. Friis-Jensen, vol. 1, p. 66).



immediately the bird, resurrected, gave proof by a loud crow that it had truly recovered its breathing.)<sup>245</sup>

While this incident is not paralleled directly in other textual sources, it has drawn scholarly commentary that attempts to connect it with other textual sources related to pre-Christian Norse beliefs. E. O. G. Turville-Petre makes a connection between this episode and the description of a Rus' funeral by Ibn Fadlan, in which a rooster and two hens were killed, cut in two, and cast onto the ship that served as the deceased's pyre. Turville-Petre suggests that 'it is possible that it is possible that birds of this kind symbolised rebirth.'<sup>246</sup> There are issues with the reading. Ibn Fadlan's account was written in the tenth century and concerns a group whose identity is unclear: while he calls them *Rūsiyyah* ('Rus'), they may have been Scandinavian traders, who may or may not have been acculturated to Slavic culture; Slavic traders; or another group altogether.<sup>247</sup> While Iron Age southern Scandinavian archaeological finds suggest chickens may have had ritual/religious significance (§3.2.1), this episode in *Gesta Danorum* is a tale concerning the Migration Period written down in the thirteenth century. Furthermore, while Saxo Grammaticus has not been discounted as a historical source, in the *Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, Lönnroth et al. comment that 'Saxo preaches and editorialises just as eagerly as he reports the facts, and he does not hesitate to use mythical *fornaldarsögur* as historical sources if he can derive some appropriate philosophical moral from the narrative.'<sup>248</sup> As such, it is hard to definitively comment on how closely it is related to pre-Christian Norse ideas.

As well as the Rus' funeral described by Ibn Fadlan, Turville-Petre also cites the cockerels named in *Vǫluspá* as further examples of the 'Norse' connections between cockerels and rebirth. These cockerels are briefly alluded to, but both the birds and their cries appear to be related to death and the afterlife:

Sat þar á haugi  
ok sló hǫrpu  
gýgjar hirðir,  
glaðr Eggþér;  
gól um honum

---

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., transl. Fisher (ed. Friis-Jensen, vol. 1, p. 67).

<sup>246</sup> E. O. G. Turville-Petre, p. 273.

<sup>247</sup> See Haley-Halinski, 'Paths of Belonging'.

<sup>248</sup> Lönnroth et al., p. 503–4.

í Gaglviði  
fagrrauður hani,  
sá er Fjalarr heitir.

Gól um ásum  
Gullinkambi,  
sá vekr hólða  
at Herjafóðrs;  
en annarr gelr  
fyr jörð neðan,  
sótrauður hani,  
at sölom Heljar.<sup>249</sup>

(Joyful Eggþér, giantess' shepherd, sat there on a mound and struck a harp; a fair red rooster crowed to him in the gosling-/gallows-wood;<sup>250</sup> that one is named Fjalarr.

Gullinkambi cried out to the Æsir; that one awakens the men at the war-father's [Óðinn]; and another crows beneath the earth, a soot-red rooster, at the hall of Hel.)

Another potentially-related cockerel is Salgofnir, a rooster said to live in Valhöll according to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, who has a similar role to Gullinkambi in *Völuspá*.<sup>251</sup> These cockerels may have connections to rebirth, in as much as their cries take place in the section of *Völuspá* that immediately precedes the onset of Ragnarök, which may be considered a cycle of rebirth as much as it is an ending, given that it concludes with the gods emerging into a refreshed world and resuming their game. However, while there may be a link between cockerels and rebirth, whether this constitutes evidence for the argument that cockerels *symbolise* rebirth in Old Norse literature specifically is still unclear.

---

<sup>249</sup> *Völuspá* (K) 41–42 (*Edkv* I, pp. 301–2).

<sup>250</sup> In their commentary on this verse, Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason suggest that Gaglviðr is either a forest with birds, or a forest of particularly tall, gangly trees. The *Hauksbók* redaction *Völuspá* (H) 31:6 (*Edkv* I, p. 312) reads Galgviði, which could be related to *gálgi* ('gallows'). While this is not the generally accepted reading, it is thematically consistent with the burial mound, Valhöll, and Hel, and should not be discounted.

<sup>251</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, 49:7 (*Edkv* II, p. 282). In their notes to this stanza, Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason suggest that Gullinkambi and Salgofnir are the same cockerel. This may be the case, or they may be variant traditions.

This does not remove the possibility that these birds are still in some way connected with awakening and even rebirth, but it allows for interpretative avenues to be opened, rather than simply assuming that they must specifically signify rebirth. After all these cockerels do appear to have connections with death and the afterlife: one crows to a person who is sitting on a burial mound, two appear to live in Valhøll, and one lives in Hel. However, these birds do appear to have some connection to awakening the dead, although they appear to be awakening people in the afterlife, rather than awakening them from death into life. Thus, while these cockerels do appear to straddle the borders between death and life, their connections to resurrection as such are fragile. The presence of these cosmological cockerels may have some connection with the use of chickens in pre-Christian burials, but such grave goods are not attested in Icelandic or Norwegian contexts, meaning that the eddic verse discussed here would be at a far remove from such practices when it was recorded. Similarly, while the episode in the *Gesta Danorum* might connect cockerels to death and rebirth, this does not necessarily indicate a pan-Norse symbolism ultimately linked to a small number of Iron Age Scandinavian burial practices.

Furthermore, arguing that these cockerels simply symbolise rebirth collapses the other potential readings of these birds. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, roosters crow in response to circadian rhythms, and the crowing of one cockerel often sets off a chain reaction where others in the group crow. One possible interpretation could be that awakening to a cockerel's cry was such a regular aspect of life that the afterlife, too, was furnished with its own cockerels. In addition to this, the serial crowing of the roosters in *Völuspá* may also be drawing upon natural bird behaviour to emphasise that the cosmological worlds of eddic poetry are interconnected; that major events in one run in sync with major events in the others, most notably Ragnarök.

In addition to these other interpretative possibilities, it does need to be noted that the connections between cockerels and waking are old and widespread. For instance, Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, written in the first century AD, describes the cockerel as 'nostri vigils nocturni quos excitandis in opera mortalibus rumpendoque somno natura genuit. Norunt sidera et ternas distinguunt horas interdiu cantu.' Additionally, robbers were said to be deterred and the sick cured by the cry of the cockerel.<sup>252</sup> While Plato's works may not have been known first-hand by medieval writers, there were many excerpts, epitomes, quotations,

---

<sup>252</sup> Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, Book X, ch. xxiv (ed. Rackham, p. 321). 'Our [Roman] night watchman, whom nature produced for mortals to be awakened for their labours and sleep that is to be interrupted.'

and other means of literary transmission through which its ideas were spread.<sup>253</sup> Another tradition regarding cockerels and awakening/resurrection can be found in the New Testament of the Bible and subsequent commentaries on it. Before his death, Christ tells the apostle Peter that he would deny Christ three times before the cry of the cockerel. After Christ's resurrection, he tells Peter that he has returned three times. Peter refuses to believe this three times, and a cockerel crows. Peter then realises that what Christ told him was true, and weeps in remorse.<sup>254</sup> Thus, the cry of the cockerel was associated with remorse and redemption, and by extension rejuvenation, at least in a spiritual sense, from the earliest days of Christianity.

The ideas from Pliny and the Bible regarding the cry of the cockerel as both awakening and rejuvenating is found across the *Physiologus*/Bestiary tradition in medieval Europe. The *Physiologus* is a collection of Christian animal lore that was first created in second-century Greece, and was subsequently edited, translated into multiple languages including Latin, and transmitted throughout medieval Europe.<sup>255</sup> Examples of the relevant cockerel lore can be found in the ninth-century Bern *Physiologus*, late-twelfth/early-thirteenth-century Aberdeen Bestiary, and thirteenth-century Ashmole Bestiary to name a few examples.<sup>256</sup>

While there are no extant bestiary entries on the cockerel from Scandinavia or Iceland, two late-twelfth/early-thirteenth Icelandic manuscript fragments of vernacular translations of the *Physiologus* suggest there was knowledge of and interest in *Physiologus*/Bestiary lore in medieval Iceland.<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, there is a similar passage in the early-twelfth-century *Disciplina clericalis* by Petrus Alphonsi has been found in post-medieval vernacular Icelandic translations, and is thought to have influenced Old Norse texts such as *Víga-Glúms saga*, suggesting it was known in Iceland at the time.<sup>258</sup> In one of the parables in this text, the biblical figure Balaam tells his son 'Lát ok eigi hanann vera vakara

---

<sup>253</sup> Hexter, pp. 193–95; Germ, pp. 70–96.

<sup>254</sup> Matthew 26:69–75, Mark 14:66–72, Luke 22:55–62.

<sup>255</sup> Eden, 'Introduction' to Theobaldus, *Physiologus*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>256</sup> Aberdeen Bestiary, fol. 39r <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f39r>> [Accessed 12th August 2019]. Similar passages can be found in the ninth-century *Bern Physiologus*, (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 318, ff. 21v, 22r); and the thirteenth-century *Ashmole Bestiary* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Ashmole 1511, ff. 50v, 51r), among others.

<sup>257</sup> *The Icelandic Physiologus* (ed. Halldór Hermansson).

<sup>258</sup> For a discussion of the Icelandic vernacular treatments of the *Disciplina clericalis*, see Caldwell, pp. 125–35. For the possible influence of *Disciplina clericalis* upon *Víga-Glúms saga*, see Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Formáli' §2 in *Eyfirdinga saga*, pp. xxxix–xl. For the wider influence of the Latin *exempla* tradition on vernacular Icelandic literature, see Ciklamini, p. 71.

en þik, þviat hann vakir í óttu, en þú sefr.’<sup>259</sup> Again, the watchfulness and wakefulness of the cockerel is used as a model for a good Christian, although the additional symbolism found in the bestiaries is lacking.

Overall, there are some connections between roosters and resurrection in Scandinavian and North Atlantic literature, although they do not appear to be as coherent as Turville-Petre suggests. Of the examples given, only the tale from the *Gesta Danorum* is explicitly tied to resurrection from death to life, and only the bird itself is resurrected. While the tale recounted by Saxo concerning Hadding’s dream may have held some resonance with pre-Christian East Norse beliefs, mythology, and/or funerary practices, it is also possible that this episode contained a piece of Christian symbolism, perhaps to suggest that, in some way, the history of the Danish kingdom had always been tied to Christianity. Alternatively, it could reflect some aspect of funerary practice from the Migration Period or Viking Age, but it is almost impossible to discern what, if any, can be read as such. At the very least, it can be ascertained that in thirteenth-century Denmark, stories were circulated in which cockerels were associated with magic, ritual, and rebirth in pre-Christian times, although whether this reflects pre-Christian beliefs, Christian ideas concerning cockerels, or a mixture of the two, is unclear.

In eddic poetry, meanwhile, the cockerel’s crow doesn’t so much resurrect the dead as awaken the dead within the world of the dead, be it Hel or Valhöll. While the events that the cockerels’ crows announce do ultimately lead to a rebirth of sorts, there are many other factors at play. Rather than indicating a clear example of a specifically Norse pre-Christian use of the cockerel as a symbol of rebirth, these instances could indicate many other things as well, such as a cosmological extension of bird-human relationships and/or a cross-cultural spread of symbolism, which need to be considered alongside the argument that cockerels may have symbolised resurrection and rebirth in pre-Christian Norse belief systems.

### 3.2.4.2 Chickens and Human Sexuality

Another aspect of chicken symbolism that appears in Old Norse literature is the use of chickens as an archetype of heterosexuality. As discussed above (§3.2.4), grammatical gender appears to be a structuring principle behind *Hana heiti*, perhaps reflecting the sexual

---

<sup>259</sup> ‘Frá lærsvæini’ (ed. Gering, p. 164). ‘And let not the rooster be more wakeful than you, because he wakes in the pre-dawn, but you sleep.’ The Icelandic translation appears to be faithful to the Latin original, found in Petrus Alphonsus, *Disciplina clericalis*, ‘De formica, gallo, cane’ (ed. Hilka and Söderhjelm, p. 3).

dimorphism of chickens. While this theme is rarer in Old Norse literature than the theme of awakening, it does appear in *Flóamanna saga*:

Frá því er sagt eitt hvert sinn, at þau Þorgils ok Helga sátu úti, ok hrein hænán við hananum, en haninn leggr at henni ok berr hana, þar til hon mæðiz. Þorgils mælti: «sér þú, Helga, sameign þeira hana ok hænu.» Helga svarar: «hvers er þat vert?» segir hon. «Svá má vera,» segir Þorgils, «annarra viðreign.» Geraz nú góðar samfarar þeira.<sup>260</sup>

(It is said one time, that Þorgils and Helga sat outside, and the hen called out to the rooster, and the rooster lay by her and beat against her, until she became exhausted. Þorgils spoke: ‘Do you see, Helga, what is going on between the hen and the rooster?’

Helga answered: ‘What does it matter?’ she says.

‘So it may be,’ Þorgils said, ‘with other dealings.’

Now their marriage became good.)

As already mentioned, chickens were rare in Iceland, likely due to harsh climate and/or a lack of suitable food, and so their presence in this scene suggests that Þorgils and Helga are in a period of plenty.

In addition to this, the presence of a reasonably explicit description of chicken sex ties into the theme of marital relations. Firstly, roosters were often used as symbols of strong and attentive husbands, for example in the *Disciplina clericalis*, where alongside wakefulness, the rooster’s ‘strength’ in tending to his hens is praised, as the text states ‘Lát hanann eigi vera þér sterkara; hann hirdir tíu húsfreyjur sínar, en þú varla eina.’<sup>261</sup> In addition to this, the saga narrative may be making a nod to related ideas of the hen and rooster as particularly sexually voracious. As discussed by Dieter Bitterli, the image of the rooster as belligerent and prone to copulation was a popular one in medieval Europe,<sup>262</sup> and so it may also have been known in medieval Iceland. The particularly graphic description of chicken sex in *Flóamanna saga* suggests that it may in part have been an innuendo drawn from life, but there is also the

---

<sup>260</sup> *Flóamanna saga*, ch. 31 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 63).

<sup>261</sup> ‘Frá lærisveini’ (ed. Gering, p. 164) ‘Let not the rooster be stronger than you; he keeps his ten wives, but you scarcely one’; Petrus Alphonsus, *Disciplina clericalis*, ‘De formica, gallo, cane’ (ed. Hilka and Söderhjelm, p. 3).

<sup>262</sup> Bitterli, pp. 121–24.

possibility that the saga is also drawing upon a wider literary topos that used chickens as a sexual innuendo.

Basil Price has provided another reading, arguing that this episode hints at the threat of marital abuse, based on the reading that the rooster kills the hen, and Þorgils uses this to reassert his masculinity after miraculously breastfeeding his son in Greenland.<sup>263</sup> While I do not follow Price's reading that the rooster necessarily kills the hen, his argument that the rooster is being used to re-establish Þorgils' masculinity in terms of sexual aggression and capacity for violence is compelling, particularly given the general use of chickens as allegories for human heterosexuality in medieval European literature, including an emphasis on the sexual 'strength' of roosters. Thus, while the sexual aspects of chicken symbolism in Old Norse literature were not particularly prominent, they were present, and the single example of chickens as a metaphor/exemplar for human sexuality appears to be drawn from a combination of wider literary tropes and observed animal behaviour, and used to evoke cisgender, heterosexual, patriarchal norms, including misogynistic ideologies.

### 3.2.4.3 Chickens as a Luxury

There are, in addition to these broader European ideas concerning chickens found in the *Íslendingasögur*, instances where mentioning of chickens indicates more specifically Icelandic aspects; namely, chickens as a luxury item. One example can be found in *Hænsa-Þóris saga*. In the opening of this saga, it is said that 'eitt sinn, er Þórir fór sunnan um heiði, hafði hann með sér hœns í fôr norður um land ok seldi þau með öðrum kaupskap, ok því var hann kallaðr Hænsa-Þórir.'<sup>264</sup> While to a present-day reader, this may seem relatively unremarkable, chickens were likely something of a rarity in the time the saga was written down, if not the time it was set. As Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson comment, 'Alifuglaræktar er fremur sjaldan getið í fornöld, og það virðist yfirleitt ekki hafa kveðið mikið af henni, enda bendir frásögn af Hænsa-Þóri fremur til þess.'<sup>265</sup> The saga doesn't mention chickens at any other point, so it is possible that this anecdote was added to explain the name Hænsa-Þórir in *Íslendingabók*.<sup>266</sup> However, this potentially allows some insight into

---

<sup>263</sup> B. Price, 'Session 4: Norse Texts and Northern Cultures'.

<sup>264</sup> *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, ch. 1 (ed. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, p. 6). 'One time, when Þórir travelled north through the heaths, he had poultry with him, and he sold them alongside other goods. Thus he was called "Poultry-Þórir."'

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, note 2. 'Poultry breeding in ancient times is rarely mentioned, and there is usually little evidence of it, as the narration of Hænsa-Þórir suggests.'

<sup>266</sup> *Íslendingabók*, ch. 5 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 22). For a discussion of the relationship between *Íslendingabók* and *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, see Berger, pp. 5–6.

his character. As discussed, chickens were rare in Iceland, likely due to issues surrounding food production and climate. Thus, Hœnsa-Þórir is not just selling livestock; he is selling a rare luxury commodity, the upkeep of which possibly cost more than their yield. This reading is in keeping with Hœnsa-Þórir's portrayal throughout the saga as a selfish man who will exploit and steal from others for his own gain. While it may be a fictional means of explaining a name, this aspect of *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* could be using the rarity of chickens to make a statement regarding Hœnsa-Þórir's character, before the main action of the saga begins.

The rarity and luxury status of chickens also needs to be considered when discussing the chicken-feather cushion used in the *seiðr* ceremony in *Eiríks saga rauða*. In this episode, the character Þorbjörg líttla-vǫlva has a special costume that incorporates a lambskin hood, catskin gloves, and calfskin boots. Additionally, the saga states that ‘var henni bvit ha sėti ok lagt vndir hana hegindi þar skyllði i vera hesna fíðri.’<sup>267</sup> The published analyses of Viking Age feather goods suggest that pillows and quilts were ususally made using a mix of feathers from ducks, geese, and seabirds such as gulls and cormorants.<sup>268</sup> Only the feathers at Mammen, Denmark, were potentially from chickens, although the archaeologists' report concluded that duck was more likely.<sup>269</sup> Thus, the emphasis on this being a chicken-feather pillow marks it out as an exceptional object, particularly in the context of Icelandic literature.

There has been some scholarly discussion concerning pre-Christian ‘magical’ implications of the animals used to create the costume worn by Þorbjörg. For instance, H. R. Ellis Davidson suggested that the catskin gloves may indicate an affinity with the Norse goddess Freyja.<sup>270</sup> However, there is little evidence for a firm connection between Freyja and cats beyond a brief comment in *Gylfaginning*, so this interpretation is tenuous.<sup>271</sup> It is possible that, given the appearance of roosters in the afterlife in *Vǫluspá* (§3.4.2.1), the chicken-feather pillow is somehow linked to and/or symbolic of Þorbjörg being able to access the realm of the dead. Yet, again, this is based on a small number of sources. Another possibility is that the feathers are part of a shamanistic apparatus. In older works on shamanistic beliefs and practices, particularly those following Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism*,

---

<sup>267</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 4 (ed. Jansson, p. 39). ‘A seat was made for her and a cushion placed under her, inside which was chicken feathers.’

<sup>268</sup> Berglund, pp. 128–31; Dove and Wickler, pp. 32–5.

<sup>269</sup> Berglund, p. 129.

<sup>270</sup> Ellis Davidson, p. 120.

<sup>271</sup> *Gylf*, pp. 25, 47 (ch. 24, 49). See also N. Price, p. 69.



there is an emphasis on the notion that shamanistic practitioners embark on a kind of spiritual ‘flight,’ and so shamanistic societies are particularly invested in birds and bird-human hybrids.<sup>272</sup>

However, Homayun Sidky, in his 2008 monograph on the image of the shaman in western scholarship, has pointed out that Eliade posits a universalist and primitivist portrayal of shamanism, and that ‘ornithological symbolism, which for Eliade... always means “shamanic flight,” can have various meanings.’<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, as Clive Tolley argues in his publication on Norse ‘shamanism,’ this episode in *Eiríks saga rauða* has a number of aspects that appear strongly related to Christian ideas, and Tolley remarks that ‘all such appeals to apparently genuine tradition stretching back to the pagan period seem to me ill-founded and to underestimate the inventive ingenuity of the thirteenth-century author.’<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, several scholars have challenged the argument that Norse paganism and *seiðr* could be called ‘shamanistic,’ let alone ‘shamanism.’<sup>275</sup> Overall, without further evidence regarding feather pillows in Norse culture beyond their everyday use as furnishings, its magico-religious significance, shamanistic or otherwise, is hard to argue for.

Yet this does not preclude the costume and cushion from having some symbolic meaning in a thirteenth-century Icelandic context. In her monograph on clothing in the *Íslendingasögur* and *Íslendingaþættir*, Anita Sauckel states that fur or leather cloaks are frequently used to indicate magic practitioners. While the roots of this motif are unclear, she supports François-Xavier Dillmann’s theory that the eclectic manner of dress exhibited by magic-practitioners is a way of showing that they occupy a space beyond the normal social order. In particular, Sauckel argues that the description of Þorbjörg’s clothing given in *Eiríks saga rauða* deliberately mixes signifiers of upper and lower social classes along with materials not mentioned as human clothing anywhere else in the corpus, which builds an overall impression of a character who exists outside the mundane social order.<sup>276</sup> Arguably, the chicken-feather cushion also fits into this scheme. Feather pillows were not unusual, but pillows filled only with chicken feathers were likely very rare. Furthermore, chickens were

---

<sup>272</sup> Eliade, pp. 5, 403.

<sup>273</sup> Sidky, p. 12, with a wider discussion in pp. 6–20. In addition to this, Eliade’s desire for a monolithic, primitive religious experience may have been rooted in his experiences of the occult aspects of the fascist Iron Guard. Dubuisson, p.173; Ioanid, pp. 438–39; Heinämäki, pp. 63–6, 73–6.

<sup>274</sup> Tolley, pp. 487–507.

<sup>275</sup> For a thorough historiography of this dispute and its connections to German and Nordic romantic nationalism, see von Schnurbein, pp. 116–38.

<sup>276</sup> Sauckel, p. 96; with reference to Dillmann, p. 403.

very uncommon in Iceland and presumably likewise in Greenland. Thus, Þorbjörg's chicken-feather cushion is simultaneously everyday, unusual, and luxurious, which fits in not only with the rest of her costume and accoutrements, but with more general patterns of the clothing of magic-practitioners in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Overall, it would appear that chickens, while they rapidly became an agricultural staple in mainland Europe and Scandinavia, had a different status in the North Atlantic. In those parts, keeping chickens was more a luxury pastime than everyday farming. As a result, chickens had very little impact upon the everyday life of these places, beyond their use as a status symbol. However, this did not prevent the literature of these areas adopting them to mean a variety of things: as well as the symbolism brought in from Christian traditions and more secular European ideas, there was an added suggestion of luxury. Yet, many of the symbolic traditions at play elsewhere in Scandinavia and western Europe appear in Icelandic literature, suggesting that even if chickens were not as much of an agricultural staple as they were elsewhere, they were still known of, and still seen as symbolically central, even if that centrality was less apparent due to a lack of familiarity.

### 3.3 Domestic Geese

The other major species of domesticated bird in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic was the Domestic Goose. As the Latin binomial suggests, the Domestic Goose is descended from the Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*); most likely the eastern subspecies (*Anser anser rubrirostris*), rather than the western (*Anser anser anser*), as the earliest records of goose-keeping come from Greece, Egypt, and the Roman Empire.<sup>277</sup> Much like chickens, the Domestic Goose was not common in Western Europe until it was introduced via Roman trade, and thereafter became a frequently-used agricultural animal. For instance, the Domestic Goose appears in the same contexts as chickens in the *Lex Salica*, and the fine for stealing either bird was equal: 120 denarii.<sup>278</sup> This indicates that while they were less important than some other animals, Domestic Geese still became a staple element of western European agriculture during the medieval period.

As a general rule, chickens proved more popular than Domestic Geese in medieval Europe. While geese competed for pasture space with grazing livestock, chickens are more omnivorous and can be kept in smaller spaces. Geese are larger than chickens, and as a result

---

<sup>277</sup> Honka et al., pp. 367–68; MacDonald and Blench, pp. 529–30.

<sup>278</sup> *Lex Salica* §VII 'De furtis avium' (ed. Hessels and Kern, pp. 33–41). See above, §3.2.1.

they not only need almost twice as much food, but they can also destroy crops by trampling them. Finally, chicken droppings can be used as fertiliser, while waterfowl droppings, due to higher water levels and chemical composition, soak into soil and pollute it.<sup>279</sup> Both species have been used as pest control, as they will eat slugs and snails, although given that Domestic Geese can destroy crops more easily than chickens, the latter may have been preferable for this task.<sup>280</sup> However, geese were popular due to their greater versatility: as larger birds, geese produce more meat, and unlike chickens, Domestic Geese can be used as guard animals, and their feathers can be used to make quill pens.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, geese are often hardier and can survive on a lower-quality diet, making them preferable in harsher climates.<sup>282</sup>

One of the major issues that accompanies researching Domestic Geese is that Domestic and Greylag Geese are incredibly difficult to osteologically differentiate. Domestic Geese may sometimes be larger and/or more heavily-boned, but this is not a hard and fast rule. As such, many archaeological reports choose to group Greylag and Domestic Geese together.<sup>283</sup> Furthermore, there is frequent confusion between species within the genus *Anser*, and even occasionally between the genus *Anser* and the genus *Branta*.<sup>284</sup> The only way to consistently tell apart Domestic and Greylag Geese in Viking Age and medieval finds is through aDNA analysis. This has been done successfully on finds from an Anglo-Saxon farm in Flixborough, Lincolnshire.<sup>285</sup> However, aDNA analysis is far less widely used than osteological identification, and not all bone specimens can have DNA extracted from them, meaning that no site can have complete identification of the goose specimens.<sup>286</sup>

In addition to this, the fact that wild Greylag Geese are widespread in Northern Europe adds a further layer of complexity as Domestic Geese and wild Greylag Geese can interbreed. Furthermore, some human populations relied primarily or solely on wild goose populations, depending on circumstances. Thus, while Domestic Geese were an important element in human-bird interactions in medieval Europe, they cannot be fully separated from wild geese in the way that chickens can be separated from wild junglefowl.

---

<sup>279</sup> Slavin, 'Chicken Husbandry', pp. 37–8; *ibid.*, 'Goose management', pp. 4–5.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Chicken Husbandry', p. 38; *ibid.*, 'Goose management', p. 4.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Chicken Husbandry', pp. 37–8; *ibid.*, 'Goose management', pp. 4–5.

<sup>283</sup> Dobney et al., 'The Agricultural Economy', pp. 177–79; Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 366

<sup>284</sup> Dobney et al., 'The Agricultural Economy' p. 177.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177–9.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

### 3.3.1 Domestic Geese in Mainland Scandinavia

So far, no aDNA studies of medieval goose finds from medieval Scandinavia or the North Atlantic have been published. However, it is thought that goose husbandry developed with the importing of Domestic Geese during the Roman Iron Age, and played a reasonably significant role in agriculture and subsistence, particularly in present-day Sweden and Denmark.<sup>287</sup> The Eketorp fortress yielded an NISP of 155 likely-domestic *Anser* geese for Phase II and an NISP of 1140 for Phase III. A further 24 goose specimens from Phase II and 128 from Phase III have been identified as *Anser* goslings.<sup>288</sup> Geese are also relatively plentiful in the Danish Viking Age sites discussed by Gotfredsen. While some sites yielded an NISP of 2, several had NISPs over forty, and Fugledegård had an NISP of 212 that Gotfredsen identifies as Domestic Goose, in contrast to the single specimen from this site she identifies as a wild Greylag Goose.<sup>289</sup>

On the one hand, these numbers do not come close to roughly contemporary sites in England, such as Flixborough, Lincolnshire, or Coppergate, York, which have *Anser anser* NISPs going into the hundreds and even thousands.<sup>290</sup> On the other hand, this variation may be partially due to preservation conditions between sites, and it can be difficult to discern whether bones belonged to Domestic Geese or Greylag Geese. Overall, this does suggest that while Domestic Geese may have been less agriculturally important in southern Scandinavia than they were elsewhere in western and northern Europe, they were still kept regularly and in reasonably large numbers.

As with chickens, the recent re-evaluation of bird bones from a range of medieval Norwegian sites has raised the total NISP of *Anser anser* from 144 to 526, with an additional 25 specimens that may belong to the species, and another 36 that belong to the genus *Anser*.<sup>291</sup> The majority of specimens come from Oslo and Bergen sites, which may indicate a greater presence in urban areas, although this distribution is true of most of the species in the report, and may be down to bone survival rather than the distribution of birds in life.<sup>292</sup> While this is a substantial raise in numbers from previous estimates, it is unclear whether these bones belonged to wild or Domestic Geese, as noted by Walker et al., who suggest that while

---

<sup>287</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 367.

<sup>288</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch, pp. 219, 262–74.

<sup>289</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 368

<sup>290</sup> O'Connor, *The Animal Bones*, pp. 193–4; Jaques et al., p. 38; Dobney et al., 'The Agricultural Economy', pp. 177–78.

<sup>291</sup> Walker et al., p. 9.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–14.

they are likely to be domesticated animals, this is uncertain.<sup>293</sup> Butchery marks were found on 37 specimens in the sample discussed, indicating human consumption.<sup>294</sup> These Norwegian finds support the argument that while Domestic Geese and their wild relatives were a reasonably substantial presence in medieval mainland Scandinavia, they were far less popular than chickens, possibly due to their larger size, aggression, and grazing requirements.

### 3.3.2 Domestic Geese in the North Atlantic

As with chickens, archaeological sources suggest that Domestic Geese were less widely-kept in the North Atlantic area than in mainland Scandinavia. For instance, the Orcadian settlement at Quoynegrew has an overall NISP of five geese from the genus *Anser*, none of which could be identified beyond genus.<sup>295</sup> In Iceland, there were no bones identified as *Anser anser* at Skuggi or Gásir, and out of the Mývatnssveit excavations (Sveigakot, Hofstaðir, Hrísheimar, Steinbogi, and Selhagi), *Anser* specimens were only found in the tenth-century remains at Sveigakot 2.<sup>296</sup> At Pálstoftir, the small sample of animal bones included 8 specimens identified as *Anser anser*, and a further 57 specimens from the genus *Anser*, the total making up 75% of all bird remains found. While these could have been Domestic Geese, Lucas' report appears to favour these being wild geese, although no explanation is given as to why.<sup>297</sup> A single specimen identified as 'possibly domestic' was found in the excavation of a Viking Age site at Vatnsfjörður.<sup>298</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that while subspecies of *Anser anser* (wild or domestic) were present in North Atlantic settlements, they were possibly less popular as agricultural animals than they were in southern Scandinavia, which could explain why their remains are less common in human settlements.

The scarcity of Domestic Geese in medieval Iceland is also suggested in textual sources, particularly the same early modern sources that mention chickens. As mentioned earlier (§3.2.3), both Oddur Einarsson and P. H. Resen note that in early modern Iceland, there were barely any tame/domesticated geese, and chickens were kept only by a select few rich households. In terms of medieval written sources, geese are also rare in Old Norse documents. There are no surviving Norwegian documents that mention geese, and only two from Iceland. One is an inventory from Þykkvabæjarklaustr in Álptaveri, dated to 1340,

---

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Harland et al., pp. 156–57.

<sup>296</sup> Harrison et al., 'Small holder farming', p. 58; Harrison et al., 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður', p. 106; McGovern et al., 'Coastal Connections', p. 193.

<sup>297</sup> Lucas, p. 92.

<sup>298</sup> Ragnar Edvardsson and McGovern, p. 27.

which lists four geese in its livestock count.<sup>299</sup> Another is an inventory from Maríukirkja in Borg, near Eyjafjall, dated to 1371. The church lists eleven geese as the last entry in its livestock count.<sup>300</sup> It is possible that both inventories listing geese last in their livestock suggests geese were considered less important compared to other livestock, and so they could have been left out of other diplomas and inventories on these grounds, but given the lack of zooarchaeological specimens and textual attestations, this feels somewhat unlikely. ‘[H]ei[m]gæsa dune’ (‘home-geese’ down’) is also mentioned in the redaction of the Icelandic agricultural law text *Búalög* found in the late-sixteenth-century Holm. Papp. 67 4to x, listed as a means of payment.<sup>301</sup> This suggests that Domestic Geese were kept for down in sixteenth-century Iceland, but gives no further information as to how widespread the practice was. Overall, while textual and archaeological sources suggest a limited amount of goose-keeping in medieval Iceland, these sources are few and far between, and it is hard to discern exactly how widespread and productive this practice was.

As well as domestic geese, wild or semi-wild geese were also an important resource in Viking Age and medieval Iceland: something reflected in medieval Icelandic law-codes. Geese are among the birds one is forbidden from hunting on another’s land in the Staðarhólsbók redaction of the *Grágás* law code, and it also states that ‘A fitjom scal fugla merkia. oc sýna búm. ecki er þar lög mark nema a fitiom se markat.’<sup>302</sup> Marked birds are the property of the landowner, and poachers would have to pay a fine. As discussed in §2.4, *fit* appears to refer to the webbed feet of certain birds, and if this is the case, then the law appears to be instructing landowners to mark water birds such as geese on their webbed feet to indicate these birds are their property. It is slightly unclear as to whether these birds are domestic, semi-wild, or wild, but it does suggest that these birds were at least considered to be attached to a household.

If geese—whether wild or domestic—were relatively important in medieval Iceland, the lack of these birds in the archaeological record needs to be considered. Firstly, goose-meat was eaten in Iceland,<sup>303</sup> and so these birds would have been dismembered, and their bones may have been damaged and fragmented before deposition. For instance, wild bird bones in

---

<sup>299</sup> *Diplomatarium Islandicum* II, §479 (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, p. 738).

<sup>300</sup> *Diplomatarium Islandicum* III, §210 (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, p. 259).

<sup>301</sup> *Búalög* II.A (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, p. 21). The mid-sixteenth-century manuscript Holm perg 7 8° states that two geese are equal to one *eyrir*. See *Búalög III* (ed. Ólafur Lárússon, p. 40).

<sup>302</sup> *Grágás* §437, p. 508. ‘One should mark birds on their [webbed] feet and show this to neighbours. It is not a lawful mark if it is anywhere but the [webbed] feet.’

<sup>303</sup> Lucas, p. 92.

two Viking Age Icelandic settlements were broken up and trodden into the floor after the bird itself was cooked and eaten.<sup>304</sup> Additional posthumous uses of goose body parts could also contribute to the lack of surviving specimens. In her article on uses of birds in pre-industrial Iceland, Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck mentions several practices that could have hindered the preservation of goose bones. Swan and goose wings were used as dusters, and their leg and wing bones were used as drinking straws, and so birds' skeletons were not only disarticulated, but put under heavy posthumous use, which could further weaken and/or damage them.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, one of the ways that Icelanders traditionally preserved birds for eating was in acid whey, which not only preserved the meat, but softened the bones so that they too could be eaten. While Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck does not mention this practice being performed on goose carcasses, she does say that it was done with seabirds and swans, as well as birds that were caught in large quantities in seasonal harvests, a criteria which could include wild geese.<sup>306</sup> If this was indeed the case, the bones of geese that had been preserved in whey would have been eaten along with the meat, or decomposed rather than being preserved, thus lessening the number of finds in archaeological excavations.

Overall, Domestic Geese were kept by Norse peoples from the Roman Iron Age onwards. Like chickens, they were a minor agricultural animal in southern Scandinavia, and were frequently kept, but were not the main subsistence livestock. In the North Atlantic area, Domestic Geese appear to have been less common, despite the fact that geese are hardier than chickens. However, the scarcity of goose remains may not reflect the full extent of goose exploitation in medieval Iceland, due to practices that affected preservation. Furthermore, while keeping Domestic Geese may have been more feasible than keeping chickens, documentary sources for goose-keeping suggest that while Domestic Geese were uncommon and largely for the affluent, many people seemed to rely upon wild or semi-wild goose populations, rather than tending their fully domesticated geese.

### **3.3.2.1 Geese in *Íslendingasögur***

Unlike chickens, Domestic Geese do not have notable attestations in south Scandinavian literature. However, as with chickens, despite their relative scarcity in the zooarchaeological record of the North Atlantic, Domestic Geese do have several attestations in medieval

---

<sup>304</sup> Amundsen, p. 206; Zori et al., p. 171.

<sup>305</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 36–7.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

Icelandic literature. Yet geese, both domestic and wild, typically appear to have less symbolic weight than chickens in Old Norse literature and are often used in a more naturalistic vein.

Explicitly-named *heimgæsir* ('home-geese,' i.e. tame/domestic) are mentioned in *Kormáks saga*. Before his battle with his love-rival, Þorvarðr, Kormákr is advised by his mother to visit the magic practitioner, Þórdís *spákona*. Upon arrival, Kormákr finds that Þórdís has already provided magical assistance to Þorvarðr in the form of impenetrable skin, but is willing to at the very least grant equal protection to Kormákr if he stays overnight. Kormákr wakes up in the middle of the night to find Þórdís about to sacrifice the third of three geese. Þórdís states that if she had sacrificed all three, she would have been able to undo the spell separating Kormákr and his lover. In the subsequent battle, Kormákr fails to win Steingerðr's love, despite beating Þorvarðr by crushing his ribs.<sup>307</sup> In this episode, the geese are variously referred to as *gás* ('goose') and *heimgás* ('home-geese'). There are no other attestations of goose-sacrifice in Old Norse literature, and there are no archaeological finds that suggest these birds were sacrificial animals, so possibly this episode simply required a plausible livestock animal to sacrifice. Thus, while it tells little about pre-Christian ritual sacrifice, this episode does suggest that tame household geese were recognised livestock when this saga was composed and circulated.

One of the few other examples of geese in the *Íslendingasögur* can be found in *Grettis saga*. One of the episodes that illustrates the fraught relationship between Grettir and his father, Ásmundr, takes place when Grettir is young, and he is asked by his father to mind the geese; a task Grettir does not take to:

Síðan tók Grettir við heimgásunum; þær váru fimm tiger ok með kjúklingar margir. Eigi leið langt, áðr honum þóttu þær heldr bágrækar, en kjúklingar seinfærir. Honum gerði mjök hermt við þessu, því at hann var lítill skapdeildarmaðr. Nokkuru síðar fundu fõrumenn kjúklinga dauða úti ok heimgæss vængbrotnar.<sup>308</sup>

(Then Grettir received the geese; there were fifty, with many goslings. It was not long before the geese seemed rather difficult to drive, and the goslings slow. It annoyed him greatly, because he was hardly a good-natured man. Some time later, vagrants found the goslings dead outside, and the geese with broken wings.)

---

<sup>307</sup> *Kormáks saga*, ch. 22 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, pp. 282–89).

<sup>308</sup> *Grettis saga*, ch. 14 (ed. Guðni Jónsson, p. 37).



Ásmundr questions Grettir about this, and Grettir proudly states that he did this to the geese with a verse in *dróttkvætt*, thus framing his slaughter with a poetic form usually reserved for noble and heroic subjects.<sup>309</sup> On the one hand, this episode serves to illustrate Grettir’s character: he is short-tempered enough to kill geese rather than drive them, and he is strong enough to carry out such a deed relatively quickly. It also further emphasises Grettir and Ásmundr’s poor relationship. Not only is Grettir destroying his family’s livestock in a fit of rage, but he is destroying livestock that are reasonably rare, and which may have already been a mark of status. The destruction of valuable birds is not unique to *Grettis saga*,<sup>310</sup> and while it was not a common literary motif, it may have been a strong way to signal a character’s violence as well as the destruction of wealth.

### 3.3.2.2 Guard Geese in Eddic Poetry

Like chickens, presumably-tame geese also appear in the corpus of eddic poetry, although they do not appear to have the same cosmological aspect, appearing only in the legendary poems concerning human heroes. There are two attestations of geese in eddic verse. They are found in separate poems, but the same line is shared by both: ‘ok gullu við gæss í túni.’<sup>311</sup> In *Guðrúnarkviða I*, this line occurs when Guðrún weeps loudly over the body of Sigurðr. In *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, the line occurs when Sigurðr dies, and Guðrún clasps her hands together so hard that the noise rings out and disturbs the birds. This line’s interpretation has been the subject of scholarly debate. Nils von Hofsten argues that this line attests to an otherwise-lost connection between geese and women.<sup>312</sup> More recently, Lars Lönnroth has argued that these geese are a form of pathetic fallacy, as they ‘cackle as if they were sharing Gudrun’s grief.’<sup>313</sup> In both cases, the geese appear to provide a purely literary function, either as providing some sort of gendered space for Guðrún’s grief to be expressed, or as emphasising her grief’s magnitude, as it is both loud and strong enough to provoke other species into sympathetic reactions.

However, other scholars have argued that this line may have more naturalistic origins. For instance, in their commentary on *Guðrúnarkviða I*, Hugo Gering and Barend Sijmons comment that ‘Dieses motiv [...] zeugt von guter naturbeobachtung: die gänse sind

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., pp. 37–8.

<sup>310</sup> See the destruction of a hawk in §4 as another example.

<sup>311</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða I* 16:5–6 (*Edkv II*, p. 331); *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 29:7–8 (*Edkv II*, p. 340). ‘And geese cried out in the homestead.’

<sup>312</sup> von Hofsten, p. 86.

<sup>313</sup> Lönnroth, p. 116; see also von See et al., ‘Guðrúnarkviða I’, p. 248.

bekanntlich äußerst nervöse tiere, die auf jedes ungewohnte geräusch mit geschrei reagieren.<sup>314</sup> The notion that geese are particularly vigilant and will cry out in response to noise has a precedent in European literature that goes back to Roman historiography. In his account of the Gauls' attack on Rome c. 390 BC, Livy recounts that the Gauls' attack on Rome went undetected by humans and dogs, but not geese, which gave off an alarm call that alerted the guards to intruders.<sup>315</sup> This anecdote was circulated throughout medieval Europe in a number of forms, including excerpts found in bestiary literature.<sup>316</sup>

While Livy's account was written down centuries after the fact and likely embellished, it speaks to the idea that geese may have been used as guard animals or were at least known to be sensitive to intruders. As Domestic Geese were likely introduced to Scandinavia via Roman trade connections, it is possible that Scandinavians were at least aware of guard geese. However, that does not necessarily mean that this line references archaic Germanic goose-keeping practices directly descended from Roman ones, particularly as scholars such as Lönnroth have argued that the poems centred around Guðrún's grief 'appear to be fairly late and at least partly influenced by Christian medieval poetry.'<sup>317</sup> However, despite the likely later composition of these poems, this does not necessarily make it less based upon natural goose behaviour. Geese have remained a consistent, if unusual, guard animal throughout the world because of their sensitivity to noise,<sup>318</sup> and it is possible that even if they were not used as guard animals in medieval Iceland or Scandinavia, this sensitivity could have been common practical knowledge.

Overall, Domestic Geese appear to have been less popular than chickens or wild Galliformes as food in all areas of Scandinavia and the North Atlantic. The exact reasons for this are unclear, and it may have varied from region to region, despite this overall pattern. However, domesticated or semi-tame geese were a relatively prominent subsistence animal in a number of places, even if their role in human history in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic was not quite as large as that of chickens.

---

<sup>314</sup> Gering and Sijmons, p. 239. 'This motif [...] is evidence of good observation of nature: geese are known to be extremely nervous animals, who respond to every unfamiliar noise by crying out.'

<sup>315</sup> Livy, 5.47.2–4 (ed. Foster, pp. 156–58).

<sup>316</sup> Aberdeen Bestiary, ff. 53r-53v. <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f53r>> and <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f53v>> [Accessed 20th August 2019].

<sup>317</sup> Lönnroth, pp. 116–17, 119.

<sup>318</sup> Ova, pp. 217–18; Silver, <<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/07/130725-geese-guard-police-china/>> [Accessed 20th June 2019]; Subramanian, p. 67.

### 3.4 Domestic Birds: Conclusion

Domestic birds were an important part of agriculture and everyday life in medieval Europe. While they are frequently referred to as ‘minor’ domesticates, compared to larger mammals such as cows, chickens formed such an important part of the human diet that they underwent substantial selective breeding in the medieval period, and arguably facilitated the spread of urbanisation. Geese were less popular, but they were still reared for food and raw materials.

However, this pattern was not necessarily the same in Norse contexts. While southern Scandinavia appears to display similar patterns of domestic bird husbandry and consumption to continental western Europe, the same cannot necessarily be said for North Atlantic sites. There, the harsher climate and relative lack of surplus feed meant that animal feed was given to higher-priority livestock such as cows, sheep, and goats. Thus, domestic birds themselves had little impact upon human culture in the North Atlantic. However, their absence in itself had important repercussions regarding human relationships with wild birds (§4).

In addition to this, the attitudes toward domestic birds displayed in textual sources indicate a very different attitude toward these birds than those displayed toward other culturally-significant birds. While domestic birds often make up a high proportion of the specimens found at any given archaeological site, they are comparatively rare in literary sources. While cockerels appear to have had some symbolic significance as well as some presence in other worlds, hens were almost invisible outside farming and the dining table. Geese are similarly elusive in literature, and only seem to appear in the realm of mortal humans. This is in stark contrast to ravens and eagles, which feature prominently in Norse literature, despite appearing to have little in the way of interaction with humans (§6). Hawks and falcons, meanwhile, had substantial contact with humans due to their use in falconry, and they appear to have been anthropomorphised to an extent that was not exercised on chickens and geese (§5).

On the one hand, this may have been a psychological protection mechanism: present-day psychological studies suggest that anthropomorphising animals can provoke ‘anticipatory guilt’ at the thought of eating members of that same species.<sup>319</sup> However, such studies only assess current US and western European ideas concerning animals, and do not factor in other ways of conceptualising non-human sentience, personhood, and animacy.<sup>320</sup> Thus, while the

---

<sup>319</sup> Wang and Basso, pp. 163–64.

<sup>320</sup> Nadasdy, ‘First Nations’, pp. 7–9; Praet, pp. 344–53.

discrepancy between how livestock birds and trained hunting hawks were represented and spoken about in texts may reflect some degree of unwillingness to anthropomorphise livestock, this is by no means certain, and the textual record that survives does not adequately represent the range of attitudes Norse-speaking peoples may have held through the medieval period. Overall, however, it would appear that the more mundane the bird, the less symbolic value was attributed to it.

## 4 Subsistence and Proximity II: Wild Birds

### 4.1 Introduction

As well as keeping domestic birds, Norse peoples in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic also hunted wild birds, for both leisure and subsistence purposes. Hunting birds for leisure will be discussed in §5, the falconry chapter of this thesis, as it appears to have been assumed that the ‘noble hunt’ incorporated falconry, even if birds of prey are not explicitly mentioned.<sup>321</sup> However, the presence or absence of domestic species in a given region changed the dynamic between humans and wild birds. Widespread rearing of domestic birds allowed humans to become less reliant upon wild bird populations, which in turn facilitated urbanisation, which in turn had an impact upon which bird populations thrived or moved away from a given area. On the other hand, Icelandic laws codes and archaeological sources suggest that the absence of domestic birds in a settler community that was culturally accustomed to relying upon them as a staple resource caused them to rely more heavily upon wild birds, and in turn they had to adjust their actions to avoid unsustainable wildlife exploitation.

### 4.2 Wild Birds as Food: Archaeological Evidence

As was the case with domestic birds, the Norse peoples exploited wild birds for resources. As well as meat and eggs, wild birds likely provided feathers, down, tallow, and other raw materials that could be used in various areas of life. Unfortunately, very few medieval texts mention wild birds in any great depth. As well as the textual sources lacking in detail when it comes to wild birds, it can also be difficult to determine which wild birds were used in subsistence and how. To determine whether a bird was eaten, bones can be analysed for butchery marks. For instance, 10% of *Gallus gallus*, 10% of *Anser anser*, and 4% of Black

---

<sup>321</sup> For example, the A and B redactions of *Oddgeirs þátr Danska* both describe a hunting scene. The A-redaction mentions hawks, but the B-redaction does not. The episode is otherwise the same, and it is probable that the B-redaction’s authors and audiences would assume that noble men hunting fowl on horseback would also be accompanied by hawks. *Oddgeirs þátr Danska*, A text, ch. 37 (ed. Loth, p. 196); *Oddgeirs þátr Danska*, B text, ch. 18 (ed. Loth, p. 195).

Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) specimens from Norwegian sites analysed by Walker et al. show evidence of butchery before consumption. Alongside these, Walker et al. identified 42 specimens of gull (*Larus* sp.) that could not be identified on a species level due to human tooth marks on the ends of the wing bones.<sup>322</sup>

However, this is by no means a hard and fast rule, as the majority of bird bones do not show butchery marks, even if the bird was eaten; for instance, a smaller bird that was boiled whole before dismembering may have had its flesh softened enough to not require a knife to dismember it.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, small-to-medium birds' bones may be too small or damaged to clearly show cut marks. This is particularly the case in regions such as Iceland, where most subsistence birds, such as Puffins and auklets, would be placed in the small-to-medium bracket. In these cases, other methods of identifying whether birds had been consumed can be used. For example, in both Hrísbú and Miðbær, Puffin bones were found near refuse pits and hearth areas, and were often trampled into a floor layer.<sup>324</sup> From their location, it has been surmised that these bones came from birds that were eaten as meals by the occupants of these sites, and that furthermore, their remains (both bones and cooking ashes) saw re-use as an element of the floor in these areas of the buildings they were consumed in.

Perhaps the most prominent non-domestic bird was the Ptarmigan. Walker et al.'s overview of medieval Norwegian bird remains in human settlements yielded an NISP of 1161 for *Lagopus* sp., with 133 further possible specimens. These finds were overwhelmingly found in the rural and hunting sites at Dovre, with almost none at the more urban sites in Oslo, Bergen, and Tønsberg; instead, in these sites, chicken predominated.<sup>325</sup> As discussed above (§3.2.2; §3.2.3), the spread of chickens in Europe may have helped to facilitate medieval urbanisation, by providing a small livestock animal which required little specialised care, and which could provide both the eggs and meat provided by wild birds. In situations where chickens were not available and/or not necessary, the hunting of wild Galliformes such as Ptarmigan and Capercaillie continued or was reinvigorated as an inland source of food.<sup>326</sup>

This pattern continued in Iceland. While chickens are nearly absent from the majority of sites, wild alternatives are common. Based upon site reports, Puffins and auks (*Alcidae*) constitute a significant amount of wild bird specimens from medieval Icelandic sites. On sites

---

<sup>322</sup> Walker et al., p. 22.

<sup>323</sup> Serjeantson, 'Food and a Mark of Status', p. 133.

<sup>324</sup> Amundsen, p. 206; Zori et al., p. 171.

<sup>325</sup> Walker et al., p. 9.

<sup>326</sup> Walker et al., pp. 15–18, 25–6.

nearer the coast, such as Akurvík, Gásir, and Miðbær, this lack of domestic birds led to an increased exploitation of seabirds and cliff-nesting birds.<sup>327</sup> The trading post at Gásir yielded commodity birds, such as Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) and swan, although the majority of identified bird remains belonged to the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), which may indicate meat or down trade.<sup>328</sup> However, some subsistence birds were found, namely guillemot, murre, Puffin, and Razorbill, which Harrison et al. suggest were not only widely consumed fresh, but were ‘used as a seasonal “crop” in dried form.’<sup>329</sup> At the seasonally-occupied site in Akurvík, few bird bones could be identified to species level, although of the identifiable bones, gulls were the predominant genus. Unlike the gnawed bones in the Norwegian finds, no butchery marks were found on the Akurvík gull bones. Amundsen et al. comment that while these birds, like modern gulls, may have died after being caught in nets or by guards while raiding fish-drying racks, but they may also have been eaten.<sup>330</sup> No Ptarmigan bones were reported in any of these sites.

In contrast, the inland sites discussed by McGovern et al. in their study of Viking Age and medieval settlements around Mývatn, Northern Iceland, report a very different ratio of bird species. Mývatn is an inland lake, with upland nesting sites for a variety of birds, and the archaeofauna reflect this. While murre, auks, and Puffins were present in some of these sites, they are never in a majority. At six of the nine sites discussed, Ptarmigan are by far the most common bird; at five sites, they even outnumber the specimens that could not be identified to species level, and many of these unidentified bones are in the Ptarmigan’s size range.<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, while Ptarmigan were common in almost all sites, the proportion of adult waterfowl bones at the sites was lower than expected, considering that the sites were all near waterfowl nesting sites along Lake Mývatn.<sup>332</sup> McGovern et al. conclude that this could be due to the residents not wishing to unbalance the populations of the migratory waterfowl, preferring to harvest eggs to adult birds, whereas there was a lower risk of disturbing populations of non-migratory Ptarmigan.<sup>333</sup> This pattern was not always a hard and fast rule. Of the 49 bird specimens from Hrísrú, a farmstead in Mosfellsdalur, nine were identified as

---

<sup>327</sup> Amundsen, p. 206.

<sup>328</sup> Harrison et al., ‘Gásir in Eyjafjörður’, pp. 106, 112. See also §3.7; §5.5.2.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>330</sup> Amundsen et al., pp. 132–33. A similar theory is suggested by Feeley et al., p. 4 to explain the high proportion of gulls found at the fifteenth-century coastal site at Gúfuskálar.

<sup>331</sup> McGovern et al., ‘Coastal connections’, p. 193.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., pp. 199–202.

Puffin, and 18 were identified as Auks or Auklets.<sup>334</sup> Overall, it would appear that where chickens were not available or viable, Norse communities relied heavily upon wild species, typically cliff-nesting birds and/or wild Galliformes, to fill the nutritional gap.

As well as bird meat, bird eggs were an important element of the diet of Norse peoples. As discussed (§3.2.2), it would appear that chickens were kept in Norway for their eggs, rather than their meat. Unfortunately, it is harder to gauge from the remains of wild birds whether or not they were exploited for their eggs before being eaten for their meat, and any evidence for this largely depends on whether the site excavators were looking for bird eggshell. As such, data is limited, although once again, the survey of sites around Mývatn have yielded some interesting data. While there are very few bones of adult waterfowl around the human settlements, relatively large amounts of eggshell belonging to both Ptarmigan and waterfowl were discovered, with waterfowl eggshells outnumbering those of Ptarmigan.<sup>335</sup> What this suggests is that while residents of the Mývatn sites were cautious not to disrupt bird nesting sites, they were also keen to not let an opportunity go to waste, and traditional egg-harvesting practices in the Mývatn region may have been established very early in the region's settlement, as the residents attempted to reconcile their imported foodways with the fauna of the region.<sup>336</sup>

Overall, archaeological site reports suggest that while Viking Age and medieval Icelandic foodways were regionally contingent, birds appear to have been an important part of the Norse diet more broadly. Both eggs and meat were important year-round, and the absence of domestic birds caused both Norwegian rural communities and Icelandic settler communities to rely heavily on wild bird populations, often hunting wild birds to an extent where the percentage of NISP at a given settlement excavation are, similar to, if not greater than, that of a domestic species in an urban mainland site. For instance, the analysis by Walker et al. indicates that in urban sites, domesticated chickens and geese account for 79% of the NISP and wild Galliformes (grouse, ptarmigan, partridge and Capercaillie) account for 6% of the NISP. In rural sites, wild Galliformes account for 89% of the NISP, while domesticated chickens and geese account for just 2%.<sup>337</sup> As previously discussed, there are very few chicken specimens found in Icelandic archaeological sites at all, and so chicken

---

<sup>334</sup> Zori et al., p. 164.

<sup>335</sup> McGovern et al., 'Coastal connections', p. 194.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 199–200.

<sup>337</sup> Walker et al., p. 23.

bones make up a very small percentage of NISP in the excavations they are found in.<sup>338</sup> This may be due to preservation factors, but it would seem based on site reports, like those from the Mývatn excavations,<sup>339</sup> that wildfowling was a supplementary but nonetheless consistent activity in Viking Age and medieval Iceland alongside fishing and the rearing of larger livestock. Thus, while climate and wildlife demographics were important factors in determining Norse foodways, cultural factors may likewise have played a role, causing Icelanders to seek avian replacements for the familiar domesticated birds of Scandinavia.

### 4.3 Wild Birds as Raw Materials: Feathers and Down

While meat and eggs were key reasons that wild birds were exploited, these were not the only reasons. Feathers and down were another key reason that wild birds were hunted or, in some cases, protected. Feathers were used for a variety of things in medieval Scandinavia: the feathers of larger birds such as swans and geese were preferred for quill pens, while a variety of feathers were used for things such as decorations and arrow fletching.<sup>340</sup>

In addition to this, down and soft feathers were used for bedding and as a luxury export from the medieval period through to the modern period.<sup>341</sup> Eiderdown has been a source of particular interest for researchers looking into Viking Age and medieval feather objects, as it is a luxury item that was available to medieval residents of Norway and Iceland.<sup>342</sup> However, as pointed out by the archaeologist Véronique Forbes, the role of eiderdown in subsistence and economy has often been overlooked in archaeology, as eiderdown feathers are very small and delicate.<sup>343</sup> As such, studies of down objects themselves are limited, and often rely heavily upon documentary and literary evidence.

What analysis has been published concerning Viking Age feather pillows supports the hypothesis that eiderdown was not only used, but valued. For instance, a feather pillow from the tenth-century Øxnes burial in northern Norway contained feathers belonging to cormorants, gulls from the genus *Larus*, and a sea duck from the genus *Somateria* (eider), although species could not be confirmed.<sup>344</sup> While the feathers themselves cannot always be identified, eider bones found near human settlements have been interpreted as signs of

---

<sup>338</sup> See §3.2.3.

<sup>339</sup> McGovern et al., 'Coastal Connections'.

<sup>340</sup> Soffía Guðný Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir, p. 50; Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', pp. 371–72; Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 40–1.

<sup>341</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 38–39, 41, 43–5.

<sup>342</sup> Forbes, p. 105.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Dove and Wickler, p. 32.



eiderdown collection and trade. As well as Norwegian sites, a notable example is from the Icelandic trading post Gásir, where eider bones and Gyrfalcons remain have been used to support the hypothesis that luxury goods passed through Gásir.<sup>345</sup> While it is by no means certain that all eider bones in human settlements indicate the presence of large-scale down harvesting and trading, it does at least indicate that humans and eider ducks were living in close proximity, and that some down-gathering may have taken place.

The earliest written evidence for Scandinavian down-gathering and trade is arguably ‘The Voyage of Ohthere,’ which was incorporated in the Old English translation of Orosius’ *History Against the Pagans*. This ‘voyage’ is an account that is said to have been told to the court of King Alfred by a Norwegian visitor called Ohthere. While it is short, it touches upon several aspects of interactions between the Norse and the *Finns* (presumably the Sámi) who lived to the north. Among other things, Ohthere mentions that the Finns pay tribute to the Norse in ‘deora fellum ꝛ on fugela feðerum ꝛ hwales bane ꝛ on þæm sciprapum þe beoð of hwales hyde gewohrt ꝛ of seoles.’<sup>346</sup> This description has frequently been cited as a source for the relationship between the Norse and the Sámi in the Viking Age, in particular the fact that Ohthere’s people seem to make a substantial part of their living from gathering tribute from the Sámi.<sup>347</sup>

In her article on the history of the eiderdown economy in Norway, Birgitta Berglund cites Ohthere’s account as the first possible mention of eiderdown in Norway, based on the possibility that English did not yet have a linguistic distinction between feathers (ON *fjǫðr/fiðri*; OE *feðer*) and down (ON *dúnn*).<sup>348</sup> In support of this possibility, Berglund gives a description of the traditional eiderdown gathering and refinement methods in Norway.<sup>349</sup> However, there are no known medieval analogues in terms of equipment finds or written accounts, and there have so far been no positive identifications of eiderdown goods in Viking Age or medieval finds from Norway aside from the possible down in the Øxnes pillow. Furthermore, the only attestations of *æðadúnn* (‘eiderdown’) comes from the Icelandic *Búalög*. In this text, it is stated that three *merkr* (unit of weight) of eiderdown is valued at one *alin*, and makes a distinction between *þurr* (‘dry’) and non-dry eiderdown-weights.<sup>350</sup> Thus, it

---

<sup>345</sup> Berglund, p. 130; Harrison et al., ‘Gásir in Eyjafjörður’, pp. 106, 112.

<sup>346</sup> ‘Ohthere’s Report’ (ed. Batley and Englert, pp. 45–6).

<sup>347</sup> Storli, pp. 77, 95–7. For a recent study of Sámi economy and Sámi-Norse relations, see Hansen and Olsen, pp. 54–81.

<sup>348</sup> Berglund, p. 128.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120–24.

<sup>350</sup> *Búalög* I (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, pp. 3, 6).

would appear that by the time *Búalög* was created, eiderdown was a valuable commodity in Iceland, despite a lack of earlier attestations. Overall then, there is a likelihood that eiderdown was processed and traded from the Viking Age onwards, but few conclusions can be drawn from the available sources beyond this acknowledgement.

#### 4.4 Wild Birds in Literature and Law

As mentioned previously (§2.3), despite many local wild birds being important to subsistence and trade, particularly in Iceland and Norway, the majority of these birds are conspicuously absent from the textual record. For instance, despite *lundi* ('puffin'), *alka* ('auk'), *haftyrðill* ('Little Auk,' *Alle alle*), *þiðurr* ('Capercaillie,' *Tetrao urogallus*), *már* ('gull') and *tyrðilmúli* ('Razorbill,' *Alca torda*) being significant sources of meat, eggs, and materials, they have scant citations in the Old Norse textual corpus (§9). On the other hand, birds such as ravens and eagles are extensively represented in the textual corpus (§6). Thus, there is a substantial disconnect between the image of bird life in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic presented by textual sources, and that of the zooarchaeological sources.

However, this absence of wild birds in textual sources does not mean that nothing can be reconstructed of their relationship with humans. While the specific details of human interactions with individual species may not be clear from textual sources, an overview of how literary and legal texts speak about birds, particularly in Icelandic contexts, can raise some interesting observations concerning the relationships between humans and the finite resources they relied upon for their wellbeing.

