

The Rhetoric of Reasonableness:
Hófin Civic and Legal Rhetoric of the Medieval Scandinavians

by

Robert L. Lively

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2020 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Kathleen Lamp, Chair
Robert E. Bjork
Peter Goggin

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2020

ABSTRACT

Rather than being the lawless barbarian society that history and popular culture have painted it, medieval Scandinavian culture was more complex and nuanced. This dissertation interrogates the use of a rhetoric of reasonableness (*hóf*) in the medieval Nordic society to give voice to this silenced tradition. Specifically, this research focuses on the use of rhetoric in civic and legal settings to show that medieval Scandinavians were more interested in reasonable solutions than unreasonable ones.

Civic rhetoric among the medieval Nordic people relied heavily on *hóf* to keep civic practice manageable. Working in small towns and villages without central bureaucracies, reasonableness became important to the functioning of the village. Large scale disruptions could mean the death of all inhabitants in the area due to social disruption if violence occurred, so finding reasonable means of dealing with social problems was of paramount importance to the Norse. Using readings and analysis from the Icelandic sagas, I show the mechanisms of their rhetoric were used to manage civic life.

Legal rhetoric was also based on reasonableness. If civic actions became violent or potentially violent, then the courts needed a way to redress and maintain the peace in the area. The practice of law was heavily influenced by the rhetorical stance of *hóf*. The Scandinavian tradition of court cases appears in their early laws and in several sagas which allows a picture to be created of their rhetorical stance of reasonableness in the law cases. Analysis of historical data and saga manuscripts give evidence of a rhetorical tradition of reasonable redress in the legal system.

For Shelby, Jared, and Erek,
who have always supported my academic efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members and mentors: Kathleen Lamp, Robert E. Bjork, and Peter Goggin. I want to thank them for working with me through Skype and email, so I could complete this dissertation. Their guidance and advice have helped more than they could ever know. I have been incredibly lucky to have such a dedicated committee.

Alex Arreguin helped me get started on this path toward the Ph.D., and I appreciate all of his motivation along the way. I would also like to thank Jordan Loveridge for being a mentor as the project developed. This project couldn't have been completed without the advice and guidance of Cheryl Glenn, Jessica Enoch, Rich Enos, and Shane Borrowman. Their scholarship and opinions helped clarify my research trajectory as I was starting out.

Finally, I would like to thank the English Department and the Graduate College at Arizona State University, the English Department at Mesa Community College, Arnamagnæan Institute, the University of Copenhagen, the University of Iceland, and the English Department at Truckee Meadows Community College for their support in this endeavor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Perceptions of the Medieval Nordic People.....	2
Murphy’s Three Genera.....	5
Research Questions.....	10
Overview of Chapters.....	12
Conclusion.....	14
2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS.....	16
Medieval Scandinavian Manuscripts.....	17
Historical Investigations into the Vikings.....	20
Myth of the Dark Age of Rhetoric.....	26
Literary Influences.....	33
Methods.....	35
3 HISTORY AND CONTEXT.....	42
Denmark.....	46
Sweden.....	48
Norway.....	50
The Expansion Period, The Settlement of Iceland, and the Diaspora.....	53
The Legal Structure in the North.....	58

CHAPTER	Page
Reasonableness as a Rhetorical Position.....	61
Women in the Viking World.....	63
Conclusion.....	65
4 <i>HÓF</i> AS A RHETORICAL STANCE IN CIVIC RHETORIC.....	67
Guilt Versus Shame Culture.....	70
Examining Civic Rhetoric in the North.....	76
Praise.....	77
<i>Drengr</i> , <i>Drengskapr</i> , and <i>Drapa</i> as Rhetoric.....	78
<i>Goði—Bóndi</i> Relationship.....	82
The Rhetoric of Friendship.....	85
Shame.....	89
Goading.....	98
Civic Ethos and Cultural Policing.....	106
5 “LOUD APPROVAL AT THE LAW ROCK:”	
THE NORDIC LEGAL TRADITION.....	109
The Rhetoric of Legal Space.....	111
The Viking Legal Tradition—The Icelandic Example.....	114
The Forensic Rhetorical Education.....	121
Rhetoric of Viking Legal Proceedings.....	124
Arbitration and Mediation in Legal Actions.....	127
Legal Reasonableness in Action: Four Case Studies.....	129
<i>Njal’s Saga</i>	129

CHAPTER	Page
<i>Ljósvetninga Saga</i>	136
<i>Bandamanna Saga</i>	141
The Conversion of Iceland.....	144
Towards a Nordic Legal Rhetoric.....	150
6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	154
Limitations.....	157
Implications.....	158
Possibilities for Future Research.....	160
REFERENCES	164
APPENDIX	
A. MANUSCRIPTS	177
B. MAJOR TEXTS AND SAGAS	180

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. List of <i>Pings</i>	104

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Viking Age Trade Routes in North-west Europe.....	42

Chapter One—Introduction

The viking [*sic*] historian may equally fear that before he acquires all the languages, reads all the books, and flushes all the coverts of all the periodicals, he will have reached the blameless haven of senility without a word rendered. Patently, to wait on definitive knowledge is to wait on eternity. (Jones 11)

This warning captures the problem with studying medieval Nordic culture. The wide range of topics, geography, and languages is almost paralyzing. Beyond the use of secondary sources, the scholar must also learn the vernacular Old Norse in a variety of dialects, as well as a smattering of runes and runic scripts. The wide swath of scholarship presents many opportunities for research, but it also leaves just as many gaps. This dissertation fills a gap in research into the rhetorical practice of reasonableness of the medieval Nordic peoples. For my study, I examine the data and the written records of the Icelandic people in the medieval period, the sagas. These sagas record the life of the Scandinavians during the settlement and Nordic expansion periods, basically 700 CE to about 1200 CE. These sagas were written in the national vernacular, Old Norse, and were one of the very few Scandinavian records from that era. *The Grágás*, the Icelandic Law Code, was compiled during this era, and compliments the sagas with the legal precedents of the day. Viking runic inscriptions were also present during this time, but they are often fragmentary, terse, and non-contextual, so their benefit to my study was minimal.

Perceptions about the Medieval Nordic People

When the Vikings first began plundering the English coastline in the late 700s CE, the monasteries along the coast provided rich and easy plunder for the sea raiders. The first major raid took place in England on June 8th 793 CE at Lindisfarne. The English monastery was thought to be secure from invasion. It was linked to the mainland by a narrow causeway which was underwater at high tide, so no invader could lay siege to the monastery. The rough waters of the North Atlantic at its back provided a natural wall from invasion. Inside the monastery lay treasures of precious metals and the beautiful Lindisfarne Gospels and the bones of St. Cuthbert. A seemingly invincible place to store sacred treasures of Christendom. When the Vikings approached by sea in their longships, the monks were unprepared for the onslaught. The Vikings came for treasure, and they took the gold and silver, sacked the altar, and took some of the monks as slaves. Since they weren't Christians, they didn't touch the gospel manuscript or the bones of Saint Cuthbert. For the Vikings, it was about plunder. To the Christians, it was an attack on a holy site. These seaborne attacks occurred on several monasteries over the next hundred years along the coasts.

The terrified monks kept records of the attacks and passed on letters often citing Jeremiah 1:14 to give biblical precedent on the evil of the north men: "Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the North an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land." This Christian viewpoint helped to spread the reputation of the Viking warriors as not only a new point of conflict, but as a force of evil. After the attacks on Lindisfarne in 793 C.E., Simeon of Durham described the raid:

And they came to the church of Lindisfarne, laid waste with grievous plundering, trampled holy places with polluted feet, dug up the altars, and seized all the treasures of the holy church. They killed some of the brothers; some they took away with them in fetters; many they drove out, naked and loaded with insults; and some they drowned in the sea. (qtd. in Magnusson 61)

This account of the raid travelled quickly to the court of Charlemagne in Aachen where the Anglo-Saxon monk Alcuin, who grew up near Lindisfarne, commented that,

It is some 350 years that we and our forefathers have inhabited this lovely land, and never before in Britain has such a terror appeared as this we now have suffered at the hands of the heathen. Nor was it thought possible that such an inroad from the sea could be made. (qtd. in Jones 194-195)

As the Viking attacks spread across Europe, the reputation of the Vikings as lawless killers cemented in the minds of the chroniclers of the day. Obviously, these perceptions are from the point of the highly literate plundered and not from the perspective of the raiders. Defining the Vikings through the writings of Christian Europeans has hurt a real understanding of medieval Scandinavian culture for almost a thousand years.

In modern discourse, we tend to take a very reductive view of the Vikings. Modern continental historians, for instance, often focus on the brutality of the Viking raids, but many early cultures look extremely brutal by our contemporary standards. The Vikings were similar to the Romans, Saxons, Franks, Goths, or Celts in their tactics. Jonathan Clements comments on this tendency to stereotype Viking culture: "The Vikings were often defined by what they were not. They were, to the contemporary chroniclers that hated and feared them, *not* civilized, *not* local, and most importantly, *not* Christian" (emphasis in original 12). But historians have

mostly clung to the primary evidence written by survivors of raids against monasteries to paint the picture of the Vikings. In fact, many history texts focus mainly on Viking ships and military technology to capture the sense of the Viking Age.

Viewed as a counterpoint to this perception, the Icelandic sagas create a more complete picture of Nordic life and culture. These sagas show a complex people, and the sagas are known for being brutally honest in their rendition of life in Iceland (see Byock, *Medieval* 36). The perspective of the sagas is an insider's view of a culture, an emic view. These sagas also show that the Viking people were extremely rhetorical in their thinking. The Norse used many readily accepted types of rhetoric, creating a rhetoric culture in their civic and legal practices. For this dissertation, I argue the major element of rhetorical practice the Scandinavians employed in the Middle Ages represent a rhetoric of reasonableness (the Old Norse term, *hóf*). I argue *hóf*, as a rhetorical stance, permeated their rhetoric, and I work toward codifying the techniques and the transmission from generation to generation (See Kennedy's *Comparative Rhetoric*). *Hóf* allowed them a functioning civic and legal rhetoric required to govern and keep the peace in medieval Nordic culture—a culture without strong central governments.

Exploring Viking rhetorical practices proves quite challenging since many historians pay little if any attention to Scandinavian rhetoric in the Middle Ages outside the view of the skaldic verse as a Nordic preceptive *Ars poetriae*. Skaldic verse is an important avenue of inquiry, but it obscures other rhetorical practice because it assumes no other rhetorical practices were taking place.

Delving into primary textual material in the sagas allows me to examine the rhetorical practices as written during the medieval period. The primary material provides clear evidence of rhetorical practices in the areas of governing and law, social rhetoric involved in maintaining a functioning society, and women's rhetorical practices delineating their rhetorical role in society. The sagas provide compelling evidence of insular medieval Nordic rhetorical practices which is seldom mentioned in historical texts, but it is obviously present.

Murphy's Three Genera

To provide context for this research, it is important to look at one of the major turning points in medieval rhetoric. When James J. Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* was published in 1974, its reviews were mixed. George Kennedy hails Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* as "a significant contribution to the history of rhetoric in western Europe" (181). Kennedy points out the nuanced views of defining the three genera of Poetics, Letter Writing, and Preaching which form the preceptive tradition in the Latinate Middle Ages. While Kennedy views Murphy's bias against the sophistic tradition as unfortunate and potentially limiting, he does praise Murphy contributing "a good perspective and values his subject. And he has clearly advanced the history of rhetoric a thousand years" (185), but Kennedy's optimistic perspective was not shared by all.

John Norton-Smith's review of *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* was scathing at best. He calls the work "dry and monotonous" (327), and it seems to stem from Murphy's synthesis of medieval texts to show that rhetoric was alive and well in the

Middle Ages clinging to the textbook traditions of the surviving Roman books, particularly the *Rhetorica ad Herrenium*, and other fragmentary Greek texts available to them. Norton-Smith dismisses Murphy's book in all areas except the chapter on the *Ars praedicandi* which Norton-Smith views as "profitably discussed" (326).

The most interesting points raised in these reviews is that Kennedy is a Classicist who is interested in the history of Rhetoric and who has translated Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* into English from the Ancient Greek while John Norton-Smith is a literary critic and translator of the medieval era, mainly focusing on medieval England. Kennedy views Murphy's book as an advancement of rhetoric, Norton-Smith seems to view it as a poorly written literary critique.

What Norton-Smith failed to see at the time was that Murphy was attempting to show a continuity in rhetoric from classical times to the Renaissance. In his way, Murphy was countering the "rhetoric in decline" narrative. He was looking at the existing materials in the classical tradition and synthesizing them into a coherent thread of rhetorical practice. I agree with Kennedy that his work was groundbreaking at the time, and it did show rhetorical activity. But his scope was extremely limited to his three genera, *Ars poetriae*, *Ars dictaminis*, and *Ars praedicandi*.

The lens that Murphy uses shows the direct linkage to the Classical tradition, especially in his discussion and analysis of the *Ars poetriae*. Murphy points out that Grammar is always the first of the liberal arts to be mentioned in medieval education. He argues that the modern reader often misinterprets the

meaning of the word. “the term ‘grammar’ as commonly used today is severely narrowed... For us it merely denotes some standards of “correctness”... Early medieval grammarians made no such distinction. The *Ars grammatica* included not only correctness... but also the further study of what we would today call literature” (136). Murphy shows that the concerns of the Romans in linking style, grammar, and literature were still linked in the medieval period.

Drawing from the early medieval writers Donatus and Priscian, Murphy links the idea of rhetoric back to the Roman schools and their use of literature in their curricula to develop style and better orators and writers. For Murphy the link from the Romans through the medieval period is an unbroken link in the teaching of rhetoric, from Cicero and Quintilian to such works as Priscian’s *Praeexercitamina Prisciani Grammatici ex Hermogene versa* and *Institutiones Grammaticae*, Donatus’s *Ars Minor*; to their influence on later writers Venerable Bede, Alcuin, John of Salisbury, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf. This connection to the classical world seems possible, and Murphy outlines the connections convincingly.

The *Ars dictaminis*, Murphy states, is a “truly medieval invention” (194). This invention has a long precursor before the medieval version of letter writing evolved to suit the needs of a feudal Europe. In antiquity, Murphy points out, there was evidence of oral transmissions of messages as early as *The Iliad*. But this gave way to other forms such as *epistola*. Letters are regularly mentioned in the Bible and church uses. Pope Gregory the Great, for instance, was known for his letter writing skills. However, these letters had the problem of being rather formulaic. In the feudal era, the way to properly address various levels of society became formulae

in which to compose. It took out the missteps of accounting for the level of the audience to whom you were writing.

According to Murphy, the *Ars dictaminis* really started when Alberic of Montecassino developed the *cursus* or prose rhythm for composition of correspondence. As Murphy notes, “Alberic’s major contribution to the *Ars dictaminis* is his application of rhetorical principals to letter-writing” (203). Alberic uses *colores* (figures and tropes) and elements of his *Dictaminum Rarii* to expand the formulaic composition. Alberic looked at letter writing as rhetorical exercise where he went from just thinking about figures to actually applying ideas of oral composition and the canon of rhetoric to the letter-writing process. In particular, “Alberic cites the Ciceronian objectives of the exordium, that is, to render the audience ‘attentive, docile, and well-disposed’” (205). Alberic’s biggest contribution seems to take the writer from a place of passivity to one of agency, able to affect the reader of the letter.

Murphy’s final section of rhetoric deals with the *Ars praedicandi*, the art of preaching. This chapter begins with the biblical origins and ideals of preaching. Murphy ties in preaching to the larger Judeo-Christian context. Preaching was an early order of God, and to the early Christians, it was a religious duty. Murphy underscores that there was a major societal change here, where “Neither Greek nor Roman civil society had a theocratic base” (273), yet when monotheism became the cultural norm, the underpinning of civil society became a mix of civic and scriptural—a fundamental paradigm shift from earlier times.

According to Murphy, “Christ introduced a rhetorical element which had never before operated in human history—a direct command to his followers to spread the Gospel” (273). This edict led to the proselytizing mission of early Christians throughout Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa. The rhetoric of preaching changed the dynamic between speaker and audience. Where Ancient rhetoric often used speech as a means to influence the audience to the advantage of the speaker, Murphy claims St. Paul’s tactic in preaching was a call to God. The preacher was a vessel for God’s word, not a rhetorical orator seeking something for his own benefit. As Murphy explains it, the preacher lacks agency of his own because he is moved by God’s will.

Perhaps the greatest book in antiquity on preaching is St. Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*. In this, Augustine reconciles a lot of rhetorical techniques with Christian theology. St. Augustine’s contribution to saving Roman rhetoric is in his fourth book where he gives “a defense of Ciceronian rhetoric” (286). According to Murphy, Augustine ties rhetoric into one of the signs or manifestations of God where the rhetoric is a trigger to the way of God.

Rhetoric in the Middle Ages succeeded in showing there were rhetorical practices in the Middle Ages. In that respect, Murphy’s text opened new avenues at the time for further research; thus, the problem arose where Murphy’s three genera became fossilized as the *only* rhetoric in the Middle Ages. The intention of liberating scholars became one of limiting the research agenda into an ironically preceptive view of rhetorical study. This dissertation expands that perspective to include how *hóf*, a rhetoric outside of Murphy’s genera, can further broaden rhetorical research.

Research Questions

Murphy's earlier works expanded and challenged the ideas of rhetoric in a time when rhetoric was supposedly lacking. It was the "Dark Ages" when rhetoric allegedly didn't have a place. Murphy's work influenced this study because he expanded the ideas of what rhetoric could be. A theme picked up by Cheryl Glenn, Andrea Lunsford and others to examine silenced or hidden rhetorics. The overarching research question driving my study is "What role did *hóf* play in the rhetorical practices in medieval Scandinavia circa 700 CE-1200 CE?" My first question broadly concerns the civic and legal contexts of the Viking Age. What civic practices were available to participate in Nordic society, and who had the ability to speak? Were there various contextual venues for civic participation? Since the medieval Scandinavians didn't use classical rhetorical terms until after the conversion to Christianity (Denmark 826 CE; Norway 995 CE; Iceland 1000 CE; and Sweden (officially) by 1130 CE), the use of classical rhetorical terms is problematic although I use them to describe certain recognizable elements of rhetoric. Strecker and Tyler's rhetoric culture suggests that while rhetoric would be a term used traditionally, Nordic cultural practices would suggest a different nomenclature, which is why I argue it is best encapsulated by the term *hóf* which translates from the Old Norse as "reasonableness."

In the civic arena, how did society use *hóf* on a daily basis? How was conflict mediated in the medieval north? What constrained and gave agency to people in public? These questions are important because before the slow creep of feudalism

reached the north, the men were often free to give and take allegiances. For instance, in Iceland if a *goði* (a large farm owner) was weak or cruel, a *bóndi* (a free, small farmer) could pull his support from him and declare for someone else—unlike the serfs tied to the land on the continent. So how was reasonableness as a stance developed and used to balance competing needs among the population?

Surprisingly, court cases are often written about in the sagas, so legal and oratory techniques are displayed. In Olwyn Owen's text, *Things of the Viking World*, she describes *þings*, the Viking assembly and court, as traveling wherever Vikings settled. As such, *þings* appear from Greenland through Scandinavia and the British Isles onto the European continent. To make these courts and legislative bodies work over a broad geographical area, they had to be effective. Rhetoric had to be used. The sagas provide evidence of *hóf* as rhetoric displayed in the court cases which was occurring across the Viking world. What forensic elements of *hóf* were used in the *þings*? How did *hóf* manifest itself in Nordic law-speaking practices? What artifacts could explain and corroborate the Viking rhetoric culture traditions as shown in the sagas?

Since the Viking culture is somewhat enigmatically hyper-masculinized and yet gives women quite a few rights, another question I wanted to explore is how women's rhetoric functioned to give them agency in their society, and how women used rhetoric to their advantage. Women could own property and even divorce their husbands, so how did they act as rhetors both in public and on the farmstead? What was considered as *hóf* for a woman speaker in both civic and legal environments?

Overview of Chapters

In this chapter, Chapter One—Introduction, I introduce the discussions concerning medieval Nordic culture and the lack of serious study into their rhetorical practices because the misunderstanding of the Viking culture.

Chapter Two— Literature Review and Methods examines the pertinent historical books on the medieval Norse culture and analyzes the differences historians have taken with constructing Norse culture. The methods section reviews the methods and methodology used in the dissertation looking at how a multimethod approach worked best for this research.

Chapter Three—History and Context delves into the evolution of the medieval Nordic people who came to be defined by the term, Viking. It examines the growth of both raiding, trading, and the Viking diaspora which followed. Additionally, it sets up the later chapters in terms of the rhetoric is traditionally missed by examining the medieval Nordic peoples in terms of just history or archaeology, and why the scattered and difficult geography of Scandinavia helps enforce the rhetorical *topos* of *hóf*.

Chapter Four—“*Hóf* as a Rhetorical Stance in Civic Rhetoric” argues that medieval Norse Civic Rhetoric relies heavily on *hóf* to keep the peace and make governing possible. As shown in several sagas and historical documents, *hóf* allows small communities to work out civic governing in places where strong central bureaucracies did not exist. Since medieval Scandinavia was a praise and shame culture, rhetorical involvement helped regulate a functioning society. Moreover, rhetoric was never in a full state of decline because *hóf* as rhetoric has was a useful

rhetorical strategy for the Nordic people. A strategy the Scandinavian rhetoricians would widely use. For the purpose of my dissertation, I show civic rhetorical practices in the sagas based around the idea of reasonableness. As such, I will examine several sagas, such as *Egil's Saga*, *Njal's Saga*, *The Saga of Gunlaug Serpent Tongue*, and *The Story of the Heath Slayings: Heiðarviga Saga* among others as examples. These representative texts show forms of acceptable civic rhetoric for their medieval audiences.

Chapter Five— “Loud Approval at the Law Rock:” The Viking Legal Tradition focuses on Viking legal rhetoric, their law-speaking, and how *hóf* influenced legal rhetoric. *Njal's Saga* presents a classic court case in the Scandinavian tradition. The case is brought against the men who burned Njal and his retainers in their longhouse. I will use this as a case study on the major points of their forensic rhetoric culture. The Vikings used a mix of forensic elements recognizable in the classical sense, but also included elements of oral culture in their native tradition. In the *Bandamanna Saga*, the court case shown there also includes a clear sense of the reasonable law-speaking at work. The *Ljósvetninga Saga* looks at how reasonable and unreasonable people are viewed in court cases. The historical example I also draw from to show the pervasiveness of *hóf* is the story of the Icelandic conversion to Christianity, which occurs as a court drama and not as a spiritual debate. In addition to these sagas, I explore rhetorical elements of law speaking in *Droplauggarssons Saga* and *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Moreover, I examine the forensic education shown in sagas. I also show the Nordic range of legal *hóf* shown in

four short case studies of *Njal's Saga*, *Bandamanna Saga*, *Ljósvetninga Saga*, and the conversion case.

Chapter Six— Implications and Conclusions will function as a conclusion to my dissertation and shows how *hóf* forms the basis of the medieval Nordic rhetorical practices. The use of *hóf* allowed the Scandinavians often living in rather isolated communities the tools to run a civic and legal structure without established bureaucracy. I examine the potential problems of research involving medieval Scandinavian manuscripts; I then look at potential avenues for future research which arise from my topic. This dissertation highlights the rhetorical activity which was occurring outside the Latin rhetorical tradition in the north of Europe.

Overall, my dissertation argues that there was a vibrant culture of rhetorical practice beyond the classical Latinate tradition of Christianized Europe. This dissertation will help expand rhetorical scholarship into a population that has often been marginalized and ignored because of the perceived ignorance and violence of medieval Scandinavians. By expanding the scholarship here, I anticipate more studies into the cultures of Europe who have been understudied in the shadow of the rhetorical canon, showing that rhetorical practice occurred during this “dark age” in the Viking north.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to trace the research gaps in medieval Nordic rhetoric. There seems to have been several factors, acting independently, at work which downplayed the rhetorical practices taking place in Scandinavia. The early

Christian conflicts with the Vikings set the tone for the way they have been viewed over the past thousand years—violent, uncultured, and somehow lesser in the scope of Western European history. Even when scholars like James J. Murphy attempted to break the stereotype of the “Dark Ages” and rhetorical practice, the various cultures and long timeframe of the medieval period created many gaps in the research. This dissertation works to fill in these gaps by looking at the Icelandic Sagas to find evidence of *hóf* as rhetorical purpose and practice too long ignored in scholarship.

Chapter Two—Literature Review and Methods

It is largely through the transforming of the Viking homelands, with their astonishingly high level of technical and organizational achievement, that our picture of the period has been altered.... The Viking Age is now seen as having been altogether more complex, with a strong class system, diverse social conditions, and far more radical achievements” (Roesdahl 4-5)

This chapter provides a review of the pertinent literature and theory in the study of the medieval Nordic people focusing on why the research gaps exist. I begin with a discussion of the Nordic manuscripts. Most of the early writing outside of Scandinavia comes from monotheists, who often take a negative view of the Nordic cultures. These sources demonstrate a biased view against the culture of the Nordic peoples. Literary movements influencing how the sags were perceived downplayed their reliability as source material even if praising their literary merit. While historians became fascinated by the shipbuilding and military technology that caught the imagination of researchers at the expense of rhetorical studies. The next section reviews the widespread belief that little if any rhetoric occurred in the Middle Ages. This popular narrative is fast losing ground in rhetorical research, but it is important to lay the groundwork for the lack of scholarship on marginalized peoples in the Middle Ages. The next section explores the historians’ views of the medieval Nordic peoples. While much work has gone into expanding the views of the Vikings beyond their bloody and violent image, there has recently been a push back to eliminate the cultural studies of the Norse to view them once again as pillagers more so than explorers, merchants, and farmers.

Next, I explore the archaeology of the sagas, specifically looking at the work of Jesse Byock, who has spent the past few decades excavating Iceland to show the sagas are factually accurate representations of the medieval Nordic culture. His scholarship is crucial in analyzing that the places and events of the sagas have historical merit to show the rhetorical elements involved would have to be accurate for the audience at the time. Then I turn to look at the weight literary critics, led by *Sigurður* Nordal and the Bookprose movement, had in reducing the sagas to mere literary works rather than histories as the Old Norse word *sagas* imply.

Finally, I examine the use of rhetorical methodologies to examine the material. Feminist methodologies on researching marginalized and silenced populations have used historiography and Rhetorical Archaeology quite effectively to give voice to silenced women in rhetorical history. Using similar techniques to enhance the rhetorical analysis of the sagas, I can help show Viking rhetorical practices. I also examine how Richard Leo Enos's Rhetorical Archaeology can help parse out elements of medieval Nordic rhetorical practices. Finally, due to the temporal scope and geographical breadth of the medieval Nordic culture, I use Hawhee and Olson's Pan-Historiography as an overview to link the other methodologies into a comprehensive overview of rhetorical practices of the medieval Norse.

Medieval Scandinavian Manuscripts

It is important to examine what we even mean by texts in Old Norse. According to Matthew P. Driscoll, most texts from the medieval period are

fragmentary with 51% of the corpus as five leaves or fewer and 15% of those are part or single leaves. The most common complete, or almost complete, are copies of the originals, or copies of copies, etc. from the 14th, 15th, or 16th centuries. He estimates we only have fragments of perhaps 7-15% of the manuscripts that were composed in the Old Norse period. (“Introduction to Manuscript Studies”)

There is a long tradition of textual editing that textual scholars draw from. The term textual criticism can be defined as the technique of restoring texts as nearly as possible to its original form. This method of historical inquiry is about solving the problem of transferring a manuscript text preserved in script to a modern medium through which most of us work. We really accept, either implicitly or explicitly, that these textual critics have done their work accurately.

There are two main schools of thought in this: the Lachmann Method (or sometimes called Neo-Lachmann depending on the methodology used) and the Bedier school. The Lachmann Method arises from the German philologist Karl Lachmann (1793-1851). His method was described as a genealogical approach. He took a broad view of the surviving texts and tried to establish a history of the transmission of the text. His method creates a stemma codicum, which develops a tree-like structure showing the relationships between the main surviving texts of a work. By doing this, the method attempts to distinguish between later mistakes and additions to a text, and which were artifacts from the earlier or original text. As such, this methodology is an attempt at reconstructing a text. This method examines texts and focuses on similarities and differences and often focuses on errors to establish the genealogy of a text. Lachmann’s ideas on textual criticism and

reconstruction were not new ideas. His methodology was pioneered by the School of Alexandria's methods of trying to reconstruct Homer's works which took an eclectic approach to constructing a manuscript to examine. In modern saga studies, they use a Neo-Lachmann Method which is more interdisciplinary. They use historical and archaeological data as well as computer modelling to reconstruct saga texts. I believe this method helps solidify their choices for the reconstructed texts since the triangulation of data with computer modelling gives the method a better chance of correctness.

The other method of constructing a text is from the Bedier school. Bedier rejected the idea of the stemma codicum as being objectively scientific since it relies on data from scribal errors and linguistic similarity which cannot be one hundred percent accurately studied. When building a stemma, researchers may find many versions are discarded as irrelevant since they are so close in construction. According to Bedier's theory, these reconstructed texts are more hypothesis than fact. So Bedier viewed the composite editions as not reconstructed originals, but as a completely new version that had never existed before. Instead, Bedier used a method that was originally pioneered in ancient Pergamon by Stoic editors who tried to find the "best text" available.