##### 4.4.1 Wild Birds in Icelandic Law

While medieval Icelandic law codes do not give a great amount of detail regarding wild birds, they list several types of bird that are otherwise only attested in *Fugla heiti*. In addition to attesting birds' names, these law codes detail how people were expected to treat wild birds on their own land and on others'. The earlier Icelandic law code *Grágás* largely concerns itself with the tame or semi-wild birds that were marked by landholders. In addition to stipulations regarding the marking of tame or semi-tame birds (§3.3.3), there are also a series of laws dictating what types of bird one may take from another's land. Forbidden birds include *vale* ('falcons'), *álptir* ('swans'), *gæis* ('geese'), and *andir* ('ducks') as well as *sæ fugla* ('sea birds').<sup>351</sup> In both the *Konungsbók* and *Staðarhólsbók* redactions of *Grágás*, somebody who

---

<sup>351</sup> *Grás* §436, p. 507.

has captured a bird on another's land must notify the landowner of the kill.<sup>352</sup> In *Staðarhólsbók*, there is an additional chapter that discusses what to do if one kills or captures a marked bird, depending on the type of bird and the circumstances of its capture.<sup>353</sup> As well as this, the *Staðarhólsbók* redaction also contains additional restrictions regarding bird-hunting:

*Eigi skal veiða gæs ne anþir ne æðar ne þernor i örscotz helgi við eG ver manz. þo at hann veiðe i sino lande. Eigi skal maðr þa fugla veipa sva mioc i sino lande þoat fir se eGveri hins en i örscotz helgi við þat. at quiðr beri þat at af þeim söcom spilliz eGver hins.*<sup>354</sup>

(One shall not hunt geese, nor ducks, nor eider, nor terns within an arrow-shot's distance of another's egg-laying site, even though he may hunt in his own land. One shall not hunt birds in one's land so much that, although there was previously an egg-laying site or be within an arrow-shot's distance of it, the neighbours decree that the egg-laying site may be destroyed because of this.)

This sort of restriction upon hunting practices maps on to the earlier restraint in hunting adult migratory birds in areas such as *Mývatn*, as shown in the archaeological record (§4.2).<sup>355</sup> Thus, it would appear that medieval Icelanders had a sense of how their presence and subsistence activities affected their environments. With a lack of domestic bird species, it was possible that they could over-hunt migratory birds, thus destroying egg-laying sites. To avoid this, a system of self-regulation and watchful neighbours was implemented and set in law.

These laws were later elaborated upon in the late-thirteenth-century Icelandic law code *Jónsbók*, as part of a chapter on marked and unmarked birds:

*Vali alla elptr ok gæff. ok alla aðra fugla omer/kta æ huerr maðr æ sinní iðrðu leiguliði sem landz drottinn nema fra se fki/lt. vtan þernur eða andir fkal æigi veiða næRR annars landi. en .cc. faðma tolfrað se til eGuers annars mannz. ok eíngi fkal þa fugla weiða sua míok æ sinní iðrðu. þo at firr se híns eGuerí. at fkyndómum monnum vi. þeim er nær bua þicki þess væn at eGuer fpilliz af.*<sup>356</sup>

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*; *GráK* §208, p. 122.

<sup>353</sup> *GráS* §437, p. 508.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, §436, p. 507.

<sup>355</sup> See also Brewington et al., pp. 1680–81.

<sup>356</sup> *Jónsbók*, §VII, 57 (ed. Schulman, p. 264).

(Each man owns all falcons, swans, geese, and all other unmarked birds on his land, whether he is a tenant or a landowner, unless they are excluded by agreement. An exception is made for terns and ducks, which may not be caught closer than a duodecimal 200 [240] fathoms from another man's nesting grounds. No man shall catch so many birds on his land, although it may be far from the nesting site, that six sensible men who live nearby reckon it likely that the nesting grounds could be damaged as a result of this.)

Much of this resembles the laws found in *Grágás*, although some details have been made more specific: 'örskotz helgi' ('arrow-shot's length') has been replaced by '.cc. faðma tolfraeð' ('a duodecimal 200 fathoms'), and the neighbours' decree is replaced by the opinion of 'fkynföllum monnum vi. þeim er nær bua' (six sensible men who live nearby'), with the section on neighbours' complaints being expanded. The chapter then goes on to discuss specific cases, like how to reimburse one whose marked bird has been captured by another, and specific arrangements concerning swans' eggs, whereby the ownership of the eggs is determined by the location of the long-term laying site of said swans, rather than by who has marked the birds themselves.<sup>357</sup>

Laws restricting the over-exploitation of wild birds are not attested in other Scandinavian law codes. For example, *Frostapingslög* (Norway) does not mention wild birds at all, while the elder *Gulapingslög* (Norway) only mentions them briefly in passages stating that one must refrain from hunting on the sabbath, and that wild birds are clean to eat.<sup>358</sup> What this suggests is that, perhaps somewhat obviously, these concerns regarding the sustainable exploitation of wild bird colonies were greater in Iceland, where domestic birds were less widespread.

These restrictions on the exploitation of wild birds are interesting when viewed alongside literary accounts of bird populations in Iceland. According to some *Íslendingasögur*, the wild birds of Iceland were, during the initial settlement period, unwary of humans due to not recognising them as a threat. In *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, the narrative states that in Skalla-Grím's farm, 'allt var þar þá kyrrt í veiðistöð, er þat var óvant

---

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., pp. 264–65.

<sup>358</sup> *Frostapingslög* (ed. Keyser and Munch); *Eldre Gulapingslög*, §16 Um sunnudaga halld (ed. Eithun et al., p. 40).

manni.<sup>359</sup> On the one hand, *landnám*-period sites such as Tjarnargata 4 have yielded large numbers of avian archaeofauna in relation to later sites, which potentially supports the idea that birds were initially over-hunted, possibly due to a lack of wariness around humans.<sup>360</sup> Brewington et al., in their study of human effects on Iceland in the centuries following the *landnám*, note both the unsustainable introduction of pigs as livestock and initial over-hunting of wild bird populations followed by a scaling back of wildfowling as instances of mismanagement, resilience, and attempted recovery in a microcosm of the Anthropocene.<sup>361</sup> On the other hand, Orri Vésteinsson et al. have cautioned that while such passages in medieval sagas may hold a degree of accuracy, they should be read sceptically, as their evocation of a plentiful golden age of settlement-era Iceland was likely a nostalgic construct to contrast against the present day.<sup>362</sup>

Overall, law codes and early archaeological finds suggest that instances of over-hunting may have occurred in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, but from an early point in settlement people were conscious of managing wild birds as a resource. Thus, while wild birds were legally considered as property in Iceland, they were also treated with an awareness that they were a living, finite resource that could be depleted, driven away, or even destroyed by unchecked human exploitation. While medieval Icelanders may not have had the same environmental concerns that humans face today, they were conscious of the effects that they had upon their environment, including the avian biodiversity of their homes, and modified their behaviour and their laws to accommodate this relationship in a way that was sustainable.

#### 4.4.2 Wild Birds in Literature

Despite egg-gathering appearing to be important based upon the law-codes and the Mývatn excavations, there is only one prominent attestation of birds' egg-laying sites in Norse literature. This is the description of Straumey in *Eiríks saga rauða*, where 'sva var morg æðr i eygni at varla matti ganga fyri eGivm.'<sup>363</sup> It is only in the Hauksbók redaction that eider ducks are specified – in the Skálholtsbók redaction, the passage simply mentions *fvgl* ('bird'). Quite why eider ducks would be mentioned in this passage is unclear. Given the value of eiderdown as a commodity, it may be a suggestion that this land is abnormally rich compared to where

---

<sup>359</sup> *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ch. 29 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson, p. 40). 'Everything was calm at the hunting place when the animals were unaccustomed to men.'

<sup>360</sup> Brewington et al., p. 1680.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1680–82.

<sup>362</sup> Orri Vésteinsson et al., pp. 102–4.

<sup>363</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða*, (ed. Jansson, p. 64). 'There were so many eider ducks on the island that one could scarcely walk for eggs.'

the travellers departed from. However, this passage only mentions eggs. While eider down is traditionally collected from nesting birds, and so an abundance of eggs would suggest an abundance of down, for travellers it is likely that eggs were of more immediate interest than down, even in the case of such lucrative birds as the eider.

One of the few wild subsistence-birds that appears in literature, albeit in a limited capacity, is the *rjúpa* ('Ptarmigan'). In many cases, it is simply mentioned offhandedly as quarry for hunters, such as in *Droplaugarsona saga* and *Fljótsdæla saga*.<sup>364</sup> There is also a story found in multiple *konungasögur* where King Hákon Magnússon of Norway dies while Ptarmigan-hunting. According to the *Heimskringla* redaction, 'reið hann um dag eptir rjúpu nokkurri, er fló undan honum. Þá varð hann sjúkr ok fekk banasótt ok andaðisk þar á fjallinu.'<sup>365</sup> The exact purpose of this anecdote is unclear. While some kings were satirised as being more interested in hunting than in ruling, no scholar appears to read this particular episode as satire. Instead, it may be that Ptarmigan-hunting was either what the king was doing, or it was a plausible reason for a king to be in the mountains when he died.

One of the few instances where a Ptarmigan is not simply mentioned as quarry is *Heiðreks saga*. While the bird itself does not appear, the Ptarmigan is the solution to one of the poetic riddles spoken by Gestumblindi:

Hueríar eru þú r leikur,  
er lida land yfir  
[at foruitni faþur]  
huitan skíolld  
þú r um uetr bera  
eN suartaN um sumar?<sup>366</sup>

(Who are those women, who pass over lands, to the curiosity of their father? They carry a white shield through the winter, and a black one in the summer.)

---

<sup>364</sup> *Droplaugarsona saga*, ch. 3 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 145); *Fljótsdæla saga*, ch. 11 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 242).

<sup>365</sup> *Magnúss saga berfætts*, ch. 2 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 212). 'He rode through the day after a certain ptarmigan, which flew away from him. Then he became sick with a mortal illness and died there on the mountain.' The same tale is in *Ágrip af Nóregis konunga sögum*, ch. 46 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson, p. 43); *Morkinskinna II*, ch. 59 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, p. 18); *Fagrskinna*, ch. 80 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson, p. 303).

<sup>366</sup> *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ch. 10 (ed. E. O. G. Turville-Petre, p. 45).

The answer given to this riddle is ‘þat ero rjúpur; þær ero huitar um uetr eN suartar um sumar.’<sup>367</sup> This knowledge of seasonal plumage-changes shows that Norse peoples observed Ptarmigans, although it is only a part of the symbolism involved in this riddle.

It is not clear as to why *rjúpur* are characterised as shield-carrying women, as there are no other attestations of such a connection in Old Norse literature. In her article on supernatural women in the riddles of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, Hannah Burrows suggests that, rather than this being an example of an otherwise-unattested link between Ptarmigans and shield-maidens, this is an instance of ‘mythological interference,’ predicated on the supernatural-women-and-their-father theme of the surrounding riddles, without necessarily requiring these elements in order to make sense.<sup>368</sup> As such, this riddle may not reveal any mythological or symbolic significance behind Ptarmigan, but it does reveal that medieval Norse peoples were aware of the seasonal plumage changes these birds went through.

Overall, then, it would appear that while Ptarmigan were another important subsistence species in Viking Age and medieval Norway and Iceland, this did not translate into their having symbolic centrality. The same can be said of the majority of other wild birds: while they may appear in texts, they are rarely afforded the same symbolic value as other, non-quarry birds. This attitude may be linked to the idea discussed above (§3.4): personhood and symbolism may, in certain cultures, be taken from some animals that were consumed. This is, of course, not true of all animals or all cultures. For instance, the bear, despite being hunted, had spiritual significance to Sámi peoples of Northern Scandinavia, and possibly to neighbouring Norse peoples too.<sup>369</sup> While a blanket statement regarding attitudes to wild birds in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and North Atlantic regions would be ultimately reductive, it would appear that, as far as medieval literature was concerned, they were considered a mundane fact of life.

#### **4.5 Fowling Methods in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic**

In addition to a lack of attestations of prey species, textual sources only rarely mention fowling methods. Most other accounts of wildfowling in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic are relatively sparse on detail. Typically, characters are said to go *á fuglaveiði* (‘on a bird-

---

<sup>367</sup> *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ch. 10 (ed. E. O. G. Turville-Petre, p. 45). ‘That is a Ptarmigan; they are white throughout the winter, and black in the summer.’

<sup>368</sup> Burrows, pp. 207–8.

<sup>369</sup> Jennbert, *Animals and Humans*, pp. 111–13.

hunt'),<sup>370</sup> but little further information is given. Similarly, there practically no archaeological finds of objects that can be conclusively identified as fowling equipment.

One of the few examples of fowling methods in Old Norse literature is found in the late fifteenth-century *Fljótsdæla saga*, where the narrative comments that Droplaugr's sons do not hunt Ptarmigan like other men, as 'Ekki höfðu þeir net ok skutu með snærisspjótum.'<sup>371</sup> It may be assumed, then, that by the late fifteenth century nets were used to hunt Ptarmigan. It is unclear exactly what a *snærisspjót* was, due to a lack of textual detail or archaeological evidence.<sup>372</sup> However, according to Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, nets and snares were the most common pre-industrial methods to hunt Ptarmigan in Iceland,<sup>373</sup> so *Fljótsdæla saga* may be at least somewhat accurate in its representation of medieval Icelandic wildfowling methods.

The only major treatment of fowling is the *Morkinskinna* redaction of Haraldr Sigurðarson's siege at Sicily, where he captures small birds and uses them as siege weapons:

Hér er lœkr einn skammt frá borginni, en þann sama leir sem þar er hjá lœknum er heitir bitumen, þann leir skulum vér taka ok elta um nætr [...] Þat mun þá verða jafnt sem lím [...] Síðan skulum vér ríða þessu lími á tré þessi er hér standa útan borgar, en þat kann verða svá hart sem grjót, er þat þornar. Síðan skulum vér ríða blautu líminu á trén, ok með þessum ráðum skulum vér vinna þessu miklu borg. Síðan skulu til koma þeir men várir er bezt kunnu við smáfogla, ok kann vera at foglunum verði óhægt at hefja fœtrna af limunum, er leirinu blautu er á riðit.<sup>374</sup>

(There is a lake not far from the stronghold here, and that mud which is by the lake is that same one which is called bitumen [asphalt]. We shall take that mud and work it in the night [...] It will then become just like lime [...] After we shall spread this lime onto this tree which stands here outside the stronghold, and it will become hard as grit when it dries. After we shall spread soft lime onto the tree, and with this device we will conquer the stronghold. After that, those men of ours

---

<sup>370</sup> ONP, s.v. 'fuglveiðr' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o24417>>; ONP, s.v. 'fuglaveiðr' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o24400>> [Accessed 23rd August 2019].

<sup>371</sup> *Fljótsdæla saga*, ch. 11 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 242). 'They did not have nets but shot with snare-spears.' For dating see Jón Jóhannesson, 'Formáli §Flótsdæla saga', p. xcix.

<sup>372</sup> CV, s.v. 'snæris-spjót' simply call it a javelin. Jón Jóhannesson, *Fljótsdæla saga* ch. 11, p. 242, n. 5, suggests it was a spear with a woven throwing-aid; an argument supported by re-enactors, see *Hurstwic* <[http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/manufacturing/text/viking\\_spear.htm](http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/manufacturing/text/viking_spear.htm)> [Accessed 23rd August 2019].

<sup>373</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 30–1.

<sup>374</sup> *Morkinskinna* I, ch. 14 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, p. 100).



who are best experienced with small birds will come there, and can be that it is impossible for the birds to lift their feet from the branches that the soft mud is spread onto.)

After these birds are captured, incendiary parcels are tied to them and they are released in time for them to return to their nests in the city's roofs. As discussed previously (§2.4), these birds are not identified beyond being 'small birds.' This may be because this anecdote as a whole appears to be a literary invention. This particular example appears to have been drawn from the slightly earlier Norman *Roman de Brut*, dated to c. 1138, in which the African king Gormund conquers an Irish city named Cirencester through the same method, although the birds are specified as *muissuns* ('sparrows').<sup>375</sup> Although the *Roman* is itself an adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin text, *Historia regum Britanniae*, the *Historia* merely states that 'capta tandem praedicta civitate et succensa, commisit proelium cum Karetico et fugavit eum ultra Sabrinam in Gualias.'<sup>376</sup> Thus, the earliest attestation of the incendiary birds appears to be the *Roman de Brut*. While a number of plausible suggestions have been given as to how Norman French narratives found their way into Old Norse literature,<sup>377</sup> quite why this would have been attributed to Haraldr harðráði is unclear.

The use of birdlime (any adhesive substance employed to trap wild birds) is practiced globally as part of traditional fowling repertoires.<sup>378</sup> However, two aspects of this passage stand out. Firstly, this is the most detailed description of a fowling technique in the Old Norse literary corpus.<sup>379</sup> Secondly, while it describes making birdlime out of bitumen, most Western European sources advise boiling plant matter such as holly bark to make lime, and making lime for fowling is not well-attested in Iceland and large parts of Norway.<sup>380</sup> The incendiary bird tactic found in the *Roman de Brut* mentions *lim* ('lime'), but does not otherwise go into the same level of detail. The level of detail in the Morkinskinna redaction could indicate a high degree of familiarity with Continental fowling techniques on the part of one or more composers or scribes during transmission, and the inclusion of bitumen may be a detail used to make the story seem more plausibly exotic or eastern, as trade routes that carried bitumen from the Middle East to Northern Europe via the Mediterranean appear to have existed from

---

<sup>375</sup> Wace, *Roman de Brut* 13593–13610 (ed. and transl. Weiss, pp. 340, 342).

<sup>376</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae*, 9.184 (ed. Reeve, p. 257).

<sup>377</sup> See P. A. White, pp. 161–62

<sup>378</sup> Anon., 'Bird Lime', p. 30; Dalby, s.v. 'līm', 'līmen', 'līm-route', 'līm-stat'.

<sup>379</sup> The same level of detail is not found in the Heimskringla account: *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 6 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 76).

<sup>380</sup> Gent, pp. 65–8.

at least the early medieval period.<sup>381</sup> It could also be a means by which to cast Haraldr as a brilliant leader and tactician, as he can describe his plans so well. In either case, it seems unlikely that this description attests to a widely-used fowling technique in Iceland and Norway so much as a detail to highlight Haraldr's resourcefulness and the exotic setting of this particular episode.

Perhaps some of the most insightful sources into how wildfowling may have been carried out in the medieval North Atlantic are later ethnographic sources, such as those discussed by Alexander Fenton. In the Orkneys and Shetland, there were a diverse range of wildfowling practices. To harvest cliff-nesting seabirds, the most prevalent technique was to let somebody down on a rope, and they would gather birds and/or eggs, or sweep the birds off the cliff to be caught by a boat waiting below.<sup>382</sup> Less risky techniques included lowering a many-hooked fishing line down a cliff to snag the beaks of curious young birds, and raising nets along cliffs to capture birds as they flew out from their nests.<sup>383</sup> Horsehair snares were also used, either lain on the ground or attached to the end of poles.<sup>384</sup> While these accounts are dated to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a considerable amount of the fowling-vocabulary described by Fenton appears to ultimately derive from Old Norse, and the technology described, such as ropes and snares fashioned from hair, nets, and woven egg-baskets could have had medieval analogues.

Similarly, Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck's article cites accounts of pre-nineteenth-century Icelandic wildfowling that describe nets and horsehair, willow, or whale-baleen snares attached to woollen or hempen ropes being used to capture Ptarmigan.<sup>385</sup> Similar to the Northern Isles, lines with snares and hooks were lowered down cliffs to harvest young birds from their cliff-nests, or people were lowered down on ropes and they would simply pull birds from their nests and wring their necks.<sup>386</sup> Larger birds, such as swans and geese, could be captured with the use of large nets, or they were chased on horseback with the aid of dogs.<sup>387</sup> Again, similar techniques could have been achieved with the resources available to medieval Norse peoples in these regions.

---

<sup>381</sup> Burger et al., pp. 9–15.

<sup>382</sup> Fenton, pp. 512–14, 517–18.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 510–11, 514–17.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 526–27.

<sup>385</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 30–1.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5.

Overall, due to lack of clearly identifiable examples it is difficult to say exactly which wildfowling techniques were used in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and North Atlantic. However, ethnographic accounts of traditional, pre-industrial North Atlantic fowling techniques frequently describe methods that could be achieved using materials available to medieval Icelanders. Through these sources, a portrait is painted of wildfowling in Iceland and the North Atlantic as a reasonably intensive and risky process, which required teams of fowlers and strong equipment to do safely. Thus, it may have been in the interests of the human populations to monitor the bird colonies and ensure they did not relocate to less accessible areas, as this would put the wildfowlers in more danger.

#### **4.6 Wild Birds: Conclusion**

Unfortunately, little can be said regarding how humans understood and envisaged the wild birds that surrounded them. In terms of textual sources, wild prey birds remained largely in the realm of the mundane and were tied to the mortal realm even more firmly than domestic birds. While the everyday relationships between humans and wild prey birds may have been very close, the imaginative relationship may have been very distant.

That being said, these fleeting mentions do allow a glimpse into the development and maintenance of sustainable fowling practices in medieval Iceland. The law codes suggest that Norse settlers in the North Atlantic appear to have been relatively quick to modify and regulate fowling practices to balance an increased reliance upon wild bird populations due to a lack of domestic birds with the finite nature of these populations. While such practices may not have always been successful, the importance of sustainable egg harvests was inscribed in law, and the failure of such sustainability was recorded in annals. Thus, the symbiosis between human populations and bird populations did influence the law codes of Iceland to ensure that birds, while exploited, were also protected by law, and bird colonies were preferably left alone just enough to ensure that a solid breeding base of birds resided there each year.

## 5 Hawks and Falconry

### 5.1 Introduction

As previously mentioned (§1.8, §2.3.1), hawks and falcons (henceforth collectively known as ‘raptors’)<sup>388</sup> were important in several cultures during the Middle Ages and Scandinavia and the Norse North Atlantic were no exception. Raptors appear throughout sources as prized hunters, grave goods, and elite jewellery, among other things. However, while raptors do have a limited presence in Old Norse mythology, they are not given the prominence afforded to eagles and ravens (§6). While both Freyja and Frigg are said to own *valshamir* (‘falcon-skins’) that can be used to transform into falcons in *Skáldskaparmál*, but neither is shown using this item, instead only seeming to loan it to others.<sup>389</sup> Similarly, while Frigg is referred to as *drottning valshams* (‘lady of the falcon-skin’) in *Skáldskaparmál*, her connections with raptors are unclear beyond this and the ownership of a *hamr*, and the term may have been included as a counterpart to Óðinn’s heiti, *hrafna guð* (‘god of ravens’).<sup>390</sup> Instead, the reasons for such emphasis on falcon imagery in Iron Age and medieval Scandinavia and Norse North Atlantic is likely to have been connected to falconry: the practice of hunting with the assistance of trained birds of prey to capture, kill, and retrieve prey animals.

#### 5.1.1 Falconry and Human-Animal Studies

Falconry is a particularly rich area of research for those seeking to study human-animal relationships due to the highly particular nature of the relationship between bird and falconer. The captive breeding of raptors was not widely achieved in Europe until the twentieth century, and so almost all the raptors used in Iron Age/Medieval European falconry were individually captured and ‘manned.’<sup>391</sup> This causes what theorist Donna Haraway calls ‘an ongoing “becoming with,”’ in which the human and non-human parties involved shape one another’s behaviour and mutually recreate one another as elements in a partnership.<sup>392</sup> As well as the raptor being trained, the identity of somebody who hunted with raptors was

---

<sup>388</sup> The modern distinction between falcons and hawks is based upon whether the bird is high-flight, meaning that it hunts in open spaces and swoops upon its prey from above, or low-flight, meaning that it hunts in enclosed spaces such as woodland and kills by holding the prey with its talons. (Oggins, p. 11). Although the Old Norse-Icelandic words *haukr*, *valr*, and *fálki* are often translated as *hawk*, *falcon*, and *falcon* respectively, the extent to which these correlate with present-day distinctions between falcons and hawks is unclear, as *haukr* appears to be used relatively loosely to refer to any trained raptor, *fálki* appears to be a later loan word, and *valr* is listed as a *heiti* for *haukr* in *Hauks heiti* 2:2 (ed. Gurevich, p. 943).

<sup>389</sup> *Skm*, pp. 2, 24, 30 (ch. G56, 18, 19).

<sup>390</sup> *Skm*, p. 30 (ch. 19); *Gylf*, p. 32 (ch. 38).

<sup>391</sup> To *man*, from Latin *mansuefacere*, means to accustom a raptor to human presence. Cade, p. 1; Platt et al., p. 383.

<sup>392</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 16.

imbued with symbolism, meaning that the mere presence of the bird reworked the human in the eyes of others.

Although there are no extant Old Norse falconry treatises, a rough model of the manning process can be gleaned from falconry treatises written in continental Europe in the medieval period. First, a raptor was obtained, either as an *eyass* ('nestling') or a *haggard* ('adult'). Once it was strong enough to be trained, the bird's eyelids were *seeled* ('temporarily stitched shut') to placate the bird by removing visual stimuli. This was later replaced by covering the bird's eyes with a hood. The falconer would then keep the bird in a darkened room and deprive it of food whilst carrying it around for as long as a day and night. Afterwards, the falconer would feed the bird while making a distinctive yet soothing vocal sound. This process would be repeated until the bird became used to being carried by humans. Eventually, the stitches would be loosened, and the bird would be trained to take down prey on behalf of the human falconer, and to return when called.<sup>393</sup> Even with these efforts, a raptor that has been manned will not become fully tame, and it requires constant and careful maintenance to prevent it from becoming stressed, ill, or simply reverting to a wild behavioural state if it is mistreated or simply uncomfortable with its human companion.<sup>394</sup>

However, a raptor remains biddable as long as it is properly maintained and has a trusting relationship with its handler. As Wietske Prummel notes:

There has to be close contact between the falconer and the hawk to have successful hunts [...] You have to spend a lot of time with your hawk or hire employees to train the bird and keep it in good condition. This is the reason that falconry was mainly done by the elite.<sup>395</sup>

The time and effort required to maintain birds of prey meant that falconry was the conspicuous consumption of its day. Not only was it a clear display of the practitioner's surplus time and resources, but it linked them to the noble courts that practised it throughout Europe, and to the trade networks of affluent people who dealt in raptors and other birds from as far afield as Greenland and south-east Asia.<sup>396</sup> As such, trained raptors became an identity-marker of social elites.

---

<sup>393</sup> Oggins, pp. 22–30. Possibly the most detailed medieval account of manning and raptor maintenance comes from Frederick II, Books II–III, (ed. Budriesi, pp. 286–696).

<sup>394</sup> Prummel, 'Falconry in continental settlements', p. 357; Schroer, pp. 318–19.

<sup>395</sup> Prummel, 'Falconry in continental settlements', p. 358.

<sup>396</sup> Oggins, p. 111; Mehler et al.

Even if raptors were not domesticated or even tamed in the conventional sense, they still gained a new status as they moved from being perceived as wild animals to companion animals. While perceptions of animals in these categories of course varies from culture to culture, Gary Varner's philosophical work has sought to provide a generalisable framework for the various categories of companion animals according to their relationships with humans. Following Varner's typology, raptors used in falconry would fall loosely under the category *domesticated partner*, which he defines as a 'a pet that works with humans fairly extensively in ways that emphasize and exercise the pet's mental and/or physical faculties fairly extensively and in healthy ways.'<sup>397</sup> Although in present-day Western contexts the word *pet* has strong connotations of sentimentality and anthropomorphism, Varner defines a "pet" as any animal that meets four basic criteria:

1. A pet's keeper feels affection for it,
2. A pet leads a very different life than its keeper,
3. A pet lives in an area significantly under the keeper's control,
4. A pet depends on its keeper to have various important interests met.<sup>398</sup>

An inspection of sources concerning medieval falconry, as well as some sources concerning early modern Icelandic falconry, suggest that Varner's four criteria stated above, as well as the qualifier for *domesticated partner*, were arguably met by trained raptors in medieval Scandinavia and the North Atlantic, with the caveat that raptors were not, and still are not, domesticated.

The criterion of emotional connection is perhaps the hardest to argue. On the one hand, accounts of present-day falconry often emphasise the emotional dimensions of the human-bird bond. Both Kristina Jennbert and Ellen Hagen describe the need for both intellectual and emotional understanding in falconry, or else the bird will simply refuse to cooperate.<sup>399</sup> This is not unique to raptors. Haraway notes a similar combination of affection and discipline between humans and working dogs, emphasising that 'respect and trust, not love, are the critical demands of a good working relationship.'<sup>400</sup>

This emotional bond is elusive in the available Norse sources, but there are suggestions of it in the inclusion of raptors in human burials, and in the personification of

---

<sup>397</sup> Varner, p. 69.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>399</sup> Jennbert, 'Certain Humans, Certain Animals', p. 189; Hagen, pp. 149–53.

<sup>400</sup> Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*, p. 39.

some raptors in literary sources (§5.2.1, §5.4.2–3). Furthermore, suggestions on emotional bonds between human and animal are found in Frederick II of Hohenstaufen’s work. He specifies that a falconer must love falconry to the point where they pursue it even in old age, and furthermore that they must take delight in acquiring the best hunting birds and keeping them in good health.<sup>401</sup> Although Frederick prioritises a falconer’s love of falconry itself, the care the falconer is supposed to lavish upon their birds suggests at least some affection towards them. Thus, while it is hard to definitively prove from the available sources, it is likely that emotional bonds existed between a medieval falconer and their birds, just as such bonds exist between falconers and their birds in the present day.

As semi-wild creatures with their own living quarters, trained raptors also fulfil Varner’s second and third criteria. Trained raptors are usually kept in purpose-built living spaces such as mews or hack-houses.<sup>402</sup> Currently, no archaeological evidence for such structures is known from medieval Scandinavia or the Norse North Atlantic. This may be in part due to the maintenance of these structures. The earliest known falcon-house in Iceland, established at Bessastaðir prior to 1663, is said to have been kept ‘scrupulously clean’ and the cloth floor-coverings were washed two or three times a week, which would lessen the likelihood of evidence such as feathers, droppings, or parasites, which could be used to identify such a structure.<sup>403</sup> In terms of the textual record, one of the only medieval Norse sources to mention where trained raptors were kept is *Hrólfs saga krakka ok kappa hans*,<sup>404</sup> which mentions a falconer running to ‘eins lopts’ (‘an attic’) to check on his master’s hawks. As a medieval *fornaldarsaga*, *Hrólfs saga* is not indicative of Iron Age Scandinavian practices so much as medieval Icelandic practices and attitudes toward the past, but it does suggest that medieval Icelanders knew that raptors were kept in designated housing.

Finally, raptors fulfil criterion four, as they were reliant upon their keepers for food and for care; a stressed raptor will become ill or escape.<sup>405</sup> Additionally, the relationship between falconer and raptor is very much a working partnership. The falconer makes use of the bird’s capacity for flight, as well as its speed and sharp beak and claws, to catch and kill quarry. Although a raptor used in falconry may not be a pet in the modern sense, it was

---

<sup>401</sup> Frederick II, Book II, ch. lxiv, lxxxi–lxxxiii, (ed. Budriesi, pp. 348, 354–56).

<sup>402</sup> Oggins, pp. 22–30; Hunt, p. 14.

<sup>403</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 46–7.

<sup>404</sup> *Hrólfs saga*, ch. 29 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 87).

<sup>405</sup> Prummel, ‘Falconry in continental settlements’, pp. 357–58; Adelard of Bath, *De avibus tractatus* (ed. Burnett et al., pp. 237–67).

something like a *trained partner animal*: not quite tame, definitely not domesticated, but kept within the human sphere, carefully and even affectionately maintained, and used for its skills and capabilities. Overall, manning a raptor was not simply a question of training it, but rather of engaging in a mutual becoming-with, as the human became a falconer, and the raptor became their partner.

## 5.2 Falconry in the Archaeological Record

While there have been cases put forward for an independent falconry tradition in prehistoric Europe based upon archaeological finds such as stone gauntlets, these are largely discredited.<sup>406</sup> Instead, it is generally accepted that falconry was introduced to Europe in the Migration Period by Central Asian peoples, and spread westward by migratory groups.<sup>407</sup> The earliest evidence for falconry in Northern Europe comes from the archaeological record, although such finds are often difficult to interpret. To aid identification of falconry in the archaeological record, Wietske Prummel has provided five general, cross-cultural criteria:

1. Falconry equipment such as jesses, bells, or lures. This is the least ambiguous form of evidence, but as much of the equipment is made of leather it is prone to decomposition and therefore rare in the archaeological record.
2. The skeleton of a bird of prey buried alone or alongside a human being.
3. The presence of hawk or falcon bones amongst settlement finds.
4. A predominance of female birds, as they are larger and therefore favoured by falconers.
5. The remains of game caught by these birds of prey, such as cranes or hares.<sup>408</sup>

The earliest probable Criterion 1 evidence from Norse finds is small metal bells, thought to be the bells attached to a trained raptor to locate it if it becomes lost or tangled in foliage.<sup>409</sup> Such bells have been found in Viking Age excavations in Kaupang, Norway, and Fugledegård, Järrestad, and Uppåkra (which are in modern-day Sweden, but were then part of Denmark), and possibly Birka, Sweden.<sup>410</sup> However, the presence of these bells alone does not necessarily indicate falconry. Rather, it is the association of bells with other objects associated with hunting, such as horse or dog bones, or metal swivels from animal harnesses, that would suggest falconry. The bell at Kaupang was found alongside horse remains and a

---

<sup>406</sup> Wallis, pp. 411–24.

<sup>407</sup> Epstein, pp. 497–509; Åkerström-Hougen, *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>408</sup> Prummel, 'Evidence of Hawking', pp. 335–36.

<sup>409</sup> Stylegar, p. 93.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–5; Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 375; Bellamy-Dagneau, pp. 27–30.



swivel thought to belong to a dog lead, adding to the plausibility of its connections to falconry,<sup>411</sup> but elsewhere bells are not accompanied by such finds, making them harder to interpret with certainty.

### 5.2.1 The Swedish Falconry Graves

The earliest finds in northern Europe that meet Prummel’s other criteria are the so-called ‘falconry graves’ found in Germany and East Central Sweden. The German finds commence in the early sixth century, and usually consist of a human interred with grave goods including a raptor.<sup>412</sup> These have been interpreted as indicative of falconry in light of laws concerning the theft of trained birds of prey in the early sixth-century law codes of the Burgundians and the Salian Franks,<sup>413</sup> which suggest that falconry had become established in these regions by that point. The Swedish finds first appear in the late sixth or early seventh century,<sup>414</sup> and consist of a series of cremation burials in which one or more raptors were included in the deceased’s cremation pyre. In some of these burials, such as the Rickeby burial, prey animals such as Black Grouse were also included.<sup>415</sup> These falconry graves do not extend to other parts of Scandinavia and were phased out in around the tenth century as grave goods became less frequent due to Christian influence.

The types of bird found in these graves is significant in arguments that falconry was practised by the peoples who conducted these burials. Maria Vretemark has written extensively on these graves, and this table summarises the most recent and extensive list of falconry graves she has published:

*Table 2: Swedish Falconry Graves. After Vretemark, ‘Birds of prey as evidence of falconry’, pp. 829–32*

Location	Dating	Grave goods potentially relevant to falconry <sup>416</sup>	Buried person(s)	Birds of prey
Östhögen, Gamla Uppsala (Uppland)	Second half of C6	Horse, dog	Female 20–35	Goshawk

<sup>411</sup> Stylegar, pp. 94–5.

<sup>412</sup> Dobiak, pp. 350–51.

<sup>413</sup> *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, §VII Concerning the Theft of Birds, (ed. Drew, p. 71); *The Burgundian Code. Book of Constitutions or Law of Gundobad. Additional Enactments*, §XCVIII Of Falcons, (ed. Drew, p. 84).

<sup>414</sup> The west mound of Gamla Uppsala was thought to be the earliest Swedish falconry grave, dated to the late sixth century. Ljungkvist, pp. 245–59, challenged this, re-dating it to the early seventh century. Vretemark, ‘Birds of prey as evidence of falconry’, p. 829, re-asserted the late sixth century dating, and furthermore classed the sixth-century east mound (Östhögen) as another falconry grave, based on the inclusion of a Goshawk.

<sup>415</sup> Sten and Vretemark, pp. 145–56; Vretemark, ‘The Vendel Period royal follower’s grave’, pp. 379–86.

<sup>416</sup> For a full list of grave goods, consult Vretemark’s original table.

Västhögen Gamla Uppsala (Uppland)	Late C6/early C7	Horse, dogs	Female 20–35 Male 20–35	Goshawk
Slagsta, Botkyrka (Södermanland)	Late C6	Horse, dog, hare	Adult	Goshawk
Ärvinge A49, Spånga (Uppland)	C6	Bronze fittings, iron rivets, horse, dogs	Male 20–40	Sparrowhawk
Ärvinge A13, Spånga (Uppland)	Early C7	Bronze fittings, bronze and iron rivets, horses, dogs, hare, goose	Male 20–40	Eagle Owl ( <i>Bubo bubo</i> )
Rickeby, Vallentuna (Uppland)	Early C7	Horse riding equipment, horse, dogs, goose, grouse, crane	Male 35–60	Eagle Owl, Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> )
Landshammar Spelvik (Södermanland)	C7	Horses, dogs	Male 30–45	Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl
Hoxla, Sorunda (Södermanland)	C7	Gold and silver fittings, horses, dogs	Male 40–60	Goshawk
Algö Överselö (Södermanland)	C7	Horses, dogs, goose, wild duck	Adult male	Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl
Rinkeby, Spånga (Uppland)	C7	Horses, dogs, goose, dove	Adult male Child	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Sunnerby, Otterstad (Västergötland)	C7	Iron rivets, gaming pieces, horses, dogs, goose, grouse, wild duck	Male 20–40 Male 40–60	Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl
Gamleby, Gunnerstad (Småland)	C7	Horse, dogs, goose, wild duck	Adult male	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Vårby, Huddinge (Södermanland)	C7	Iron rivets, bronze fittings, horse, dog	Male 40–60 Female 40–60	Goshawk
Vendlas hög A1:1, Vendel (Uppland)	C7–8	Bronze rivets, horse, dogs, grouse, wild duck	Child Adult 18–24 Adult 18–24	Goshawk
Vendlas hög A2:2, Vendel (Uppland)	C7–8	Horse equipment, horse, dogs, crane	3 children	Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Merlin
Lyckås A1, Skärstad (Småland)	C7	Bronze fittings, horse, dogs	Adult	Goshawk

Lyckås A2, Skärstad (Småland)	C7	Bronze fittings, horse, dogs	Adult male	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Valsgårde 6, Gamla Uppsala (Uppland)	C7	Saddle, horse equipment, horses, dogs, goose, grouse	Adult male	Goshawk
Valsgårde 7, Gamla Uppsala (Uppland)	C7	Saddle, horse equipment, dog lead, horses, dog, goose, grouse	Adult male	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Almvägen, Sollentuna (Uppland)	C7–8	Cloisonné bronze fittings, horses, dogs	Male 20–30	Peregrine Falcon
Häggvik, Sollentuna (Uppland)	C7–8	Bronze fittings, iron rivets, horse, dogs, goose	Adult male	Sparrowhawk
Tors Backe, Sollentuna (Uppland)	C8	Horse, dog, wild duck	Teenager	Goshawk, eagle
Vendel III, Gamla Uppsala (Uppland)	C8	Arrows, horse equipment, dog lead, horses, dogs, goose, crane, wild duck	Adult male	Gyrfalcon, Eagle Owl
Solberga, Askeby (Östergötland)	C8	Bronze fittings, horse, dog	Adult	Goshawk
Karleby, Östertälje (Södermanland)	C8–9	Bronze fittings, horse, dog, goose	Male 20–40	Goshawk
Rådhuset, Örebro (Närke)	C8–9	Bronze fittings, horse, dog	Male 20–40	Goshawk
Arninge, Täby (Uppland)	C9	Horses, dogs, goose, wild duck, starling	Female 18–25 Male 40–60 Male 20–40 Male 20–40 Adult 20–40	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Ingjaldshögen Vansö (Södermanland)	C9	Horses, dogs, goose, wild duck	Adult male	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Varu, Fellingsbro (Västmanland)	C9	Iron rivets, horse, dog	Adult male	Goshawk
Trotteslöv, Berga (Småland)	C9–10	Horses, dogs, wild duck	Female 30–40	2 unidentified

Valsta, Norrsunda (Uppland)	C9–10	Horse, dog, goose	Adult	Goshawk
Karby, Vendel (Uppland)	C9–10	Bronze fittings, horse, dogs	Adult male	Goshawk
Broby, Börje (Uppland)	C9–10	Horses, dogs, goose, wild duck, crane, bittern	Male 40–60	Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl, Osprey
Söderby A7, Danmarks (Upplands)	C9–10	Bronze fittings, horse, dog	Adult	Gyr Falcon
Söderby A10, Danmarks (Uppland)	C9–10	Bronze fittings, iron rivets	Male 20–40	Gyr Falcon
Söderby A25, Danmarks (Uppland)	C9–10	Bronze fittings, iron rivets, arrows, horse, dog, goose	Male 20–40	Golden Eagle ( <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> )
Skopintull, Adelsö (Uppland)	Early C10	Horse riding equipment, dogs, goose, wild ducks	Female 30–50 Male >50	White-tailed Sea Eagle, Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Viby, Kalmar (Uppland)	Early C10	Silver fittings, horses, dogs, goose	Male 40–60	Goshawk, Eagle Owl
Rissne, Spånga (Uppland)	C10	Bronze fittings, horse, dogs	Male 18–20	Goshawk

These burials span several centuries, and so, at the time of its creation, each would have had its own separate socio-historical context. Nonetheless, there are some general observations that can be made. Firstly, the presence of horses, dogs, prey animals such as cranes and grouse, and various fittings and rivets in among the grave goods all potentially fit Prummel’s criteria for archaeological evidence for falconry. While the bird skeletons have not been sexed in most cases, the recurrence of local hawk species does suggest that these birds were regularly captured and kept.

The Goshawk is by far the most common species of raptor in these burials, and both the Goshawk and Sparrowhawk have been common residents in Sweden since their first arrival after the Ice Age.<sup>417</sup> Both hawks remained popular throughout the Middle Ages, and raptors from Scandinavia and other cold climates were highly sought after throughout Europe as they were thought to be ‘maiores, fortiores, audatiores, pulchiores, meliores et velociore,

<sup>417</sup> Ericsson and Tyrberg, pp. 106–7; Ferguson-Lees and Christie, pp. 578–81, 595–600.

quelibet autem in specie sua.’<sup>418</sup> Therefore, both birds were not only useful and easily obtained, but were also relatively prestigious.

Although Peregrine Falcons are currently passage visitors in Sweden, prior to their anthropogenic decline in the twentieth century they were relatively common resident birds.<sup>419</sup> It is difficult to know the extent to which Peregrine Falcons and Goshawks were differentiated in Late Iron Age/Viking Age East Central Sweden,<sup>420</sup> although it is perhaps safe to say that even if the two birds were considered similar, their differences in size and hunting styles may have caused them to be distinguished in some capacity. Peregrines’ high-flight hunting style meant they were not ideal hunting birds in the heavily-wooded Swedish countryside near these burials, but they were possibly kept as prestige birds due to their speed, even if their strength and size was inferior to Gyrfalcons and Goshawks.<sup>421</sup>

The inclusion of Eagle Owls is somewhat more complex. Although Eagle Owls are resident birds of prey in Sweden, they are mostly active at night, dawn, and dusk, and so would not be ideal for daytime hunting.<sup>422</sup> Based on later medieval European sources, it has been suggested that these Eagle Owls were used as decoys so prey birds would attack the half-asleep owl and thus be distracted from approaching raptors.<sup>423</sup> This does call into question whether Ärvinge A13 should strictly be considered a ‘falconry grave,’ although the grave goods and the other animals indicate associations with nobility and hunting. Thus, while Eagle Owls might not have been falconry birds in the strictest sense, they were likely viewed as accessories to the hunt, and can be loosely considered as ‘falconry grave goods’ if the other animals and objects interred indicate ties to falconry and hunting.

Gyrfalcons are uncommon in the falconry graves. The earliest identified specimen from the falconry graves is in the eighth-century Vendel III burial, and then two more are found in the late-ninth/early-tenth-century Söderby A7 and A10 graves. It is likely that these Gyrfalcons were traded from more northern areas, as they typically inhabit circumpolar coastal areas (§5.3). The position of Gyrfalcons as luxury trade commodities may explain

---

<sup>418</sup> Frederick II, ‘§6 Appendix I’ (ed. Budriesi, p. 1112) ‘bigger, stronger, braver, more beautiful, better and faster than others of their kind.’ See also Oggins, p. 16.

<sup>419</sup> Ericsson and Tyrberg, pp. 114–15; Ferguson-Lees and Christie, pp. 911–19.

<sup>420</sup> Peregrine Falcons were not officially identified as a distinct species until the taxonomic description by Tunstall in 1771, and *De arte venandi cum avibus* (Frederick II, Appendix I §5 (ed. Budriesi, p. 1110)) appears to describe them as a subspecies of Goshawk, although it does note that there was some dispute over this designation.

<sup>421</sup> Oggins, pp. 13–4.

<sup>422</sup> Ericsson and Tyrberg, pp. 170–71; Eriksen and Wabakken.

<sup>423</sup> Tyrberg, pp. 215–31.

why these birds are rarely found in graves compared to native woodland species, and may indicate a certain level of prestige, even if the Söderby graves overall had less ostentatious grave goods than many of the falconry graves.

Perhaps the most remarkable birds in these assemblages are the White-tailed Sea Eagle from the Skopintull burial and the Golden Eagle from Söderby A25. These are unlikely to be falconry birds, as although falconry with Golden Eagles is practised in the Eurasian steppe, there is no record of eagles being used in pre-modern European falconry as their size and weight make it difficult to use them on horseback.<sup>424</sup> As well as their size making them impractical hunting birds, White-tailed Sea Eagles largely prey upon fish and coastal water birds rather than the inland prey favoured by the medieval hunt.<sup>425</sup> Other finds of White-tailed Sea Eagles from Viking Age urban sites in Denmark suggest they were urban scavengers, and that they were caught and butchered for their feathers.<sup>426</sup> Given that the Skopintull eagle was included in the cremation, it was unlikely to be a scavenger. Instead, it may have been kept as a status symbol, either due to the bird's impressive physical size, or due to possible connections to entities such as Óðinn and the *jotnar* (§6.4.2).

The ages and genders of the human remains in these burials are diverse. While the majority of individuals have been identified as male, several skeletons have been identified as female, and female skeletons appear in individual graves as well as multiple burials. Thus, it cannot be argued that the women in falconry graves were all servants or wives of noblemen. Instead, given the presence of women in these graves as well as later literary sources connecting noblewomen to falconry (§5.4.2), it is fair to assume that at least some of the women in these graves may have taken part in falconry.

Some scholars have used Freyja's ownership of a *valshamr* to argue that raptor emblems signified an individual's devotion to Freyja, and that this identity-marker was recognised across the Norse diaspora as far as the Rus' royal dynasty.<sup>427</sup> Although archaeological sources support the argument that the rulers of the Kievan Rus' retained connections with East Sweden in the tenth century,<sup>428</sup> there is little to suggest that this included a religious continuity with pre-Christian Swedish beliefs, or that raptors were

---

<sup>424</sup> Oehrl, p. 516; Wood and Fyfe, 'Translators' Introduction', pp. xxxix–xl; Soma.

<sup>425</sup> Ferguson-Lees and Christie, pp. 402–6.

<sup>426</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 372.

<sup>427</sup> Kovalev, pp. 460–517.

<sup>428</sup> Hedenstierna-Jonson, pp. 159–78.

specifically sacred to Freyja, beyond her *valshamr*. As such, a secular reading of falcons would be more fruitful.

As already mentioned, falconry was from its inception a form of conspicuous consumption. It required the individual to have the time and resources to train and keep raptors, and it also implied that the deceased had connections to socially-elite practitioners of falconry on the Continent and beyond. As such, the inclusion of a raptor in the deceased's grave was more than a sign of their favourite hobby: it was a mark of their elite status and their prestigious connections. This use of raptors as emblems of well-connected nobles appears to have outlived the falconry graves in Sweden. For instance, Jennbert argues that a bird brooch in the shape of a raptor as viewed from above, widespread in Viking Age Denmark and Sweden, was a popular identity-marker among elite women as a symbol of wealth and prestige.<sup>429</sup> Overall, it would be safest to assume that the main "meaning" of raptor emblems in Late Iron Age southern Scandinavia was as a symbol of elite status that could be "read" throughout Europe and Asia. To own a bird, whether a local Goshawk or an imported Gyrfalcon, was to possess the means to train and maintain this bird, and to participate in the networks of trade, gift-giving, expertise, and social prestige that aristocratic falconry practitioners likely shared.

It should also be noted that the presence of raptors in grave goods does not necessarily indicate that the deceased personally practised falconry. Rather, as Jennbert argues, grave goods, including animals, form a web of significant objects that evoke a particular social identity that those responsible for the burial (usually family, friends, and/or followers) wished to express on behalf of the deceased and/or themselves.<sup>430</sup> As such, grave goods should be interpreted in the context of secular mentalities, widely-held norms and patterns of belief, rather than according to the deceased's personal religious beliefs or sense of self.<sup>431</sup> For instance, in rare cases, such as Vendlas hög A1:1 and A2:2, children are interred alongside birds of prey and an array of aristocratic grave goods. While it is not impossible that some older children or young teenagers may have been introduced to at least the basic principles of falconry, it is likely that these birds were included for symbolic reasons, rather than as an indication that the children were active falconers.

---

<sup>429</sup> Jennbert, 'The Mania of the Time', pp. 24–8.

<sup>430</sup> Jennbert, *Animals and Humans*, pp. 103–4, 157.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

### 5.2.2 Conclusion to Falconry in the Archaeological Record

There are three key observations to be taken away from the archaeological evidence for falconry in southern Scandinavia. Firstly, falconry was known about and practiced by certain groups of Norse-speaking peoples from at least the seventh century, if not earlier. Secondly, falconry was, from its introduction, a pursuit of the wealthy and the well-connected. As such, material culture pertaining to falconry, such as brooches and grave goods, appear to have been used by Norse-speaking peoples to signal their belonging to an international network of wealthy and therefore powerful falconry practitioners. Finally, the falconry burials speak to a certain level of intimacy between bird and human, conceptually if not individually, where the bird almost became part of the person. As the following discussion of raptors in Old Norse-Icelandic literature will discuss, the position of the raptors on the borders of personhood was a recurring concept in Old Norse culture. Even if there was not a direct line between the falconry graves and later iterations of attributing personhood to hawks and falcons, it is important to note that these patterns of human-bird interaction and human reaction to these interactions were not isolated, unique instances but rather part of a longer history of falconry.

### 5.3 Gyrfalcons in Scandinavia and Iceland

While the Swedish falconry graves contain few Gyrfalcons, the role of the Gyrfalcon in medieval falconry should not be overlooked. The Gyrfalcon is both larger and heavier than the Peregrine Falcon, and although it cannot reach the speeds of a Peregrine Falcon, it can take larger prey. While a largely coastal-dwelling bird, Gyrfalcons have a wide natural range, encompassing many Arctic and sub-Arctic regions in a circumpolar distribution, from northeastern Canada to eastern Russia and northern Greenland.<sup>432</sup>

As well as their hunting abilities, another aspect of the Gyrfalcon that proved popular was its tendency toward polymorphism, having multiple naturally-occurring plumage colours, or ‘morphs,’ which range from white to dark brown.<sup>433</sup> These morphs loosely map on to geographic distribution with the paler morphs typically being found further north, although this is not always the case.<sup>434</sup> This rough distribution of morphs was known in medieval Europe, and white or light grey Gyrfalcon from Greenland, Iceland, and Norway

---

<sup>432</sup> Johnson et al., p. 3146.

<sup>433</sup> Chang et al., pp. 224–25, list four distinct morphs recognised by modern Gyrfalcon breeders: white (white feathers with no markings or faint markings), silver (white feathers with some darker barring on the breast and wings), grey (tan feathers with some barring on the breast and dark barring on the wings), and black (tan feathers with heavy dark barring on back and wings).

<sup>434</sup> Johnson et al., p. 3146.



were highly sought after, much like the paler Goshawk morphs. In his monograph on falconry among the medieval English royalty, Robin S. Oggins notes that ‘Gyrfalcon’ on its own in documents usually referred to the darker morphs, while grey birds were often referred to as ‘Iceland’ Gyrfalcon, and the white ones as ‘Greenland’ Gyrfalcon, and that white colour morphs were almost always mentioned before other Gyrfalcons on documents, stressing their rarity and value.<sup>435</sup>

The emphasis on colour and provenance of these birds was unlikely to be a coincidence: the resources and labour of not only manning these birds, but of finding them in the first place, was all part of the package. For example, in 1225, King Hákon IV of Norway sent ‘xiiij. girofalcons, tres albas et decem [griseos?]’ to King Henry III of England, stating that his fowlers had searched for the birds in Iceland, and he emphasises the cold and hunger suffered at the glacial oceans where these birds nest.<sup>436</sup> He then goes on to remark that ‘aves Islandicas carius quam aurum et argentum amplexari dicebantur.’<sup>437</sup> The simple fact of sourcing these birds from Iceland was enough to bring a prestige that a darker bird from Norway simply could not supply. In addition to this, Martina Giese has argued that there was an aesthetic preference for white animals in general during the Middle Ages due to the rarity of pure white colouration among many animals, as well as the connotations of beauty, holiness, and the numinous that whiteness held in medieval art and literature.<sup>438</sup>

The archaeological record of Gyrfalcons in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic is, perhaps surprisingly given the prestige of birds from these regions, quite sparse. The 2003 excavations of a trading post active in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at Gásir, northern Iceland, revealed only a single Gyrfalcon leg bone, even if it does map onto documentary accounts of falcon export from Gásir.<sup>439</sup> Walker et al.’s re-evaluation of bird bones from medieval Norway, meanwhile, raises the previous total of identified Gyrfalcon bones from four to ten, with all six newly-identified specimens coming from Bergen. This is in stark contrast with the number of Goshawk specimens, which increased from four to 141. Walker et al. note that the falconry species are limited to Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, which are all urban trading centres, suggesting these birds would be exported.<sup>440</sup> Bird and human

---

<sup>435</sup> Oggins, pp. 12–3.

<sup>436</sup> *Diplimatarium Norvegicum* 19, §167 (ed. Bugge, p. 125), ‘Thirteen Gyrfalcon, three white and ten grey.’

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Icelandic birds are said to be held at a greater worth than gold or silver.’

<sup>438</sup> Giese, pp. 666–67, 671–72.

<sup>439</sup> Harrison et al., ‘Interim Report of Animal Bones’, p. 86

<sup>440</sup> Walker et al., p. 27.

demographics could also play a part. Gyrfalcons and Peregrine Falcons tend to be less numerous, and nest in places less accessible to humans, such as cliffs, and as a result only the rich had access to them. Goshawks, meanwhile, were used not only by royalty and nobility, but by high-ranking commoners as well. Thus, a combination of higher levels of export than local use and a lower number of captured birds to begin with may have skewed the number of Gyrfalcons found in Norwegian and Icelandic population centres.

It is also hard to trace Gyrfalcons in Old Norse textual sources. Part of this is due to issues concerning vocabulary. While the Modern Icelandic *fálki* usually refers to a Gyrfalcon, this is thought to be a later loanword.<sup>441</sup> Additionally, the terminology is not consistent, and both law codes and literary texts have used *falki* and *haukr* interchangeably between variants.<sup>442</sup> Instances where a bird's whiteness is emphasised give a stronger suggestion that the bird in question may be a Gyrfalcon. One such example is in *Króka-Refs saga*, where fifteen white *falkar* and fifty other *falkar*, as well as five white bears are among the valuable Greenlandic wares that the protagonist Refr brings to Denmark.<sup>443</sup> *Falki* is also attested in *Thómass saga erkibyskups*, along with *falkiner* ('falconer'), which is otherwise only attested as the byname of a Jón *falkiner/falkineri* who is named as a witness in three documents from Bergen, two dated to 1315 and one to 1323.<sup>444</sup> So while tracing the term *falki* in Old Norse textual sources brings up some sources that attest to the trade in falcons, such attestations are few and far between, and do not necessarily provide significant amounts of information.

In some cases, Gyrfalcons are referred to with the older term *valr*. One example is the thirteenth-century didactic text *Konungs skuggsjá*, intended for the education of Magnús lagabœtr, son of King Hákon IV. While the text primarily discusses the practical and moral concerns of rulership, its discussion of Greenland also contains the most detailed description of Gyrfalcons in Old Norse literature:

Ual er þar oc mikell oc margr íppi lannde sa er íaðrum lonndum þætti mykil  
gærsimi ípæra. hviter palir oc er hann gnogare þar en a ænngu lannde aðru oc  
kunnu lannzmænn sialfr þo ser æcki af at nyta.<sup>445</sup>

---

<sup>441</sup> ÁBM, s.v. 'fálki'.

<sup>442</sup> *Nyere Lands-Lov* §IX.vii (ed. Keyser and Munch, p. 171); *Elíss saga ok Rosamundu*, ch. 14 (ed. Kölbing, p. 54).

<sup>443</sup> *Króka-Refs saga*, ch. 4 (ed. Pálmi Pálsson, p. 38).

<sup>444</sup> *Thómass saga erkibyskups*, ch. 6 (ed. Unger, p. 16); *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* I, §146 (ed. Lange and Unger, p. 129); *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* II, §122 (ed. Lange and Unger, p. 106); *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* V, §69 (ed. Lange and Unger, p. 64).

<sup>445</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá*, (ed. Holm-Olsen, p. 30).

(There is a falcon that is larger and greater in number in that land than in any other. The white falcon is thought to be a great treasure, and it is more abundant there than in any other land, although the inhabitants do not know how to use it.)

While this is quite clearly referring to Gyrfalcons, as a general rule *valr* tends to be used widely as a generic term for raptors (§9). As such, while an overall inspection of the corpus of *haukr*, *valr*, and *falki* attestations may provide examples where the context suggests a Gyrfalcon is being referred to, the majority of attestations are too fleeting to identify the bird being referred to.

Overall, the position of the Gyrfalcon in Old Norse culture is complex. On the one hand, it was a valuable commodity that was potentially considered more valuable than gold. On the other hand, there is scant evidence that falconry was practised in Iceland or in the Norse Greenland colonies, despite or perhaps in part due to the birds' considerable export value, alongside factors such as the lack of game compared to mainland Scandinavia, Britain, and continental Europe. While the Gyrfalcon remains elusive in sources, what attestations there are of these birds only serve to highlight their status as a rare, exported luxury, particularly when it came to the white birds, whose striking plumage held connotations of exoticism, purity, and wealth to the southern nobles who bought or were given them.

#### **5.4 Hawks and Falconry in Medieval Icelandic Literature**

While Gyrfalcons are elusive in Old Norse textual sources as a specific entity, this does not mean that raptors as a whole are not visible in the textual corpus. On the contrary, they are relatively widespread in Old Norse-Icelandic literature compared to most types of bird. While some texts display a close knowledge of raptors as raptors, for the most part, these representations of hawks and falcons serve to reflect the noble status of their owners, whether as a status symbol or, in some cases, the birds are harmed as metonymic aspects of their owners. This use of raptors as a reflection of and metonymic stand-in for their owners not only carries on the sense of dividuality of elite personhood mentioned above, but is sometimes developed in the opposite way, as characteristics that are usually only attributed to humans, particularly inner emotional lives, are also attributed to hawks and falcons in literary texts.

##### **5.4.1 *Hauks heiti* and Observation of Hawk Behaviour**

Before going into the particular symbolic uses of hawks and falcons in Old Norse literature, an inspection of the anonymous *þula*, *Hauks heiti* not only illustrates the level of cultural

prominence and familiarity possessed by raptors, but also provides an overview of how raptors were perceived and understood through the features and ideas highlighted by the *heiti*:

Haukr, hamðir, harmr,  
Hábrók, tregi,  
heiðir, heimþér,  
hrímnir, kǫglingr,  
ginnarr, gamðir  
ok geirlǫðnir,  
gǫllungr, ginnungr  
ok gaglhati.

Yrlygr, ymir,  
undskornir, valr,  
ifjungur, ifli,  
ifill, Veðrfólnir,  
forseti, viðnir,  
fjǫrsungr, þrǫmmungr,  
olgr, mútari,  
ǫglir, sauðnir.<sup>446</sup>

(Hawk, *hamðir*, sorrow, high-breeches, grief, heath-dweller, *heimþér*, screamer, *kǫglingr* [possibly ‘watchful one’], deceiver, entertainer, and spear-leader, shrieker, trickster, and gosling-hater.

Fighter, crier, wound-cleaver, *valr*, hooded one, hood-wearer, blindfolded one, one that pales in the storm, watchful, forest-dweller, spotted one, lumbering one, clamorous one, moulted one, *ǫglir* [possibly ‘averse one’ or ‘eagle’], one who suffers from heat.)

This *þula* does need to be approached cautiously. It is attested in only three manuscripts: AM 748 I b 4to, AM 757 a 4to, and the eighteenth-century AM 744 4to x, and many of the words listed are *hapax legomena*. As such, it is unclear how much currency some of these *heiti* had in Old Norse speech and poetry.<sup>447</sup> That being said, many of the words used suggest a close

---

<sup>446</sup> *Hauks heiti*, 1:1–2:8 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 940–44).

<sup>447</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hauks heiti*, pp. 940–44.

knowledge of raptors, and the features and ideas they highlight appear elsewhere in Old Norse literature and falconry literature.

Many of these names refer to the sounds that raptors make; a common identifying feature of birds in the *þulur* and in medieval bird-lore more generally.<sup>448</sup> Visual appearance is addressed in *fforsungr* ('spotted one'). Sensitivity to climate appears in two: *veðrfólur* ('one that pales in the storm'), possibly a reference to the tendency of birds from harsher northerly climates to have paler plumage, and *sauðnir* ('one who suffers from heat'), which may refer to the tendency of Gyrfalcons and Sparrowhawks to become ill if kept in locations that were too warm.<sup>449</sup> The habitats of hawks and falcons are also referenced in *heiðir* ('heath-dweller') and *viðnir* ('forest-dweller').<sup>450</sup>

Some of the *heiti* seem to have literary roots. *Hábrók* ('high-breeches') is not only a *heiti* but appears to be a relatively common given name for hawks, possibly as a reference to raptors' feathered legs.<sup>451</sup> Given its frequency in the literary corpus, *Hábrók* may have served as a generic name for hawks. In *Grímnismál*, it is stated that *Hábrók* is the best of hawks, and King *Hrólfr* of *Hrólfs saga* is said to own a hawk with that name.<sup>452</sup> *Hamðir* (possibly 'cloaked one' derived from *hamr*), *ginnarr* (deceiver), and *ginnungr* ('trickster') could potentially allude to the use of falcon-disguises by the *Æsir*.<sup>453</sup>

Several *heiti*, meanwhile, seem directly related to falconry: *ifjungr* ('hooded one'), *ifli* ('hood-wearer'), and *ifill* ('blindfolded one') all presumably allude to the temporary blinding of a raptor while it is being manned, and *gamðir* ('entertainer'), *geirløðnir* ('spear-leader'), and possibly *gaglhathi* ('gosling-hater') could all refer to the use of falcons in the hunt – a courtly source of amusement. The two emotion-based *heiti*, *harmr* ('sorrow') and *tregi* ('grief'), may allude to the birds' predatory natures, as with *undskornir* ('wound-cleaver') and *gaglhathi*. *Heimþér*, too, may refer to a kind of domestic or trained partner animal, if one takes *heim-* to be derived from *heimr* ('home') and *-þér* to be an archaic word pertaining to servant.<sup>454</sup> However, as this word is a *hapax legomenon*, it cannot be interpreted with certainty. Alongside these, *mútari* ('moulted one') and its synonym *mútaðr* are both derived

---

<sup>448</sup> *Hrafns heiti, Hana heiti, Ara heiti* (ed. Gurevich, pp. 944–51); Lacey, 'Avian Aurality', pp. 400–15.

<sup>449</sup> Orten Lie, pp. 730, 742–43.

<sup>450</sup> Low-flight hawks generally favour enclosed woodland, and high-flight falcons open heathland.

<sup>451</sup> Simek, s.v. 'hábrók'. Kock, pp. 265–66 argues that, in light of OHG *habuh* and OE *hafoc*, *Hábrók* was of common Germanic origins and later folk-etymologised.

<sup>452</sup> *Grímnismál* 44:8 (*Edkv* I, p. 377); *Hrólfs saga*, ch. 27 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 79).

<sup>453</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hauks heiti*, pp. 941–42.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*

from Old French term *muter* ('a hawk that has moulted'),<sup>455</sup> which in itself could attest to noble falconry networks, given that *mútari*, like *falki*, were foreign loanwords introduced in the medieval period.

Overall, these observations should be extrapolated with caution, due to the poetic, frequently unique, and likely antiquarian nature of the language in *Hauks heiti*. However, the descriptive categories it uses illustrate that raptors were familiar to the composer(s) and audiences of the *pula*, not only in their wild behaviour, but in the processes of manning, co-hunting, and co-habitation that spring from the practice of falconry.

#### 5.4.2 Raptors and/as Noblemen

Outside *Hauks heiti*, one of the main uses of raptors in Old Norse-Icelandic literature was as a shorthand to indicate wealth and/or nobility of human characters. For instance, in *Hrólfs saga*, when King Hrólfr travels with his retinue, it is said that '[þ]eir höfðu hauka sína sér á oxlum, ok þótti þat mikil þryði í þær mundir, en Hrólfr konungr átti þann hauk, er Hábrók hét.'<sup>456</sup> Here, as argued by Lydia Carstens, the hawks are used 'as a literary feature to visualize the virtues of the protagonist without explicitly naming them,' a trope that she identifies in other medieval texts such as the Middle High German *Parzival*.<sup>457</sup> Thus, it is arguable that these literary raptors ultimately hold the same symbolic function as the birds in the falconry graves, even these two examples of symbolism were not directly related.

However, *Hrólfs saga* and many other texts go beyond this use of raptors to signify nobility. The association between hawks and noblemen throughout Old Norse literature, particularly genres more concerned with courts, royalty, and nobles, e.g. *konungasögur*, *riddarasögur* and *fornaldasögur*, leads to a phenomenon where the birds are not used to indicate the social status of their owners so much as they become stand-ins for their owners. For instance, when King Hrólfr and his men fight the forces of King Aðils of Uppsala, Hrólfr's retinue seems to be winning. The narrative then recounts how:

[Í] þessum harða bardaga kemr haukr Hrólfs konungs fljúgandi úr borginni ok sez á oxl Hrólfs konungs svá látandi svá sem hann eigi miklum sigri at hrósa. Bøðvar mælti: "svá lætr hann nú, sem hann hafi nokkurn frama unnit." Sá maðr skundaði

---

<sup>455</sup> CV, s.v. 'mútaðr'; ONP, s.v. 'mútaðr' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o55727>>; ONP, s.v. 'mútari' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o55728>> [Accessed 11th July 2019].

<sup>456</sup> *Hrólfs saga*, ch. 27 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 79) 'they had their hawks on their shoulders, which was thought to be great gallantry at the time, and King Hrólfr had his hawk, which was called Hábrók'.

<sup>457</sup> Carstens, p. 405

til eins lopts, sem haukana átti at annaz ok þeir váru í geymdir, ok þykkir honum undarligt, at haukr Hrólfs konungs er í burtu, en hann finnr dauða alla hauka Aðils konungs.<sup>458</sup>

(In this fierce battle Hrólfr's hawk comes flying out of the fortress and lands on Hrólfr's shoulder, behaving as if he had a great victory to boast of. Bǫðvar spoke: 'Now he is behaving as if he had triumphed at something.' The falconer ran to an attic where the hawks were kept, and it seemed wondrous to him, that King Hrólfr's hawk had escaped, but he found all of King Aðils' hawks dead.)

Not only are hawks used to symbolise nobility in the quote mentioned in the previous paragraph, but here the bodies of hawks are used as metonymical substitutes for the bodies of their owners, as the violence carried out on Aðils' hawks by Hábrók is implied to mirror Hrólfr's men killing Aðils' men.

A similar motif is found in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfrekkar*. When the hall in which Hálf and his men are sleeping is set on fire, it is said that 'En sa er fyst uaknadí af Hálfs rekum, sa haullína nǫr fulla af reykhann mællti. ríuka mun um hauka uora nu sagdí hann.'<sup>459</sup> Again, the bodies of the hawks are used as substitutes for the bodies of their noble owners: if smoke is curling around the hawks, it is presumably surrounding the bodies of their owners who are also in the hall. In both sagas, hawks not only symbolise the nobility of their owners, but stand in for their owners' bodies in a form of metonymic substitution.

This motif of metonymically substituting a raptor for a noble person also occurs in *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*. In the thirteenth-century *Heimskringla* version of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Óláfr's sister refuses to marry in accordance with Óláfr's wishes. The saga describes how, in retaliation, 'Óláfr konungr lét taka hauk, er Ástriðr átti, ok lét plokka af fjaðrar allar ok sendi henni síðan. Þá mælti Ástriðr: "Reiðr er bróðir minn nú."<sup>460</sup> Lydia Carstens argues that Óláfr is making his sister feel guilty by implying that her disobedience makes him appear as weak as a featherless hawk to other nobles.<sup>461</sup> She bases this on a tale recounted in *Skáldskaparmál*, in which King Jǫrmunrekkr orders the execution of his son,

---

<sup>458</sup> *Hrólfs saga*, ch. 29 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 87).

<sup>459</sup> *Hálfs saga ok Hálfrekka*, ch. 7 (ed. Seelow, p. 183) 'And he who awoke first out of Hálf's retinue saw that smoke nearly filled the hall. He spoke: "Smoke now curls around our hawks," he said.'

<sup>460</sup> *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 57 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 307) 'King Óláfr commanded that the hawk Ástriðr owned be taken and all the feathers plucked, and afterward it was sent to her. Then Ástriðr spoke: "Now my brother is angry."'

<sup>461</sup> Carstens, p. 406.

Randvér. Upon hearing this, Randvér uses a plucked hawk to signify the fate of Jormunrekkr's kingdom following his death:

[T]ók Randvér hauk sinn ok plokkaði af fjaðrarnar ok bað senda feðr sínum. Þá var hann hengðr. En er Jormunrekkr konungr sá haukinn þá kom honum í hug at svá sem haukrinn var ófleygr ok fjaðrlaus, ok svá var ríki hans óføert er hann var gamall ok sonlaus.<sup>462</sup>

(Randvér took his hawk and plucked its feathers and asked it to be sent to his father. Then he was hanged. And when King Jormunrekkr saw the hawk, he realised that just as the hawk was flightless and featherless, so his kingdom was crippled when he was old and sonless.)

Carstens' argument is not entirely unfounded. Both texts have been attributed to Snorri Sturluson, and both recount tales of noble revenge through the destruction of a prized hawk. However, the text of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* itself does not provide an explicit reference to the story of Jormunrekkr, and Carstens' argument is not the only possible interpretation. Óláfr's gesture could also serve as a threat. Although raptors moult and regrow their feathers annually, if their feathers are forcibly plucked there is a serious risk that the feathers will grow back damaged, or simply not at all due to damaged feather follicles. The main flight feathers, known as *primaries*, are particularly susceptible to this sort of damage if plucked, and so removing a raptor's primaries may render it permanently flightless.<sup>463</sup> An audience familiar with falconry would likely know this, and so Óláfr's gesture could be seen not only as the deliberate sabotage of a valuable possession, but also as a threat to Ástríðr, using her hawk to stand in for her own person: just as Óláfr can pluck her hawk's feathers, he is fully capable of, so to speak, plucking her feathers, whether physically or socially.

Another variation on this trope is found in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. In this saga, Haraldr Blátǫnn kills his white-haired brother Knútr, who is his father's favourite son. He then asks his mother Þyri for help regarding how he might inform his father without being killed in retribution:

Haraldr sendi fóstbróður sinn, er Haukr hét, á fund Þyri drottningar, móður sinnar, ok bar henni orð til, at hon fengi ráð til at segja tíðendin. En hon gaf þau ráð til, at hann færi sjálfr á fund föður síns ok segði, at haukar tveir hefði barizt ok væri

---

<sup>462</sup> *Skm*, p. 49 (ch. 42).

<sup>463</sup> Heidenreich, pp. 168–74; Delnatte et al., pp. 600–10.



annarr alhvítr, en annarr grár, ok væri báðir góðir, en svá lyki með þeim, at hinn hvíti haukrinn hefði bana ok þætti þat almikill skaði. Síðan fór Haukr til Haralds ok sagði, hvat móðir hans hafði til ráðs gefit. Fór Haraldr til hallar, þar er Gormr konungr drakk inni með hirð sína. Haraldr gekk nú í höllina fyrir föður sinn ok segir honum frá haukunum, svá sem móðir hans hafði ráð til kennt, ok lauk svá sínu máli, at nú er dauðr hinn hvíti haukrinn.<sup>464</sup>

(Haraldr sent his foster brother, who was called Haukr, to a meeting with his mother, Queen Þyri, and sent her a message saying that he needed her to send advice on how to deliver news. And she gave this advice, that Haraldr himself should go to meet his father and say the following: that two hawks, one white and one grey, both good, had fought. It ended up that the white hawk had died and that seemed an almighty shame. Haukr went back to Haraldr and passed on the advice his mother had given. Haraldr went to the hall where King Gormr drank with his retinue. He went before his father and tells him about the hawks, just as his mother had advised. His story ended with the white hawk's death.)

Although there is no hawk physically present in this episode, Þyri's advice – possibly as a play on her foster son's name – again substitutes the body of a young nobleman with that of a hawk. Neither brother is said to own a raptor, but Knútr is described as having white/blond hair and being the favourite son of his father.<sup>465</sup> As well as being a means of differentiating the two brothers, this mentioning of hair colour illustrates how the two brothers were perceived by their father by relating to cultural perceptions of birds with darker and paler morphs, such as Goshawks and Gyrfalcons. As discussed in §5.2.2 and §5.3, paler birds were frequently considered of greater value due to visual appeal and remote provenance. This episode of *Jómsvíkinga saga* illustrates how, as well as individual hawks standing in for individual owners, raptors could be used as generic substitutes for noble individuals.

The metonymical incorporation of the raptor's body into a falconer's personhood is not unique to certain literary genres from medieval literature. Arguably, the inclusion of raptors in the Swedish falconry graves also suggests that the raptor hunting-companions of Iron Age elites may indicate a similar imaginative phenomenon. As discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, human societies attribute personhood to non-human animals in one of two

---

<sup>464</sup> *Flateyjarbók* I, ch. 77 (ed. Sigurður Nordal, p. 113).

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 74, p. 109.

ways. *Metonymical personhood* is predicated upon proximity to human life. Animals such as pets are drawn into the sphere of personhood due to their being intimately involved in the day-to-day lives of a human household. In contrast, *metaphorical personhood* is where a non-human animal is analogously compared to humans based on certain – usually social – traits, such as communicating using vocalised sounds, and living in family units.<sup>466</sup>

While Lévi-Strauss and Hastrup frame the metaphorical and metonymical personhood of animals in quite general terms, raptors appear to have a highly particular form of metonymical personhood in Old Norse culture, regardless of any pre-existing metaphorical humanity. Some of the earliest extant sources that suggest such a metonymical personhood are the falconry graves' joint human-animal burials. As Howard Williams argues in relation to pre-Christian cremation burials of human and animal remains in early medieval England, this kind of mixture of human and animal 'can be seen as means of constituting new identities for the dead following the cremation,' signifying '[an] enmeshed relationship of animals and people.'<sup>467</sup> Although trained raptors were not considered persons enough to merit their own individual burials, their social identities were metonymically attached to those of their owners to the extent that their bodies were merged as part of the death ritual.

Such human-animal composites are also discussed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in *Medieval Identity Machines*, where he argues that medieval knighthood was a composite hybrid identity constructed equally from horse, human, and equestrian equipment, all working towards a shared aim.<sup>468</sup> While the universality of the psychoanalytic theory Cohen bases his analysis in has been questioned, the anthropological concept of composite or dividual personhood, a personhood that is formed from multiple material entities that may divide and reconvene, has been observed in present-day cultures, and analogous concepts have been posited in (pre)historic societies.<sup>469</sup>

As the falconry graves have only been found in East Central Sweden, it is unknown whether this metonymic incorporation of raptors into their human owners' identities/personhood occurred elsewhere among the Norse peoples at this time. Yet the bone assemblages in these falconry graves could express dividual personhood, as the culturally constructed noble "person" required both human and raptor as integral elements, alongside

---

<sup>466</sup> Lévi-Strauss, pp. 204–5; Hastrup, p. 254.

<sup>467</sup> Williams, p. 20.

<sup>468</sup> Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, pp. 45–77.

<sup>469</sup> Marriott, pp. 109–10; Budja, pp. 137–53. For discussions of the limits of psychoanalytic frameworks, see Spivak, pp. 105–7.

other things such as horses and dogs, regardless of whether the human practised falconry. The later literary use of a raptor's body as a substitute for that of a noble person is not necessarily a direct reflection of Iron Age Swedish burial practices or overall mentalities, but it does arguably reflect a similar attitude toward raptors, affording them a limited, dividual, metonymically-derived personhood within the shadow of their human owner's personhood.

#### 5.4.3 The Inner Lives of Raptors in Medieval Icelandic Literature

In addition to raptors being incorporated into/substituted for their human owners, at several points in Old Norse literature some form of inner cognitive and emotional life comparable to that of humans is attributed to raptors. For instance, in *Hrólfs saga*, Hábrók shows pride in his battle victory – a fact recognised by the human character Bǫðvar, who comments ‘svá lætr hann nú, sem hann hafí nǫkkurn frama unnit.’<sup>470</sup> On the one hand, Bǫðvar is himself not entirely human. He is the son of a man who was transformed into a bear, and he and his brothers possess animal features, so it is possible that he possesses an enhanced sensitivity to animals.<sup>471</sup> On the other hand, such an ability is not noted in the saga, and Hábrók's emotions are acknowledged by the narrative voice itself, suggesting that Hábrók is expressing something analogous to human emotion.

The inner life of raptors is also hinted at in the fourteenth-century *Mágus saga jarls*, a loose adaptation of the French *chanson de geste*, *Les Quatre Fils Aymon*. In both shorter and longer redactions, there is an episode where King Hlöðvir returns to his kingdom, and his wife attempts to reassure him that his treasures, including his hawk, are safe. In this episode, it is said that ‘þegar sem haukurinn leit konung, flýgur hann frá drottningu ok settist á hönd konungi, því að fullgerla kenndi þar hvor annan.’<sup>472</sup> Like *Hrólfs saga*, *Mágus saga* suggests that trained hawks were capable having and communicating inner thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, this is a Norse interpolation, which suggests it may have had some cultural specificity regarding Norse understandings of raptor behaviour. From these examples and from the dividual incorporation of raptors into human personhood, it can be argued that raptors were not only metonymically incorporated into their falconers' personhood, but that

---

<sup>470</sup> *Hrólfs saga*, ch. 29 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 87) ‘Now he is behaving as if he had triumphed at something.’

<sup>471</sup> *Hrólfs saga*, chs. 19–20 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 49–54).

<sup>472</sup> *Mágus saga jarls (hinn meiri)*, ch. 12 (ed. Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, p. 187) ‘as soon as the hawk glimpsed the king, he flew from the queen and landed upon the king's hand, because they clearly recognised one another.’ This is from the longer redaction, but a similar recognition appears in the shorter redaction, *Mágus saga jarls*, ch. 4 (ed. Cederschiöld, p. 6).

there was a kind of conceptual “bleeding through” from the category of human to the category of raptor that afforded raptors an inner life suggestive of individual personhood.

Linguistic evidence suggests that this aspect of raptors’ personhood may have earlier roots. Adjectives found in skaldic verse and prose sagas alike attest to a deeply-held link between the character of raptors and a particular kind of bravery and keenness exhibited by young noblemen. In skaldic verse, these occur in the form of the compounds *hawkliga* (‘hawkishly’), *hawkligr* (‘hawklike’), *hawklundaðr* (‘hawk-minded’), *hawklundr* (‘hawk-minded’), *hawklyndr* (‘hawk-minded’), *hawksnarlīga* (‘hawk-swiftly’ or ‘hawk-keenly’), *hawksnarr* (‘hawk-swift’ or ‘hawk-keen’), and *hawksnjallr* (‘hawk-swift’ or ‘hawk-brave’); all of which are used to describe a nobleman and/or his valour.<sup>473</sup>

As well as these adjectival and adverbial compounds, *hawkmaðr* (‘hawk-man’) and even *hawk* on its own are used as synonyms for brave young man or hero in skaldic verse and prose texts.<sup>474</sup> In the twelfth-century *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, it is said that King Hákon ‘í silkiskyrtu ok hjálm á hofði, skjöld fyr sér, en sverð í hendi er Kvernbiti hét, ok sýndisk maðrinn svá búinn ǫllum [ǫðrum] hawkligr.’<sup>475</sup> Likewise in *Piðreks saga af Bern* King Gunnarr is described as ‘kurteiss sterkr oc allgoðr Riddari oc haucligr er han sat a sinum hæsti.’<sup>476</sup> In *Fljótsdæla saga*, Piðrandi inn gamli Ketilsson is described as ‘hawk at hug’ (‘a hawk in his mind’).<sup>477</sup> Yet this proverbial bravery of hawks is not always clear-cut. Another character described as *hawkligr* in *Piðreks saga* is Villifer is described as ‘nockot bívgnæfiaðr oc havclegr i avgum.’<sup>478</sup> In this instance, it is not entirely clear whether he is being described as having fierce eyes, or as being sharp-sighted (in a similar sense to the Modern English phrase *eagle-eyed* or the hawk-*heiti forseti* and *koglingr*).<sup>479</sup> However, in the majority of cases, comparisons to hawks were used to express the particular boldness of (usually young) noble men.

---

<sup>473</sup> The exact semantic field of *-snarlīga*, *-snarr*, and *-snjallr* are hard to determine, although in context these words usually appear to take the meaning ‘brave’ rather than ‘swift’.

<sup>474</sup> CV, s.v. ‘hawk’; FJ, s.v. *hawkliga*, *hawkligr*, *hawklundaðr*, *hawklundr*, *hawklyndr*, *hawkmaðr*, *hawk*, *hawksnarlīga*, *hawksnarr*, *hawksnjallr*.

<sup>475</sup> *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, ch. 6, (ed. Driscoll, pp. 12–4) ‘in a silken shirt and a helmet on his head, bearing a shield before him, and the sword called Kvernbiti in his hand. And so prepared, the man appeared hawklike to all.’

<sup>476</sup> *Piðreks saga* I, ch. 289 (ed. Bertelsen, pp. 342) ‘a courteous, strong, and entirely good knight, and hawklike when he rode his horse.’

<sup>477</sup> *Fljótsdæla saga*, ch.3 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 219).

<sup>478</sup> *Piðreks saga* I, ch. 287 (ed. Bertelsen, pp. 338–9) ‘somewhat hook-nosed and hawklike in the eyes.’

<sup>479</sup> *Hauks heiti* 1:4, 2:5 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 941, 943). For a discussion of *koglingr* and its potential links to watchfulness, see Gurevich, Commentary to *Hauks heiti*, p. 942.

This link is exceptional because there are no other types of bird which are used to express human personality traits in such a way. Although *hrafnligr* ('raven-like') is attested as an adjective, it only occurs in a translation of a pun found in a homily by Alcuin of York, where the Latin for *tomorrow* is said to be raven-like in the sense of sounding like a raven's cry.<sup>480</sup> A similar case is the word *ǫrnfljótr* ('eagle-swift'), used by the anonymous composer of the twelfth-century *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* to describe themselves:

Áðr mun, óss an glóða  
 elris þrek, at virkum,  
 greppr megi ǫllum yppa  
 ǫrnfljótr, at brag þrjóta.<sup>481</sup>

(Áðr mun þrjóta at brag at virkum, an ǫrnfljótr greppr megi yppa ǫllum þrek elris glóða óss.)

(Sooner this poem for the considerate one [ÓLÁFR] must end, than the eagle-swift poet may extol all the courage of the elder of the estuary's embers [GOLD > MAN].)

Although this could possibly be a reference to the poet's boldness, Kate Heslop's commentary makes a strong case that this is likely an allusion to the swiftness with which the poet is composing, likening their mind to an eagle's rapid flight, and possibly also to the myth of the mead of poetry, in which Óðinn acquires the gift of poetry in an eagle's form.<sup>482</sup> This is likely, as there is a widely-attested verbal formula whereby a particularly swift person or horse is compared to a hawk,<sup>483</sup> which the skald may well have been playing off when composing this stanza.

There is one further instance of a bird being used to describe human/humanoid character traits, proposed by Richard North in his translation of *Haustlǫng*. North translates the word *lómhugaðr*, used to describe Þjazi, as 'loon-minded' rather than the more widely-accepted 'deceitful-minded.'<sup>484</sup> His argument runs that in this particular stanza, it is Loki, not

<sup>480</sup> 'Vmm fotta læiðretting' (ed. Widding, p. 81); Lacey, 'Birds and Bird-Lore', pp. 49–50.

<sup>481</sup> *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* 26:5–8 (ed. Heslop, p. 1056).

<sup>482</sup> Heslop, Commentary to *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, p. 1056.

<sup>483</sup> *Bærings saga fagra*, ch. 29 (ed. Cederschiöld, p. 117); *Rémunadar saga keisarasonar*, ch. 58 (ed. Broberg, p. 289). This phrase does not appear in all MSS of *Rémundar saga*. It occurs in the fifteenth-century Holm. perg. fol. 7, where it specifies a *sparrhaukr* ('sparrowhawk'), and in two seventeenth-century manuscripts, AM 181 h fol. and AM 125 8°, both of which compare the speed of Rémundr's horse to that of a *haukr*. As these redactions are not thought to be stemmatically-linked, it is possible that this proverbial phrase found its way into the text at multiple points in its transmission.

<sup>484</sup> Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlǫng* 12:5 (ed. North, p. 6).

Þjazi, who is being deceitful (despite Þjazi’s earlier deceptions), and that the translation ‘loon’ instead ‘gives Þjazi the “mind” or “intention” of a diving fish-eating predator.’<sup>485</sup> While this is interesting, Loki’s deceitfulness does not necessarily cancel out the possibility that Þjazi is likewise being characterised as deceitful here, and furthermore *lómr* (‘Loon,’ *Gavia stellata*) is not used to express predatory intent anywhere else in the Old Norse corpus. Indeed, the only other attestations of *lómr* (‘loon’) in the Old Norse corpus are in *Fugla heiti* (§2.3) and in the kenning *sárlómr* (‘wound-loon’) [BIRD OF BATTLE] in *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*.<sup>486</sup> Overall, deceitful-minded seems the stronger reading, and Margaret Clunies Ross’ more recent edition of *Haustlǫng* not only uses the reading *deceitful-minded*, but dismisses North’s edition as ‘unreliable.’<sup>487</sup> This leaves *haukr* as the only bird used in Old Norse literature to characterise a state of mind.

The only other animal that is used in Old Norse literature to refer explicitly to human character traits in a similar manner is the wolf, which appears in variations on *úlfhugaðr/úlfhuigr* (‘wolf-minded’), which are used to describe a “wolfish” (fierce or predatory) attitude possessed by a human.<sup>488</sup> The special status of wolves and their closeness to certain humans is attested across Old Norse culture, and may have its roots in pre-Christian attitudes toward humanity and animality and/or an ongoing fascination with dangerous predators.<sup>489</sup> It would appear that hawks likewise possessed a privileged status among non-human animals, and were seen as psychologically similar to humans.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Overall, the sources suggest that the closeness of human and raptor due to falconry arguably led to an exceptional treatment of raptors in Late Iron Age and Medieval Norse cultures, which manifested in a variety of material and textual ways. This exceptional treatment grew over time, culminating in a pattern of linguistic and literary motifs that suggest raptors were considered to possess metonymical personhood. It is likely that the metonymical attachment of raptors and noble humans stemmed from use of falconry as conspicuous consumption throughout Iron Age and medieval Europe. This first appears in Norse contexts in the form of

<sup>485</sup> North, commentary on *Haustlǫng*, (ed. North, pp. 53–4).

<sup>486</sup> *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* 8:2 (ed. Heslop, p. 1039).

<sup>487</sup> Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlǫng* 12:5 (ed. Clunies Ross, p. 449); Clunies Ross, ‘Introduction to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlǫng*’, p. 432.

<sup>488</sup> *Reginismál* 12:3 (*Edkv* II, p. 299); *Vǫlsunga saga*, ch. 35 (ed. Finch, p. 65); *Qrvar-Odds saga*, M-redaction, ch. 5 (ed. Boer, p. 22); *Qrvar-Odds saga*, S-redaction, § Draumr Guðmundar (ed. Boer, p. 23). Although *hundvís* (‘greatly wise’) appears in *Hymiskviða* 5:3 (*Edkv* I, p. 400), it is more likely to be derived from the *hund-* prefix meaning *hundred*, rather than *hundr* meaning *dog*. See CV, s.v. ‘Hund-’; J. Turville-Petre, p. 159.

<sup>489</sup> Pluskowski, *Wolves*, pp. 134–53, 180–84. See also §7.2.2.3.

raptors being incorporated into the posthumous bodies of deceased nobles in East Central Swedish burial rites, as symbols of their human owners' socially elite position.

Over time, this association between raptors and the nobility became increasingly entrenched. Not only did raptors symbolise nobility, they became metonymical stand-ins for the nobles themselves. The physical, social, and emotional closeness between raptor and human, created through the institution of falconry and the processes of manning and maintenance of each individual bird, also led to slippage between the cognitive categories of human and raptor. Not only were raptors metaphorically brave, they were *of the same mind* as young men – keen and brave – and they were able, in some limited capacity, to express inner sensations such as recognition of their lords, and joy at their martial victories.

This being said however, it is important to note that the personhood granted to raptors was partial and contingent. While they may have been considered to have some inner life comparable to that of a human, the posthumous treatment of raptors was no different from other non-human animals. Raptors were incorporated in human burials in a manner that suggests they were a part of the interred humans' personhood, rather than persons in their own right. Raptors were not given their own burials, but archaeological finds suggest they were disposed of on middens like most other wild or non-edible domestic animal. So while living raptors held a privileged and arguably unique position of metonymical personhood, it is important to bear in mind that as non-human animals, their personhood was only ever partial and temporary.

## 6 Birds and Symbolism

### 6.1 Introduction

While falconry was an important part of Late Iron Age and Medieval Norse elite culture, perhaps the most widely-known connection between birds and the Norse peoples in the present-day imagination is their use of birds in mythological contexts. There are three types of bird which are commonly associated with Old Norse mythology and pre-Christian beliefs. These are eagles (*ǫrn/ari*), ravens (*hrafn*), and swans (*svanr/álpt/qlpt*). All three types of bird appear repeatedly throughout the literary and iconographic corpus, indicating they held a longstanding and widespread significance.

Some scholars have argued that the mythological and literary significance of these birds was largely removed from their living presence in the world of the Norse peoples. For

instance, Roberta Frank argues that ‘it is never the bird that gives the thought; it is the thought that produces the bird.’<sup>490</sup> On the other side of the debate, Aleksander Pluskowski argues that living animals’ behaviour was an integral part of their symbolic/mythological roles, as ‘ecology [...] represents an important backdrop for situating the use of animals in the symbolic repertoire.’<sup>491</sup> When the literary representations of these three bird types are analysed in conjunction with zooarchaeological and documentary sources, the complex interplay that took place between the material and symbolic realms of human-animal interactions is brought into view. In this interplay, birds’ behaviour cannot explain away their representations, but they can be used to understand some of the patterns of thought that gave rise to them.

In each case, the portrayal of these birds in literary and iconographic sources differs from the everyday interactions between human and bird that are attested to in the zooarchaeological record of the medieval Norse cultural area. While these birds may have been symbolically rich according to the pictorial and literary records of the social elites, it would appear that human-bird interactions prioritised practicality and material matters over any symbolic importance these birds may have had. Yet while the symbolic and material lives of birds may have differed from one another in considerable ways, this is not to argue that the natural, the mythological, and the literary were separated from one another. Instead, the three of them fed into one another.

## 6.2 The Birds of Battle

One of the most persistent topics in the discussion of eagles and ravens in both Old Norse and Old English literature is the so-called ‘Beasts of Battle,’ beginning with the identification of the topos by Francis P. Magoun Jr, who describes it as ‘the mention of the wolf, eagle, and/or raven as beasts attendant on a scene of carnage.’<sup>492</sup> Subsequent scholars have expanded upon Magoun’s work, inspecting the literary functions, origins, and analogues to this topos.<sup>493</sup>

One area of this expanded view of the Beast of Battle topos is the search for analogues in Old Norse literature, which are largely, but not exclusively, found in skaldic verse. The argument that eagles, ravens, and wolves are strongly associated with scenes of battle in Old Norse literature is supported by the primary sources. In *Skáldskaparmál*, it is said:

---

<sup>490</sup> Frank, ‘Ornithology’, p. 83.

<sup>491</sup> Pluskowski, ‘Animal Magic’, p. 105.

<sup>492</sup> Magoun, p. 83.

<sup>493</sup> See Honegger; Griffith; Lacey, ‘Birds and Bird Lore’, p. 101.



Tveir eru fuglar þeir er eigi þarf at kenna annan veg en kalla blóð eða hræ drykk þeira eða verð, þat er hrafn ok ǫrn. Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn ǫrn eða hrafn.<sup>494</sup>

(There are two birds that need not be named in another way than to call blood their drink or carrion their food, these are the raven and the eagle. One may name all other grammatically masculine birds with blood or carrion and that is then the name Eagle or Raven.)

The majority of raven/eagle kennings throughout the corpus of skaldic verse follow the formula laid out in *Skáldskaparmál*.<sup>495</sup> This passage also seems to suggest that kennings for eagles and ravens are largely interchangeable. This has led scholars to a variety of different strategies when interpreting these kennings' referents. The editorial guidelines of the Skaldic Poetry Project indicate an occasionally arbitrary division of bird-of-battle kenning-referents into the sub-sets [EAGLE], [RAVEN], or ambiguous.<sup>496</sup> Meissner uses the referent [RAVEN] for almost all bird of battle kennings on the grounds that 'Epitheta (besonders schwarz, dunkelfarbig) oder charakteristische Züge des Zusammenhangs lassen keinen Zweifel zu, daß die meisten dieser Kenningar den Raben bezeichnen sollen.'<sup>497</sup> [EAGLE] is used only in specific circumstances, such as *svan blóðs bjúgnefjaðastan* ('the most bent-beaked swan of blood').<sup>498</sup> In this instance, Meissner argues 'Die Krummschnäbligkeit ist aber gewiß nicht für den Raben charakteristisch, daher ist hier eine Adlerkenning anzusetzen.'<sup>499</sup> This provides a clearer rationale than that found in the Skaldic Poetry Project, but it is still largely guided by Meissner's own assumptions regarding the salient features of eagles and ravens.

Yet, contrary to Meissner's assertion that birds of battle are almost invariably ravens in Old Norse literature, there are several examples of eagles appearing in the context of warriors and battle. In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, it is said that 'arar gullu' ('eagles cried out') when the hero Helgi was born, presumably in celebration of the birth of a great warrior, and later in the poem 'ǫrnu sadda' ('sated the eagles') is used as a metaphor for killing in

---

<sup>494</sup> *Skm*, p. 90 (ch. 60).

<sup>495</sup> Meissner, pp. 119–23; Busch.

<sup>496</sup> 'Kennings', Skaldic Poetry Database, < <http://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/m.php?p=kennings&v=refs> > [Accessed 23rd October 2018]

<sup>497</sup> Meissner, p. 117. 'Epithets (especially black or dark-coloured) or characteristic features [of ravens] in the context [of the kenning] leave no doubt that most of these kennings designate the raven.'

<sup>498</sup> Rǫgnvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinnsson, *Háttalykill* 64:3–4 (ed. Gade, p. 1072).

<sup>499</sup> Meissner, p. 117 'The bent beak is certainly not characteristic of the raven, therefore this is recognisable as an eagle kenning.' For more examples see *ibid.*, pp. 119–23.

battle.<sup>500</sup> In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, meanwhile, killing is referred to as ‘glaða or̃n’ (‘to gladden the eagle’).<sup>501</sup> In addition to the kenning-elements used to refer to ravens and eagles, both birds are also used extensively as symbols for battle in skaldic verse, with the cries of ravens being used to evoke combat, and warriors being named through calling them the feeders of ravens, wolves, or eagles.<sup>502</sup> The association between ravens, eagles, and battle/death also occurs, with slightly less frequency, in prose texts. For instance, in *Landnámabók*, a raven’s appearance at Brekka is seen as an omen of death.<sup>503</sup> In *Sverris saga* and *Sqrla saga sterka*, two sagas from differing genres and dates of recording, an alliterating figure of speech occurs which compares corpses to food for ‘hundar ok hrafnar’ (‘dogs and ravens’).<sup>504</sup> Overall, the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature clearly illustrates that both ravens and eagles were strongly linked to battle, and this frequently manifested in terms of the birds being fed, or crying out in joy.

As mentioned, the beasts of battle topos was first identified in Old English poetry, and parallels are still drawn between the Old Norse and Old English examples of this topos by scholars. This is not without good grounds, as these two poetic traditions often treat the topos in a similar manner. Some of the Old English examples have even been thought to have been directly influenced by Old Norse poetry. One such example is *The Battle of Brunanburh*:

Lēton him behindan hræw bryttian  
 sealwig-pādan, þone sweartan hræfn  
 hyrned-nebban, and þone hasu-pādan,  
 earn æftan hwīt, æses brūcan, —  
 grædigne gūþ-hafoc, and þæt græge dēor,  
 wulf on wealda.<sup>505</sup>

(They let them behind sorrow to dispense the dark-coated, the black raven, horn-nosed, and the hazy-coated eagle with a white tail, food to enjoy, the greedy battle-hawk, and that grey beast, the wolf in the wood.)

M. S. Griffith suggests that the resemblance between *gūþ-hafoc* (‘battle-hawk’) here and the <bird> of <battle> [RAVEN/EAGLE] formula found in skaldic verse indicates skaldic influence.

<sup>500</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 1:2, 35:6 (*Edkv II*, pp. 247, 253).

<sup>501</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, 28:4 (*Edkv II*, p. 277).

<sup>502</sup> Meissner, p. 310.

<sup>503</sup> *Landnámabók*, ch. S168, H137 (ed. Jakob Benediktsson, p. 202).

<sup>504</sup> *Sverris saga*, ch. 207 (ed. Finnur Jonsson, p. 437); *Sqrla saga sterka*, ch. 20 (ed. Rafn, p. 445).

<sup>505</sup> *The Battle of Brunanburh* 60a–65b (ed. Campbell, p. 94).

John D. Niles has likewise argued that this poem's historical context and literary and linguistic features, such as the use of the beasts of battle topos after the battle, represent 'an emerging tenth-century Anglo-Norse poetics.'<sup>506</sup> Niles argues that almost all Old English examples place this topos before the battle, foreshadowing the deaths that will occur, whereas most Old Norse examples appear during or after the battle, as is the case in *Brunanburh*.<sup>507</sup>

However, Eric Lacey has argued against an argument of direct influence, and demonstrated that the appearance of the beasts of battle after a battle is not unique to *Brunanburh* in the Old English corpus.<sup>508</sup> One of the most cohesive arguments against the idea that the Old English and Old Norse beasts of battle topoi were directly linked has been made by Judith Jesch. Jesch discusses both the Old English and Old Norse uses of the topos, and argues that while they are superficially similar, their emotional resonance differs between cultures, as the use of this trope in Norse skaldic verse is triumphant and focuses on the victors, whereas the Old English use of this trope is often elegiac and focuses on those killed in battle.<sup>509</sup> Furthermore, the beasts of battle also appear in continental German sources, in a somewhat more limited capacity, which problematises Frank's argument that the presence of these beasts indicates direct transmission between Old Norse and Old English literature.<sup>510</sup> Thus, it would appear that rather than one directly influencing the other, the two poetic traditions drew the topos from a common source, which diverged in its use during the Late Iron Age/Early Medieval Period.

So far, the sources indicate that both Old English and Old Norse poetics contained roughly analogous phenomena, possibly with some shared root(s). Some scholars in the field of Norse studies, such as Heinrich Beck, have argued that these birds, and the beasts of battle topos, are connected to the figure of Óðinn/Woden, in his role as the pre-Christian god of death.<sup>511</sup> As shall be discussed in §6.3 and §6.4, both types of bird are commonly associated with Óðinn in some capacity in Old Norse literature. Eagle- and/or raven-kennings frequently feature Óðinn, and *arnhofði* ('eagle-head') and *hrafnáss* ('raven-god') are both attested *heiti* for Óðinn.<sup>512</sup> In terms of their general significance as an element in the beasts of battle topos,

---

<sup>506</sup> Niles, p. 356.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>508</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', p. 103.

<sup>509</sup> Jesch, pp. 251–80.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254. See also Harris, pp. 9–10; Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', pp. 107–8.

<sup>511</sup> Beck, p. 64

<sup>512</sup> Meissner, pp. 119–23; *Óðins nqfn* 2:1 (ed. Gurevich, p. 735); Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlög* 4:4 (ed. Clunies Ross, p. 437); Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson, *Poem about Gizurr gullbrárskald* 2:4 (ed. Marold et al., p. 255). Busch,

eagles and ravens are, in their role as birds of battle, in some way connected to Óðinn, and possibly other cognate Germanic deities.

The origins of this relationship between Óðinn and eagles and ravens may have its roots in the observation of bird behaviour. The Common Raven and the White-Tailed Sea Eagle, the two most likely bird species to have inspired this topos, both supplement their diets with carrion scavenged from farms, other animals' kills, and, given the opportunity, battlefields.<sup>513</sup> Ravens in particular are known to follow wolves to a kill, as wolves can bring down large prey and open up carcasses with their teeth.<sup>514</sup> Ravens' association with eagles is less common, but not impossible; present-day ravens have been observed following other birds of prey such as Goshawks to benefit from their hunts.<sup>515</sup>

This observation of animal behaviour is hardly limited to Old Norse and Old English literatures. In her article on Skaldic and Old English verse, Frank appears to argue that the presence of the Beasts of Battle is not a Germanic topos, but rather specific to Old English and Old Norse literature, with similar topoi found worldwide.<sup>516</sup> Jesch too acknowledges that the trope of scavenging birds on the battlefield can be found not only in Germanic literature, but in Celtic and biblical literature as well.<sup>517</sup> Jesch also stresses that the appearance of these three beasts in relation to battle across Old English, Old Norse, and Welsh literature, and the continued use of this trope by these cultures after their Christianisation, loosens the bonds between these animals and Óðinnic symbolism:

It is possible to see a religious, i.e. heathen, connection behind all this, and certainly eagles, ravens and wolves are all associated with Óðinn in Old Icelandic texts. Nevertheless, this association must be secondary, arising because Óðinn is the god of war, for the animal symbolism is independent of religious associations. After all, it continued to be used by skalds praising Christian kings and rulers in the eleventh century. The beasts were a symbol that could be creatively adapted, and they were, for different ideological purposes. Ultimately, however, their

---

pp. 38–9 argues that <bird> of <Óðinn> kennings should only be understood as referring to ravens, but I do not think such a clear-cut distinction should be made.

<sup>513</sup> E. O. G. Turville-Petre, pp. 58–9; Grundy, p. 34. For ethological studies on ravens' and eagles' feeding habits, see Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven*, pp. 51–3, 137–41; Love, pp. 87–8, 104–5. The opportunistic feeding habits of White-Tailed Sea Eagles in particular has been exploited by farmers and led to their decline in the British Isles, as people would leave out poisoned carcasses for them to feed upon. See Love, p. 120.

<sup>514</sup> Stahler et al., pp. 283–90.

<sup>515</sup> Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven*, pp. 139–42.

<sup>516</sup> Frank, 'Skaldic Tooth', p. 348.

<sup>517</sup> Jesch, pp. 251, 257–60.

origins lay in the early Scandinavians' observations of the natural world, and their symbolic interpretation of social phenomena in the context of these observations.<sup>518</sup>

Such arguments are not restricted to Jesch. Gabriel Turville-Petre and Stephan Grundy have suggested that the association between Óðinn and ravens sprang from a shared link with the slain on the battlefield, and the predatory and powerful natures of these three animals may also have held particular resonance with warriors.<sup>519</sup> While, as Joseph Harris suggests, religious aspects of the Beasts of Battle topos likely helped fuel its longevity,<sup>520</sup> these connections to religious beliefs did not appear from nowhere, nor were they the only significance of these birds in Old Norse culture. The following discussions will expand upon the significances of eagles, ravens, and swans in Old Norse culture, and the effects of these ideas upon the birds themselves.

## 6.3 Ravens

### 6.3.1 Ravens in Literary and Mythological Sources

Ravens are, arguably, the birds most closely associated with Old Norse culture in present-day scholarship and the popular imagination. In addition to this, they appear with relative frequency in the sources and are, alongside eagles, a fairly widespread kenning-referent.<sup>521</sup> In particular, ravens are frequently thought to have been connected with Óðinn. For instance, in *Myth and Religion of the North*, Gabriel Turville-Petre dedicated a substantial section of his chapter on Óðinn to enumerate appearances of ravens in Old Norse-Icelandic texts.<sup>522</sup> While not every raven in Old Norse literature is necessarily Óðinnic, there are several instances where ravens and Óðinn are directly linked. For instance, in *Gylfaginning*:

Hrafnar tveir sitja á ǫxlum honum [Óðinn] ok segja í eyru honum ǫll tíðindi þau er þeir sjá eða heyra [...] Þá sendir hann í dagan at fljúgja um allan heim ok koma þeir aptr at dögurðarmáli. Þar af verðr hann margra tíðinda vís. Því kalla menn hann hrafna guð.<sup>523</sup>

---

<sup>518</sup> Jesch, p. 267.

<sup>519</sup> E. O. G. Turville-Petre, pp. 58–9; Grundy, p. 34.

<sup>520</sup> Harris, p. 15.

<sup>521</sup> Busch.

<sup>522</sup> E. O. G. Turville-Petre, pp. 57–60.

<sup>523</sup> *Gylf*, p. 32 (ch. 38).

(Two ravens sit on his [Óðinn's] shoulders and speak into his ears all news that they see or hear [...] He sends them out at dawn around all the world and they come back for the morning meal. Through this he becomes knowledgeable about many events. Thus people call him the ravens' god.)

To support this, *Gylfaginning* quotes a stanza from the eddic poem *Grímnismál*:

Huginn ok Muninn  
fljúga hverjan dag  
jǫmungrund yfir;  
óumk ek of Hugin  
at hann apr né komit,  
þó sjámk meirr um Munin.<sup>524</sup>

(Huginn and Muninn fly out each day over the world, I fear that Huginn may not return, but I worry more about Muninn.)

While these two texts very clearly portray an affinity between Óðinn and ravens, they are only two texts, both recorded in thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts, with one relying upon the other. While the Prose Edda can be dated to the first half of the thirteenth century as Snorri Sturluson died in 1241, the dating of the poems of the Codex Regius is inconclusive, as it may have been orally transmitted in various forms for quite some time before it was recorded in that manuscript, which has been dated to c. 1270.<sup>525</sup> As it is quoted in the Prose Edda, *Grímnismál* likely predates the thirteenth century, and Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason assert that 'ekkert bendir til að *Grímnismál* séu ungt kvæði' in their 2014 edition of eddic poetry.<sup>526</sup> Thus, while these two texts do suggest that there was a tradition of associating Óðinn and ravens, this is not the only use of ravens in Old Norse literature, and furthermore the connections between Óðinn and ravens are themselves complex.

Two texts in *Heimskringla*, an Icelandic compilation of texts also attributed to Snorri Sturluson, likewise connect Óðinn and ravens. In *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, jarl Hákon inn ríki Sigurðarson lands at Gautasker before raiding, and the narrative states that 'Gerði hann blót mikit. Þá kómu þar fljúgandi hrafnar tveir ok gullu hátt. Þá þykkisk jarl vita, at Óðinn

---

<sup>524</sup> *Grímnismál*, 20:1–6 (*Edkv* I, p. 372).

<sup>525</sup> Fidjestøl, pp. 215, 226–27, 245.

<sup>526</sup> Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, 'Formáli', *Edkv* I, p. 185. 'Nothing suggests that *Grímnismál* is a young poem.'

hefir þegit blótit ok þá mun jarl hafa dagrað til at berjask.<sup>527</sup> Meanwhile in the semi-legendary *Ynglinga saga*, a euhemerised version of Óðinn is portrayed as a sorcerer. The narrative states that ‘hann átti hrafna tvá, er hann hafði tamit við mál. Flugu þeir viðá um lönd ok sǫgðu honum mǫrg tíðendi.’<sup>528</sup> These texts explicitly connect Óðinn with ravens, whether or not they are explicitly named as Huginn and Muninn.

There are also examples of ravens being connected to a slightly more nebulous, generic paganism in medieval Icelandic literature. In *Njáls saga*, before the Battle of Clontarf, the heathen leader Bróðir and his men dream that they are pursued by ravens, where ‘sýndisk þeim ór járni nefin ok klærnar; hrafnarnir sóttu þá fast.’<sup>529</sup> These ravens are subsequently interpreted by the character Óspakr as being ‘óvinir þeir, er þér hafið trúat á ok yðr munu draga til helvítis kvala.’<sup>530</sup> While this could hold implicit connections to Óðinn, this could equally be a wider emblem of the violence and darkness of pre-Christian beliefs as viewed through a Christian lens. The term used for these ravens in the edition is *óvinir*, which can mean ‘enemies’ or ‘devils,’ but in the Reykjabók and Oddabók redactions, these ravens are referred to as *djofla þá* (‘those devils’), strengthening the argument that these ravens are supposed to be diabolical in nature.<sup>531</sup> Thus, the ravens of the Battle of Clontarf, while not specifically Óðinnic, are likely part of a wider medieval characterisation of pre-Christian Norse beliefs as misguided or even as devil-worship.

The precise nature of Óðinn’s companion ravens has been discussed at length by scholars. While these birds behave like animal companions, many scholars interpret Óðinn’s ravens as being representative of and/or embodying Óðinn’s mental faculties.<sup>532</sup> This allegorical interpretation of these birds is at least in part based upon their names. It is generally accepted in scholarship that Huginn is related to the noun *hugi* (‘thought’), and while the etymology of Muninn has been debated, it is frequently considered to be related to the verb *muna* (‘to remember’).<sup>533</sup> Such an interpretation of these ravens as allegories became more explicit and widespread in later Icelandic literature. For instance, the sixteenth-century

---

<sup>527</sup> *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 27 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 260). ‘He performed a great sacrifice. Then two ravens came flying there and cried out loudly. Then the jarl felt himself to know that Óðinn had received the sacrifice and then the jarl would have to fight at daybreak.’

<sup>528</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, pp. 18–9). ‘He owned two ravens, which he had trained to speak. They flew widely across lands and told him of many events.’

<sup>529</sup> *Njáls saga*, ch. 156 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 447). ‘It seemed to them that the ravens had beaks and claws of iron. The ravens attacked them fiercely.’

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.* ‘those enemies, in which you have believed in and which will drag you down to hell’s torments.’

<sup>531</sup> Note 6, *Njáls saga*, ch. 156 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 447). See also Hamer, pp. 93–8.

<sup>532</sup> Hermann, p. 16; Lindow, pp. 43–4.

<sup>533</sup> Mitchell, pp. 454–56.

*Herberts rímur* uses the kenning *ϕglir óska fróns* ('hawk of the land of wishes', Huginn/Muninn) to refer to a character's thoughts.<sup>534</sup> An alternative reading of the names Huginn and Muninn has been provided by Stephan Grundy. He argues that Huginn and Muninn should be read as adjectival constructions describing 'two birds with the capacity to *hyggja* and *muna*,' rather than 'shamanistic projections of Óðinn's spirit.'<sup>535</sup>

While Grundy's arguments have received relatively little attention, the argument that Huginn and Muninn are so named because they are birds that appear able to think and remember is not entirely implausible from a HAS perspective. Corvids are inquisitive social learners that learn through observation, interaction and imitation within their own species as well as between species.<sup>536</sup> While there are no other medieval Icelandic sources pertaining to tamed ravens, modern studies demonstrate that crows and ravens are able to learn how to talk and replicate sounds to report events that have happened to them.<sup>537</sup> They are willing to live close to human settlements, and often observe other birds and non-avian animals from relatively close quarters compared to most wild birds.<sup>538</sup> Furthermore, corvids are capable of recognising when another being is watching them, and adjusting their behaviour as a result.<sup>539</sup> While empirical studies of bird behaviour are unlikely to have taken place among Iron Age and Medieval Norse peoples, the patterns of behaviour whereby corvids appear to be consciously observing the creatures and events around them are unlikely to have gone unnoticed. Such animals would thus be strong candidates for association with a god who gathers knowledge.

Ravens are also marked out as remarkable in the medieval Icelandic textual sources in ways that do not make explicit reference to Óðinn, but rather play upon their associations with death. As discussed above, ravens are linked to battle as part of the Norse iteration of the beasts of battle topos, likely because these birds would gather on battlefields to scavenge on the corpses. Observation of ravens' behaviour around battlefields and warriors may also help to explain another Old Norse literary trope that links ravens and battle, in which ravens follow a warrior who is likely to succeed in battle. Possibly the earliest attestation of this is in

---

<sup>534</sup> *Herberts rímur* III, 1:1 (ed. Wisén, p. 75). I am grateful to Lee Colwill for alerting me to this.

<sup>535</sup> Grundy, pp. 187–8.

<sup>536</sup> Marzluff and Angell, pp. 12–24.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208–9.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88–107, 173–75.

<sup>539</sup> Bugnyar et al.



the tenth-century skaldic poem *Haraldskvæði* (also known as *Hrafnsmál*), in which a raven says to a *valkyrja* that:

Haraldi vér fylgðum syni Halfdanar  
ungum ynglingi síðan ór eggi kvámum.<sup>540</sup>

(We have followed the son of Halfdan, the young prince, since we came from the egg.)

Here, the raven's straightforward statement that its flock followed Haraldr hárfagri Hálfdanarson since their hatching appears to suggest that it is an accepted fact that ravens follow powerful warriors. This idea also appears in the eddic poem *Reginsmál*, where Hnikarr imparts the following passage as part of his wisdom:

Mörg eru góð,  
ef gumar vissi,  
heill at sverða svipun  
dyggja fylgju  
hygg ek ins dökkva vera  
at hrottameiði hrafns.<sup>541</sup>

(There are many good omens, if men know them, at swords' swinging [BATTLE]. I believe that the dark raven is a faithful companion for the sword-tree [MAN].)

The motif of ravens following warriors who are destined to win also appears in saga literature. In *Njáls saga*, when Skarpheðinn and his followers go to Oddi, the narrative comments that '[h]rafnar tveir flugu með þeim alla leið.'<sup>542</sup> A battle occurs there, and Skarpheðinn kills a man named Tjörvi. A footnote supplied by Einar Ól. Sveinsson relates this to a passage from *Sturlunga saga* where a man named Hrafn and his followers ride to an enemy's home, '[þ]eir riðu til Hjaltadals-heiðar. Ok er þeir kómu upp á heiðina, kendi at lit brá. Hrafnar tveir flugu með þeim um alla heiðina.'<sup>543</sup> It may be worth noting that in the latter instance, the use of this trope appears to be at least partially tongue-in-cheek, as the narrative

---

<sup>540</sup> Þorbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál)* 4:3–4 (ed. Fulk, p. 97).

<sup>541</sup> *Reginsmál* 21:1–6 (*Edkv* II, p. 301).

<sup>542</sup> *Njáls saga*, ch. 79 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 195). 'Two ravens flew with them all the way.'

<sup>543</sup> *Íslendinga Saga* II, ch. 275 (ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, p. 189). 'They rode to Hjaltadalsheiðr. And when they came up on to the heath, the light grew dim. Two ravens flew with them all the way across the heath.'

states that Hrafn himself comments on it, remarking that ‘sér þat vel líka, er nafnar hans vóru með þeim í sinni.’<sup>544</sup>

The origins of this trope could again have some basis in the observation of corvid behaviour. Several studies in corvid behaviour have shown crows to display patterns of behaviour that suggest the capacity for analogical reasoning, meaning that they are able to extrapolate from one experience to predict the outcome of similar scenarios.<sup>545</sup> There are reports that ravens will follow human hunters, and even approach gunshot sounds in areas of North American forests where moose hunting takes place, in the expectation that such activity will lead to a fresh moose carcass.<sup>546</sup> This would be a behaviour they learn by associating the appearance and behaviour of human hunters, as well as the sound of hunting rifles, with open moose carcasses, and extrapolating that to future encounters with humans who behave or look similarly to those hunters. With this in mind, it is possible to hypothesise that ravens in medieval Scandinavia learned to follow armies and warriors through a process of analogical reasoning based on the features of warriors and the signs of an oncoming battle.

One further way in which ravens are used in a possibly symbolic fashion is in *Landnámabók*. Flóki Vilgerðason, also known as Hrafna-Flóki, is said to navigate his way to Iceland with the aid of three ravens he consecrated to an unspecified deity. The first and second birds merely return to the ship, but the third flies out to Iceland, and the ship follows it.<sup>547</sup> While some Polynesian peoples used birds in traditional methods of navigation, many of these methods have been lost and there is no record of such methods being used in European contexts.<sup>548</sup> As such, it is more likely that this episode has been influenced by the story of Noah in Genesis, in which Noah sends out a raven to seek land, but the raven does not return, and instead he sends out a dove, which returns both times and brings sign of land the second time.<sup>549</sup> The tale is modified somewhat, as the ravens return to the ship almost immediately and there are no doves; perhaps to represent the non-Christian beliefs of Hrafna-Flóki and his crew. While this episode could have some basis in fact, the episode’s structure and the use of a raven provides a feasible enough biblical parallel, and it is not unlikely that medieval

---

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. ‘It pleased him well, that his namesakes were with them at that time.’

<sup>545</sup> Emery and Clayton; Smirnova et al.; cf. Vonk.

<sup>546</sup> Heinrich, *Ravens in Winter*, pp. 250–252; Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven*, pp. 238–42, 252–54; C. White, pp. 1057–60.

<sup>547</sup> *Landnámabók*, ch. H5 (ed. Jakob Benediktsson, pp. 5, 7).

<sup>548</sup> Lewis, pp. 162–73.

<sup>549</sup> Genesis 8:6–12.

Icelanders would seek to incorporate their origin legends into the wider Christian world through the incorporation of biblical parallels.<sup>550</sup>

### 6.3.2 Ravens in the *Þulur*

While ravens appear throughout literature in symbolic guises, the anonymous *þula Hrafn's heiti*, preserved in AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to, still represents a useful and diverse collection of symbolic and metaphorical terms concerning ravens. Like the other anonymous *þulur*, it is a learned source that contains several *hapax legomena*. It is not the only source concerning *heiti* for ravens. Six raven-*heiti*: *krákr* ('crow'), *Huginn*, *Muninn*, *borginmóði* ('saved by one's mood/self-confident'), *árflognir* ('early/year-flier'), *ártali* ('year-counter'), and *holdboði* ('flesh-messenger'), are found in the main text of *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Laufás Edda* contains the six from *Skáldskaparmál* alongside ten more, which apart from one are also found in this *þula*.<sup>551</sup> However this *þula* is the most extensive, with 17 *heiti* and one conjectured eighteenth *heiti*:

Hrafn, holdbori, Huginn, óværi,  
blæingr, liti, borginmóði,  
[vari,] hornklofi, viti, klóakan,  
krákr, drúkr, Muninn, corvus, geri.

Krummi, krumsi, korpr, borningr,  
spori, ártali ok árflognir.<sup>552</sup>

(Raven, flesh-borer, Huginn, restless one, black one, sharp-seeing one, **saved by one's mood/self-confident**, horn-splitter, wise one, sharp-clawed one, crow, *drúkr/rook*, Muninn, corvus, greedy one.

Crooked-claw, crooked one, raven, borer, informer, year-counter and early/year-flier.)

While many of these *heiti* are otherwise unattested, some appear in very late- or post-medieval sources. For instance, while *krummi* does not appear elsewhere in skaldic verse, eddic verse, or *rímur*, but has been attested in Icelandic folk songs and in *Ósvalds saga*, an Old Norse rendition of German legends surrounding St. Oswald of Northumbria in which a

<sup>550</sup> A similar phenomenon is discussed in Howe, pp. ix, 2–4, 179.

<sup>551</sup> *Skm*, p. 91 (ch. 60); *Laufás Edda*, §HRAffna kienning<ar> (ed. Faulkes, p. 273).

<sup>552</sup> *Hrafn's heiti* 1–2 (ed. Gurevich, pp. 944–47); *Laufás Edda*, §HRAffna kienning<ar> (ed. Faulkes, p. 273). The word *vari* appears in *Laufás Edda* manuscripts. Gurevich, commentary to *Hrafn's heiti*, p. 945, argues that it may have originally been part of the *þula* for metrical reasons.

speaking raven aids the saint.<sup>553</sup> This suggests that while these *pulur* were learned in nature, they may have also captured parts of the popular lexicon that has not survived elsewhere.

Many raven-*heiti* appear relatively straightforward. Some seem to be based upon Proto-Germanic renditions of bird cries: *hrafn* ('raven'), *korpr* ('raven'), and possibly *drúkr*, if de Vries' emendation to *hrókr* ('Rook,' *Corvus frugilegus*) is correct.<sup>554</sup> Several *heiti* also reference ravens' appearance: *blæingr* ('black one'), *klóakan* ('sharp-clawed one'), and *krummi* and *krumsi* (both 'crooked one'), which could refer to their claws or beaks. Related to beaks and claws are the *heiti* that refer to ravens' scavenging: *holdbori/holdboði* ('flesh-borer'/'flesh-messenger'), *hornklofi* ('horn-splitter'), *geri* ('greedy one'), and *borningr* ('borer'). These *heiti* all suggest a knowledge of ravens based upon experience of their behaviour at relatively close range.

Some of these *heiti* are less self-explanatory, such as *ártali* ('year-counter') and *árflognir* ('early-/year-flier'). Gurevich's only comment on these is to note that *ártali* is also used as a moon-*heiti*.<sup>555</sup> One possible explanation for their use as raven-*heiti* could be that as ravens are one of the few larger bird species that live in Iceland all year, they would be one of the few species that could be spotted flying in the early part of the year.<sup>556</sup> *Krákr* ('crow') may appear odd in terms of present-day species taxonomies, but several Old Norse texts appear to use *kráka/krákr* ('crow') to indicate small ravens rather than a separate animal.<sup>557</sup> This taxonomic blurring in *heiti* also lends credibility to the suggestion that *drúkr* is a corrupted version of *hrókr*.

The *heiti* concerning ravens and thought are perhaps some of the most complex. These are *viti* ('wise one'), *spori* ('informer'), *Huginn*, *Muninn*, *liti* ('sharp-seeing one'), *vari* ('watchful one'), and possibly *borginmóði* ('saved by one's mood/self-confident') and

---

<sup>553</sup> Jón Þórarinnsson, p. 368; *Ósvalds saga*, ch. 2 (ed. Kalinke, p. 123). The motif of ravens assisting saints is not unique to Norse sources and is part of wider hagiographical conventions. See Kalinke, 'Introduction', p. 48–52; *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* X, s.v. 'Rabe'.

<sup>554</sup> Gurevich, commentary to *Hrafns heiti*, pp. 946–47; de Vries, s.v. 'drukr'; Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', pp. 43–53, 59–60.

<sup>555</sup> Gurevich, Commentary on *Hrafna heiti*, p. 947.

<sup>556</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, p. 29.

<sup>557</sup> For example, in *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallarsonar*, ch. 2, (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 301), the Raven Banner is referred to disparagingly as a crow. Reducing birds associated with Óðinn/Óðinnic figures appears in *Morkinskinna* II, ch. 58 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, pp. 12–14), where crows that speak to an old man could arguably be a small-scale version of Óðinn and his ravens, and in *Völsunga saga*, ch. 1 (ed. Finch, p. 3), where an *óskmey* ('wish-maiden') serving Óðinn assumes a *krákuham* ('crow-skin') fulfilling the god's orders. Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', pp. 43–60 analyses the Old English terms, *hrefn* ('raven') *hroc* ('rook'), and *craue* ('crow') are often used interchangeably based on dramatic intent, with some differentiation based on a bird's size also at play. A similar phenomenon may have been at play with the Old Norse cognates *hrafn*, *hrókr*, and *kráka/krákr*.