Bedier looked at all available texts to determine a best edition. He realized that this was a more subjective approach, but it is a more conservative attempt to present a medieval text as it was rather than building a new version based on all extant versions and scraps of texts. Both practices are used in Scandinavian

manuscript studies. These historical reconstructions help scholars better understand and contextualize medieval Scandinavian culture.

Historical Investigations into the Vikings

When researchers consider the term “Dark Ages,” they usually consider the time frame from the fall of Rome to around the beginnings of the Renaissance, or the rebirth of Classical literature and culture, roughly from about 500 C.E. to 1400 C.E. The scholar William Patton Ker delineates the Dark Ages from about 500 C.E. until 1200 C.E. when he says the Middle Ages began. The Italian Humanist Petrarch coined the term “Dark Ages” to lament the fact that Latin language and literature was in decline, but his term was extended to mean a lack of cultural advancement in general after the fall of Rome. This perception of the Middle Ages upon non-medievalists has hindered the research and popular perception of the political, religious, and cultural advances which occurred during this timeframe. The idea of a “Dark Age” is popularized and spread through works such as Michael Woods book and PBS documentary *In Search of the Dark Ages* and the recent History Channel Documentaries in 2015 and 2017, lamenting the fact that the Dark Ages were times of plague, famine, and internecine wars with little cultural advancement.

Unfortunately, both of the time frames listed above encompass the rise and fall of the Viking Age. Previous historians and scholars viewed the Viking Age as uninteresting. It wasn't until the late 1800s that scholars turned their attention to the medieval north and the Scandinavian people. This research manifested itself in archaeological finds in the 1850s of the Tune ship mound in Østfold, the excavation

of the Gokstad ship in 1880, and the early 1904 excavation of the Oseberg ship. The Victorians, in particular, seemed to find the Vikings as interesting. Since the Victorians reveled in curiosities and unusual artifacts, the sordid tales of Viking raids and plundering, for some reason, caught their attention, and scholars began researching the Vikings with renewed vigor.

The twentieth century saw a blossoming of medieval Nordic historical works. Perhaps the best known is Gwyn Jones's *A History of the Vikings* (1968). This seminal work offers a look into the development of the Nordic peoples who became the Vikings pre-700s, and then explores the three major Nordic kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Along with the obvious technological advances in ship building and seamanship, Jones traces overseas expansion to the Orkneys, the Faeroes, and Iceland. Moreover, he examines the mercantile efforts of Scandinavian traders on the continent and their ventures down the Volga to the Mediterranean cultures of the Islamic and Byzantine empires.

Jones seems truly impressed with the Viking culture of the north, and he traces the people and development of the three major northern kingdoms, but his work looks at the broad history of the Vikings. Even though he has many references to *þings* and the legislative and judicial functions they served, he never uses the term rhetoric or rhetorical when discussing these activities. Jones is writing a sweeping history which follows major people and events, but he does not turn his gaze to the acts of rhetoric in shaping these events. Unfortunately, this becomes commonplace in examining the histories written about the Scandinavian people.

Violence is an acceptable topic while the rhetoric of governing and legality is not considered.

Historians have continued to write about Vikings and the medieval north. Beyond Jones's *A History of the Vikings*, still a standard reference for Viking studies, recent scholarship seems to show a clear split in historical accounts of the medieval Scandinavians. Jesse Byock's work, for instance, attempts to show that the Vikings were much more complex than the typical barbarian portrayal commonly displayed in history books and popular culture. Using Iceland as his main area of research, Byock's work describes the Icelanders during the settling of Iceland in the 930s CE that "Iceland functioned as a single island-wide community or 'great village.' Inward-looking, highly litigious and hardly military, the new society operated through consensual order" (*Viking Age* 3). In league with Byock, William Ian Miller's text *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (1990), explores the limited use of violence in Icelandic society. Chapter 8 of Miller's work focuses on peacemaking, which was far more common than the negative views of Vikings. "If peace means the absence of violence, then for people with recognizable feuding relations, then peace was in fact the norm" (259). For the average Scandinavian, a peaceful life on a small farmstead was much more probable than a life of bloody raids and violence.

R.I. Page's book, *Chronicles of the Vikings* (1995), gives a more complete picture of medieval Scandinavia life of merchants and farmsteads and travel. In this text, Page has collected primary accounts of Viking life, using the sagas, as well as Saxo Grammaticus's *History of the Danes*, Adam of Bremen's *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, as well as a host of Anglo-Saxon sources. Page

attempts to craft a more complete image of the medieval Scandinavians than just bloody reavers.

William Short's work, *Icelanders in the Viking Age* (2010), exclusively focuses on the daily life of the people of Iceland. Short examines the development of Iceland from the *Landnáma* (the land-taking, *i.e.* settlement) through the Viking Age. Short's work is interesting because he examines the typical Icelanders' life by carefully reading the sagas and then visiting the locations to see how much is actually accurate. Short's work establishes a correlation of geography to facts in the sagas to say that if the sagas are mostly accurate in place and geography, then aren't they accurate in other areas as well? While Short acknowledges that a majority of the sagas were composed by later Christians in the Viking Age; nevertheless, he argues "there is clearly a considerable amount of genuine historical information embedded in these texts, and they remain one of the most important reference points for understanding the saga age" (6).

Another scholar who investigates the daily life of the Vikings, Kristen Wolf, expands her view to look at daily life across all of Scandinavia. In the intro to her book, *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen* (2013), she sets up a context for reading the text, and then she groups her chapters around Domestic Life, Economic Life, Intellectual Life, etc. She writes for a more general audience, but her scholarship is well-documented, and her scope is a broad swath across all of Scandinavia giving a good perspective on the north in the Middle Ages.

Similarly, in Anders Winroth's *Age of the Vikings* (2014), he focuses on bits of culture that explore the day-to-day life and experiences of the Vikings. He interjects colorful historical fiction scenes in the book to better illustrate the history he is portraying. He goes out of his way to show that the medieval Scandinavians were more than just a stereotype of violence which is often shown by the Christian chroniclers.

What is preserved is certainly only the tip of the iceberg, and much has been lost... Nonetheless, what survives of poetry, representational and decorative art, and stories teaches us that the Viking Age was not only about raiding, plunder, and warfare. Scandinavians had a sense of beauty and an ear for poetry, and they developed idiosyncratic styles of both art and literature without any close counterparts in the rest of Europe. (240)

On the other hand, some recent scholarship has pushed back against this more expanded view of the Viking life. Jonathan Clements's book, *The Vikings: The Last Pagans or the First Modern Europeans* (2005), paints a somewhat mixed picture. He acknowledges their cultural complexity, but maintains they needed to be tamed by land and Christianity before they could be considered cultured. Clements remarks "Take the Viking out of the longship, turn him into a farmer, and suddenly he worries about crops, disease, trade, and family. He welcomes law and order" (80). Clements fails to acknowledge that in Scandinavia, the Viking was probably a farmer who worried about these things, and who was already participating in law and order in his kingdom, or on his farmstead.

Robert Ferguson's text, *The Vikings* (2010), attempts to diminish the cultural complexities of the Viking culture. He downplays the Scandinavian scholarship into the nuances of the Viking Age by describing it as constructed "cultural identity" (5), claiming that Scandinavian scholars are just painting their forefathers as "noble

savages” (5). Ferguson’s thesis argues, “Among the aims of this book is to restore the violence of the Viking Age” (6). This historiographical point of view of the Vikings is perhaps summed up best by Dumville, “long-haired tourists who roughed up the locals a bit” (9). This reductive scholarship undermines the conversation of what the Viking Age was really like.

One of the more recent books on the Norse is *The Viking Diaspora* by Judith Jesch (2015). In her book she argues that the Viking Age is much harder to pin down. She looks at historical, literary, and archaeological evidence to get a better sense of the Nordic peoples. She argues that the typical Viking Age range of c. 750 C.E. to 1100 C.E. is very problematic since The Norse were active sea traders before this, and the Vikings didn’t stop raiding after the loss at Stamford Bridge in 1066. She points out the chroniclers show active Viking Raids in the 1200s in the Mediterranean and into the 1300s in the Baltic Sea. She argues that the Viking Age should be amended to include the final collapse of the colony in Greenland in the 1500s. At this point, the Scandinavians are no longer expanding their colonies—they are retracting back into Scandinavia or permanently settled in other places. She coins the term “The Long Viking Age” to refer to this increase in timeframe.

Jesch argues quite convincingly the diaspora includes periods of intense violence and raiding—but followed by times of peaceful trading and exploration. To characterize the Long Viking Age as inherently and continually violent is painting an incorrect picture of the Nordic peoples in that era. Jesch points directly to the Icelanders as “the most visible and lasting monuments to the Viking Diaspora” (199). She goes on to point out that “the diasporic consciousness of the medieval

Icelanders” is “also an important interpreter of the Viking Age to subsequent generations” (199). The sagas and historical works by Icelanders, in her view, are the best representations of the medieval diaspora captured for posterity.

This dissertation takes the view that Scandinavia was more complex than these renewed attempts to create a Nordic “Other.” Rather than extending the conversation about the medieval Scandinavians, these violent histories offer outdated views of the Vikings as just war-like thugs. By our standards, most medieval culture would be considered extremely violent, but by not focusing solely on that, scholars can attempt to explore and expand our knowledge of that era. Scholars such as Winroth, Jesch, and Page suggest a more nuanced approach to studying the medieval Scandinavians. It is important to consider the histories to see the ideas of reasonableness in medieval Scandinavian culture. *Hólf* played an incredibly important role (as I argue in chapters four and five). It is in this spirit that I explore the rhetorical practices of the medieval Scandinavians. These people were demonized as godless barbarians, and their rich culture ignored. However, the literary tradition of the sagas, current historical work, and archaeological finds points to *hólf* as one of their major rhetorical *topoi* in medieval Scandinavia.

The Myth of the Dark Age of Rhetoric

Along with the myth of the Dark Ages in history and literary narratives, rhetoric, too, seems to encompass a Dark Age from the ascension of Augustus to emperor of Rome to when the humanists began searching for ancient texts. The story of Poggio Bracciolini’s find of Cicero’s texts in 1415 at Cluny and his discovery

of a complete text of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* in the dusty stacks at St. Gall are legendary. In fact, according to Stephen Greenblatt, Bracciolini's find of Lucretius's poem *De Rerum Natura* in the Fulda Monastery in Germany sparked the Renaissance. Greenblatt's book, *The Swerve*, creates a narrative of the "Dark Age" when nothing important happened. His oversimplification of the medieval period ignores the rich and diverse cultures that arose after the fall of Rome. Greenblatt's contention that the modern world was spawned from a single rediscovery of Lucretius seems stretched, but it does easily fit into the popular narrative of the "Dark Ages."

The "loss of rhetoric" narrative helped scholars view the Middle Ages as bereft of rhetorical activity. Bizzell and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition* claims that "During this thousand-year span, much Greco-Roman learning was lost... and Greco-Roman public forms of rhetoric all but disappeared. the great speeches and influence of rhetoric seemingly died with Cicero. But rhetoric did not disappear, Christian scholars preserved and studied some of the surviving texts" (431). Bizzell and Herzberg set up the narrative that is generally accepted today, that Christians preserved rhetoric to enlighten the heathen masses. But Bizzell and Herzberg still fall into the reductive narrative of medieval Europe. "For the next five centuries—sometimes termed 'The Dark Ages'—the sparse population of Europe survived in small local economic units... Even minimum subsistence could be swept away by marauding invaders—central Asians in the 400s, Arab Muslims in the 600s and 700s, and Asians, Muslims, and Norsemen in the 900s" (434). It's clear that in *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Bizzell and Herzberg are talking about is the Classical,

Christian tradition. For the authors, the Asians, Muslims, and Norsemen don't have a place in rhetorical history. Or if they did, it was to destroy peoples who practiced and used rhetoric.

The view of minimal rhetorical activity permeates medieval scholarship as well. Martin Camargo pointedly argues that rhetoric had "Little to no connection to vital civic life" (101). Part of this decline narrative is probably due to Kennedy's claim that the freedom necessary to have debates (and thus in his view, rhetorical activity) was reduced under Augustus and then freedom was lacking in Europe under the feudal system where feudalism and manorialism reduced freedom of the population even further. The hierarchical Middle Ages didn't seem to have a place for rhetoric. Brian Vickers's classic text *In Defence of Rhetoric's* chapter "Medieval Fragmentation" maintains this narrative. Vickers contends that rhetoric only works as "a discipline essential to the life of a democracy. When emperors or dictators rule, however, and such issues are decided by edict or by appointed administrators, rhetoric's role in society inevitably declines" (214).

A cursory view of the Latin west and Christianity in the Middle Ages would seem to support the decline narrative and the Christian saviors of the west, leading to a rebirth of the Greek and Roman cultures led by humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini. Moreover, this narrative only works in the framework of the Greco-Roman tradition. Other cultures, outside this tradition engaged in rhetorical practices which have been marginalized by the canonical views of rhetoric. So much so that Tom Miller points out that "The Rhetorical Tradition is a fiction that has just about outlived its usefulness" (26). The Nordic peoples didn't live under emperors

and dictators. They lived in isolated valleys and gathered in legislative assemblies across the Viking diaspora. They were of keen legal minds, and they developed a court system which worked for them. The rhetorical practices of the medieval Scandinavians were present outside of the Classical tradition, yet the missing gap in knowledge was overlooked because rhetoric was not supposed to be practiced outside of a few genera of topics according to scholars of the medieval period.

To better understand the relevant gaps in the scholarly knowledge of the History of Rhetoric, and why a dissertation on the rhetorical practices of the medieval Scandinavians, as revealed in the sagas and archaeological evidence, would potentially contribute to current scholarship, it is essential to examine the gradually expanding scope of rhetorical studies.

Even as early as James J. Murphy's 1974 study, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, he acknowledges that the conversation is incomplete "despite the apparently substantial number of authors and works treated in this book, this can only be a preliminary survey. Vast areas remain unexplored" (ix). This becomes a common theme in well-known rhetorical studies, the acknowledgement of gaps and alternatives left unexplored. Bizzell and Herzberg echo Murphy's statement when they comment, "Given the state of scholarship at the time we assembled the first edition, it would have been difficult to represent any alternative Western traditions, such as women's rhetorics or rhetorics of color" (v). But they do point out that these gaps will point to "future scholarship" (v).

Over the past twenty years, however, this future scholarship has been pursued. The canonical texts are still there, and they are still taught in the academy

in History of Rhetoric classes, but new rhetorical studies are emerging to challenge the parlor conversation and shape the new heated discussions in the parlor. *Rhetoric Review* has published the transcripts of three CCCCs panel meetings called "Octalogs I-III" where prominent scholars in the field discussed the current trends and movements of Rhetorical studies. The trends show a movement away from only studying canonical texts and open the conversation to feminist, multicultural, non-western, and other ignored and understudied rhetorics.

These new rhetorical studies are lifting voices to be heard by the rhetorical scholars in the community. To do so, the rhetorical trope seems to be acknowledging the canonical field and then distance the new work from it while maintaining the classical frames of reference in names and terminologies in the field.

In his 1993 work, *Comparative Rhetoric*, prominent rhetorical scholar George Kennedy argues that many areas excluded from the canon can be researched, and should be researched, using classically developed methods to explore new areas of research. Feminist researchers were some of the first to expand the rhetorical field. The history of rhetoric contains many female rhetors, and it wasn't until the 2nd edition of Bizzell and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition* that they include women in the canon (v). But beyond this, feminist scholars began researching women's rhetoric in such works as *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995), edited by Andrea Lunsford, or Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold* (1997).

In these works, Lunsford and Glenn argue that there were many women participating in rhetoric contemporaneously with the canon—yet were generally ignored by earlier scholars. As Cheryl Glenn points out,

Fortunately, rhetorical scholars of every stripe are involved in various re-tellings and remappings of rhetorical history, all acknowledging the political nature of their work and the biases mined in their own rhetorical territory. In particular, the recent body of historiography in which feminist researchers recover and recuperate women's contributions to the broad history of culture-making constitutes a new, more scenic excursion into the history of rhetoric. ("Classical Rhetoric Retold")

As such, the new forms of rhetoric often ask for acknowledgement from the canonical scholars to establish their credibility, then create a new space to develop new research.

Matt Schaub follows this pattern in his study of Arabic rhetoric: there is a "conspicuous lack of attention to important contributions coming from rhetorical traditions outside the western canon, within standard texts on the history of rhetoric" (233). Schaub's plea clearly influenced Borrowman's studies on the "Islamization of Rhetoric" (2008), and "Recovering the Islamic Aristotle" (2010). Similarly, Xing Lu's works (1998) and C. Jan Swearingen (2009) on Chinese rhetoric have expanded the scholarship into Asian rhetoric.

The duo of Lipson and Binkley's recent work (*Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*, 2004; *Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics*, 2009) focuses on traditions outside and external to the western canon. These collections explore Indian rhetoric, Ancient Egyptian rhetoric, Sumerian rhetoric, Chinese rhetoric, even biblical Hebrew rhetoric. This collection asks scholars to apply historical and rhetorical methods to other early written artifacts which have been largely ignored for the most part.

In looking outside the western canon, several scholars have asked what was happening in competition or concurrently with the canon? What traditions either were ignored, lost out to, or were unknown to the western tradition? *Rhetoric in the*

Rest of the West (2010) asks these types of questions with essays on such topics as Etruscan rhetorical influences on the Romans to St. Patrick's epistolary rhetoric.

Rich Enos's study, *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle* (2012) points out that archaeological evidence of other rhetorics circulating around the canon is incredibly revealing for the history of rhetoric. Building on the accepted historical interpretations, Enos argues, "Most scholars agree, however, that works are best understood when viewed not as isolated and autonomous events but as intertextual, that even discrete texts are part of a diachronic chain-of-being" (13). In effect, Enos is contextualizing historical rhetoric research. Since rhetorical activity occurs in a context, then it is valid to study rhetorical practices in a context. His insights help elucidate rhetorical research, especially in the traditions which were marginalized by the canonical tradition.

For medieval Nordic rhetoric, I have found few scholars researching in the field. Most of those scholars are interested in poetics and style. For instance, Rory McTurk's, *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, features one essay by Thorir Oskarsson entitled "Rhetoric and Style." This essay only studies style through a canonical view of poetics that could easily be considered a preceptive study as Murphy defines it. Oskarsson examines skaldic poetry in terms of stylistic choices made and meter used. He identifies poetic devices which are the *topoi* of the skaldic arts.

Literary Influences

Another major problem creating a research gap into the study of medieval Nordic rhetoric is the way the sagas have been viewed and interpreted in literary circles. The controversy surrounding the two major literary movements, the Bookprose (*Buchprosa*) and the Freeprose (*Freiprose*), have colored the way scholars have viewed the composition and meaning of the sagas. The Bookprose movement was closely aligned with a group of Icelandic scholars in the late 18- early 1900s. The figurehead of this movement was an Icelandic scholar, Sigurður Nordal who argued that the sagas were purely based on fiction. He wanted to show that sagas construction was literary in nature and not historically based. In many ways, Nordal and the Bookprose movement hoped to find elements of classical complexity in the way the sagas were composed, yet they did not find these literary elements in the sagas. The sagas appeared a mish-mash of sources. The Bookprosists held that the sagas were comprised of elements of earlier works, Latin texts, and continental vernacular literature all combined to form saga material. Perhaps the best-known work was Nordal's study of *Hrafnkell's Saga* where he argues that the saga is completely a work of art not actually examining real feud in Iceland.

The Freeprosists, on the other hand, sought to embed the Icelandic Sagas in an earlier oral tradition. In the Freeprose interpretation, the sagas were originally composed orally and transmitted generation-to-generation in the old way of social memory, from poet to apprentice, to keep the traditions and the history alive. When the sagas were written down, the Freepose movement saw this as a continuation and codification of those histories into manuscript form. But ultimately driving their

existence in a literal, historical event. The Freeprosists thought the Bookprose view as being overly concerned with the black and white, completely true or untrue, dichotomy of the sagas as unhelpful and possibly misleading.

The Bookprosist theory did gain widespread and popular approval. Nordal and the Icelanders in the *Buchprosa* movement heavily influenced the interpretation of the sagas for almost forty years. From the 1930s through the 1970s, it seems that the Bookprose interpretation held sway. In Iceland, in fact, there is the Sigurður Nordal Institute loosely connected to the University of Iceland, which carries out research on the sagas today. Nordal's influence was greatly felt in determining the way sagas were presented for public consumption. The Nordal's followers translated many of the Icelandic sagas, and their forewords and introductions often have a distinct Bookprose slant to them. In the English translations, Lee M. Hollander gives a distinctly Bookprosist feel to his translations.

Since the 1970s, there has been a multidisciplinary pushback against the Bookprosist interpretation. Jesse Byock argues that the earlier methods are outdated and, therefore, have been seriously reexamined by historical, archaeologists, and folklorists in a socio-literary and socio-historical saga analysis ("The Sagas" 72). This increase in multidisciplinary approaches has begun to turn the tide in saga analysis. Using triangulated data from history, saga manuscripts, archaeology and folklorist approaches, scholars now believe that the sagas were grounded in oral tradition which saved the collective memory until it was written down. They argue that the sagas do contain the seeds of truth and real culture in them; therefore, the work being done in these fields helps to corroborate the truth

from the fictitious additions and omissions as the sagas were changed from oral to manuscript texts.

The main problem for rhetorical studies here was that for such a broad swath of the twentieth century, the Bookprose view let researchers of medieval Nordic culture believe that the sagas were “derived from personal inspiration and generative force, principally from knowledge of Latin and learned writing, especially from church writings and hagiography” (The Sagas” 71). Until rather recently scholars of rhetoric have overlooked the sagas as potential points of rhetorical interest because the Bookprose movement cast the sagas as derivative of writing on the continent and not texts of medieval Nordic construction. The rhetoric in the sagas has simply been waiting there to be found.

Methods

My dissertation relies on multimethod research to examine the phenomena of medieval Nordic rhetoric. My multimethod research relies on using several qualitative methods to give a greater understanding of the rhetorical practices of the medieval Nordic people. One of the main methods for this research is close reading and rhetorical analysis of the sagas to present case studies of rhetorical reasonableness at work in medieval Scandinavia. I use Rhetorical Archaeology, Recontextualization, and Pan-Historiography to triangulate data in the dissertation. By using these multiple methods, I can better stitch together the pieces found in historical texts, rhetorical research, and archaeological data to give fuller breadth and depth to the rhetoric used at the time. By using these methods in conjunction

with close readings of saga texts and historical materials as they apply to issues of rhetorical practices, I can focus on the use of *hóf* as a rhetorical stance. For my chapters, I am examining works that show clear displays of reasonable rhetoric of the day. I examine these rhetorical practices in several sagas to show that they are widespread and recognizable. My purpose is to expand the scope of rhetorical usage in the medieval Scandinavian countries by examining their rhetoric of reasonableness. It isn't intended to diminish or invalidate the Classical Canon that the church spread in the medieval period, but I am seeking to ascribe rhetorical practices beyond the Christian/Classical models to a native tradition of the medieval Scandinavians.

In looking at the context of the sagas, it is important to note that "Saga stories reveal the normative codes of the society and indicate to the reader basic rules of conduct" (Byock *Medieval* 9). Jesse Byock's research into the reliability of the sagas has helped this dissertation in undertaking a study of rhetoric in the sagas. Byock and other archaeologists have shown that many of the descriptions of events are fairly reliable in the accounts, so using literary references in the sagas may provide some insights into the rhetoric used in the times of the saga age. To further support this position, Byock explains, "Most important, the saga had to be credible; that is, the story had to be portrayed as possible, plausible, and therefore useful within the context of Iceland's particular rules of social order" (Byock *Medieval* 36). This dissertation takes Byock's summation that the material presented in the sagas is credible for the purposes of my historiography.

Rhetoric has had a burgeoning integration with archaeology over the past three decades. Richard Leo Enos's *Rhetorical Archaeology* presents a method of examining both textual and non-textual sources to triangulate possible sources of rhetoric. In his essay, "Rhetorical Archaeology," Enos points out that "Discovering new knowledge in rhetoric is akin to the task of cutting back a jungle frontier. First, we must travel the well-worn path of research done by others so that we can benefit from their knowledge, but also see what needs to be explored and (in some cases) to correct and adjust earlier work" (36). His metaphor of exploring the history of rhetoric may be apt for the problems faced with researching medieval Nordic rhetorical practices. The path for research is a bit unclear, and this project hopes to cut the trail a bit longer.

Rhetorical Archaeology seeks to expand the frontiers of rhetoric by "Realizing the importance of situated discourse led to an obvious challenge to historians of rhetoric. Any historical research, as with contemporary writing practices, needs to be no less attentive to situational constraints and mentalities of the culture" (Enos "Rhetorical Archaeology" 7). Clearly Rhetorical Archaeology relies on an interdisciplinary approach to research in an attempt to triangulate data for veracity. Context for researching rhetorical practices is evident because the sagas themselves often set context for the uses of rhetoric. Use of rhetorical analysis along with historical materials and Rhetorical Archaeology provides a method to examine rhetorical practices found in the sagas.

The Icelandic literary critic, Sigurður Nordal, spoke of the sagas as minor literary works not worthy of much study because they only dealt with daily life of

common people—not important people doing interesting things. But in Old Norse, the word *saga* means history, so they were intent in writing histories of Nordic people. These sagas seem to represent history as they occurred. It is similar to the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann who took *The Iliad* and used it to discover the city of Troy. Archaeologist Jesse Byock has discovered that the sagas are remarkably accurate from his research in Iceland and the artifacts he has found.

Additionally, LuMing Mao's essay, "Writing the Other into Histories of Rhetorics: Theorizing the Art of Recontextualization," helps shed light on "crossing borders in studying other discursive traditions and practices" (41). While Mao's work specifically interrogates rhetoric in the *Daodejing* and works of Asian rhetoricians, his theory of recontextualization merits use in looking at marginalized populations everywhere. He points out that working in non-western and non-canonical works are often difficult due to the looming spectre of western rhetoric. Mao argues George Kennedy, for instance, ascribes that "the use of Greco-Roman rhetorical models and concepts aims to help us understand non-Western discursive practices and traditions" (43). Yet Kennedy is often testing Aristotelian ideas against other traditions making it more competitive than comparative or descriptive. Mao continues, "While Kennedy has no stated intention to impose his Aristotelian rhetoric upon all other non-Western rhetorics, he has created a rhetorical hierarchy where the Aristotelian rhetoric is perched at the top and the rest of the world rhetorics are being grouped below" (43).

I found this very true as I wrote the dissertation. I was subconsciously evaluating my findings in light of Aristotelian rhetoric. I had to stop from time to

time to refocus on medieval Scandinavian culture and its cultural logic to avoid sweeping Aristotle into the discussions. Nonetheless, I did use several Classical Rhetorical terms since they felt the most appropriate for the discussions of the medieval Nordic rhetoric for better context. LuMing Mao helps overcome some of this by pointing out Linda Alcoff's four-step strategy to consider recontextualizing a non-canonical rhetorical situation. One must begin by "analyzing and questioning the impetus to speak; interrogating the bearings of one's location and context on one's representation; holding oneself accountable to what one says; and recognizing and examining the consequences of one's claims or representations on the discursive and material context" (Alcoff 24-27, qtd. in Mao 45). Mao's intent is to confront the differences in the ways that knowledge is not only created by a rhetor, but the way it is received by the audience. While this is obviously the task of any rhetorical history, Mao contends that recontextualization also confronts the writer's preconceived notions and biases allowing "the first step toward responsible, ethical representation" (47). My use of recontextualization allowed me to explore the rhetoric shown in the sagas and bring it into a critical view.

Finally, as a link to these methodologies, I use Hawhee and Olson's essay, "Pan-Historiography: The Challenges of Writing History Across Time and Space." This essay connects wide ranging ideas under the theoretical use of Pan-Historiography, and since the medieval Nordic peoples spanned a large geographical area and a large time frame, this methodology exemplifies my research plan.

Pan-Historiography challenges the current trend of moving toward "more restricted or focused histories" (90). Hawhee and Olson see this research trend as

hampering some fields because it fails to “explore the rhetorical histories of a concept or cultural group” (90-91). Since their essay deals with the wider swaths of rhetorical history, this essay functions as a lynchpin in my dissertation. My study of *hóf* in medieval Nordic rhetoric only works as a broad look at culture. This dissertation uses the scope of the Hawhee and Olson ideas of Pan-Historiography since the people who spoke the Danish Tongue (i.e. the Scandinavians) had a similar language and cultural institutions across a large geography and time, yet by focusing in at specific references from the sagas, I can make some guarded claims about the Nordic rhetorical culture.

As Hawhee and Olson note, “The decision to span depends upon and responds to the aspects of rhetorical history or theory that the study hopes to illuminate and the contributions a rhetorical perspective might make to clarifying the broad themes” (92). Spanning is a very important concept for the Pan-Historiography I used in this work. Spanning both geographical area and timeframes allowed me to show how the Nordic concept of *hóf* led to a stable social structure wherever the Norse settled over a span of almost five hundred years in the Viking Age.

Moreover, since “historiography always involves making selections. With more expansive histories, those selections slice up time, selecting representative figures or movements in order to create a larger narrative arc” (Hawhee and Olson 94). Spanning allowed me to demonstrate social trends, cultural preferences, and how broad frames of culture are reinforced by specific instances in the histories and sagas of the Norse to build my case.

Using this multimethod approach gave me the ability to structure the dissertation to look at a recontextualize culture that spanned both geography and time and use both written and material artifacts to help expose the rhetorical practice of *hóf* that has been missing from rhetorical history of the medieval Nordic peoples.

For my chapters, I used rhetorical analysis of the sagas looking for rhetorical elements shown in the works. To triangulate the accuracy of my data, I used archaeology to verify the claims; thus, using a form of Rhetorical Archaeology as a method to describe and explain the rhetorical artifacts from the sagas. This dissertation offers a start to later research projects exploring medieval Scandinavian rhetorical practices to further fill in the gaps.

Chapter Three—History and Context

“One’s Home is Best/Though hut it be:
There a man is master and lord;
Though but two goats thine/and a thatched roof,
‘tis far better than beg.”
--*Hávamál* (Sayings of the High One)

In the first two chapters, I introduced and reviewed the pertinent scholarship concerning medieval Scandinavia and its rhetorical traditions. This chapter explores the history of Scandinavia: its regions, developments, and historical references from earlier writers. Additionally, the developments along with its diaspora will help center the argument of their rhetoric of reasonableness (*hófi*) for later chapters surrounding the civic and legal rhetorics of chapters four and five. The need to understand the historical developments sets a context for understanding *hófi* in these later chapters.

One of the major arguments I challenge in this dissertation is the early influence of classical culture brought by Christianity to northern culture in general, and rhetorical practices in particular. In setting up this chapter, the impressive work by Ebbe Schön, the Swedish folklorist and scholar, must be considered. Although many scholars contend that sagas and law codes written after the conversion are greatly influenced by the new religion, Schön argues that Christianity was slow to take hold in the north. His work in Sweden suggests that in Lovön, an island near Stockholm, it took about 150-200 years before the population would be considered predominantly Christian. Lovön is centrally located in relation to the Swedish kingdom, so the outlying hinterlands might take

considerably longer to complete the conversion. If Schön's argument is correct, then even if the sagas and law codes were written after the "conversion," they may only contain a glaze of Christianity. Kennedy's assessment of this phenomenon supports Schön's argument. "Classical rhetoric as understood in the early Middle Ages found a limited practical application in a number of oral and written forms" (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 204). Since Iceland was considered the edge of the world, Christianity there may have moved even slower. By the time Ari Thorgillsson and Snorri Sturluson were writing, the Christianity may not have influenced the writing as much as the modern reader may believe. If this is the case, then we must consider that all the trappings of Christianity, including their use of Classical Rhetoric, would also have taken a long time to permeate the culture, thus preserving many elements of the native rhetorical traditions

Historically, the Northern Germanic peoples were known in antiquity. Several articles have been published about the relationship between the Runes and either the Roman or Etruscan alphabets.¹ The trade connections with the Mediterranean world clearly influenced the shape of letters in the Runes used by the Scandinavians in their ubiquitous carvings. Additionally, early maps by Pytheas of Massalia (c. 300 BCE) show the peninsula of Jutland and describes the lifestyle as agricultural and poor by his standards.² Orosius's *History Against the Pagans* describes an early Northern people, the Cimbri, who were often in conflict with Rome which Orosius paints in a biased way as "The enemy captured both camps and acquired an enormous quantity of booty In accordance with a strange and unusual vow, they set about destroying everything they had taken...the horses themselves

were drowned in whirlpools, and men with nooses around their necks were hanged from trees. Thus, there was no booty for the victors and no mercy for the vanquished" (qtd in Jones 21). Tacitus, the Roman Senator and Historian writing in the first century CE describes the northern Germanic peoples in a very different light: They [The Chauci] are the noblest peoples among the Germans and one that prefers to maintain its greatness by righteous dealing. Free from greed and from ungovernable passion, they live in peaceful seclusion; they provoke no wars and do not engage in raids for plunder" (55). Tacitus further goes on to mention both the Swedes and the Dani (the Danes) as emerging into separate and competing kingdoms.

The point which emerges here is that the preserved historical records indicate that early on in northern history there were peoples who were known to be Scandinavian. They lived at the edge of the known world, were pagan, were a warrior society, and were different than the Germans whom the Celts and Romans had frequent contact. These small tribal kingdoms were often lumped together as Danes because these were the people inhabiting the Jutland peninsula and were often in the most contact with other cultures. Moreover, the Scandinavians were generally considered a single people because they spoke the *dönsk tunga* (lit. the Danish Tongue, but what we would consider Old Norse).

This interpretation of a single Danish people is somewhat misleading. Due to the nature of the small isolated settlements of Scandinavia, there were many dialects and variations of language among the Nordic peoples. While it is true that variations of Old Norse were intelligible with each other, many dialectical variations

existed, particularly the split between west and east Old Norse. However, to the outsider chronicling the Nordic peoples, these variations would have gone unnoticed.

The Viking raids are probably the most notably chronicled events from Scandinavia, but the Scandinavians were more often traders than raiders. The Nordic trade routes spanned the known world from Baghdad to the New World. The



Figure 1. Viking Age trade routes in north-west Europe. By Brianann MacAmhlaidh. The map is based off figure 12 in: Richards, JD (2013) [1991] *Viking Age England*, The History Press ISBN: 978 0 7509 5252 1. *Wikimedia Commons*.

Museum in Sweden, for instance, the *Historiska Museet* in Stockholm displays many artifacts found in trade sites from as far away as China and Ireland. These artifacts testify to the widespread trade routes established during the Middle Ages, so the perception of the Danes as simply violent interlopers is not correct.

Since there is evidence of a cultural unit of “Danes,” the following regional accounts shows a geographical span of a singular cultural unit as Hawhee and Olson discuss in “Pan-Historiography.” Furthermore, this cohesive cultural unit is inherently important in showing the rhetorical stance of *hóf* as a value to the medieval Nordic peoples across the north.

Denmark

The Danish people, due to their geographical connection to continental Europe, were in the most contact with Christianized Europe. Adam of Bremen’s *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* describes the Danish lands like this:

The main part of Denmark (which is called Jutland) extends its full length north from the River Eider, three days’ journey is you turn off through the island of Fyn. But if you travel the direct route from Schleswig to Alborg you will have five to seven days journey... The land there is infertile. Apart from places near a river practically the whole of it looks waste-land: “a salt land and not inhabited” ... the desert of Jutland is more savage than any other. The land is avoided because of the poverty of its crops, the sea because of marauding bands of pirates. Hardly any cultivated land is to be found in any region, hardly anywhere fit for human habitation. But whenever you come upon inlets of the sea, there it has very large towns. (Adam of Bremen 186-187)

While it appears that Adam never traveled much to most of Denmark, and not at all to Norway or Sweden, he relies heavily on the views of the King of Denmark, Svein

Estridsson. What Adam of Bremen does, though, is give a relatively early view of the Scandinavian countries. Writing about 1075 CE, Adam of Bremen relates the lands of the north in a way to give a sense of how they were viewed by contemporaries. As a Christian and an outsider, Adam clearly filters the descriptions through a Christian lens.

Since Denmark was physically connected and juxtaposed to Christian, feudal Germany, it is not surprising that the Danes were the first to adopt Christianity (c. 975 CE). But this date is all too convenient. Christianity had been known of long before when Scandinavians had served as Roman mercenaries, and an earlier chieftain Harald Klak had been baptized around 826 CE. It wasn't officially declared a Christian country until Harald Bluetooth declared Christianity his religion for a united Denmark and Norway that defined Denmark as the first Christian Nordic kingdom. Having the support of the Christian Europeans gave Harald valuable allies to consolidate his power. As the Danish National Museum points out "After Harald Bluetooth had been baptized, it was harder for the German Emperors to interfere in Danish affairs....Therefore Harald probably thought it was a good political move to become Christian in order to avoid war with the Holy Roman Empire" ("The Transition to Christianity"). It also further opened the north to Christian writing (i.e. Latin) and classical culture. Additionally, this also led to the spreading of feudal ideas into a north, which was very independent minded and less rigidly hierarchical than their neighbors to the south.

The changes in Denmark were not immediate ones. Latin didn't completely replace literacy in writing. Nordic runestones now appeared with Christian symbols,

and funeral stones now embedded “God help his soul” (*Guð hjalpi sál hans*) on the rockface. In fact, the Jelling Stones in Jutland are regarded as some of the finest and best-preserved stones in existence. Denmark still remained fundamentally a pre-Christian Nordic country for the next few hundred years until the complete conversion was achieved. Nor did the conversion stop Viking raids. Monasteries were less frequently targeted, but raids on towns were still conducted for booty and supplies, yet having a Nordic country converted gave a base for missionaries to attempt further conversion of the north.

Years later in the early 1200s, Saxo Grammaticus outlines the history of the Danes from their mythological past to the present time of his writing. He describes the history of the people there to establish a national identity. Since he, himself, was a Dane, this is clearly a work of national importance to the kingdom. Saxo synthesizes historical accounts, Latin tradition of literature, and oral and written stories from various other countries, but particularly Icelandic sources, to recount the makings of the Danish Kingdom.

Sweden

North and East of the Jutland peninsula lies Sweden. One of the earliest references to the Swedes comes from the *Beowulf* manuscript where after Beowulf's death Wiglaf worries that the cowardice of the Geats who have fled the dragon's wrath will show the Swedes that the Geats are cowards.

So this bad blood between us and the Swedes,
This vicious feud, I am convinced,
Is bound to revive; they will cross our borders
And attack in force when they find out

That Beowulf is dead. In days gone by
He kept our coffers and our kingdom safe. (*Beowulf* 203)

The poem ends with an elegiac note because the Geats are doomed without their champion to save them. This analysis of the Swedish dominance of the landscape appears to be an accurate assessment from the *Beowulf* poet since the Swedish people dominate the lands north of Jutland in the medieval period.

Additionally, Ibn Fadlan traveled north up into what is now modern-day Russia. In the Kingdom of the Khazars, he met a group of Scandinavians. Since the description and the geographical location are evident, then it is likely these are Swedes Fadlan encountered. His description of them being “like palm trees. They are fair and ruddy...Each of them carries an axe, a sword, and a knife” (45) And “all their women wear on their bosoms a circular brooch” (46), clearly describes the personal effects of medieval Scandinavians.

It is not surprising that the militarily strong and economically prosperous northern Swedes would catch the interest of early missionaries in the north. Ansgar, a cleric from the diocese of Hamburg-Bremen, attempted to start a Christian community on the trading site of Birka in Sweden several miles from present-day Stockholm. Ansgar met with some interest, and he did manage to convert a few Swedes, but his mission in 829-831 CE was ultimately unsuccessful. Ansgar’s replacement, Gautbert, seems to have been inept because he was “driven out by a pagan mob” (Page 228). Ansgar returned in 850 CE to try again, but he was no more successful on his second visit. Despite his preaching and occasional conversions, Sweden remained largely pagan for almost another two hundred years.

Since Sweden was the last to convert to Christianity (c.1035 CE), it seems rather odd how positively Adam of Bremen describes Sweden:

Sweden is a very fertile country, the land abundant in crops and honey. Further it excels all others for cattle breeding, is very favoured in its rivers and woods; and the whole region is everywhere full of imported merchandise... Though all Northerners are noted for their hospitality, our Swedes are supreme. To them worse than any infamy is to deny hospitality to travelers... There are many people in Sweden outstanding in strength and warfare. Moreover, as excellent fighting-men they are equally good on horseback or shipboard. Indeed that is why they seem to keep the rest of the northern peoples under their thumb. Their power, however, is dependent on the will of the people. (Adam of Bremen 43)

While the Danes sought influence and power by turning south, the Swedes turned east and the riches of the Slavs living along the Volga river. The Swedes traded extensively with the Slavs finally working their way as far as the Crimea on the Black Sea. This pipeline of wealth in Arabic metals and eastern furs made the Swedes a powerful player in the north. I must also clarify that the Swedes were a tribal cultural group that gained supremacy in eastern Scandinavia and the idea of a Sweden as we know it wasn't a reality until the 11th-12th century when the Swedes consolidated power in their area. Over the next few hundred years (and some say this rivalry exists even today) the Swedes and Danes vied for supremacy and influence in the north.

Norway

Norway is perhaps the most difficult geographical region to control in Scandinavia. It is connected to Sweden, a short boat ride from Denmark and other northern continental countries, yet it is much more geographically difficult because

of its great forests and tall mountains. Adam of Bremen describes Norway as something of a backwater.

As Nortmannia is the farthest country of the world, so we properly place consideration of it the last part of this book. By moderns it is called Norway. Of its location and extent, we made some mention earlier in connection with Sweden. But this in particular must now be said, that in its length that land extends into the farthest northern zone, whence also it takes its name. It begins with towering crags at the sea commonly called the Baltic; then with its main ridge bent north, after following the course of the shore line of a raging ocean, it finally has its bounds in the Riphean Mountains, where the tired world also comes to an end. On account of the roughness of its mountains and the immoderate cold, Norway is the most unproductive of all countries....Poverty has forced them thus to go all over the world and from piratical raids they bring home in great abundance the riches of the lands. (Adam of Bremen 210-211)

What is important to note is that Adam of Bremen is pointing out that the Norwegians went trading and on raids as a by-product of their geography. For them, it was a matter of survival because of the short growing season, isolated geography, and relative lack of agricultural production.

To accommodate this trading and raiding, the Norwegian shipbuilding became a strong industry for them. Of all of the Scandinavian countries, Norway had the great forests to serve as raw material lumber for shipbuilding. This material culture became important for transporting both traders and war parties across Europe. The Scandinavian ship builders are considered some of the very best. While the other Europeans were leery of venturing too far out to sea in their ships, the Viking Knorr and dragon ships routinely crossed the North Sea, Baltic, and North Atlantic. Their shiplap and inner framework proved to be a good design for traversing heavy seas.

Surprisingly, even though the settlements of Norway were isolated and difficult to travel between, Christian missionaries braved the hostile climate and geography to work on conversion, yet the historical data concerning the conversion are somewhat nebulous. Adam of Bremen and Saxo Grammaticus both chronicled Christian missionary work in the north. Robert Ferguson contends that the seep of Christianity took a long time, starting with Håkon the Good's son Harald Fairhair who was fostered to a Christian king, Athelstan, in England. However, Harald's efforts to convert Norway were mostly ineffectual (Ferguson 263-264). Even though the initial incursion of Christianity took place around 975 CE, the country remained mostly pagan. Even with the efforts of King Olaf Trygvasson (c. 995 CE), commonly known as Saint Olaf I, Norway was only nominally Christian. Olaf didn't endear himself to his people. He destroyed pagan temples and forced conversion when he could. Yet after several years of this, his country still wasn't sympathetic to Christian teachings. In fact, Norway doesn't gain an arch diocese from the pope until 1154 CE, so Norway wasn't sufficiently Christian until around the 1100s to deserve an archdiocese.

This timeline would also show that Classical culture would not have been widely spread throughout Norway until long after Harald Fairhair's attempts at Christianity—even long after Saint Olaf's reign. Traditional pagan practices were still commonly used until the Christian, Classical models finally displaced them, which was a longer process encompassing several generations.

The Expansion Period, The Settlement of Iceland, and The Diaspora

As with other sea-faring peoples, the medieval Scandinavians settled many lands and started many colonies. During this period, the Scandinavians found themselves in a bind. Their population growth had risen to strain their resources, so moving on to settle more abundant areas was almost inevitable. Much like the Greek and Phoenicians, the medieval Scandinavians found themselves needing to expand, so that their population burden wouldn't break their society. Additionally, some colonists fled the encroachment of both the feudal structure, which threatened their traditional forms of self-rule, and Christianity, which also attempted to break their traditional religion. Their technology of shipbuilding gave the people the ability to travel great distances to establish both trading posts and new settlements.

While many scholars contend that the Viking Age starts at the first attack on the Lindisfarne monastery in 793 CE and lasts until Harald Hardradi and the combined Norwegian, Northumbrian, and Orcadian army was defeated by the Anglo-Saxon ruler, Harold Godwinson, at Stamford Bridge in 1066 CE.³ Judith Jesch claims that the Viking Age is much longer and more complex than that. Viking ships and their military tactics didn't spring into existence overnight before Lindisfarne, and their culture and raiding survived long after Harald's defeat at Stamford Bridge. Jesch points out that

Such dates are particularly favoured by historians, relying on specific events recorded in documentary sources...Beyond England, it is more difficult to pin down an exact date for the end of the Viking Age, especially if the conversion to Christianity is avoided as too imprecise or variable to be a marker...Military raids led by Scandinavian kings and chieftains continued well into the thirteenth century...The disappearance of the Scandinavian colony of Greenland at some time in the fifteenth century, the Scottification of the Northern Isles around the same time, and the Protestant Reformation

throughout Scandinavia and its surviving colonies in the sixteenth century combine to suggest that c. 1500 is as good a date as any for the end of the 'long Viking Age.' (*The Viking Diaspora* 9-10)

These ideas of the diaspora and what constitutes the Viking Age is still contested by medieval Scandinavian historians, but what is abundantly clear from the historical and archaeological evidence is the widespread colonization and influence of the medieval Scandinavian culture on the North Atlantic islands.

The Orkney Islands were a place of strategic importance to the British Isles. Before the attacks on Lindisfarne in 793, the island was settled by Irish monks and Gaelic peoples. When the Scandinavians began their raids on the poorly defended monasteries in England, the Orkneys became a strategic point with which to launch their raids. Archeological evidence is scarce as to whether the Norse settling in the Orkneys came there as conquerors or whether they came as peaceful farmers and traders.⁴ One point is clear, the Norse completely displaced the native population and renamed the older Gaelic place names with Scandinavian ones.

The *Orkneyinga Saga* follows up this early history with the founding of Orkney as a jarldom. According to the saga, Harald Fairhair gave the Orkneys to Jarl Rognvald for the loss of his son in service to the king. But since Rognvald already held lands in Norway, and didn't want to give them up, Rognvald gave these lands to his brother, Sigurd, who became the first jarl of Orkney.

The importance of the diaspora here is that this settlement in the Orkneys occurred early in the Viking Age, and the Nordic influence went on to affect not only the Orkney Isles, but the Shetlands, parts of Scotland, and many of the islands off

the Scottish coast. This culture affected the geographical area for the next several hundred years.

The settlement period of Iceland is well documented by the Icelandic historian Ari Thorgilsson in the *Íslendingabók* (c. 1125 CE) and the *Landnámabók* (date uncertain, but probably around the early 12th century CE). Ari writes in the *Landnámabók* that the settlement period lasted from about 870 CE to 930 CE. At that time, most of the land had been claimed, and farmsteads arose around the edges of Iceland since glaciers or arctic deserts occupied the middle of the island. Ingólfr Arnarson is said to have founded the Icelandic capital of Reykjavík in 874 CE. Tradition holds that Arnarson threw two logs, which would later serve to build his high seat, off of his ship as he reached the shores of Iceland. A year later, his slaves found the poles washed up in a smoky bay⁵ in southwest Iceland. He established a farm here, and it later became the village where Reykjavík is now located. His story is one of the most important to Icelanders because he represents the founding of the country—and still has an impact on modern Icelanders.

Iceland became an interesting example of medieval Scandinavian lifestyle. Fleeing from the encroaching feudal and Christian institutions, Iceland kept many of the old cultural structures which were eventually written down in their sagas. As Hawhee and Olson describe in their essay, “Pan-Historiography,” Connecting the dots of a large swath of time and geographical space can be enriched and enlivened by slicing down to particular places, people, or events (91-94). Examining Iceland and its sagas provides the slicing in to look at a particular culture that best represents a later look at what earlier Scandinavian culture looked like. The

Icelandic culture and language are conservative, and people with a good knowledge of Icelandic can read Old Norse. Many of the best-preserved sagas are from Iceland. The linking of Icelandic sagas to the slicing metaphor of Hawhee and Olson delves into the civic and legal rhetorics in chapters four and five. In these chapters, I use examples from the sagas to illustrate the rhetorical dominance of *hóf*, and how a rhetoric of reasonableness permeated both civic and legal rhetoric of the day.

The isolated nature of Iceland makes it a perfect exemplar for looking at the medieval Nordic culture. The rhetorical stances of peace and violence in the native population are of particular importance since so much of the perceptions of the Vikings were the violence directed outward to other places they attacked. According to Straumsheim's research, medieval Iceland was one of the more peaceful places in Europe. He identifies the cultural constructs that limits the use of violence. He directly points to Iceland's mediation system and its legal system when looking at avenues that vent potential violence from occurring. "Such an approach to conflict resolution in most cases resolved disputes quickly and to the satisfaction of the parties" (Sigurðsson, qtd. in Straumsheim). The idea of *hóf*, of reasonableness, was predicated on keeping a civil and legal peace in a place lacking a central bureaucratic government. For instance, when Christianity was introduced in Iceland, the new religion wasn't openly accepted, and only after several years of proselytizing did the issue of Christian and pagan reach a level where violence may occur. Instead of a religious war, the two parties went to court and plead their cases. The law-speaker at the *Alþing* in the year c.1,000 CE, "Thorgeir of Ljosavatn, who held office for seventeen years and though a heathen announced the adoption of

Christianity in Iceland” (Jones 283). Thorgeir did, however, declare that pagans could still practice their religion in private and that Christian eating habits (e.g. the banning of eating horse flesh) would not influence Iceland. This way, both parties in the case received something. On a practical level, it took the pressure off of Iceland to convert, and it stopped Norway or Denmark from invading to convert the Icelanders.

The sagas also tell of the founding of the colony on Greenland. The *Grœnlendinga Saga* and *Eirík’s Saga Rauða* (*Erik the Red’s Saga*) relate the story of settling Greenland in isolated colonies, their adventures and expeditions further west, and the discovery of Vinland, North America, probably in L’Anse Aux Meadows, Nova Scotia. These sagas tell us about the environment and the conditions of exploration and life in the westernmost parts of the north Atlantic. We also learn of the spread of Christianity there as well from Leif Eiriksson, who brought Christianity with him from Norway to Greenland—although there were probably Christians there and people who knew of the religion before he edified it.

At the same time settlers were fleeing from Norway to Iceland, c.870 CE to 930 CE, the Faroe Islands were also settled. Much like the Orkneys, the Norse settlers displaced Irish monks who had traveled there to live solitary, ascetic lives. The archaeological evidence suggests that a rather large number of settlers arrived in a rather short period of time. This meant that the islands must have been known beforehand, but the relative isolation made them a desirable target for immigrants fleeing Harald Fairhair since the Faroes are much closer than Iceland. The evidence suggests that Norse farming methods and lifestyle were maintained on the Faroes.

Longhouses and several *þing* sites have been discovered, as well as the close linguistic relationship Faroese has with Old Norse and modern Icelandic.

The story of the Faroes's conversion to Christianity in 999 CE is more tragic and violent than Iceland, yet it may have led the impetus for Iceland's peaceful adoption of Christianity. The *Faereyinga Saga* tells the tale of Olaf Tryggvason, Saint Olaf I, sending one of his jarls, Sigmundur Brestisson to bring Christianity to the Faroes. Instead of introducing the positives of the new faith, Sigmundur tried to force the population to convert by the sword. His destruction of pagan temples and forcing the new religion on the populace was met with vigorous resistance. The rebel leader, þrándr í Götú, led an ill-fated revolt which was defeated, and Christianity became the religion of the Faroes.

The Legal Structure of the North

The Viking *þings* of the medieval period, as shown in the sagas, create a way to examine their legal structure. Gwynn Jones argues that "It was long held that a substantial body of custom and law could be recovered from saga sources, and indeed it can, but what is now very much in dispute is how reliable was the information transmitted" (345). According to Jones, the writing of the sagas is done in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; therefore, the court cases from the sagas shows a later representation of law. In light of modern scholarship, this has two problems. First, even in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, scholars are still reading with a medieval mindset in the court practices. The second is that the question we need to ask is if the fundamentals of the structure, pleading, and laws are all that different

from saga times. Many medieval practices remained somewhat static for long periods of time, from textiles to farming to building, so would the law shown here be very different? Modern scholars suggest not.

Ari Thorgillson chronicles the early genesis of the legal codes in *The Book of the Icelanders*

The first summer which Bergthor recited the law, the innovation was made that our law should be written in a book at Haflidi Marson's during the following winter according to his dictation and counsel, and that of Bergthor, and of other wise men who were designated for the task. They were to make new provisions in the law wherever they considered such to be better than the old ones. The laws were to be recited the next summer in the Lögrétta, and all those to be enacted which the majority of the people then did not oppose. (12)

Since Ari was writing in 1117-1118 CE, this makes his accounts fairly close to the actual time of the events. Furthermore, Ari gained this information from talking to witnesses to events. A man named Teitr is often mentioned as a source, and Ari even mentions interviews with people who had traveled to both Greenland and America (Vinland). Ari chronicles the settling of Iceland and the conversion to Christianity in Iceland. Archaeologists and historians can demonstrate that much of what Ari has chronicled as true. For instance, settlements have been found in Greenland and Nova Scotia as evidence that Vikings were there. Additionally, Ari claims that Iceland was completely settled in sixty years. Recent archaeological studies back up this claim. If so many of Ari's claims are true, then we must consider his rendering of legal tradition taken from primary sources as probably true as well.

But this is not to say that Icelandic law is the final word in looking at the medieval Scandinavian law codes. It does provide a baseline for looking at the topic as a whole. A majority of the Icelanders came from Norway during the *landnáma*

(the land-taking) during the settlement period, circa 870-930 CE. The legal codes and *þings* were carried from the mainland to Iceland during the settlement. Norway, for example, has its own legal code the *Gulábing* and *Frostábing* laws fairly contemporary with Icelandic law—although these Norwegian laws appear to be rooted in an earlier legal tradition. The idea that a widespread legal tradition appeared and flourished before the conversion, and before the vernacular period, is important to consider when looking at the legal aspects in the sagas. These legal representations become important representative examples of the broad legal structures in the medieval north. It also explains why the sagas were so well received outside of Iceland. These examples resonated with the audiences on the continent where they could see elements of a shared culture of reasonable decisions in the sagas.

In any case, the lawyers in the sagas are clearly a known and structured class of legal rhetors in the Viking world. The descriptions of *þings* in the Viking world show a broad diaspora of this cultural phenomenon. With any cultural system, specialists in the area will develop and create language and tradition (i.e. a discourse) for the members of that community. The medieval Nordic lawyers developed this as well. Lawyers were apprenticed to a legal expert to learn the law. This type of inculcation of lawyers gave them the ability to plead cases, but also offer legal advice to those who needed it. There are many examples of lawyers' advice-giving in the sagas.⁶ With the descriptions of the legal discourse community, the sagas strongly indicate a legal rhetorical tradition outside of the classical norm.

Reasonableness as a Rhetorical Position

Civic rhetoric has been defined in many ways. Aristotle defines his theory of rhetoric as being inseparable from civic engagement; thus, all rhetoric is civic in some way. Strecker and Tyler Argue that culture and rhetoric are defined as chiasitic, so where civic culture exists, there is rhetoric. Grabill defines Civic Rhetoric as “The theory and practice of civic involvement and citizenship” (84). To this end it is clear that medieval Nordic culture, then, would have some sort of civic rhetoric, for it had civic involvement in its town and legislative gatherings. However, the perception of civic rhetoric in the medieval period is often viewed as limited. For instance, Kennedy argues that,

even in the early Middle Ages, when there was reduced practical opportunity to exercise civic rhetoric, the definition and content of rhetorical theory set forth by Isadore and Alcuin, for example, show the same civic assumption: the revival of classical rhetoric in Renaissance Italy was foreshadowed by renewed need for civic rhetoric. (*Classical Rhetoric* 2-3)

Kennedy follows the typical view that rhetoric all but disappears in the medieval period, but his lack of knowledge of Scandinavia appears all too clear here. During the medieval period, Scandinavia had a clear and pressing need for civic rhetoric. Its isolated geography and lack of feudal system gave the people a need to work as a civic unit with democratic populism as a form of legislative control. The need for small communities to talk, make decisions, and regulate their small farmsteads, villages, and towns with words rather than force was much more common than the violent images often associated with the medieval North.

To this end, the sagas suggest that the idea of reasonableness (*hóð*) becomes the stance of the civic rhetorical move. In a world where most people were armed in

some fashion, keeping civic peace became one of the highest priorities. A person entering the public arena tried to be reasonable in all of the transactions and interactions they conducted. The ability to negotiate this public sphere was considered an art form that kept the peace.

Consider also the geography of the medieval North. With the exceptions of a few large trading centers, most Scandinavians lived in rather rural, isolated farming and fishing communities. The villages needed to cooperate in order to survive in the rough northern winters. These villages needed to be able to pool resources, work together on projects of food collecting and harvesting. Since these are village-oriented activities, the group needed cohesion to function effectively. The interactions of these people couldn't be severed with feud or violence. If it did, then everyone may perish, so the rhetorical stance of reasonableness needed to be a common strategy among the villagers.