*óværi/óvari* ('restless one/incautious one') appear to be related to the concepts of knowledge and thought. Huginn and Muninn are, as discussed (§6.3.1), connected through literature to Óðinn, and etymologically to thought and memory, and the observations that led to these names may well have led to other intelligence-based *heiti* for ravens.

Gurevich states that *viti* and *spori* are both related to ravens' powers of prophecy.<sup>558</sup> However, she does not give any reference for these prophetic powers. The main source that links corvids with prophecy or divination in a Scandinavian context is Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. Adam of Bremen attributes the byname Craccaben ('Crow-bone') to Óláfr Tryggvason on the grounds that Óláfr practiced divination with bird bones.<sup>559</sup> On the one hand, Craccaben appears to be a rendition of a Norse term, rather than a Latinate invention. However, the only Norse sources that use this byname are translations of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, which mention 'Olaaf Tryggvason er Danir kaulludu krakalegg edr krakabein.'<sup>560</sup> As Sverre Bagge has argued, there are grounds to doubt the veracity of Adam's criticisms of Óláfr Tryggvason's faith, as the Norwegian king preferred English clerics over those of Hamburg-Bremen, and the clarification used in the Norse translations that the name *krákabein* was used by the Danes rather than the Norwegians also suggests that it was invented by his opponents to cast doubt over his Christianity by associating him with 'pagan' things such as divination and ravens.<sup>561</sup>

In most cases in Old Norse literature, birds do not tell the future so much as they happen to know of things that exist or events that are happening elsewhere. Corvids act as informants in this regard not only to Óðinn, but to a number of legendary and non-legendary human figures, including Konr, Sigurðr fáfnisbani, and a mysterious old man encountered by King Óláfr kyrri Haraldsson who is told by three crows that Óláfr's men killed his horse.<sup>562</sup> Overall, then, while it may be said that ravens could know things and inform others, there is no strong evidence to suggest this was to do with divination rather than ordinary observation of events, reflected in *vari* and *liti*.

Overall, what the *heiti* in this *pula* appear to show is that while ravens were associated with mythological figures, their feeding habits, behaviour, and taxonomic position were also

---

<sup>558</sup> Gurevich, commentary to *Hrafn's heiti*, (ed Gurevich, pp. 946–47).

<sup>559</sup> Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, Book 2, ch. 40 (ed. B. Schmeidler, p. 101).

<sup>560</sup> *Hamborgar históría* (ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger, p. 18). 'Óláfr Tryggvason, whom the Danes called crow-leg or crow-bone.' See also *Hamborgar históría* (ed. Kälund, p. 62).

<sup>561</sup> See Bagge, pp. 480–82.

<sup>562</sup> *Rígsþula* 45 (*Edkv* I, p. 457); *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* 11 (*Edkv* II, p. 326); *Morkinskinna* II, ch. 58 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, pp. 12–14).

important factors in how they were understood, at least in learned Icelandic contexts. While ravens were not kept by humans, they were still observed and their behaviour influenced the ways in which they were portrayed in art and literature.

### 6.3.3 Ravens in Zooarchaeology and Law Codes

However, for all that ravens appear symbolically central throughout the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus, there appears to be minimal, if any, crossover between the attention given to ravens in literary sources and human interference in their lives in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland. The Icelandic law-code *Grágás* and the Christian Laws of Bishop Árni both forbid the consumption of ravens and other *klófuglar*, stating ‘Klo fugla scolo menn eigi eta þa er hræ kló er a. Orno oc Rafna vali oc smyrta.’<sup>563</sup> As discussed in §2.4, rather than reflecting any sort of pre-Christian reverence toward these birds, the most likely explanation for this would be that it is a modification of the dietary restrictions found in the Bible, where corvids are among the list of birds that one is forbidden to eat, on the grounds that, by consuming flesh, they deviate from the habits of a “normal” bird.

Elsewhere in *Grágás*, it is stated that ‘Rétt er manne at veiða i aNars manz lande. Öрно oc Rafna. smyrta oc lör. oc spóa oc alla smá fugla þa er eigi fliota a vatni nema riupor. Vale scal eigi veiða oc álptir oc gæs oc andir.’<sup>564</sup> This makes sense, as ravens can pose a threat to young livestock,<sup>565</sup> and were of little value as a food source, due to dietary restrictions. Small wild birds such as curlews are plentiful in Iceland and were probably of some value as food sources, although larger birds such as swans, geese, and ducks were more valuable as a source of food, feathers, and eggs, and therefore hunting rights were given to landowners.<sup>566</sup> Thus, as far as legal texts are concerned, there is little to suggest that the symbolic and literary value of ravens, particularly in medieval Icelandic literature, had any bearing on how they were treated in day-to-day life in medieval Iceland, where they were regarded as little better than pests, if they were paid attention to at all.

As far as zooarchaeological evidence is concerned, a similar story to the law codes plays out. Ravens, along with most other corvids, appear to have been largely left to their

---

<sup>563</sup> *Grágás* §32, p. 43. ‘One should not eat claw-birds: those which possess carrion claws: eagles, ravens, and merlins.’ The same law can be found in the late thirteenth-century Christian laws of Bishop Árni Þorláksson, approved for the diocese of Skálholt in 1275. See *Biskop Arnes Kristenret*, §39 (ed. G. Storm, p. 50).

<sup>564</sup> *Grágás* §436, p. 507. ‘One is permitted to hunt these on another’s land: eagles, ravens, merlins, plovers, curlews and all small birds that do not float on the water, apart from ptarmigans. One shall not hunt falcons, swans, geese, or ducks.’

<sup>565</sup> Harrison, ‘Small holder farming’, p. 71.

<sup>566</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, pp. 29–30, 40–1.

own devices. Due to their highly adaptive nature, corvids are frequently *synanthropic*, meaning that they can live in habitats modified by human activity, and in many cases are *commensal* with humans, meaning that they not only live near human settlements, but benefit from it without causing humans any significant disadvantage.<sup>567</sup> In medieval European towns, the food waste left in midden heaps attracted many kinds of bird, including large species such as the Common Raven and the White-Tailed Sea Eagle, making these two birds a more common sight than they are in present-day urban environments.<sup>568</sup> In present-day urban habitats, smaller, more sociable corvids such as crows and jackdaws are more likely to become commensal species, as they are able to adapt to such densely-populated environments and live upon the food waste left by humans, while larger, louder, or more solitary species such as ravens and rooks are often synanthropic or even avoid densely-populated human settlements, as they require more space and food.<sup>569</sup>

Common Raven remains are relatively rare throughout the zooarchaeological record of Scandinavia and the North Atlantic. One of the greatest amounts is found in the Eketorp ringfort in Öland. While the NISP (Number of Identified Specimens) of the Common Raven from the finds dated from the fifth to eighth centuries (Eketorp-II) is only eight, the Eketorp-III settlement from the eleventh to thirteenth century has an NISP of 116. A further 34 specimens have been found that could not be accurately dated to any phase of the ring fort's occupation.<sup>570</sup> The type of settlement may have some role in this discrepancy. Eketorp-II appears to have been a small farming village with 53 house-like structures, while Eketorp-III, built after centuries of abandonment, appears to have been used not only for agriculture, but for manufacturing, hunting, and possibly even military purposes, as suggested by the presence of objects such as weapons, horse gear, fishing equipment, and an entire workshop area between the main and outer walls that contained a considerable amount of waste from bronze-casting and iron-working.<sup>571</sup> As such, it is entirely likely that these ravens were scavengers taking advantage of the waste produced by human settlements,<sup>572</sup> and the greater

---

<sup>567</sup> Both terms discussed in Serjeantson, *Birds*, p. 375.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 376–78.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378; Marzluff and Angell, pp. 88–93. Marzluff and Angell also note that increasing human populations and building density in urban areas have led to a decline in synanthropic raven populations in recent decades, possibly due to an increased scarcity of resources.

<sup>570</sup> Boessneck et al., p. 221.

<sup>571</sup> Näsman, pp. 52–4, 57–9; Wallander, pp. 189–202.

<sup>572</sup> Suggested in Boessneck et al., p. 348.

number of NISP in the later occupation phase is linked to the greater population and thus greater amount of waste.

This is supported by Anne-Brigitte Gotfredsen's research on bird remains in Viking Age Danish sites, where corvids are, as a rule, more common in strongholds and urban sites than in rural sites or trading areas.<sup>573</sup> While it is possible that a greater number of specimens could indicate human consumption, this is not particularly likely as none of the bones have any noticeable butchery marks.<sup>574</sup> Furthermore, there are no traces on any raven bones found in Scandinavia or the North Atlantic area to suggest that they were kept in captivity as amusements or pets, despite their intelligence.

As such, the status of ravens in Eketorp is likely to have been similar to the status they face in many places today: they live near human settlements and occasionally scavenge from them, but there is little interaction, other than ravens scavenging from human food waste and humans sometimes killing ravens as pests. As Gotfredsen concludes in her discussion of Viking Age Denmark, 'high frequencies of corvids may rather be seen as a result of general corvid behaviour rather than of people's fascination with these black birds.'<sup>575</sup> In their chapter on bird bones in the Orcadian settlement of Quoygrew, Jennifer Harland et al. come to a similar conclusion:

The predators (particularly the eagle) may represent animals killed to protect stock [...] As a symbol associated with Odin, the raven (and perhaps related *Corvus* species) has potential ritual importance in the pre-Christian Viking Age. However, at Quoygrew ravens and crows are absent from Phase 1, when pagan practices would be most expected. They may instead have been killed due to their predatory or scavenging activities.<sup>576</sup>

This was also the case in tenth-century Iceland. Sveigakot in Mývatnssveit, northern Iceland yielded an NISP of four, including 'a nearly complete articulated leg with claws,' but the conclusion reached by archaeologists was that it 'need not indicate human consumption,' despite the fact that if animals' extremities are found without other parts this may indicate

---

<sup>573</sup> Gotfredsen 'Birds in Subsistence', pp. 371–73.

<sup>574</sup> Boessneck et al., p. 348.

<sup>575</sup> Gotfredsen 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 373.

<sup>576</sup> Harland et al., p. 157.



that they were butchered for consumption.<sup>577</sup> Furthermore, this is the only instance of raven remains found in the Mývatnssveit sites listed by McGovern et al.<sup>578</sup>

However, there are certain exceptions, as a few sources suggest that, in times of desperation, ravens were eaten by medieval Icelanders. The strongest evidence for this comes from a twelfth- to thirteenth-century settlement in Skuggi, Hörgárdalur, in NW Iceland. This site had one of the highest yields of NISP (44) of any medieval Icelandic excavation, and several long bones have breaks or cut marks ‘in a way that could indicate disarticulation of these elements for consumption purposes,’ although there is also a chance that these birds were killed and dismembered as they were a threat to lambs.<sup>579</sup>

While the consumption of ravens was likely illegal or at least heavily frowned upon in Iceland by this point, Harrison points out in her report that the consumption of ravens at Skuggi may be rooted in socioeconomic circumstances. This site was occupied seasonally, and the occupants were tenant farmers. The primary food sources in more inland sites during this period were Ptarmigan and freshwater fish, neither of which are found in the zooarchaeological materials excavated at Skuggi. Harrison uses this to argue that, as tenants, the occupants of Skuggi did not possess the right to hunt Ptarmigan or freshwater fish. Such rights were the preserve of the landowners, and as such the occupants of Skuggi had to hunt ravens, as an inland source of food that was legal for them to hunt.<sup>580</sup>

This is not entirely unprecedented, as in the additional materials of *Staðarhólsbók*, it is said that there was a famine one winter during the reign of Norwegian king Haraldr Gráfeldr, and ‘þa atu men hrafna oc melraka. oc morg oatan ill var etinn. enn sumir letu drepa gamalmenni oc omaga.’<sup>581</sup> However, this is the only textual attestation to such practices, and it is only found in the additional materials of one seventeenth-century manuscript of *Landnámabók*. Furthermore, although a pre-Christian Icelandic practice of throwing the elderly off cliffs during famine is occasionally mentioned elsewhere, there is no archaeological evidence to support it, and the episode may stem from an exaggeration of hardship in pre-Christian times.<sup>582</sup> The only other instance of ravens being consumed in Iceland is found in a medical miscellany in the fifteenth-century Icelandic manuscript

---

<sup>577</sup> McGovern et al., ‘Coastal Connections’, p. 193.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> Harrison, ‘Small holder farming’, p. 71

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., pp. 71–2.

<sup>581</sup> Björn Jónsson, *Skarðsárþók*, appendix ch. 1 (ed. Jakob Benediktsson, p. 189). ‘Then people ate ravens and foxes, and many things that should not be consumed were eaten. And some killed old people and the infirm.’

<sup>582</sup> See discussion in Grønlie, p. 69, note 83.

RoyalIrAcad 23 D 43, which advises those suffering from seizures to cook the crop of a raven in embers and eat it over the course of three days.<sup>583</sup> Again, this advocates the consumption of ravens only in extenuating circumstances, which supports the overall argument that ravens were not a common food source.

Overall, it would appear that although observation of ravens in the wild influenced the ways in which they appear in the iconographic and textual record of the Norse peoples, there is little to suggest that this symbolic prominence had any notable impact upon the ways in which humans treated ravens in the Old Norse world. Ravens, like any large urban or rural scavenger, were tolerated, but if they became pests or threatened livestock, they were killed and their bodies discarded on middens. Similarly, the urban scavenging populations of these birds would frequently be cast upon middens after death, regardless of whether they were killed by humans.<sup>584</sup> The same fate likely awaited other, similar-looking corvids such as crows and rooks: any links they may have had to Óðinn or to battlefield spirits was outweighed by the practicalities of living alongside these imposing, intelligent, but ultimately non-human animals.

## 6.4 Eagles

### 6.4.1 Identifying Eagles

In both Old Norse and Old English literature, references to eagles are thought to mean the White-Tailed Sea Eagle. While the argument that the White-tailed Sea Eagle consumes more carrion than the Golden Eagle has largely been disproved,<sup>585</sup> two other factors suggest that White-tailed Sea Eagle is the more likely species. Firstly, although it has recently faced extinction due to human interference and persecution, it was once relatively widespread on British and Scandinavian coastlines.<sup>586</sup> Secondly, the small pieces of description present in both Old English and Old Norse literature both suggest a colouration closer to that of the White-Tailed Sea Eagle than that of the Golden Eagle, the other eagle species commonly found in Northern Europe. For instance, in several skaldic verses, [BIRD OF BATTLE] kennings use *grár* ('grey') to describe birds of battle, for example 'grár sármútari' ('grey wound-hawk') in *Háttalykill* and 'grár nagr hræva' ('grey [carnivorous bird] of corpses') in a

---

<sup>583</sup> MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43, fol. S 17v (ed. Larsen, p. 120).

<sup>584</sup> O'Connor, 'Human Refuse', pp. 17–20; Mulkeen and O'Connor, pp. 443–46.

<sup>585</sup> Wolf, p. 238; Watson et al., p. 549.

<sup>586</sup> Ferguson-Lees and Christie, pp. 402, 405; Love, pp. 107–33.

*lausavísa* attributed to Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsson.<sup>587</sup> Most tellingly, Þorkell hamarskáld uses two specific colour terms in *Magnússdrápa*, describing bodies ‘und gulri / grás arnar kló.’<sup>588</sup> This combination of grey feathers and yellow claws is more likely to refer to the White-Tailed Sea Eagle than the brown-feathered Golden Eagle.<sup>589</sup> While this may seem irrelevant to the artistic and literary uses of eagles, the differences in size and behaviour between species are useful to bear in mind when interpreting the sources in light of how humans and animals interacted.

#### 6.4.2 Eagles in Literary and Mythological Sources

As discussed (§6.2), eagles were viewed as birds of the battlefield in both Old Norse and Old English, and this in turn led to a connection between Óðinn, as a god of death, and eagles.<sup>590</sup> Unlike ravens, Óðinn’s connections with eagles does not manifest in companion animals. Instead, he transforms into an eagle to perform certain deeds. This is most apparent in *Skáldskaparmál*. In the story of the mead of poetry, Óðinn steals the mead and then ‘brásk hann í arnarham ok flaug sem ákafast’ to escape between worlds.<sup>591</sup> As will be discussed below, there are multiple possible influences on how Óðinn became associated with eagles, but focusing upon naturalistic observations, one explanation becomes readily apparent. On the one hand, eagles were battlefield-scavenging birds, which would link them to Óðinn. On the other hand, White-Tailed Sea Eagles are immense, powerful predators, with wingspans that easily reach over 2m across.<sup>592</sup> Such physically imposing birds would be an ideal candidate for an animal associated with a powerful deity.

However, this ability is not unique to Óðinn. Several *jötnar* also use eagle-forms, particularly for quick and powerful flight. The *jötunn* Hræsvelgr is only ever mentioned in eagle-form. He appears in in both *Gylfaginning* and in the poem *Vafþrúðnismál*, according to which:

Hræsvelgr heitir  
er sitr á himins enda,

<sup>587</sup> Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsson, *Lausavísur* 3:6–7 (ed. R. Poole, p. 134); Rognvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinsson, *Háttalykill* 62:2 (ed. Gade and Marold, p. 1071).

<sup>588</sup> Þorkell hamarskáld, *Magnússdrápa* 4:7–8 (ed. Gade, p. 412) ‘under the yellow claw of the grey eagle.’

<sup>589</sup> For more examples of *grár* being used for eagles and a discussion of the semantic range of *grár*, see Wolf, pp. 227–29, 238.

<sup>590</sup> See Honegger, pp. 289–98; Jesch, pp. 251–80.

<sup>591</sup> *Skm*, p. 4 (ch. G58). ‘He changed into an eagle-skin and flew as quickly as he could.’ This tale has been considered part of *Gylfaginning*, but Faulkes argues that it belongs more properly to *Skáldskaparmál*. Faulkes, ‘Introduction’ to *Skáldskaparmál*, p. vii.

<sup>592</sup> Love, p. 23, Table 1.

jötunn í arnar ham.  
Af hans vængum  
kveða vind koma  
alla menn yfir.<sup>593</sup>

(The one who sits at the heavens' end is called Hræsvelgr; a giant in an eagle skin.  
They say that wind from his wings blows over all people.)

Although Hræsvelgr does not himself have much to do with battle, his name means 'carrion-swallower,' which would be in keeping with eagles' scavenging. These aspects of the Old Norse-Icelandic literary tradition together with ornithological studies of the White-Tailed Sea Eagle illustrate, again, that many aspects of Old Norse bird-lore were based upon observations of the bird in the real world.

The association between eagles and battle saw many modifications over time. Although eagles are not said to follow lucky warriors in the same manner as ravens, they could act as portents under certain circumstances. In the later medieval *fornaldarsaga*, *Ketils saga hængs*, the protagonist Ketill fights a duel with a king, Framarr, who is described as a *blótmaðr* ('practicing heathen').<sup>594</sup> When they arrive at the scene of battle, an ironic twist on the use of birds as omens takes place:

Áðr þeir börðust, fló örn af skógi ar Framari, ok sleit af honum klæðin; þá kvað Framarr vísu:

Illr er örn í sinni;  
emka sárr at kvíða;  
færir hann sínar greipar  
gular í blóðæðar mínar;  
hlakkar hreggskornir;  
hvers er hann forkunnigr?  
Opt hefi ek ara gladdan;  
góðr em ek valgöglum.

---

<sup>593</sup> *Vafþrúðnismál* 37, quoted in *Gylf*, p. 20 (ch. 18).

<sup>594</sup> *Saga Ketils hængs*, ch. 5 (ed. Rafn, p. 132).

(Örn er illr í sinni; emka sárr at kvíða; hann færir gular greipar sínar í blóðæðar mínar. Hreggskornir hlakkar; hvers er hann forkunnigr? Ek hefi opt gladdan ara; ek em góðr valgöglum.)

Þá sótti örninn svá fast, at hann varð vopnum at verjast; þá kvað hann vísu:

Veifir þú vængjum;  
vopnum mun ek þér heita;  
vafrar þú nú, víðflögull,  
sem vitir mik feigan.  
Villr ertu, vígstari;  
vit munum sigr hafa;  
hverf þú at Hængi;  
hann skal nú deyja.

(Þú veifir vængjum; ek mun heita þér vápnum; þú vafrar nú, víðflögull, sem mik feigan. Ertu villr, vígstari; vit munum hafa sigr; hverf þú at Hængi; hann skal nú deyja.)<sup>595</sup>

(Before they fought, an eagle flew out of the forest to Framarr, and tore the clothes from him; then Framarr spoke this verse:

The eagle is in an ill mood/the eagle is ill-behaved to his companions. I am not so wounded as to be afraid. He plunges his yellow claws into my blood vessels. The wind-cleaver [EAGLE] screams; what can he fortell? I have often gladdened the eagle, and I am good to slaughter-goslings [BIRDS OF BATTLE].

Then the eagle attacked him so fiercely that he had to defend himself with weapons. Then he spoke this verse:

You flap your wings; I will promise you weapons. You hover now, wide-flown one [EAGLE], as if you know me to be fated to die. Are you confused, slaughter-starling [EAGLE]? We [two] will have victory; turn to Hængr; he shall now die.)

Following this, Framarr attacks Ketill and loses. This episode may be subverting the supposed pre-Christian belief in birds foretelling victory or defeat (§6.3.1), as well as

---

<sup>595</sup> The verses and prose order of verses are taken from Framarr víkingakonungr, *Lausavísur* 1–2 (ed. La Farge, pp. 587–89); the surrounding prose is taken from *Saga Ketils hængs*, ch. 5 (ed. Rafn, pp. 136–37).

connections between eagles and Óðinn. The omen itself still functions: Framarr is attacked by an eagle, indicating ill favour, but he ignores it and faces the consequences. While the saga itself is recorded in a Christian context, this episode suggests one of two things: either bird-omens had passed into folklore, or the saga is mocking pre-Christian beliefs as insincere and impotent next to the proto-Christian ‘noble heathen’ Ketill, who refuses to sacrifice to Óðinn.

Eagles are also used to signify warriors in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. At the start of the saga, the character Þorsteinn Egilsson has a prophetic dream:

Þat dreymði mik, at ek þóttumk heima vera at Borg ok úti fyrir karldurum, ok sá ek upp á húsin ok á mœnunum álp eina væna ok fagra, ok þóttumk ek eiga, ok þótti mér allgóð. Þá sá ek fljúga ofan frá fjöllumum ǫrn mikinn; hann fló hingat ok settisk hjá álpinni ok klakaði við hana blíðliga, ok hon þótti mér þat vel þekkjask. Þá sá ek, at ǫrninn var svarteygr ok járnklær váru á honum; vaskligr sýndisk mér hann. Því næst sá ek fljúga annan fugl af suðrætt; sá fló hingat til Borgar ok settisk hjá álpinni ok vildi þýðask hana; þat var ok ǫrn mikill. Brátt þótti mér sá ǫrninn, er fyrir var, ýfask mjök, er hinn kom til, ok þeir þorðusk snarpliga ok lengi, ok þat sá ek, at hvárumtveggja blæddi; ok svá lauk þeira leik, at sinn veg hné hvárr þeira af húsmœninum, ok váru þá báðir dauðir, en álpin sat eptir hnipin mjök ok daprlig. Ok þá sá ek fljúga fugl ór vestri; þat var valr; hann settisk hjá álpinni ok lét blítt við hana, ok síðan flugu þau í brótt bæði samt í sǫmu ætt, ok þá vaknaði ek.<sup>596</sup>

(I dreamed that I was at home at Borg, out by the men’s doors, and I looked up at the buildings and saw a beautiful and fair swan on the roof. I felt like I owned her, and this seemed very good to me. Then I saw a great eagle fly from the mountains. He flew this way and sat beside the swan and chatted with her cheerfully, and to me it looked like she received this well. Then I saw that the eagle was black-eyed and iron-clawed; he seemed valiant to me. Next, I saw another bird fly from the south. It flew this way to Borg and sat beside the swan and wished to attach himself to her; it too was a great eagle. The eagle who was before me appeared to me to quickly become ruffled, when the other came near, and they fought long and hard. I then saw that they both bled, and their game ended thus: each one fell in opposite directions from the roof, both dead, and after

---

<sup>596</sup> *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, ch. 2 (ed. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, p. 54).

this the swan sat, very despondent and sad. Then I saw a bird fly from the west; it was a falcon. He sat beside the swan and acted cheerfully toward her, and afterwards they flew away together in the same direction. Then I awoke.)

The dream is then interpreted, with the four birds representing characters in the saga: the swan is Þorsteinn's daughter Helga, the two eagles are her suitors Gunnlaugr ormsungu Hermundsson and Skáld-Hrafn Qnundarson, and the falcon is her eventual husband, Þorkell Hallkelsson.<sup>597</sup> While there is debate as to whether or not these dream-birds should strictly be classed as *fylgjur*, they do seem to perform a similar task of symbolising essential aspects of the people they are attached to.<sup>598</sup> Both Gunnlaugr and Skáld-Hrafn are strong men and gifted poets: traits which may link them to Óðinn and thus to eagles. Þorkell, meanwhile, is a comparatively less illustrious man, indicated not only by the falcon, but also by his perfunctory appearance in the saga and absence from other Old Norse sources. Overall, the sources which link eagles to battle and death through Óðinn, *jǫtnar*, and warriors all reinforce the connections already discussed in relation to eagles as birds of battle: these large, powerful birds which scavenged from battlefields became linked to Óðinn and warriors, and these links in turn influenced texts such as *Gunnlaugs saga*, which drew upon the Óðinn-eagle connection to symbolise its two warring skalds with eagles.

However, not all *jǫtnar* that take an eagle's form are directly connected to battle or carrion. Rather, they are violent, primal, yet aristocratic beings that in some ways resemble the Æsir.<sup>599</sup> Such *jǫtnar* are also able to take eagle form. In the same prose narrative as the account of Óðinn turning into an eagle, the *jǫtunn* Þjazi comes to steal Íðunn 'í arnarham,' ('in an eagle-skin') and when Suttungr sees Óðinn escaping with the mead of poetry in the form of an eagle, 'tók hann sér arnarham ok flaug eptir honum.'<sup>600</sup> In the earlier skaldic poem *Haustlǫng*, Þjazi is also described as taking the form of an eagle:

Segjǫndum fló sagna  
snótar úlfr at móti  
í gemlis ham gǫmlum  
glamma ófyrskǫmmu.  
Settisk ǫrn þars Æsir

---

<sup>597</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>598</sup> Mundal, pp. 33, 38.

<sup>599</sup> For a discussion of the Æsir and *jǫtnar* as mirror-images of one another, see Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, pp. 48–50, 56–71.

<sup>600</sup> *Skm*, pp. 2, 4–5 (ch. G56, 58). 'Transformed himself into eagle-form.'

ár-Gefnar mar bôru  
— vasa byrgitýr bjarga  
bleyði vændr — á seyði.<sup>601</sup>

(Úlfr snótar fló glamma ófyrskömmu at móti segjondum sagna í gømlum ham gemlis.  
Qrn settisk, þars æsir báru mar ár-Gefnir á seyði; bjarga byrgitýr vasa vændr bleýði.)

(The wolf of the woman [ÞJAZI] flew noisily, not recently, for a meeting with the  
troops' commanders [ÆSIR], in the old shape of the ancient one [EAGLE].<sup>602</sup> The eagle  
set himself down where the Æsir carried the mare of prosperity-Gefn [FREYJA;  
GODDESS > OX] in an oven; the crags' refuge-god [JQTUNN; ÞJAZI] was scarcely a  
coward.)

While Þjazi and Suttungr may be violent raiders, they are neither gods of death nor carrion-eaters. Instead, the connections between Þjazi, Suttungr, and eagles may come from a different source: the use of eagles as icons of power. This use of eagles has a long and complex history, and passes through a number of cultures, from early Iron Age Central Asia and the Roman Empire to medieval Northern Europe. Each iteration held its own culturally-specific aspects, but the use of eagles as a symbol of martial and social power in the broadest sense appears to have been widespread across the Iron Age and Middle Ages, and this phenomenon is more than likely to have influenced the Norse use of the eagle-symbol, particularly in iconographic contexts.

#### 6.4.3 Eagle-Iconography in Archaeological Sources

Birds of prey with hooked beaks are a common motif in the iconography of iron Age southern Scandinavia. First, there are the Migration Period bracteates. These bracteates are small discs, typically made of gold, which were manufactured in a relatively short period from the fifth to the sixth century. While the epicentre of the bracteate phenomenon was in the area of present-day Denmark, northern Germany, and southern Sweden, bracteates have been found in England, Ukraine, and Hungary.<sup>603</sup> While the designs found on bracteates appear to be quite uniform throughout the area that they have been found, the uses that they were put to appears to vary, as they have been found as grave goods for male and female skeletons as well as in hoards and as single finds. It is therefore probable that interpretations,

---

<sup>601</sup> Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlög* 2 (ed. Clunies Ross, p. 434).

<sup>602</sup> For a discussion of age in eagle-kennings, see §6.4.4.

<sup>603</sup> Axboe, p. 10 fig. 1.



as well as uses, of bracteate-imagery was likewise heterogenous across their find range, even if the designs themselves were relatively uniform.

The most well-known interpretations of bracteate imagery attempt to connect the bracteates to later Norse mythological sources. As well as producing an iconographic catalogue of bracteates, Karl Hauck argued extensively that the imagery of the bracteates almost unanimously links to narratives concerning Óðinn, and other elements of mythology found in the Prose Edda. Across his body of work on the Migration Period golden bracteates, Hauck repeatedly uses the association between Óðinn and ravens in medieval Icelandic mythological texts to explain the use of birds on the migration-period golden bracteates of Southern Scandinavia and Northern Europe as being used to indicate a proto-Óðinnic figure, with the single raven being an abbreviation of Huginn and Muninn.<sup>604</sup> In Hauck's model, the iconography of the Germanic peoples of the Migration Period preserves a tradition that maps almost completely onto the textual sources from thirteenth-century Iceland. Hauck remained adamant throughout his career that his identification of these birds was correct, and in one of his final papers on the topic, he insists that 'Die Identifizierung des Vogelattributs, das sich auch auf A- und B-Versionen findet, ermöglicht es zugleich, den Hauptgott der Brakteatenkunst als Odin, den Hrafnáss, den Rabengott der Skalden, zu benennen.'<sup>605</sup>

Many scholars have critiqued Hauck's reading of the bracteates. Kathryn Starkey argues that the animals found upon the bracteates are by no means as exclusively associated with Óðinn as Hauck suggests they are.<sup>606</sup> Nancy Wicker has also criticised Hauck's work, stating that his insistence upon matching Migration Period bracteates to thirteenth-century texts feels extremely forced, as '[i]t sometimes seems as if he tries to find elements on bracteates corresponding to every detail that Snorri mentions.'<sup>607</sup> John Hines has levelled similar critiques, highlighting Hauck's 'selective use of sources of questionable relevancy to create what turns into a self-perpetuating, and what is worse a self-validating, system of interpretation.'<sup>608</sup>

---

<sup>604</sup> Hauck, 'Gudme als Kultort', pp. 78–9; Hauck et al., 'Der Brakteat des Jahrhunderts', pp. 44–5.

<sup>605</sup> Hauck, 'Machatten Odens.', pp. 3–4. 'The identification of the bird's attributes, which are also found on A- and B- versions [of the bractates], makes it possible to name the main god of the bracteate-images as Óðinn, the *hrafnáss*, the raven god of the skalds.'

<sup>606</sup> Starkey, pp. 380–84.

<sup>607</sup> Wicker and Williams, p. 164.

<sup>608</sup> Hines, 'Review Article', p. 254.

Approximately 90 of the 146 bracteates feature one or more birds with a curved beak and claws, which could be considered eagles (see Figure 3).<sup>609</sup> Although Hauck argues that the vast majority of these birds are ravens, he does occasionally interpret birds on the bracteates as eagles. In these cases, he mostly proposes that some of the bracteates depict Óðinn and his eagle-form, as described in *Skáldskaparmál*.<sup>610</sup> Hauck uses the inscription on IK 41 to support this, stating that the runes read *ara haitika* ('my name is eagle'), and that this is related to the Óðinn-*heiti arnhqfði* ('eagle-head').<sup>611</sup> However, Hauck's reading is by no means certain. The inscription has also been interpreted as a so-called Rune-Master inscription, referring to the name of the rune carver/bracteate-maker himself.<sup>612</sup> Furthermore, the only other attestation for *ara* meaning *eagle* in runic script comes from a thirteenth-century inscription from Lund.<sup>613</sup> Finally, the ability to transform into an eagle is also available to the *jotnar*, and Stephan Grundy has argued that apart from the *Prose Edda*, there are very few sources that explicitly link Óðinn to eagles, and so rather than being necessarily Óðinnic, eagles were rather an appropriate bird for a powerful male entity in Old Norse literature.

---

<sup>609</sup> These numbers come from my own analysis of the photographs and sketches in Hauk et al., eds, *Der Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* vols. 1,1–3,2. Individual bracteate designs are referred to by their Ikonographischer Katalog (IK) number.

<sup>610</sup> Hauck, 'Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, IV', pp. 47–70; Hauck, 'Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, LXI', p. 104.

<sup>611</sup> Hauck, 'Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, LXI', pp. 103–4

<sup>612</sup> Both theories are discussed in Hauck et al., *Ikonographischer Katalog* 1,2, p. 81.

<sup>613</sup> *Samnordisk runtextdatabas* separate search parameters: Old West Norse "ara"; English "eagle" <<http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm>> [Accessed 30th October 2017]. I have discussed the Lund inscription listed here in Haley-Halinski, 'The Oars of the Eagle'.



Figure 3: Silver bracteate, sixth century, found in Bridlington, Yorkshire. British Museum number 2014,8015.1

Grundy's arguments gain support from being contextualised alongside the origins of the bracteates and their eagle-images. The Migration Period gold bracteates are thought to hold their origins in the practice of Romans paying Germanic mercenaries in Roman coins, which were then used as personal ornaments by these mercenaries when they returned home. Some of these coins depicted eagles in various contexts. Over time, South Scandinavian peoples began to replicate these coins as jewellery, modifying the motifs as well as creating their own that combined Roman and Germanic imagery to create objects that were no longer copies of Roman coins, but carried the same sense of prestige.<sup>614</sup> In pre-Christian Greco-Roman thought, the eagle was the animal attribute of Zeus/Jupiter due to its size, strength, and the fact that it was viewed as one of the rulers of the animal kingdom, analogous to Zeus' rulership of the pantheon.<sup>615</sup> By the Migration Period, the Romans had been Christianised for several centuries, but the eagle carried on being used as a symbol of power and elite status, not least due to its privileged status in Christian symbolism as the bird of St John, as a symbol of Christ, and as a symbol of those who look toward God.<sup>616</sup> The Huns also used the eagle as a symbol of power.<sup>617</sup> As such, Germanic peoples in contact with the Roman

---

<sup>614</sup> Åkerström-Hougen, *Genesis och Metamorfosis*, pp. 57–76; Burche, pp. 185–92.

<sup>615</sup> Gilhus, pp. 106–7.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176–78; Durham and Fulford; Lerz et al.

<sup>617</sup> Heather, pp. 311–12.

Empire likely would have associated eagles with military power and material wealth from the Migration Period onward.

Following on from the bracteates in Northern and Western Germanic bird-  
iconography was a phenomenon that has been called the ‘Vendel Ravens.’ These are sixth-  
and seventh-century depictions of birds in metalwork that depict a large bird with a pointed  
beak in profile – this beak is often curved, suggesting they may be birds of prey such as  
eagles, not ravens.<sup>618</sup> Despite being called Vendel ravens, they appear not only in the area  
around the Vendel burials, but in the Sutton Hoo burial from East Anglia, and in a few places  
from present-day Denmark.<sup>619</sup> The roughly contemporary Merovingian Franks manufactured  
similar aquiline bird brooches that depict a bird in profile with a hooked, but not curling,  
beak, a single inlaid gem for an eye, and a more rectangular tail than that of the Vendel  
ravens.<sup>620</sup>



*Figure 4: Vendel Raven style shield mount, seventh century, found at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk. British Museum number 1939,1010.94.C.1*

---

<sup>618</sup> Ambrosiani, p. 26.

<sup>619</sup> British Museum collection numbers 1939,1010.94.C.1; 2001,0103.3.e and 1921,1101.251; Danish National Museum collection number C 22356; Metropolitan Museum of Art accession number 1991.308.

<sup>620</sup> Examples include British Museum collection numbers 1903,0214.9; AF.527.a; 1867,0729.35; 1902,1108.24; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession numbers 17.191.164 and 17.191.165.



*Figure 5: Merovingian Bird Brooch, sixth century, found at Walthamstow, London. British Museum number 1903,0214.9*

However, rather than necessarily indicating links with a deity (Óðinn-cognate or otherwise), such eagle brooches appear to have been a shared pictorial language through which to express social prestige. Peter Heather notes that the similar Gothic eagles ‘are one of the richest individual items buried with the dead, and surely must have been used to express elite status.’<sup>621</sup> While the Gothic peoples and Scandinavians had different pre-Christian religions and relationships to neighbouring cultures,<sup>622</sup> it is possible that the Northern and Western Germanic peoples likewise adopted the eagle not directly as a symbol of Óðinn, but rather of military might and aristocracy, which was/became the domain of Óðinn. While the East Anglian, Merovingian Frankish, and Norse eagles may not have always been the richest items in a burial, they were usually made of precious metals, gilded, inlaid with precious stones, and/or showed high levels of craftsmanship in the use of niello or cloisonné,

---

<sup>621</sup> Heather, p. 311.

<sup>622</sup> For instance, Wolfram, pp. 106–12, argues that pre-Christian Gothic peoples did not have an Óðinn-cognate deity.

suggesting that they too were expressions of wealth and status. Given that these symbols did not arise until the Migration Period, it is possible that this expression of power came from encounters with the Roman and Hunnic uses of the eagle-symbol, two nations with great military power and wealth that the Germanic peoples had contact with during the Migration Period. As well as connections to power, the connections between eagles and the elites of chronologically- and geographically-distant peoples such as the Huns and Romans may also have fed into their associations with the primal, aristocratic *jǫtnar*.

#### 6.4.4 Eagles in the *Pulur*

Eagles, like ravens, also have their own anonymous *pula* in AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to. It has the same form and approach as *Hrafns heiti*, although it only has one stanza:

Qrn, gallópnir ok andhrímnir,  
 hræsvelgir ok hreggskornir,  
 egðir, kinnarr, ari, blindviðnir,  
 arnkell, gemlir ok aquila.<sup>623</sup>

(Eagle, screecher, and counter-screamer, carrion-swallower and wind-cleaver, sharp-edged one, chin/cheekbone, eagle, blind wood-dweller, old man, old one, and *aquila*.)

As is the case with many other bird-*pulur*, two *heiti*, *gallópnir* (‘screecher’) and *andhrímnir* (‘counter-screamer’), are likely to have their roots in the sounds that eagles make, which include yelping and a *klea* alarm call.<sup>624</sup> The *heiti gemlir* (‘old one’) is spelled *gelmir* (‘screamer’) in AM 757 a 4to, which can also be placed in this group.

*Qrn*, *ari*, and *aquila* all mean ‘eagle,’ and the inclusion of the Latin word again illustrates the learned nature of the *pula*. As discussed (§6.4.2), *hræsvelgir* means ‘corpse-swallower,’ but while it presumably comes from the scavenging habits of eagles it is only attested in the context of the *jǫtunn*. *Egðir* (‘sharp-edged one’), *hreggskornir* (‘storm-cleaver’), and *kinnarr* (‘chin/cheekbones’) presumably refer to the eagle’s beak and talons, which are distinctively large and sharp, and as iconographic portrayals attest, were salient features of birds of prey in Iron Age and medieval Norse culture.

<sup>623</sup> *Ara heiti* (ed. Gurevich, p. 950).

<sup>624</sup> Ferguson-Lees and Christie, p. 405.

The *heiti* to do with old age, *arnkell* (‘old man’) and *gemplir* (‘old one’), are slightly more difficult to interpret. As Gurevich notes, *gemplir* could feasibly be connected to a term referring to a year-old animal, as *gemplingr* is an Old Norse-Icelandic term for a year-old sheep.<sup>625</sup> There is one attestation of the term being used to refer to a hawk rather than an eagle in the kenning *gemplis stalli* (‘the old one’s shelf’) [ARM],<sup>626</sup> suggesting that it could have been used to refer to the age of a bird in a similar manner to *mútari* (‘moulted one’), which was used to refer to a falcon that had moulted (§5.4.1). However, this is unusual and could be a corruption as of the four manuscript attestations of this verse, only the two younger manuscripts (AM 242 fol., c. 1350, and Utrecht, University Library 1374, c. 1595) read *gemplis*, and the two older manuscripts (GKS 2365 4to, c. 1300–25, and DG 11, c. 1300–25) read *gelmis* (‘screamer’), so its use as a hawk-*heiti* in this instance may be erroneous.<sup>627</sup> *Arnkell* presents similar difficulties. Gurevich posits that this *heiti* could refer to a lost legendary figure, although there are no grounds on which to support this.<sup>628</sup>

One potential origin for the connection between eagles and old age may be found in mythological sources. The *heiti* *gemplir* is attested in the poem *Haustlǫng*, where Þjazi transforms into an eagle-form:

Segjǫndum fló sagna  
snótar ulfr at móti  
í gemplis ham gǫmlum  
glamma ófyrskǫmmu.

(Úlfr snótar fló glamma ófyrskǫmmu at móti segjǫndum sagna í gǫmlum ham gemplis.)<sup>629</sup>

(The wolf of the woman [ÞJAZI] flew noisily, not recently, for a meeting with the troops’ commanders [ÆSIR], in the old shape of the ancient one [EAGLE].)

The double emphasis on age in *gǫmlum ham gemplis* (‘the old shape of the ancient one’) may be to do with the eagle-*jǫtunn* connections found in mythology and poetry, and the nature of the *jǫtnar*. As noted by Margaret Clunies Ross and Katja Schultz, Old-Norse Icelandic mythological texts characterise *jǫtnar* as distinctly primordial beings; possibly the oldest

<sup>625</sup> Gurevich, commentary on *Ara heiti*, p. 951; CV, s.v. ‘gemplingr’.

<sup>626</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal* 2 (ed. Gade, p. 1106).

<sup>627</sup> *Háttatal*, ch. 2 (ed. Faulkes, p. 5) follows the reading *gelmis stalli*.

<sup>628</sup> Gurevich, commentary on *Ara heiti*, p. 951.

<sup>629</sup> Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Haustlǫng* 2:1–4 (ed. Clunies Ross, p. 434).

known creatures in the cosmos, even compared to the Æsir.<sup>630</sup> Thus, eagles may have been considered old because of their connections with such ancient mythological beings.

Another difficult *heiti* is *blindviðnir* ('blind wood-dweller'). White-Tailed Sea Eagles do not typically live in forests – as attested in a list of gnomic phrases referring to things that belong in/on other things contained in *Grettisfærsla*, which asserts that eagles live on cliffs.<sup>631</sup> The element *blind-* is also difficult. In medieval animal lore, the eagle was anything but blind. Instead, it was said to gaze into the sun and keep its keen sight, just as humankind was supposed to gaze upon the light of God through contemplation: a trope that appears in thirteenth-century homily books from both Iceland and Norway.<sup>632</sup> Gurevich argues that as *viðnir* and variants on *ifli* appear in *Hauks heiti*, *blindviðnir* is most likely a hawk-*heiti* that became displaced.<sup>633</sup> Another possible interpretation can be proposed, however, based on eagles' anatomy. Eagles possess nictitating membranes: translucent 'third eyelids' that can be closed to shield their eyes from threats such as prey's retaliations, or harsh wind and rain while retaining some sight. An observer may see an eagle close its cloudy-white nictitating membrane yet retain its ability to spot prey and interpret that as eagles not only being prone to blindness, but being able to watch while blinded. However, as there are no extant Old Norse texts that mention such a membrane, this explanation is conjectural.

In addition to the *heiti* found in the published edition of the *þula*, there are several lists of eagle-*heiti* found elsewhere in the Old Norse literary corpus. The main text of *Skáldskaparmál* provides a list that contains several names found in *Ara heiti*, as well as two extra ones, stating that 'Ǫrn heitir svá: ari, gemlir, hreggskornir, egðir, ginnarr, undskornir, gallópnir.'<sup>634</sup> *Undskornir* ('wound-cleaver') likely refers to the role of White-Tailed Sea Eagles as battleground scavengers. *Ginnarr* is glossed by Faulkes as 'deceiver.'<sup>635</sup> There are few natural behaviours of the White-Tailed Sea Eagle that would be particularly deceptive, and so the most likely origin for such a *heiti* in this case may be mythological texts – as mentioned, Óðinn uses an eagle-disguise to steal the mead of poetry, and this *heiti* could be related to this tale, although even this is not necessarily a strong reading. Alternatively,

---

<sup>630</sup> Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes* vol. 1, pp. 55–6, 65–7; Schultz, pp. 65–72.

<sup>631</sup> *Grettisfærsla* (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (2), p. 23).

<sup>632</sup> *Gamal Norsk Homiliebok*, §Sermo de euuangeliftif. in die sancti Johannis, §In ascensione domini nostri [Iesu Cristi]. Sermo ualde neccellaria (ed. Indrebø, pp. 48–50, 90); *Íslensk Hómiltubók*, §Hátíð Jóhannesar postula (ed. de Leeuw van Weenen, fol. 83v).

<sup>633</sup> Gurevich, commentary on *Ara heiti*, p. 951.

<sup>634</sup> *Skm*, p. 92 (ch. 60). 'The eagle can be named thus: eagle, old one, storm-cleaver, edged one, deceiver, wound-cleaver, screecher.'

<sup>635</sup> Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* II, s.v. 'ginnarr.'



*ginnarr* could be a corruption of *kinnarr*, attested in AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to.

While there are few differences between the *pula* and the *heiti* found in *Skáldskaparmál*, the differences in *heiti* does suggest a wider oral tradition of bird-*heiti*.

Overall, it would appear that the eagle-*heiti* found here seem slightly less grounded in natural observation than the raven- and hawk-*pulur* in the same manuscripts. This may be due to White-Tailed Sea Eagles' greater distance from human settlement, as they are less synanthropic than the Common Raven. As such, symbolism and lore may have been more well-known than observed behaviour. It could also be due to a greater amount of eagle lore and symbolism transmitted between cultures in Iron Age and Medieval Europe. However, this could equally be due to the smaller number of *heiti* recorded in this single stanza.

Overall, it would appear that while natural observation was the basis for a lot of Norse eagle lore, the symbolic use of eagles in literature and visual arts throughout Iron Age and Medieval Europe also had a role in Norse portrayals of eagles.

#### 6.4.5 Eagles in Law Codes and Zooarchaeology

As with ravens, it should be asked whether eagles' symbolic centrality had any impact upon the White-Tailed Sea Eagles that lived alongside the Norse peoples. Like ravens, eagles are also mentioned in the dietary restrictions of *Grágás*, and they also appear in the list of birds that may be hunted in the *Staðarhólsbók* redaction of *Grágás*, and in *Jónsbók*.<sup>636</sup> This suggests a similar set of attitudes toward eagles, as birds that were too atypical to eat, and that were considered pests. Indeed, the loss of White-tailed Sea Eagles in many areas of Europe and the British Isles has been due to the now-disproven belief that they actively hunt and kill livestock.<sup>637</sup>

Again, as is the case with the Common Raven, the White-Tailed Sea Eagle is relatively elusive in the zooarchaeological record. Out of the excavations of Icelandic sites, this species appears twice: one claw in an unstratified layer at Skútustaðir, and a single wing bone from the late-medieval Icelandic monastery at Skriðuklaustur. Neither find has any marks that can explain why the eagle might have been there, and so it may simply be the case that passing birds perished nearby and ended up on a midden heap. Eketorp-II has an NISP of four, and Eketorp-II has an NISP of six, with a further single specimen that could be from either phase.<sup>638</sup> This increase in White-Tailed Sea Eagle specimens in proportion to the size

---

<sup>636</sup> *Grágás* §32, 436, pp. 43, 507; *Jónsbók*, § VII, 58 (ed. Schulman, p. 266).

<sup>637</sup> Love, pp. 101–6; Marquiss et al., pp. 13–14.

<sup>638</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch, pp. 277–78.

of the human settlement suggests that these birds scavenged from coastal human settlement sites, although the seabird nesting sites and large fish population provided a pre-existing source of food for these birds.<sup>639</sup> In a survey of site reports conducted by Mulkeen and O'Connor, White-Tailed Sea Eagles are some of the most commonly-found birds of prey in Iron Age and Medieval European settlements, coming second only to Goshawks in the number of sites where elements of the bird was found.<sup>640</sup> Thus, although it is a rare sight in present-day Europe, Mulkeen and O'Connor conclude that the White-Tailed Sea Eagle 'was a fairly common scavenger in Roman and medieval towns.'<sup>641</sup>

Perhaps most surprising are the conclusions drawn by Anne-Brigitte Gotfredsen in her survey of bird bones in Viking Age Denmark. Gotfredsen remarks on two things: firstly, the extremities of White-Tailed Sea Eagles appear with more frequency than other parts of the bird, and show signs of dismemberment; and secondly, at least one of these birds has marks on its feet that are suggestive of prolonged captivity. While it is possible that this bird may have been kept as a trophy pet or for religious reasons by an elite member of the community, Gotfredsen argues that the butchery marks alongside the captivity marks suggest a different scenario: rather than pampered pets, these eagles were kept captive and their feathers were harvested for arrow-fletching.<sup>642</sup> The bones in Eketorp are likewise primarily wing-bones, one of which shows captivity-marks, and so Boessneck et al. reach a similar conclusion, also stating that White-Tailed Sea Eagles were likely kept in captivity around the fortress to increase the feather-harvest for fletching.<sup>643</sup> This is somewhat weakened by the fact that no eagle-feather-fletched arrows have been found in any of these sites, but Roman Iron Age arrows have been discovered in Denmark that were fletched with White-Tailed Sea Eagle feathers.<sup>644</sup> Arrows fletched with feathers from such an impressive bird were likely considered prestigious, if not lucky. Overall, the zooarchaeological evidence suggests that, similar to the Common Raven, the White-Tailed Sea Eagle was, in the Old Norse world, an urban scavenger that occupied a synanthropic niche in a human-influenced environment, but despite its symbolic value as an icon of power and as a shape assumed by Óðinn, they were not treated with any particular reverence, even in pre-Christian Denmark. Instead, like ravens,

---

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> Mulkeen and O'Connor, pp. 443–45, particularly Table 1.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., p. 443.

<sup>642</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 372

<sup>643</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch, p. 277.

<sup>644</sup> X. P. Jensen, pp. 17–21.

eagles were interacted with in a manner that prioritised practicality over any kind of veneration as symbolic birds.

## 6.5 Swans

### 6.5.1 Swans in Literary and Mythological Sources

Swans may appear to be outliers in this chapter, as they are neither birds of battle, nor are they particularly related to Óðinn. However, they appear in Old Norse mythological texts with enough prominence for Cleasby and Vigfússon to state that ‘they are the sacred birds at the well of Urda.’<sup>645</sup> This statement is related to one of the most appearances of swans in an Old Norse mythological text. In *Gylfaginning*, it is said that ‘[f]uglar tveir fœðask í Urðar brunni. Þeir heita svanir, ok af þeim fuglum hefir komit þat fugla kyn er svá heitir.’<sup>646</sup> Urðarbrunnr is mentioned multiple times in this text; it is situated by the roots of Yggdrasil, and it is where the *nornir*, a group of women roughly analogous to the Greek Fates, live and draw their water.<sup>647</sup> On the one hand, this link between swans and Urðarbrunnr could simply be due to the whiteness of both, as Urðarbrunnr is said to be strikingly white in both *Gylfaginning* and in its quoted source, *Völuspá*:

Ask veit ek ausinn,  
heitir Yggdrasill,  
hár baðmr, heilagr,  
hvíta auri.  
Þaðan koma duggvar  
er í dali falla.  
Stendr hann æ yfir grœnn  
Urðar brunni.<sup>648</sup>

(I know of an ash-tree called Yggdrasill, holy, with high branches, sprinkled with white clay. From it come the dews which fall in the valley. Yggdrasill stands evergreen over Urðarbrunnr.)

*Gylfaginning* adds further details about Urðarbrunnr, stating that ‘þat vatn er svá heilagt at allir hlutir þeir sem þar koma í brunninn verða svá hvítir sem hinna sú er skjall heitir, er innan

---

<sup>645</sup> CV, s.v. ‘álpt’.

<sup>646</sup> *Gylf*, p. 19 (ch. 16). ‘Two birds nourish themselves in Urðarbrunnr. They are called swans, and from them have come that type of bird which is called swan.’

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 15–6 (pp. 17–9).

<sup>648</sup> *Völuspá* 19 quoted in *Gylf*, p. 19 (ch. 16).

liggr við eggskurn.’<sup>649</sup> The detail of the holy waters appear to be connected to the mention of holiness in stanza 19 of *Völuspá*, although interestingly the word *heilagr* (‘holy’) appears only in the *Gylfaginning* redaction of that stanza, not the Codex Regius or Hauksbók redactions.<sup>650</sup> *Gylfaginning* also adds the detail of the two swans, which is absent from other Old Norse-Icelandic sources.

The treatment of the swans in *Gylfaginning* seems to suggest that the association of swans and Urðarbrunnr is merely a matter of colour, and this is possible. The whiteness of swans appears to have been particularly prominent in Norse culture, to the point where Old Norse-Icelandic developed the word *álpt*, which was likely derived from the Latin *albus*, as well as retaining the older Germanic *svanr* (§9). Yet while *álpt* is unique to Old Norse-Icelandic, both *svanr* and *álpt* appear in a variety of contexts, suggesting there was minimal, if any, difference in how the two words were used. However, as Karen Bek-Pedersen states, while the association between white birds and the whitening powers of the waters of *Urðarbrunnr* could be the only factor, there is still a possibility that this connection ‘could tenuously link the birds to ideas about fate,’<sup>651</sup> due to the cosmological significance of the well they live in.

Another text that connects swans to fate is *Völundarkviða*. This poem introduces three women who own swan-feather cloaks which allow them to fly and possibly to take the form of swans. In the prose introduction to the text found in the Codex Regius, it is said that ‘Þar vǫru hjá þeim álpitarhamir þeira; þat vǫru valkyrjur [...] Þar vǫru tvær dœtr Hlǫðvés konungs, Hlaðguðr svanhvít ok Hervǫr alvitr; in þriðja var Qlrún Kjársdóttir af Vallandi.’<sup>652</sup> This is arguably the earliest attestation of an explicit link between *valkyrjur* and swans, and given the connections between *valkyrjur* and battlefield deaths,<sup>653</sup> it is arguable that this then connects swans and fate. Connections between swans and fate could also have at least in part have been based upon swans’ migratory habits. While some swans do regularly winter in Iceland, particularly around springs and coastal areas, the majority (just over 90%) of the Icelandic

---

<sup>649</sup> *Gylf*, p. 19 (ch. 16). ‘That water [from Urðar brunnr] is so white that all things which go into the well become as white as the membrane called *skjall*, which lies inside an eggshell.’

<sup>650</sup> *Völuspá (K)* 19 and *Völuspá (H)* 19 (*Edkv* I, pp. 295, 311).

<sup>651</sup> Bek-Pedersen, p. 126.

<sup>652</sup> *Völundarkviða*, prose introduction (*Edkv* I, p. 428). ‘They had their swan-*hamir* by them. They were *valkyrjur* [...] There were two daughters of King Hlǫðvér [Clovis], Hlaðguðr swan-white and Hervǫr the strange creature, the third was Qlrún Kjársdóttir from Valland.’

<sup>653</sup> Quinn, pp. 1513, 1525–26.

swan population arrives in Iceland in spring and leaves in autumn.<sup>654</sup> This pattern of arrival before the summer and departure before winter hardship may also have fed links between swans and death.

However, this link is only found in the prose introduction rather than in the poem itself. The poem's account of these three women runs as follows:

Meyjar flugu sunnan  
myrkvið í gøgnum,  
alvitr ungar,  
ørlog drýgja;  
þær á sævar strönd  
settusk at hvílask,  
drósir suðrænar,  
dýrt lín spunnu.

Ein nam þeira  
Egil at verja,  
fögr mæri fira,  
faðmi ljósum;  
önnur var Svanhvít,  
svanfjaðrar dró,  
en in þriðja,  
þeira systir,  
varði hvítan  
háls *Völundar*.<sup>655</sup>

(Maidens flew in from the south, through Mirkwood, strange young creatures/all-wise young women, to fulfil fate. They set themselves at the sea's shore to rest, southern women, and spun precious cloth.

---

<sup>654</sup> For instance, in the winter of 1982–1983, between 700 and 800 of approximately 9000 to 10000 Icelandic Whooper Swans wintered in Iceland, with the majority of the swans wintering in Ireland and Scotland. See Arnþór Garðarsson and Kristinn Haukur Skarphéðinsson, 'A Census'; Arnþór Garðarsson and Kristinn Haukur Skarphéðinsson, 'Veturseta'. A more recent census of the wintering locations of Icelandic swans by Hall et al. stated that 7.4% of the population wintered in Iceland in winter 2014–2015, despite an increase to a total population of 34004 swans, suggesting a relatively stable proportion (between 5% and 10%) of the overall population winters in Iceland.

<sup>655</sup> *Völundarkviða* 1–2 (*Edkv* I, pp. 428–29).

One of them began to take Egill into her bright embrace, the fair maiden of the living; the second, Svanhvít, cast off her swan feathers, and the third, their sister, embraced the white neck of Vǫlundr.)

The main discrepancies are that firstly, the verses do not identify these women as *valkyrjur*; and secondly, the line *ørlog drýgja* ('to fulfil fate'), found in stanzas 1 and 4, places a strong emphasis on the link between these women and fate that is lacking in the prose.

The *Kommentar zu Liedern der Edda* discusses these and other issues. As far as the identification of these women with *valkyrjur* is concerned, the writers of the *Kommentar* acknowledge that while the poem does not identify these women as *valkyrjur*, their ability to fly and their connections to fate and war provide enough grounds for the writer(s) of the prose introduction to identify these women as such, even if they were not originally intended to be interpreted as *valkyrjur*.<sup>656</sup> Thus, the authors of the *Kommentar* acknowledge these discrepancies between the two elements of *Vǫlundarkviða* as it is recorded in the Codex Regius, they do not view them as being irreconcilably problematic, but rather reasonable interpretations of some of the more ambiguous and/or idiosyncratic aspects of the poem.

In her analysis of these three women in relation to *nornir* and other supernatural women in the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus, Bek-Pedersen states that on the one hand, these women are definitely supernatural.<sup>657</sup> However, Bek-Pedersen then goes on to comment that, unlike *nornir*, these women are neither in charge of nor embodiments of fate, rather their fates are to simply be different from their husbands.<sup>658</sup> To explain the atypical natures of these women, who combine elements of *valkyrjur* and *nornir*, among others, Bek-Pedersen argues that 'the poem clearly draws on narrative material that was by no means specific to Norse tradition.'<sup>659</sup>

The material that Bek-Pedersen is referring to is the Eurasian folktale of the swan-maiden. This is a young woman who can take the shape of a swan with the aid of an item such as a feather cloak. This item is stolen by a man whom she must then marry. The tale usually resolves itself with the woman recovering her cloak and escaping.<sup>660</sup> Connections between the swan women of *Vǫlundarkviða* and the 'swan maiden' of folklore has been

---

<sup>656</sup> Von See et al., 'Vǫlundarkviða', pp. 122–23, 132–33.

<sup>657</sup> Bek-Pedersen, p. 126.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>660</sup> Hatto, p. 326. And old but frequently-cited study of the swan-maiden myth is Holmström. A short history of scholarship on the European swan-maiden motif is in A. L. Miller, pp. 55–65.

proposed by several scholars. In the entry for swan-maidens in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, Anne Holtsmark theorises that the swan women in *Vǫlundarkviða* originated in an independent Indo-European folklore motif that became attached to *Vǫlundarkviða*, and subsequently integrated into the concept of *valkyrjur* in the later Middle Ages.<sup>661</sup> Ursula Dronke has suggested a similar argument in her commentary on *Vǫlundarkviða*, where she states that ‘in the course of transmission of *Vkv* [sic] the motif of royal valkyrie fathers has been imposed upon the swan maidens.’<sup>662</sup> If *Vǫlundarkviða* was the result of the combination of domestic and foreign folktales and mythology, this may explain its atypical nature, including the discrepancies between prose and verse concerning the swan-women. Yet at the same time, attempts to identify discrete ‘mythological,’ ‘folkloric,’ ‘native,’ and ‘foreign’ elements of *Vǫlundarkviða* not only does a disservice to the text as it is preserved, but may be linked to nationalism and related ideologies.<sup>663</sup>

There have been some attempts to link swans, women, and death in older East Norse archaeological sources. In his article on a Gotlandic picture stone from Barshaldershed, Anders Dobat argues that the stone depicts a woman riding a chariot that is guided by a swan, which it turns he connects to swan-shaped rein guides from the Viking Age found in Danish sites as these rein guides were expressions of the rider being led to their ultimate fate, death, by these rein guides. This, he argues, indicates that swans were linked to women, death and fate, and therefore to *valkyrjur*, from an early point in time. Dobat also links the depictions of swans to Freyja, although the reasoning behind this is unclear, beyond a conflation of Freyja and the *valkyrjur*.<sup>664</sup> In his conclusion, Dobat acknowledges that his approach to written sources is ‘rather naïve and uncritical,’ but argues that this is excused as it ‘leads to the identification of a coherent theme [...] the steering of the wagon and thereby the passenger’s fate was given into the control of the divine powers.’<sup>665</sup>

While this is an interesting reading of material and textual sources in tandem with one another, Dobat does not cite a single primary source when discussing the textual sources regarding *valkyrjur* and swans. Instead, Dobat relies upon Holmström’s 1919 monograph on swan maidens in legend and folklore, and cites an entry in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for*

---

<sup>661</sup> Holtsmark, *Kulturhistorisk leksikon XVII*, s.v. ‘svanemøyer’.

<sup>662</sup> Dronke, ‘Commentary’ to *Vǫlundarkviða* (ed. Dronke, p. 302).

<sup>663</sup> Haley-Halinski, ‘Transforming’.

<sup>664</sup> Dobat, p. 186.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

*nordisk middelalder* as mentioning swans that does not, in fact, mention swans.<sup>666</sup>

Furthermore, photographs of the image on the picture stone he references show it to be not as clear as the illustration Dobat uses for his paper suggests. While the swan-shaped rein guides are indeed interesting, they are not found on Gotland, and furthermore, it is also entirely possible that, as is the case with the falconry brooches in Viking Age Sweden and Denmark, the image of a swan was used due to their reputation as a valuable source of food and feathers (§6.5.2), or simply because of the aesthetic appeal of the way a swan's neck curves, rather than any connections with Freyja and *valkyrjur*.

Despite the lack of a clear, strong connection between swans and *valkyrjur*, there is a connection in Old Norse-Icelandic literature between swans and women more generally. One of the most striking examples is *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. In the same dream discussed above (§6.4.2) in relation to eagles, Helga's *fylgja* is a beautiful swan. On the one hand, it is tempting to link this to the tenuous connection between swans and *valkyrjur* discussed above. Helga is indeed fateful in the sense Karin Bek-Pedersen gives for the swan-women in *Völundarkviða*, in as much her mere existence sets the fate of others in motion.<sup>667</sup> However, Helga does not behave similarly to them in other ways, as she is largely the passive object of desire pursued by the two poets rather than expressing or acting out her own desires, romantic or otherwise.

The other *Íslendingasaga* in which a dream-swan is used to as a substitute for a woman is *Flóamanna saga*. In this saga, the protagonist Þorgils has a series of dreams, which are interpreted by his son Þorleifr:

Aðra nótt dreymdi hann ok sagði: “Ek þóttumst heima vera í Traðarholti, ok var þar fjölmennt. Ek sá álp eina gange eptir gólfinu, ok var blíðari við aðra en mik. Þá hrista ek hana, ok var hon þaðan af miklu betr til mín.” Þorleifr svarar: “Þar muntu kvángast, faðir, ok muntu lítt í fyrstu njóta ástar hennar, ok mun þat þó vel dragast.”<sup>668</sup>

(On the second night, he dreamed and said: ‘I believed myself to be at home in Traðarholt, and it was crowded. I saw a swan go onto the floor, and she was more cheerful toward others than myself. Then I shook her, and because of that, she

---

<sup>666</sup> Ström, *Kulturhistorik leksikon* VI, s.v. ‘ham(n)skifte’.

<sup>667</sup> Bek-Pedersen, p. 125.

<sup>668</sup> *Flóamanna saga*, ch. 12 (ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, pp. 293–94).



acted better toward me.’ Þorleifr answered, ‘Then you will marry, father, and you will scarcely enjoy her love at first, but it will get better.’)

These two dreams are similar in that they both feature a swan that symbolises a woman named Helga. Although this may simply be a coincidentally-shared motif that had wider circulation, some scholars have argued that *Flóamanna saga* may have directly lifted this motif from *Gunnlaugs saga*, based on the saga’s broader tendency to lift motifs from other sagas, and the firmer links between the swan dream and the overall saga plot in *Gunnlaugs saga*.<sup>669</sup>

The most likely explanation for these women’s swan *fylgjur* is that comparing women to swans was a trope in Old Norse literature used to express beauty. In addition to the examples already discussed, this comparison appears in *lausavísur* attributed to Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson, where he describes his love-interest as drooping ‘sem ǫlpt á sunði’ while having sex with his rival.<sup>670</sup> It also appears in *Vǫlsunga saga*, where Brynhildr is said to lean forward on her throne ‘sem alpt af baru.’<sup>671</sup> There are also numerous women’s names in Old-Norse Icelandic that begin with the element *Svan-*, such as Svanhildr and Svanlaug. Men’s names with animal elements have been discussed as expressions of a hope that the human would take on admirable qualities of the animals in question, and women’s names may have had a similar motivation.<sup>672</sup> In the case of Brynhildr, the comparison could convey a sense of danger, given swans’ aggressively territorial natures towards other birds and towards humans, especially when nesting or guarding mates.<sup>673</sup> Yet overall, whiteness does appear to have been an element of conventional beauty in Old Norse literature, particularly conventional feminine beauty,<sup>674</sup> and as such, the majority of comparisons between swans and women are likely to indicate beauty.

Overall, while swans are not as widespread as eagles or ravens in Old Norse literature, they appear frequently enough to merit sustained comment. From the examples discussed, it would appear that the recurring connections between women and swans in Old Norse-Icelandic literature is more likely speaking to ideas concerning womanhood. While whiteness, fairness, and grace are all traits of swans that appear to have been desirable in

---

<sup>669</sup> Perkins, p. 217. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* II, p. 751.

<sup>670</sup> *Hallfreðar saga* ch. 9, (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 181). ‘Like a swan on the strait.’

<sup>671</sup> *Vǫlsunga saga*, ch. 29 (ed. Finch, p. 49). ‘Like a swan from the wave.’

<sup>672</sup> Jennbert, *Animals and humans*, pp. 184–88.

<sup>673</sup> Swift et al., pp. 1, 28.

<sup>674</sup> Haley-Halinski, ‘Transforming’.

women, it is worth bearing in mind that swans are also powerful and fiercely protective of their families: traits that may have likewise been desirable and/or admirable. By looking at wider connections between swans and women in Old Norse literature, the meaning moves away from a confusion of swan-maidens and *valkyrjur*, to a much broader set of meanings that combined ideas concerning gender and interpretations of birds' appearances and behaviour.

### 6.5.2 Swans in Zooarchaeology and Law Codes

In the zooarchaeological record, swans, like eagles and ravens, appear to have been treated in a manner that emphasises practical matters over other concerns. The individual species of swan are hard to identify from bones alone, and so although Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus bewickii*), and Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) are all found in the areas discussed, in many cases identification can only go as far as the genus *Cygnus*.<sup>675</sup>

In nearly all cases, the appearance of cut marks on the bones and prevalence of bones from the birds' extremities indicate that these birds were butchered and/or consumed. In their report on the Gásir excavations, Harrison et al. comment that although swan meat was typically consumed by elites in medieval Europe, swan bones with butchery-marks appear in sites of both lower and higher status in Iceland, suggesting that swan meat was rare but 'socially equivocal [...] It is possible that the consumption of swan meat at Gásir carried a different social message to the visiting merchants and their Icelandic customers.'<sup>676</sup> Thus, while medieval Icelandic texts such as *Karlamagnúss saga* mention swans as food only in relation to courtly food, such as a feast that contains 'hirtir ok villigellter, traunur og ges. hęsn ok pafuglar pipradir, endr og elfr. og allz kyns uilli fygli,'<sup>677</sup> this is unlikely to have been indicative of Icelandic culture, but rather of Icelandic interpretation of European courtly culture. Instead, law codes and zooarchaeological sources suggest that there was less social stratification when it came to the consumption of swan meat in Iceland.

Worked swan bones frequently appear in Viking Age Danish sites, suggesting that swan feathers and bones were used as raw materials for pillows, quills, flutes, and various other objects.<sup>678</sup> Thus, if swans were indeed sacred in some capacity to pre-Christian Norse

---

<sup>675</sup> In some cases where a species has been identified, it is contested between reports, e.g. Harrison et al., 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður', p. 106; Hamilton-Dyer, p. 31.

<sup>676</sup> Harrison et al., 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður', p. 112.

<sup>677</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga*, §Jórsalaferð (ed. Loth, p. 261). 'Harts and wild beasts, cranes and geese, poultry and peppered peafowl, ducks and swans and all kinds of wildfowl.'

<sup>678</sup> Gotfredsen, 'Birds in Subsistence', p. 371.

peoples, this did not prevent them from using swans' bodies as raw materials. This use of swans as raw materials persisted into the medieval period. In the late medieval monastery at Skriðuklaustur, Iceland, among the swan bones are three long bones that had been cut and polished to form hollow tubes. The initial report discussed their resemblance to bone flutes without finger-holes but does not provide an explanation.<sup>679</sup> Based upon later ethnographic accounts of bird bones being used as drinking straws in Iceland, Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck suggests that these bones were used as straws for patients at the monastery's hospice.<sup>680</sup> Thus, while swans were potentially significant in pre-Christian beliefs, and held symbolic value in literature, their primary importance in everyday life was as raw materials.

However, this is not to say that swans were an entirely egalitarian resource. Rather, medieval Icelandic law codes and other documents indicate that as these birds were such a versatile resource, they were very valuable. While eating swans was permitted in law, swans are mentioned in the list of birds one may not hunt on another's land in the Staðarhólsbók version of *Grágás*, where it is stated that 'Vale skal eigi veiða oc álptir oc gæs oc andir.'<sup>681</sup> As such, the question of who had the rights over swans and their eggs on a particular piece of land usually was related to that person's social and material power as a landholder. In *Jónsbók*, there are a collection of laws concerning swans:

J huers landi sem elptr werpa. þa eignaz sa er mar/kar ef hann veitir atroðr j sínu landi [...] Nu hafa elptr .íj. fumar orpit j fama landi famfleytt. þa eignaz sa er þat land attí. j huers landi sem hann merkír ok kreppir. ok þo at annar merkí. þa □ hann ef grannar hans vilia þat með eiði fa/na at þeim þickí þat likaz at þær elptr hafi j hans landi orpit. en hinn hafi þo fullt fyrir ftarf sítt.<sup>682</sup>

(Whoever owns the land in which swans lay eggs, then that person becomes the owner who marks them if he grants rowing passage in his land [...] Now the swans have laid eggs in the same land for three summers in succession, then they are owned by the person who owns that land, regardless of in whose land he marks and catches them. And if another man marks them, he owns them if his neighbours will confirm it with oaths that they think it most likely that those

<sup>679</sup> Hamilton-Dyer, p. 46.

<sup>680</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, p. 38.

<sup>681</sup> *Grágás* §436, p. 507. 'One shall not hunt falcons, swans, geese, or ducks.'

<sup>682</sup> *Jónsbók*, §VII, 57 (ed. Schulman, pp. 265–66).

swans have laid eggs in his land. However, the other is to be paid in full for his work.)

This indicates that, even if laws concerning wild birds in general were recorded and presumably enforced (§4.4.1), swans were considered worthy of specific laws concerning ownership, hunting, and harvesting. The importance of swan hunting-rights continued through the Middle Ages, as illustrated by the bestowal of *álptaveiðr* ('swan-hunting') as a valuable donation to churches in fourteenth-century Icelandic documents.<sup>683</sup> As both law codes and the zooarchaeological record suggest, the consumption of swans was not as restricted to the highest of social elites in Iceland as it appears to have been in certain European societies. This said, swans were still a valuable commodity, and there were legal repercussions for those who took swans that belonged to others.

Overall, while swans had some level of symbolic significance in the mythology and iconography of pre-Christian Norse peoples, it seems to be more piecemeal than that concerning ravens and eagles. Swans appear to have been connected to women as emblems of grace and fairness. Swans were also loosely connected to social prestige. Their size made them valuable sources of meat, feathers, and eggs, which meant that even if they did not have the royal connotations they had (and continue to have) in places like Britain, hunting rights were still the preserve of the wealthy.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Although the textual and artistic representations of these birds suggest that they had a great deal of importance in Old Norse culture, the zooarchaeological evidence for human interactions with these birds falls firmly on the side of practicality. Regardless of their potential symbolic significance, Old Norse people approached birds with practical matters at the forefront of their minds. The two realms, the practical and the imaginative, undoubtedly had some overlap. However, it was limited, and all of these birds lived peripherally to human society, which meant there was less opportunity to envisage the kind of personhood for these birds that was attributed to hawks.

In terms of how these birds became so symbolically important, the most immediate factor is likely to be that these birds are large and visually distinctive. This allowed them to stand out against their environments in the eyes of the humans who shared these

---

<sup>683</sup> *Diplomatarium Islandicum* II, §240–336 VII, §492 (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, pp. 428, 769).

environments with them. Secondly, all three were, to some extent, synanthropic. Eagles and ravens adapted to scavenging from human settlements, and swans continued to live on bodies of water close to human populations. This meant that people were more aware of them, compared to smaller, shyer species of bird that existed alongside humans across medieval Scandinavia. This high level of visibility may have caused people to project ideas on to these birds, in the way that present-day Western humans may attach superstitions or personalities to particular birds they see, often in relation to how frequent or how distinctive their encounters are. However, in each case, a rich presence in the mythological, textual, and iconographical record appears to have minimal effect upon the birds themselves as they navigated a world occupied and modified by humans. Human intervention in these bird populations appears to have invariably been to the benefit of humans and the detriment of individual birds. These majestic birds fired the imagination, and the reasons behind this often lay in the appearance and behaviour of these animals, but the individual birds themselves were not held in great regard; rather, the idea of them was.

## 7 Human-Bird Transformation and Communication

### 7.1 Introduction

This final chapter will explore the imaginative repercussions of human-bird interactions through the lens of two ideas: human-animal transformation and human-animal communication. Both ideas appear throughout Old Norse literature, and the ways they are portrayed offers significant clues about attitudes towards them. Firstly, they can help to add nuance to how the Norse-speaking peoples viewed the categories of ‘human’ and ‘bird.’ Secondly, they give a broader view of the array of creative and intellectual possibilities that grew from living alongside birds.

A hallmark of how Old Norse literary texts represent these phenomena is their complexity. In part, this is due to the many streams of influence coalescing and occasionally conflicting or existing in uneasy synthesis with one another. Within one text, there may be influences ranging from traditional Scandinavian narratives, to continental romance, to annals, to patristic literature. As such, while certain strands of thought can be highlighted and commented upon, they are part of a complex whole.

One major factor in the examination of both of these topics is genre. As a general pattern, the further away and longer ago a text is set, the more explicit and fanciful it can be in its portrayal of human-animal transformation and communication. The eddic poems and

the myths of the *Prose Edda*, as well as the *fornaldarsögur*, appear to suggest that under the right circumstances, the human form is relatively malleable. In contrast, the *Íslendingasögur* often prefer to leave the precise details of acts of cross-species transformation and communication ambiguous. As will be discussed, this may have been due to influence from Christian ideas concerning the nature of humanity. However, while ideas from Christian theology and philosophy concerning humans and animals were present and influential in medieval Iceland, they were not the only ideas present. Instead a reasonable number of texts display syncretic and otherwise idiosyncratic approaches to human-bird communication.

## 7.2 Introduction to Transformation

The act of transformation in Old Norse literature can be mental, physical, both, or operate on an ambiguous principle that may not quite fit either of the preceding categories. In some cases, the shape-shifter in question appears to exist in their world in a relatively well-adjusted manner. In other cases, the shape-shifter resembles Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's description of the negative aspects of a *hybrid*, as 'a conjoining of differences that cannot simply harmonize,'<sup>684</sup> in their inability to fit their animal aspects to a human society. Some of this may be due to the mixture of cultural influences present in medieval Iceland. However, even if some shapeshifters reflect an uneasy cultural hybridity, others reflect a more positive, or at least neutral, attitude toward transformation.

### 7.2.1 Human-Animal Transformation in Late Iron Age Scandinavian Archaeology

Some of the earliest depictions of human-animal transformations in a Norse cultural milieu are arguably the Migration Period bracteates (see §6.4.3). Several of the recurring iconographic elements of these bracteates feature birds. Many of these are on the so-called 'C-bracteates,' which depict a human or human head riding a horse-like creature. In some of these bracteates, this figure is accompanied by a bird. In other C-bracteates, a bird's head emerges from the human figure's hair, either from the front, resembling a quiff, or from the rear, resembling a ponytail. It is these latter C-bracteates that are of interest here, as they appear to depict human-bird hybridity. In addition to this, the hybridity/transformation displayed by these bracteates show varied levels of ambiguity. The silver bracteate from Yorkshire (Figure 3) has a human head with a bird on top taking the place of its hair, with clearly-defined beak, a leg that maps onto the human's nose, and a sweeping tail that flows

---

<sup>684</sup> Cohen, *Hybridity*, p. 2.

into a knotted hairstyle. The gold bracteate from Norfolk (Figure 7), meanwhile, is more ambiguous. The human head appears to have a long, flowing hairstyle, but swirling knots on either end could be evocative of a bird's head, with the dot in the centre of the knot potentially evoking the pupil of an eye.

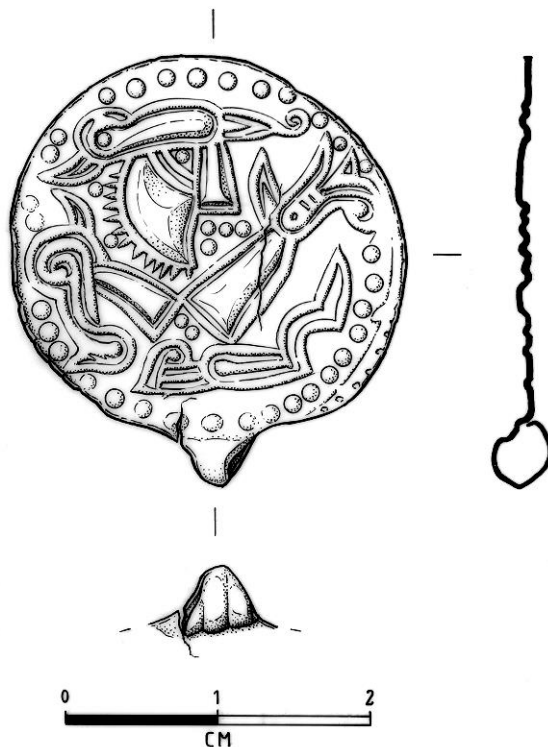


Figure 6: Gold bracteate, sixth century, found in Lessingham, Norfolk. Unique ID NMS-A13EDD

As discussed (§6.4.3), Karl Hauck has argued extensively that the imagery of the bracteates is linked to narratives concerning Óðinn, despite considerable scholarly criticism. The Norwegian archaeologist Lotte Hedeager has interpreted the bird-shaped-hair motif in a manner similarly guided by scholarly interpretations of medieval textual sources on Óðinn:

[T]he figurative symbolism of the Migration Period's gold bracteates reveal the archetypal representation of the shaman's, presumably Odin's, journey to the Other World. The soul is depicted as a man's head, but often in bird disguise; the hair is often styled as that of a bird's head.<sup>685</sup>

While Hauck's and Hedeager's readings differ, they both share some overarching assumptions: medieval mythological texts can be used to explain Migration Period imagery,

<sup>685</sup> Hedeager, p. 153.

and images containing human-animal hybridity can be interpreted in a relatively literal fashion as a human/humanoid deity depicted physically or spiritually turning into a bird.

Hedeager's shamanistic reading of the bird-shaped-hair bracteates runs into similar problems to Hauck. Firstly, while scholars have argued that Old Norse pre-Christian religions may have had elements that correspond to aspects of the academic construct named 'shamanism,' their work typically focuses on the Viking Age rather than the Migration Period.<sup>686</sup> Furthermore, many of these scholars argue that encounters with the northern Scandinavian Sámi peoples may have influenced the shamanistic aspects of Old Norse religions. The bracteates were largely a southern Scandinavian phenomenon, however, and so then Sámi influence may not have been as strong.

Secondly, Jens Peter Schjødt has argued that even if there were shamanistic beliefs in Old Norse society, a "shaman", whether human or divine, was not solely a shaman, but rather had other roles in society. Through an analysis of Óðinn's appearances in literature, Schjødt concludes that Óðinn was first and foremost a chieftain-god, and a god of death, with his shamanistic aspects being an aspect of his chieftainly powers.<sup>687</sup> Thus, while readings of the bracteates as illustrating aspects of later mythological texts are tempting, comparing the sources in this manner risks closing down the interpretive potential of the bracteates, and makes many assumptions regarding the continuity between beliefs and practices in southern Scandinavia in the sixth century and how pre-Christian beliefs were conceived of in medieval Iceland.

While not without flaws, comparative anthropological and psychological approaches to Iron Age Scandinavian animal art have offered more flexible interpretations than those tied to eddic mythology. Siv Kristofferson has used anthropological theories of art to argue that the hybridity in Late Iron Age Scandinavian animal art 'might be taken as a strong expression of a [human-animal] relationship without opposition or distinction.'<sup>688</sup> Thus, rather than illustrating *specific* narrative examples of humans transforming into animals, Kristofferson interprets these images as being indicative of a more generalised investment in the permeability of human-animal distinctions.

---

<sup>686</sup> N. Price.

<sup>687</sup> Schjødt, pp. 562–77.

<sup>688</sup> Kristofferson, 'Half beast half man', p. 269. See also *ibid.*, 'Transformation', pp. 4–15.



Similarly, Torill Christine Lindstrøm uses psychological theories to argue that such hybrid images express *relationality* between humans and animals, particularly in moments of human-animal symbiosis in activities such as hunting and horse-riding.<sup>689</sup> Relational ontologies that posit the ‘self’ as being constructed from relationships between the self and both human and non-human beings exist in present-day cultures, including multiple First Nations Canadian peoples.<sup>690</sup> Kristofferson and Lindstrøm have also co-authored an article, in which they argue that Migration Period art in particular may have been deliberately ambiguous, not only due to beliefs in the permeability of the human-animal boundary, but as a means of expressing the shifting social, political, and geographical positions of peoples in northern Europe at the time.<sup>691</sup> Kristofferson and Lindstrøm’s theories may seem less satisfying than readings that supply a definitive ‘answer’ for Iron Age Scandinavian imagery, but they may offer more flexibility than readings that try to force specific identifications of figures based upon mythological texts.

While the theories put forth by Kristofferson and Lindstrøm are less dogmatic than those which rely upon readings of eddic texts, they are not without their problems, not least because they rely upon white anthropologists’ accounts of Indigenous beliefs and practices. Such approaches have been critiqued by Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd as replicating colonial structures of power, as they exploit and erase Indigenous lives, communities, and voices.<sup>692</sup> Furthermore, drawing direct links between the ontologies of present day Indigenous communities and those of prehistoric European cultures is in itself dangerous. Firstly, such assertions are often used to construct the ‘ecologically noble savage,’ a stereotype that flattens Indigenous experiences and practices into a one-dimensional entity rather than a diverse range of complex and locally-situated events and systems.<sup>693</sup> Secondly, arguing that prehistoric European peoples and contemporary non-Christian peoples, particularly Black or Indigenous peoples, are connected in being somehow closer to nature holds its own problems, as such arguments were used to justify colonial rule and violent missionary work, as they posited that these peoples were closer to an ‘animal’ state of being.<sup>694</sup>

---

<sup>689</sup> Lindstrøm, pp. 152, 160–64.

<sup>690</sup> Bird-David, pp. S77–9; Atleo, pp. 82–4; Wilson, pp. 91–2.

<sup>691</sup> Lindstrøm and Kristofferson, pp. 75–81.

<sup>692</sup> Todd, pp. 8–9, 13–4.

<sup>693</sup> Nadasdy, ‘Transcending the Debate’, pp. 292–93; Adamson and Monani, pp. 8–9.

<sup>694</sup> McLean, pp. 359–61; Quijano, pp. 51–2.

Meanwhile, present-day eco-fascist and ethno-nationalist thought often appropriates ecocritical readings of texts such as Genesis in conjunction with relational-ontology readings of pre-Christian Germanic animal art to argue that ‘pagan’ Germanic cultures were more environmentally-aware than Abrahamic religions.<sup>695</sup> Thus, while Kristofferson and Lindstrøm make some interesting observations in their work, their methodologies are not without problems. Comparative studies of human-animal hybridity in art cannot provide ‘evidence’ of ontological similarities between Iron Age Scandinavian and present-day Indigenous peoples. Rather, these comparisons simply suggest that it is possible to read the hybridity of Iron Age Scandinavian animal art as indicating a knowledge-system regarding human-animal relationships that may have differed from that of later periods. It may have resembled relational ontologies, or other ideas concerning cross-species hybridity and transformation.

Overall, while precise readings of Iron Age Scandinavian animal art may not be possible, these objects speak of cultural investment in some form of symbolic intermingling of human and non-human animals. Depending on their owner and use, Migration Period bracteates could have held a variety of potential meanings, some of which have been discussed above. However, what can be said about them is that they speak to the idea that human-animal hybridity was an important part of symbolic life. Later Icelandic texts do show some continuity with these symbolic priorities: many narratives display an interest in the potentials held by human-animal transformation. However, while the Migration Period bracteates appear to display these acts in a reverential light, medieval Icelandic literature appears more ambivalent. While many texts are interested, even fascinated by the possibility of human-animal transformation/hybridity, they also frequently treated it with an air of suspicion.

### **7.2.2 Human-Animal Transformation in Old Norse Literature**

While many artistic representations of human-bird transformation and hybridity come from Migration Period and Viking Age Scandinavia, literary portrayals of human-bird transformation come from a much later date and from a different region: medieval Iceland. While pre-Christian narratives and beliefs may have provided aspects of medieval literary depictions of human-animal transformation, these later representations also show strong links

---

<sup>695</sup> von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, pp. 180–215; Protopapadakis, pp. 587–90, 598–600; Moses, p. 204–5; Abram, *Evergreen Ash*, pp. 28–9, 61–2, 173–74; Darwish.

to contemporary scholarly literature on the nature of humanity and on the possibilities and limitations of human transformation.

There are some factors to note when discussing human-animal and human-bird transformations in Old Norse literature. Firstly, there are two distinct groups that can transform: there are mythological beings that are narratively treated like human characters by the narrative, such as the Æsir, Vanir, and Jǫtnar,<sup>696</sup> and there are humans. This is an important distinction, as distinctions in genre, setting, and human/supernatural being status all affect how human-animal transformation is portrayed, as humans and humanoid supernatural beings have different capabilities. As will be discussed below, the more distant the setting, the greater the saga's engagement with ideas such as cross-species transformation. Finally, while human-animal transformation is not exactly rare in Old Norse literature, human-bird transformation is. While such transformations are often prominent, they are also exceptional.

#### 7.2.2.1 Human-Animal Transformation in Old Norse Mythological Literature

As already mentioned, while many of the characters in Old Norse mythological texts occupy a human narrative position, they are not human, and have powers far beyond that of any human. As such, the possibilities inherent in human-bird transformation can be fully explored. For these characters, transformation into birds is easily performed, typically through the use of a *hamr* ('skin,' 'shape,' or 'cloak'). For instance, in *Skáldskaparmál*, after Óðinn drinks the Mead of Poetry, the narrative says that 'Þá brásk hann í arnarham ok flaug sem ákafast. En er \*Suttungr sá flug arnarins, tók hann sér arnarham ok flaug eptir honum.'<sup>697</sup> Thus, for both Óðinn and Suttungr, taking on a bird *hamr* appears to be a quick process. Meanwhile, the goddess Freyja is said to own a *valshamr* ('falcon-shape') that enables herself and those who borrow it to transform into a falcon.<sup>698</sup> Quite what a *hamr* is appears to differ between texts and even between individuals. Freyja's *valshamr* appears to be a physical object to be loaned and worn, whereas it is not specified whether Óðinn and Suttungr use physical *hamir* to change shape.

While the means of transformation may vary between texts, the purpose of transformation is relatively consistent: supernatural anthropomorphic entities transform into birds in order to travel from one place to another. In *Prymskviða* and *Skáldskaparmál*, Loki

---

<sup>696</sup> Abram, *Evergreen Ash*, p. 61.

<sup>697</sup> *Skm*, pp. 4–5 (ch. G58). 'Then he transformed into an eagle-form and flew as quickly as he could. And when Suttungr saw the eagle's flight, he took on his own eagle-form and flew after him.'

<sup>698</sup> *Skm*, p. 2 (ch. G56); *Prymskviða* 3–4 (*Edkv* I, p. 422).

borrowing Freyja's feather *hamr* to travel to the distant realms of *Þrymsheimr* and *Jötunheimr*.<sup>699</sup> Similarly, Óðinn uses his *arnarhamr* ('eagle skin') as a means of quick long-distance escape when stealing the Mead of Poetry.<sup>700</sup> While the species of bird that each figure transforms into may have symbolic meaning, the reason behind human-bird transformation in general appears to be fairly straightforward: flight is a quick and easy way to cover a long distance.

As Margaret Clunies Ross has argued, these acts of transformation and flight bring their own risks, as they place the flyer in a geographical and social space that is far from their own.<sup>701</sup> In most instances, this hostile location is the realm of a *jötunn*. Not only does this occur when Óðinn steals the Mead of Poetry and is pursued by Suttungr, but also when Loki borrows Frigg's *valshamr* for entertainment and ends up perching at the window of Geirrøðr the *jötunn*:

En Geirrøðr leit í móti honum ok mælir at taka skyldi fuglinn ok færa honum. En sendimaðr komsk nauðuliga á hallar vegginn, svá var hann hár. Þat þótti Loka gott er hann sótti erfiðliga til hans ok ætlaði sér stund at fljúga eigi upp fyrr en hann hafði farit alt torleiðit. En er maðrinn sótti at honum þá beinir hann fluginn ok spyrnir við fast ok eru þá fœtrnir fastir.<sup>702</sup>

(And Geirrøðr looked over to him and ordered the bird to be taken and brought to him. The servant climbed the hall's wall with difficulty, as it was so high. Loki found it amusing that he pursued him with such difficulty, and did not intend to fly away until the man had traversed all of the difficult path. And when the man reached him, Loki stretched his wings to fly and kicked off strongly, but his feet were captured.)

Þórr eventually rescues Loki, and little further comment is made about shapeshifting. It would appear that in these mythological narratives the convenience of flight outweighs the risks of transformation and flight in an unfamiliar environment.

Overall, human-bird transformation in Old Norse mythology is, above all else, a matter of practicality, allowing a character to rapidly travel long distances. The consequences of this

---

<sup>699</sup> *Skm*, p. 2 (ch. G56); *Þrymskviða* 3–4 (*Edkv* I, p. 422).

<sup>700</sup> *Skm*, p. 4 (ch. G58).

<sup>701</sup> Clunies Ross, 'Frequent Flyers', pp. 91–3.

<sup>702</sup> *Skm*, p. 24 (ch. 18).

travel may put shapeshifters in peril due to unfamiliar or hostile environments, but the transformation itself is presented as a relatively routine matter. As a cosmos that is likely to have been considered fictional by many medieval Icelanders, the mythological realms were the setting that could allow for the greatest exploration of the possibilities of human-bird transformation in Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

### 7.2.2.2 Human-Animal Transformation in Non-Mythological Literature

The question of human-animal transformation in Old Norse literature outside mythological texts is somewhat more complex. Several characters in Old Norse sagas can, to varying degrees, transform into animals and/or take on animal attributes. However, the ways they do this, where and when they do this, and why, can all lead to vastly different portrayals of this phenomenon.

Addressing human-animal transformations more broadly in medieval Icelandic literature requires consideration of how people conceptualised the categories ‘human’ and ‘animal,’ and where the distinctions between them lay. For medieval Christianity, this was a question that grew increasingly complex over the centuries. The learned position on the matter was that all living things possessed a soul, and the difference was one of degree: vegetable souls are little more than passive recipients of nutrients; animal souls can sense and react to the world; but only humans have the capacity to rationally reflect upon their experiences.<sup>703</sup> While this scheme was attributed to Aristotle, before the reintroduction of Aristotelean texts to Europe such ideas were in circulation due to Porphyry’s *Introduction to Aristotle’s Categories*, which was transmitted in a Latin translation by Boethius.<sup>704</sup>

The works of neither Aristotle nor Boethius are mentioned in extant texts or book lists from medieval Iceland.<sup>705</sup> However, the argument that rationality distinguishes humans from animals is found in the fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript AM 226 fol., which includes an Old Norse translation of Exodus with additional commentaries. The argument appears in a discussion of how humans dominate animals despite many animals’ physical superiority, and is attributed to St Augustine, ‘J adra deilld eru oll kuikendi manningur undir lagi, eigi fyrir likamsins skylld utan helldr fyrir þá skynsemd ok skilning sem uer hofum ok þau hafa

---

<sup>703</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* II.iii–v, III.iii, III.ix, III.xii (ed. Hett, pp. 80–100, 154–62, 180–6, 194–6); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.vii.12–6, I.xiii.9–20 (ed. Rackham, pp. 30–4, 62–8). See also discussions in Grummett; Fellenz, pp. 90–1.

<sup>704</sup> Oelze, pp. 6–7, 23–5; Toivanen, pp. 125–28.

<sup>705</sup> Olmer.

eigi.<sup>706</sup> Thus, while there is no evidence for many of the canonical examples of this differentiation between humans and animals in medieval Iceland, the idea does appear to have been in circulation by the fourteenth century and may well have been known earlier through the transmission of commentaries on the Old Testament.

As well as there being a clear argument in medieval Christianity for a human-animal divide predicated on rationality, there was also a tradition of argument against the possibility of human-animal transformations. It was accepted by most scholarly commentators during the medieval period that some degree of transformation in the world was to be expected. For instance, both Isidore of Seville and Arnulf of Orléans theorised that transformation could occur by natural, artificial, magical, or spiritual means.<sup>707</sup> However, certain types of transformation, especially human-animal transformation, were quite troubling to the medieval Christian church.<sup>708</sup> As a result, important Church figures such as St Augustine argued that human-animal transformations were illusory or even diabolical in nature, because he believed that humans could not be shaped into beasts, physically or spiritually, by any agency other than God.<sup>709</sup> In *De civitate Dei*, Augustine argued that due to this, when a human appears to transform into an animal, what actually occurs is that the soul is clothed in an illusion, while the physical body itself is lying somewhere nearby, still in human form.<sup>710</sup> The only exception to this, is if God transforms a human into an animal.<sup>711</sup> *De civitate Dei* is not listed in extant medieval Icelandic book-lists, but several Augustinian works were known in Iceland, along with breviaries of Augustine's thought.<sup>712</sup> Furthermore, the above quotation from *Stjórn* is attributed to Augustine, suggesting that there was a considerable amount of knowledge of St Augustine's writings in Iceland, even if the texts themselves have scant attestation.

Nonetheless, while this was the theological approach to human-animal transformation and the human-animal divide in early Christian thought, it is important to note that these ideas did not necessarily pervade all literary texts from the High and Late Middle Ages. Instead, many literary traditions blurred the boundaries between human and animal, and

---

<sup>706</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 7 (ed. Unger, pp. 21–2). ‘Secondly, all living things are laid beneath humankind not due to the body but rather because of the capacity for rational thought and understanding that we possess and they do not.’

<sup>707</sup> Barreiro and Cordo Russo, p. 9.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>709</sup> Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xviii, 18 (ed. Sanford and Green, pp. 420–22).

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 18 (ed. Sanford and Green, p. 424).

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 18 (ed. Stanford and Green, pp. 422–24).

<sup>712</sup> See Olmer, pp. 6–7; T. Frank, p. 143.

portrayed transformations between these different categories.<sup>713</sup> In these texts, human and non-human beings existed on something closer to a spectrum: while they shared many qualities, some qualities such as Christianity and language marked an individual out as more human, while traits like irrational violence marked them as more bestial.<sup>714</sup> Medieval Icelandic literature occupied the same ground as many contemporary continental literatures in this regard. On the one hand, patristic literature and other early Christian texts maintained a hard line on the distinction between human and animal. On the other hand, various traditions that existed outside the immediate influence of the church often explored the grey areas in between human and animal, as well as instances where the two crossed over.

### 7.2.2.3 *Berserker*, Wolf-men, and Bear-men

One of the most common and widely-researched examples of human-animal transformations in Old Norse literature is a complex of loosely-related figures: the *berserkr*, the *úlfhéðinn*, and other characters who take on the shape or characteristics of bears and/or wolves.<sup>715</sup> Study of the *berserkir* and *úlfhéðnir*, bear-shapeshifters and wolf-shapeshifters respectively, has a long history. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German nationalist scholarship sought to connect the *berserkir* to Iron Age cults of ‘Germanic masculinity,’ with an emphasis on all-male warrior bands and ecstatic battle-fury.<sup>716</sup> While such approaches have fallen out of favour, some scholars have tried to revive the possibility that bear-warriors and wolf-warriors did exist in Iron Age Scandinavia, based upon objects such as the Torslunda helmet plates, which depict what appears to be a human with bear-like features or wearing a bear skin.<sup>717</sup>

More recent approaches to *berserkir* and related figures tend to focus upon them as a medieval Icelandic literary phenomenon. In literature, it is quite unusual for a *berserkr* to explicitly, fully transform into a bear. Instead, one of the few examples of what can be considered human-bear transformation is not a *berserkr*, but rather a man who appears capable of transforming into a bear, most likely because his father was himself magically transformed into a bear. This is Bǫðvarr bjarki in the *fornaldarsaga* known as *Hrólfs saga kraka*. During a battle, a bear enters battle on the side of the protagonists, and Bǫðvarr is

---

<sup>713</sup> Salisbury, pp. 1–2.

<sup>714</sup> Salisbury, pp. 137–66; E. Campbell, p. 96.

<sup>715</sup> Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, ‘Werewolf’, pp. 277–83, argues that while these traditions are distinct, they share a lot of common ground.

<sup>716</sup> Dale, pp. 98–110; Jefford Franks, pp. 44–51.

<sup>717</sup> For one example of a discussion that is sensitive to the division between literary and non-literary sources, see Andrén, pp. 100–2.

found in an apparent trance. The bear disappears when Boðvarr is awakened.<sup>718</sup> Although some scholars have called Boðvarr a *berserkr*,<sup>719</sup> he is never named as such in the text, suggesting transformation into a bear and entering a berserk state were not considered the same thing, at least as far as medieval Icelanders were concerned.

Another complete human-animal transformation in Old Norse literature that is firmly situated in the long-ago and far-away setting of the *fornaldarsaga* is found in *Völsunga saga*. Sigmundur and his son Sinfjötli discover wolf-skins in a building in the forest and are subsequently turned into wolves:

Þeir finna eitt hús ok tvá men sofandi í húsinu með digrum gullhringum. Þeir höfðu orðit fyrir ósköpum því at úlfahamir hengu í húsinu yfir þeim. It tíunda hvert dægr máttu þeir komask ór hómunum. Þeir váru konungasynir. Þeir Sigmundur fóru í hamina ok máttu eigi ór komask, ok fylgði sú náttúra sem áðr var, létu ok vargsrøddr. Þeir skilðu báðir røddina.<sup>720</sup>

(They found a house and two men sleeping inside, with thick gold rings. A bad fate had overcome them, as there were wolfskins hanging over them both. Every ten days they could escape the skins. They were princes. Sigmundur and Sinfjötli went into the skins and could not escape them, as they were led by the same power. They spoke in wolves' voices and they could understand one another.)

The two men remain fully transfigured into wolves until Sinfjötli fights eleven men and then turns on Sigmundur, who then bites him in the throat. Sigmundur subsequently heals him and they escape their wolf skins.<sup>721</sup> This episode touches upon questions of human volition in human-animal transformation: the two heroes apparently put the skins on due to a mysterious external influence, and when in the skins, they cannot communicate through human speech and appear to have had their aggression exacerbated. While the tale is largely positive, as Sigmundur decides that Sinfjötli is trustworthy, there does appear to be some concern regarding what might happen to one's self-control upon being turned into an animal.

When it comes to texts with more contemporary settings, such as *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*, the extent of human-animal transformation among *berserkir*, bear-men, wolf-

---

<sup>718</sup> *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ch. 33 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 100–2).

<sup>719</sup> N. Price, p. 362.

<sup>720</sup> *Völsunga saga*, ch. 8 (ed. Finch, p. 11).

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.



men, and *úlfhéðnir* is greatly reduced. In *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, Kveld-Úlfr Bjálfason is rumoured to be *hamrammr* (lit. ‘skin-powerful’; able to change shape) by his neighbours due to his foul temper and self-isolation at night, and one account of a battle states that ‘svá er sagt, at þá hamaðisk hann.’<sup>722</sup> However, the narrative leaves the extent of Kveld-Úlfr’s transformation reasonably ambiguous, beyond an implicit suggestion that he didn’t have a stable human form, and that he was capable of temporarily gaining superhuman physical abilities. This oblique mode of speaking about human-animal transformation was a recurring feature of human-animal transformations in Old Norse literature set in settlement-era Iceland, as texts often used terms such as ‘eigi einhamr’ (‘not of one shape/skin’), *hamrammr* (‘shape/skin powerful’), and ‘eigi í mannligu eðli’ (‘not of human nature’).<sup>723</sup>

In her article on shapeshifters in Old Norse literature, Rebecca Merkelbach has noted that the extent to which shapeshifters can transform is often linked to literary genre: the more fantastical the setting, the more malleable the *berserkr*’s body and mind. Thus, in *fornaldarsögur* the *berserkr* may fully transform, whereas in the *Íslendingasögur*, they tend to take on traits such as excessive ferocity and strength, although this distinction is not always clear-cut.<sup>724</sup> This ambiguity, Merkelbach argues, suggests that shapeshifters in the *Íslendingasögur* do not undergo a physical transformation, but rather a behavioural one based on an inner emotional/behavioural instability that places certain humans closer to the monstrous.<sup>725</sup> Ultimately, the *berserkr* of Old Norse-Icelandic literary imagination existed at the limits of the human. However, their capacity to fully transform into an animal of any sort was left vague. In many cases, their transformation may have pushed at the boundaries of the human, but not broken them.

There are a number of reasons for this, ranging from narrative traditions to literary tastes, but another factor, particularly in the more officially-sanctioned literary genres of medieval Iceland, might be a variation on something that can be termed ‘species anxiety’. Species anxiety, as defined by Maneesha Deckha in her work on animals in Canadian law, species anxiety refers to ‘a [...] phobia that individuals manifest at the thought of the human body intermingling with another species at the reproductive, genetic, cellular, or other body

---

<sup>722</sup> *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ch. 1, 27 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson, pp. 1, 36) ‘So it is said that he transformed.’ The wolf/troll nature of Egill Skalla-Grímsson’s family is also discussed in Ármann Jakobsson, ‘Beast and Man’, pp. 32–41.

<sup>723</sup> Merkelbach, ‘Eigi í mannligu eðli’, pp. 86–90.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86–90; *ibid.*, *Monsters in Society*, pp. 105–6.

part level, in spite of the fact that interspecies biological interface happens routinely.<sup>726</sup> While Deckha's definition of species anxiety in the present concerns itself with the splicing of humans and animals through biological science, medieval Icelandic texts do appear to show a degree of species anxiety when faced with the possibility of human-animal intermingling through things such as shapeshifting. The loss of self-control, itself a hallmark of the animal in medieval literature, whether magical as in the case of Sigmundur and Sinfjötli, or emotional, as in the case of Kveld-Úlfr, is frequently a catalyst for transformation.

Interestingly, this ties into Joyce Salisbury's observations concerning the increasing fluidity of the human-animal boundary in medieval European literature.<sup>727</sup> Salisbury herself emphasises the way that humans could 'become' animals in literature, especially if their behaviour, such as dietary or sexual practices, was viewed as being disruptive and/or less than human.<sup>728</sup> Salisbury argues that this attitude was fostered by a combination of influences including Classical literature, such as Aesop's *Fables* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Christian theology and morality tales, and pre-Christian Northern European beliefs and narratives concerning human-animal transformation.<sup>729</sup> While Salisbury highlights the depiction of human-animal transformation in Old Norse texts as a source of fluidity between human and animal in medieval European literature, I would argue that by the time most Old Norse literature was recorded, there had been a considerable amount of influence flowing from medieval Europe, bringing more rigid theological and philosophical attitudes toward the boundaries between human and animal, even if these stories may have had the opposite effect on continental European literature.

This may be why the long-ago and far-away settings of certain genres are more likely to feature explicit human-animal transformations. The further away from the Christian present that a narrative was, the more it could explore the narrative and creative possibilities of human-animal transformation without throwing the humanity of present-day Norse people into doubt. The greatest freedom came with mythological materials, as the characters in these narratives were not, strictly speaking, human, while still embodying all the narrative possibilities of humans. In these cases, the narrative potential of flight could be fully explored. In the case of humans, transformation was a more complicated matter. Many narratives, particularly those that were not closely associated with the church, including

---

<sup>726</sup> Deckha, p. 22.

<sup>727</sup> Salisbury, pp. 137–78.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104–5, 150–55.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*, 104–28, 159–60.

stories containing elements that possibly pre-dated the Christianisation of the Norse peoples, likewise showed a fascination with the possibilities granted by human-animal transformation, such as superhuman strength.

However, when it comes to the texts set closer to medieval Iceland, these possibilities do remain open, but are spoken of in more ambiguous terms. I would argue that this particular trait in medieval Icelandic literature represents a certain meeting of influences, as popular narratives concerning human-animal transformation met Christian species anxiety concerning the uniqueness of humanity. The results of this meeting were complex: on the one hand, humans did – or at least appeared to – turn into animals in many stories. Yet, despite the exploration of anti-social/animalistic traits such as uncontrolled violence that frequently marked out shapeshifters in medieval Icelandic literature, writers were also reluctant to describe full human-animal shapeshifting in recognisable settings and eras. Thus, it is arguable that while stories of human-animal transformation were hardly censored by authorities such as the church, there was a certain undercurrent of species anxiety concerning the idea that Christian men or their recent ancestors could perform an impossible or highly dubious transformation. This complexity and anxiety also surface in the very few examples of human-bird transformation in medieval Icelandic literature.

### 7.2.3 Human-Bird Transformation in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature

Despite the relative frequency with which human-like mythological beings transform into birds, there are very few examples of human-bird transformation in Old Norse literature. In all cases, the purpose of the transformation, like mythological transformations, is primarily practical, as characters seek to exploit the abilities that birds have and humans do not. However, unlike mythological figures' transformations, human-bird transformations carry with them a deal of political baggage concerning power and humanity.

This apparent correlation between genre and shapeshifting ability discussed in relation to human-animal transformations more broadly also appears in relation to human-bird transformation. The first example of human-bird transformation is that of the euhemerised Óðinn in *Ynglinga saga*. The narrative states that 'Óðinn skipti hǫmum. Lá þá búkrinn sem sofinn eða dauðr, en hann var þá fugl eða dýr, fiskr eða ormr ok fór á einni svipstund á fjarlæg lǫnd at sínum ørendum eða annarra manna.'<sup>730</sup> In some ways, this is similar to the

---

<sup>730</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 18). 'Óðinn changed skin. He lay on the bank as if sleeping or dead, and he was then bird or beast, fish or serpent and went in a heartbeat to distant lands to perform his errands or those of another.'

shapeshifting found in mythological texts: Óðinn transforms into animals in order to perform a particular task. The text also appears to be drawing upon other materials. In particular, the sequential nature of the description of this transformation – first Óðinn lies down, and then he is a bird or beast – bears a passing resemblance to the transformation/projection performed by Bøðvarr bjarki in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, as this statement may be interpreted as suggesting that Óðinn’s human body remains in a sleeping/trance-like state.<sup>731</sup> However, Óðinn’s transformation into a bird is fairly incidental here, and provides no material beyond demonstrating one of his magical abilities.

The second human-bird transformation is that of Jarl Fránmarr in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*. This is treated only very briefly, in a prose passage describing the events that take place when Atli and Hjörvarðr go to Svávaland to obtain Sigrlinn so Hjörvarðr can marry her:

Atli helt vörð ok fór yfir ána. Hann fann eitt hús. Fugl mikill sat á húsina ok gætti ok var sofnaðr. Atli skaut spjóti fuglinn til bana, en í húsínu fann hann Sigrlinn konungs dóttir ok Álofu jarls dóttir ok hafði þær báðar braut með sér. Fránmarr jarl hafði hamazk í arnar líki ok varit þær fyrir hernum með fjölkynngi.<sup>732</sup>

(Atli kept guard and went over the river. He found a house. A great bird perched on the house and kept watch, but it was sleeping. Atli threw a spear that killed the bird, and in the house he found Sigrlinn the king’s daughter and Álofa the jarl’s daughter, and took them both away with him. Jarl Fránmarr had transformed himself into the likeness of an eagle and protected them from the army with magic.)

Why or how Fránmarr can transform into an eagle is unclear. This is not unusual for this poem as it is recorded in the Codex Regius, which has been noted as patchy or even incoherent.<sup>733</sup> There do, however, appear to be similarities between this transformation into an eagle and those of the Æsir and Jǫtnar. Fránmarr is powerful and aristocratic, traits he shares with the human-like mythological beings. The physical power and the sharp beak and claws of an eagle also makes sense if he is trying to fight off humans. Another aspect of Fránmarr’s transformation that is worth noting is that he transforms voluntarily. This places

---

<sup>731</sup> Tolley I, p. 507.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>733</sup> Larrington, introduction to ‘The Poem of Helgi Hiorvardsson’, p. 119.

him apart from characters like Skalla-Grímr and Sigmundur, whose transformations are at least partially involuntary. Voluntary transformation into a bird appears in one other text, and like in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, this act appears to be the mark of a malignant sorcerer. This transformation is that of Queen Gunnhildr in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*.

Queen Gunnhildr's transformation, as well as having the most surrounding detail, is also most narratively central out of these three examples. When Egill falls foul of Gunnhildr and her husband King Eiríkr, Egill's friend Arinbjörn advises him to write a praise poem for the king overnight in exchange for his life. However, when Arinbjörn checks on Egill before going to bed, Egill says that 'hefir hér setit svala ein við glugginn ok klakat í alla nótt, svá at ek hefi aldregi beðit ró fyrir.'<sup>734</sup> Arinbjörn then goes and 'settisk við glugg þann á loptinu, er fuglinn hafði áðr við setit; hann sá hvar hamhleypa nokkur fór annan veg af húsinu.'<sup>735</sup> While it is not explicitly said that this shapeshifter is Gunnhildr, it is heavily implied as such, and Gunnhildr has already shown magical propensities by cursing Egill. The bird-form that she takes appears relatively unimportant, beyond the fact that swallows were known to be noisy and adept at flight.<sup>736</sup> However, there are aspects of this transformation that cause it to stand out. Gunnhildr's transformation is voluntary, unlike the moments of uncontrollable emotion that mark out the transformation of *berserkir*, or the magically-inflicted transformations of Sigmundur and Sinfjötli. This puts Gunnhildr's voluntary transformation into the same category as pagan magicians/witches such as Fránmarr and the euhemerised Óðinn.

This, in turn, casts a different light upon Gunnhildr's transformation and its implications for her queenship. The portrayal of Queen Gunnhildr as a malignant witch has a long history; Theodoricus monachus' *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* and *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, both dated to the twelfth century, both mention Gunnhildr's uncanny ability to manipulate events, and implicitly or explicitly tie it to witchcraft.<sup>737</sup> In the twelfth/thirteenth-century *Historia Norwegiae*, Gunnhildr is said to have been a Danish princess and daughter of King Gormr.<sup>738</sup> This is contradicted by the two slightly earlier texts,

---

<sup>734</sup> *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ch. 61 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson, pp. 104–5) 'A swallow has sat here by the window and chirruped all night, so I had no peace [for composition].'

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105. 'Set himself by the window that the bird had previously sat by; he then saw where a certain shapeshifter left the opposite side of the building.'

<sup>736</sup> *Aberdeen Bestiary*, §De Yrundine, ff. 47v–48v <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f47v>> <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f48r>> <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f48v>> [Accessed 7th November 2019].

<sup>737</sup> Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, ch. 4 (ed. Storm, p. 10); *Ágrip*, ch. 6 (ed. Driscoll, p. 14).

<sup>738</sup> *Historia Norwegiae* (ed. Storm, p. 105).

which do not state Gunnhildr's origins, but mention that Haraldr blátǫnn, son of King Gorm, offered to marry her, suggesting they were unrelated.<sup>739</sup>

However, in the *konungasögur*, Gunnhildr was given a very different origin story. Here, she is the daughter of Qzurr, a *hersir* ('local leader') from Hálogaland. In *Heimskringla*, when Eiríkr first encounters Gunnhildr in Bjarmaland, she tells him that 'ek hefi hér verit til þess [...] at nema kunnostu at Finnum tveim.'<sup>740</sup> These two *Finnar* both wish to marry her, but she escapes and marries Eiríkr. Much has been made in scholarship of later ethnographic texts concerning shamanistic rituals among the Sámi, including accounts where ritual practitioners would enter a trance-like state while their spirit travelled in the form of an animal.<sup>741</sup> The trope of shapeshifting Sámi is also present in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. For instance, in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, a Sámi man travels to Iceland in the form of a whale.<sup>742</sup> The implication of sexual aspects of Gunnhildr's relationship with the *Finnar*, even if it was never consummated, may be enough to raise fears of miscegenation and potentially even species anxiety, given Norse attitudes toward the Sámi in the medieval period.

While Norse-Sámi relationships and intermarriage are likely to have been not uncommon in the Viking Age, by the thirteenth century state-formation among the Norse kingdoms had led to increasing exploitation of Sámi communities and colonisation of Sámi land.<sup>743</sup> Medieval Icelandic texts, then, appear to reflect contemporary attitudes regarding the Sámi, rather than Viking Age realities. At several points, the Sámi are portrayed as being less-than human using literary tropes resembling ones used to dehumanise Jews elsewhere in medieval European literature. For instance, in *Óláfs saga Odds*, a saga about Óláfr Tryggvason attributed to the Icelandic monk Oddur Snorrason, Óláfr visits one of the *Finnar*, who tells Óláfr that 'í þínu fǫruneyti eru björt guð, ok þeira samvistu má ek eigi bera, ok hefi ek annarskonar natúru.'<sup>744</sup> In his article on the Sámi in saga literature, Jeremy DeAngelo argues that this emphasis on the Sámi man's nature is symptomatic of a broader prejudice

---

<sup>739</sup> Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, ch. 6 (ed. Storm, pp. 12–3); *Ágrip*, ch. 11 (ed. Driscoll, p. 21).

<sup>740</sup> *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, ch. 32 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnason, p. 135). 'I have been here so that I may learn the craft of these two Finns.'

<sup>741</sup> For such an account, see Körnigh, quoted in Hansen and Olsen, p. 346. N. Price, pp. 265–66, gives a general overview of such rituals.

<sup>742</sup> *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 33 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 271).

<sup>743</sup> Hansen and Olsen, pp. 48–54, 116–17, 141–227.

<sup>744</sup> Oddur Snorrason, *Ólaf's saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 17 (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, p. 188). 'Among your travel companions is a bright god, and I cannot bear to meet them, as I have a different nature.'

against those who dwell in the north,<sup>745</sup> but I would argue that this overlooks the ways that this episode maps onto medieval European anti-Semitism.

As discussed, medieval Christian scholarly thought frequently followed the Aristotelean tripartite division of ‘souls’ into vegetable (living), animal (sensing), and human (rational). Many medieval Christian writers used the very existence of the Jewish faith to argue that Jews were not, in fact, human, as their refusal to convert to Christianity was proof of their lack of reason. For instance, Peter Abelard wrote that ‘Iudei quippe tantum, quod animales sunt ac sensuales, nulli imbuti philosophia, qua rationes discutere queant.’<sup>746</sup> Thus, it is not about an anti-North prejudice; rather, it is part of a wider project of essentialising discrimination against non-Christian minorities, by racializing them and labelling them as subhuman by nature. The repeated emphasis on the Sámi man’s innate inability to convert in *Óláfs saga Odds* mirrors the dehumanising antisemitism found throughout medieval Europe, as it labels the Sámi as essentially incapable of achieving full humanity, unlike the Norse.

The suggestions of human and non- or semi-human miscegenation as well as the suggestion of a voluntary loss of humanity through magical transformations attached to Queen Gunnhildr in *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* arguably tie into wider patterns in the propagandistic portrayal of her as a malevolent, sexually-voracious figure who was ultimately responsible for her husband’s cruel rulership.<sup>747</sup> While the fact of her transforming into a bird may be primarily due to reasons of practicality, the way *Egils saga* portrays her transformation within the context of her wider literary representation plays into wider racial and species anxieties in Old Norse literature. Just as continental medieval Christian writers considered the faith of Jews irrational and thus as a marker of their less-than-human status, Norse Christian writers constructed the literary figure of the *Finnar* around beliefs concerning the Sámi, turning their paganism and shape-shifting magic into insinuations that they were and should be treated as less than fully human. In addition to this, the position of ethnically Norse individuals who voluntarily transform into animals is arguably put at risk: they are intentionally giving up or suspending their humanity to gain something. The fact that Queen Gunnhildr may have learned to shapeshift from Sámi magicians only served to

---

<sup>745</sup> DeAngelo, p. 260.

<sup>746</sup> Peter Abelard 1314–15 (ed. Thomas, p. 90). ‘Surely Jews are as sensual as animals and are imbued with no philosophy with which to discuss reasoned arguments.’ *Abulafia*, pp. 124–27, discusses how writers such as Anselm of Canterbury, Peter the Venerable of Cluny, and Bishop Odo of Cambrai all used similar arguments.

<sup>747</sup> *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, ch. 5 (ed. Driscoll, p. 8); Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, pp. 412, 422; Sayers, pp. 60–8.

emphasise the threat of racialised species anxiety that was tied to human-animal shapeshifting under certain contexts.

Overall, Old Norse sources do not suggest that it was impossible for humans to transform into animals. Humans of all sorts were portrayed as having the capacity to at least appear to transform into animals. However, the extent to which somebody could transform and how they did so was important, as the boundary between human and animal was also both permeable and politically charged. Many theological and philosophical authorities asserted that there was a clear qualitative difference between human and animal, based upon the nature of the soul that they possessed. However, throughout medieval Icelandic culture, many beings appear to have been suspected to inhabit the borders of the human. These beings, whether real or fictitious, were socio-culturally constructed and both promoted the exploration of and facilitated the essentialising of the human, the animal, and the hierarchies within and between these categories.

#### **7.2.4 Human-Animal Transformation: Conclusion**

Overall, the question of human-animal transformation in Old Norse literature was complex and multifaceted. It was a common narrative trope, and representations of it were influenced by a variety of different things, including older ideas concerning human-animal relationships, interpretations of Sámi practices, patristic texts, continental literature, and more. In many ways, the repeated portrayal of it in Norse literature suggests a fascination with the idea and the possibilities it enables, not to mention a fascination with the idea of transformation in and as of itself.

At the same time, several texts also display something resembling species anxiety. In many cases, human-animal transformation occurs as something outside of the transformed person's control and often to their detriment, or else it is a voluntary act performed by a figure of uncertain humanity and/or malevolent intent. Becoming an animal was possible, and in some circumstances even desirable. However, there was also the suggestion that to become an animal was to risk one's humanity or reveal that the shapeshifter was not entirely human to begin with.

#### **7.3 Human-Animal Communication: Introduction**

One of the reasons that Gunnhildr transforms into a swallow is to distract Egill from composing poetry. While this is not an example of human-bird communication, the bird's vocalisations are clearly loud and distinctive enough to distract Egill from his work.



Elsewhere in Old Norse literature, however, birds' vocalisations can be and are used to facilitate cross-species communication with humans. These instances of human-bird communication, like human-animal transformation, are very complex, but again, like transformation, bring up important questions regarding the definition of human and animal in medieval Iceland.

Quite what is meant by 'communication' is important. While non-verbal communication of sensations such as discomfort or pleasure is a common cross-species phenomenon in real life as well as literature, 'communication' here refers to the expression of specific information from one being to another. With many humans, this is done verbally, through written or spoken means. However, cross-species communication on this level is far more complex, as it relies upon both parties having a shared language.

Birds are not the only non-human animals that can communicate with humans in Old Norse literature. There are isolated examples of other animals communicating specific information to humans. One example is in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*. Upon becoming Hrafnkell's shepherd, Einarr Þorbjarnarson is told that he is forbidden to ride the horse Freyfaxi, although he may ride any of the other horses. However, one morning he finds that all the sheep are lost and all the horses other than Freyfaxi are too skittish to be ridden. Freyfaxi then flees to Hrafnkell's home. Hrafnkell recognises Freyfaxi's neigh and goes outside to speak to him, saying 'Illa þykki mér, at þú ert þann veg til gorr, fóstri minn, en heima hafðir þú vit þitt, er þú sagðir mér til, ok skal þessa hefnt verða.'<sup>748</sup> While Freyfaxi's neighs are not represented as direct speech, Hrafnkell behaves and speaks as if this were the case. This could be symptomatic of the position of horses in medieval Icelandic culture, as their close proximity to humans and their role as carriers of people and goods positioned them as mediators between human and non-human animals.<sup>749</sup>

However, this moment of horse-human communication is just one facet of an exceptional human-horse relationship. Notably, Hrafnkell addresses Freyfaxi as 'fostri minn,'<sup>750</sup> suggesting that Freyfaxi is more than 'just' a horse. The human-horse relationship in medieval Europe was intense and complex, as emphasised in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's discussion of the knight and horse as a single hybrid 'cyborg.'<sup>751</sup> While Hrafnkell and

---

<sup>748</sup> *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, ch. 3 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson p. 104). 'It seems an evil thing to me, that you are in such a state, my fosterling. But you had your wits about you when you spoke to me, and this shall be avenged.'

<sup>749</sup> Loumand, p. 133.

<sup>750</sup> *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, ch. 3 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 104). 'My fosterling.'

<sup>751</sup> Cohen, pp. 45–77. See also §5.2.1.

Freyfaxi are not quite a cyborg in the manner of a chivalric knight, William Ian Miller has argued that the language used by Hrafnkell to refer to Freyfaxi indicates the ‘pure’ love of a pet owner.<sup>752</sup> Yet, as Donna Haraway observes in her *Companion Species Manifesto*, when it comes to human-animal relationships ‘pure’ love is ultimately a narcissistic fantasy.<sup>753</sup> Indeed, Miller’s second statement cuts closer to the economic fact that permits seemingly-pure interspecies love: animals, like foster children, would not inherit from their owner, and as such were not competitors for the owner’s wealth and possessions. As such, rather than animals being capable of purer love than humans, love between a human and an animal was not subject to the same economic anxieties as that between parents and biological children in medieval Iceland.<sup>754</sup> Ironically, it may be Freyfaxi’s legal status as non-human that allowed Hrafnkell’s and Freyfaxi’s exceptional bond to grow to the point where communication is possible.