The Norse idea of *hóf*, or reasonableness, plays an important part in examining the civic rhetoric of the medieval Scandinavians. They preferred to resolve disputes peacefully. The system developed as a means to keep the peace, and if people were considered *óhóf*, or unreasonable, they gained a black mark in public opinion. To be labeled as *ójafnaðarmaðar*, or unjust or overbearing man, was considered a stern public rebuke in the north. The stance the average citizen was supposed to adopt was reasonableness.

People mentioned in the sagas are often categorized in terms of their reasonableness. Relationships, such as friendships, are often categorized in terms of their evenhanded-ness and reasonable-ness. People who are reasonable will take and

make settlements to keep the peace and maintain civic order while the villains are often men and women who are unreasonable. The stain of looking unreasonable in a society built on the premise of personal honor and reputation could have long and lasting repercussions.

Women in the Viking World

The rhetorical stance of medieval Nordic women seems almost a contradictory idea. On one hand, the society is structured as a highly masculinized, male-dominated society which excluded women from even speaking in court. But on the other hand, no other society in Europe at the time gave women the amount of cultural importance as medieval Scandinavia. Women could inherit property. Women could run farms. Women could divorce their husbands if they chose. It is a mixed bag of cultural suppression and liberation which makes the rhetoric developed by the medieval Nordic women so fascinating. There is also the geography to consider. Since many of the Scandinavian settlements were isolated, the women needed to contribute in significant ways. The lifestyle was mostly subsistence, and the women and men needed to be equal in many ways because the work of survival and defense needed to be done. The demands of geographical space account for a lot of the equality in the sagas.

In *Rhetoric Retold*, Cheryl Glenn frames the argument for women's rhetoric in the classical tradition:

Rhetoric always inscribes the relation of language and power at a particular moment (including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what may be said); therefore, canonical rhetorical history has represented the experience of males, powerful males, with no provision or

allowance for females. In short rhetorical history has replicated the power politics of gender, with men in the highest cultural role and social rank. And our view of rhetoric has remained one of a gendered landscape, with no female rhetoricians (theoreticians) clearly in sight. (1-2)

Her argument is compelling in looking at the classical and Christian traditions, but the saga world complicates this in some ways. Yes, the legal roles were limited to men in the courts, but the *Grágás* laws explicitly state the legal rights for women. As women grew older, they received more and more ability to run their lives. This seems like splitting hairs since the laws were codified by men, but an average medieval Scandinavian woman had many more legal and social rights than her sisters in Christianized Europe.

The sagas show the rhetorical practices women engaged in as forms of civic rhetoric. Women had a great deal of influence in the function of society. The sagas portray many strong women characters who are not silenced. The reasonableness of the situation gave them a means to interact civilly in ways that many women in Christianized Europe were not permitted. They speak in longhouses, travel extensively, manage and inherit wealth. The *Laxdæla Saga*, for instance paints a realistic picture of women's roles in medieval Iceland. It is also one of the few sagas with major female characters. Guðrún and Hallgerðr occupy a majority of the text and show that women are not satisfied in trying to be controlled by men and kept on a farm. There are many examples in the sagas where women exercise control and use the rhetoric at their disposal to influence the course of events in the sagas.

Conclusion

The history and context of the Viking Age shows a people who were defined a lot by their geography and on the edge of the classically influenced Christian Europe. The Scandinavians had their own laws, culture, and civic practices that were slowly subsumed by Christian Europe as the medieval period gave way to the later Middle Ages. Moreover, it is still possible to deduce some of the civic and legal rhetoric by using the Icelandic sagas as exempla of the older systems. The story of the native traditions in the medieval north are one of loss and remembrance, captured by the saga writers. In these sagas, we see *hóf* as a cultural stance in their rhetoric to keep the peace and create functioning systems of small isolated civic bureaucracies. In later years major nation states emerged to control vast areas of land and sea and the independent people living in small Norse villages saw their way of life change.

Notes:

1. The Runic alphabet clearly shows a Mediterranean influence. Most Scholars view contact with Rome as the source of the similarity (see Tómasson “The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts I: Old Icelandic” and Antonsen “The Runes: The Earliest Germanic Writing System.” However, Gwynn Jones sees an earlier connection to possibly the Etruscans (See *The Vikings* pp. 19-22). Richard Leo Enos argues more forcefully that the connection is actually to the Etruscan Alphabet since the Romans borrowed heavily from their Italic neighbors. (See Enos “Scriptura Etrusca: A Prolegomenon to Roman Rhetoric”)

2. See Jones pp. 21.

3. The Norse defeat at Stamford Bridge is often seen as a turning point since it stopped the Danish rule in England. However, the defeat of Harold Godwinson just a few days later at Battle Hill, Hastings to the Norman army fails to take into account that the Normans were themselves part Nordic. And that Harald Hardradi and William the Conqueror were distantly related.

4. For an interesting view of the Orkney Islands see <http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/vikingorkney/index.html> for an interesting read on the history and culture of the Orcadians.

5. Reykjavík literally means smoky bay. Reykja= smoke and vík= bay.

6. Consultation with lawyers is a common *topos* in legal events in the sagas. See *Bandamanna Saga*, *Ljósvetninga Saga*, *Valla-Ljóts Saga*, and *Njal's Saga* for further examples of the legal consultation at work in the sagas.

Chapter Four—

Hóf as a Rhetorical Stance in Civic Rhetoric

“A man should not hold on to the ale-cup,/But drink moderately from it”
-- *The Hávamál* (Sayings of the High One)

“A wise man does all things in moderation”
-- *Gisli Sursson’s Saga* (Ch. 15)

Previous chapters have challenged the misconceptions of the medieval Nordic people as ignorant and violent. From an outsider point of view, especially the Christian chroniclers of the day, it makes sense they would view the invaders this way. In looking at the sagas, as well as the historical and archaeological evidence, this view becomes particularly problematic. Most medieval Scandinavians led relatively peaceful lives as farmers. Since the Scandinavian towns and villages were rather sparsely populated and remote, the need for collective action to survive long harsh winters was of the utmost importance. Thus, rather than construct a society built on violence, the society needed to be peaceful and cooperative so that the group could survive. Saga manuscripts chronicling the early settlement of Iceland show this in effect. Feud is always a possibility, but the sagas show there were many elements which society could enact to try and diffuse the potentially violent situation.

When historians focus on feud, what they are missing is the rhetorical stances of the people *before* any violence ensues, and the actions of other citizens to help end the violence if it starts. The main rhetorical stance of the medieval Nordic peoples was the idea of *hóf*,¹ the idea of reasonableness as a means of keeping the

peace and ensuring their collective survival as a group. Rhetoric to the Norse meant that a reasonable solution could, and should, be reached between parties in a way that saved face for everyone involved. The social structure was set up for this, and society placed a high value on people who were reasonable, and shamed those who were seen as being unreasonable, or, *óhóf*.² To understand this in a larger context, it is necessary to understand the difference and implications of a shame versus a guilt culture, and why this is important to understanding the civic rhetoric of the medieval Scandinavians.

Hóf appears as a set of principles which the person should aspire to. Reasonableness is often praised in many sagas as a way to conduct oneself in public dealings since *hóf* brought stability to smaller decentralized areas in Scandinavia. Kristen Wolf argues this value was important across all demographics in all Scandinavia. “The need of moderation in eating, drinking, and even wisdom, and the value of circumspection in one’s dealings with others are emphasized” (70). Saga literature often shows threats to Icelandic peace and stability by men who demonstrate *óhóf*, or unreasonableness.

The sagas have a specific term for ruthless and overly ambitious men. They are called *ójafnaðarmenn* (sing. *ójafnaðarmaðr*) meaning “uneven,” unjust, or overbearing men. *Ójafnaðarmenn* took advantage of the fact that social defenses against a thoroughly ruthless individual were cumbersome and potentially inadequate. (Byock, Feud 29-30)

These men are often the villainous people described in the sagas. If the rhetoric of reasonableness was valued in the society, it makes sense that the sagas would cast this negative trait in a negative light to show the future readers the conduct that is

valued in the society. The sagas reinforce positive social interactions by showing and commenting on the negative societal impacts of the *ójafnaðarmenn*.

The terms in Old Norse often used to describe the type of men as these, ones who are civic minded and respectful in keeping the peace are often referred to as *jafn* or even-minded men. They are thoughtful and willing to reasonably act in public matters openly and with good intent. The contrast to that is the *ójafnaðarmaðr*, men who are uneven tempered. The idea of a reciprocal balance sheet is a mindset which sometimes influenced the Old Norse saga landscape. When the uneven man has pushed too far, or offended too much, the civic responsibility of a reasonable man is to balance those scales, to get even.

An impactful example for this comes from the *Ljosvetninga Saga*. The saga opens with a description of people who are viewed positively—Thorgeir the Chieftain, Forni, Arnor, Thorfinn. The description of these men is a counterexample to the descriptions of the antagonists in the saga—the brothers Solmund, Soxolf, and Eyjolf. While Andersson and Miller view the contrast as a “juxtaposition of good and evil,” The better contrast in my mind is between *Hóf* and *Óhóf*. Later, Andersson and Miller comment that the contrast emerges between moderate and immoderate conduct. The brothers are described in the saga as “all forceful and overbearing men” who were “great troublemakers” (*Ljosvetninga Saga* 122). The language of the saga consistently draws the comparison of reasonableness versus unreasonableness in the characterization of the major figures of the saga, which the saga is clearly meant to show how civil society is damaged by the actions of the

immoderate men. Their cultural mores determined a lot of their social and legal actions.

Guilt Versus Shame Culture

In the hypermasculine world of the sagas, honor is a large motivation in all civic dealings. To save face and keep one's honor intact are an extremely important motivating factor in the dealings with fellow villagers or countrymen.

Transgressions against this public "face" could bring dishonor or shame to the person—something anyone in that society would be loath to endure. Guerra et al. points out the multifunction of a shame-based culture in relation to a code of honor in regulating civic activity.

Pitt-Rivers (2001) suggests the existence of three basic functions of an honor code: (1) it guides one's judgment and moral evaluations of others; (2) it influences one's own actions before society; and (3) it is a measure of social status. Consequently, honor is one's own image and, at the same time, the representation of one's moral values in the social group. In this sense, it is an integrated part of a group's social identity (Pitt-Rivers, 2003), being present in the interpersonal relationships established in the group. (299)

The shame culture is often associated in cultural anthropology with honor cultures. The Germanic peoples, the medieval Nordic peoples included, practiced shame culture. This meant that the ethics and morality were publicly constructed and driven. For instance, a person contemplating an action might view the dynamics in terms of what society would think of him if he committed the action. But the broad strokes of this type of culture are often outward of the individual. The public view of the person was important. It regulated the society had of the person, and to be accepted and have good standing in the community, the person's public honor

needed to be maintained at all costs. If not, he could be shamed or ostracized from the community, and in many older cultures, this might be the equivalence of a death sentence since without a clan, tribe, or community, the person loses all of the safety net belonging to the culture. Shweder notes that

Socially shared and valued ego ideals, notions about a well-developed self, and ideas about what it means to be a good, worthy, admirable, attractive, or competent person are variable across time and space; and as they vary, the character, substance and meaning of 'shame' can be expected to vary as well, although not in an unlimited number of ways. (1120)

Thus, the idea of a shame culture is socially constructed to fit that society's notions of what is good and proper publicly.

This emphasis on praise for acts the public deems worthy and shame for acts the consensus of the population says falls short of their collective expectations may seem much like Aristotle's definition of the epideictic. When Aristotle wrote about the types of rhetoric, he explains that the epideictic centers on praise and blame, and that it concerns the present (as opposed to the future or past), but as Cynthia Sheard points out, "epideictic rhetoric was burdened from the start by suspicions of the speaker's self-indulgence and opportunism, his manipulation of audience sentiments, and his distance from the interests of the community" (767-768). The medieval Scandinavians didn't use praise and blame in Aristotle's meaning of the word. They used the variation of praise and shame. While this praise and shame culture seems like a form of epideictic, several points of difference must be made. Praise and shame cultures share many similarities to the epideictic, but the suspicious view of epideictic as lacking importance does not apply to the Nordic praise and shame culture.

Due to the praise and shame structures of the society shown in the sagas, *topoi* seem to exist for both praise and shaming situations. Goading, for instance, creates *topoi* for shame situations for different contexts and power relations. The public praising or shaming is a conscious rhetorical move to spur someone to action. In the sections below, I give several examples of the types of praise and shame which move medieval Scandinavians to action, thus, showing that praise and shame cultures use this as an active form of rhetoric to instigate civic action. This chapter expands the description of the praise and shame of the medieval Norse.

Sociological approaches have looked at shame cultures in terms of societal norms and the relation of the individual to meet those norms. In shame cultures, people judge their actions through an external lens where the individual needs to be aware of public audience for actions and the social consequences for doing/not doing something. In shame cultures, the moral compass of the society is external to the person. Societal values viewed socially determine what is right and wrong. In this case, the transgressor is judged by others, not the self. If something bad happened, and the community didn't know, then there would be no shame until the transgression was brought to light. From a modern perspective, it is very constraining to worry about the needs of the external when it may interfere with individual motivation. In some instances, it raises "the other" above "the self" when matters of public action are considered. According to Heller,

The bearer of the social triggers of shame is the eye of the Other, the eye of the community. One is constantly seen whatever one is doing; one is supposed to be seen. If she carries out all activities according to the norms or rules of the community, she is not ashamed for the Eye approves. However, if she is doing something that infringes the rules, or at least might be seen as something that infringes them, the affect of shame conquers or possesses the

person. Whenever the eye of the Other disapproves, the guilty party feels annihilated: she blushes, bends her head so she cannot see the judgment of the Eye, runs away or at least feels the urge to disappear or sink into the earth in order not to be seen. (1017)

In any heroic society, the idea of words and deeds carry with it the potential for praise or shame. Public words were considered carefully since they might bring the speaker shame if an utterance was in haste, ill-thought out, or damaging to another person's reputation. Honor, public honor, meant everything. A man, or family, or clan were only as honorable as their words were to back them up. The code of conduct constructed for the functioning society had to be obeyed. Failing to live up to an obligation in a public arena brought shame. In Icelandic sources, the shame culture is preserved in its original intent of civic regulation of activities. This element is clear in the sagas post-conversion, which lends relevance to the ideas of Byock and others that the sagas preserve native, historic traditions.

It is now beneficial to turn towards the idea of a guilt culture as a means of contrast. A guilt culture in European history is generally thought of as a Christian convention. It is a change of focus in matters of morality. Christianity laid out many prescriptive laws, judgements, and strictures which the congregations needed to follow. Whether each individual followed these rules was not always available for public knowledge. The lists of "thou shalt nots" in Christianity is extensive. Nevertheless, the guilt culture creates the standard the individual must follow. Rather than an outside lens to view codes of conduct as worthy or unworthy, the guilt culture creates an internal lens with which to view your own adherence to the laws and codes of conduct the individual finds worthy. Failure to live up to this code creates internal anguish (guilt), so punishment in the guilt culture is from within.

People suffer because they expect to be punished. In the early Christian sense, punishment through damnation or suffering was expected of those who breached moral teachings. It does not need societal judgement on the merits of action or inaction. The internalized guilt does the judging of the action.

Critics in the 20th century viewed the switch from a shame to a guilt culture as a natural evolution in morality. To them, the guilt culture of Christianity swiftly replaced shame as a means of societal control. Once again, we see the clash of a Christian and pagan worldview where the Christian narrative of superiority is held up against an earlier civic structure. David Konstan's essay, "Shame in Ancient Greece," acknowledges the problem in looking at older Greek texts—which is relevant to the study of post-conversion medieval peoples as well.

Shame has had a bad press for the past century or so. As Thomas Scheff remarks (1997: 205): 'Over the last 200 years in the history of modern societies, shame virtually disappeared. The denial of shame has been institutionalized in Western societies.' Shame's status as a moral emotion has been impugned by critics, among them theologians and anthropologists, who consider it a primitive precursor to guilt: shame, the argument goes, responds to the judgments of others and is indifferent to ethical principles in themselves, whereas guilt is an inner sensibility and corresponds to the morally autonomous self of modern man. The shift from a shame culture to a guilt culture, in the formula made popular by Ruth Benedict (1946), is taken as a sign of moral progress. Thus the warrior society represented in the Homeric epics—a shame culture, according to E. R. Dodds (1951)—slowly gave way to a guilt culture, which began to emerge in fifth-century democratic Athens but did not achieve a fully developed expression in the classical world until the advent of Christianity. (1031)

The narrative of societal structures as lacking until Christianity comes to rescue the world is troubling and problematic. It assumes that the civic structures set in place were so ill-equipped to a functioning society that the guilt culture of Christianity quickly fixed the problems of the primitive pre-Christian civilization. This was not

true of any of the structures Christianity replaced. They were different, but not savage, primitive, or other pejoratives applied to them. And since these other structures were not lacking, the idea they were quickly replaced by guilt culture is also fallacious. The Greek and Roman shame cultures weren't replaced in a day, and neither were the Germanic ones. Bjork and Niles argue this point in respect to the *Beowulf* manuscript being created for a Christian audience by a Christian poet, and therefore, enforcing Christian themes. Bjork and Niles point out that,

The introduction of a new state-sanctioned (or ruler-sanctioned) religion does not necessarily effect radical change in a culture's basic structure of values. Not only in *Beowulf* but the *Maxims* of the Exeter Book—"Dom bið selast" (Fame is best, 80)—and the *Battle of Maldon* attest to the vitality of the shame culture and its values in Anglo-Saxon England long after the Conversion. (285)

The sagas attest to this fact as well. Even though the sagas were written down after the Conversion of Iceland, they still retain the cultural values of the shame culture and the rhetorical principles involved with it.

In the following sections, I examine praise and shame cultural artifacts as shown in the sagas and as an element of skaldic poetry. Starting with praise as a cultural ideal, I explore the uses of praise poetry, the *drapa*, and instances it afforded in the saga manuscripts. I will also discuss how friendship ritual bonds helped cement relationships to keep the peace. It was considered a point of honor by society to keep and reciprocate a friendship bond. I, then, turn my attention to the uses of shame as a vehicle for public, civic rhetoric. While these ideas of praise and shame may contrast with some modern held beliefs, to the mind of the medieval Scandinavian, these ideas were a web that helped bring honor and, for the most

part, keep peace in the small village structure found throughout the medieval Nordic world.

Examining Civic Rhetoric in the North

In the medieval north during the Viking Age, before the creep of feudal Europe and Christianity, the civic culture was based on a praise and shame culture. The societies did not have a strong central government and needed other ways to maintain an active public culture. The small settlements, and the lack of resources needed a cooperative populace to ensure survival for everyone. To do this, they created civic structures based on cooperative principles that transcended class and gender. The ideals of these principles were public, and the populace was responsible for holding each other up to the agreed upon standards. The webs of civic rhetoric touched everything from court cases to interactions between remote farmers.

People who upheld these values were praised. They embodied the values of the society. Skalds, the northern poets, created poems to exemplify these cultural icons. Men who were moderate, loyal, oath-keepers, and respected the law were considered *drengskapr*. Those who were selfish, uneven, and immoderate were often labeled *ójafn* or *níðingr*. Their reputations and their family's reputation were tarnished in the public eye.

This form of civic-cultural policing required everyone on the farm, the *godorð* where the *goði* held sway, and the villages to take an active part in civic matters. If the people let a person get away with immoderate behavior, then they risked the repercussions spreading wide across the countryside and perhaps endangering their

own safety or survival. The public nature of the civic discourse of the medieval Scandinavian people was successful because it brought people together and formed bonds of cooperation. The language used had to be public and it had to stress reciprocity in the relationship. The society worked well as long as everyone owed each other some form of civic duty. When someone broke these bonds of public accountability, the public shaming was the way to bring these immoderate people back into the fold.

Praise

In the world of the heroic epic, there was nothing greater than the public honor of praise. Throughout the ancient world, from Ancient Greece through the Middle Ages, praise from your community was considered best. The medieval Norse were no exception. The right action or gesture could bring public accolades which would enhance a person's honor and prestige. The outward filter on praise means that people weren't necessarily judged on their moral fiber of character, but on how well they navigated the idea of public perception. The average person could probably function well in a society like this, while a few savvy individuals would find it advantageous to build their prestige through publicly seen "good deeds." It was only those who couldn't resist temptation to commit acts that they knew were probably wrong where they would deviate from the norms of society and commit shameful acts (discussed later in the chapter).

Drengr, Drengskapr, and Drapa as Rhetoric

The sagas portray a clear heroic stance on praise. The Old Norse term *drengr* can be defined as a warrior and as a cultural ideal. Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál* describes this as, "Valiant men who exert a good influence are called drengr." It is often used as a term of praise in the sagas. The Vikings viewed the warrior ideal as praiseworthy and manly, and they often used martial terms when granting praise. These terms of praise often refer to bravery, fairness, a sense of duty to honorable acts, and forbearance in battle. In *The Story of the Heath Slayings*, Thorbiorn has his foot chopped off in a fight with Bardi. When Thorbiorn fails to concede the fight Bardi calls him a troll, but Thorbiorn answers, "nought of trollship is it for a man to bear his wounds, and not to be so soft as to forbear warding him while he may. That may be accounted for manliness rather" (46). Thorbiorn's efforts and *drengr* impressed the other warriors and the scene ends with "There he fell and earned a good word" (46).

In *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue*, When Gunnlaug travels to Norway, Earl Eirik Hakonarson notices a problem with Gunnlaug's foot.

"What's the problem with your foot, Icelander?" the earl asked.
"I have a boil on it, my lord," he replied.
"But you weren't limping?"
"One mustn't limp while both legs are the same length," Gunnlaug replied.
(571).

Gunnlaug's forbearance of pain shows his manly nature which should have drawn praise from his hoists, yet one of the earl's followers doesn't recognize this and sets things in motion to cause problems for Gunnlaug later in the saga.

Perhaps the greatest warrior poet of the sagas, Egil Skallagrimsson is the ultimate ideal. He is a warrior of great skill, a poet of great renown, and he ventures through his saga praising his friends and shaming his enemies. Even the Old Norse term *drengskapr*, taken from the root for warrior, refers to nobleness, honor, and high-mindedness. To be brave, noble, and puissant is to be a *drengskapr*. The Icelandic skalds, their poets, were responsible for upholding this ideal. If a warrior upheld the *drengskapr*, they would often compose *drapa*, or long verse poems dedicated to the deeds of the great warriors. The skald is a major force in developing praise through verse. There are many instances in Norse poetry of *drapa*: The *Knuts drapa* telling the exploits of Cnut the great, the *Vellekladrapa* telling the deeds of Hakon Hlathajarl, and the mythological *Thorsdrapa*, a poem of deeds of the god Thor. In *Egil's Saga*, Egil often used the *drapa* to praise people with whom he wanted to reconcile.

From the time Egil was a child of three, he had the gift of poetry. When he was just a boy, Egil wasn't allowed to go with his father, Skallagrim, and the other householder's to Yngvar's hall for a feast since his father said there would be excessive drinking. So Egil stole a horse and rode to the feast anyway against his father's wishes. Yngvar greeted the little boy and Egil composed this short *drapa*,

I have come in fine fettle to the hearth
Of Yngvar, who gives men gold from the glowing
Curled serpent's bed of heather;
I was eager to meet him.
Shedder of gold rings bright and twisted
From the serpent's realm, you'll never
Find a better craftsman of poems
three winters old than me. (52)

This use of praise is quite savvy for the child. He praises the host as being generous and a *goði* who gives gold gifts to his retainers. This poem at a feast publicly praising the host would give Yngvar honor, and it would also create honor for Egil as the poet, but also for his father, Skallagrim. The father must have been furious at Egil for disregarding his order to stay home, but the public honor he received probably helped Egil avoid too much punishment.

Egil often found poetry making a way to mitigate hostility and conflict he continually found himself in. When he and his friend Arinbjorn stood before King Eirik Bloodaxe to make peace for killing retainers of Eirik, Egil composed a *drapa* praising the king's prowess in battle.

The clash of swords roared
On the edge of shields,
battle grew around the king,
fierce he ventured forth.
The blood river raced,
The din was heard then
Of metal showered in battle,
The most in that land
The web of spears
Did not stray from their course
Above the king's
Bright row of shields.
The shore groaned, pounded by the flood
Of blood, resounded
under the banners' march

In the mud lay
When spears rained down.
Eirik that day
Won great renown. (115)

This excerpt shows the *drapa* as a kind of encomium for the hero. The aspects of the *drengr* or *drenskapr* are prominently displayed in the poetry. Eirik Bloodaxe showed *drenskapr*. He waded into battle, and he didn't back down. His shield was

raised high and the blood of his opponents washed the ground. Egil's *drapa* praised the king in a public way to show the honor Egil was giving him.

The public nature of praise is important to understand since the rhetorical act of praising here is seen as an act of contrition by praising someone you had been in conflict with. The nature of public praise cannot be overstated. The poet who praises a person with a *drapa*, or the person who publicly praises someone for good deeds is reinforcing a publicly constructed and generally believed to be the best kind of behavior for someone in that society. If the person getting praised truly earned it, then his reputation would increase among the citizens and, thus, his honor. It would bring accolades to his family and farmstead. It would also increase the reputation for the praiser—whether it was a skald or a member of the community. Rightly praising someone would be looked upon as a good deed.

Later in the saga, the older Egil composes this *drapa* to his ally Arinbjorn as a gift for his new position in the royal court. This is just a brief excerpt:

By my side, better
than every other
spreader of treasure
stood my loyal friend
whom I truly trusted,
growing in stature
with his every deed.

Arinbjorn,
paragon of men
who lifted me alone
above the king's anger.
The king's friend,
who never told untruth
in the warlike leader's hall. (161)

Once again, we see Egil using his poetry to create praise of character for his friend he intends to praise. The warrior poet Egil uses this rhetorical move several times in the saga to reinforce the proper character of the warrior spirit and of honorable high-mindedness, which is ironic considering Egil's character at times seems a bit erratic, especially in the rivalry with his brother. Since these poems were for public consumption and recited in the long houses for entertainment, these poems become a public vehicle for teaching and reinforcing proper behavior of the warriors. After all, who doesn't want a poem composed of your great deeds? Perhaps this use of praise poetry, primacy of the Nordic ethos of honor, but also of examining the proper civic conduct of the time is what makes *Egil's Saga* a favorite in Scandinavia to this day.

Goði— Bóndi Relationship

The rhetoric surrounding the *goði— Þingmaður* relationship was based on moderation, reasonableness, and reciprocity. *Goði* were landholders who ran farmsteads in Iceland. Each *goði* had retainers who were small farmers in their districts and farmhands who worked the main farm. Free farmers (sing. *bóndi*, pl. *boendr*) who had sufficient lands and wealth would often attach their farms in a relationship with a wealthier landowner in a loose relationship for support. The wealthier landowner promised to help the *bóndi* in local disputes and help in times of trouble. The *bóndi* promised to support the *goði* in court cases and local troubles. *The Ljósvetninga Saga* relates an occurrence where a *goði* named Eyjolf address a meeting of the district farmers,

As you well know, I am considered your chieftain. I judge it to be the spirit of our relationship that each aids the other in just cases. You should support me against my opponents while I am to be your ally when your needs require it. People thought that this was right and proper. (Andersson and Miller 211).

While this sounds very feudal in nature, a lord gaining fealty from a subordinate, this simply wasn't the case. The relationship and civic rhetoric of the relationship had to be reciprocal. In the case above, Eyjolf focuses not on his chieftaincy for support, but on the spirit of the relationship of mutual aid. This is an important distinction because of the public nature of the discourse. Backdoor deals weren't being made. This was a public gesture towards reciprocity of chieftain and free farmer. Byock contends that "Ostensibly power flowed into the hands of chieftains, but actually much of it remained in the hands of the obstinate farmers. The *boendr*, aided by their sons and farmhands, guarded their own rights and interests" (Byock, *Feud* 82). While the idea of an imbalanced continental system based on lords and fealty, the Icelandic societal structure retained a strong vein of independence, mutual cooperation, and reciprocal civic duties. Free farmers even had the ability to make promises to two *goðar* at the same time. If the farmstead was close to two chieftaincies, then it was possible to support two *goðar*. Of course, if the two *goðar* became embroiled in a dispute, then the farmer had to make a choice on which one to support, damaging the relationship and promise of support to the other.

The *bóndi* had certain expectations of support just as much as the *goði* did. If these expectations were not met, then the *bóndi* was free to withdraw his promise and support from his *goði*— if the *goði* behaved erratically, became too belligerent, or active uneven in his dealings, then the *bóndi* could promise support to a more

even-natured *goði* living somewhere near his farm. The *goði* had to act reasonably in civic matters to keep his supporters; moreover, the public nature of the relationship would be speculated on. An overbearing *goði* might face public shame for his actions. Reasonableness in tone and deed would help generate support in times of trouble. An erratic *goði* may be powerful for a time, but if his support slowly drains away because of his unruly civic behavior, then he would lose supplies, support, and wealth. Thus, it was important for the *goði* to maintain civil and proper relations with his *boendr*. As *Hrafnkel's Saga* points out after Sam has banished Hrafnkel and taken over his farm and *boendr*,

The Thjostarssons advised him to be kind, generous and helpful to his men and to support them in anything they needed.

“They would be worthless men if they failed to give you loyal support then, whenever you needed it. (60)

In addition to the pledges of support for the *goði*, a *bóndi* also needed to support the *goði* at quarter courts (*þings*) and the summer court at *þingvellir* the *Alþing*. *Boendr* were required to pay a fee to attend the *þings*, so they needed to have enough wealth to do this. Sometimes a generous *goði* paid for some retainers to attend with him to gather more support for a pending legal dispute at a *þing*. At times, several *boendr* would pool their resources to pay the fee and elect a representative to support their *goði* at the *þing*. This pooling of resources created a show of support from less wealthy farming families in the district. Once the fees had been paid, the *bóndi* became a *þingmaður*, a man supporting his particular *goði* at the law court.

One of the important rhetorical points is that the discourse used between *goði* and *bóndi* had to take on a reasonable tone in keeping the peace on the farmstead and in the district. The *goði* couldn't overreach on his temper or demands, nor could

the *bóndi* expect too much from the chieftain. The societal forces worked to make sure both sides received the maximum benefit without incurring any shame in the relationship, which might contain a lot of bad behavior on both sides. The public expectations of proper civic behavior between a *goði* and *bóndi* usually resulted in district-wide stability for the most part and worked to curb the worst instincts of the people in the relationship.

The Rhetoric of Friendship

The idea of friendship in the sagas does not equate to the modern term, and those who read it as a modern term miss the point of the rhetorical choices involved in a friendship relationship. The Old Norse terms for friendship are *vinfengi* and *vinátta*. These terms refer not to a loose association based on whether the parties involved liked each other, although the term *vinátta* has connotations of a more likable relationship. The *vinfengi* and *vinátta* are terms denoting allies who are willing to support each other in armed conflicts. This type of relationship is politically motivated and practical for security of a landholder's property so that the major landholders could find common cause in both land disputes and legal disputes. Byock comments that “*Vinfengi* agreements allowed leaders to achieve the collaboration necessary for social control” (*Medieval* 130).

These friendship collaborations are spoken of often in the sagas, but they are not generally looked at in terms of their rhetorical significance by using language instead of force to mitigate violence in the community even though Sigurðsson argues “friendship was the most important social bond in Iceland and Norway up to

middle of the thirteenth century. It did not only shape the power game, but basically it formed the entire social structure, it was the glue that held society together” (*Viking Friendship* 2). While Iceland serves the purpose in this dissertation of being the exemplar due to its surviving written sagas, Sigurðsson’s work also shows the close cultural relationship Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have through the Middle Ages.

Friendship was reinforced in many ways in the sagas. Feasting, gift-giving, and public oaths of friendship occurred to show the close political bonds of friendship. Sections 40-44 of the *Hávamál* has a series of verses on the benefits of friendship and gift-giving. The advice was to trust in good friends and be reciprocal in the giving and receiving of gifts, “those who give to each other/will ay be friends,/Once they meet half way.” (Hollander 20). These were public demonstrations that the friendship relied on the sharing of material wealth that was a metaphor for sharing in the rough times as well.

In *Njal’s Saga*, one of the great tragedies of this is that Njal and Gunnar have sworn friendship, and this eventually leads to Njal’s burning. The saga states, “Because of their close friendship, Gunnar and Njal used to take turns at inviting one another to an autumn feast“ (97). Later, when Njal’s wife, Bergthora, and Gunnar’s wife, Hallgerd become embroiled in a feud, Njal and Gunnar do their best to keep the peace through their public friendship. When one of Njal’s servants is killed at the behest of Hallgerd, Gunnar offers Njal a self-judgement over the incident—a way of allowing Njal to name the terms to keep the peace. Njal accepts the offer, saying “I know that I am dealing with a man of honour, and I do not want to be the

cause of our breach of friendship” (112). Njal and Gunnar keep their friendship and continue feasting and gift-giving to solidify their friendship and to keep the peace in the district.

Perhaps the clearest example of the ideas of friendship as being a political and reciprocal contract comes near the end of *Njal's Saga* when Gizur and Asgrim are petitioning the various *god̄i* for support. They ask Snorri what help he intends since he was a friend to Njal. He replies,

I shall do you this act of friendship since your honour will be wholly at stake. I shall not come to court with you; and if a fight breaks out at the Althing, you must not attack before you are absolutely positive of the result... But if you are forced to give ground, you had better retreat in this direction, for I shall draw up in battle array ready to come to your help. If on the other hand your opponents' retreat... I shall take it upon myself to bar their way. (296-97)

This friendship contract clearly defines the risks that Snorri is willing to take on, and the exact terms of the friendship bond. It also positions Snorri as a potential peacemaker if things go badly for Gizur and Asgrim, and as a potential public ally if things go well for the prosecutors of the burning of Njal and his wife.

The rhetorical idea of gift-giving and feasting also shows the power balances in society. Njal and Gunnar are on generally equal terms since they reciprocate the feasting and gift-giving, but there are poorer people who couldn't possibly return the favors of friendship in this manner. These feasts and gifts demarcated a line of wealth and power because most couldn't throw large banquets. Yet this power structure led the people to view the *god̄i* as either worthy of respect by honoring bonds with his retainers, or as stingy and a breaker of vows. The feasting between friends in these cases cemented the *god̄i's* reputation as a public good friend or a

fair-weather friend. These gifts also showed the *vinfengi* that his reputation would not be damaged by association with an honorable and generous *goði*. Civically, befriending a well-liked, generous, and well-behaved *goði* could only help stabilize the social fabric, making the rhetorical acts of feasting and gift-giving a reasonable alliance to enter into.

Female friendships in the sagas are much scarcer and more problematic. Since the sagas are focused mainly on the male figures, women often receive minimal attention from the writers. However, the sagas name the term for female friendship, *vinkona*, and there are a few minor references in the sagas. In the *Laxdæla Saga*, Thorgerd told her son Steinthor that “she wanted to go west to Saurby to see her friend Aud” (182). Scholars are split on the idea of female friendships. Paul Durrenbeger and Gísli Pálsson suggest that female friendships only occurred between highborn women or widows of a higher social class. Durrenberger and Pálsson see these relationships in the same mold as male friendships based on wealth and alliance to help maintain political stability. Yet Natalie M. Van Duesen points out that while references to women’s friendships in the sagas may be sparse, scholars can infer that women had wider friendships than the sagas describe. Without using the term, *vinkona*, there are many references to women knowing each other, advocating for a marriage bonding for a friend or a friend’s daughter. Since women were often excluded from the political sphere, it makes some sense why they are often not mentioned in friendship as the focus of many sagas in the political problems of *goðar*. Yet, the friendship of women seems to work in the background of the sagas to create and maintain *hóff* for the household—

women working to help cement marriages, visiting friends to keep alliances, and bonding to make their households function better.

Shame

Rhetorically, shame was an important part of public life in medieval Scandinavia. Early law codes contain rather interesting examinations of the society's use of codification of shame and the public sphere. Shame is usually categorized as *níð*, a general term of public shame. The early *Gulathing* law code of Norway presents a section on *níð* and *níð*-like behavior. The law is very exacting and demonstrates the seriousness that the utterance of a *níð* was taken in medieval Nordic society.

Nobody is to make a verbal *níð* about another person, nor “timber- *níð*” either. If he becomes known for this and is found guilty of it, his penalty is outlawry. Let him deny it with a six-man oath. Outlawry is the outcome if the oath fails. No one is to make an “exaggeration” (*yki*) about another or libel. (*Gulathing*, qtd. in Sørensen 15)

One who portrayed *níð* publicly was named a *níðingr*, a term of shame and scorn. The Icelandic *Grágás* law code also mentions various ways of *níð*-like behavior. Besides verbally committing a charge of slander as a way of shaming someone, one's actions could also be considered as *níð*-like, and lastly, there were material rhetorics to embody *níð*. The law codes describe the use of slandering someone for *níð*, which is a serious offense. If someone makes a claim of *níð* against someone, then the person must defend themselves in court or even through combat since the charge of *níð* is such a serious offense.

The idea of *tunguníð*, or *níð* of the tongue (i.e. spoken *níð*) was the worst possible form of slander someone in medieval Scandinavia could endure. Sørensen argues that, “It always conveys contempt, and its purpose is to expel the person concerned from the social community as unworthy” (29). In the form of civic rhetoric, charging someone as having *níð* was tantamount to revoking his membership in the community—it is basically a death sentence. The dishonor of *níð* was civic death, and in small tight-knit communities of medieval Scandinavia, these types of charges became amplified because everyone would know. There would be no way of hiding or ignoring this charge. The only reasonable way to respond to this charge would be through court action or through a strong and violent response. Any other response would be viewed as an acquiescence of the charge, civic ostracism, and a loss of all honor.

The Vatnsdaela Saga takes up this point to show how the failure to live up to sworn public oaths can lead to *níð* being leveled against a man as a form of public shaming, reinforcing the civic duty that oath-swearing brings. In *The Vatnsdaela Saga*, Jokul, a rather uneven man, enters into a feud with Berg and Finnbogi, men of prominent families in the Vatnsdaela district. When Jokul’s brother fails to achieve a settlement with Berg, violence seems to be inevitable although the men in the district perhaps think their *goði* is being unreasonable, so he shames them with the threat of *níð*, and reminds them of the public oaths they swore.

Finnbogi is the most fearless of men; but neither one of us need be spared. Berg, the dog, bent lower when I hit him, so that he fell down. You must now turn up to the duel if you have a man’s heart rather than a mare’s. And if anyone fails to turn up, then a scorn-pole will be raised against him with this curse—that he will be a coward in the eyes of all men, and will never again

share the fellowship of good folk, and will endure the wrath of the gods, and bear the name of truce-breaker. (241-242)

The idea of *níð* is broken down in many ways in the scope of the sagas. *Níð* dealt with passivity and cowardice in actions. In fact, *The Grágás*, or Grey Goose Laws, the collection of Icelandic Laws even provides for judgments against, or trial by arms, if accusations of *níð* are proven unfounded. It was a serious enough offense to have judicial precedent for the charges. In a society where aggressive behavior was given high social standing, any acts of public cowardice or passivity were deemed *níð*.

In the *Vatnsdala saga*, when violence becomes inevitable in the saga, Jokul travels to duel with Finnbogi and Berg, but due to weather, Jokul's opponents don't show up. Jokul takes the opportunity to shame Berg and Finnbogi by erecting a *níðstöng*.

Jokul carved a man's head on the end of the post, and wrote in runes the opening words of the curse, spoken of earlier. Jokul then killed a mare, and they cut it open at the breast, and set it on the pole, and had it face towards Borg. (243-244)

Moreover, since public shaming for cowardice or unmanly acts was demeaning and open for public airing, sometimes when a person was wronged, they would make an accusation against someone by carving a *tréníð*. This type of *níð* was an effigy carved from wood that depicted the accused of having sex with another man or with an animal, usually one from the accused man's farm. Then it was set in the road or public place near the accused's residence so all the townfolk could see it.

In *Gísli the Outlaw's Saga*, Gísli and Bard fail to show up on time to a duel, and after waiting three days for them, Skeggi and Thorkel decided to shame them by creating a *tréníð*.

Skeggi had come to the isle and staked out the lists for Bard, and laid down the law of the combat, and after all saw neither him nor any one to fight on the isle in his stead. There was a man named Fox, who was Skeggi's Smith; and Skeggi bade Fox to carve likenesses of Gísli and Bard: "And see," he said, "that one stands just behind the back of the other, and this laughingstock shall stand for aye to put them to shame." (8)

I must make a point here that the idea of *níð* implies that a person has been accused of *níð*, or might break an oath or not live up to a vow, so there is some type of *níð*-like activity or potential failing a public vow of support for someone. The term *níðingr* is for a man who has performed a shameful action and is seen doing it or publicly acknowledges it. For instance, an retainer who publicly refuses to fight to support his *godí*, especially at legal proceedings or other large public gatherings risks being called a coward, and thus accruing the title of *níðingr*. Gísli, Bard, Finnbogi, and Berg from the examples above have been publicly shamed through a *níð*. This type of shame had to be avenged for their reputations and their family's reputations to be cleansed. A charge of *níð* was made against them, but their actions would prove if they would be looked upon by the public as *níðingr*. Their subsequent actions (or lack of actions) would provide the evidence of the charge.

These terms are rhetorical in the fact that they are persuasive terms. *Níð* and *níðingr* are used by the public and by *godar* to move and motivate men to action. The symbolism is perhaps the least important here since these terms can literally cause ostracism, exile, and death to the recipient of such terms. Sørensen sums this up as "The purpose of *níð* is to terminate a period of peace or accentuate a breach of the

peace and isolate an opponent from society by declaring that he is unworthy to be a member. The man attacked must show that he is fit to remain in the community, by behaving as a man in the system of Norse ethics” (32). To reestablish his standing in the community, the man accused of *níð* usually had to challenge the accuser to trial by arms, thus publically proving that he was 1). honorable, and 2). not a coward. If the man accused was successful in combat, then the charges were shown to be false. While the violence shown was the ending gambit for a person accused, the main point is that men would go out of their way to make reasonable public requests and enter into relationships they could live up to. The idea of *níð* was so strong that it acted as a potent social barrier for men to honor their commitments and act for the public good.

The general forms of *níð* were *argr*, *ragr*, and *ergi*. These terms are extremely pejorative in the sagas. These terms have varying connotations to cowardice and passivity. An *argr*, *ragr*, or *ergi*, can be anything from a coward who ran away from battle, to a male sexual bottom, or even a sorcerer’s friend or apprentice. A coward might be someone who refuses to fight and shows his cowardice in a public forum—he deserts the shield wall, his *comitatus*, fails to live by the warrior’s code, or fails to honor an oath. The honor of the man is lessened. He has boasted over his cups and has failed to live up to his word. The society shuns him for this. These terms are broadly used, and a lot of implications are found in the sagas for the *níð*. Scholars such as Byock, Jones, and Sørensen believe the references to *níð* in the sagas rely on a connotative context that we simply don’t have for a fuller understanding of the cultural condemnation a *níð* would bring.

Two terms used in the *Grágás* to denote sexual crimes related to *níð* are *stroðinn* and *sorðinn*. These two terms are important in understanding offenses to warriors. According to Sørensen, these two terms translate roughly to “one who has sexually been used by another man” (17). The *níð* structure for shaming shows how the hyper-masculinized culture viewed passive homosexuality. The culture had strict views of masculine passive behavior.

Vikings honored manliness and dominance in the bedroom. The *Grágás* have laws stating that a man must be on top during sex. If you were caught with a woman on top, it was a sign of effeminacy. Being a *ragr*, a bottom to another man, is another type of cowardly shame to the Vikings. The masculine ideal of the Norse was to be dominant and aggressive, and if a man was perceived to be passive, or less active in his prowess in and out of the bedroom, then it was a mark against him; thus, it would incur public shame. The major difference in these terms is that *argr*, *ragr*, or *ergi* suggested a person “willing or inclined to play or interested in playing the female part in sexual relations” (Sørensen 18). The culture expected dominant behavior by the males, and it was a breach of communal behavior to be anything else.³

Finally, a *níð* could also be thrown as an accusation of being a sorcerer’s friend or apprentice. Sorcery was considered a passive way to kill or bring sickness. The man didn’t do anything but cast the spell. Poisonings and mysterious illnesses could be considered sorcery since they killed passively and from afar. A sorcerer was a coward by killing in secret and not publicly and aggressively.

For the *níðingr*, rhetoric proved incredibly damaging to their reputations. The poets would often insult the *níðingr* publicly. The root of the modern English word “scold” comes from the Old Norse word “skald” or poet. The poet had the ultimate responsibility to rhetorically put offenders into their place. The poets would wait until they were performing in front of retainers, warriors, other chieftains, and the assembled households to publicly shame the offenders deemed *níðingr*.

Cormac the Skald's saga uses this rhetorical stance to insult men who have been deemed in the story to lack the *drengskapr*. For instance, Thorvard didn't like Cormac, and he paid a beggar to sing a song shaming Steingard as a witch, then blamed the song as a creation of Cormac's. Culturally, the skalds could write songs of shame to entertain and instruct the farm holds, but this was a libel since she wasn't a witch. Cormac's reputation was damaged by this lie, thus his honor. Cormac challenged Thorvard to a duel (*holmgang*) to satisfy and restore Cormac's honor, but Thorvard didn't arrive for the duel. Irritated that Thorvard didn't show up, Cormac decides to make a real verse shaming the man for cowardice.

"Now," said Cormac, "I bid Thorvard anew to the holmgang, if he can be called in his right mind. Let him be every man's nothing if he come not!" and then he made this song:

"The nothing shall silence me never,
Though now for their shame they attack me,
But the wit of the Skald is my weapon,
And the wine of the gods will uphold me.
And this they shall feel in its fulness;
Here my fame has its birth and beginning;
And the stout spears of battle shall see it,
If I 'scape from their hands with my life."

Then the brothers set on foot a law-suit against him for libel. Cormac's kinsmen backed him up to answer it, and he would let no terms be made, saying that they deserved the shame put upon them, and no honour; he was not unready to meet them, unless they played him false. Thorvard had not

come to the holmgang when he had been challenged, and therefore the shame had fallen of itself upon him and his, and they must put up with it. (Ch.21)

Cormac's rhetorical strategy of shaming Thorvard for cowardice is poetic justice. By attempting to shame Cormac and his craft, Thorvard fell victim to the art of skaldic poetry. This scene from The Saga of Cormac once again shows the shame culture and the rhetoric surrounding it sewn into the fabric of Norse society. The set of public values of conduct were public and open for public commentary. By not appearing for the duel, Cormac has labeled Thorvard as a *níðingr*—not a man who needs reinforcement of a code of right conduct, but Thorvard is now a man who has failed to live up to that social contract. The accusation has become a failed deed, and so Thorvard is now labeled a coward publicly.

Additionally, a way a person could respond to a call for shame was to erect a *níðstöng*, or a *níð* pole. A *níðstöng* is a pole raised on another's property which was set on top with the head of a slaughtered animal, usually a horse, and carved with runes which lists the name of the offender and the crime he is accused of. The pole acts as a public form of shame. The manner in which the Norse used these ways to regulate honor and denigrate shameful activities is clearly shown in the sagas. For instance, in *Egil's Saga*,

When their sails were hoisted, Egil went back to the island.

He took a hazel pole in his hand and went to the edge of a rock facing inland. Then he took a horse's head and put it on the end of the pole.

Afterwards he made an invocation saying, 'Here I set up this scorn-pole and turn its scorn upon King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild'—then he turned the horse's head to face land—'and I turn its head upon the nature spirits that inhabit this land, sending them all astray so that none of them will find its resting-place by chance or design until they have driven out King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild from this land.'

Then he thrust the pole into a cleft in the rock and left it to stand there. He turned the head towards the land and carved the whole invocation in runes on the pole. (106)

In this example, the shame is heaped upon the king and queen. Not only did Egil seek to publicly shame them, he also carved runes upon the pole, so people could read the curse. Rhetorically, the *níðstöng* functions as a symbol showing public scorn for actions. Egil, in this instance, is shaming Eirik and Gunnhild for seizing land property belonging to Egil.

The rhetorical shaming with the *níðstöng* has perhaps never gone out of style in Scandinavia. The saga references clearly indicate a strong tradition of shaming with the pole, adorned with curse words in runes and somehow linked to animal heads. These symbols are still used today. According to the Icelandic news site, *Visir*, in 2006, a man claiming to be in the direct descent from Egil Skallagrimsson used a *níðstöng* to shame a neighbor for accidentally killing his dog. The man who created the pole was arrested since the authorities considered the *níðstöng* as a death threat. Similarly, a man used a *níðstöng* adorned with sheep's heads in Norway as part of an election protest. Another instance in Iceland occurred in 2016, when the Icelandic Prime Minister was indicted for corruption in the Panama Papers scandal. Several protesters stood in front of the *Alþingi* with *níðstöng* that had a horse skull and dried codfish among them. These instances show the rhetorical significance of the *níð* shaming to this day. Using the historical basis for the shame culture throughout Scandinavia, the symbolic action of the pole represents people who have broken codes of conduct and are being publicly shamed to force a course of action. The sagas' message of correct public action is still in the

public imagination today, and the *níðstöng* still carries rhetorical weight—even after almost a thousand years.

Goad

In the sagas, not everyone had access to the court system or to modes of policing civic obligation. Since the masculine world of the medieval Scandinavians excluded women, and often did not address intrafamily squabbles, another method of advocacy and resolution was needed. Since people without direct legal recourse (e.g. women, bondsmen [ON *bóndi*], retainers) needed a method of persuasion to motivate the men in charge who could act in this society. Given the circumstances of the civic and legal structure in medieval Scandinavia, goading a person to act in the family/farm/ district's best interest was a reasonable move for the goader. If the goader could successfully point out that the male being goaded might incur shame upon him or the family, then the male might be inclined to act at the behest of the goader for reasons of honor and saving face among his retainers. Some scholars suggest that goading only served as a literary device, but William Ian Miller suggests it is too critical in the scope of the Nordic society to be just a literary device. "Some would say the vengeance minded woman was nothing more than a literary commonplace (e.g. Heller 1958; Jochens 1986). But if she was a commonplace, it is indeed remarkable how much social and psychological sense her role made" (212).

Miller's observation rings true in thinking about the reasonableness of a goader's position. A person without recourse under the legal system would need other avenues of recourse. Miller further points out, "What was common to all

inciters was not their sex but their dependence on the men they incited” (212). Since one of the duties of wives and retainers was to maintain the reputation of their family or farmstead, then the social sense of goading becomes clear. The threat of shame was often enough to move men to action in settings where the power structures excluded all from taking part in the discussions outside the farmsteads. To maintain the reputation and honor and avoid shame in the district, goading becomes a rhetorical device which people outside the *þing* system could use to move the reluctant men, who could actively repair or save their reputation, to action. This goading is a rhetorical exercise in reminding the men in charge that without action, shame will result for them, the family, and the farm.

Servants, perhaps the lowest rung on the hierarchy in the Nordic farmstead, only above slaves, also goaded the landowners to action. *The Heiðarviga Saga*, *The Story of the Heath Slayings*, one of the earliest and most fragmentary of the Icelandic sagas contains an early reference to a servant goading his landholder to action. Bardi’s brother Hall is killed, but Bardi sees the problem of taking vengeance, but one of his servants, Thord the Fox, sees that Bardi’s reputation will suffer if he doesn’t take action. Shame for Bardi and perhaps danger to the farm will occur if Bardi takes no action. Thord goads him on thus,

Bardi and his brethren were without, when the workingmen came and they greeted them well. They had their work-tools with them and Thord the Fox was dragging his scythe behind him.

Quoth Bardi: “Now Draggeth the Fox his brush behind him.”

“So it is,” saith Thord, “that I drag my brush behind me, and cock it up but little or nought; but this my mind bodes me, that thou wilt thy brush very long or ever thou avenge Hall thy brother. (*The Story of the Heath Slayings* 20)

Thord is used in the saga to show that the inaction seen in Bardi's actions are unwanted in making the farm function effectively. Thord the Fox is holding up a mirror to Bardi to illustrate the lack of action. Later in the sequence,

Now he [Bardi] bade Thord to this, because the wether [*sic*] was worse to catch than other sheep, and swifter withal. "Now further to-morrow shalt thou go to Ambardale, and fetch home the five-year-old ox which we have there, and slaughter him, and bring all the carcass south to Burg on Saturday. Great is the work, but if thou win it not, then shalt thou try which of us bears the brush most cocked thenceforward."

Thord answered and said that often he heard his big threats; and thereof he is nowise blate. (21)

Since Thord was purposefully slacking in his work duties, Bardi threatens him with violence if he doesn't complete the task assigned, but Thord publicly shames him by saying his boasts are often grand, but seldom lived up to. The scene ends with Bardi riding off of the farm shamed into action by the servant. This early scene from *The Heidarviga Saga* serves to illustrate the power of rhetorical shaming cutting across levels of society. But this is not the only evidence of this type of rhetorical ploy from servants in the farm.

In *Hrafinkel's Saga*, A servant woman who was washing clothes happened to see Eyvind, the brother of a man who had Hrafinkel outlawed and seized his property. Hrafinkel moved east and started fresh, and he often saw the man who took his lands but did nothing about it. The washer-woman ran to Hrafinkel and said, "The old saying is true enough, 'The older a man, the feebler.' The honour a man's given early in life isn't worth much if he has to give it all up in disgrace, and he hasn't the courage to fight for his rights ever again. It's a peculiar thing indeed to happen to those who were once thought brave" (63-64). At the woman's goading, Hrafinkel and his retainers armed themselves and pursued Eyvind.

bingmenn also goaded their *goði* (chieftain) to an action by bringing up the shame of inaction. In the *Ljósvetninga Saga*, Einar chides the proud and indulgent Gudmund, “You value no one’s opinion but your own in this case, but it may be that your success will fall short of your ambition” (174). When the charges are filed against Akra-Thorir for a failure to produce some seized property, Thorir Helgason says, “There isn’t much help to be expected from you; it always turns out that you knuckle under to Gudmund” (174). Later, Isolf approaches one of Gudmund’s sons, Eyjolf and flatly states, “My business is not calculated to enhance your honor, but still, we thingmen look to you for support. We think that the action of the Fnjoskadalers is a blatant disgrace... It will be considered you are losing status unless, of course, men more distinguished than you should intervene” (206). In these examples, the *goðar* are shamed by not using the counsel of their retainers. Advice is important because it helps build consensus on a prudent course of action which could end in violence against the entire retinue of the chieftain, not just the *goði*. Moreover, the honor of the household and farmstead is threatened with public shame, or lack of honor.

But perhaps the most common form of goading to be found in the sagas is that of the wife goading her *goði* husband or her sons to action. It must particularly be noted that goading is always a public event. An audience must be there to hear the goading and bring the public nature of the shame culture to bear upon the recipient. In these instances, a woman who was forbidden by society from taking vengeance on her own would wait for an assembly of the *goði*’s retainers, warriors, and perhaps other *goðar* from nearby farms to insult her lord for failing to act in the

best interests of society. It could have been for failing to act to bring a legal case against a killing, or it could have been failing to seek blood feud against another *godi* for the slaying of a relative. A scene from *The Íslendinga Saga* illustrates the importance of the public nature of the goading. “Alf... reminded Brand that Thoralf had been actively involved in the killing of Kalf and his son Guttorm. But Brand’s wife Jorunn would not join in [the discussion]. She was the daughter of Kalf. *And the General view was that she had not goaded Brand*” (Miller 213, emphasis in Miller).

In Gisli’s saga, Thorgerd Egilsdottir goads her sons to attack a man named Bolli for killing Kjartan, her son.

As they ride past Bolli’s farmstead, she asks her sons who the farm belongs to and says: What I do know...is that here lives Bolli, your brother’s slayer, and not a shred of resemblance do you bear to your great ancestors since you won’t avenge a brother the likes of Kjartan. Never would your grandfather Egil have acted like this, and it grieves me to have such spineless sons. You would have made your father better daughters, to be married off, than sons. It shows the truth of the saying, Halldor, that ‘every kin has its coward’. I see only too well now that fathering such sons was Olaf’s greatest failing....I made the journey mainly to remind you of what you seem to have forgotten.

Halldor then answered, ‘You’re the last person we could blame, Mother, if it did slip from our minds.

Halldor had little else to say, although his hatred for Bolli swelled.(ch.53)

Impugning her sons’ manhood and comparing to the glory and masculinity of the past is a common trope in the sagas. Thorgerd shows that public declarations of cowardice are effective rhetorical means to persuade her sons to action.

Similarly, in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, When Thorbjorn accuses Thorarin of stealing horses and comes to Thorarin’s farm without warrant and accuses him of stealing

the horses, Thorarin backs down. When Thorarin's mother sees this, she rushes forward exclaiming,

'It's true what they say about you, Thorarin,' she said. 'You're more like a woman than a man, putting up as you do with all of Thorbjorn's insults. I can't think whatever I did to have a son like you.'

...

'I'm not standing around here any longer,' said Thorarin, and rushed forward with his men. (51)

Additionally, In the *Laxdæla Saga*, Gudrun goads her husband and brothers to take vengeance on Kjartan over a broken oath and a public loss of face for her family.

Gudrun said, "you would have had just the right temper if you had been peasants' daughters—you do nothing about anything, whether good or bad. Despite all of the disgrace and the dishonor that Kjartan has done to you, you lose no sleep over it even when he rides past your door with only a single companion. Men like you have the memory of hogs. It's obviously futile to hope that you will ever dare attack Kjartan at home if you haven't the nerve to face him now when he is only travelling with only one or two companions. You just sit at home pretending to be men, and there are always too many of you about."

Ospak said she was making too much of this, but admitted that it was difficult to argue against her. He jumped out of bed at once and dressed, as did all the brothers one after another; then they made ready to lay an ambush for Kjartan.