Yet, while Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi may experience their bond in a loving manner, this is not how other humans react to it. When Hrafnkell loses his land and power, Freyfaxi is taken and presented to Þorgeirr, another opponent of Hrafnkell. Þorgeirr looks at Freyfaxi and comments that ‘hestr þessi sýnisk mér eigi betri en aðrir hestar, heldr því verri, at margt illt hefir af honum hlotizk.’<sup>755</sup> After this, Freyfaxi is taken away to a cliff, and a bag made of hide drawn over his head. He is then pushed off the cliff with long poles and abandoned with a stone tied to his neck.<sup>756</sup> The violent, almost ritualistic manner in which Freyfaxi is killed suggests a range of responses, from envy of his favoured position to the possibility that the bond between Freyfaxi and Hrafnkell was unsettling to others. Freyfaxi’s apparent ability to communicate with Hrafnkell, as well as his apparent ability to make the other horses skittish and tempt Einarr into riding him, all suggest a wilfulness and capacity for communication that place him at an anxiety-inducing threshold between human and animal.

Another non-human fosterling in the *Íslendingasögur* is Sámr the dog, who is given to Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi in *Njáls saga*. While Sámr doesn’t have quite the same unsettling power over events that Freyfaxi has, his bond with Gunnarr is still so strong that when Sámr is killed prior to Gunnarr’s own death, the dog’s death cry sounds out all the way to Gunnarr,

---

<sup>752</sup> W. I. Miller, p. 48.

<sup>753</sup> Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, pp. 34–9.

<sup>754</sup> W. I. Miller, p. 48.

<sup>755</sup> *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, ch. 6 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson, p. 123). ‘I don’t think this horse looks any better to me than other horses. In fact, he seems worse, as if great evil has come from him.’

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4.

who awakens in his bed and remarks, ‘sárt ertú leikinn, Sámr fóstri, ok búð svá sé til ætlat, at skammt skyli okkar í meðal.’<sup>757</sup> While this is not as remarkable an instance of cross-species communication as the one in *Hrafnkels saga*, it is arguable that Gunnarr’s connection to Sámr is similar to that of Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi: a man owns an animal that is so special that he refers to it as his ‘fosterling,’ and he seems capable of hearing and understanding its distress in a manner that borders on the preternatural. Similar to horses, dogs were likewise close to human households and deeply involved in human lives, and so again it makes sense from this perspective that dogs might be thought of as more capable of communicating with humans.

Human-bird communication is portrayed in a slightly different manner. As is the case with human-animal transformation, human-bird communication is more common in the more fantastic genres that take place in more distant times and places, such as eddic poetry and *fornaldarsögur*. However, a small number of *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* also feature humans that can understand birds. As the examples that will be discussed below suggest, the majority of narratives that feature human-bird communication do not present human responses of unease to these speaking birds. Thus, ‘speaking’ birds appear to be a different, seemingly less upsetting, phenomenon compared to ‘speaking’ horses. Similarly, many examples of human-bird communication represent birds’ communication in direct speech, unlike Freyfaxi.

This pattern may lead to the interpretation that there was a belief among the Old Norse peoples in birds having their own language.<sup>758</sup> While there may, at some point, have been such a belief, closer inspection of the lexical terms used to refer to birds and to human-bird communication suggests that while communication of meaning between birds and humans *could* occur, medieval Icelandic texts were very careful *not* to specify that birds had their own language. Thus, like human-bird transformation, while human-bird communication was represented in Old Norse literature, sources frequently had caveats in place, suggesting that human-bird communication was another site of species anxiety.

### **7.3.1 Human-Animal Communication in Old Norse Narrative Literature**

Birds often communicate with humans in the more fantastic genres of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, particularly eddic poetry. In these poems, multiple characters gain the ability to

---

<sup>757</sup> *Njáls saga*, ch. 77 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 186). ‘You have been hard done by, Sámr my fosterling, and soon we may be as well.’

<sup>758</sup> This is a central part of the argument of Timothy Bourn’s MA thesis, ‘The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition’.

understand birds. Possibly the most well-known of these episodes is the one involving Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in *Fáfnismál*. After Sigurðr kills Fáfnir, a human or human-like being who was transformed into a dragon,<sup>759</sup> Fáfnir's brother Reginn tells Sigurðr to cut out Fáfnir's heart and cook it. Sigurðr does so, burns his finger on the heart, and sucks it. In doing so he ingests some of the dragon's blood and starts to understand the birds around him:

En er hjartblóð Fáfnis kom á tungu honum, ok skilði hann fuglsrødd. Hann heyrði at igður kløkuðu á hrísinum. Igðan kvað:

‘Þar sitr Sigurðr,  
sveita stökkinn,  
Fáfnis hjarta  
við funa steikir;  
spakr þœtti mér  
spillir bauga,  
ef hann fjörsega  
fránan æti.’

Önnur kvað:

‘Þar liggr Reginn,  
ræðr um við sik,  
vill tæla mög,  
þann er trúir honum,  
berr af reiði  
röng orð saman,  
vill þolva smiðr  
bróður hefna.’

Þriðja kvað:

‘Höfði skemmra  
láti hann inn hára þul  
fara til heljar heðan;

---

<sup>759</sup> Fáfnir and Reginn are both dubiously human figures. While they are ostensibly human-like, or at least are initially, Reginn is described in the prose introduction to *Reginismál* (*Edkv* II, p. 296) as being ‘dvergr of vøxt’ (‘a dwarf in size’), and the name Reginn is listed among the *dvergar* in *Völuspá* 12:7 (*Edkv* I, p. 294). Fáfnir is not described as a *dvergr*, but he is the brother of Reginn and, as described in *Reginismál* (*Edkv* II, pp. 298–300), transforms into a dragon after killing his father to gain all the compensation payment for the death of Ótr, the brother of Fáfnir and Reginn.

öllu gulli  
þá kná hann einn ráða,  
fjöld, því er und Fáfni lá.<sup>760</sup>

(And when Fáfni's heart-blood touched his tongue, he could understand the voices of birds. He heard the small songbirds chattering among the branches. One bird said:

'There sits Sigurðr, spattered with blood, he's cooking Fáfni's heart with flames; it would seem wise to me if the destroyer of rings were to eat the gleaming life-muscle.'

'There lies Reginn, plotting to himself, he wishes to betray the boy, the one who trusts in him, he carries together ill words from anger, the smith of malice wishes to avenge his brother.'

'He should strike the head from the hoary sage, and send him from here to hell! Then he would command all the gold himself, that gold that lay under Fáfni.'

Upon hearing this, Sigurðr kills Reginn and carries off the gold himself. This is the pattern that most episodes involving speaking birds take in eddic poetry: a male hero overhears birds in trees, some of which seem to be gossiping amongst themselves, others addressing the hero directly. The birds impart information that they have overheard or witnessed, and this knowledge subsequently changes the course of events and drives forth the narrative.

Another example of this is found in *Rígsþula*, an eddic poem preserved in the fourteenth-century manuscript AM 242 fol. The nobleman character Konr, a descendent of Heimdallr, is introduced as having a diverse range of magical knowledge, including the ability to understand birds. Just before the manuscript breaks off, there is a passage of direct speech attributed to a bird, who appears to be about to incite Konr to action.<sup>761</sup> Thus, even in poems not preserved in the Codex Regius, a young hero who can understand birds and is incited to act as the result of something he hears birds saying is a not-uncommon feature in eddic verse.

There is a slightly atypical example of a hero overhearing birds in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*. Here it is not the main protagonist of the poem that hears birds but rather

---

<sup>760</sup> *Fáfniismál*, 32:1–34:6 (*Edkv* II, pp. 309–10).

<sup>761</sup> *Rígsþula*, 42:1, 45:1 (*Edkv* I, pp. 456–57).

Atli, who has been sent by King Hjörvarðr to attain the princess Sigrlinn. Atli is turned away, and then the prose introduction recounts how Atli encountered a talking bird:

Atli jarls sonr stóð einn dag við lund nokkurn, en fugl sat í limunum uppi yfir honum ok hafði heyrt til at hans men kōlluðu vænstar konur þær er Hjörvarðr konungr átti. Fuglinn kvakaði, en Atli hlýddi hvat hann sagði.<sup>762</sup>

(The jarl's son Atli stood one day by a grove. A bird sat in the branches over him and heard that his men called those women married to King Hjörvarðr the most beautiful of women. The bird twittered, and Atli listened to what it said.)

The bird says that another woman, Sigrlinn the daughter of Svafnir, is the most beautiful. Atli asks the bird to say more, and it replies that it will only do so if a sacrifice is made to it.<sup>763</sup> The episode ends here, and a prose passage states that ‘Þetta var áðr Atli færi’<sup>764</sup> (‘that was before Atli went’). Thus, it is a little unclear at what stage in the proceeding Atli hears this bird, or why or how he has the ability to hear birds. The bird asking for payment for its information is also very unusual, and it does not seem to affect the narrative.

As discussed in §7.2.3, *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* has been viewed as one of the more incoherent poems of the Codex Regius, and this episode does seem to suggest issues in transmission and/or recording. It is possible that the ‘Þetta var áðr Atli færi’ statement following the verses indicates this episode was supposed to precede Hjörvarðr learning about Sigrlinn's beauty, at which point this episode fits more neatly into the pattern of speaking birds elsewhere in Old Norse literature. However, this still leaves the questions of how Atli was able to understand this bird, and what the significance of its asking for payment is, both questions beyond the remit of this discussion.

Non-eddic texts also feature human characters who learn vital information from birds. In *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, Sigurðr Fáfnisbani's daughter Áslaug appears to have inherited his ability to understand birds, as Áslaug tells Ragnarr that she learned of his plan to marry King Eysteinn's daughter because ‘fuglar þrír sátu í trénu hjá yðr. Þeir sögðu mér þessi tíðendi.’<sup>765</sup> Similarly, in the pseudo-historical/pseudo-legendary *Ynglinga saga*, King Dagr Dyggvason of Sweden is said to be ‘svá spakr, at hann skilði fugls rōdd. Hann átti spōrr einn,

---

<sup>762</sup> *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* (Edkv II, p. 259).

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–5, pp. 259–60.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>765</sup> *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ch. 9 (ed. Guðni Jónsson, p. 244). ‘Three birds sat on a tree near you. They told me this news.’

er honum sagði mǫrg tíðendi.<sup>766</sup> Upon learning that this sparrow was killed, Dagr rides out to avenge it but ends up dying himself. The latter episode may be playing upon Óðinn's ravens (§6.3.1). The euhemerised human Óðinn of *Ynglinga saga* likewise has two ravens that inform him of events, although rather than this Óðinn understanding all ravens, the narrative states that these birds had been 'tamit við mál.'<sup>767</sup> Thus, while the motif of the young hero being incited to action by a speaking bird giving him information is more common in eddic poetry, the idea that birds could give vital information was also present in prose narratives set in the legendary past.

Finally, there are texts with examples of humans understanding birds that are not set in the legendary past. For instance, in a part of *Morkinskinna* that is sometimes referred to as *Óláfs þátr ok Kráku-Karls*, King Óláfr kyrri of Norway is introduced to an old man of whom it is said that 'hann kunnir fugls rǫddu.'<sup>768</sup> While the king does not believe this rumour, he decides to test it. He orders the man's horse to be killed and then goes on a boat journey with the old man. While they are on the boat, a series of three crows visit the boat and make a loud noise. The old man eventually states that the crows informed him that King Óláfr ordered his horse to be killed.<sup>769</sup> Again, birds are privy to information that a human would not know.

The overall idea behind these episodes can be explained in quite a straightforward manner: just as transforming into a bird is desirable because flight grants access to difficult-to-reach places, understanding birds is desirable because one can then be privy to what they see and hear due to their powers of flight and their ability to hide. A small songbird in the branches of a tree, like the *igður* of *Fáfnismál*, is more likely to overhear vital information than a human hiding in a bush, as even if they are not hidden, humans would not consider birds likely to pass on what they have heard. Similarly, as birds can quickly travel long distances, they would know things that the humans in a given area might not. Thus, human-bird communication was a helpful narrative device for conveying information to a hero.

### 7.3.2 Communication, Speech, and Language

However, while human-animal communication is a recurring narrative motif in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, the question of non-human speech outside literature was more complex.

---

<sup>766</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 18 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarni, p. 35). 'So wise, that he understood birds' voices. He owned a sparrow, which told him many tidings.'

<sup>767</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnason, p. 19). 'Trained with speech.'

<sup>768</sup> *Morkinskinna* II, ch. 58 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, p. 12). 'He understands birds' voices.'

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, ch 58, pp. 13–4.

While such a thing may have been believed in at an earlier point, medieval Icelandic grammatical texts suggest that there was a distinction to be drawn between vocal communication and verbal language. While this did not affect the narrative motif of speaking birds, it may have influenced the vocabulary surrounding these episodes so that they were more compatible with theological and philosophical attitudes toward non-human communication.

The separation between language and vocal communication in medieval Icelandic sources appears to hinge upon the word *mál* ('language' or 'speech'). In the *Second Grammatical Treatise*, linguistically dated to the late twelfth century but preserved in later manuscripts including the mid-fourteenth-century AM 242 fol., *hljóð* ('sound') is divided into three parts. First is 'vitlaus hljóð' ('irrational sounds'), encompassing music and sounds created by non-living things such as water.<sup>770</sup> Second is *rødd* ('voice'). *Rødd* is created by animals, and humans can understand what animals mean by these sounds, even if the sounds themselves appear *skynlausar* ('senseless').<sup>771</sup> Birds are discussed as a key example of *rødd* in the *SGT*, as it says that '[f]uglarnir syngja ok gjalla ok klaka, ok þó með ýmsum háttum.'<sup>772</sup> Thus, there is a clear acknowledgement that birds' vocalisations are remarkable. The third and final type of sound is *mál*, which the *SGT* differentiates from *rødd* through the manner in which it is produced. While it is implied that *rødd* may be produced by any living thing as a means of expression, *mál* can only be produced by humans, through a combination of the physical qualities of the human mouth and 'minni ok vit ok skilning' ('memory and wit and discernment'), the mental faculties that allow humans to remember and comprehend a shared discursive language, and which are analogous to reason.<sup>773</sup> A similar passage can be found in the Third Grammatical Treatise.<sup>774</sup>

This division of sounds, as noted in Raschellà's commentary on the *SGT*, reflects contemporary grammatical thought, as derived from a composite of Classical sources, including Priscian and Aristotle.<sup>775</sup> Yet, Raschellà notes that the Second Grammatical Treatise does not appear derived from any one grammatical model. Rather, it is the product of currents of thought surrounding the rediscovery of many Aristotelean texts in the twelfth and

---

<sup>770</sup> *Second Grammatical Treatise*, restored text (ed. Raschellà, p. 50).

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.* 'Birds sing and call out and chatter, and even these in various ways.'

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52–4.

<sup>774</sup> Óláfr Þórðarson, *Third Grammatical Treatise* §1 (ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 20–2).

<sup>775</sup> Raschellà, commentary on *Second Grammatical Treatise*, p. 78.



thirteenth centuries. For instance, it shares its division of sounds with Roger Bacon's *Summulae dialectics*, but not to an extent that suggests the *SGT* was directly influenced by it.<sup>776</sup> Thus, the *Second Grammatical Treatise* may be viewed best as a learned text rooted in wide reading of contemporary theories on the nature of language.

While the Icelandic Grammatical Treatises are learned works and therefore may not always map directly onto narrative sources, some of which are thought to have their basis in more traditional materials, it is notable that the term used for birds' speech in Old Norse-Icelandic is consistently *fuglsrødd* ('bird's voice') rather than *fuglsmál* ('bird's language'). In a corpus search on the ONP, *fuglsrødd* and *fuglarødd* appear six and two times, respectively.<sup>777</sup> *Fuglamál* is given an entry, but it is noted as a younger formation, with no medieval attestations.<sup>778</sup> Elsewhere, when characters are said to be able to understand birds in prose and in most poetry, it is almost always *rødd* or *klak* ('chirping'). When Sigurðr Fáfnisbani gains the ability to understand birds, it is said that 'skilði hann fuglsrødd,' and in *Guðrúnarkviða I*, when Guðrún tastes Sigurðr's blood the same formula is used to describe the consequences: 'hon skildi því fugls rødd.'<sup>779</sup> In *Óláfs þáttr ok Kráku-Karls*, the old man is introduced with 'hann kunni fugls røddu,' while in *Rígsþula* is it said that Konr 'kløk nám fugla.'<sup>780</sup> Overall, a pattern emerges: through exceptional circumstances, humans are granted the ability to understand birds' voices, but not their language.

One of the only exceptions to this is in *Ynglinga saga*, where Óðinn's two ravens are said to have been 'tamt við mál.'<sup>781</sup> The exceptional use of *mál* regarding animal vocalisations here may be deliberate, as it would highlight how powerful a sorcerer the euhemerised Óðinn was, as he could do the apparently-impossible and teach birds language. Most of the other examples of *mál* being attributed to birds appear in the titles of poems. While the title of *Hrafnsmál/Haraldskvæði* by Þorbjörn hornklofi is a modern editorial decision, two poems, one by Sturla Þórðarson and one by Þormóðr Trefilsson, both appear to have been given the title *Hrafnsmál* ('Raven's Speech') contemporary to their medieval

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>777</sup> ONP, s.v. 'fuglsrødd' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o24412>>; ibid., s.v. 'fuglarødd' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o24394>> [Accessed 17th October 2019].

<sup>778</sup> ONP, s.v. 'fuglamál' <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o96156>> [Accessed 17th October 2019].

<sup>779</sup> *Fáfnismál* (*Edkv* II, p. 309). 'He understood birds' voices'; *Guðrúnarkviða I*, prose prologue (*Edkv* II, p. 329). 'Thus she understood birds' voices.'

<sup>780</sup> *Morkinskinna* II, ch. 58 (ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, p. 12). 'He understands birds' voices'; *Rígsþula* 42:1 (*Edkv* I, p. 456). '[He] understood birds' chirping.'

<sup>781</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnason, p. 19). 'Trained with speech.'

composition and/or transmission.<sup>782</sup> Thus, the attribution of *mál* to birds was in some limited use for poetic titles, but it is unclear whether this reflects a deeper meaning regarding the speech of ravens or was simply one of several naming conventions for Old Norse poetry (e.g. *Hávamál* and *Eiríksmál*).

Overall, the question of humans being able to comprehend birds' voices is not exactly problematic from a medieval Icelandic scholarly standpoint. As mentioned, birds were noted for their distinctive and diverse vocalisations. However, the question of whether birds have a distinct language of their own outside of vocal expressions of sensations such as hunger or territorial instincts is somewhat fraught in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. While in at least some traditions among the Norse peoples, it was a belief or narrative trope that birds could speak, this idea appears to have sparked a species anxiety in certain sections of the medieval Icelandic population, as verbal, as opposed to vocal, communication, would signal humanity. As a result, *mál* is rarely associated with human-bird communication in Old Norse literature, beyond certain exceptional cases.

There is, however, evidence of beliefs in birds' *mál* found in later texts. For instance, in his nineteenth-century collection of Icelandic folktales, Jón Árnason has this to say of birds:

Mörgum hefir þókt það meinlegt, að þeir hafa ekkert skilið fugla, og það því fremur, sem margir fróðlegar sögur hafa farið af því bæði að fornu og nýu, hversu margvísir þeir væri, og segðu mönnum ýmsa hluti orðna og óorðna. En til þess að skilja fuglamál, hafa fróðir menn fundið það ráð, að taka smirilstúng, en hún er blá, og láta hana liggja í hunangi 2 daga og 3 nætur, þegar hún er síðan borin undir túngurótum, skilur sá fuglamál, sem hana ber þar.<sup>783</sup>

(Many have felt sorry that they cannot understand birds, and all the more so because many interesting tales, both old and new, tell of how wise birds are, and how they have told men of diverse matters that have happened and are yet to happen. In order to understand birds' language, wise men have found this method: take a merlin's tongue, which is blue, and let it lie in honey for two days and three nights. When it is then carried under the base of the tongue, the carrier can understand birds' language.)

---

<sup>782</sup> Þormóður Trefilsson, *Hrafnsmál* (ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 196–97); Sturla Þórðarson, *Hrafnsmál* (ed. Gade, pp. 727–45).

<sup>783</sup> Jón Árnason I, §4c, p. 614.

Of course, this is a considerably later source, so the extent to which it can be projected back to medieval Iceland is debatable. However, given that this appears to be told with awareness of tales of heroes who learn important information from birds, it is possible that traditions that emphasised the existence of an independent language of birds may have been circulated as well as the ones that were recorded, in which the difference between language and voice was emphasised. This is possible, and it is worth noting that such beliefs may well have existed alongside those that appear to shape the texts discussed in this section. Thus, while species anxiety was influential over many medieval Icelandic texts, it was not hegemonic, and the desire for the knowledge birds possessed was a greater influence.

#### **7.4 Human-Animal Communication: Conclusion**

Overall, like human-animal transformation, human-animal communication in Old Norse literature was a complex and potentially controversial topic. Many aspects of human-animal communication were desirable, and narratives that took place in the legendary past frequently exploited the possibilities of such a phenomenon. However, a closer inspection of the language surrounding these episodes reveals a greater complexity at play: while many texts feature episodes involving birds that can apparently ‘speak,’ the vocabulary is almost invariably in line with grammatical literature, which states that while birds have ‘voice,’ and many permutations thereof, they do not have language, which is a reflection of rationality and thus the preserve of humans.

The popularity of such episodes most likely reflects a common observation regarding birds: compared to most wild animals, they produce frequent and distinctive vocalisations, which are used to communicate between individuals. It is tempting to attribute this to an avian language, or something approximating it. Thus, many medieval Icelandic texts combine this with theological ideas concerning language and humanity. Yet, this did not result in the censorship of such ideas, but rather modification. Thus, medieval Icelandic literature provides an insight into a specific cultural phenomenon, where the species anxiety of certain aspects of medieval Christianity was synthesised with cultural phenomena that frequently blurred the boundaries between human and non-human.

The question of what it meant to be human may have also had indirect effects upon bird populations. While the question of whether birds possessed rational souls was unlikely to have interfered much in everyday activities such as poultry-rearing or falconry, it possibly affected the ways in which people spoke about and perceived birds. On the one hand there

was a rich narrative tradition of speaking birds and of human-animal shapeshifting, not to mention a plethora of everyday human-bird interactions that may have encouraged people to anthropomorphise birds, if only playfully. On the other hand, there was a clear division between humans and bird in theory as far as theology was concerned. This division is particularly apparent in certain Old Norse-Icelandic texts, compared to contemporary vernacular literatures from England, France, Germany and Italy. Quite why this might be the case is unclear. While it may have been due to the sheer amount of human-animal permeability in pre-Christian Norse art and a relatively late conversion to Christianity meaning such cultural products were closer to the present, this explanation remains conjectural.

Some birds were close to the human-animal border without species anxiety becoming a concern. As discussed in §5, hawks that had been trained for falconry appear to have been afforded a sort of pseudo-personhood with relatively little concern. Yet while such exceptional birds existed alongside humans in medieval Scandinavia, the attitude that many people took toward birds, whether it was caused by religious belief or not, was indifference. This is not to say that they weren't important, or that they didn't also have symbolic value. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, birds clearly held symbolic value. Yet this did not mean that they were held in unusually high regard. Humans were humans, and birds were birds, even if the dividing lines between the two would occasionally shift and blur.

## 8 Conclusion

By discussing the relationships between humans and birds in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland from a multidisciplinary perspective, several conclusions can be drawn. Rather than seeing Old Norse folk taxonomies as static systems of categorisation, I believe that they would be better understood as dynamic systems of knowledge that were based upon old foundations but responded to innovations and changes. While §2 and §9 show that most Old Norse Level II bird names were ultimately derived from proto-Germanic roots that were imitations of birds' calls, there are also many Old Norse terms, particularly Level Ia, III, and IV terms that draw upon visual appearance, behaviour and habitat. This suggests that while sound was an important feature in the perception and identification of birds, their habitat, appearance, and relationships with humans were just as important.

Inspection of the relationships between humans and birds that were less frequently mentioned in literature, namely chickens, Domestic Geese, and the frequently unremarked-

upon mass of wild birds around Iceland and Scandinavia also led to some interesting conclusions. Domesticated species of birds appear infrequently in literary texts. This may be due to the fact that the majority of Old Norse vernacular literature was recorded in Iceland where, due to the climate, domesticated birds were kept only by those with the resources to care for these birds. However, archaeological finds from Norway suggest that as was the case in medieval Europe, chickens became a key part of the urban diet and helped to facilitate the spread of urbanisation by providing a reliable source of protein without requiring large amounts of space or fodder.

In Iceland, meanwhile, humans largely relied upon wild birds for meat and eggs. The initial effects of the *landnám* on the wild birds of Iceland are uncertain. Some later Icelandic texts seem to suggest that the *landnám* was a Golden Age in which Iceland offered vast populations of wild birds that were unconcerned by human presence. However, this is unlikely to be anything more than nostalgia, and the law codes of Iceland show a clear concern toward conserving the nesting sites of wild birds. While these may not be comparable to present-day environmental concerns, these law codes and their developments over time do indicate that medieval Icelanders were aware of how their activities and consumption of wild resources could have destructive repercussions, and it would appear that individuals were held accountable by their neighbours in an attempt to regulate the exploitation of wild resources.

Falconry is an interesting aspect of Old Norse culture. It is conspicuously absent from the *Íslendingasögur*, and there is very little evidence to suggest that Iceland was itself a location where many inhabitants practised falconry. However, this does not mean that Iceland and Scandinavia were cut off from the immense cultural phenomenon that was falconry in the global middle ages. Rather, Norway, Iceland, and Greenland were vital elements in the international bird of prey trading network, as Gyrfalcons lived and bred in these regions. Furthermore, an inspection of Old Norse literature set in locations other than Iceland reveals that there was a rich knowledge of and array of symbolic uses of hawks and falcons. Furthermore, the language surrounding hawks in Old Norse suggests that as these animals were raised as hunting companions, the conceptual boundaries between human and non-human animal, at least in some ways, became somewhat permeable.

The analysis of eagles, ravens, and swans took up a considerable portion of this thesis, not only due to these birds' heavy symbolic presence in Old Norse literature, but also due to

their extensive discussion in scholarship. One key observation was that while each of these birds appeared extensively in literature, this did not appear to change everyday human interactions with any of these birds. The connection of these birds to mythological beings existed alongside the exploitation of these birds as sources of materials and, in times of desperation, sources of food. However, this does not mean that the literary and symbolic uses of these birds should be dismissed as ultimately irrelevant to the study of human-bird interactions. The links between ravens and the god Óðinn suggest a long history of observing the behaviour of ravens. The connections between eagles and Óðinn and the *jotnar* likewise indicates observations of eagles as large, powerful predators and an engagement with iconography of power used by other cultures. Finally, the connection between swans and women appears to speak not to half-lost beliefs concerning *valkyrjur* so much as it does to contemporary beauty standards and observations of migration patterns. Thus, even if literary and symbolic uses of birds did not positively influence the treatment of birds by humans, these portrayals of birds do seem rooted in sustained observation of and interaction with birds. Furthermore, these portrayals can be used to infer which birds were considered culturally interesting, even if these are not always the same birds as the species that appear to have been materially important in everyday life.

The final section of this thesis looked at the treatment of human-bird transformation and communication in Old Norse literature and culture. This chapter illustrated that there was a degree of tension and species anxiety at play: on the one hand, many narratives involve episodes where humans understand or turn into birds. On the other hand, Christian scholarship at the time was insistent that there was an insurmountable difference between human and non-human animals predicated on language and rationality, even if they shared the basic makeup of bodies and souls. The result was that while these transformations and moments of communication were hardly censored, the closer a character was to contemporary times or nearby countries, the more likely it was that anyone performing human-animal transformations of communication would be treated with suspicion. Yet despite this anxiety, these transformations and communications illustrate how coexistence with birds fostered imaginative responses, particularly in the form of a desire to see what a bird sees and hear what a bird hears as it flies through the air and perches undetected.

Overall, the relationships between medieval Norse peoples and birds were multifaceted and extremely complex. Birds were not flat repositories of human symbolism: birds could and did shape the symbolism that was laid upon them by human observers. Birds were not

simply passive resources, but their reactions to human exploitation shaped laws. The many aspects of mutual influence that passed between birds and the Norse-speaking peoples of the North Atlantic are important to note not least because of the current Anthropocene concerns facing humanity. Not only is it important to set human relationships with animals and the natural world into historical contexts, but there have been arguments that the story of Norse settlement in the North Atlantic islands should be viewed as part of the Anthropocene, in terms of both disastrous mismanagement and positive responses (§4.4.1). Thus, while these birds and the humans that lived among them are long dead, their histories have structured and informed present-day attitudes toward birds, and should not be overlooked.

## 9 Appendix: Lexicon of Old Norse bird names

To support the analysis in my dissertation, the following non-exhaustive list of terms for birds in Old Norse is appended, with translations supplied from a range of dictionaries and philological works. While this list excludes kennings and *heiti* in the sense of poetic synonyms, many terms are found in the anonymous *þula* known as *Fugla heiti*, which appears to record bird names rather than poetic synonyms in the strictest sense. Taxonomic levels are conjectural and based on a partial corpus. In some cases, more than one potential level is provided.

To aid in creating a diachronic perspective on species identification, where possible the Latin name given by Nicolai Mohr in his 1786 publication *Forsøg til en islandsk Naturhistorie* is listed, although this should not be taken as indicative of medieval uses of a word. In cases where the Latin binomial of a species has changed since 1786, the current binomial is supplied in brackets following Mohr's entry. Generally, I provide binomials where dictionaries provide species identifications, but not if a more generic identification is given (e.g. Razorbill (*Alca torda*) vs. auk (*Alcidae*)). Where possible, I supply the Modern Icelandic descendant of the name and its present-day definition, although again this cannot be equated with the usage of the Old Norse term.

In some cases, multiple Old Norse names appear to refer to the same species. The exact reasons for the use of multiple names are often lost or unclear, but Simone Kotva's interviews with present-day residents of the Faroes give rise to a possible explanation: rather than multiple names indicating euphemism, dialectical variations, or misidentifications, they were

contextually-driven. Names could be given to a bird depending on when, where, and how it was encountered and understood.<sup>784</sup>

In the interests of readability, the dictionaries CV, FJ, ONP, and ÁBM as well as GFH will be cited in-text. Footnotes will only be provided for these texts if the material discussed is under a different headword from the headword of the entry in this appendix. While the ONP is the most up-to-date dictionary of Old Norse, in the case of many compounds or words attested in poetry rather than prose it does not supply a definition, hence many terms here do not include an ONP definition.

Words with ten or more attestations will be regarded as ‘widely attested.’ These entries may include notes on patterns of attestation, such as use in a particular genre. Words with between four and ten attestations will be regarded as ‘scarcely attested’ and will have notes on patterns of attestation. Words with three or fewer attestations will have their attestations listed in a footnote. Where a term is not attested outside *Fugla heiti* until the early modern period, I have supplied the earliest attestation(s) from that period. Use as bynames is not counted among attestations for the purposes of this appendix.

### **Akrhœna/Akrhæna**

Modern English: quail (CV); partridge (ONP; GFH, p. 957)

Derived from *akr* (‘field’) and *hæna/hœna* (‘hen’).

Level III taxon.

Attested in *Stjórn* and an *ævintýr* from a fourteenth-century manuscript.<sup>785</sup>

### **Akri**

Modern English: Gull (FJ; ÁBM). GFH (p. 957) gives two possibilities: it may indicate a bird that eats seeds from cultivated fields, or it could be a diminutive form of *akrhœna* (see entry).

FJ and ÁBM both connect it to *akr* and draw from this that it may be related to *sæðingr* (see entry).

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>784</sup> Kotva, pp. 18–9, 26–30.

<sup>785</sup> ‘Af kóngsyni ok kóngsdóttur’ (ed. Gering, p. 213); *Stjórn*, ch. 91 (ed. Unger, p. 292).



Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Alifugl**

Modern English: Tame edible bird (CV; ONP).

The term appears to combine *fugl* with *ali-*, a prefix used for tame animals fattened for consumption.<sup>786</sup>

Level Ia taxon.

Scarce attestations in homiletic literature.

### **Alka**

Modern English: Auk (CV; FJ); Razorbill (*Alca torda*) (GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Álka (*Alca torda*).

Name given in Mohr: Listed under both *Alca torda* and *Colymbus troille* (*Uria aalge*).

ÁBM states it may be derived from Latin *olor* ('swan'), or else from its Indo-European root *\*el-* or *\*ol-* ('to squeak').

Level II taxon.

This term is solely attested in *Fugla heiti* until the early modern period.<sup>787</sup>

### **Ari**

Modern English: Eagle (FJ; CV; ONP; GFH, p. 952).

Modern Icelandic: Ari ('eagle').

Name given in Mohr: *Vultur albicilla* (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)

ÁBM argues it may be derived from the Indo-European root *\*er-*, which indicated fast flight.

Level II taxon.

Less common than *örn*, particularly in prose contexts, but widely attested.

---

<sup>786</sup> CV, s.v. 'ali-'.  
<sup>787</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21). *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 51).

## Arta

Modern English: Duck (FJ); Garganey (*Spatula querquedula*) (CV); Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) (GFH, pp. 952–3).

Modern Icelandic: Arta (*Anas crecca*)

Name given in Mohr: None, but *ört* is listed under *Anas crecca*.

ÁBM suggests *arta* may be related to *erla* (see entry).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Álft/Álpt/Ólpt/Ólft

Modern English: Swan (FJ; CV; ONP; GFH, p. 952)

Modern Icelandic: Álft (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Name given in Mohr: *Anas cygnus* (*Cygnus cygnus*)

ÁBM suggests it may be derived from the Latin *albus* ('white').

Level II taxon.

Widely attested. There does not appear to be any clear rationale behind the choice of *álpt* or *svanr* but a text will typically only use one.

## Brandgás

Modern English: Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 958)

Modern Icelandic: No direct equivalent, but *brandönd* refers to *Tadorna tadorna*. The Danish *bramgås* and the Faroese *brandgás* both refer to the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*), and the *brand-* element was used in Linnaean taxonomy for the genus *Branta*.<sup>788</sup>

Appears to be derived from *-gás* ('goose') and *brand-* ('burnt').

Level III taxon.

---

<sup>788</sup> Jobling, s.v. 'Branta'; Günther, s.v. 'hvitkinngås'.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Brimorri**

Modern English: Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) (GFH, pp. 958–9); Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) (CV, FJ).

Modern Icelandic: None, but *sæorri* is attested as a folk name for *Melanitta nigra*.<sup>789</sup>

Derived from *brim* ('ocean') and *orri* ('grouse').

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Doðka**

Modern English: CV suggest *Tringa fusca*, an obsolete taxon of wading bird,<sup>790</sup> but also connect it to Modern Icelandic *lækjarduðra*, which is a folk-name for the Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*). This is noted by GFH (p. 953).

ÁBM and GFH (p. 957) argue the name may be related to terms for weariness.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Doðrkvisa**

Modern English: Uncertain. FJ connects to *lækjarduðra*.

Possibly related to *doðka* (see entry) and Modern Icelandic *lækjarduðra*. The latter element *-kvisa* may be related to the verb *kvisa* ('to whisper, to spread rumours').

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Dunna**

Modern English: Duck (FJ; GFH, p. 955); wild duck (CV).

ÁBM argues the word is likely derived from terms related to Modern English 'dun.'

---

<sup>789</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 152.

<sup>790</sup> The latest source for this name is Latham, p. 733.

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Dúfa**

Modern English: Dove/pigeon (FJ; CV; ONP; GFH, p. 955)

Modern Icelandic: Dúfa ('dove/pigeon')

Name given in Mohr: *Columba oenas*. Mohr notes that these birds are not found in the wild in Iceland, but merchants bring ones from Copenhagen for falconry practice.<sup>791</sup>

See below, *smyrill*.

ÁBM argues it may come from Old Irish *dub* ('black').

Level II taxon.

Widely attested in *riddarasögur*, medical texts, and religious texts.

### **Ertla**

Modern English: Wagtail (*Motacilla* sp.)

Modern Icelandic: *Ertla* is used in the names of numerous birds.

Name given in Mohr: *Motacilla alba*

FJ suggests it is a diminutive of *arta*. ÁBM states it is related to *arta*, but both are likely imitative in origin.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Falki/Fálki**

Modern English: Falcon (ONP; FJ)

Modern Icelandic: Fálki (*Falco rusticolus*)

Name given in Mohr: *Falco rusticolus*

---

<sup>791</sup> Mohr, p. 51. As there is little to no record of dove-keeping in earlier Icelandic sources, this may have been a recent Danish pastime.

ÁBM states it is a loanword from Middle Dutch, ultimately derived either from Latin *falx* ('sickle') or from a root of words such as Modern Icelandic *fölmur* ('pale').

Level II or III taxon.

Widely attested in courtly or gift-giving contexts.

### **Fitfugl**

Modern English: Bird with webbed feet (CV).

Derived from *fit* ('webbed foot') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Only attested in *Konungs skuggsjá*.<sup>792</sup>

### **Fjallrota**

Modern English: Uncertain. Partridge (CV); goose (FJ).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists it as a folk-name for the Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) but does not discuss this.<sup>793</sup>

The first element is derived from *fjall* ('mountain'). The second element is uncertain, but GFH (p. 957) suggests it may be derived from *hrota* ('Barnacle Goose').

Level II taxon, but if derived from *hrota*, it may be Level III or IV.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Fjólmoði**

Modern English: Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*) (FJ; CV; GFH, p. 956).

GFH (p. 956) breaks it into *fjól* ('very') and *móði* ('bold/weary'). 'Weary' may be favoured based on a comment in the seventeenth-century *Natural History* by Jón lærði Guðmundsson, where he describes it as harmless and afraid of many things.<sup>794</sup> CV connect the name to its wailing cry.

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>792</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá* (ed. Holm-Olsen, p. 27).

<sup>793</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 270.

<sup>794</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Fiörfuglar smáer (ed. Halldór Hermansson, pp. 20–1).

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>795</sup>

### **Flóðskítr**

Modern English: Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 958).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists *flóaskítur* as a folk name for *Podiceps auratus*.<sup>796</sup>

Appears to be derived from *flóð* ('flood') and *skítr* ('dirty/shitter').

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Friggjarelda**

Modern English: White wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) (CV; GFH, p. 956)

While it is listed in editions as a compound, the manuscript appears to list it as two words, with a possible -us abbreviation on the end of *Friggjar* (GFH, pp. 956–7). ÁBM connects the -*elda* element to *erla*.

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*, although in early modern sources and Modern Icelandic, White Wagtails are known as *Mariúerla*, which suggests that Frigg has been replaced by the Virgin Mary in the bird's name.<sup>797</sup>

### **Fugl**

Modern English: Bird (CV; FJ; ONP)

Modern Icelandic: Fugl ('bird')

ÁBM argues it is derived from Indo-European terms for blowing.

Level I taxon.

Widely attested.

---

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.

<sup>796</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 50.

<sup>797</sup> Mohr; *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 49); Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

## Fýling

Modern English: Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) (FJ; GFH, p. 956).

Modern Icelandic: *Fýll*, *fúlmár*, and *fýlingur* all indicate the Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*).<sup>798</sup>

Name given in Mohr: *Procellaria glacialis* (*Fulmarus glacialis*). Mohr gives the Icelandic as *fýlingr*.

*Fýling* appears to be a combination of other Icelandic fulmar names and the diminutive suffix *-ingr*. The *fýll*- element appears derived from *fúll* ('foul').

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>799</sup> It may be attested in *vágfýlingi* ('wave-fulmar') [SHIP] in the twelfth-century skaldic poem *Erlingsdrápa* by Þorbjörn skakkaskáld, but this is based on an editorial emendation.<sup>800</sup>

## Gagl

Modern English: Wild goose (CV); Gosling (FJ; GFH, p. 952; ONP); (young) waterfowl (ÁBM).

Modern Icelandic: Gagl ('gosling').

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level III taxon.

Only attested once in prose.<sup>801</sup> Common in kennings.

## Gammr

Modern English: Vulture (CV; ONP; FJ; GFH, p. 952). Occasionally translated as 'buzzard' in *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, but this is not widely supported.

Modern Icelandic: Gammur ('vulture'), occasionally used for other large birds of prey.

---

<sup>798</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 54.

<sup>799</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21); *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 50).

<sup>800</sup> Discussed in Gade, commentary to *Erlingsdrápa*, pp. 631–34.

<sup>801</sup> *Óláfs saga Helga*, ch. 78 (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason, p. 217).

ÁBM states it is a loanword from Romance languages.

Level II taxon.

Widely attested, particularly in kennings and *riddarasögur*.

### **Gaukr**

Modern English: European Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) (FJ; CV; ONP; GFH, p. 952).

Modern Icelandic: Gaukur (*Cuculus canorus*)

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).<sup>802</sup>

Level II taxon.

Rare in prose contexts, common in kennings.

### **Gaukþjórr**

Modern English: Uncertain. Possibly Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*), based on the Nynorsk *gaukskjor* (ÁBM; GFH, p. 952).

The first element appears to be related to *gaukr*. ÁBM suggests the second element may be a corruption of *skjórr* ('magpie').

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Gás**

Modern English: Goose (FJ; CV; ONP).

Modern Icelandic. Gás ('goose').

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Gáshaukr**

---

<sup>802</sup> Kroonen, s.v. '\*ʒaukaz'.



Modern English: Goshawk (CV).

Derived from *gás* ('goose') and *haukr* ('hawk').

Level III taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Geirfalki**

Modern English: Gyrfalcon (ÁBM)

Derived from *falki* and *geir* ('spear'), possibly due to the bird having spear-shaped markings (ÁBM).

Level III or IV taxon.

Mentioned in a small number of fourteenth-century Norwegian documents in the context of trading and gift-giving.<sup>803</sup>

### **Geirfugl**

Modern English: Great Auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 952)

Name given in Mohr: *Alca impennis* (*Pinguinus impennis*)

The *geir-* element is likely referring to the shape of the beak. Jón Guðmundsson lists the *geirnefur* (lit. 'spear-nose') as one of four auks.<sup>804</sup> *Geirvía* is also attested as a folk-name for the Razorbill (*Alca torda*).<sup>805</sup>

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and in variant of a Norwegian document preserved in GKS 1154 fol. E, although the latter is likely a corruption of *geirfalki*.<sup>806</sup>

### **Geitungr**

Modern English: Wasp (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 952).

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>803</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* VIII, §135 (ed. Unger and Huitfeldt-Kaas, p. 145); *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* VIII, §140 (ed. Unger and Huitfeldt-Kaas, p. 149)

<sup>804</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>805</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 22.

<sup>806</sup> 'Sættar gerð Magnusar konungs ok Jons erchibyskups' (ed. Keyser and Munch, p. 471).

Only attested as a bird in *Fugla heiti* and kennings.

## Gjóðr

Modern English: Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) (CV; GFH, pp. 958–9); sea-eagle (ONP); eagle (FJ).

ÁBM suggests it may be derived from Germanic \*g(e)u (‘to scream’).

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations in prose, typically as a gloss for the Latin *vultur* (‘vulture’).

Widespread in skaldic verse.

## Gleða

Modern English: Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) (GFH, p. 952; CV; FJ; ONP)

Thought to be related to Germanic words for gliding, and possibly to the dialectal English term for a Red Kite, *glede*.<sup>807</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and the Old Norse *Physiologus*.<sup>808</sup>

## Gollungr

Modern English: Hawk (CV).

Gade argues this term indicates a young hawk based upon the term *gollr* being used in *Frostubingslög* to indicate the state of hawks before fledging.<sup>809</sup> There may be some confusion with the hawk-*heiti* *gollungr* (‘screamer’), although both terms are too scarcely-attested to make a conclusive statement.

Likely Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Haraldsdrápa II* by Einarr Skúlason.<sup>810</sup>

## Grágás

---

<sup>807</sup> GFH, p. 953; ÁBM; Suolahti, pp. 356–57.

<sup>808</sup> *Icelandic Physiologus*, fragment B §16 (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>809</sup> Gade, commentary to *Haraldsdrápa II*, p. 548; in reference to *Frostubingslög* §Um gáshauka (ed. Keyser and Munch, p. 242).

<sup>810</sup> Einarr Skúlason, *Haraldsdrápa II* 5:4 (ed. Gade, p. 548).

Modern English: Grey geese, i.e. wild geese of the genus *Anser* (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 952).

Name given in Mohr: *Anas anser* (*Anser anser*)

Derived from *grá* ('grey') and *gás* ('goose'), presumably based on feather colour.

Level III taxon.

Attested in relation to birds in *Fugla heiti*, *Piðreks saga*, and *Búalög*.<sup>811</sup>

### **Grávalr**

Modern English: Grey falcon, likely Gyrfalcon (CV).

Derived from *grá* ('grey') and *valr* ('falcon').

Level III or IV taxon.

Attested in a Norwegian document as a translation for the Latin 'aves gerofalcones griseos' ('grey Gyrfalcons'),<sup>812</sup> as well as scarce attestations in romance texts.

### **Grípr**

Modern English: Gryphon/griffin (FJ; GFH, p. 952); vulture (ÁBM; ONP).

Derived from Latin *gryphus* ('gryphon'), possibly via Middle Low German *grip*.<sup>813</sup>

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and *Piðreks saga*.<sup>814</sup>

### **Haftyrðill**

Modern English: Little Auk (*Alle alle*) (FJ; GFH, p. 959).

Modern Icelandic: Haftyrðill (*Alle alle*).

Name given in Mohr: *Alca alle* (*Alle alle*).

---

<sup>811</sup> *Piðreks saga*, II, §Af Hildibrandi ok Alibrandi, ch. 408 (ed. Bertelsen, p. 351). The *Búalög* citation is inaccessible due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is attested on the ONP entry <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?c223224>> [Accessed 27th April 2021].

<sup>812</sup> 'Sættar gerð Magnúsar konungs ok Jóns erchibyskups' (ed. Keyser and Munch, p. 471); 'Den latinske Original' (ed. Keyser and Munch, p. 464).

<sup>813</sup> de Vries, s.v. 'grip'.

<sup>814</sup> *Piðreks saga* I, ch. 130 (ed. Bertelsen, p. 126).

The first element of the name, *haf-*, means ‘ocean.’ The latter element, *tyrðill*, means ‘turd.’ It may be a reference to the large amount of guano that nesting birds produce.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>815</sup>

### **Hani**

Modern English: Rooster (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Hani (‘rooster’).

Thought to be derived from Latin *canere* (‘to sing’).<sup>816</sup>

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Haukr**

Modern English: Hawk (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 952).

Modern Icelandic: Haukur (‘hawk’).

ÁBM notes the etymology is uncertain, but may be derived from words meaning ‘to grip.’

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Hegri**

Modern English: Heron (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 958).

Name given in Mohr: *Ardea cinereal*

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti*, *Hávamál*, and *Merlinusspá II*.<sup>817</sup>

---

<sup>815</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>816</sup> Suolahti, p. 231; de Vries, s.v. ‘hani’; Kroonen, s.v. \*hanan-.

<sup>817</sup> *Hávamál* 13:1 (*Edkv* I, p. 324); Gunnlaugr Leifsson, *Merlinusspá II* 24:4, 26:5 (ed. R. Poole, pp. 157–59).

## Heimgás

Modern English: Tame/Domestic Goose (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 952).

Derived from *heim* ('home') and *gás* ('goose').

Level III taxon.

Attested in *Sturlunga saga*, *Kormáks saga*, and *Grettis saga*.<sup>818</sup>

## Helsingr

Modern English: Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) (FJ; CV; GFH, pp. 952–53).

Modern Icelandic: Helsingi (*Branta leucopsis*)

Name given in Mohr: *Anas bernicla* (*Branta bernicla*). The Barnacle Goose was not distinguished as separate species until 1803.

GFH (p. 953) and CV suggest the name is derived from *hals* ('neck') due to the bird's black-and-white neck markings.

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>819</sup>

## Heri

Modern English: Uncertain. GFH (p. 954) states it may be a mistaken, corrupted, or lost name.

Likely Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Hilduri

Modern English: Hawk (CV); phalarope (ÁBM).

ÁBM suggests connections to *hylr* ('a deep spot in a river') and/or *dúrr* ('nap').

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>818</sup> *Svínfellinga saga* ch. 9 (ed. Guðbrandur Vigfusson, p. 91); *Kormáks saga*, ch. 22 (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, pp. 282–89); *Grettis saga*, ch. 14 (ed. Guðni Jónsson, p. 37).

<sup>819</sup> *Qualiscunque* (ed. Burg, p. 49).

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Himbrin**

Modern English: Great Northern Diver (*Gavia immer*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Himbrimi (*Gavia immer*)

ÁBM suggests the term is related to terms for pale colours.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>820</sup>

### **Hrafn**

Modern English: Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 953).

Name given in Mohr: *Corvus corax*.

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Hroðgás**

Modern English: Barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*) (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 958–8).

Name given in Mohr: *Hrota* is listed under *Anas ethyropus* (*Anser ethyropus*). While this binomial refers to the Lesser White-fronted Goose, it has some superficial similarities to *Branta leucopsis*, which was not established as a taxon until 1803. The Icelandic synonyms listed by Mohr all refer to the Barnacle Goose. The *hrota* is mentioned by Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, who comment that it is the smallest of Icelandic geese, suggesting *Branta leucopsis*.<sup>821</sup>

GFH (p. 959) lists *hrotgás* as an orthographic variant. She also suggests an etymological link to *hroði* ('phlegm').

Level III taxon.

---

<sup>820</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, §671, p. 556; Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20) mentions *heimbrijme*, which may be a variant.

<sup>821</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, §667, p. 548.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### Hrossagaukr

Modern English: Sandpiper (FJ); Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) (CV); Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) (GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Hrossagaukur (*Gallinago gallinago*).

Name given in Mohr: *Scolopax gallinago* (*Gallinago gallinago*).

Derived from *hross* ('horse') and *gaukr* ('cuckoo'). Both GFH and CV note that the name is likely to do with the bird's cry, despite identifying it as separate species.

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>822</sup>

### Hrókr

Modern English: Shag (FJ; GFH, pp. 958–59); Rook (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists *hrókur* as a folk-name for *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.<sup>823</sup>

Name given in Mohr: *Pelecanus cristatus*. This binomial is not widely attested, but would appear to refer to the European Shag.<sup>824</sup>

Most cognates for the word, such as Old English *hrōc*, are translated as 'rook.' In this context, the name is thought to be imitative in origin.<sup>825</sup> While the Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) has a wide range, including parts of Scandinavia, it is very rare in Iceland,<sup>826</sup> so the name appears to have been transferred to the European Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*), possibly due to dark plumage or loud cries. Based on sources such as Mohr, this took place prior to the eighteenth century.<sup>827</sup>

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>822</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>823</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 420.

<sup>824</sup> Brünnich, p. 31.

<sup>825</sup> Lacey, 'Birds and Bird Lore', pp. 43–54.

<sup>826</sup> Beaman and Madge, pp. 749–50.

<sup>827</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, §670, p. 555; Mohr, p. 33.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Hryggjarstykki**

Modern English: Duck (CV; GFH, pp. 953–54); Gull (GFH, pp. 953–54).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists it as a folk-name for the Greater Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*).<sup>828</sup>

Derived from *hryggr* ('spine') and *stykki* ('piece'), presumably due to distinctive markings.

Level II taxon.

Only attested as a bird name in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Hængivakr**

Modern English: Uncertain. Kittiwake (CV); a bird that hovers (GFH, p. 958).

GFH (p. 958) notes that while *hængi-* can be translated as 'hanging,' the latter part of the word is ambiguous. If taken without an accent on the vowel (*vakr*) the word appears to be 'hanging watcher,' whereas if the vowel is accented (*vákr*) it may mean 'hanging buzzard.'

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Hœna**

Modern English: Hen (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Hæna ('hen')

CV suggest this is a feminine form of *hani* formed though analogy with masculine/feminine word pairs such as *dalr* ('valley') and *dæl* ('small dale'). De Vries suggests a connection to Latin *conia* ('stork'), but this is not widely accepted.<sup>829</sup>

As it is derived from *hani*, technically a Level III taxon, but often used semi-synonymously with *hani* as a Level II taxon.

---

<sup>828</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 392.

<sup>829</sup> De Vries, s.v. 'hœna'.



Widely attested.

### **Hæns/Hœns**

Modern English: Domestic Fowl (CV; FJ; ONP); Poultry (GFH, p. 953).

De Vries suggests that it is derived from *hani*.<sup>830</sup>

As it is derived from *hani*, technically a Level III taxon, but often used semi-synonymously with *hani* as a Level II taxon.

Widely attested

### **Igða**

Modern English: Small songbird (ONP); Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) (CV; Larrington);<sup>831</sup> Marsh Tit (*Palus palustris*) (FJ; GFH, p. 955).

ÁBM suggests a connection to *ígull* ('sea urchin') via Indo-European, possibly derived from words connected to smallness or pointedness.

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations in *Fugla heiti* and in narratives concerning Sigurðr Fáfnisbani.

### **Jaðrakárn**

Modern English: Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) (FJ); Whimbrel (*Numenius* sp.) (CV; GFH, p. 955).

Modern Icelandic: *Jaðrakan* (*Limosa limosa*).<sup>832</sup>

Name given in Mohr: None, but *jardreka* is listed under *Scolopax* and said to be numerous in the Faroes.

ÁBM suggests that the word may be derived from *jaðarr* ('edge').

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>833</sup>

---

<sup>830</sup> De Vries, s.v. 'hœns'.

<sup>831</sup> Larrington, *The Lay of Fafnir*, p. 162.

<sup>832</sup> Günther, s.v. 'svarthalespove'.

<sup>833</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20) mentions a bird called *jadraka*.

## Jarpi

Modern English: Hazel Grouse (*Tetrastes bonasia*) (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 956–57).

Modern Icelandic: Jarpi (*Tetrastes bonasia*)

The manuscript reading for this is *lárpi*, but *jarpi* has been conjectured based upon Modern Icelandic *jarpi* and Norwegian Bokmål *jerpe*, both referring to *Tetrastes bonasia* (GFH, p. 957). *Jarpi* may be derived from the Old Norse *jarpr* (‘brown’), referring to the bird’s plumage.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Kárn

Modern English: Uncertain.

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM). Possibly connected to *jaðrakárn*.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Kjalarfugl

Modern English: Uncertain.

The *kjalar*- element is unclear. GFH (p. 955) argues that it is more likely derived from *kjǫlr* (‘keel’) than the Óðinn-*heiti* *Kjalarr*.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Kjarfilki

Modern English: Uncertain.

The name translates literally to ‘bunched-sole,’ which has led ÁBM to suggest that it may refer to a bird that sits on bunches of grain.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## **Kjúklingr**

Modern English: Chicken (CV); Chicken or gosling (FJ); Gosling (ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Kjúklingur ('chicken').

Suolahti suggests the word is derived from a West Germanic word for young chicken combined with the diminutive suffix *-ingr*.<sup>834</sup>

Level II taxon but can be used as a Level Ia or III taxon.

Only attested in *Grettis saga*.<sup>835</sup>

## **Klófugl**

Modern English: Clawed bird (CV).

Derived from *kló* ('claw') and *fugl* ('bird').

Level Ia taxon.

Attested in *Grágás* and *Kristinn rétrr Árna byskups*.<sup>836</sup>

## **Kráka**

Modern English: Crow (ONP; CV; GFH, p. 955); Raven (FJ).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

## **Kreppingr**

Modern English: Uncertain. 'The creeper' (CV).

GFH (p. 958) suggests that the name may be related to *kreppa* ('to grasp'), and so it may be a bird that grasps (i.e. a bird of prey) or is grasped (i.e. a game bird).

Likely Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

---

<sup>834</sup> Suolahti, p. 234.

<sup>835</sup> *Grettis saga*, ch. 14 (ed. Guðni Jónsson, p. 37).

<sup>836</sup> *Grás* §32, p. 43; *Biskop Arnes Kristenret*, §39 (ed. Storm, p. 50).

## Langvé

Modern English: Common Guillemot/Murre (*Uria aalge*) (CV; GFH, p. 956).

Modern Icelandic: Langvía (*Uria aalge*).

Name given in Mohr: None, but *langvigia* is listed under *Colymbus lomvia* (*Uria lomvia*).

ÁBM argues that the word is derived from *langr* ('long'), and Germanic terms for birds such as eagles and vultures.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>837</sup>

## Leörblaka

Modern English: Bat (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 955).

Derived from *leðr* ('leather') and *blaka* ('to flutter').

Level II taxon.

Only explicitly called a bird in *Fugla heiti*, but mentioned in passing in *Alexanders saga*.<sup>838</sup>

## Líri

Modern English: Uncertain. Tern (CV); Shearwater (GFH, p. 957).

GFH (p. 957) links it to Norwegian Bokmål *lire* (*Puffinus* sp.).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Locusta

Modern English: Locust

Derived from the Latin *locusta* ('locust').

---

<sup>837</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21) mentions *langvije* and *hringvije* as types of auk.

<sup>838</sup> *Alexanders saga*, §Alexanders brev til Aristoteles (ed. Finnur Jónsson, p. 160).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in homiletic literature and *Stjórn*.<sup>839</sup>

### Lóa

Modern English: Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) (FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 956); Sandpiper (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Ló/Heiðló/Heiðlóa (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Name given in Mohr: *Charadrius apricarius* (*Pluvialis apricarius*)

The origin of the name is uncertain, although it, along with *lævirki*, may be derived from Germanic terms for singing or speaking.<sup>840</sup> ÁBM suggests this, alongside another possible etymological roots from terms relating to bright or light colours.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and in the law code *Jarnsíða*.<sup>841</sup>

### Lómur

Modern English: Black-throated Diver (*Gavia arctica*) (CV); Divers/Loons (*Gavia* sp.) (FJ; GFH, p. 955).

Modern Icelandic: Lómur (*Gavia stellata*).

Name given in Mohr: *Colymbus septentrionalis* (*Gavia immer*)

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and one kenning until early modern sources.<sup>842</sup>

### Lópræll

Modern English: Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 956).

---

<sup>839</sup> Stockholm, Royal Library, Perg. 4to No. 15, 6r7–8 (Iceland, s. xiii<sup>1</sup>); *Stjórn*, ch. 114 (ed. Unger, p. 316).

<sup>840</sup> Suolahti, p. 98.

<sup>841</sup> Also mentioned in Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>842</sup> Anon., *Ólafs drápa Tryggvasonar* 8:2 (ed. Heslop, p. 1039); Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

Modern Icelandic: Lóuþræll (*Calidris alpina*).

Name given in Mohr: *Tringa alpina* (*Calidris alpina*)

The first element, *ló-*, is thought to be derived from *lóa* ('plover'), and the latter element is *þræll* ('slave'). CV state that this name is due to the Dunlin 'following in the wake of the sandpiper,' but *lóa* usually refers to plovers, rather than sandpipers. Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson mention that this bird's name derives from the fact it appears to follow the *heiðló* ('Golden Plover') so closely, it could be mistaken for the other bird's young.<sup>843</sup>

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>844</sup>

## Lundi

Modern English: Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 956).

Modern Icelandic: Lundi (*Fratercula arctica*).

Name given in Mohr: *Alca arctica* (*Fratercula arctica*).

ÁBM argues it is derived from *lend* ('loins'), based on the bird's fat deposits.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and as a determinant in kennings for the sea until early modern sources.<sup>845</sup>

## Lævirki

Modern English: Lark (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 955).

The origin of the name is uncertain, although it, along with *lóa*, may be derived from older Germanic terms for singing or speaking.<sup>846</sup>

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>843</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, p. 581.

<sup>844</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>845</sup> Sturla Þórðarson, *Hrynhenda* 6:4 (ed. Valgerður Erna Þorvaldsdóttir, p. 682); Anon, *Krákumál* 5:7 (ed. McTurk, p. 726); Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>846</sup> Suolahti, p. 98.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Már

Modern English: Gull (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 952, 958).

Modern Icelandic: *Már* and *máfur* are both used extensively in species names for gulls, e.g. *Hettumáfur* (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) and *Silfuramáfur* (*Larus argentatus*).

Name given in Mohr: None.

Suolahti and ÁBM consider two hypotheses: it may be derived from an Indo-European word for dark blue, or it may be onomatopoeic.<sup>847</sup>

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

## Meisingr

Modern English: Songbirds of the tit family (*Parus* sp.) (CV; FJ); Young titmouse (GFH p. 957).

Suolahti suggests that the name is derived from a widespread Germanic bird name *meis* ('dark') and the diminutive suffix *-ingr*.<sup>848</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Mýrisnípr

Modern English: Snipe (CV); Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) (GFH, pp. 958).

Modern Icelandic: *Mýrisnípa* is a folk-name for the Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*).<sup>849</sup>

Name given in Mohr: *Mýrisnypa* and *mýrisnita* are listed under *Scolopax gallinago* (*Gallinago gallinago*), with *hrofa-gaukr* as a synonym. Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni

---

<sup>847</sup> Suolahti, pp. 397–99.

<sup>848</sup> Suolahti, pp. 153–54.

<sup>849</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 154.

Pálsson list *mýriskíttr*, *mýrisnípr*, and *hrossagaukr* as synonyms, but note that the bird known in Swedish as *horse-gøg* ('horse-cuckoo') is a different species.<sup>850</sup>

Derived from *mýri* ('mire') and *snípr* ('snipe'). Norwegian Bokmål *myrsnipe* refers to the Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*).

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## **Nagr**

Modern English: Bird of prey (CV; GFH, p. 953).

ÁBM links this word to *naga* ('to gnaw').

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations in kennings and *Fugla heiti*.

## **Nátthrafn**

Modern English: Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) (CV).

Likely a calque on the Latin bird name *nycticorax*.

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested glossing *nycticorax* in *Stjórn* and a psalter.<sup>851</sup>

## **Nætingr**

Modern English: Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) (CV);<sup>852</sup> Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) (GFH, p. 957).

De Vries has argued that the name is imitative.<sup>853</sup> GFH (p. 957) and ÁBM favour fulmar, based on the Faroese *náti* ('fulmar') with the diminutive suffix *-ingr*.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

---

<sup>850</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, §677, p. 579.

<sup>851</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 23 (ed. Unger, p. 86); *Psalter*, §Ps. 101 (ed. Uecker, p. 185).

<sup>852</sup> Also argued in De Vries, s.v. 'nætingur'.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.*



## Orri

Modern English: Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrrix*) (CV; FJ; ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Orri (*Lyrurus tetrrix*).

Suolahti argues that the name is derived from terms for men and masculinity and that the name originally referred exclusively to male birds.<sup>854</sup> *Lyrurus tetrrix* has notable sexual dimorphism in its plumage.