Gudrun now asked Bolli to go with them. Bolli said it would not be right for him to do that because of his kinship with Kjartan, and he recalled how lovingly Olaf had brought him up.

"That's perfectly true," said Gudrun. "But you don't have the luck to be able to please everybody; and if you refuse this journey, it will end our marriage."

And at Gudrun's promptings, Bolli remembered all his resentment against Kjartan, and he armed himself quickly. (172)

From these examples above, it is clear to see that one of the rhetorical moves for a woman in medieval Scandinavia was to goad men into action. By attacking the men in ways that make them appear publicly weak or ineffective, the women in these examples were able to move men to action. These examples also hint at the troubles

inherent in the division of roles inside and outside the household. In the outer world, men may have constraints put on them to save face or be motivated not to take action for fear of shame by taking vengeance on a family member and breaking societal taboos on kin-slaying, for example. On the farmstead, the woman's role is to defend the home and reputation of the family. If an event occurs, it is her duty to defend the reputation of the homestead—to rouse her male relatives to the action she cannot undertake. This sometimes puts the men on the farmstead in an uncomfortable position of facing possible shame in multiple venues, in both home and village.

Andersson and Miller point out that “Goadings, needling, and insinuating suggestion simply seem to be key elements in the rhetoric of persuasion in the culture, available to those who need to persuade. The art of persuasion, although useful to all, is especially so to those who must act with others or through others” (20). Rather than consider goading simply a literary commonplace, then, it may be better and more effective to consider the three rhetorical *topoi* suggested by these examples. First, there is a *topos* in which the audience of servants and retainers attempts to shame the man into action by attacking his reputation among the servants and retainers. The public values they held are evident through their method of shaming language. The workers in the village and farmstead valued a strong work ethic and a responsive *godí*. When the *godí* failed to uphold these values, the retainers could goad him to action by reminding him of the public values to save face among his retainers. The audience had to be aware of the values of the day to understand this rhetorical ploy to move the *godí* to action.

The second *topos* would be that of *þingmenn* goading their chieftain to action. *Goðar* had well defined roles in terms of actions with their *þingmenn*, and if a *goði* failed to act, or acted improperly, it would be a reasonable ploy to bring the *goði* back into the realm of acceptable behavior by goading. When the *þingmenn* entered into a relationship with a *goði*, there would be an expectation of help and support from the more powerful *goði* to support, with force or legal help, if anything happened to a *þingman*. Consequently, if the retainer believed the *goði* to be acting inappropriately, society would expect the goading—to remind the *goði* of the oaths sworn for mutual help.

The third type of goading *topos* is between a woman and her husband or sons. The family dynamic plays an crucial part here since the woman's role is in maintaining her family and farm, which includes looking after the reputation and safety of the farms. In medieval Scandinavia, it was common for women to manage farmsteads for long periods if her husband was off at a *þing*, or if he went off raiding. The goading here is meant to ensure the reputation and safety of the farmstead and family. Since women were generally forbidden in taking an active role in legal and vengeance taking, then they logically looked for the intermediary who had the power to act publicly. The goading in these cases attacked the masculinity and virile prowess of the *goði*, as well as the bravery of him or the sons. Cowardly actions could bring about raids on the farmstead when the men were away, so it was important to broadcast a public display of strength to the region around the farm. The goading woman in the sagas was not portrayed as shrewish. The goader was expected to perform these duties and remind her husbands and sons in a public manner of the

duties expected of them in maintaining their household. This course of action would have been considered a reasonable approach for a caring wife and mother to take.

Civic Ethos and Cultural Policing

So how were these civic rhetorics supported and enforced in Nordic society? The easy answer would be to examine skaldic poetry where praise and shame could be poured out through verse, but there is more to value-enforcement than just the poetics. For praise, skalds were often employed to write *drapa* poetry praising lords and *goði*. In addition, skalds would often compose the Viking equivalents of panegyric or elegiac poetry to reinforce the idea of *drengr* or *drengskapr* for fallen warriors or the honored dead, and they could reinforce shame if a person broke civic code. Their rhetorical power would often cement the ideals of the Norse people.

Since this was a praise and shame society, the communities themselves played an important role in maintaining social norms, peace, and community cohesion. This had to occur through the rhetoric used and not through violence. The society had rules to maintain a social order in places where strong central rule was often lacking. This required consensus and a willingness to listen and maintain relationships and friendships among neighbors. These small farmsteads and villages acted as public venues for displays of friendship and community, and if someone broke the civic norms, then there were rhetorical structures in places to goad, or shame a person into the “right” course of action. Each member of society from lowly servants to powerful chieftains had recourse to rhetorical action to affect a course of action in the community. While continental Europe often silenced many voices

through the feudal system, medieval Scandinavia set up rudimentary democratic systems to help govern and administer small villages. They needed a concerted effort by all members of these farms and villages to survive in the harsh environment they often found themselves in. To do so, the people needed to develop a civic ethos quite different than what evolved in Christian Europe.

The civic ethos of medieval Scandinavia meant knowing how to navigate the terrain of praise and shame. If a person could avoid any words or deeds which might bring shame to their family, then they were viewed as a productive member of the civic unit: the farmstead, village, or district. But if they couldn't, then they might incur shame.

To construct an ethos of praise and good will in the community, the person needed to think hard about the relationships, friendships, and obligations they took on. Ethos meant that the person had to live a reasonable life and demonstrate *hóf* in their personal and public lives. Excess was looked down upon. Too much drinking, greed, and violence was often frowned upon as unreasonable behavior for a member of the community, and moderate people in the sagas are often given praise because they viewed the group peace and tranquility above their immediate concerns.

Notes:

1. The Old Norse Prose Dictionary Project lists uses of terms related to *hóf* and their number of usages. *Hóf*, for instance, is used 136 times in the sagas. References to *ójafnaðarmaðr* and unevenness of character are used 59 times while *drengr*, an honorable and ideal man, is used 155 times. The legal term *lögmaðr* appears 118 times. *Ójafn*, meaning uneven, is used 34 times. *Níðr* is used over 130 times. The terms for friendship *vinfengi* is used 57 times while *vinátta* appears 85 times. Even the women's term for friendship *vinkona* occurs 19 times. For further information, see the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?>

2. In Old Norse, the prefix Ó- represents a negation, so the term *óhóf* literally means “not reasonable.”

3. The terms *argi*, *ragr*, and *ergi* can denote many forms of non-masculine behavior, moreover, the terms of *stroðinn* and *sorðinn* belong in the sexual category of *níð*. However, the mythology of the Norse has many instances where these *níð* structures are broken. The mythological stories contain bestiality and cross-dressing by major figures in the Nordic pantheon.

In the *Þrymskviða*, Thor has his magical hammer, *Mjölnir* stolen by the giant, Þrymr. To get his hammer back, Thor must give the goddess Freya to the giant as a bride. Instead of giving Freya to the giant, Thor and Loki dress up as bride and bridesmaid and attend the “wedding.” Thor’s odd behavior as a woman is explained by Loki in various comic scenes in the tale. Finally, Þrymr hands the hammer over to his bride as a wedding present, and Thor reveals himself and smites the giant with *Mjölnir*.

The comedic tone of the piece is unusual since Thor would face a *níð*, and be a *níðingr*, since he committed the act of cross-dressing. Yet Thor was one of the most beloved gods, so why would this occur? Some scholars have suggested that this is an older poem and Thor is being publically shamed because he has been “unmanned” by having his weapon taken. His masculinity is restored and his shame is taken when he recovers his hammer and slays the thief. In this interpretation, the public shame is a penance. However, other scholars have suggested that this tale is a much later tale and is a parody adapted from the continent. The tone and the feel of the piece seem to fit a more older understanding of shame.

In the *Prose Edda*, the origin of Odin’s eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, is related. After Valhalla was built, the gods were worried there would be an attack, then one day a builder showed up to build a wall around it. He claimed he could build it in three seasons by himself, and if he did, he would get the beautiful goddess, Freya, the sun, and the moon. The gods accepted the offer, and the builder asked if he could use his horse to help him haul the stones. Loki convinced the other gods to agree. By the end of the second year, the wall was well along in construction. The builder’s horse, Svaðilfari, was capable of moving incredibly large stones, and the gods were worried he would win the wager. They became mad at Loki for convincing them in the first place. Loki was tasked with figuring out a way to stop the builder’s progress. So Loki shape-shifted into a mare and distracted Svaðilfari into chasing him instead of finishing the work. The builder became angry and it was revealed he was secretly a giant trying to steal Freya. Thor killed the builder with *Mjölnir*. *The Edda* suggests that Loki was caught by Svaðilfari because the text states, “Loki, however, had such dealing with Svaðilfari that sometime later, he gave birth to a foal” (*The Prose Edda* 68)

The clear picture is that Loki was *stroðinn* to Svaðilfari. Loki was always suspect among the gods, so his shame in this instance may be felt to be deserved. He was a trickster, a friend to giants, and the person who had Baldr killed. Yet the terms used are not as judgmental as the social functions of *níð* suggest.

Chapter Five—

“Loud Approval at the Law Rock:”

The Nordic Legal Tradition

“If we tear apart the law, we tear apart peace”

--*Íslendingabók*

“With laws shall our land be built up but with lawlessness laid waste”

--*Njáls Saga*

To claim that the medieval Norse had an incredibly legal mindset would not be an understatement. The sagas, as cultural artifacts, often suggest that the rule of law is extremely important in the makeup of their society. The sagas show court cases, lawyers as a profession, rhetorical training of lawyers, and the spaces of legal rhetoric. This information from the sagas is reinforced by archaeological and historical research looking at the preeminence of law as a cultural factor. In fact, our modern word “law” is derived from the Old Norse *lög*.¹ And our variant words of law, lawman, outlaw, bylaw, etc. all derive from the Old Norse root word, not the Latin, French, or the continental jurist tradition from which many of our legal terms were taken (“Law”). For instance, after England was conquered by the Danish “Great Heathen Army” in 865 CE, the northern and eastern parts of England were partitioned off into a Danish controlled area. Rather than call this area heathendom, the Anglo-Saxon terms was Dane-law— a place where Danish law and customs prevailed. Even this historical reference to a Viking invasion is coupled with their profound respect and value in a law code. In this chapter, I argue that the medieval Scandinavians had developed a legal rhetoric based on the concept of *hóf* and

reasonable dealings. Nordic lawyers had codified techniques and traditions which fit their world of oral traditions and easily transitioned into the vernacular period after the conversion to Christianity. These legal techniques were tested in courts and transmitted from generation to generation through medieval fosterage with trained lawyers.

The legalistic nature of the medieval Nordic people shows a culture centered on legal process, and historians who focus on Viking raids and brutality are often focusing on the effect of the legal process. The Norse who were outlawed by a court judgment frequently became the raiders feared by the chroniclers. From close examination of the sagas and historical interpretation, I contend that the medieval Scandinavian society is dominated by their legal structure. Thus, these “lawless barbarians” are quite constrained in many ways by the law in which they live day-to-day.

In examining the legal materials that have survived, the rhetorical stance of *hóf* also dominated the legal sphere as well. The legal system fit consistently into the civic values of the medieval Scandinavians, and the reasonableness of their rhetoric created legal structures to help keep the peace and make sure no party lost face. As with their civic rhetoric, the legal cases needed to be public and open for all to see. This chapter explores the places of legal rhetoric, rhetorical education and training, advocacy and mediation, and examples of the efforts to use reasonableness to maintain peace through the legal process.

The Rhetoric of Legal Space

Hawhee and Olson's Pan-Historiography emphasize that to examine cultural trends, it is important to span, then to focus in on specific examples to illustrate the broad picture. I intend to use this macrocosm to microcosm focus to help explain the importance of the space for legal proceedings. To truly understand the legal rhetoric of the medieval Nordic peoples, one must first understand the cultural and the geographical contexts in which it is embedded. For the Vikings, this legal space is associated with place, specifically *þings*² (lit. "assembly" in *Old Norse*). In the Germanic tradition, all legal and legislative assemblies took place outside under the open sky. Tacitus discusses the idea of the court assembly in *Germania*.

When the assembled crowd is ready, they take their seats, carrying arms. Silence is commanded by the priests, who have on these occasions the right to enforce obedience. Then the king or the chiefs are heard in accordance with each one's age, nobility, military distinction, or eloquence. The power of persuasion counts for more than the right to give orders. (43)

At the *þings*, legislation was conducted, and court cases were heard by a group of appointed judges. The concept of an assembly (a *þing*) is a very old idea, and wherever Nordic people settled, they established *þings*. These assemblies were beneath the open sky, sometimes set in a grouping of stones, and public for everyone to see.

Olwyn Owen's book, *Things in the Viking World*, examines the widespread development of *þings* across the Viking diaspora. Based on archaeological findings and linguistic information, *þing* sites appear across the Scandinavian expansion during the early medieval period. I compiled the chart below based on the findings in Owen's text to show the amount and diverse localities of the *þings*.

Location	Number of <i>þings</i>
Norway: Frostating, Gulating, Borgarting, Eidsivating	4
Great Britain: Tingwall (2), Tiongal, Tinwhil, Dingwall, Doomster Hill, Tinwald, Tynwald Hill, Thingmount, Thingwall (2), Thynghowe, Thinghou, Thingoe,	14
Ireland: Thingmote	1
Iceland: þórsnes, Kjalarnes, Thingvellir	3
Faroe Islands: Ördavík, millum, Vatna, á Ryggi, við Sjógv, Tinganes, Selatrað, Borðoy, í Vági	8
Denmark: Viborg, Jelling, Ringsted, Lund (now part of Sweden)	4
Sweden: Forsa, Bulverket, Birka, Gamla Uppsala, Fornsigstuna, Vallentuna, Bällsta, Anundshögen, Tingshögen	9
Shetlands: Delting, Lunnasting, Nesting, Tingwall, Aithsting, Sandsting	6
	Total Things: 49 (found so far)

Table 1. List of *þings*

As one can see from the chart, the institution of the *þing* is prevalent in the Viking world. From the archaeological data, *þings* appeared to be fewer where strong central government existed or where the population had easier access to a court assembly. The Shetlands and Great Britain seem to have many *þing* sites due to isolated geographical populations, making it difficult to travel to the assemblies, so they developed their own. Even places such as Greenland and Russia have potential *þing* sites. According to Sanmark, “In the early 20th century, two “booth” sites in Greenland were identified, one at Brattahlíð (Qassiarsuk) and another at Garðar (Igaliku), which, after some debate, were accepted by leading scholars as the remains of thing (assembly) sites (“The Case of Greenlandic Assembly Sites” 178).

Russia was settled, and parts conquered, by Swedish peoples in the 800s, so the idea of *þings* would be present, but I could find no references to Russian *þing* sites in my research. Furthermore, While L'anse aux Meadows shows evidence of Icelandic colonization circa 1,000 CE, there have been no traces of *þing* sites in the New World; however, I would not be surprised if evidence of a site was one day discovered. The *þings* were too much a part of the culture in medieval Scandinavia not to be used in the New World. As archaeologists continue their searches for Viking Age cultural centers, more *þing* sites will inevitably be discovered in the future.

The cultural power of the assemblies should not be overlooked. Classical scholars have argued for the performative aspects of manhood—since only males could publicly use rhetoric—and this is also true of medieval Nordic rhetoric. These *þings* were imbued by their users with rhetorical power. Who could speak as well at the assemblies exhibited power given to him by the assembled. The situatedness of the event—outdoors, surrounded by the community, weighing matters of law—created a rhetoric for legality. And as shown in the chart above, the medieval Nordic peoples valued this rhetorical space as they took it with them wherever they colonized. But more importantly, the legal power was a force to maintain public peace through redress of wrongdoings without having to resort to violence. While violence sometimes did escalate after court cases, the ultimate purpose was to diffuse this type of action through fines and other more civil forms of legal actions, including mediation and advocacy for parties concerned in the proceedings.

In Iceland, perhaps the greatest exemplar of this rhetorical space is derived from the Law Rock (*lögberg*). This natural, raised stone at the *þingvellir* commands a broad view of the plains surrounding the Óxara river. Moreover, since there is a basalt cliff behind it, the effects create something of a natural amphitheater, allowing the person holding the Law Rock to project his voice to the crowd; thus, it creates both a rhetorical space to speak imbued with power, and it holds a practical place for a speaker to wield that power. The amphitheater acoustics along with the commanding presence upon the Law Rock creates a significant element in the rhetorical performance between the speaker and the audience. Since there were blendings of legal matters and formulaic pieces, the crowd would potentially see the lawyer as they might view the performance of a *skald*, an Old Norse poet, so the speaker could command, captivate, and plead with his audience—an audience used to hearing a performance. When someone stepped to the Law Rock, the space in some ways defined the rhetorical situation. The spoken words needed to be legal, formulaic, performative, and clear.

The Viking Legal Tradition—The Icelandic Example

Viking society had a long tradition of judicial process. The Icelandic people developed a sense of democratic populism, almost unheard of in continental Europe, very early in their history. While there were several cultural groups which settled Iceland,³ the immigration of the Nordic peoples to Iceland slowed dramatically in the 930s CE. From this time until the reemergence of the Norwegian royal influence in the 1200s, the Icelandic culture operated mostly outside the sphere and influence of

mainstream European culture. The isolation led to the undisturbed development of legal institutions known only to Iceland. For instance, Iceland operated without influence from strong political or religious figures for almost 400 years, hearkening back to earlier times in Scandinavian customs. The sagas show us family life, and the major players in these stories are always located on the family farm holdings.⁴ The harsh environment may have precluded the building of empire in Iceland; consequently, this isolation led to many adaptations in the Norse culture to make it function.

The key adaptation I am looking at is the arrangement in Icelandic legal structure. The decentering of the government into local community leaders created a need to establish a legal system to deal with squabbles and disputes among the farm owners to keep the peace. The Icelandic term for these farm owners was *godar* (sing. *goði*), which may have carried religious significance at one point.⁵ Each *goði* controlled a holding as something of a chieftain, but he exerted little or no sway in military or political matters beyond his property lines. Each *goði* was supported by followers who were called *þingmenn* (sing. *Þingman*). The *þingman* was a retainer who joined the household of a *goði* and attended the *þing* in his retinue. In turn, the *þingman* promised to support and help his *goði* in legal actions. The *goði's* relationship to his *þingman* was not based in geography as was typical in the feudal system emerging in continental Europe. For a chieftain in Europe, his power was derived from the geographical area he controlled, and his power was strengthened by the more area he held. In Iceland the *þingman* - *goði* relationship (See Ch. Four for more about this) was more of a public commitment.⁶ But the relationship was

tenuous at best. A *bingman* was free to switch allegiance by simply swearing a public oath. And as the sagas attest, *bingman* all too often abandoned or betrayed a weak *goði*.

To settle disputes that inevitably arose, the Icelanders set up four regional assemblies, or *tings*, and once a year, every summer, they met in one major assembly known as the *Althing* (*Alping*). Part country fair and part judicial proceeding, the *tings* were a spectacle. The chieftains would name judges to hear the cases, and render rulings based in tradition and common sense.⁷ R.I. Page points out that the Icelanders were informed by common sense, which I argue is a form of *hóf*. Here he relates how Ari Thorgilsson explains that the Icelanders encountered a problem, and how they reasonably solved it.

There arose a great legal dispute at the *thing* between two people, Thord gellir, son of Olaf feilan from Breidafiord, and Odd, known as Tungu-Odd, who came from Borgarfiord. Odd's son Thorvald had taken part with Hoensa-Thrir in the burning of Thorkel Blundketil's son in Ornofsdal. Thord gellir was the prosecutor in the case because Herstein, the son of Thorkel Blund-Ketilsson, was married to his niece Thorunn... The defendants were prosecuted at the *thing* held at the place which was later called Thingnes in Borgarfiord, because it was then the legal requirement that homicide cases should be pursued at the thing that was nearest the spot where the killing occurred. But the two sides fought there, and the *thing* could not be conducted according to law. There Thorolf 'fox', brother of Alf of the Dales, was killed; he was in Thord gellir's party.

Later they brought the case before the *Althing*, and there the two sides fought again. In this broil men from Odd's party fell: moreover Hoensa-Thorir was outlawed and later killed, and others too who had taken part in the burning.

Then Thord gellir made a speech about it at the Law-rock pointing out what problems men had if they must go to unfamiliar *things* to bring suits for homicide or injuries done them, and he spoke of what he had had to go through before he could bring his case to law and the various troubles that would arise if no solution could be reached.

Then the land was divided into Quarters, so that there should be three *things* in each where members of the same *thing* could bring their lawsuits:

except that the Northern Quarter there should be four because the northerners were not prepared to accept anything else. (qtd. in in Page 176)

Consensus-building and appeasement seemed to be a rhetorical stance here because the concessions received in the other quarters was not acceptable to the Northern Quarter, so the acceptance of the unusual fourth court in the north was a reasonable, common-sense approach to securing the legal system needed to keep the peace.

An Icelandic lawyer was called a lawman (*lögmaðr*), and the main official was given the prestigious title of Lawspeaker (*lögsögumaðr*). Even though these various courts were for public consumption, dealing with criminal, civil, and judicial matters, the men who could hear and speak well in the law gained some prestige among their peers. For cross jurisdictional cases that could not be settled in the *þings*, the Vikings set up the Fifth Court at the *Alþing*—sort of an appeals court to the four regional things.

Since the legal proceedings were a cultural event, the judicial process became an important social construct in Iceland, and legal rhetoric became a valued skill among the people. As time went on, the society became dominated by legalistic principles that judged almost every facet of life. A *goði* might be called upon to know the law regarding tariffs, divorce, sheep stealing, kinslaying, and outlawry. Because of the diverse nature of the legal institution, those talented in law became a prized commodity, not only as lawyers, but as advisors to their *goði*. To plead cases effectively in court, a lawyer, (*lögmaðr*) needed an excellent memory and a quick recall.

At the end of the settlement period (ca. 930s CE), as the population continued to grow, and as the regional *þings* sometimes became problematic due to jurisdictional issues, the pragmatic Icelanders set up the *Alþing*—the court of courts—the national assembly, on the *Þingvellir* (literally the “*thing* plains”).

At the *Alþing*, the collected *goðar* elected a Lawspeaker (*lögsögumaðr*) for a term of three years. The Lawspeaker was commissioned with reciting one third of the collected law each year of his term. As one can imagine, this recitation was haphazard at best. Since the Lawspeaker was not necessarily elected because of his memory or his eloquence, often the Lawspeaker only recited the law he could remember. If the Lawspeaker was of lesser quality, then the recitation was undoubtedly flawed. The law was fluid in early Iceland. The Lawspeaker would stand on a rocky outcropping, the Law Rock (*lögberg*), to recite the law, where several others would be there to help correct him. This place also served as the place where litigants made their complaints public. When a suit was brought forth, the *goðar* appointed forty-eight judges to hear the case. The number and distributing of judges were based on the four regional things, and it varied in numbers occasionally. Many of the *goðar* served as judges, but trusted *þingmenn* were elected as well.

When presenting a case, perhaps ironically considering their reputations, Icelanders preferred to settle disputes with a sensible monetary payment. In a culture where personal honor was highly valued and respected, sometimes an offer of restitution could be considered insulting if it were deemed insufficient to satisfy honor; therefore, violence sometimes occurred in the court cases: *Njal's Saga* opens with a scene of violence in the court case. Mord Fiddle's case opens with an attempt

to settle a dispute monetarily and ends with a duel to settle things. This foreshadows the latter case in the saga as Njal's killers are put on trial.⁸

The title for this chapter, "Loud Approval at the Law Rock," is taken from *Njal's Saga*.⁹ This refers to the successful completion of a case to the audience's approval since the praise and shame culture needed to observe and make sure the legal proceedings were within the bounds of social propriety. The legal process was almost considered sacrosanct among the Icelanders. A verbal approval by the gallery listening to the case meant that the verdict would be viewed as binding by the communities. Since Iceland had no police force or constabulary, winning public approval meant that this judgment would be upheld by the people—a very democratic way to enforce judgments. This tradition of popular approval is a very old Germanic tradition. Tacitus comments on the noisy approval in Germania. "If a proposal displeases them, they shout their dissent. If they approve, they clash their spears. Showing approval with weapons is the most honourable way to express assent" (43).

Bringing weapons to court was a time-honored tradition in among the Germanic peoples. In *Njal's Saga*, Bjarni Brodd-Helgason tells Flosi Thordarson, "Also, we must go fully-armed to court and be continually on our guard, but never fight unless we are forced to do so in self-defence" (291). While this might be read unintentionally humorous to modern readers, to a Viking this was a serious piece of advice. Violence between parties was a legal option of the time. If the parties could not agree on settlement, or if a side sought revenge, then violence was a way to end the matter. Dueling, *hólmganga* in Old Norse, or an armed meeting between sides,

was an acceptable appeal for a case that could not litigiously reach a conclusion even though it was often frowned upon by the public because if parties were injured or killed it may lead to later public strife.

But even if a person were murdered, killed in a duel, or died unexpectedly, the bounds of law were still considered to be enforceable—even after death. If ghosts appeared, Vikings could hold a door-court, a *duradomr*, to rid the house of the dead. In *Eyrbyggja's Saga*, for instance, Thoroddr and his men, who had drowned, haunted the farmhouse of Kjartan, causing sickness, death, and all range of ill omen for those in the farmstead. The door-court was held like a *þing*, and charges of trespassing against the ghosts resulted in their banishment.¹⁰ The following example illustrates the power of the legal mindset in medieval Scandinavia.

Snorri asked the Priest to go with Kjartan to Frodriver along with his son, Thord the Cat and six other people. They must burn the canopy from Thorgunna's bed, said Snorri, and then summon all the dead men to a door-court. After that the priest was to sing mass, consecrate water, and hear people's confessions. They rode over to Frodriver, and on the way there they asked the neighbors to come with them.

It was Candlemas Eve when they came to Frodriver, and the fire had just been lit. Thurid had been taken ill with the same illness as those who had died. Kjartan went straight into the living room and saw Thorodd and the other dead people sitting at the fire as usual. He pulled down the canopy from Thorgunna's bed, plucked a brand from the fire, went out, and burnt to ashes all the bed furnishings that had once belonged to Thorgunna.

Then Kjartan summonsed Thorir Wood-Leg, and Thord the Cat summoned Thorodd for trespassing on the home and robbing people of life and health. All the dead were summonsed in the same way. Then the door-court was held and charges made, the proper procedure of ordinary law courts being observed throughout. The jury was appointed, testimony was taken, and the cases were summed up and referred to judgement. When sentence was being passed on Thorir Wood-Leg, he rose to his feet and said, 'I've sat here as long as people would let me.' Then he went out through the door at which the court was not being held.

After that, sentence was passed on the shepherd, and he stood up. 'I'll go now, and it seems I should have gone sooner,' he said.

When Thorgrima Witch-Face heard her sentence, she stood up, too. 'I've stayed here as long as you've let me,' she said.

So they all received their sentences one after another; and each, on being sentenced, got up, made some such remark, and left the room. It was clear that none of them wanted to go.

Thorodd was the last to be sentenced. When he heard the judgement, he stood up. 'There's no peace here,' he said, 'we'd best all be on our way.' And with that he walked out.

Then Kjartan and the others went back inside, and the priest carried holy water and sacred relics to every corner of the house. Next day he sang all the prayers and celebrated mass with great solemnity, and there were no more dead men haunting Frodriver after that. Thurid began to improve and got well again. (140-141)

Even in death the drowned men had to obey the law. This shows the legal mindset and the rhetorical power of the court. Ghosts were banished by producing witnesses to prove trespassing. There is no Christian religious exorcism here—no pleas to God to save a soul. The law was binding in the mind of the Icelanders. The priest only arrives after the ghosts have fled. The power of legal words, spoken in open court beneath the sky had the real power here—even the dead had to acknowledge that power.

The Forensic Rhetorical Education

As discussed in the previous section, the Viking world was organized around a legalistic mindset that valued technicalities of law. William Ian Miller contends, "The saga genre itself attests to the cultural obsession with law" (227).¹¹ In Icelandic society, being a *lögmaðr*, a lawman was a valued commodity. However, education in the Viking world was neither standardized nor institutional. In fact, historians generally ignore discussing Nordic education in the scope of their scholarship. But what we can do is look at the evidence given us in commentaries and the sagas.

The medieval Norse were isolated as a culture, yet their educational system was fairly consistent with the rest of Europe in the early Middle Ages. The Icelanders, for instance, had few established church schools in Iceland until the 1200s. But scholars can glean a sense of the educational methods by examining historical accounts and sagas. As was typical of the rest of Europe, apprenticeships and fosterage were the typical ways the young, male, Icelandic student gained an education. While there is not a preponderance of evidence in the sagas of this, there are a few passing references to show that rhetorical education took place by apprenticeship or fosterage with men who were regarded as having keen legal minds. For instance, in *Njal's Saga*, we see that part of a wedding agreement from the landowner Njal was that he offers to become a teacher of law to Thorhall Asgrimsson.