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations, notably in *Stjórn* and *Óláfs saga helga*.<sup>855</sup>

## Óðinshani

Modern English: Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) (CV; FJ); Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) (GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Óðinshani (*Phalaropus lobatus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Tringa lobata* (*Phalaropus lobatus*).

The name is derived from Óðinn and *hani* (‘rooster’), although the reasons are unclear.

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>856</sup>

## Páfugl/Pái

Modern English: Peafowl (*Pavo* sp.) (FJ; ONP; CV; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Páfugl (*Pavo cristatus*).

Likely derived from Latin *pavo* (‘peafowl’).<sup>857</sup>

Level II taxon.

Widely attested, particularly in later, more romance-influenced literature.

## Pía

---

<sup>854</sup> Suolahti, p. 249.

<sup>855</sup> *Stjórn*, ch. 23 (ed. Unger, p. 77); *Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 73 (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason, pp. 193–94).

<sup>856</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>857</sup> Suolahti, p. 225.

Modern English: Magpie (*Pica pica*) (ONP).

Derived from the Old French *pie* ('magpie').<sup>858</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Karlamagnúss saga*.<sup>859</sup>

### **Rifanskinna**

Modern English: Uncertain.

The name may mean 'torn/stitched skin', from *rifa* ('tear') or *rifa* ('stitch') (GFH, p. 958). Based on the first possibility, GFH suggests a bird of prey, although based upon the second possibility a bird that was used for its skin is also possible. Only swan skins are recorded as being bought and sold in Iceland,<sup>860</sup> but it is possible that domestic trade in less prestigious bird skins was not recorded.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Rindill**

Modern English: Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Músarrindill (*Troglodytes troglodytes*).

Name given in Mohr: *Motacilla troglodytes* (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Suolahti suggests that the word may be related to words for stallions, although he remarks that the semantic discrepancy is jarring.<sup>861</sup> ÁBM suggests it may be related to the Germanic *\*wrendila-*, related to spinning or being articulated.

Level II taxon.

Only attested as a byname until early modern sources.<sup>862</sup>

### **Rindilþvari**

---

<sup>858</sup> Hieatt, note in translation of *Karlamagnúss saga* III, p. 119.

<sup>859</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga*, 'Af Otvel', ch. 3 (ed. Unger, p. 437).

<sup>860</sup> Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, p. 39.

<sup>861</sup> Suolahti, p. 80.

<sup>862</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Fugla kyn nockur (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

Modern English: Uncertain. CV suggest synonymy with *rindill* (see entry).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists *rindilþvari* as a folk name for *Rallus aquaticus*.<sup>863</sup>

*Rindil-* appears to be derived from *rindill*, and GFH (p. 957) suggests that *þvari* may be something like ‘borer.’

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Rjúpa

Modern English: Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 956).

Modern Icelandic: Rjúpa (*Lagopus muta*).

Name given in Mohr: *Tetrao lagopus*. While this binomial is an older term for the Willow Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), this likely refers to the Iceland-dwelling Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*), as the two had only recently been distinguished as separate species.<sup>864</sup>

Suolahti suggests that the name may be derived from the bird’s alarm call.<sup>865</sup> ÁBM accepts this, but also gives an alternative hypothesis that the word may be derived from Indo-European terms for grey or brown.

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

## Rytr

Modern English: Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) (CV; GFH, p. 957); tern (FJ).

Modern Icelandic: Rita (*Rissa tridactyla*).

Name given in Mohr: *Ritur* is listed under *Larus tridactylus* (*Rissa tridactyla*).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

---

<sup>863</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 176.

<sup>864</sup> *BirdLife International*, ‘Species factsheet: *Lagopus muta*’ (2020)

<<http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/rock-ptarmigan-lagopus-muta>> [Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020].

<sup>865</sup> Suolahti, pp. 256–57.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>866</sup>

### Sendlingr

Modern English: Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*) (FJ);<sup>867</sup> sandpiper (GFH, p. 958). CV connect it to the Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), but its range does not extend to Scandinavia or Iceland.<sup>868</sup>

Modern Icelandic: *Sendlingur* (*Calidris maritima*).

Likely derived from *sandr* ('sand') and the diminutive suffix *-ingr*, based on the bird's shoreline habitat.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### Skarfr

Modern English: Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax* sp.) (ONP; FJ; GFH, p. 954);<sup>869</sup> Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) (CV).

Modern Icelandic: *Skarfur* appears in multiple common names for cormorant species, including *Dílaskarfur* (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and *Toppskarfur* (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*).

Suolahti argues the name may be derived from the bird's cry or descriptions of its colour.<sup>870</sup>

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and *Marteins saga byskups*.<sup>871</sup>

### Skári

---

<sup>866</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21) mentions *ritur* under *biargfugla kyn* ('cliff-bird kin').

<sup>867</sup> Zoega, s.v. 'sendlingr'.

<sup>868</sup> Beaman and Madge, pp. 314–15.

<sup>869</sup> Zoega, s.v. 'skarfr'.

<sup>870</sup> Suolahti, pp. 393–94.

<sup>871</sup> *Marteins saga byskups*, ch. 53 (ed. Unger, p. 601).

Modern English: Young seagull (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 958).

De Vries suggests connections to words meaning ‘temperamental.’<sup>872</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Skeglingr**

Modern English: Young kittiwake (GFH, p. 954); young tern (FJ).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists *skeglingur* as a term for a young kittiwake.<sup>873</sup>

Name given in Mohr: None, but *skegla* is listed under *Larus tridactylus* (*Rissa tridactyla*).

Likely derived from *skegla* (‘kittiwake’) and the diminutive suffix *-ingr*.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Skíði**

Modern English: Uncertain.

GFH (p. 955) suggests it could be related to *skíð* (‘ski’).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Skjór**

Modern English: Magpie (*Pica pica*) (ONP; FJ; GFH, p. 954).

ÁBM suggests that the term may be related to the bird’s colours.

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and *Karlamagnúss saga*.<sup>874</sup>

---

<sup>872</sup> De Vries, s.v. ‘skári’.

<sup>873</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 266.

<sup>874</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga*, §Af Otvel, ch. 21 (ed. Unger, p. 460).

## Skjöldungr

Modern English: Shelduck (CV; GFH, p. 954).

Possibly derived from *skjoldr* ('shield'), hence CV's argument that it is due to a shield-like marking.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Skógarfugl

Modern English: Forest bird.

Derived from *skogr* ('forest') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Only attested in *Piðreks saga* until early modern sources.<sup>875</sup>

## Skógarrjúpa

Modern English: Uncertain, presumably a game bird.

Derived from *skogr* ('forest') and *rjúpa* ('ptarmigan').

Level III taxon.

Only attested in one manuscript of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.<sup>876</sup>

## Skrýtingr

Modern English: Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) (CV; GFH, p. 959).

Gurevich's translation is based upon similarity to the English dialect word for Mistle Thrush, *shrite*. ÁBM mentions this connection, and also argues it may be related to words meaning 'to blow' or 'to shriek.'

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

---

<sup>875</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Fugla kyn nockur (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>876</sup> *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ch. 15 (ed. Jón Helgason, p. 133).

## Skurfir

Modern English: Uncertain.

Possibly imitative in origin and/or related to *skarfr* (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Skúfr

Modern English: Skua (CV; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Skúmur (*Cathacta skua*/*Stercorarius skua*).

Name given in Mohr: None, but *skúmr* is listed under *Larus catarractes*, which may be *Stercorarius skua*, as its first binomial was *Catharactes skua*.

The connection to skuas, particularly Great Skuas, is probable, as the Faroese word for the Great Skua is *skúvur/skúgvur*.<sup>877</sup> ÁBM argues the word may be linked to *skúfur* ('tassels') and refer to the bird's wing feathers.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*. *Skúmr* appears in early modern sources.<sup>878</sup>

## Smáfugl

Modern English: Small bird (CV).

Derived from *smá* ('small') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Widely attested.

## Smyrill

Modern English: Merlin (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Smyrill (*Falco columbarius*).

---

<sup>877</sup> Günther, s.v. 'storjo'; Jobling, s.v. 'skua'.

<sup>878</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

Name given in Mohr: *Falco lanarius*, or Lanner Falcon, a bird native to Africa but popular in European falconry. Mohr goes on to remark that these birds were often seen in eastern Iceland hunting doves imported by merchants.<sup>879</sup> Interestingly, the name *smyrill* is also assigned to *Falco lanarius* by Brünnich,<sup>880</sup> suggesting that *smyrill* was used to refer to *Falco lanarius* in the eighteenth century as well as/instead of *Falco columbarius*, although the extent to which this happened is unclear.

The word *smyrill* itself appears to be derived from Proto-Germanic *\*smezilaz* ('merlin').<sup>881</sup>

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations, primarily in law-codes.

### **Snæfugl**

Modern English: Snow bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 958–59).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists snæfugl as a folk name for snjótitlingur (*Plectrophenax nivalis*).<sup>882</sup>

Name in Mohr: None, but *snjótitlingr* is listed under *Emberiza nivalis* (*Plectrophenax nivalis*).

Derived from *snær* ('snow') and *fugl*.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Sparrhaukr**

Modern English: Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) (CV; FJ).

Modern Icelandic: Sparrhaukur (*Accipiter nisus*).

Derived from *sporr* ('sparrow') and *haukr*.

Level III taxon.

---

<sup>879</sup> Mohr, p. 19 This and Mohr's comments on Stock Doves on p. 51, it would appear that in the eighteenth century, Danish merchants imported both hawks and their quarry to Iceland for entertainment.

<sup>880</sup> Brünnich, p. 1.

<sup>881</sup> Orel, s.v. '\*smezilaz'.

<sup>882</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, p. 326.



Widely attested, mostly in courtly literature.

### **Spiki**

Modern English: Small passerine (GFH, p. 954); tit (*Parus* sp.) (CV).

GFH (p. 954) suggests it is a loanword from Scandinavian, related to Nynorsk *spikkje* ('sparrow'). Suolahti remarks that *spiki* is likely onomatopoeic.<sup>883</sup> ÁBM also raises the possibility it may be related to *spík* ('narrow spit of land'), referring to a bird's beak.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Spói**

Modern English: Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) (CV; GFH, p. 955); Curlew (*Numenius* sp.) (FJ; ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Spói (*Numenius phaeopus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Scolopax phaeopus* (*Numenius phaeopus*).

ÁBM suggests the name is derived from Indo-European *\*spe-* ('walk fast'), based on the bird's rapid movements.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>884</sup>

### **Spætr**

Modern English: Woodpecker (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 957).

Modern Icelandic: Spæta (*Picus* sp.)

Suolahti suggests that the name may be related to words for peeking.<sup>885</sup> ÁBM argues that it is ultimately derived from the same roots as *spíki* (see entry), referring to the bird's beak.

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>883</sup> Suolahti, p. 155.

<sup>884</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>885</sup> Suolahti, p. 28.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### Spørr

Modern English: Sparrow (*Passer* sp.) (ONP; CV; FJ; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Spörfugl (*Passer* sp.).

Suolahti connects it to Germanic words meaning ‘twitching,’ due to the bird’s rapid movements.<sup>886</sup>

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations.

### Stari/Starri

Modern English: Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 958); Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula/Coloeus monedula*) (ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Stari (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

Suolahti argues that the word is derived from words for speckled, referring to the bird’s plumage.<sup>887</sup> ÁBM argues it is derived from birds’ songs.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and as a gloss for Latin *graculus* (‘jackdaw’).<sup>888</sup>

### Steindelfr

Modern English: Wagtail (*Motacilla* sp.) (CV); Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) (FJ; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Likely *steindepill* (*Oenanthe oenanthe*).

Name given in Mohr: *Steindepill* is listed under *Motacilla oenanthe* (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Etymology unclear. ÁBM (s.v. ‘depill’) suggests a way for the Modern Icelandic *-depill* to be related to *-delfr* but is uncertain of the ultimate origins of that element.

---

<sup>886</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>888</sup> *Norske Diplomer* §69 (ed. Hødnebo, p. 113).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*. Jón Guðmundsson mentions a *steindepla*.<sup>889</sup>

### Stelkr

Modern English: Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) (FJ; GFH, p. 954); Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Stelkur (*Tringa totanus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Scolopax totanus* (*Tringa totanus*)

Suolahti and ÁBM both suggests the name is derived from words for walking carefully, as if on stilts, due to the long legs and careful gait of the bird.<sup>890</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>891</sup>

### Storkr

Modern English: Stork (*Ciconia* sp.) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Storkur (*Ciconia* sp.).

Suolahti suggests the name is derived from terms meaning to walk stiffly.<sup>892</sup>

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* and one gloss.<sup>893</sup>

### Strúz/Strútfugl

Modern English: Ostrich (ONP)

Modern Icelandic: Strútur ('ostrich').

Derived from the Latin *struthio* ('ostrich'), probably via the Middle Low German *strūs*.<sup>894</sup>

---

<sup>889</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>890</sup> Suolahti, p. 285.

<sup>891</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Landfuglar mýra og móa (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 20).

<sup>892</sup> Suolahti, p. 368.

<sup>893</sup> Norske Diplomer §69 (ed. Hødnebo, p. 113).

<sup>894</sup> De Vries, s.v. 'strúz'.

Level II taxon.

The former variation is only attested in *Piðreks saga*, the latter in *Gautreks saga*.<sup>895</sup>

### **Súla**

Modern English: Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Súla (*Morus bassanus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Hafsula* is listed under *Pelecanus bassanus* (*Morus bassanus*).

ÁBM argues that the name may be cognate with Icelandic *súl* ('cloven tree'). He argues it is in reference to the bird's cloven tail feathers, but it may also be derived from the bird's pose while diving, where the wings fold into points that run parallel to the tail.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>896</sup>

### **Svala**

Modern English: Swallow (ONP; CV; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: Svala (*Hirundinidae*).

Name given in Mohr: *Hirundo urbica* (*Delichon urbicum*).

Suolahti suggests links to Germanic words for flitting back and forth.<sup>897</sup>

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Svanr**

Modern English: Swan (CV; ONP; FJ).

Modern Icelandic: Svanur (*Cygnus cygnus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Anas cygnus* (*Cygnus cygnus*).

---

<sup>895</sup> *Piðreks saga* I, ch. 130 (ed. Bertelsen, p. 126); *Gautreks saga*, ch. 2 (ed. Ranisch, p. 58).

<sup>896</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Meingadir landfuglar (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

<sup>897</sup> Suolahti, p. 23.

Suolahti suggests the name is derived from words for resounding or melody.<sup>898</sup>

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Svarr**

Modern English: Uncertain.

GFH (p. 954) suggests it may be related to Old Norse *svarra* ('to roar'), or Nynorsk *svarra* ('to soar/wander'). She also suggests it may be related to *svorr* (see entry).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Svartbakr**

Modern English: Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 954).

Modern Icelandic: *Svartbakur* (*Larus marinus*).

Name given in Mohr: *Larus marinus*

Derived from *svartr* ('black') and *bakr* ('back')

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>899</sup>

### **Svartfygli**

Modern English: CV suggest *Uria troile*, an obsolete name for *Uria aalge*, the Common Guillemot/Murre.

Modern Icelandic: *Svartfugl*

Derived from *svartr* ('black') and *fugl* ('bird').

Level II or Ia taxon.

---

<sup>898</sup> Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>899</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Fiörfuglar smáer (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

Attested in *Búalög*, the Skálholt Annals, and the Gottskalk Annals.<sup>900</sup>

### **Sviplækja**

Modern English: *Tringa fusca* (CV) (see above, ‘doðka’). GFH (p. 953) notes similarity to *lækjaduðra* (see above, ‘doðka’; ‘doðrkvisa’).

ÁBM suggests the *-lækja* element may be related to *lókr* (‘lazy man’ or ‘homeless man’).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Svørr**

Modern English: Uncertain.

For etymological considerations, see above, ‘svarr.’

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations in skaldic verse as a kenning-element.

### **Sæðingr**

Modern English: Gull (FJ; GFH, p. 955); Common Gull (*Larus canus*) (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Sigurður Ægisson lists *sæðingur* as a folk-name for both *Larus fuscus* and *Larus canus*.<sup>901</sup>

As mentioned by ÁBM, the word is likely derived from *sæði* (‘seeds’) and diminutive suffix *-ingr* and may refer to the bird foraging for seeds in fields.

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and two kennings.<sup>902</sup>

### **Sæfugl**

---

<sup>900</sup> *Búalög* III (ed. Jón Þorkelsson, p. 39); *Annálar* (D), §d.c [1327] (ed. Storm, p. 206); *Ibid.*, (P), §d.c, pp. 346–47.

<sup>901</sup> Sigurður Ægisson, pp. 296, 370.

<sup>902</sup> Þórður Særeksson, *Fragments* 1:6 (ed. Gade, p. 476); Hallfreður vandræðaskáld Óttarsson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar* 18:3 (ed. Heslop, p. 425).

Modern English: Sea bird

Derived from *sæ* ('sea') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Scarce attestations.

### **Titlingr**

Modern English: Sparrow and/or small songbird (ONP; CV; FJ; GFH, p. 955).

Modern Icelandic: Tittlingur ('small passerine').

Name given in Mohr: None, but *-titlingr* appears as a final element with *snio-titlingr* (*Emberiza nivalis*; *Plectrophenax nivalis*, also listed as a *solskrikia*), *thufu-titlingr* (*Fringilla lapponica*; *Calcarius lapponicus*), and *audnu-titlingr* (*Fringilla linaria*; *Carduelis flammea*).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested, especially as a gloss for Latin *passer* ('songbird').

### **Tjaldr**

Modern English: Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 955–56).

Name given in Mohr: *Haematopus ostralegus*.

CV suggest that the name may be derived from *tjald* ('tent') as this bird's long legs resemble tent-poles. ÁBM suggests it is related to *tildra* ('to climb'), due to its careful gait and long legs.

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti* until early modern sources.<sup>903</sup>

### **Trana**

Modern English: Crane (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 955)

Modern Icelandic: Trana ('crane').

---

<sup>903</sup> Jón Guðmundsson, §Fiörefuglar smáer (ed. Halldór Hermansson, p. 21).

CV and FJ posit an older form, *trani*. ÁBM argues that it shares a root with English *crane* and Lithuanian *garnys* ('stork'), but how the *kr-* changed to *tr-* is unclear.

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Turturi/Turturdúfa**

Modern English: Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) (CV; ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Turtildúfa (*Streptopelia turtur*).

Derived from the Latin *turtur* ('turtle dove').

Level II or III taxon, *turturdúfa* has explicit Level III status.

Scarce attestations in Christian religious literature.

### **Tyrðilmúli**

Modern English: Razorbill (*Alca torda*) (CV; FJ; GFH, pp. 955–56).

Derived from *tyrðill* ('turd') and *múli* ('snout, muzzle'). See above, 'haftyrðill'.

Level II or III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Peisti**

Modern English: Guillemot (GFH, p. 955).

Modern Icelandic: Teista/Þeista (*Cephus grylle*).

Name given in Mohr: *Colymbus grylle* (*Cephus grylle*).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Perna**

Modern English: Tern (CV; GFH, p. 955).

Name given in Mohr: *Sterna hirundo*.



Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and in law codes.<sup>904</sup>

### **Þiðurr**

Modern English: Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) (FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 955); Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*) (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Þiður (*Tetrao urogallus*).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested, primarily in skaldic verse and texts thought to originate from Denmark, possibly as neither Partridge nor Capercaillie are native to Iceland.<sup>905</sup>

### **Preistr**

Modern English: Thrush (ONP).

Likely cognate with *þrǫstr* (see below).

Level II taxon.

Only attested in *Cecilíu saga*.<sup>906</sup>

### **Þrǫstr**

Modern English: Thrush (CV; FJ; GFH, p. 955).

Modern Icelandic: Þröstur (*Turdus* sp.).

Name given in Mohr: *Skogar-throstr* is listed under *Turdus iliacus*.

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

---

<sup>904</sup> *Jónsbók*, § 57 (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, p. 190); *Grás* §436, p. 507; Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *Lausavísur* 13:3 (ed. R. Poole, p. 233).

<sup>905</sup> MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43, fols. S 17v–S 26r (ed. Larsen, pp. 120–29).

<sup>906</sup> *Cecilíu saga*, ch. 5 (ed. Unger, p. 280).

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Ugla**

Modern English: Owl (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 953).

Modern Icelandic: Ugla ('owl').

Name given in Mohr: *Strix* (Owl).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations across many genres.

### **Úfr**

Modern English: Owl (ONP); Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) (FJ; GFH, p. 953); Widgeon or Whewer (CV).

Modern Icelandic: Úfur (*Bubo bubo*).

Likely imitative in origin (ÁBM).

Level II taxon.

Used in in Christian religious literature and glosses.<sup>907</sup>

### **Útifugl**

Modern English: Wildfowl (CV); Wild birds (FJ).

Derived from *úti* ('outdoors') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Scarce attestation in *strengleikar* and skaldic verse.<sup>908</sup>

### **Vakr/Vákr**

Modern English: Vulture (ONP); hawk (CV; FJ); buzzard (GFH, p. 958).

---

<sup>907</sup> *Íslandsk-latinske glosar* (ed. Guðmundur Þorláksson, p. 87); *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* (ed. Rindal, p. 130); *Pétrs saga postula*, SÁM 1 fol. 16v.

<sup>908</sup> Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonarkviða* 4:6 (ed. Gade, p. 702); *Jonet* (ed. Cook and Tveitane, p. 230).

Modern Icelandic: Vákur (*Buteo* sp.).

ÁBM argues it is likely derived from words for hovering or soaring.

Level II taxon.

Attested in *Fugla heiti* and *Rómverjar saga*.<sup>909</sup>

## Vallófr

Modern English: Uncertain.

GFH (p. 959) and de Vries agree that *vall-* is probably derived from *vǫllr* ('plain').

Gurevich argues that *-ófr* derives from *úfr* ('eagle owl'), while de Vries states that it is a weak verb meaning 'to hang over', related to *váfa* ('to waver').<sup>910</sup>

Level II taxon, or possibly Level III if Gurevich's argument regarding *-ófr* is accurate.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

## Valr

Modern English: Falcon/hawk (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, pp. 953, 958).

Origins unclear. The possibility that this is a contraction of *valhaukr* is widely accepted, although the origins and meaning of the *val-* element is debated. CV favour the interpretation 'carrion,' making the *valr* a 'carrion hawk,' while Suolahti argues that it is related to the Old English *wealh* ('foreign'), indicating trade.<sup>911</sup> De Vries rejects the reading of 'foreign' based on falcons being native to Scandinavia, and argues that the *val-* is based on an Indo-European word meaning 'to tear,' which was folk-etymologised in Old English into 'foreign.'<sup>912</sup> ÁBM favours the 'foreign' interpretation, although he argues that it was used in the sense of a bird destined for foreign trade, rather than a foreign bird. Peter Kitson offers yet another theory, that *valr* is derived from a Germanic word for falcons that was also borrowed into Welsh as *gwalch* ('hawk/falcon').<sup>913</sup> Finally, Philip Shaw has argued that *valr* was in fact an early loan from Old English into Old Norse somewhere between the seventh and tenth

---

<sup>909</sup> *Rómverja saga*, ch. 1 (ed. Þorbjörg Helgadóttir, p. 225).

<sup>910</sup> de Vries, s.v. 'vallófr'.

<sup>911</sup> Suolahti, p. 331.

<sup>912</sup> de Vries, s.v. 'valr'.

<sup>913</sup> Kitson II, pp. 12–3.

centuries, with *wealhhafoç* ('foreign hawk') being contracted to *wealh* and used in an early iteration of the Scandinavian falconry trade.<sup>914</sup>

Level II or III taxon.

Widely attested.

### **Villifygli**

Modern English: Wild bird (CV).

Derived from *villr* ('wild') and *fugl*.

Level Ia taxon.

Only attested in *Karlamagnúss saga*.<sup>915</sup>

### **Ýfingr**

Modern English: Young Eagle Owl (GFH, p. 958).

Gurevich's definition is based on the ÁBM's hypothesis that this word is formed from *úfr* ('eagle owl') and the diminutive suffix *-ingr*. ÁBM does, however, comment that the word may alternatively be related to *yfa* ('to ruffle/tease').

Level III taxon.

Only attested in *Fugla heiti*.

### **Æður**

Modern English: Eider duck (CV; FJ; ONP; GFH, p. 957).

Modern Icelandic: *Æður* (*Somateria mollissima*).

Name given in Mohr: *Anas mollissima* (*Somateria mollissima*)

The etymology is unclear. ÁBM suggests it may be related to Latin *avis* ('bird').

Level II taxon.

Scarce attestations in various genres.

---

<sup>914</sup> Shaw, pp. 9–11.

<sup>915</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga*, §Jorsalaferð (ed. Loth, p. 261).

## Qnd

Modern English: Duck (CV; FJ; ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Önd ('duck').

Name given in Mohr: None, but *-ønd/-and* is a final element in many bird names, including *sef-ønd* (*Colymbus cristatus*; *Podyceps cristatus*), *husønd* (*Anas clangula*; *Clangula clangula*), *straum-ønd/brim-ønd* (*Anas histrionica*; *Histrionicus histrionicus*), *Blafolls-ønd/gras-ønd/kil-ønd* (*Anas boscas*, Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*), *krik-and/atteling-and* (*Anas crecca*), *hrafns-ønd* (*Anas fuligula*; *Aythya fuligula*), *topp-ønd/vatns-ønd* (*Mergus merganser*), and *gul-ønd/fisk-and* (*Mergus serrator*).<sup>916</sup> Thus, while the medieval sources do not offer many examples, it is likely that Old Norse had a rich vocabulary concerning wild ducks.

Level II taxon.

Widely attested.

## Qrn

Modern English: Eagle (CV; FJ; ONP).

Modern Icelandic: Örn ('eagle').

Name given in Mohr: *Vultur albicilla* (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

Thought to be a later form derived from the same root as *ari* (see entry).

Level II taxon.

Widely attested. More common than *ari*.

---

<sup>916</sup> Some synonyms not in specific entries are listed on Mohr, p. 26.

## Bibliography

### List of Abbreviations

ÁBM	Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon
CV	Cleasby, R., and Guðbrandur Vigfússon
<i>Edkv</i>	Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., <i>Eddukvæði</i> , 2 vols.
FJ	Finnur Jónsson, <i>Lexicon Poeticum</i>
GFH	Gurevich, E., ed., <i>Fugla heiti</i> (commentary and text)
<i>GráK</i>	Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., <i>Grágás. Elzta lögbók íslendinga</i>
<i>GráS</i>	Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., <i>Grágás. Staðarhólsbók</i>
<i>Gylf</i>	<i>Gylfaginning</i> (ed. Faulkes)
ONP	<i>Dictionary of Old Norse Prose</i>
<i>Skm</i>	Faulkes, A., ed., <i>Skáldskaparmál I</i>

### Dictionaries and Databases

- Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk Orðsifabók* (Reykjavík, 1989)
- Cleasby, R., and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1874)
- Dalby, D., *Lexicon of the Mediæval German Hunt: A Lexicon of Middle High German Terms (1050–1500), Associated with the Chase, Hunting with Bows, Falconry, Trapping and Fowling* (Berlin, 1965)
- Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* <<https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php>>
- Faulkes, A., *Edda. Skáldskaparmál II, Glossary and Index of Names* (London, 1998)
- Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguae Septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1931)
- Geir T. Zoega, *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (Oxford, 1910)
- Günther, M., *Nordiske navn på Norges fugler* (Ås, 2011)
- Heggstad, L., F. Hødnebo and E. Simensen, *Norrøn ordbok*, 5th ed. (Oslo, 2008)
- Hine, R. S., ed., *A Dictionary of Biology*, 8th ed. (Oxford, 2019)

- Hoffmann-Krayer, E., and H. Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1927–42)
- Jobling, J. A., *Helm Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names* (London, 2010)
- Kroonen, G., *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series 2 (Leiden and Boston, 2013)
- Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid*, 22 vols. (Malmö, Oslo and Copenhagen, 1956–78)
- Martin, E., *The New Oxford Dictionary for Scientific Writers and Editors*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2009)
- OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/>>
- Orel, V., *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology* (Leiden and Boston, 2003)
- Simek, R., *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, transl. A. Hall (Woodbridge, 1993)
- Rundata (Scandinavian Runic-text Database)*  
<<http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forsk/samnord.htm>>
- de Vries, J., *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1962)

## **Manuscripts**

- Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library MS 24 (England, s. xii<sup>1</sup>), Online Facsimile <<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/>> [Accessed 12th August 2019]
- Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 318 (France, s. ix<sup>2</sup>), Online Facsimile <<https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0318>> [Accessed 30th April 2019]
- Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Ashmole 1511 (England, s. xiii<sup>1</sup>)
- Reykjavík, Stofnunun Árna Magnússonar, SÁM 1 (Iceland s. xiv<sup>3</sup>)
- Stockholm, Royal Library, Perg. 4to No. 15 (Iceland, s. xiii<sup>1</sup>)

## Printed Works

- Abram, C., 'Einarr Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson, and the Post-Pagan Mythological Kenning', in *Eddic, Skaldic, and Beyond: Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, ed. M. Chase (New York, 2014), pp. 44–61
- , *Evergreen Ash: Ecology and Catastrophe in Old Norse Myth and Literature* (Charlottesville and London, 2019)
- Abulafia, A. S., 'Bodies in the Jewish-Christian Debate', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. S. Kay and M. Rubin (Manchester and New York, 1994), pp. 123–37
- Adamson, J., and S. Monani, 'Introduction: Cosmovisions, Ecocriticism, and Indigenous Studies', in *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos*, ed. S. Monani and J. Adamson (London and New York, 2016), pp. 1–19
- Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 'The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106.3 (2007), 277–303
- Agrawal, A., 'Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge', *Development and Change* 26 (1995), 413–39
- Allsen, T. T., *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia, 2006)
- Ambrosiani, B., 'Regalia and Symbols in the Boat-Graves', transl. H. Clarke, in *Vendel Period Studies: Transactions of the Boat-Grave Symposium in Stockholm, February 2–3, 1981*, ed. J. P. Lamm and H. Å. Nordström (Stockholm, 1983), pp. 23–30
- Amundsen, C. P., 'Farming and Maritime Resources at Miðbær at Flatey in Breiðafjörður, NW Iceland', in *Atlantic Connections and Adaptations: Economies, Environments and Subsistence in Lands Bordering the North Atlantic*, ed. R. A. Housley and G. Coles, *Symposia of the Association for Environmental Archaeology* 21 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 203–10
- Anderson, E. R., *Folk-Taxonomies in Early English* (Madison, Teaneck, 2003)
- Andrén, A., *Tracing Old Norse Cosmology: The World Tree, Middle Earth, and the Sun in Archaeological Perspectives* (Lund, 2014)



- Andrén, A., K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, ed., *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions. An International Conference in Lund, Sweden, June 3–7, 2004*, Vågar till Midgård 8 (Lund, 2006)
- , ‘Old Norse Religion: Some Problems and Prospects’, in *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions. An International Conference in Lund, Sweden, June 3–7, 2004*, ed. A. Andrén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, Vågar till Midgård 8 (Lund, 2006), pp. 11–4
- Anon., ‘Bird Lime and its Uses’, *The Independent: Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts* 36.1849 (May 1884), 30
- Appell-Warren, L., *Personhood: An Examination of the History and Use of an Anthropological Concept* (Lewiston, NY and Lampeter, 2014)
- Arnþór Garðarsson and Kristinn Haukur Skarphéðinsson, ‘A Census of the Icelandic Whooper Swan Population’, *Wildfowl* 35 (1983), 37–47
- , ‘Veturseta áftar á Íslandi’, *Bliki* 4 (1985), 45–56
- Atleo, E. R., *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (Vancouver and Toronto, 2011)
- Axboe, M., *Brakteatstudier* (Copenhagen, 2007)
- Ármann Jakobsson, ‘Beast and Man: Realism and the Occult in *Egils saga*’, *Scandinavian Studies* 83.1 (2011), 29–41
- Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, ed., *Morkinskinna*, 2 vols., Íslenzk fornrit 23–4 (Reykjavík, 2011)
- Bagge, S., ‘The Making of a Missionary King: The Medieval Accounts of Olaf Tryggvason and the Conversion of Norway’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105.4 (2006), 473–513
- Bahr, P. H., ‘On the “Bleating” or “Drumming” of the Snipe (*Gallinago caelestis*)’, *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* (1907), 12–35
- Barnes, M., ‘Languages and Ethnic Groups’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. K. Helle (Cambridge and New York, 2003), pp. 94–102

- Barreiro, S. F., and L. M. Cordo Russo, 'Introduction', in *Shapeshifters in Medieval North Atlantic Literature*, ed. S. F. Barreiro and L. M. Cordo Russo (Amsterdam, 2019), pp. 9–20
- Barrett, J., A. Hall, C. Johnstone, H. Kenward, T. O'Connor and S. Ashby, 'Interpreting the Plant and Animal Remains from Viking-Age Kaupang', in *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, ed. D. Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series I, Norsk Oldfunn 22 (Aarhus, 2007), pp. 283–319
- Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Tractatus/Liber de proprietatibus rerum Bartholomei anglici* (Lyon, 1480)
- Bately, J., and A. Englert, ed., 'Text and Translation', in *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages Along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context*, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde, 2007), pp. 40–58
- Beaman, M., and S. Madge, *The Handbook of Bird Identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic*, digital edition (London, 2010)
- Beck, H., 'Die Tiere der Jagd und Walstatt in den eddischen Liedern', in *Das Tier in der Dichtung*, ed. U. Schwab (Heidelberg, 1970), pp. 55–73
- Behrend, J. F., ed., *Lex Salica*, 2nd ed. (Weimar, 1897)
- Behrendsmeyer, A. K., C. T. Stayton and R. E. Chapman, 'Taphonomy and Ecology of Modern Avifaunal Remains from Amboseli park, Kenya', *Paleobiology* 29.1 (2003), 52–70
- Bek-Pedersen, K., *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology* (Edinburgh, 2011)
- Bellamy-Dagneau, K., 'A Falconer's Ritual: A Study of the Cognitive and Spiritual Dimensions of Pre-Christian Scandinavian Falconry' (unpubl. MA Thesis, University of Iceland, 2015)
- Benson, L. D., ed., Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Parliament of Fowls', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 2008), pp. 383–94
- Berger, A. J., 'Old Law, New Law, and *Hænsna-Póris saga*', *Scripta Islandica* 27 (1976), 3–12

- Berglund, B., ‘*Fugela Feðerum* in Archaeological Perspective — Eider Down as a Trade Commodity in Prehistoric Northern Europe’, *Acta Boreala* 26.2 (2009), 119–35
- Berlin, B., D. E. Breedlove and P. Raven, ‘Folk Taxonomies and Biological Classification’, *Science*, New Series, 154.3746 (1966), 273–75
- , ‘General Principles of Classification and Nomenclature in Folk Biology’, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 75.1 (1973), 214–42
- Bertelsen, H., ed., *Piðreks saga af Bern*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen, 1905–11)
- Best, J., and J. Mulville, ‘A Bird in the Hand: Data Collation and Novel Analysis of Avian Remains from South Uist, Outer Hebrides’, *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 24 (2014), 384–96
- Bird-David, N., ‘“Animism” Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology’, *Current Anthropology* 51.S1 (1999), S67–91
- BirdLife International*, ‘Species Factsheet: *Lagopus muta*’ (2020)  
 <<http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/rock-ptarmigan-lagopus-muta>>  
 [Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020]
- Bird Names for Birds* <<https://birdnamesforbirds.wordpress.com>> [Accessed 28th September 2020]
- Bitterli, D., *Say What I Am Called: The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto, 2009)
- Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed., ‘Haralds saga ins hárfagra’, in *Heimskringla I*, 4th ed., Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík, 2002), pp. 94–149
- , ed., ‘Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar’, in *Heimskringla III*, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík, 1951), pp. 68–202
- , ed., ‘Magnúss saga berfætts’, in *Heimskringla III*, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík, 1951), pp. 210–37
- , ed., ‘Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar’, in *Heimskringla I*, 4th ed., Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík, 2002), pp. 225–372
- , ed., ‘Ynglinga saga’, in *Heimskringla I*, 4th ed., Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík, 2002), pp. 9–83

- Bjarni Einarsson, ‘Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum’, in *Ágrip. Fagrskinna*, Íslensk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík, 1985), pp. 1–54
- , ed., *Egils saga* (London, 2003)
- , ed., ‘Fagrskinna — Nóregs konunga tal’, in *Ágrip. Fagrskinna*, Íslensk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík, 1985), pp. 55–373
- Bjarni Sæmundsson, *Fuglarnir (aves Islandiæ)*, Íslensk Dýr 3 (Reykjavík, 1936)
- Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, ed., ‘Mágus saga jarls (hinn meiri)’, in *Riddarasögur II* (Reykjavík, 1949), pp. 135–429
- Blench, R., and K. MacDonald, ‘Chickens’, in *The Cambridge World History of Food I*, ed. K. F. Kiple and S. V. Beck (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 496–99
- Bochenski, Z. M., K. Wertz and T. Tomek, ‘What Happens to Dead Birds Left in a Cave and its Vicinity for a Quarter of a Century? A Taphonomic Experiment’, *Historical Biology* 30.6 (2018), 855–67
- Boer, R. C., ed., *Orvar-Odds saga* (Leiden, 1888)
- Boessneck, J., and A. von den Driesch, ‘Die Tierknochenfunde mit Ausnahme der Fischknochen’, in *Eketorp. Befestigung und Siedlung auf Öland/Schweden III: Die Fauna*, ed. J. Boessneck, A. von den Driesch and L. Stenberger (Stockholm, 1979), pp. 24–421
- Bourns, T., ‘The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition’ (unpubl. MA Thesis, University of Iceland, 2012)
- Brede, G., ‘Building New Homes for Swifts and Communities’, *RSPB Website*, Published 17th August 2016, Last Updated 28th August 2018 <<https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/building-new-homes-for-swifts-and-communities/#pPJ6PwvhRzHKvWvF.99>> [Accessed 11th July 2019]
- Brewington, S., M. Hicks, Ágústa Edwald, Árni Einarsson, K. Ananthawat-Jónsson, G. Cook, P. Ascough, K. L. Sayle, S. V. Arge, M. Church, J. Bond, S. Dockrill, Adolf Friðriksson, G. Hambrecht, Arni Daniel Juliusson, Vidar Hreinsson, S. Hartman, K. Smiarowski, R. Harrison and T. H. McGovern, ‘Islands of Change vs. Islands of

- Disaster: Managing Pigs and Birds in the Anthropocene of the North Atlantic', *The Holocene* 25 (10) (2015), 1676–84
- Broberg, S. G., ed., *Rémunadar saga keisarasonar*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 38 (Copenhagen, 1912)
- Brünnich, M. T., *Ornithologia borealis, sistens collectionem, avium ex omnibus, imperio Danico subjectis, provinciis insulisque borealibus Hafniæ factam, cum descriptionibus novarum, nominibus incolarum, locis natalium et icone* (Copenhagen, 1764)
- Brøgger, A. W., 'Osebergfundets historie', in *Osebergfundet I*, ed. A. W. Brøgger, Hj. Falk and H. Schetelig, (Oslo, 1917), pp. 1–119
- Budja, M., 'Interpretative Trajectories Toward Understanding Personhoods in Prehistory', *Documenta Praehistorica* 39 (2012), 137–53
- Budriesi, A. L. T., ed., Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, *De arte venandi cum avibus. L'arte di cacciare con gli uccelli: edizione e traduzione italiana del ms. lat. 717 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna collazionato con il ms. Pal. lat. 1071 della Biblioteca apostolica vaticana*, Fonti e studi 10 (Rome, 2009)
- Bugge, A., ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen XIX* (Oslo, 1910)
- Bugnyar, T., S. A. Reber, and C. Buckner, 'Ravens Attribute Visual Access to Unseen Competitors', *Nature Communications* 7, Article 10506 (2016), 1–6
- Burche, A., 'Coins', in *Wealth and Prestige: An Analysis of Rich Graves from Late Roman Iron Age on Eastern Zealand, Denmark*. ed. L. Boye and U. Lund Hansen (Taastrup, 2009) pp. 185–92
- Burg, F., ed., \*Oddur Einarsson, *Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiae. Nach der Handschrift der Hamburger Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek*, Veröffentlichungen aus der Hamburger Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek 1 (Hamburg, 1928)
- Burger, P., R. J. Stacey, S. A. Bowden, M. Hacke and J. Parnell, 'Identification, Geochemical Characterisation and Significance of Bitumen among the Grave Goods of the 7th Century Mound 1 Ship-Burial at Sutton Hoo (Suffolk, UK)', *PLoS ONE* 11(12) DOI: <10.1371/journal.pone.0166276>

- Burnett, C., I. Ronca, P. M. España and B. van den Abeele, ed. and transl., Adelard of Bath, 'De avibus tractatus', in *Adelard of Bath, Conversations with his Nephew. On the Same and the Different, Questions on Natural Science, and On Birds*, Cambridge Medieval Classics 9 (Cambridge and New York, 1998), pp. 237–74
- Burnside, J., 'At Wisdom's Table: How Narrative Shapes the Biblical Food Laws and Their Social Function', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135.2 (2016), 223–45
- Burrows, H., 'Enigma Variations: Hervarar saga's Wave-Riddles and Supernatural Women in Old Norse Poetic Tradition', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112.2 (2013), 194–216
- Busch, V., 'Kennings for "Raven" and "Eagle"', *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 51.1 (2021), 26–45
- Cade, T. J., 'Propagating Diurnal Raptors in Captivity: A Review', *International Zoo Yearbook* 24/25 (Jan 1986), 1–20
- Cajete, G., 'Native Science and Sustaining Indigenous Communities', in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*, ed. M. K. Nelson and Danial Shilling (Cambridge and New York, 2018), pp. 15–26
- Caldwell, J. R., 'On the Icelandic "Disciplina Clericalis"', *Scandinavian Studies and Notes* 10.5 (1929), 125–35
- Campbell, A., ed., *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938)
- Carstens, L., 'On the Hunt in Old Norse Sources', in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences. Papers Presented at a Workshop Organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) Schleswig, June 16th and 17th, 2011*, ed. O. Grimm and U. Schmölcke (Neumünster, 2013), pp. 397–417
- Caspermeyer, J., 'Holy Chickens: Did Medieval Religious Rules Drive Domestic Chicken Evolution?', *Molecular Biological Evolution* 34.8 (2017), 2123–24
- Cederschiöld, G., ed., 'Bærings saga', in *Fornsögur Sudrlanda. Magus saga jarls, Konrads saga, Bærings saga, Flovents saga, Bevers saga* (Lund, 1884), pp. 85–123

———, ed., ‘Mágus saga jarls’, in *Fornsögur Sudrlanda. Magus saga jarls, Konrads saga, Bærings saga, Flovents saga, Bevers saga* (Lund, 1884), pp. 1–42

CFA, ‘Balinese Point Score’,

<<http://cfa.org/Portals/0/documents/breeds/standards/balinese.pdf>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]

———, ‘Oriental Point Score’,

<<http://cfa.org/Portals/0/documents/breeds/standards/oriental.pdf>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]

Chang, V. S., J. Lejeune and K. M. Cheng, ‘The Pattern of Inheritance of Melanin-Based Plumage Color Variants in the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*)’, *Journal of Raptor Research* 44.3 (2010), 224–32

Church, M. J., S. V. Arge, S. Brewington, T. H. McGovern, J. M. Woollett, S. Perdikaris, I. T. Lawson, G. T. Cook, C. Amundsen, R. Harrison, Ye. Krivogorskaya and E. Dunbar, ‘Puffins, Pigs, Cod and Barley: Palaeoeconomy at Undir Junkarinsfløtti, Sandoy, Faroe Islands’, *Environmental Archaeology* 10.2 (2005), 179–97

Ciklamini, M., ‘*Exempla* in an Old Norse Historiographic Mold’, *Neophilologus* 81 (1997), 71–87

Clunies Ross, M., *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic saga* (Cambridge, 2010)

———, ‘The Cognitive Approach to Skaldic Poetics, from Snorri to Vigfússon and Beyond’, in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. R. McTurk and A. Wawn. Leeds Texts and Monographs New Series 11 (Leeds, 1999), pp. 267–86

———, ‘Frequent Flyers in Old Norse Myth’, in *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*, ed. G. Barnes and G. Singleton (Newcastle, 2005), pp. 79–96

———, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge, 2005)

———, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society I* (Odense, 1994)

- , ed., Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, ‘Haustlǫng’, in *Poetry From Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 431–63
- Cohen, J. J., *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (Basingstoke and New York, 2006)
- , *Medieval Identity Machines*, *Medieval Cultures* 35 (Minneapolis, 2003)
- Cook, R., and M. Tveitane, ed., ‘Jonet’, in *Strengleikar: An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais. Edited from the Manuscript Uppsala De la Gardie 4–7 — AM 666 b, 4to* (Oslo, 1979), pp. 229–45
- Crane, S., *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia, 2013)
- Dale, R. T. D., ‘*Berserkir*: A Re-Examination of the Phenomenon in Literature and Life’ (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2014)
- Dalton, H., J. Salo, P. Niemelä and S. Örmä, ‘Frederick II of Hohenstaufen’s Australasian Cockatoo: Symbol of Détente between East and West and Evidence of the Ayyubids’ Global Reach’, *Parergon* 35.1 (2018), 35–60
- Darwish, M., ‘Green Neo-Nazism: Examining the Intersection of Masculinity, Far-Right Extremism and Environmentalism in the Nordic Resistance Movement’ (unpubl. MA thesis, University of Oslo, 2018)
- Day, J., ‘Swift Advice for Ecologists’, *RSPB Website*, Published 11th June 2019, Last Updated 11th June 2019 <<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/news/stories/swift-advice-for-ecologists/#MdZpQM82OXurq1Ym.99>> [Accessed 11th July 2019]
- DeAngelo, J., ‘The North and the Depiction of the *Finnar* in the Icelandic Sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies* 82.3 (2010), 257–86
- Deckha, M., ‘Holding onto Humanity: Animals, Dignity and Anxiety in Canada’s *Assisted Human Reproduction Act*’, *Unbound* 5.21 (2009), 21–54



- Delnatte, P., S. Lair, G. Beauchamp, and G. Fitzgerald, 'Assessment of Regrowth of Flight Feathers after Manual Removal in American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)', *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine* 45.3 (2014), 600–10
- Dillmann, F. X., *Les magiciens dans l'Islande ancienne. Études sur la représentation de la magie islandaise et de ses agents dans les sources littéraires norroises*, Acta Academiae regiae Gustavi Adolphi 92 (Uppsala, 2006)
- Dobat, A. S., 'Bridging Mythology and Belief: Viking Age Functional Culture as a Reflection of the Belief in Divine Intervention', in *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions. An International Conference in Lund, Sweden, June 3–7, 2004*, ed. A. Andrén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, *Vägar till Midgard* 8 (Lund, 2006), pp. 184–89
- Dobiat, C., 'Early Falconry in Central Europe on the Basis of Grave Finds, with a Discussion of the Origin of Falconry', in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences. Papers Presented at a Workshop Organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) Schleswig, June 16th and 17th, 2011*, ed. O. Grimm and U. Schmolcke (Neumünster, 2013), pp. 343–56
- Dobney, K., D. Jacques, C. Johnstone, A. Hall, B. La Ferla and S. Hayes, 'The Agricultural Economy', in *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats: The Environmental Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Flixborough*, ed. K. Dobney, D. Jacques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, *Excavations at Flixborough* 3 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 116–89
- Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York, 1984 [1966])
- Dove, C. J., and S. Wickler, 'Identification of Bird Species Used to Make a Viking Age Feather Pillow', *Arctic* 69.1 (2016), 29–36
- Drew, K. F., ed. and trans., *The Burgundian Code. Book of Constitutions or Law of Gundobad. Additional Enactments* (Philadelphia, 1972)
- , *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (Philadelphia, 1991)

- Driscoll, M. J., ed. and trans., *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum: A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway*, 2nd ed., Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 10 (London, 2008)
- Driver, R. J. and A. L. Bond, 'Toward Redressing Inaccurate, Offensive, and Inappropriate Common Bird Names', *Ibis* pre-publication access (2021)  
<<https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.12984>>
- Dronke, U., ed., 'Völundarkviða', in *The Poetic Edda II: Mythological Poems* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 243–328
- Dubuisson, D., *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*, trans. W. Sayers (Baltimore, 2003)
- Durham, E., and M. Fulford, 'Symbols of Power: the Silchester Bronze Eagle and Eagles in Roman Britain', *Archaeological Journal* 170.1 (2013), 78–105
- Eden, P. T., ed., Theobaldus, *Theobaldi «Physiologus»*, *Mittellateinische studien und texte* 6 (Leiden and Cologne, 1972)
- Edgar, S., and A. M. Kinney, ed., *The Vulgate Bible*, 6 vols., *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 1, 4–5, 8, 13, 17, 21 (Cambridge, MA, 2010–13)
- Egerton, F. N., *Roots of Ecology: Antiquity to Haeckel* (Berkeley, CA, 2012)
- Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, *Reise igiennem Island I* (Copenhagen, 1772)
- Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed., *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Íslenzk fornrit* 12 (Reykjavík, 1954)
- , ed., 'Hallfreðar saga', in *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Íslenzk fornrit* 8 (Reykjavík, 1939), pp. 133–200
- , ed., 'Kormáks saga', in *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Íslenzk fornrit* 8 (Reykjavík, 1939), pp. 201–302
- Eithun, B., M. Rindal and T. Ulset, *Den Eldre Gulatingslova*, *Riksarkivet Norrøne Tekster* 6 (Oslo, 1994)
- Eliade, M., *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, transl. W. R. Trask (New York, 1964 [1951])
- Ellis Davidson, H.R., *Gods and myths of northern Europe* (Harmondsworth, 1964)

- Emery, N. J., and Clayton, N. S., ‘The Mentality of Crows: Convergent Evolution of Intelligence in Corvids and Apes’, *Science* 306, 5703 (10th Dec 2004), 1903–7
- Epstein, H. J., ‘The Origin and Earliest History of Falconry,’ *Isis* 34 (1943), 497–509
- Erfanefnd landbúnaðarins, *Íslenskar erfðaauðlindir: Landsáætlun um verndun erfðaauðlinda í íslenskri náttúru og landbúnaði 2009–2013* (Borgarnes, 2009)
- Ericson, P. G. P., E. Ingren and M. Vretemark, ‘Animal exploitation at Birka — a preliminary report’, *Fornvännen* 83 (1988), 81–8
- Ericson, P. G. P., B. Wigh, K. Svensson and Y. Bäckström, ‘Retrieval of Faunal Remains at the Excavations at Birka; Principals, Preliminary Results and an Outline of Future Osteological Analysis’, in *Excavations in the Black Earth*, ed. B. Ambrosiani and H. Clarke, Birka Studies 2 (Stockholm, 1995) pp. 82–9
- Ericson, P. G. P., and T. Tyrberg, *The Early History of the Swedish Avifauna: A Review of the Subfossil Record and Early Written Sources*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar Antikvariska serien 45 (Stockholm, 2004)
- Eriksen, A., and P. Wabakken, ‘Activity Patterns at the Arctic Circle: Nocturnal Eagle Owls and Interspecific Interactions During Continuous Midsummer Daylight’, *Journal of Avian Biology* 49.7 (June 2018) DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jav.01781>> [Accessed 10th July 2018]
- Evans, H. J., ‘Animal-Human Relations on the Household-Farm in Viking Age and Medieval Iceland’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2017)
- Faulkes, A., ed., *Edda islandorum. Völuspá. Hávamál: P. H. Resen’s Editions of 1665* (Reykjavík, 1977)
- , ed., *Edda Magnúsar Ólafssonar (Laufás Edda)* (Reykjavík, 1979)
- , ed., Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Háttatal*, 2nd edn. (London, 2007)
- , ed., Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 2nd edn. (London, 2005)
- , ed., Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Skáldskaparmál I: Introduction, Text and Notes* (London, 1998)
- Feeley, F. J., G. Cersario, W. Coleman, K. Crow, A. Hualinos, J. LeVasseur, O. Lysa, D. Ojeda, A. Rivers and T. Ryan, ‘The Final Report on the Archaeofauna from Context

- 147 at the Medieval Fishing Station at Gufuskálar, Western Iceland’, NORSEC Laboratory Report #65 (New York, 2018)
- Fellenz, M. R., *The Moral Menagerie: Philosophy and Animal Rights* (Urbana and Chicago, 2007)
- Fenton, A., *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1978)
- Ferguson-Lees, J., and D. A. Christie, *Raptors of the World* (London, 2001)
- Ferrando, F., ‘Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations’, *Existenz* 8.2 (2013), 26–32
- Fidjestøl, B., *The Dating of Eddic Poetry*, ed. O. E. Haugen, *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana* 41 (Copenhagen, 1999)
- Finch, R. G., ed. and transl., *Völsunga saga* (London, 1965)
- Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Alexanders saga: Islandsk oversættelse ved Brandr Jónsson (biskop til Holar 1263-64)* (Copenhagen, 1924)
- , ed., *Ari hinn fróði Þorgilsson: Íslendingabók* (Copenhagen, 1930)
- , *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd edn., 3 vols. (Copenhagen, 1920–4)
- , ed., *Flóamannasaga*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 56 (Copenhagen, 1932)
- , ed., *Hrólfss saga kraka og Bjarkarímur* (Copenhagen, 1904)
- , ed., Óláfr Þórðarson, *Málhljóðar- og málskrúðsrit. Grammatisk-retorisk afhandling*, *Historisk-filologiske Meddelelser* 13,2 (Copenhagen, 1927)
- , ed., ‘Sverris saga’, in *Eirspennill: Am 47 fol. Nóregs konunga sögur: Magnús góði - Hákon gamli* (Oslo, 1916), pp. 255–438
- , ed., Þormóður Trefilsson, ‘Hrafnsmál’, in *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning* B1, reprint (Copenhagen, 1973), pp. 196–97
- Forbes, V., ‘Duck Fleas as Evidence for Eiderdown Production on Archaeological Sites’, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 61 (2015), 105–11

- Forbes, V., A. J. Dugmore and Erling Ólafsson, 'The Life and Death of Barn Beetles: Faunas from Manure and Stored Hay Inside Farm Buildings in Northern Iceland', *Ecological Entomology* 41.4 (2016), 480–99
- Forth, G. 'Symbolic Birds and Ironic Birds: Varieties of Classification in Nage Folk Ornithology', *Ethnology* 48.2 (2008), 139–59
- Foster, B. O., ed. and transl., *Livy with an English Translation in Fourteen Volumes III: Books V, VI and VII* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1960)
- Fraiman, S., 'Pussy Panic versus Liking Animals: Tracking Gender in Animal Studies', *Critical Inquiry* 39.1 (Autumn 2012), 89–115
- Frank, R., 'Did Anglo-Saxon Audiences Have A Skaldic Tooth?', *Scandinavian Studies* 59.3 (1987), 338–55
- , 'Ornithology and the Interpretation of Skaldic Verse', *Saga-Book* 23 (1990–93), 81–3
- Frank, T., 'Classical Scholarship in Medieval Iceland', *American Journal of Philology* 30.2 (1909), 139–52
- Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged edition (New York, 1922)
- Freedman, P., 'The Medieval Spice Trade', in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, ed. J. M. Pilcher (Oxford, 2012), pp. 325–41
- , 'Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value', *Speculum* 80.4 (2005), 1209–27
- Friðrik G. Olgeirsson, *Alifuglinn: Saga alifuglaræktur á Íslandi frá landnámi til okkar daga* (Reykjavík, 2003)
- Friis-Jensen, K., ed., Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum. The History of the Danes*, transl. P. Fisher, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2015)
- Fulk, R. D., ed., Þorbjörn hornklofi, 'Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál)', in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 91–117

- Gade, K. E., ed., Einarr Skúlason, ‘Haraldsdrápa II’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 544–48
- , ed., Halldórr ókristni, ‘Eiríksflokkur’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 469–84
- , ed., Rognvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinnsson, ‘Háttalykill’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 1001–93
- , ed., Snorri Sturluson, ‘Háttatal’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 1094–210
- , ed., Sturla Þórðarson, ‘Hákonarkviða’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 699–727
- , ed., Sturla Þórðarson, ‘Hrafnsmál’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 727–45
- , ed., Þorbjörn skakkaskáld, ‘Erlingsdrápa’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 631–35
- , ed., Þórðr Særeksson, ‘Fragments’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 476–80
- , ed., Þorkell hamarskáld, ‘Magnússdrápa’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 409–14
- Gansum, T., ‘The Royal Viking Age Ship Grave from Gokstad in Vestfold, Eastern Norway, and its Link to Falconry’, in *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale II*, ed. H. Gersmann and O. Grimm,

- Advanced Studies on the Archaeology and History of Hunting 1.2 (Kiel and Hamburg, 2018), pp. 717–26
- Gardner, E. E., S. E. Walker and L. I. Gardner, ‘Palaeoclimate, Environmental Factors, and Bird Body Size: A Multivariable Analysis of Avian Fossil Preservation’, *Earth-Science Reviews* 162 (2016), 177–97
- GCCF, ‘Balinese (BAL)’,  
 <<https://www.gccfcats.org/Portals/0/Balinese.SOP.Template.pdf?ver=2018-06-30-232414-717>> [Accessed 31st Jan 2019]
- , ‘Oriental Longhair (OLH)’,  
 <<https://www.gccfcats.org/Portals/0/Oriental.LH.SOP.Template.pdf?ver=2018-08-28-154300-277>> [Accessed 31st January 2019]
- Gent, J. S., *The Experienc’d Fowler: or, The gentleman, citizen, and country-man’s pleasant and profitable recreation: Containing, I. The true art of taking water and land fowl, with divers kinds of nets, lime-twigs lime-bushes, and how to make the best bird-lime. II. Directions for bat-fowling, lowbelling, tramelling, and driving fowl, how to find their haunts, and take them with springes, snares, &c. III. An exact method for using the fowling-piece at a true level, to shoot at the water, ground, bush or flying* (London, 1697)
- Germ, T., ‘Plinijevo Naravoslovje in Srednjeveška Ikonografija Živali’, *Ars & Humanitas* 1 (2007), 70–96
- Gering, H., ‘Af kóngsynni ok kóngsdóttur’, in *Islendzk æventyri: Isländische Legenden Novellen und Märchen* I (Halle, 1882), pp. 212–15
- , ‘Frá lærisveini einum er freistaði vina sinnaí nauðum staddr’, in *Islendzk æventyri: Isländische Legenden Novellen und Märchen* I (Halle, 1882), pp. 164–65
- Gering, H., and B. Sijmons, *Die Lieder der Edda. Dritter Band: Kommentar, Zweite Hälfte: Heldenlieder* (Halle, 1931)
- Giese, M., ‘Kostbarer als Gold’, in *Farbe im Mittelalter. Materialität — Medialität — Semantik. Akten des 13. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes vom 1. bis 5. März 2009 in Bamberg*, ed. I. Bennewitz and A. Schindler (Berlin, 2011), pp. 665–78

- Gilhus, I. S., *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Thought* (London and New York, 2006)
- Goldsmith, M., 'The Seafarer and The Birds', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 5.19 (1954), 225–35
- Gotfredsen, A. B., 'Birds in Subsistence and Culture at Viking Age Sites in Denmark', *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 24 (2014), 365–77
- , 'The Role of Birds as Grave Gifts in Richly Furnished Roman Iron Age Inhumation Graves C. 1-375 AD, Eastern Denmark', *Anthropozoologica* 48.2 (2013), 355–70
- Gräslund, A. S., *Birka IV: The Burial Customs. A Study of the Graves on Björkö* (Stockholm, 1980)
- Griffith, M. S. 'Conventionality and Originality in the Old English "Beasts of Battle" Typescene', *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993), 179–99
- Grummett, D., 'Aristotle's Ethics and Farm Animal Welfare', *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 32 (2019), 321–33
- Grundy, S., *The Cult of Óðinn: God of Death?* (New Haven, CT, 2014)
- Grønlie, S., ed. and trans., *Íslendingabók, Kristni saga. The Book of the Icelanders, The Story of the Conversion*, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 28 (London, 2006)
- Guðbrandur Vigfússon, ed., 'Íslendinga saga', in *Sturlunga saga. Including the Islendinga Saga of Sturla Thordsson and Other Works*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1878), I, 189–409; II, 1–274
- , ed., 'Saga Svínfellinga', in *Sturlunga saga. Including the Islendinga Saga of Sturla Thordsson and Other Works* II (Oxford, 1878), pp. 83–103
- Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, ed., 'Hamborgar história', in *Flateyjarbok: En Samling af norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler I* (Oslo, 1860), pp. 17–8
- Guðmundur Þorláksson, 'Íslandsk-latinske gloser i et kalendarium i AM. 249, folio,' in *Småstykker*, ed. Kr. Kålund, M. Lorenzen, Guðmundur Þorláksson, S. Bugge, Finnur



- Jónsson and Jón Þorkelsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 13 (Copenhagen, 1884–91), pp. 78–99
- Guðni Jónsson, ed., ‘Grettis saga’, in *Grettis saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík, 1936), pp. 1–290
- , ed., ‘Ragnars saga loðbrókar’, in *Fornaldar sögur Noðurlanda I* (Reykjavík, 1954), pp. 219–85
- Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir, Egill Erlendsson, K. Vickers, T. H. McGovern, K. B. Milek, K. J. Edwards, I. A. Simpson and G. Cook, ‘The Palaeoecology of a High Status Icelandic Farm’, *Environmental Archaeology* 12.2 (2007), 187–206
- Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, ‘Reading and Writing in Medieval Iceland’, in *Teaching Writing, Learning to Write: Proceedings of the XVIth Colloquium of the Comité International de Paléographie Latine, held at The Institute of English Studies, University of London 2-5 September 2008*, ed. P. R. Robinson (London, 2010), pp. 155–62
- Gurevich, E., ‘Anonymous Þulur’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 649–63
- , ed., ‘Ara heiti’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 949–51
- , ed., ‘Fugla Heiti’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 951–59
- , ed., ‘Hana heiti’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 947–49
- , ed., ‘Hauks heiti’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 940–44