After the wedding, Njal offered to become foster-father to Thorhall Grimsson, and Thorhall went with him to live at Bergthorsknoll. He lived there for a long time, and came to love Njal more than his own father. Njal taught him law so well that he later became the greatest lawyer in Iceland. (85)

There are a few other passages in the sagas that show a clear social institution of apprenticeship for legal training. The next example is taken from *The Saga of Gunnlaugur Snake's Tongue*. Gunnlaugur is in training to be a *skald*. When he becomes angry with his father, he leaves to apprentice with Thorsteinn, a *lögmaðr*, to learn the law.

Gunnlaugur then rode away from there and arrived in the evening down at Borg and landowner Thorsteinn invited him to stay there and he accepts. Gunnlaugur says to Thorsteinn how it had gone with him and his father. Thorsteinn asked him to stay there with them a while, as he wanted, and he was there a year and learned law-wisdom from Thorsteinn and all the people there liked him well. (86)

And similarly, in *The Droplaugarssons*, there is an additional clue to the case of fosterage. Unsatisfied with the settlement at the spring *þing* in his district, Helgi Droplaugursson seeks an apprenticeship with Thorkel to learn the law.

The next Spring Thorkel Geitisson, Grim and Helgi went to the Krakalok Spring Assembly in Fljotsdale. There they met Helgi Asbarnarson and settled the suit for the killing of Thorgrim with money paid by Thorkel. But Helgi Droplaugarson did not like it that money should be paid for Dungbeetle's killing and he considered the slander to be unavenged. The brothers stayed on in Krossavik and Helgi learned the law from Thorkel. Helgi was involved in a great many lawsuits, especially in those against the thingmenn of Helgi Asbarnarson. (81)

It is interesting to note that in the oral-tradition age of Iceland, when *lögmen*n were acknowledged for their unique talents with the law, that the court proceedings were conducted in the common tongue. The low style, as it is known to scholars. In contrast, the *skalds*, the Icelandic poets, used an intricate style, common in oral cultures, which displayed poetic virtuosity, but not easily mimicked by the population. The skaldic verse was considered the high style. The oral poetry was entertainment, but not everyone could engage in it.

The populist roots of the law pleadings and court cases were accessible to anyone who was attending the *þing*. This is quite a bit different to modern court cases where the judicial language relies on knowing a highly technical jargon of legal terms derived in large part from the Greek and Roman jurist tradition. In modern society, participating in the law is not for people without the proper training. Few people without legal training can easily understand the vocabulary, much less the nuances of language in our modern courts. In Iceland, the law was

made for public consumption and participation at the *þings*. Law was made for the average man.

While the idea of legal training and accessibility runs counter to our modern conceptions of law, in the sagas there are even a few short passages that show people playing at court. In the *Ljótsvetninga Saga*, Thorkell Geitisson is credited in creating “the rules of the mock court” (150) where bondsmen and servants would get together and convene courts for the entertainment of the chieftain and his retainers. In *Njal’s Saga*, peasant children “chattering loudly with the folly of youth” (55) hold a mock court making fun of an infidelity of a chieftain.

The rhetorical education among the Icelanders followed a different course than the Greco-Roman tradition. Unlike the Greek and Roman training, there are no records of something akin to a collected Icelandic *progymnasmata*.¹² As shown in brief passages, legal games of the mock courts were a way that commoners could learn law. Much like any other endeavor in the Middle Ages, apprenticeship and fosterage were ways in which skills were passed from one generation to another. But its populist slant gave the legal rhetoric to the people. From the highest chieftain to the lowest freeman, the people needed to have, at the very least, a rudimentary understanding of law and legal procedure—a very reasonable thing to do.

Rhetoric in Viking Legal Proceedings

To the reader familiar with the history of rhetoric, a lot of the usual rhetorical devices are missing from the medieval Nordic repertoire. When Aristotle discusses the types of forensic rhetoric, he mentions the need for *pisteis*, the

available ways to persuade. But the Icelandic court did not use persuasion, as we think of it, in court. The sagas and the *Grágás* show us very formulaic methods for prosecuting and defending a case. The lawyers recited formulaic pieces, followed by witnesses who had to recite formulaic pieces. If anyone misspoke, then the other side could easily claim an irregularity in court and ask for a dismissal. This focus on the formula makes sense since they were an oral-formulaic privileging society. In *Njal's Saga*, as Mord Valgardsson began the prosecution of Flosi Thordarson at the Law Rock, he recites the form in a very precise manner:

Mord named witnesses—"to testify that I give notice of an action against Flosi Thordarson for the unlawful assault, inasmuch as he assaulted Helgi Njalsson at the place where he assaulted and inflicted on him an internal wound, brain wound, or marrow wound, which did cause Helgi's death. I demand that Flosi be sentenced to full outlawry on this charge, not to be fed nor forwarded nor helped nor harboured. I claim that all his possessions be forfeit, half to me and half to those men in the Quarter who have a lawful right to receive his confiscated goods. I refer this manslaughter action to the proper Quarter Court. I give notice of action to be heard at this session, for full outlawry against Flosi Thordarson, as assigned to me by Thorgeir Thorisson." (298)

This passage shows the Viking legalistic mind at work. Mord fails to incite the crowd and condemn Flosi as Aristotle would advocate in *On Rhetoric*.¹³ Since Mord does not need to invent the wording of the charges, his speech would be deemed *atechnic*¹⁴ by the Greeks, a lesser form of oratory which requires less skill on the speaker's part. When the Vikings developed their law, their sense of "for the common good" rested on a publicly constructed set of values. The Vikings had other ideas about the common good because of their praise and shame culture, and their strong honor culture. The Icelandic courts did not necessarily move with the idea of the just and the unjust. For this reason, the Viking court did not attempt to attack

the character or motives of the defendant. They simply said that someone had taken an action and deprived someone of life or property, and it needed to be redressed. Actions by the defendants were usually acknowledged publicly, so the courts could see the action to be mollified legally. If not, a feud would erupt, and the consequences might be severe.

While this thinking may seem different to the Greeks, the Romans understood the need for law to be a mediating force. Cicero, for example, in his *De Oratore and De Inventione*¹⁵ recognizes that lawful use of the courts can have a positive effect in keeping the peace. But Cicero's ornate style, use of amplification, are foreign ideas to a Viking court. Even later in Viking history when the church established Iceland as a Christian nation, and the Vikings had access to Classical learning, the canonical texts of rhetoric did not take hold immediately. It was over the span of almost two hundred years before Christian culture would come to dominate the land.

The bridge from orality in the proceedings to a written culture was some time in the making. Early on, the Vikings used the *Futhark*, the runic alphabet, but laws generally were not written in this alphabet.¹⁶ The earliest inscriptions in the *Futhark* were epitaphs, runic poems, rune sticks, and runestones. The vernacular Old Norse writing occurred after the introduction of Christianity in Iceland. And in particular, after the general conversion of Iceland was achieved, at least symbolically and in typical legalistic fashion, by the judgment of the *Alþing* that Iceland would be a Christian nation.

The newly introduced Latin literacy in Iceland led Norse churchmen to begin writing the sagas and laws of Iceland into the vernacular, not Latin, so once again it could belong to the people. Perhaps the most famous Icelandic Historian was Ari Thorgilsson. He wrote the earliest surviving history of Iceland, the *Íslendingabók*. Ari's book traced the earliest settlements of Iceland in the vernacular language. The precedent for using the vernacular led to the creation of a written law code.

Together, the *Konungsbók* with *Staðarhólsbók*¹⁷ collected the existent laws into a codified whole, known as the *Grágás*, or “Grey Goose” laws. Scholars are uncertain why these collected laws are known as the *Grágás*, but scholars have speculated on these.¹⁸ Once these laws were written, the law books could be referenced by litigants, and the professionalization of the lawyers had begun.

Arbitration and Mediation in Legal Actions

Before legal disputes spread to wider contention, there were mechanisms in place to help stop the dispute from escalating further. These advocates and mediators were generally known as *góðviljamaðr* (pl. *góðviljamenn*), literally good-will man, or *góðgjarnmaðr* (pl. *góðgjarnir menn*), meaning benevolent man. The terms show these advocates and mediators were viewed publically as men who helped keep the peace and were seen as reasonable and men worthy of positive linguistic terms. These men of good will would insert themselves, or be asked to insert themselves into a dispute to help broker some type of peace before the situation escalated to either a court case brought to the *Alþing* or violence broke out.

The men who worked as advocates and arbitrators were generally regarded as honorable men. In the societal framework of praise and shame, these men were seen as keepers of the peace and defenders of the social fabric which would increase their reputations as reasonable men—and bring greater social prestige to their families. Regardless of how their efforts eventually turned out, the sagas portray these men as positive for trying to broker a peaceful settlement. Women were banned from taking part in official legal proceedings, but they were often involved in mediation and violence abatement as the sagas attest.

Beyond the societal restraints on an arbitration to reduce violence, the rhetorical power wielded by the society to limit violence is impressive. In the intricate web of relationships among *godar*, they found that arbitration could help further cement their power in a region by working as arbitrators. This skill in appearing reasonable meant that the concerned parties in a conflict would then owe the arbitrators some kind of favor, further strengthening the ties among people in the region. The arbitrators obviously undertook these duties with some self-interest in mind to further solidify their positions in the region, but they also realized that conflict and open hostilities were not good for anyone, and it could permanently harm their districts if not curtailed.

As Byock sees it, “In many ways arbitration was a face-saving procedure. It relied upon the understanding that the honor of all parties was to be considered, and it allowed the parties to withdraw from a critically dangerous situation” (*Feud* 103). With the reputation of both parties on the line, the rhetorical savvy of the arbitrators had to be keen. They had to look for ways to interpret the situation or

spin the facts, so that all parties were able to leave with their honor intact, and no possible slights occurred to the injured parties. The problem with arbitration is that it relied on the goodwill of the parties entering in arbitration and the goodwill of the arbitrators. If one party was unreasonable, then negotiations would be difficult to establish or maintain.

Legal Reasonableness in Action: Four Case Studies

Up to this point in the chapter, I have dealt with broader issues surrounding forensic rhetoric and the rhetorical stance of *hóf* that influences it. Now, I would like to focus more specifically on how this cultural and rhetorical practice of reasonableness manifests itself in actual legal proceedings. For this purpose, I will use an example from court case in *Njal's Saga*, *Ljósvetninga Saga*, *Bandamanna Saga*, and the Case of the Conversion of Iceland as *foci* to better illustrate how *hóf* influences the legal setting. By closely examining these representative cases, it allows us a glimpse into the mindset of the participants and how reasonableness is valued in the legal dealings of the Scandinavians.

Njal's Saga

The story of Njal's burning is the tragic story of blood feud. What starts as an insult by Njal's wife becomes a bloody tale which culminates in a group of men led by Flosi Thordarson burning Njal's longhouse down and killing the family and retainers. Only one person, Kari Solmundarson, Njal's son-in-law, escapes in the smoke of the fire to join friends and bring a case against the burners at the *Alþing*:

No court case in the sagas, in my opinion, better illustrates the forensic rhetoric than this case does. This case deals with the claim brought against Flosi¹⁹ and the men who trapped Njal, his wife, and their retainers in his hall and burned them all alive. At the *Alþing*, the case is brought to bear, and the ramifications are witnessed by both the participants and the readers alike.

According to Jesse Byock, feuds in sagas can be resolved in three ways: “(1) arbitrated settlement, whether in or out of court; (2) direct settlement between parties, whether violent or peaceful; (3) the rejection of an offer of resolution” (*Feud in the Icelandic Saga*, 259). The case of the burning of Njal encompasses these three elements of feud, and in doing so, shows the deft use of legal rhetoric in *Njal’s Saga*. The importance of reasonableness should not be undervalued here. Two of the three means of resolution are peaceful. This means that violence was the last resort of a failed arbitration, and often times was averted completely. The case of Njal’s burning is well detailed, allowing us glimpses at the legal proceedings in Iceland, and how reasonable people tried to adjudicate a measured settlement to the tragedy to ensure violence did not disrupt the community.

For this case, the saga specifically sets up the major lawyers and their credibility— Mord and Thorhall, the prosecutors, and Eyjolf the defense lawyer. Mord and Eyjolf are portrayed as two of the best lawyers in Iceland.²⁰ Here are some examples taken from *Njal’s saga* that demonstrates legal expertise:

There was a man called Mord Fiddle, who was the son of Sighvat the Red. Mord was a powerful chieftain, and lived at Voll in the Rangriver Plains. He was also a very experienced lawyer—so skillful, indeed, that no judgement was held to be valid unless he had taken part in it. (*Njal’s Saga*, 39)

Later on, the reader is introduced to Eyjolf, another prominent lawyer in the saga:

A man called Eyjolf Bolverksson was one of the three greatest lawyers in Iceland. He was a man who commanded great respect, and his knowledge of law was outstanding. He was extremely handsome, tall, and strong, with all the makings of a fine chieftain. He was also very fond of money, like the rest of his kinsmen. (*Njal's Saga*, 290)

Thorhall's participation is important because he has been trained in law by Njal himself, the greatest lawyer in Iceland before his murder. The case in *Njal's Saga* seems very contemporary in many ways. Our predisposition to legality and litigiousness seems right at home in the *Alþing*. The legal maneuverings of Eyjolf, Mord, and Thorhall seem worthy of any television legal drama.

When each of the parties arrives at the *Alþing*, they go seeking support. In the Icelandic legal system, it is common for the litigants to bring their supporters with them to court. This show of force creates an immediate, sympathetic audience, and it seems to have had the effect of creating a situation that the court of public opinion in conjunction with societal values makes a legal right.

At the *Alþing*, Kari solicits the help of Mord and other relatives and allies of Njal to help bring the case. Allied with them is Thorhall, a man Njal trained in the law. When they go to the Law Rock to bring the case against Flosi and the burners, they bring witnesses to swear formulaic oaths before the judges at the court. An example from the text shows the formulaic nature of the words: "That I give notice of an action against Flosi Thordarson for unlawful assault against Helgi Njalsson at the place where he assaulted Helgi and inflicted on him an internal wound, brain wound, or marrow wound" (298-299). Over the course of the proceedings he uses this

formulaic piece several times. The *Alþing* had a large number of judges, 48 were available to hear the case, but the plaintiff and defendant could exclude six each, so judgments were usually done by 36 judges. The Law-Speaker served as more of a legal scholar and parliamentarian to the proceedings. The point here is not one where facts need to be ascertained. The men admit it, and the witnesses swear to it. In the Norse world, it would be considered cowardly to deny an action done in the public sphere. While this does occur in several sagas, hiding a crime like this would be considered socially unacceptable.

To defend against the case brought against him, Flosi approached Eyolf Bolverksón who was considered the third best lawyer in Iceland. At the onset he refuses to take up Flosi's case, but Flosi bribes him with a very valuable gold armband—even though it is illegal in Icelandic law to bribe a lawyer. Flosi knows he cannot get a good lawyer because of the nature of his crimes, so he has to bribe someone. Flosi's rash action of burning the house, denying the under-siege access outside (to meet in fair fighting), and needing to bribe a lawyer shows the seriousness in which Flosi, and the reader, viewed the case.

Both Flosi and Mord visit each of the booths of the chieftains seeking support for their cases. Flosi is asked by his lawyer, Eyjolf to seek an arbitrated settlement, but Flosi refuses to seek this. Eyjolf attempts a reasonable course to keep the peace, but it is rejected by his client, so Eyjolf must try other tactics to win the case. As described by Byock, the first possible peaceful solution to the feud is rejected. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the case against the burners involves the

legal maneuverings of Eyjolf and Thorhall, the two main lawyers in this section of the saga.

Because of the severe nature of the crimes against Njal, his family, and their retainers, Mord asks the court for full outlawry as a verdict, which meant that Flosi and the men accused would have to leave Iceland forever. This is a much harsher charge than lesser outlawry which required only a three-year exile. This sets the stage for the court case. Since Flosi rejected the arbitrated settlement, the odds are high: either win or leave his home and holdings forever.

Mord pleads well and the judges seem to favor him, but the lawyer for Flosi, Eyjolf, finds clever ways to diffuse Mord's case. First, he has Flosi transfer his chieftaincy to his brother, so Mord will appear to have prosecuted in the wrong court, then by challenging jurymen, etc. This sets up a repetitive theme of Mord pleading, Eyjolf countering the charges, and Mord having to seek help from Thorhall, who cannot go to the Law Rock because he has a boil on his leg the day of the trial. One of the themes that come from this sequence in the trial is that law is meant to keep the peace in society, while legal maneuverings threaten to destroy the civil peace. In each instance, frustration builds in the prosecuting lawyers, and the witnesses must continually appear in court to speak their formulaic testimony before the judges. As Thorhall comments to Mord, "Tell them that they should not let themselves be tricked by lawyers' quibbles" (*Njal's Saga*, 305).

Since Eyolf knows his case for Flosi is weak, he begins to try and undermine the jurisdiction and process of the case itself. The first thing he does is have Flosi transfer his chieftaincy to his brother, Thorgeir, and then attach himself as a

bingman retainer to Askel Thorketilsson in the North quarter. Eyjolf comments, “If your opponents do not get to hear of this, they will make a fatal error, by pleading the case in the East Quarter Court instead of the North Quarter” (300). Eyjolf isn’t worrying about the facts, nature, or seriousness of the issue. He concedes these as lost, but what he does attack is the legal process itself.

As the case progresses, Eyjolf tries to undermine the proceedings by challenging the swearing in of the jury by saying the relation to the pleader disqualifies them, but Thorhall on the prosecution observes the legal standing of the *Alþing* by contending that the only legal reason for denying a sitting juror is a relationship to the plaintiff rather than the lawyer. This begins a game of one-upmanship between the lawyers. Eyjolf tries to invalidate the jurisdiction again by claiming that dependents householders couldn’t sit as jurors, but Thorhall once again explains that if the householders “own milch animals” (306). Eyjolf then tries to get jurors excluded because they lived too far from the scene of the crime, but Thorhall once again precisely states the law that only a majority of jurors needed to be living near the crime scene. With further legal trickery by the defense, the narrator notes that the gallery who had been observing this back and forth saw that Flosi and Eyjolf were trying to undermine the proceedings and the sagas states, “There was loud agreement... That Flosi and his men were resorting to mere lawyers’ quibbles and cheating” (307). This observation is true as Flosi and Eyjolf find a loophole and win the case. Eyjolf, seeing that his case was about to fail, claimed that the whole proceeding was invalid because the jurisdiction was incorrect. It had been pleaded in the wrong quarter court.

At this point, Thorhall lances his wound and comes forward claiming direct settlement through violence. He loved Njal as a father, and having Flosi go free is unacceptable to him. He rejects the idea of resolution, Byock's third point. Thorhall, enraged at the devious undermining of the judicial proceedings, grabs a spear and attacks the supporters of the burners and a general battle ensues. As the two sides engage in combat; Flosi is wounded, and Eyjolf is killed—as are many of their supporters. Byock's second point of resolution is unleashed on the population.

It is ultimately Hall of Siða that ends the case by asking for a settlement on equal terms. His son Ljot died fighting for Flosi, yet he pleads for a settlement to stop the killing. He asks for no compensation for his loss, and he asks only that the case against Flosi be heard and judgment passed. In the end, Flosi is sentenced to full outlawry and ordered to leave Iceland. Several of Flosi's men are sentenced to three years' outlawry. Several others are fined for fighting, but Eyjolf is given no compensation because he was an unfair and dishonest lawyer. The men at the *Alþing* are so impressed by Hall of Siða's plea for peace, they all pooled their money to compensate him anyway.

It remains to be said that after Hall of Siða had forgone any compensation for his son in order to bring about a settlement, everyone at the Althing contributed something to compensate him. It amounted to no less than eight hundred ounces of silver—a quadruple compensation. But all the others who had been on Flosi's side received no compensation for injury, and were extremely dissatisfied about it. (*Njal's Saga* 323)

The idea of jurisdiction was fundamental to the way the Vikings perceived their legal system. The gallery observing the case seems to get more and more frustrated with Eyjolf and Flosi because they were misusing a respected institution. The audience at the court respected the law and the jurisprudence associated with

keeping the peace. On a regular basis, the normal operations were for the courts to help with settlements and keep the peace. In examining a way to view *hóf* in terms of the tradition in medieval Scandinavia, it allows scholars to examine questions relating to the ways in which the legal mind thought about the issues involved in legal disputes and ways the society found to prosecute wrongdoers and simultaneously keep the peace in places that have no formal constabulary to enforce the judgements of the courts. *Njal's Saga* presents an unusual case of feud that circumvents the legal system and leads to pitched battle. Most often though, a successful case led to “loud approval at the law rock” (298).

Njal's Saga illustrates that reasonableness is the best course of action in feud. The saga's tragedy occurs because the principal actors in the case often start at reasonable means, but slowly become unreasonable. The saga ends with a return to reasonableness as Hall of Siða calls for an end to hostilities and no compensation for his family. The observers see this as an ultimately selfless and reasonable event. He is practicing *hóf* in the public sphere. The bystanders are so impressed with his actions, they pool their own money and compensate him for his loss.

Ljósvetninga Saga

The *Ljósvetninga Saga* illustrates the many uses of arbitration as men of goodwill attempt to stifle the violence and unreasonableness of the saga's antagonists. While the saga is quite episodic, the major contention is between the brothers, Solmund, Eyjolf, and Soxulf, who are described as “All forceful and overbearing men” (Andersson and Miler 122) and Ofeig Jarngerðarson, who is

portrayed as a powerful but relatively moderate man. Ofeig embodies the Nordic ideal of a reasonable man. He acts in the best interest of the population to keep the peace and make sure the Ljósvatn area doesn't erupt into violence. The major episodes in the saga create clear delineations between moderate and immoderate conduct. The reasonable courses of action are the acts of those who seek an arbitrated and moderated settlements.

Chapters 6-7 are called *Ofeig's þátr* (a *þátr* is a short tale). This section of the saga sets up the major conflict that runs throughout the rest of the saga between the people of Modruvellir and the Ljóvetnings, led by Ofeig. It is a comparison of Ofeig's attempt to keep the peace while Gudmund is portrayed as unreasonable in dealing with his neighbors. Gudmund would often travel with a large retinue and stay with his *þingmenn* for long periods, basically pauperizing them. When they appeal to Ofeig, he decides to show Gudmund the error of his ways, so he brings a large retinue and stays with Gudmund for a long time, draining the resources of the goði. Gudmund sees the problem of his travels and changes his travel habits. When Gudmund comes to Ofeig's house, Ofeig gifts him with a pair of ruddy colored oxen. Gudmund gives a gift of black oxen in return. The saga comments that "Ofeig's reputation had grown greatly because of the dealings with Gudmund" (144). Ofeig's reputation of a man of goodwill is important to later dealings of arbitration in the saga.

Another instance of mediation occurs Vodu-Brand slays Harek, who is described in the saga as "a great champion: he did not pay compensation for the men he killed" (147). Harek's unwillingness to pay compensation breaks social protocol of

redressing a harm against a family. Harek's rude and insulting behavior brings him into conflict with Vodu-Brand. When the two fight, Harek is killed by Brand with an axe stroke to the head. Two brothers step in and agree to mediate, and Brand agrees to pay the family compensation for the killing. Since Harek was ill-tempered, the family agrees to the compensation; thus, all parties save face. Vodu-Brand saves his reputation at the insults of Harek, the brothers gain reputations as moderate men, and Harek's family gains the compensation they deserve in a public setting. These elements to rhetorical mediation appear throughout the saga, enforcing the theme of *hóf* both to the characters in the sagas and to the readers as well.

Vodu-Brand's character is by nature not moderate. Throughout the saga, he is reminded to be moderate by others. After the killing of Harek, Brand lives with his father, Thorkel Geitisson. Brand is moody, drinks too much, and refuses to converse with Thorkel who reminds him, "You are a very erratic fellow. Now return to your sociable ways in moderation" (151), but Brand doesn't, and he injures one of Gudmund's retainers during a sporting match. Thorkel tries to arrange compensation, but Gudmund flatly refuses, wanting to take the injury to court. Thorkel doesn't have the funds or resources to properly defend his son in court, so he rides to the *þing* with only five retainers. Thorkel is hoping to find an arbitrator to seek a mediated settlement.

When Gudmund brings the case to court, Thorkel stands and offers Gudmund a self-judgment (*sjálf-dæmi*). This public display of contrition by Brand's father acknowledges wrongdoing on the part of his son and allows Gudmund to name his compensation. This gesture should have moved Gudmund to accept the settlement.

The eyes of the court were now turned to Gudmund to do the right thing, accept it, and offer a reasonable amount for a settlement of gold, silver, or livestock, but Gudmund refuses due to his stubbornness.

Thorkel again asks,

“We are still willing to guarantee a settlement for the man if you will accept a self-judgment,” Thorkel said.

Gudmund said that he wasn’t inclined to prosecute the man in their district if they had a mind to void the case: “the man is definitely going to be outlawed.” (156)

The two sides then prepare for battle, but Ofeig and Thorstein, both moderate men, try to avert the bloodshed. “Thorstein said, ‘since you are friendly with both parties... We should take a chance with his brother, Einar. It would be more advisable to seek a settlement’” (157). This focus on mediation for a settlement is the quintessential moment of *hóf*. The public has seen the events unfold at the *þing*, and they realize that a peaceful settlement can save face for all parties involved and keep a civic peace. When they seek out Einar, he further strengthens the idea of moderation. “We are friendly with both parties and have an obligation to work for reconciliation” (157).

This theme of moderate thinking and resolve is carried throughout the rest of the saga. Gudmund’s stubborn character and his power constantly threatens to derail the rhetorical practices. While it seems as if the power structures are more powerful than peaceful settlements, the resolve of the social fabric endures. Einar marries Thorkel’s daughter, and for a while he mediates the two families since he is now tied to both houses.

When Gudmund has a feud with another person and brings a court case, the saga says, “Efforts were made to bring about a settlement, but Gudmund said it was pointless” (174). Later, Gudmund claimed that a man named Thorir had stolen livestock and brought him to court, but Thorir again claims “You [Gudmund] know no moderation in your aggressiveness” (178). This dispute lasts some time until violence once again seems inevitable. At the *Alþing*, Thorir and Gudmund are at the point of open warfare, but the saga author once again states, “efforts were made to reach a settlement” (181).

Thorir goes to the Law Rock to challenge Gudmund to combat. But before that, Thorir calls for mediation one last time. “Many of our friends and distinguished men have put themselves out to mediate our case, said Thorir. “They reproach me for not wanting to offer money for the offenses with which you charge me. I shall now put an end to this. I propose to make the offer just that much better to make up for the long delay: I will accept your brother Einar’s binding arbitration.” “I will accept no arbitrator in this case but myself,” declared Gudmund. (182).

Gudmund’s declaration leads to Thorir’s exile, but it does not stop Gudmund’s behavior. The feuds started by Gudmund last into his sons’ generation. Only then are they able to establish a settlement that brings an end to Gudmund’s uneven behavior.

Ljósvetninga Saga acts as a warning to the readers that they need to be respectful of the law, be reasonable, and be moderate. Gudmund’s actions show what misuse of power can be. The Ljósvetnings have a moderate temperament, and throughout the saga they show a respect for the law. While the power balance clearly falls with Gudmund and his kin, the ultimate victory belongs to those who practice *hóf*.

Bandamanna Saga

Bandamanna Saga is a short saga centered around the rise of Odd Ofeigsson, and the schemes of several powerful goði who attempt to steal his lands and wealth. The protagonist of the saga is Odd the son of Ofeig, relatives of the Ofeig Jarngerdarson in *Ljosvetninga Saga*. While this Ofeig is a wise and well-respected man, he has little money or disposable wealth. His son Odd feels this gives them very little status, so he asks his father for an inheritance, and he leaves the farm. Odd takes fishing equipment with him, and he spends three years as a fisherman earning money until he can buy goods and become a trader. He invests in a ferry and a trading business which earns him a lot of money. After several years of this, he invests in a long-range trading ship and goes abroad where he becomes increasingly wealthy.

Eventually, he returns to Iceland, but he has no title or lands as a goði. Odd finds land and establishes a successful farm in Northern Iceland at Mel. He becomes a goði, and his kinsman Vali manages his farm and advises him on important matters. Among other workers, Odd hires a man named Ospak, who was strong, but had a rather bad reputation. Ospak became a valued member of the farm, but Odd got bored with farming and wanted to travel again. Vali wanted to travel with Odd, so Odd transferred the godord to Ospak for the time they were gone and left him in charge of the farm.

Odd and Vali returned two winters later wealthy from their travels, but Ospak holds back on the godorð. He stalls returning the farm to Odd. Finally, Odd threatens Ospak with an axe before he returns the ownership of the farm. But Odd's

sheep start disappearing, and Ospak is suspected. Vali rides to Ospak's farm to see about the sheep. Vali tries to broker a peace with between them. "I'll ride up to the house and meet with Ospak and see if he is willing to come to terms" (472). Vali is acting as an arbitrator to help settle the dispute since he knew both parties. He is attempting to diffuse the situation, but he is ambushed and murdered by Ospak. For the murder of his kinsman, Odd takes Ospak to court.