- , ed., ‘Hrafns heiti’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 944–47
- , ed., ‘Óðins nofn’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 731–53
- Haffer, J., ‘The Origin of Modern Ornithology in Europe’, *Archives of Natural History* 35.1 (2008), 76–87
- Haley-Halinski, K. A., ‘The Oars of the Eagle Are Feathers — Skaldic Practice and Perception Beyond Performance’, *Quaestio Insularis* 19 (2018), 52–70
- , ‘Paths of Belonging: Nomadic Identity and Ritual Place in the Rus’ Funeral of Ibn Fadlan’, *Rus’ and the World of the Nomads (The Second Half of the 9th–16th Century). Publication from the 7th International Scientific Conference, Plzeň, 23rd–26th November, 2016*, ed. V. Nagirnyy, Colliquia Russica series 1 vol. 7 (Krakow, 2017), pp. 45–54
- , ‘Transforming the Feminine Body: Swan-Women in Mythological Texts’, in *The Feminine in Old Norse Mythology and Folklore*, ed. T. Kuusela (forthcoming)
- Hall, C., O. Crowe, G. McElwaine, Ólafur Einarsson, N. Calbrade and E. Rees, ‘Population Size and Breeding Success of the Icelandic Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*: Results of the 2015 International Census’, *Wildfowl* 66 (2016), 75–97
- Halldór Hermannsson, ed., *The Icelandic Physiologus*, Islandica 27 (Ithaca, 1936)
- , ed., Jón Guðmundsson, ‘Ein Stutt Undirrietting um Íslands adskilianlegar náttúru’, in *Jón Guðmundsson and his Natural History of Iceland*, ed. Halldór Hermannsson (Ithaca, NY, 1924), pp. 1–40
- Hamer, A. *Njáls saga and its Christian Background: A Study of Narrative Method*, Germania Latina 8 (Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA, 2014)
- Hamilton-Dyer, S., *Skriðuklaustur Monastery, Iceland: Animal Bones 2003-2007*, Skýrslur Skriðuklaustursrannsókna 26 (Reykjavík, 2010)

- Hansen, L. I., and B. Olsen, *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History, The Northern World, North Europe and the Baltic c. 400–1700AD, Peoples, Economics and Cultures* 63 (Leiden and Boston, 2014)
- Haraway, D. J., *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, 2003)
- , *When Species Meet*, *Posthumanities* 3 (Minneapolis and London, 2008)
- Harland, J. F., R. A. Bennett, J. I. Andrews, T. O'Connor and J. H. Barrett, 'Fowling: The Bird Bone', in *Being an Islander: Production and Identity at Quoygrew, Orkney, AD 900-1600*, ed. J. H. Barrett (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 155–59
- Harris, J., 'Beasts of Battle, South and North', in *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 3–25
- Harrison, R., 'The Gásir Area A Archaeofauna: An Update of the Results from the Faunal Analysis of the High Medieval Trading Site in Eyjafjörður, N. Iceland', in *Gásir Post Excavation Reports I*, ed. H. M. Roberts, FS423-010712 (Reykjavík, 2009)
- , 'Small Holder Farming in Early Medieval Iceland: Skuggi in Hörgárdalur', *Archaeologica Islandica* 8 (2010), 51–76
- Harrison, R., S. Brewington, J. Woollett and T. H. McGovern, 'Interim Report of Animal Bones from the 2003 Excavations at Gásir, Eyjafjörður, N. Iceland', in *Excavations at Gásir 2003: An Interim Report*, FS238-01075 (Reykjavík, 2004), pp. 73–92
- Harrison, R., H. M. Roberts and W. P. Adderley, 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður: International Exchange and Local Economy in Medieval Iceland', *Journal of the North Atlantic* 1.1 (2008), 99–119
- Hastrup, K., *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400–1800* (Oxford, 1990)
- Hatto, A. T., 'The Swan-Maiden: A Folk-Tale of Eurasian Origin?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24.2 (1961), 326–52
- Hauck, K., 'Gudme als Kultort und seine Rolle beim Austausch von Bildformularen der Goldbrakteaten (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, L)', in *The Archaeology of Gudme*

and Lundeborg. *Papers Presented at a Conference at Svendborg, October 1991*, ed. P. O. Nielsen, K. Randsborg and H. Thrane (Copenhagen, 1994), pp. 78–88

———, ‘Machttaten Odens. Die Chiffrenwelt der Brakteaten und die Methoden ihrer Auswertung’, in *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit — Auswertung und Neufunde*, ed. W. Heizmann and M. Axboe, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 40 (Berlin and New York, 2011) pp. 1–60

———, ‘Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, IV. Metamorphosen Odins nach dem Wissen von Snorri und von Amulettmeistern der Völkerwanderungszeit’, in *Festschrift für Siegfried Gutenbrunner. Zum 65. Geburtstag am 26. Mai 1971 überreicht von seinen Freunden und Kollegen*, ed. O. Bandle, H. Klingenberg and F. Maurer (Heidelberg, 1972) pp. 47–70

———, ‘Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten LXI: Odin-Brakteaten in zwei Hortfunden der südwestjütländischen Balderverehrung im Kreis Ribe, Dänemark’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studier* 35.1 (2001), 97–119

Hauck, K., M. Axboe, K. Düwel, L. von Padberg, U. Smyra and C. Wypior, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 1,1* Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/1,1 (Munich, 1985)

Hauck, K., M. Axboe, U. Clavadetscher, K. Düwel and L. von Padberg, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 1,2*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/1,2 (Munich, 1985)

Hauck, K., H. Lange and L. von Padburg, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 1,3*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/1,3 (Munich, 1985)

———, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 2,2*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/2,2 (Munich, 1986)

Hauck, K., M. Axboe, K. Düwel, L. von Padburg and C. Wypior, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 2,1*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/2,1 (Munich, 1986)

- Hauck, K., M. Axboe, K. Düwel, L. von Padburg and H. Rulffs, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 3,1*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/3,1 (Munich, 1989)
- Hauck, K., M. Axboe, H. Lange and L. von Padburg, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog 3,2*, Münsterliche Mittelalter-Schriften 24/3,2 (Munich, 1989)
- Hauck, K., J. P. Lamm, H. Hydman, M. Axboe, H. Beck, C. Behr and A. Pesch, “Der Brakteat des Jahrhunderts.” Über den einzigartigen zehnten Brakteaten aus Söderby in der Gemeinde Danmark, Uppland (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, LVIII)’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 34 (2000), 1–93
- Heather, P., *The Goths* (Oxford and Malden, MA, 1997)
- Hedeager, L., ‘Myth and Art: A Passport to Political Authority in Scandinavia during the Migration Period’, transl. F. Campbell, in *The Making of Kingdoms. Papers from the 47th Sachsensymposium. York, September 1996*. Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 10, ed. T. Dickinson and D. Griffiths (Oxford, 1999), pp. 151–56
- Hedenstierna-Jonson, C., ‘Rus’, Varangians and Birka Warriors’, in *The Martial Society. Aspects of Warriors, Fortifications and Social Change in Scandinavia*, ed. L. Holmquist Olausson and M. Olausson, Theses and Papers in Archaeology B:11 (Stockholm, 2009), pp. 159–78
- Heidenreich, M., *Birds of Prey: Medicine and Management*, transl. Y. Oppenheim (Oxford, 1997)
- Heinäpäki, E., ‘Politics of the Sacred: Eliade, Bataille, and the Fascination of Fascism’, *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 10.2 (2009), 59–80
- Heinrich, B., *Ravens in Winter* (London, 1990)
- , *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf-Birds* (New York, 2002)
- Helle, K., ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. K. Helle (Cambridge and New York, 2003), pp. 1–12

- Hermann, P., ‘Key Aspects of Memory and Remembering in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature’, in *Minni and Muninn: Memory in Medieval Culture*, ed. P. Hermann, S. A. Mitchell and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 13–41
- Heslop, K., ed., Anon., ‘Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 1031–59
- , ed., Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson, ‘Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 400–40
- Hessels, J. H., and H. Kern, ed., *Lex Salica: the Ten Texts with the Glosses, and the Lex Emendata* (London, 1880)
- Hett, W. S., ed. and transl., Aristotle, *On the Soul*, Loeb Classical Library 288 (London, 1957)
- Hexter, R. J., ‘Location, Location, Location: Geography, Knowledge, and the Creation of Medieval Latin Textual Communities’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. R. J. Hexter and D. Townsend, (Oxford, 2012), pp. 192–214
- Hicks, M. T., *Skútustaðir: An Interim Zooarchaeological Report following the 2009 Field Season*, CUNY NORSEC Laboratory Report No. 48 (New York, 2010)
- Hieatt, C. B., transl., *Karlamagnús saga: the saga of Charlemagne and his heroes*, 3 vols., Medieval Sources in Translation 25 (Toronto, 1975–80)
- Higgins, J., ‘Túnel: A Case Study of Avian Zooarchaeology and Taphonomy’, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 26 (1999), 1449–57
- Hilka, A., and W. Söderhjelm, ed., Petrus Alphonsi, *Die Disciplina clericalis des Petrus Alfonsi (das älteste Novellenbuch des Mittelalters) nach allen bekannten Handschriften*, Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 1 (Heidelberg, 1911)
- Hines, J., ‘Review Article: The Final Publication of the Series “On the Iconology of the Gold Bracteates” and Karl Hauck’s Legacy’, *Medieval Archaeology* 57.1 (2013), 251–61
- Hingley, R., ‘The Deposition of Iron Objects in Britain during the Later Prehistoric and Roman Periods’, *Britannia* 37 (2006), 213–57

- Hobgood-Oster, L., *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana, 2008)
- von Hofsten, N., *Eddadikternas djur och växter* (Uppsala, 1957)
- Hogg, L. M., ‘Humans and Animals in the Norse North Atlantic’ (unpubl. PhD Thesis, University of Cardiff, 2015)
- Holland, G., ‘Kennings, Metaphors, and Semantic Formulae in Norse *dróttkvætt*’, *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 120 (2005), 123–47
- Holm-Olsen, L., ed., *Konungs skuggsjá*, Gammelnorske Texter 1 (Oslo, 1945)
- Holmström, H., *Studier över svanjungfrumotivet i Volundarkvida och annorstädes* (Malmö, 1919)
- Holtzmann, R., ed., Thietmar of Merseburg, *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korvier Überarbeitung*, 2nd ed., *Scriptores rerum germanicarum nova series* 9 (Berlin, 1955)
- Honegger, T., ‘Form and Function: The Beasts of Battle Revisited’, *English Studies* 79.4 (1998), 289–98
- Honka, J., M. T. Heino, L. Kvist, I. V. Askeyev, D. N. Shaymuratova, O. V. Askeyev, A. O. Askeyev, M. E. Heikkinen, J. B. Searle and J. Aspi, ‘Over a Thousand Years of Evolutionary History of Domestic Geese from Russian Archaeological Sites, Analysed Using Ancient DNA’, *Genes* 9.7 (2018), 367–79
- Howe, N., *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven and London, 1989)
- Hughes, S., ‘Late Secular Poetry’, in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. R. McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 31 (Malden, MA and Oxford, 2005), pp. 205–22
- Hunn, E. S., ‘Ethnozoology’, in *Ethnobiology*, ed. E. N. Anderson, D. M. Pearsall, E. S. Hunn and N. J. Turner (Hoboken, NJ, 2011), pp. 83–96
- Hunt, T., ‘Introduction’, in *Three Anglo-Norman Treatises on Falconry*, ed. Tony Hunt, *Medieval Ævum Monographs New Series* 26 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 1–14

Hurstwic, 'Viking Spear'

<[http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/manufacturing/text/viking\\_spear.htm](http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/manufacturing/text/viking_spear.htm)>

[Accessed 23rd August 2019].

Hødnebo, F., ed., *Norske diplomer til og med år 1300*, CCN folio 2 (Oslo, 1960)

Indrebø, G., ed. 'Sermo de euuangeliftif. in die sancti Johannis', in *Gamal Norsk Homiliebok. Cod. AM 619 4°* (Oslo, 1931), pp. 47–50

———, ed., 'In ascensione domini nostri [Iesu Cristi. Sermo ualde necessaria', in *Gamal Norsk Homiliebok. Cod. AM 619 4°* (Oslo, 1931), pp. 89–92

Ioanid, R., 'The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5.3 (2004), 419–53

IOC World Bird List, 'Capitalization' <<http://www.worldbirdnames.org/english-names/spelling-rules/capitalization>> [Accessed 3rd September 2018]

Irving-Pease, E. K., H. Ryan, A. Jamieson, E. A. Dimopoulos, G. Larson and L. A. F. Frantz, 'Paleogenomics of Animal Domestication', in *Paleogenomics: Genome-Scale Analysis of Ancient DNA*, ed. C. Lindqvist and O. P. Rajora (Cham, 2018), pp. 225–72

Jakob Benediktsson, ed., Björn Jónsson, *Skarðsárþók. Landnámabók Björns Jónssonar á Skarðsá* (Reykjavík, 1958)

———, ed., *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók I, Íslenszk fornrit 1.1* (Reykjavík, 1968)

———, ed. and transl., P. H. Resen, *Íslandslýsing* (Reykjavík, 1991)

Jansson, S. B. F., ed., *Sagorna om Vinland I: Handskrifterna till Erik den rödes saga*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar 60.1 (Stockholm, 1945)

Jaques, D., K. Dobney, J. Barrett, C. Johnstone, J. Carrott and A. Hall, 'The Nature of the Bioarchaeological Assemblages', in *Farmers, Monks and Aristocrats: The Environmental Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Flixborough*, ed. K. Dobney, D. Jacques, J. Barrett and C. Johnstone, Excavations at Flixborough 3 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 36–58

Jefford Franks, A., 'Alföðr, Völur, and Valkyrjur: Óðinn as a Queer Deity Mediating the Warrior Halls of Viking Age Scandinavia', *Scandia* 2 (2019), 28–65

Jennbert, K., *Animals and Humans: Recurrent Symbiosis in Archaeology and Old Norse religion* (Lund, 2011)



- , ‘Certain Humans, Certain Animals. Attitudes in the Long Term’, in *Exploring the Animal Turn: Human-Animal Relations in Science, Society and Culture*, ed. E. Andersson Cederholm, A. Björck, K. Jennbert and A. S. Lönngren (Lund, 2014), pp. 183–92
- , ‘The Mania of Its Time. Falconry and Bird Brooches at Uppåkra and Beyond’, in *On the Road. Studies in Honour of Lars Larsson*, ed. B. Hårdh, K. Jennbert and D. Olausson, *Acta Archaeologica Lundensia in 4to* 26 (Lund, 2007) pp. 24–8
- Jensen, B., ‘Chronospecificities: Period-Specific Ideas About Animals in Viking Age Scandinavian Culture’, *Society and Animals* 21 (2013), 208–21
- Jensen, X. P., ‘Ørnene Kommer’, *Skalk* 6/2017 (2017), 17–21
- Jesch, J., ‘Eagles, Ravens and Wolves: Beasts of Battle, Symbols of Victory and Death’, in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. J. Jesch (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 251–80
- Johnsen, O. A., and Jón Helgason, ed., *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga Biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to* (Oslo, 1941)
- Johnson, J. A., K. K. Burnham, W. A. Burham and D. P. Mindell, ‘Genetic Structure Among Continental and Island Populations of Gyrfalcons’, *Molecular Ecology* 16 (2007), 3145–60
- Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, ‘Women’s Weapons: A Re-Evaluation of Magic in the “Íslendingasögur”’, *Scandinavian Studies* 81.4 (2009), 409–36
- Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri I* (Leipzig, 1862)
- Jón Helgason, ed., *Heiðreks saga: Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 48 (Copenhagen, 1924)
- Jón Jóhannesson, ed., ‘Droplaugarsona saga’, in *Austfirðinga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík, 1950), pp. 135–80
- , ed., ‘Fljótsdæla saga’, in *Austfirðinga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík, 1950) pp. 213–96

- , ed., ‘Hrafnkels saga’, in *Austfirðinga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík, 1950), pp. 95-133
- , ed., ‘Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallarsonar’, in *Austfirðinga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík, 1950) pp. 297–320
- Jón Þorkelsson, ed., *Búalög um verðlag og allskonar venjur í viðskiptum og búskap á Íslandi* I, Sögurit 13 (Reykjavík, 1915)
- , ed., *Búalög um verðlag og allskonar venjur í viðskiptum og búskap á Íslandi* II, Sögurit 13 (Reykjavík, 1916)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenzka men* II (Copenhagen, 1893)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenzka men* III (Copenhagen, 1896)
- Jón Þórarinnsson, *Íslensk tónlistarsaga 1000–1800* (Reykjavík, 2012)
- Jónas Kristjánsson, ed., *Eyfirðinga saga*, Íslensk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík, 1956)
- Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., *Eddukvæði*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík, 2014)
- Kalinke, M. E., ed., ‘Ósvalds saga’, in *St. Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe, AZ, 2005), pp. 110–71
- , *St. Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe, AZ, 2005)
- Keyser, R., and P. A. Munch, ed., ‘Den latinske Original’, in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387. Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillige med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab* II (Oslo, 1848), pp. 462–67
- , ed., ‘Frostaþingslög’, in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387. Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillige med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab* I (Oslo, 1846), pp. 156–258

- , ed., ‘Nyere Lands-Lov’, in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387. Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillige med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab II* (Oslo, 1848), pp. 7–178
- , ed., ‘Sættar gerð Magnúsar konungs ok Jóns erchibyskups’, in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387. Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillige med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab II* (Oslo, 1848), pp. 468–77
- Kingender, F., *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages* (London, 1971)
- Kitson, P. R., ‘Old English Bird-Names I’, *English Studies* 78.6 (1997), 481–505
- , ‘Old English Bird-Names II’, *English Studies* 79.1 (1998), 2–22
- Kock, A., ‘Studier i de nordiska språkens historia’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 14 (1898), 213–70
- Kotva, S., ‘Sealanguage: Field Notes from the Anthropocene’, *Parse* 6 (2017), 14–33
- Kovalev, R. K., ‘Grand Princess Olga of Rus’ Shows the Bird: Her “Christian Falcon” Emblem’, *Russian History* 39 (2012), 460–517
- Kristoffersen, S., ‘Half Beast-Half Man: Hybrid Figures in Animal Art’, *World Archaeology* 42.2 (2010), 261–72
- , ‘Transformation in Migration Period Animal Art’, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 28.1 (1993), 1–17
- Kålund, Kr., ed., *Fljótsdæla hin meiri, eller, Den længere Droplaugarsona-saga*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 11 (Copenhagen, 1883)
- , ed., ‘Hamborgar historia’, in *Alfræði íslenzk: Íslandsk encyklopædisk litteratur III* (Copenhagen, 1917–18), pp. 59–62
- Kölbing, E., ed., *Elis saga ok Rosamundu* (Heilbronn, 1881)
- Lacey, M. E. R., ‘Avian Aurality in Anglo-Saxon England’, *World Archaeology* 46.3 (2014), 400–15
- , ‘Birds and Bird-lore in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England’ (unpubl. PhD thesis, University College London, 2013)

- La Farge, B., ed., Framarr víkingakonungr, ‘Lausavísur’, in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 587–95
- Lange, Chr. C. A., and C. R. Unger, ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen I* (Oslo, 1849)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen II* (Oslo, 1852)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen V* (Oslo, 1861)
- Larrington, C., transl., ‘The Lay of Fafnir’, in *The Poetic Edda*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2014), pp. 153–61
- , transl., ‘The Poem of Helgi Hiorvardsson’, in *The Poetic Edda*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2014), pp. 119–27
- , transl., ‘The Poem of Volund’, in *The Poetic Edda*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2014), pp. 98–104
- , ‘Þóra and Áslaug in *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*. Women, Dragons and Destiny’, in *Making History: Essays on the Fornaldarsögur*, ed. M. Arnold and A. Finlay (Exeter, 2010), pp. 53–68
- Larsen, H., ed., *An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany. MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43 with supplement from MS Trinity College (Dublin) L-2-27* (Oslo, 1931)
- Latham, J., *Index ornithologicus, sive, Systema ornithologiae: complectens avium divisionem in classes, ordines, genera, species, ipsarumque varietates: adjectis synonymis, locis, descriptionibus, &c.*, 2 vols. (London, 1790)
- de Leeuw van Weenen, A., ed., ‘Á jóladaginn’, in *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, Íslensk handrit series in quarto 3 (Reykjavík, 1993), fols. 74r–77v

- , ed., ‘Hátíð Jóhannesar postula’, in *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, Íslensk handrit series in quarto 3 (Reykjavík, 1993), fols. 82v–84r
- Le Goff, J., ‘The Historian and the Ordinary Man’, in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, transl. by A. Goldhammer (Chicago and London, 1980), pp. 225–36
- Leonard, M. T., and Horn, A. G., ‘Crowing in Relation to Status in Roosters’, *Animal Behaviour* 49.5 (1995), 1283–90
- Lerz, A., M. Henig, and K. Hayward, ‘The Minorities Eagle: A New Sculpture from London’s Eastern Roman Cemetery’, *Britannia* 48 (2017), 19–35
- Levin, S. R., *The Semantics of Metaphor* (Baltimore and London, 1977)
- Lévi-Strauss, C., *The Savage Mind*, anonymous translator (London, 1966)
- Lewis, D., *We, the Navigators: The Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific* (Canberra, 1972)
- Lindkvist, T. ‘Kings and Provinces in Sweden’, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge and New York, 2003), pp. 221–24
- Lindow, J., ‘Memory and Old Norse Mythology’, *Minni and Muninn: Memory in Medieval Nordic Culture*, ed. P. Hermann, S. A. Mitchell and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, *Acta Scandinavica* 4 (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 41–57
- Lindsay, W. M., ed., Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX. Tomus I, Libros I-X continens*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911), with corrections and preparation for online presentation by B. Thayer  
<[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12\\*.html#7](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12*.html#7)> (site last updated 20th May 2018) [Accessed 26th July 2020]
- Lindstrøm, T. C., ‘“I am the Walrus”: Animal Identities and Merging with Animals — Exceptional Experiences?’, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 45.2 (2012), 151–76
- Lindstrøm, T. C., and S. Kristofferson, ‘Figure It Out! Psychological Perspectives on Perception of Migration Period Animal Art’, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 34.2 (2001), 65–84

- Linnaeus, C., *Systema Naturæ: per regna tria naturæ, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species, cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis* I, 13th ed. (Stockholm, 1788)
- Ljungkvist, J., ‘Uppsala högars datering och några konsekvenser av en omdatering til tidiga vendeltiden’, *Fornvännen* 100 (2005), 245–59
- Lockwood, W. B., ‘Word Taboo in the Language of the Faroese Fishermen’, *Transactions of the Philological Society* 54.1 (1955), 1–24
- Loog, L., M. G. Thomas, R. Barnett, R. Allen, N. Sykes, P. D. Paxinos, O. Lebrasseur, K. Dobney, J. Peters, A. Manica, G. Larson and A. Eriksson, ‘Inferring Allele Frequency Trajectories from Ancient DNA Indicates That Selection on a Chicken Gene Coincided with Changes in Medieval Husbandry Practices’, *Molecular Biological Evolution* 34.8 (2017), 1981–90
- Loth, A., ed., ‘Jórsalaferð’, in *Karlamagnús saga. Branches I, III, VII et IX*, transl. A. Patron-Godefroit, Ogier le Danois 3 (Copenhagen, 1980), pp. 233–302
- , ed., ‘Oddgeirs saga danska. Les Enfances d’Ogier le Danois’, in *Karlamagnús saga. Branches I, III, VII et IX*, transl. A. Patron-Godefroit, Ogier le Danois 3 (Copenhagen, 1980), pp. 105–232
- Louis-Jensen, J., ‘Frontiers. Icelandic Manuscripts’, in *Frontiers in the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the Third European Congress of Medieval Studies (Jyväskylä, 10–14 June 2003)*, ed. O. Merisalo and P. Pahta, Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 35 (Louvain-La-Neuve, 2006), pp. 477–81
- Loumand, U., ‘The Horse and Its Role in Icelandic Burial Practices, Mythology, and Society’, in *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions. An International Conference in Lund, June 3–7, 2004*, ed. A. Andréén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, *Vägar till Midgard* 8 (Lund, 2006), pp. 130–34
- Love, J. A., *The Return of the Sea Eagle* (Cambridge, 1983)
- Lucas, G., ‘Pálstöftir: A Viking Age Shieling in Iceland’, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 41.1 (2008), 85–100

- Lyimo, C. M., A. Weigend, P. L. Msoffe, H. Eding, H. Simianer and S. Weigend, ‘Diversity and Genetic Contributions of Chicken Populations from African, Asian and European Regions’, *Animal Genetics* 45.6 (2014), 836–48
- Lyman, R. L., *Quantitative Paleozoology* (Cambridge, 2008)
- , *Vertebrate Taphonomy* (Cambridge, 1994)
- Lönnroth, L., ‘Heroine in Grief: The Old Norse Development of a Germanic Theme’, in *Inclinate Aurem: Oral Perspectives on Early European Verbal Culture. A Symposium*, ed. J. Halldén, M. Skafté Jensen and T. Pettitt (Odense, 2001), pp. 111–28
- Lönnroth, L., Vésteinn Ólason and A. Piltz, ‘Literature’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. K. Helle (Cambridge and New York, 2003), pp. 487–520
- MacDonald, K. C., and R. Blench, ‘Geese’, in *The Cambridge World History of Food I*, ed. K. F. Kiple and K. C. Ornelas (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 529–31
- MacHugh, D. E., G. Larson and L. Orlando, ‘Taming the Past: Ancient DNA and the Study of Animal Domestication’, *Annual Review of Animal Biosciences* 5 (2017), 329–351
- Magoun, F. P., ‘The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 56.2 (1955), 81–90
- Maltby, M., M. Allen, J. Best, B. T. Fothergill and B. Demarchi, ‘Counting Roman Chickens: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Human-Chicken Interactions in Roman Britain’, *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 19 (2018), 1003–15
- Marold, E., V. Busch, J. Krüger, A. D. Kyas and K. Seidel, ed., Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson, ‘Poem about Gizurr gullbrárskald’, in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. K. E. Gade and E. Marold, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* 3 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 254–56
- Marquiss, M., M. Madders, J. Irvine and D. N. Carss, ‘The Impact of White-tailed Eagles on Sheep Farming on Mull: Final Report’ (2004)  
<<https://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/47060/0014566.pdf>> [Accessed 26th October 2018]

- Marriott, M., 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity Without Dualism', in *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behaviour*, ed. B. Kapferer, SA Essays in Anthropology 1 (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 109–42
- Marshall, P., J. van der Plicht, G. T. Cook, P. M. Grootes, N. Bevan Athfield and M. Buzinny, '8.2 Scientific Dating Evidence', in *The Later Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Bishopstone: A Downland Manor in the Making*, ed. G. Thomas, CBA Research Report 163 (York, 2010), pp. 197–202
- Marvin, G., and S. McHugh, 'In It Together: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies', in *The Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies*, ed. G. Marvin and S. McHugh (Abingdon, 2014), pp. 1–9
- Marzluff, J. M., and T. Angell, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens* (New Haven and London, 2005)
- Mason, O., 'Aboriginal Australian Zoötechny', *American Anthropologist* 1.1 (1899), 45–81
- McDougall, D., and I. McDougall, ed. and transl., Theodoricus monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium. An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 11 (London, 1998)
- McGovern, T. H., 'Animal Bone', in *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations at a High Status Farm in Western Iceland*, ed. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir (Reykjavík, 2011), pp. 257–59
- McGovern, T. H., S. Perdikaris, Árni Einarsson and J. Sidell, 'Coastal Connections, Local Fishing, and Sustainable Egg Harvesting: Patterns of Viking Age Inland Wild Resource Use in Mývatn District, Northern Iceland', *Environmental Archaeology* 11.2 (2006), 187–205
- McGovern, T. H., S. Perdikaris, I. Mainland, P. Ascough, V. Ewens, Árni Einarsson, J. Sidell, G. Hambrecht and R. Harrison, 'The Archaeofauna', in *Hofstaðir: Excavations of a Viking Age Feasting Hall in North Eastern Iceland*, ed. G. Lucas, Institute of Archaeology Reykjavik Monograph 1 (Reykjavík, 2009), pp. 168–252
- McLean, S., 'The Whiteness of Green: Racialization and Environmental Education', *The Canadian Geographer* 57.3 (2013), 35–62



- McTurk, R., ed., Anon., ‘Krákumál’, in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 706–75
- Mehler, N., H. C. Küchelmann and B. Holterman, ‘The Export of Gyrfalcons from Iceland During the 16th Century: A Boundless Business in A Proto-Globalised World’, in *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale III*, ed. K. H. Gersmann and O. Grimm, Advanced studies on the archaeology and history of hunting 1.3 (Kiel and Hamburg, 2018), pp. 995–1018
- Meissner, R., *Die Kenningar der Skalden: ein Betrag zur skaldischen Poetik*, Rheinsche Beiträge und Hilfsbücher zur germanischen Philologie und Volkskunde 1 (Bonn and Leipzig, 1921)
- Merkelbach, R., ‘Eigi í mannligu eðli: Shape, Monstrosity and Berserkism in the *Íslendingasögur*’, in *Shapeshifters in Medieval North Atlantic Literature*, ed. S. F. Barriero and L. M. Cordo Russo (Amsterdam, 2019), pp. 83–106
- , *Monsters in Society: Alterity, Transgression, and the Use of the Past in Medieval Iceland* (Berlin and Boston, 2019)
- Miller, A. L., ‘The Swan-Maiden Revisited: Religious Significance of “Divine-Wife” Folktales with Special Reference to Japan’, *Asian Folklore Studies* 46 (1987), 55–86
- Miller, W. I., *Hrafnkel or the Ambiguities: Hard Cases, Hard Choices* (Oxford and New York, 2017)
- Mitchell, S. A., ‘II:10 Óðinn’s Ravens’, in *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies II: Case Studies*, ed. J. Glauser, P. Hermann and S. A. Mitchell (Berlin and Boston, 2018), pp. 454–62
- Mohr, N., *Forsøg til en islandsk Naturhistorie* (Copenhagen, 1786)
- Morell, X., and M. Suárez, ‘First Case of Swift *Apus apus* Parasiting House Martin *Delichon urbicum*’, *Anuari Ornitolòdic de les Balears: revista d’observació estudi i conservació dels aucells* 28 (2013), 11–6
- Morris, C. D., D. J. Rackham, C. E. Batey, J. P. Huntley, A. K. G. Jones and T. P. O’Connor, ‘Excavations at Freswick Links, Caithness 1980–82: Environmental Column Samples from the Cliff-side’, in *Norse and Later Settlement and Subsistence in the North Atlantic*, ed. C. D. Morris and D. J. Rackham (Glasgow, 1992), 43–102

- Moses, A. D., ‘“White Genocide” and Ethics of Public Analysis’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 21.2 (2019), 201–13
- Mulkeen, S., and T. P. O’Connor, ‘Raptors in Towns: Towards an Ecological Model’, *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 7 (1997), 440–49
- Mundal, E., *Fylgjemotiva i norrøn litteratur* (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, 1974)
- Nadasdy, P., ‘First Nations, Citizenship and Animals, or Why Northern Indigenous People Might Not Want to Live in Zoopolis’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 49.1 (2016), 1–20
- , ‘Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism’, *Ethnohistory* 52.2 (2005), 291–331
- Naish, D., and D. M. Martill, ‘Dinosaurs of Great Britain and the Role of the Geological Society of London in their Discovery: Ornithischia’, *Journal of the Geological Society, London* 165 (2008), 613–23
- Naish, D., and S. C. Sweetman, ‘A Tiny Maniraptorian Dinosaur in the Lower Cretaceous Hastings Group: Evidence from a New Vertebrate-Bearing Locality in South-East England’, *Cretaceous Research* 32 (2011), 464–71
- Nam, Jong Kuk, ‘Medieval European Medicine and Asian Spices’, *Korean Journal of Medical History* 23.2 (2014), 319–42
- Niles, J. D., ‘Skaldic Technique in *Brunanburh*’, *Scandinavian Studies* 59.3 (1987), 356–66
- North, R., ed. and transl., *The Haustlǫng of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir* (Enfield Lock, 1997)
- Näsman, U., ‘Introduction to the descriptions of Eketorp-I, -II & -III’, in *Eketorp: Fortification and Settlement on Öland/Sweden. The Monument*, ed. K. Borg, U. Näsman, and E. Wegraeus, transl. N. Stedt (Stockholm, 1976), pp. 45–60
- O’Connor, T. P., *The Animal Bones: Bones from the Anglo-Scandinavian Levels at 16-22 Coppergate, The Archaeology of York* 15/3 (London, 1989)
- , ‘Human Refuse as a Major Ecological Factor in Medieval Urban Vertebrate Communities’, in *Human Ecodynamics: Symposium of the Association for Environmental Archaeology*, ed. G. Bailey, R. Charles and N. Winder (Oxford, 2000), pp. 15–20

- Oehrl, S., ‘Can Pictures Lie? Hunting the Red Deer with Raptors — According to Visual Representations from the Viking Age’, in *Hunting in Northern Europe Until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences. Papers Presented at a Workshop Organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) Schleswig, June 16th and 17th, 2011*, ed. O. Grimm and U. Schmölcke (Neumünster, 2013), pp. 515–30
- Oelze, A., *Animal Rationality: Later Medieval Theories 1250-1350*, Investigating Medieval Philosophy 12 (Leiden and Boston, 2018)
- Oggins, R. S., *The Kings and their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 2004)
- Olmer, E., *Boksamlingar på Island 1179-1490. Enligt diplom*, Göteborgs högskolas årsskrift 8 (Gothenburg, 1902)
- Orri Vésteinsson, T. H. McGovern and C. Keller, ‘Enduring Impacts: Social and Environmental Aspects of Viking Age Settlement in Iceland and Greenland’, *Archaeologica Islandica* 2 (2002), 98–136
- Orten Lie, R., ‘Falconry, Falcon-Catching and the Role of Birds of Prey in Trade and as Alliance Gifts in Norway (800-1800 AD) with an Emphasis on Norwegian And Later Foreign Participants in Falcon-Catching’, in *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale II*, ed. K. H. Gersmann and O. Grimm, *Advanced Studies on the Archaeology and History of Hunting* 1.2 (Kiel and Hamburg, 2018), pp. 727–86
- Ova, ‘From the Farmer’s Cabinet. Poultry: The rearing of poultry produces much profit on a small investment’, *The Farmer’s Cabinet and American Herd Book, Devoted to Agriculture, Horticulture, and Rural and Domestic Affairs* 3.7 (1839), 217–18
- Ólafur Halldórsson (1), ed., *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons Lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Altinget 1281 og Réttarbætr: De for Island given Retterbøder af 1294, 1305 og 1314* (Copenhagen, 1904)
- Ólafur Halldórsson (2), ed., ‘Grettisfærsla’, in *Grettisfærsla: Safn ritgerða eftir Ólaf Halldórsson gefið út á sjötugsafmæli hans 18. Apríl 1990* (Reykjavík, 1990), pp. 19–50

- , ed., Oddr munk Snorrason, ‘Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar’, in *Færeyinga saga. Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Íslensk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík, 2006), pp. 123–362
- Ólafur Lárusson, ed., *Búalög um verðlag og allskonar venjur í viðskiptum og búskap á Íslandi III*, Sögurit 13 (Reykjavík, 1933)
- Ólöf Ósk Guðmundsdóttir, ‘Erfðafjölbreytileiki innan íslenska hæsnastofnsins metinn með greiningu örtungla’ (unpubl. BSc Thesis, Agricultural University of Iceland, 2011)
- Panchen, A. L., *Classification, Evolution and the Nature of Biology* (Cambridge, 1992)
- Protopapadakis, E. D., ‘Environmental Ethics and Linkola’s Ecofascism: An Ethics Beyond Humanism’, *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 9.4 (2014), 586–601
- Patterson, I. J., *The Shelduck: A Study in Behavioural Ecology* (Cambridge and New York, 1982)
- Pálmi Pálsson, ed., *Króka-Refs saga og Króka-Refs rímur* (Copenhagen, 1883)
- Perkins, R., ‘The Dreams of *Flóamanna saga*’, *Saga-Book* 19 (1974–77), 191–238
- Pitt, J., P. K. Gillingham, M. Maltby and J. R. Stewart, ‘New Perspectives on the Ecology of Early Domestic Fowl: An Interdisciplinary Approach’, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 74 (2016), 1–10
- Pizzari, T., and T. R. Birkhead, ‘For Whom Does the Hen Cackle? The Function of Postoviposition Cackling’, *Animal Behaviour* 61 (2001), 601–7
- Platt, J. B., D. M. Bird and L. Bardo, ‘Captive Breeding’, in *Raptor Research and Management Techniques*, ed. D. M. Bird and K. L. Bildstein, 2nd ed. (Blaine, WA and Surrey, B.C., 2007), pp. 383–400
- Pluskowski, A., ‘Animal Magic’, in *Signals of Beliefs in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. M. Carver, A. Sanmark and S. Semple (Oxford and Oakville, 2010), pp. 103–27
- , *Wolves and Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006)
- Poole, K., ‘7.1 Mammal and Bird Remains’, in *The Later Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Bishopstone: A Downland Manor in the Making*, ed. G. Thomas, CBA Research Report 163 (York, 2010), pp. 142–56

- , ‘More Than Just Meat: Animals in Viking-Age Towns’, in *Everyday Life in Viking-Age Towns: Social Approaches to Towns in England and Ireland, c. 800–1100*, ed. D. M. Hadley and L. ten Harkel (Oxford, 2013), pp. 144–57
- Poole, R., ed., Eyvindr skáldspillir Finsson, ‘Lausavísur’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 213–34
- , ed., Gunnlaugr Leifsson, ‘Merlinusspá II’, in *Poetry in fornaldarsögur*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 8 (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 134–89
- , ed., Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsson, ‘Lausavísur’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 128–37
- Praet, I., ‘The Positional Quality of Life and Death: A Theory of Human-Animal Relations in Animism’, *Anthrozoös* 26.3 (2013), 341–55
- Price, B. A., Session 4: Norse Texts and Northern Cultures discussion, Gender and Medieval Studies Conference 2021: Gender and Mobility, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021
- Price, E. O., ‘Behavioural Aspects of Animal Domestication’, *Quarterly Review of Biology* 59 (1984), 1–32
- Price, N., *The Viking Way*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and Philadelphia, 2019)
- Probyn-Rabsey, F., S. O’Sullivan and Y. Watt, ““Pussy Panic” and Glass Elevators: How Gender is Shaping the Field of Animal Studies”, *Australian Feminist Studies* 34.100 (2019), 198–215
- Prummel, W., ‘Evidence of Hawking (Falconry) from Bird and Mammal Bones’ *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 7 (1997), 333–38
- , ‘Falconry in Continental Settlements as Reflected by Animal Bones from the 6th to 12th Centuries AD’, in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences. Papers Presented at a Workshop Organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) Schleswig, June 16th and 17th, 2011*, ed. O. Grimm and U. Schmölcke (Neumünster, 2013) pp. 357–77

- Quijano, A., ‘Questioning “Race”’, *Socialism and Democracy* 21.1 (2007), 45–53
- Quinn, J., ‘Valkyries’, in *The Pre-Christian Religions of the North: History and Structures*, ed. A. Andrén, J. Lindow and J. P. Schjødt, Pre-Christian Religions of the North 3 (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 1513–26
- Rackham, H., ed. and transl., Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Loeb Classical Library 73 (London, 1926)
- , ed. and transl., Pliny, *Natural History with an English Translation in Ten Volumes* III (London and Cambridge, MA, 1940)
- Rafn, C. C., ‘Ketils saga hængs’, in *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda II* (Copenhagen, 1829–30), pp. 109–39
- , ed., ‘Sörla saga sterka’, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda III* (Copenhagen, 1830), pp. 408–52
- Ragnar Edvardsson and T. H. McGovern, ‘Archaeological Excavations at Vatnsfjörður 2003–4’, *Archaeologica Islandica* 4 (2004), 16–30
- Ranisch, W., ed., *Die Gautrekssaga in zwei Fassungen*, Palaestra 11 (Berlin, 1900)
- Raschellà, F. D., ed., *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, Filologia Germanica Testi e Studi 2 (Firenze, 1982)
- Raven, P. H., B. Berlin and D. Breedlove, ‘The Origins of Taxonomy’, *Science* 174 (1971), 1210–13
- Rea, A. M., *Wings in the Desert: A Folk Ornithology of the Northern Pimans* (Tucson, 2007)
- Reeve, M. D., ed., Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of the De gestis Britonum*, transl. N. Wright, Arthurian Studies 69 (Woodbridge, 2007)
- Rindal, M., ed., *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, Norrøne tekster 4 (Oslo, 1981)
- Rohrbach, L., *Der tierische Blick: Mensch-Tier-Relationen in der Sagaliteratur*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie 43 (Tübingen, 2009)
- Rosenberg, N. A., T. Burke, K. Elo, M. W. Feldman, P. J. Freidlin, M. A. M. Groenen, J. Hillel, A. Mäki-Tanila, M. Tixier-Boichard, A. Vignal, K. Wimmers and S. Weigend,

- ‘Empirical Evaluation of Genetic Clustering Methods Using Multilocus Genotypes From 20 Chicken Breeds’, *Genetics* 159 (2001), 699–713
- Rowe, E. A., ‘Generic Hybrids: Norwegian “Family” Sagas and Icelandic “Mythic-Heroic” Sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies* 65.4 (1993), 539–54
- Rowland, B., *Birds with Human Souls: A Guide to Bird Symbolism* (Knoxville, TN, 1978)
- Salisbury, J. E., *The Beast Inside: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York and London, 1994)
- Sanford, E. M., and W. M. Green, ed. and transl., Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans in Seven Volumes V* (Cambridge, MA, 1965)
- Sauckel, A., *Die literarische Funktion von Kleidung in den Íslendingasögur und Íslendingaþættir*, Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde – Ergänzungsbände 83 (Berlin and Boston, 2014)
- Sayers, W., ‘Power, Magic and Sex: Queen Gunnhildr and the Icelanders’, *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* 8 (1995), 57–77
- Sayle, K. L., G. T. Cook, P. L. Ascough, H. R. Hastie, Árni Einarsson, T. H. McGovern, M. T. Hicks, Ágústa Edwald and Adolf Friðriksson, ‘Application of <sup>34</sup>S Analysis for Elucidating Terrestrial, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems: Evidence of Animal Movement/Husbandry Practices in an Early Viking Community Around Lake Mývatn, Iceland’, *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* 120 (2013), 531–44
- Schjødt, J. P., ‘Óðinn—Shaman eller fyrstegud?’, in *Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Religionsgeschichte Festschrift für Anders Hultgård zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 23.12.2001*, ed. A. van Nahl, M. Stausberg and O. Sundqvist (Berlin and New York, 2001), pp. 562–77
- Schmeidler, B., ed., Adam of Bremen, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, 3rd ed. (Hannover and Leipzig, 1917)
- von Schnurbein, S., *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism*, Studies in Critical Research on Religion 5 (Leiden and Boston, 2016)
- , ‘Shamanism in the Old Norse Tradition: A Theory Between Ideological Camps’, *History of Religions* 43.2 (2003), 116–38

- Schroer, S. A., ‘A View from Anthropology: Falconry, Domestication and the “Animal Turn”’, in *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale I*, ed. K. H. Gersmann and O. Grimm, *Advanced Studies on the Archaeology and History of Hunting 1.1* (Kiel and Hamburg, 2018), pp. 313–21
- Schulman, J. K., ed., *Jónsbók: The Laws of Later Iceland; the Icelandic Text According to MS AM 351 fol. Skálholtsbók eldri* (Saarbrücken, 2010)
- Schulte, M., ‘Kenning, Metafor og Metonymi: Om Kennings Kognitive Grunnstruktur’, *Edda* 1.14 (2014), 17–32
- Schulz, K., *Riesen: von Wissenshütern und Wildnisbewohnen in Edda und Saga*, *Skandinavistische Arbeiten 20* (Heidelberg, 2004)
- Scott-Ram, N. R., *Transformed Cladistics, Taxonomy and Evolution* (Cambridge, 1990)
- von See, K., B. La Farge, E. Picard and K. Schulz, ‘Völundarkviða’, in *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda III: Götterlieder* (Heidelberg, 2000), pp. 77–265
- von See, K., B. La Farge, E. Picard, K. Schulz and M. Teichert, ‘Guðrúnarkviða I’, in *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda VI: Heldenlieder* (Heidelberg, 2009), pp. 195–278
- Seelow, H., ed., *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*, *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi rit 20* (Reykjavík, 1981)
- Serjeantsen, D., *Birds* (Cambridge, 2009)
- , ‘Birds: Food and a Mark of Status’, in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T. Waldron (Oxford and New York, 2006), pp. 131–47
- Seymour, M. C., ed., *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum: a critical text I* (Oxford, 1975)
- Shank, M. H., and D. C. Lindberg, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge History of Science II: Medieval Science*, ed. M. H. Shank and D. C. Lindberg, (Cambridge and New York, 2013), pp. 1–26



- Shapiro, B., ‘Ancient DNA’, in *The Princeton Guide to Evolution*, ed. D. A. Baum, D. J. Futuyama, H. E. Hoekstra, R. E. Lenski, A. J. Moore, C. L. Peichel, D. Schluter and M. C. Whitlock (Princeton and Oxford, 2013), pp. 477–84
- Shaw, P. A., ‘Telling a Hawk from an “Herodio”’: On the Origins and Development of the Old English Word “Wealhhafof” and its Relatives’, *Medium Ævum* 82.1 (2013), 1–22
- Shemesh, A. O., “‘And God Gave Solomon Wisdom”’: Proficiency in Ornithomancy’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74.1 (2018), 1–9
- Shimmura, T., and T. Yoshimura, ‘Circadian Clock Determines the Timing of Rooster Crowing’, *Current Biology* 23.6 (2013), R321–23
- Shimmura, T., S. Ohashi, and T. Yoshimura, ‘The Highest-Ranking Rooster Has Priority to Announce the Break of Dawn’, *Scientific Reports* 5 (2015), 1–9
- Sidky, H., *Haunted by the Archaic Shaman: Himalayan Jhākris and the Discourse on Shamanism* (Lanham and Plymouth, 2008)
- Sigurður Ægisson, *Íslensku fuglarnir og þjóðtrúin* (Reykjavík, 2020)
- Sigurður Nordal, ed., *Flateyjarbók I* (Akranes, 1944)
- Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, ed., ‘Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu’, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, Íslenzk Fornrit 3 (Reykjavík, 1938), pp. 49–107
- , ed. ‘Hænsa-Þóris saga’, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, Íslenzk Fornrit 3 (Reykjavík, 1938), pp. 1–47
- Silver, M., ‘Honk If You Think Geese Are Good Guard Dogs’, *National Geographic Online*, published 27th July 2013 <<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/07/130725-geese-guard-police-china/>> [Accessed 20th June 2019]
- Slavin, P., ‘Chicken Husbandry in Late-Medieval Eastern England: c. 1250–1400’, *Anthropozoologica* 44.2 (2009), 35–56
- , ‘Goose Management and Rearing in Late Medieval Eastern England, c. 1250–1400’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 58.1 (2010), 1–29
- Smirnova, A., Z. Zorina, T. Obozova and E. Wasserman, ‘Crows Spontaneously Exhibit Analogical Reasoning’, *Current Biology* 25.2 (Jan 2015), 256–60

- Soffia Guðný Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir, ‘Book Production in the Middle Ages’, in *The Manuscripts of Iceland*, ed. Gísli Sugiurðsson and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík, 2004), pp. 45–61
- Soma, T., ‘Human and Raptor Interactions in the Context of a Nomadic Society Anthropological and Ethno-Ornithological Studies of Altaic Kazakh Falconry and its Cultural Sustainability in Western Mongolia’ (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Kassel, 2014)
- Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, ‘Exploitation of Wild Birds in Iceland from the Settlement Period to the 19th Century and its Reflection in Archaeology’, *Archaeologica Islandica* 10 (2013), 28–52
- Spivak, G. C., *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1999)
- Stahler, D., B. Heinrich and D. Smith, ‘Common Ravens, *Corvus corax*, Preferentially Associate with Grey Wolves, *Canis lupus*, as a Foraging Strategy in Winter’, *Animal Behaviour* 64 (2002), 283–90
- Starkey, K., ‘Imagining an Early Odin: Gold Bracteates as Visual Evidence?’, *Scandinavian Studies* 71.4 (1999), 373–392
- Steel, K., *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus, OH, 2011)
- Stefán Aðalsteinsson, ‘Sérstaða íslenskra húsdýra’, *Freyr* 100.5 (2004), 15–28
- , ‘Uppruni íslenskra húsdýra’, in *Íslensk Þjóðmenning I: Uppruni og umhverfi*, ed. Frosti F. Jóhannsson (Reykjavík, 1987), pp. 31–46
- Stefán Karlsson, ed., *Íslandske Originaldiplomer indtil 1450. Tekst*, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ Ser. A vol. 7 (Copenhagen, 1963)
- Sten, S., and M. Vretemark, ‘Storgravsprojektet — osteologiska analyser av yngre järnålderens benrika brandgravar’, *Fornvännen* 83 (1988), 145–56
- Stevens, L., *Genetics and Evolution of the Domestic Fowl* (Cambridge, 1991)
- Storli, I., ‘Othere and his World — a Contemporary Perspective’, in *Othere’s Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages Along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and*

- its Cultural Context*, ed. J. Bately and A. Englert, *Maritime Culture of the North 1* (Roskilde, 2007), pp. 76–99
- Storm, G., ed., ‘Historia Norvegiae’, in *Monumenta historica Norvegiae. Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen udgivne efter offentlig foranstaltning* (Oslo, 1880), pp. 69–124
- , ed., *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (Copenhagen, 1888)
- , ed., Theodoricus monachus, ‘Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensum’, in *Monumenta historica Norvegiae. Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen udgivne efter offentlig foranstaltning* (Oslo, 1880), pp. 1–68
- Storm, G., and E. Hertzberg, ed., Árni Þorláksson, ‘Biskop Arnes Kristenret’, in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387. Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillige med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab V* (Oslo, 1895), pp. 16–55
- Strehlau, H., ‘Animals in burial contexts. An investigation of Norse rituals and human-animal relationships during the Vendel Period and Viking Age in Uppland, Sweden’, (unpubl. MA thesis, Uppsala University, 2018)
- Stylegar, F. A., ‘The Kaupang Cemeteries Revisited’, in *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, ed. D. Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series I, Norske Oldfunn 22 (Aarhus, 2007), pp. 65–101
- Subramanian, S., *Industrial Security Management* (Delhi, 2006)
- Suolahti, H., *Die deutschen Vogelnamen. Eine wortgeschichliche Untersuchung* (Strasbourg, 1909)
- Sveinn Pálsson, ed. and transl., \*Oddur Einarsson, *Íslandslýsing. Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiae*, transl. Sveinn Pálsson (Reykjavík, 1971)
- Swainson, C., *Provincial Names and Folk Lore of British Birds* (London, 1885)
- Swift, B. L., K. J. Clarke, R. A. Holevinski and E. M. Cooper, *Status and Ecology of Mute Swans in New York State. DRAFT Final Report* (Albany, NY, 2013)
- Sykes, N., ‘A Social Perspective on the Introduction of Exotic Animals: The Case of the Chicken’, *World Archaeology* 44.1 (2012), 158–69

- Thomas, R., ed., Peter Abelard, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum* (Stuttgart-Bed Cannstatt, 1970)
- Thornhill, R., ‘The Jungle Fowl Hen’s Cackle Incites Male Competition’, *Verhandlungen der Deutschen Zoologischen Gesellschaft* 81 (1988), 145–54
- Tidemann, S., S. Chirwin and J. Ross Sinclair, ‘Indigenous Knowledges, Birds that Have “Spoken” and Science’, in *Ethno-ornithology: Birds, Indigenous Peoples, Culture and Society*, ed. S. Tidemann and A. Gosler (London and Washington, DC, 2010), pp. 3–12
- Todd, Z., ‘An Indigenous Woman’s Take in the Ontological Turn: “Ontology” is Just Another Word for Colonialism’, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29.1 (2016), 4–22
- Toivanen, J., ‘Marking the Boundaries: Animals in Medieval Latin Philosophy’, in *Animals. A History*, ed. P. Adamson and G. F. Edwards (Oxford and New York, 2018), pp. 121–50
- Tolley, C., *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic I*, Folklore Fellows’ Communications 296 (Helsinki, 2009)
- Tomasevic, J. A., and J. M. Marzluff, ‘Cavity Nesting Birds Along an Urban-Wildland Gradient: Is Human Activity Restructuring the Bird Community?’, *Urban Ecosystems* 20 (2017), 435–48
- Trut, L. N., ‘Early Canid Domestication: The Farm-Fox Experiment: Foxes Bred for Tamability in a 40-Year Experiment Exhibit Remarkable Transformations That Suggest an Interplay Between Behavioral Genetics and Development’, *American Scientist* 87.2 (1999), 160–69
- Tunstall, M., *Ornithologia Britannica: seu Avium omnium Britannicarum tam terrestrium, quam aquaticarum catalogus, sermone Latino, Anglico et Gallico redditus: cui subjunctur appendix avec alennigenas, in Angliam raro advenientes, complectens* (London, 1771)
- Turville-Petre, E. O. G., ed., *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 2, 5th corrected reprint (London, 2014)
- , *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (Westport, Connecticut, 1964)

- Turville-Petre, J., 'Two Etymological Notes: Ancrene Wisse eskibah, hond þet ilke', *Studia Neophilologica* 41.1 (1969), 156–61
- Tyrberg, T., 'The Archaeological Record of Domesticated and Tamed Birds in Sweden. Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the ICAZ Bird Working Group, Krakow, Poland, 11–15 September, 2001', *Acta Zoologica Cracoviensia* 45 (2002), 215–31
- Uecker, H., ed., *Der Wiener Psalter, Cod. Vind. 2713*, Editiones Arnemagnæanæ Series B 27 (Copenhagen, 1980)
- Unger, C. R., ed., 'Af Otvel', in *Karlamagnus saga ok kappu hans: Fortællinger om Keiser Karl Magnus og hans Jævnninger i norsk Bearbejdelse fra det trettende Aarhundrede* (Oslo, 1860), pp. 433–64
- , ed., 'Ceciliu saga meyjar', in *Heilagra Manna Sögur: Fortællinger og Legender om hellige Mænd og Kvinder I* (Oslo, 1877), pp. 275–97
- , ed., 'Marteins saga byskups', in *Heilagra Manna Sögur: Fortællinger og Legender om hellige Mænd og Kvinder I* (Oslo, 1877), pp. 554–74
- , ed., *Stjorn. Gammelnorsk bibelhistorie fra verdens skabesle til det Babyloniske fangenskab* (Oslo, 1862)
- , ed., *Thomas saga erkibyskups: Fortælling om Thomas Becket, erkebiskop af Canterbury. To bearbejdelse samt fragmenter af en tredie, efter gamle haandskrifter* (Oslo, 1869)
- Unger, C. R., and H. J. Huitfeldt-Kaas, ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen VII* (Oslo, 1869)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen VIII* (Oslo, 1874)
- , ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen XV* (Oslo, 1900)

- Valgerða Erna Þorvaldsdóttir, ed., Sturla Þórðarson, ‘Hrynhenda’, in *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. K. E. Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 676–98
- VanPool, C. S., and T. L. VanPool, ‘The Semantics of Local Knowledge: Using Ethnosemantics to Study Folk Taxonomies’, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 65.4 (2009), 529–54
- Varner, G., ‘A Two-Level Utilitarian Analysis of Relationships with Pets’, in *Pets and People: The Ethics of Our Relationships with Companion Animals*, ed. C. Overall (Oxford and New York, 2017), pp. 64–79
- Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., *Grágás: Elzta lögbók íslendinga. Eptir skinnbókinni í bóksafni konungs II* (Copenhagen, 1852)
- , *Grágás. Staðarhólsbók. Genoptrykt efter Vilhjálmur Finsens udgave 1879* (Odense, 1974)
- Vonk, J., ‘Corvid Cognition: Something to Crow About?’, *Current Biology* 25.2 (Jan 2015), R69–R71
- Vretemark, M., ‘Birds of Prey as Evidence for Falconry in Swedish Burials and Settlements (550-1500 AD)’, in *Raptor and Human — Falconry and Bird Symbolism Throughout the Millennia on a Global Scale II*, ed. K. H. Gersmann and O. Grimm, *Advanced Studies on the Archaeology and History of Hunting* 1.2 (Kiel and Hamburg, 2018), pp. 827–39
- , ‘Evidence of Animal Offerings in Iron Age Sweden’, in *Bones, Behaviour and Belief. The Zooarchaeological Evidence as a Source for Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece and Beyond*, ed. G. Ekroth and J. Wallensten, *Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen*, 4to, 55 (Stockholm, 2013), pp. 51–9
- , ‘Human Remains and Animal Offerings’, in *Vendel Period Studies: Transactions of the Boat-Grave Symposium in Stockholm, February 2–3, 1981*, ed. J. P. Lamm and H. Å. Nordström (Stockholm, 1983), pp. 139–42
- , ‘The Vendel Period royal follower’s grave at Swedish Rickeby as starting point for reflections about falconry in Northern Europe,’ in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and*

- Continental Influences. Papers Presented at a Workshop Organized by the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) Schleswig, June 16th and 17th, 2011*, ed. O. Grimm and U. Schmölcke (Neumünster, 2013), pp. 379–86
- Walker, S. J., A. K. Hufthammer and H. J. M. Meijer, ‘Birds in Norway’, *Open Quaternary* 5.1 (2019). DOI: 10.5334/oq.58
- Walker-Meikle, K., *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge, 2012)
- Wallander, A., ‘The Workshop Area in Eketorp-III’, in *Eketorp: Fortification and Settlement on Öland/Sweden. The Monument*, ed. K. Borg, U. Näsman, and E. Wegraeus, transl. N. Stedt (Stockholm, 1976), pp. 189–202
- Wallis, R. J., ‘Re-Examining Stone “Wrist-Guards” as Evidence for Falconry in Later Prehistoric Britain’, *Antiquity* 88(340) (2014), 411–24
- Wang, F., and F. Basso, “‘Animals Are Friends, Not Food’: Anthropomorphism Leads to Less Favourable Attitudes Toward Meat Consumption and Feelings of Anticipatory Guilt’, *Appetite* 138 (2019), 153–73
- Warner, D. A., ed. and transl., Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester and New York, 2001)
- Warren, M. J., *Birds in Medieval English Poetry: Metaphors, Realities, Transformations* (Woodbridge, 2018)
- Watson, J., S. R. Rae and R. Stillman, ‘Nesting Density and Breeding Success of Golden Eagles in Relation to Food Supply in Scotland’, *Journal of Animal Ecology* 61.3 (October 1992), 543–50
- Weber, R., and R. Gryson, ed., *Biblia sacra: iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, 5th edn. (Stuttgart, 2007)
- Weiss, J., ed., *Wace’s Roman de Brut: A History of the British. Text and Translation*, rev. ed. (Exeter, 2002)
- West, A. J., ‘A Bad Cockatoo Article in the New Yorker’, *Medium* (6<sup>th</sup> July 2021) <<https://indomedieval.medium.com/a-bad-cockatoo-article-in-the-new-yorker-93b33ea29a6b>> [Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021]

- White, C., ‘Hunters Ring Dinner Bell for Ravens: Experimental Evidence of a Unique Foraging Strategy’, *Ecology* 86.4 (2005), 1057–60
- White, P. A., ‘The Latin Men: The Norman Sources of the Scandinavian Kings’ Sagas’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 98.2 (1999), 157–69
- Whitman, C. H., ‘The Birds of Old English Literature’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 2.2 (1898), 149–98
- Wicker, N., and H. Williams, ‘Bracteates and Runes’, *Futhark* 3 (2012), 151–213
- Widding, O., ed., ‘Vmm fotta læiðretting’, in *De virtutibus et vitiis i norsk-islandsk overlevering, og Udvidelser til Jonsbogens kapitel om domme*, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ 4 (Copenhagen, 1960), pp. 79–81
- Williams, H., ‘Animals, Ashes and Ancestors’, in *Just Skin and Bones? New Perspectives on Human-Animal Relations in the Historical Past*, ed. A. Pluskowski, BAR International Series 1410 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 19–41
- Wilson, S., ‘Self-As-Relationship in Indigenous Research’, *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25.2 (2001), 91–2
- Wisén, T., ‘Herburts rímur’, in *Riddara rímur efter handskrifterna utgifna II* (Copenhagen, 1881), pp. 65–90
- Witton, M., ‘Baryonyx Begins’, *Markwitton.com Blog* (15<sup>th</sup> January 2014)  
 <<http://markwitton-com.blogspot.com/2014/01/>> [Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020]
- Wolf, K., ‘The Color Grey in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108.2 (April 2009), 222–38
- Wolfe, C., ‘Moving Forward, Kicking Back: The Animal Turn’, *Postmedieval* 2.1 (Spring 2011), 1–12
- Wolfram, H., *History of the Goths*, 2nd ed., transl. T. J. Dunlap (Berkeley and London, 1990)
- Wood, C. A., and F. M. Fyfe, ed. and transl., Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, *The Art of Falconry, Being the De arte venandi cum avibus of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen* (London, 1943)
- Yapp, W. B., ‘Birds in Captivity in the Middle Ages’, *Archives of Natural History* 10.3 (1982), 479–500



ZSL, 'Author Guidelines' §Conventions

<<https://zslpublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/14697998/author-guidelines>> [Accessed 25th July 2018]

Zori, D., T. Wake, J. Erlandson and Rúnar Leifsson, 'Viking Age Foodways at the Hrísbú Farmstead', in *Viking Archaeology in Iceland*, ed. D. Zori and J. Byock (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 163–80

Porbjörg Helgadóttir, ed., *Rómverja saga II*, Rit 77.2 (Reykjavík, 2010)

Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, ed., 'Flóamanna saga', in *Harðar saga*, Íslensk Fornrit 13 (Reykjavík, 1991), pp. 229–327

Åkerström-Hougen, G., *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos: A Study in Early Byzantine Iconography*, Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae, Series in 4to 23 (Stockholm, 1974)

———, 'Falconry as a Motif in Early Swedish Art: Its Historical and Art Historical Significance,' in *Les Pays du Nord et Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance). Actes du colloque d'Upsal 20-22 avril 1979*, ed. R. Zeitler (Stockholm, 1981), pp. 263–93

———, *Genesis och Metamorfosis: En studie i de nordiska guldbrakteaternas ikonografi*, Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture 31 (Gothenburg, 2010)