At court, Odd tries prosecuting the case, but he is not trained in law as his father was, so even though he had more money and lands, his father had more legal knowledge. Odd makes a legal mistake, and the case is thrown out on a technicality. Ofeig witnesses the problem and offers to help his son. He approaches the jurors and asks, "Did there seem to you any kind of justice in paying attention to such a triviality instead of condemning a thoroughly bad man, a thief, and a murderer?" (475). He uses logic on them since they swore oaths to uphold the law, and argues the law is "an oath to judge as fairly as you know how" (476). He offers them silver as compensation to avoid "breaking their sworn word" (476), and they could be rid of a truly bad man.

Ospak is outlawed for killing Vali. Men thought that Odd had pursued the case with "determination" (477), and they looked to Ofeig as the legal mind behind this. Several powerful men decided to pursue this as a bribe to the jurors, and try and outlaw Odd and gain self-judgment against him. Ofeig tells his son to give him a portion of his possessions and to take the rest of his wealth and load it aboard his ships so that the conspirators can't take his wealth if they win the case, thus making it a hollow victory if they won.

Ofeig then takes up the defense of his son and uses the idea of reasonableness against the confederates. Ofeig goes to the Law Rock and talks directly to the people. “I stayed out of the case against my son Odd up to now, even though it was begun in such a scandalous fashion that no one can think of a parallel” (487). When he calls the first witness of the eight opponents of Odd, he asks him how mediation works, and whether these agreements are between two men over a wrong, or if they are among eight men against one. The crowd sees that the chieftains are entering into an unlawful prosecution of eight against one. This clearly breaks the civic function of mitigating a claim that could break out into violence. Eight against one looks like a conspiracy to gain Odd’s wealth, and the chieftains will lose face, reputation, and honor if they continue with the case against Odd. Ofeig effectively nullified their plan by changing the case to look at their motives, making it risky for them to prosecute. When Ofeig reveals all that is left is thirteen ounces of silver of Odd’s wealth, and he has taken the rest out of Iceland one of the conspirators says, “everyone can see that this settlement is pointless and silly” (491). Another told Ofeig, “Well might you pat yourself on the back! No one man can ever have taken the wind out of the sails of so many chieftains” (492).

Ofeig’s counsel of moving the wealth to make the confederates’ demands seem silly and unreasonable and put their status and honor into question. The potential shame of the court case in front of the people of their districts directs them back toward a more moderate path in their relations with the people of their districts and their neighbors in the surrounding areas. Ultimately, Ofeig’s plan was to show them

that their immoderate behavior and bring them back into the fold of respectable citizens.

The Conversion of Iceland

In the late 900s CE, Christianity was on the march across northern Europe. Denmark had nominally converted in 826 CE, and Norway officially converted circa 995 CE. Although there had been Christians in Iceland even early in its history, the old gods and the new one seemed to coexist peacefully until the missionaries began arriving. During this time, Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvason began a campaign to Christianize Iceland. Rather than helping his cause, the missionaries he sent were disrespectful to the traditional culture and often violent.

The conversion of Iceland offers a glimpse into *hóf* in a recorded historical case. There are several sources which recount the Icelandic conversion to Christianity. *Njal's Saga* contains an account of the conversion and dates it to the year 1000 CE, but the most convincing source is Ari Þorgilsson's account in the *Íslendingabók*, which was written a mere sixty-seven years after the conversion. Ari interviewed living witnesses when composing his historical treatise. Byock traces Ari's family history as well as his educational history to build reliability in Ari's account.

He [Ari] was brought up at Haukadalsr by Hall Thorarinsson, who lived to the age of ninety-four and who remembered being baptized as a child by the missionary Thanbrand. He was also the student of Teit Isleifsson. Teit was the son of Iceland's first bishop, Isleif, who was the son of Gizur the White, a participant in the events of the conversion. (Byock, *Viking Age* 298)

Ari's attempt to use first-hand accounts helps develop a clear sense of the events of the time.

The adoption of Christianity started with more conflict than conversion. Iceland had always had a Christian population. The *Landnamabók* mentions a few settlers being Christian in the early days, but it seems that they got along well enough with their neighbors until missionaries arrived and began a campaign to convert the Icelanders. Thorvald Konradsson the Far-Traveller's early attempt ended with two pagans dead and the start of the conflict between pagans and Christians.

This minor conflict remained simmering, but not openly hostile until Olaf Trygvason became the King of Norway. He began a systematic effort to convert the pagans in the North Atlantic. At first, Olaf sent Stefnir Thorgilsson, who was more criminal than Christian. He destroyed public images and pagan temples; Since this went against established law, Stefnir ran afoul of the public sentiment. Ferguson notes that "it is some indication of their alarm at Christianity's intolerant nature that, in a direct response to Stefnir's activities, that Icelanders now turned to the law to discourage the fanaticism of the followers of that religion" (300). The Icelanders had been living in peaceful coexistence with Christians for over a hundred years at this point. Yet the "muscular brand of Christianity" (Ferguson 300) caused the Icelandic people to view the new type of Christianity as unreasonable. Stefnir's actions were viewed as *óhóf*, a clear and unreasonable attacks against the beliefs of people who had not wronged him, and as such, legal action was needed. Eventually, he was outlawed. His public display of unreasonableness by publicly

harming others' property showed him to be *ójafn*, unreasonable, and he needed to be removed from the civic body. At the *Alþing*, he was branded an outlaw, and families were asked to prosecute Christians in their ranks, the kin-shaming (*frændaskömm*). The historical and rhetorical act to make a reasonable law to stop the tension and violence occurring with the missionary failed horribly. A move intended to keep the peace, only inflamed the Christian King of Norway. Olaf was not deterred. He sent another missionary named Thangbrand, who was successful in converting in Norway and the Faroe Islands. Thangbrand did convert a few prominent Icelandic *goði*, but he killed several people who wouldn't convert and was forced out of the country and back to Norway and Olaf's court.

Olaf Tryggvason, angry that his multiple attempts to convert the Icelanders had failed, responded by placing an embargo on Iceland. He wouldn't let trading occur between Icelandic merchants and continental Europe. Since Norway was Iceland's main trading partner, this potentially would cripple the Icelandic economy which was fragile to begin with. Faced with increasing animosity among Christians and pagans, and with a threat of economic and military action from Norway, Iceland's biggest trading partner, Iceland seemed primed for massive social upheaval.

At the *Alþing* the following year, things came to a head. Christians and pagans skirmished and threatened to plunge the court and legislative process into chaos. Charges were brought against both sides. Thorgeir Thorkelsson was elected the Lawspeaker for the court to hear the case. Thorgeir was accepted by both sides

since he was a pagan and a follower of the old gods, but he was friendly with Christians and had several Christians in his extended family.

So instead of following through with violence and conversion by the sword, the Icelanders followed their primary rhetorical stance and acted with *hóf* to try and find a peaceful settlement to the dilemma. Both sides pleaded their cases before the court. Afterwards, Thorgeir went into seclusion for a few days as he weighed his decision. On one hand, he needed to honor the gods of his forefathers and the history of his people. On the other hand, he needed to appease the Norwegian king and make sure the Christians would lift the embargo and not invade. When he returned to the court, he summoned both sides and made them swear publicly that they would abide by his decision. The *Kristni Saga* reports that when Thorgeir appeared he spoke the following:

And I think it reasonable not to allow those to decide who are most contentious, and offer as compromise therefore among them that each side has points in its favor, but we all must have one law and a single faith, because as it will be agreed: if we dissolve the law, we break the peace. (qtd in Gíslason 242)

Another version is related in the *Íslendingabók*, Ari writes of Thorgeir's decision.

Then it was made law that all people should become Christian and those who here in the land were yet unbaptized should be baptized; but as concerns the exposure of infants, the old laws should stand, as should those pertaining to the eating of horseflesh. If they wished, people might sacrifice to the old gods in private, but it would be lesser outlawry if this practice were verified by witnesses. (qtd. In Byock, *Viking Age* 300)

From these examples, it is clear that Thorgeir was trying to develop a response that all parties would find equitable. He was relying on a position of reasonableness in that each side would uphold their oaths and abide by the decision, and he was willing to provide compromise. Thorgeir allowed people the worship of

the old gods in the privacy of their own homes while having a clear façade of Christianity in the public sphere.

Anders Winroth suggests that the conversion was more pronounced immediately. “The Christian convert must ‘put off the old self’ (Ephesians 4:22), including the Norse open pantheon of gods and any ritual or custom deemed pagan, and ‘put on the new self’ (4:24),” yet Byock suggests that the conversion took place in slower implements, “Christianity, coming peacefully to Iceland in 999 or 1000 (CE), did not uproot the established rural culture” (*Feud* 30). I favor a more measured spread of Christianity since it makes more sense from the rhetoric of reasonableness, which would suggest that the civic fabric would have needed more time to adjust to the new religion.

When Thorgeir proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the land, he doomed paganism in Iceland—although he probably did not realize it at the time. He was attempting to make a reasonable solution to the conflict, yet when we consider that this society was a shame culture, then it becomes clear that paganism couldn’t survive. With shame being a public policy, the accepted public form of religious consumption would be Christianity. Even if a person worshipped the old gods in private, they would have to adopt a public Christian persona. Facing such a public scrutiny, and with a person’s honor and reputation in the balance, Christianity would eventually force out pagan belief just through public scrutiny. This couldn’t have happened quickly. There would have been a slow attrition of pagans as the public rhetoric of Christianity became the religion of the land. In the *Íslendingabók*,

Ari himself suggests a slower timeline as well. “But a few years later this heathen custom was abolished, as were the others” (qtd. in Byock, *Viking Age* 300).

These four case examples above relate to the seriousness in which the medieval Scandinavians viewed *hóf* as a legal rhetorical position. With the burden of potential violence erupting and destroying the civic fabric, these arbitrators and lawspeakers needed to strike a balance between redressing a legal wrong as outlined in their law codes, and yet allowing the perpetrator to save face with the community. Unless the crime was so egregious that it demanded full outlawry, the judgment had to be reasonable enough to acknowledge the problem, but not enough to harbor ill-will between the parties involved.

The examples of *Njal's Saga* and the *Bandamanna Saga* show the importance of sound legal protections for people in legal disputes. The examples from these sagas show the problems if men of power try to derail the legal process for their own ends. If Flosi had accepted Njal's generous offer of payment, then the hostilities could have been averted. Similarly, the chieftains who tried to illegally seize Odd's property in *Bandamanna Saga* tried to unjustly use the law for nefarious purposes. What the reader should take from these is that the law should be defended by good men of character who want to preserve the peace.

The historical example of the conversion shows the good will of the law in action. Thorgeir had every reason to side with the pagans, but he saw the bigger picture of society, and the potential threat if he did choose his own beliefs. The conversion was a reasonable compromise between two competing systems, yet he didn't disenfranchise the pagan believers. He allowed them the right to still worship

in the old ways privately. Both sides saved face, violence was averted, and the conversion, for the most part, was done peacefully in the traditional Icelandic way of law. Both sides exhibited good will with the judgment.

Finally, in the example in *Ljósvetninga Saga*, we see the problems that arise when an unreasonable man comes into power, who won't compromise, and who won't abide by legal decisions. His lack of regard for the law drags the district into conflict for a couple of generations. Only with the work of reasonable arbitrators is the conflict able to come to an end. Yet Gudmund's example of *óhóf*, his unreasonableness, acts as a warning to the audience of the danger of such a stance. His rhetorical position of stubbornness endangered the entire district, disrupting civil society as well as the legal system over all of Iceland.

Towards A Nordic Legal Rhetoric

In trying to piece together a forensic rhetoric for the Vikings, it has been necessary to build an inductive case. The evidence is scattered throughout the sagas and the histories, but some threads run through these works which will allow some preliminary conclusions about the Vikings and their legalistic rhetoric.

First of all, the Vikings held the letter of the law in high regard. The evidence of this is shown in their formulaic responses, and their primacy of perfection of those formulae in the court pleadings. The Icelandic courts valued the precedents of the previous law, and the court depended on knowing the previously established law and what the public valued. The Vikings valued a good memory, very much like in any oral culture. They did not try to create a legal discourse outside of a proscribed set of

phrases. Since the Vikings were a warrior culture, and a mixed an oral and probably functionally literate culture throughout the times the sagas take place, the idea of a man giving his word was important and binding, not only in oath-giving, but in legal discourse as well. The Vikings delighted in cunningly pleaded cases, and as such, the one-upmanship of the court proceedings in the sagas are often quite enjoyable for the reader—as lawyers finds obscure points to best their rivals on. But the law gives certain parameters that should not be breached.

The Viking common idea of support in a legal dispute ultimately came down to might makes right. The first step in executing a case usually involved gathering warriors to support your case before the Lawspeaker at the Law Rock. For the Viking lawyer, the *ethos* and *pathos* of the crowd was determined before they ever uttered a word in the case. The burden, and sometimes dilemma, of friendship and kinship are often more to the point of the cases shown in the sagas. However, these points resonated with the readers of the sagas because these dilemmas were ever present in their society, and the fragile thread of law versus violence was always present. Yet the courts and the arbitrators favored reasonable settlements that saved face and preserved honor in the public eye.

From the evidence in the sagas, the Vikings had a limited set of rhetorical devices they applied in court. Most prominently, the Icelandic lawyers seemed to use a rhetoric based on oaths, set phrases, and testimony. They also had a type of *phronesis*²¹ that was based in the use of their common-sense reasonableness (*hóð*), which is ever present in the *Hávamál*,²² and ultimately influenced the laws that were collected in the *Grágás*.²³

Notes:

1. *The Oxford English Dictionary* has an interesting discussion and listing of the history and usage of the English word “law” and its derivative forms. E.V. Gordon’s *An Introduction to Old Norse*. Oxford UP, 1990 and Jesse Byock’s *Viking Language 1* and *Viking Language 2* were extremely helpful in researching the language for this chapter.
2. The thorn (þ) in Old Norse represented a modern unvoiced English “th” sound.
3. Among the ethnic groups settling Iceland were not only Norwegians, but Irish slaves, a few Danes, and some relatives of original settlers from Viking Age colonies in the North Atlantic. For a broader discussion, see Ebensdóttir ““Ancient Genomes from Iceland Reveal the Making of a Human Population” and deCode Genetics “The Majority of Icelandic Female Settlers Came from the British Isles.”
4. There are two major divisions with sagas. There are the Family Sagas, which recount early stories of the settlement and the dealings of the Icelanders; and the Sturlunga sagas, which trace the history of the Sturlung family. See Appendix B.
5. See Jones, *History of the Vikings*, 282, where he describes the *goði* as a secular priest.
6. For a more in-depth discussion of the *goði*-thingman relationship, see Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, 118-141.
7. Ari Thorgilsson, the famous Icelandic historian (1067-1148), gives examples of the Viking legal mind and the idea of *hóf* in dealing with legal matters in the *The Book of the Icelanders*.
8. See *Njal’s Saga*. Translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, pp. 290-323.
9. See *Njal’s Saga*. Translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, pp. 291.
10. This is an example of a door-court from *Eyrbyggja Saga* Translated by Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards, pp. 169-170.
- 11 For further discussion, see William Ian Miller’s *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*, pp. 227.
12. *Progymnasmata* were rhetorical exercises used throughout the Greek and Roman worlds to train students in the use of rhetorical device. Perhaps the two most

famous works of *progymnasmata* are the works of Aphthonius the Greek and his teacher Libanius.

13. For further details, see Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George Kennedy, Oxford UP, 1991.

14. See Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, pp. 37.

15. Cicero's *De Oratore* and *De Inventione* mention rhetoric's possible use for public peace.

16. The Futhark is a runic alphabet. Scholars believe that these runes may have migrated north from the Romans; however, Richard Leo Enos suggests that they may have come from the earlier Etruscan alphabet.

17. For a comprehensive examination of the *Grágás*, see *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*. Translated by Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins, University of Manitoba Press, 2007, and *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II*. Translated by Andrew Dennis and Peter Foote, University of Manitoba Press, 2000.

18. There is quite a bit of speculation of the origins of the term "Grey Goose" laws (*Grágás*). Some believe that it must have gotten its name from the goose quill used to compose them. While still others believe that the term is an idiom whose meaning is now lost to us.

19. Flosi reluctantly takes up the feud against Njal, but once he does, he is utterly ruthless, leading up to the climactic burning of Njal.

20. In the sagas, those who were especially adept lawyers were often cited and praised by the saga authors.

21. *Phronesis* is an Ancient Greek idea about how to behave and act virtuously of character. For further discussion of this, see Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin, Hackett Pub.Co., 1985.

22. The *Hávamál*, or "The Words of the High One," are gnomic stanzas from the *Poetic Edda* supposedly given to man by Odin. These passages argue for good behavior in people by highlighting outstanding medieval Scandinavian virtues.

23. Small portions of this chapter previously appeared in "We Must Always Go Fully Armed to Court: The Viking Forensic Tradition." *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West*. Shane Borrowman et al. Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010.

Chapter Six—Conclusions and Implications

“Better to fight and fall than to live without hope”

-- *Volsunga Saga*

This dissertation has attempted to answer the questions on the role that *hóf* played in medieval Scandinavian rhetorical practices. Chapters One and Two examined what practices were available in civic and legal contexts to the Norse peoples, and what were the venues for civic participation. Using a multimethod approach, I relied on Rhetorical Archaeology, Recontextualization, and Pan-Historiography to triangulate my findings for this research area. Hawhee and Olson’s Pan-Historiography allowed my research to span temporal and geographical space, letting me examine broad swaths of culture, then allowing me to focus in on representative examples to show the rhetoric in place. This movement from macrocosm to microcosm allowed me to broaden my rhetorical scope to show connections across what Judith Jesch calls “the Viking diaspora” (3). Jesch’s concerns over this scholarship helped focus my methodology in dealing with the interdisciplinarity of a multimethod approach. Jesch reflects on this type of approach:

Interdisciplinarity requires more than just a conglomeration of all possible sources for the period, and a team of specialists pooling their knowledge to achieve a grand synthesis. It also requires a more subtle understanding of the nature of the evidence and how the different sources relate or, often, do not relate to each other. While much of the available evidence is a product of the accidents of survival, there is nevertheless something about the particular mix of evidence for the period that is in itself revealing. (11)

In looking at the evidence, what survives is often important because it is probably something that is common in the culture and, therefore, the interpretations from that can be telling about the culture. Yet, there are outlier artifacts which survive, so triangulating the data among several sources creates a more complete picture of the rhetorical events I have tried to compile here.

Chapter Three examined how the macrocosm of the geography in Scandinavia and the diaspora helped solidify *hóf* as a method of civic and legal governance in the smaller settlements that were characteristic of the Viking Age. The culture of the medieval Scandinavians valued honor and worked to avoid shaming, so the civic value was placed upon reasonableness. This type of rhetorical stance made sure that villages existing with a minimal subsistence would survive the harsher climates in the winter months because cooperation and reciprocity would be needed if the group was to flourish. The landscape and the practices were similar across the breadth of the Nordic world since the culture was very similar and the language was mutually intelligible across the north, and when colonies were established, the settlers took their culture and civic habits with them. From the Volga River in modern Russia, to the Scandinavian countries to the British islands and even Greenland and the coasts of Nova Scotia, the archaeological and cultural artifacts are very consistent, allowing me to make some generalized deductions about the rhetorical practices over a large geographical span.

Chapter Four analyzed the civic rhetoric as shown in the sagas and backed up by historical and archaeological evidence. This chapter sets up the civic, functioning use of *hóf* as the major rhetorical stance in the Nordic farms and

villages. The stability *hóf* brought to public interactions assured that people dealt honorably and fairly with each other most of the time. There are, obviously, counterexamples to this. The idea of *hóf* was the ideal and used most of the time, but bad-intentioned people did practice *óhóf*, or unreasonableness, and civic unrest sometimes occurred. The idea, though, is that public praising and shaming cannot be overstated. Without strong central governments, standing armies or constabularies to regulate the peace, public accord had to be maintained to keep its citizens in line and tell the community what values were appropriate and accepted. The fear of dishonor and shame worked to curb unsavory public occurrences and keep relative peace in the community.

Praise was used in many forms to elevate the ideal. Skaldic poetry termed these paragons of virtue as *drengskapr*, idealized men of virtue, in a type of poetry called *drapa*, poems of praise, to a person of honor. These praise motifs appear in the earliest of the sagas and carry through to the latest extant manuscripts. The cultural weight they portray is serious and long lasting. Holding up certain individuals as honorable gave the skalds rhetorical power to hold up approved virtues for the community to hear in the longhouses on long winter nights.

Chapter Five explores the idea of *hóf* as it applies to legal rhetoric. The Scandinavians held legal proceedings and the rhetoric employed at their *þings* as sacred. The chapter begins with a look at the rhetorical power of place in that the *þing* sites across the medieval Nordic world. The place dictated the type of performance allowed there and who could speak at legislative and court session.

These sites were so important that wherever a colony started, they would establish a *þing*.

Iceland, in particular, is an excellent example of *þing* culture since they established several regional *þings*, and the *Alþing* served as a national legislature and court for issue deemed important across the entire country. The courts were places where legal consensus building occurred when possible. Rather than immediately resorting to violence, the courts allowed grievances to be heard publicly, and judgments were created to keep the peace and resolve disputes in the public eye. To arrange this, the assembly elected a Lawspeaker, and a set of laws that were accessible to the public.

Lawyers were trained by fosterage, and they were valued members of the society. Sagas often remark on a well-trained lawyer. These lawyers were trained through practice of mock courts in the longhouses, and through training by more experienced lawyers. Ultimately, the lawyer's job was to reach a positive judgment for the client if an arbitrated conciliation couldn't be reached. The lawyers were important for reaching reasonable legal settlements in places without a strong central government or even a local constabulary.

Limitations

As with all research, this study has limitations. The main limitation is the idea of the saga as text itself. Few complete manuscripts exist of the sagas from the medieval period. Most are copies, or copies of copies attesting to earlier works, or they are reconstructed sagas based on fragmentary texts collated into a saga. This

presents problems for me looking at the actual accounts and utterances to construct the rhetorical appeals used. However, I have made the point of trusting the textual editors' work in constructing (or reconstructing) texts.

However, I need to acknowledge the uncertainty of both of the techniques for constructing texts. Both Lachmann's and Bedier's techniques have a long history since they were built out of ancient practices of Alexandria and Pergamon, and I trust the developed methods for preserving accuracy. The same problems I encountered with medieval texts are faced by other rhetoricians in both ancient and medieval practices, and those texts are accepted as correct, so I am treating the sagas used as being more or less correct while acknowledging the potential for future revisions as more texts are translated and better methods are pioneered and applied.

Implications

This dissertation opens Scandinavian studies in new directions. There is a large corpus of work on Viking Age history, which has experienced a Renaissance of late with many new texts appearing over the past five years, perhaps coinciding with the popularity of *The Vikings* television program. It created an interest and a market for Viking themed materials. However, there have been a few really interesting developments in the histories published. Judith Jesch's book *The Viking Diaspora* attempts to expand the time frame of the Viking Age, sometimes referring to it as "the long Viking Age." The main point is that Scandinavians are often categorized and labeled by outside sources. The Christian chroniclers painted the

Vikings negatively, and the English seemed to want to define the Viking Age by stating that the Viking Age began on the attack on Lindisfarne in 793 CE and ended at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, completely ignoring the fact that Viking raids had occurred before Lindisfarne and after the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Jesch extends the research to consider the Viking Age as a longer, more complex phenomenon. In that spirit, this dissertation attempted to look at the rhetorical complexities of Scandinavian discourse as a native tradition and complex in its own ways. Instead of the violent people often associated with the Nordic culture, I have attempted to show how their rhetoric was a venue for peaceful coexistence and civic authority with mechanisms to control and limit violent interactions.

This dissertation has also helped fill a gap in the literature. While scholarship has been slowly expanding to incorporate non-western rhetorics, such as Chinese and Arabic rhetorics, as well as varying cultural rhetorics, this dissertation looks to expand the conversation about western rhetoric outside the Greco-Roman tradition. The rhetoric of various other cultures subsumed in what is often referred to as the “Christian West.” I challenge the currently privileged narrative that little rhetoric occurred in the Middle Ages. Even the three genera of *Ars praedicandi*, *Ars poetriae*, and *Ars dictaminis* mapped out by James J. Murphy are challenged by showing rhetorical traditions beyond these. Even in his genera there is nuance he doesn’t take into account. For instance, were preaching rhetorics different in various religious orders? He views the genera in fairly generalized terms.

In exploring *hóf* as a rhetorical stance in medieval Scandinavian rhetoric, I am expanding the conversation to “map the silences” as Cheryl Glenn did for women

written out of the history of rhetoric. She expanded the focus of women in the history of rhetoric by pointing out the women who were in the history of rhetoric but willfully ignored. The rhetoric shown in the sagas and legal texts provide clear evidence of rhetoric used in the medieval north. The Scandinavians' use of a rhetoric of reasonableness describes a native tradition which is outside of traditionally accepted rhetoric. This expansion, I hope, will lead to further research in marginalized groups in Europe during the medieval period.

Possibilities for Future Research

I consider this dissertation as an introductory foray into the study of medieval Scandinavian rhetoric, but there is still so much work to be done. Earlier works discussing rhetoric in the medieval Nordic countries focused on the *Ars poetriae* and deal mostly with meter and scansion of skaldic poetry. This is clearly a rhetorical study, but it is a very small slice of possible rhetorical activity, and it doesn't take into account the largest corpus of Old Norse literature, the sagas—nor does it take into account any of the written laws in Scandinavia. This dissertation opens up future research of saga civic and legal rhetoric.

As such, there are many potential elements in Old Norse society that can be pursued for their rhetorical importance. Histories concerning women have been written by major figures in the field, Judith Jesch, Jenny Jochens, and more recently Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. These works catalogue women's roles and the history of Scandinavia, but feminist rhetorical work needs to be done. Several suspect studies of women "Vikings" and the idea of women warriors have been suggested

recently, but a strong feminist methodology looking at the gendered roles of women would help clarify the actual work of women beyond sensationalized headlines. The sagas offer tantalizing clues, and a major research project would help clarify women in the Nordic rhetorical tradition.

This dissertation research is set in a book culture of manuscripts written down in Old Norse using a modified Latin alphabet. However, the Scandinavians had runes long before they adapted the Latin alphabet to their vernacular language. Runes first appear in the 2nd century CE, and Scandinavia has more than 3,000 stones, rune sticks, and various other artifacts to investigate rhetorically. The runes and runestones have been studied in a variety of scholarship, but the rhetoric and the reception of these runes have not been studied. Rich Enos's *Rhetorical Archaeology* seems exceptionally appropriate to interrogate the epigraphy of runestones and their literal and figurative rhetorical weight.

Another area I believe will need to be investigated is the material rhetorics of medieval Scandinavia. The material culture will be able to further inform scholars of the life and society of the medieval Scandinavians. As I worked on the dissertation, I continually encountered material rhetorics in manuscripts, and how these "communities of practice" (Wegner-Trayner) help in understanding how the material rhetoric is applicable to medieval Scandinavian culture and craftsmanship.

One of the first I ran across was manuscript production. Manufacturing medieval manuscripts required a concerted effort over many months. First calves needed to be killed and the skin cured and stretched by skilled workmen. After that they needed to be cut into page-sized sheets. Then they were given to scribes, which

in Scandinavia were both clerical and lay scribes. The books were written by multiple scribes—some wrote, others put in rubrication, while others illuminated chapter letters. Besides that, inks needed to be made, which was a long process and expensive, and varied depending on the part of Scandinavia they were made in. While inks could be purchased, they were very expensive, so Icelandic saga manuscripts often have few colors compared to religious manuscripts on the continent.

Material rhetorics occur on the farmsteads as well. The making of farm tools, weapons, and foodstuffs, such as skýrr, required a group effort. These processes help delineate the lives of the farmers, and they can show the craft and rhetorical skills of rural peoples. The material persuasion that occur in the daily running of the small farmsteads in Scandinavia can further help us make sense of their lifestyle.

The other major scene of material rhetorics I encountered was is their ship-building technology. Their diaspora and trading empire needed superior ships, and the construction techniques in the community offers a venue for examining their rhetorics beyond the violent image of the Viking Dragon ships.

Skilled craftsmen required an integrated effort of a large group of men to build a longship. To build the ship, the right kinds of trees needed to be cut, split in the right ways, nails needed to be made, boards bent and attached. The process took several months with an entire team working every day on it. Besides that aspect, rope needed to be made. Bark rope made from linden trees took several months of constant processing to make. In Iceland where linden trees were lacking, they used horsehair from manes and tails to create rope for ships. Farmers and rope makers

had to work in conjunction to harvest the horsehair at the right times. And then, of course, sails needed to be made—clothmaking, sewing, and hanging the sail.

The main point in all these activities is that they needed to be completed with a sense of cooperation and reasonableness of purpose. These people needed to rely on each other to complete these crafts, to create and maintain their society. These crafts are persuasive in that they require communicative tasks and are determined by their materiality.

This dissertation has interrogated *hóf* as the main rhetorical stance in both civic and legal rhetoric in medieval Scandinavia. This examination of a native rhetorical practice opens further research into the rhetorical practice of not just the medieval north, but for other marginalized cultures in medieval Europe. There is still a lot of rich rhetorical research to do as the boundaries of the discipline expand.

REFERENCES

- Abram, Christopher. "Modeling Religious Experience in Old Norse Conversion Narratives: The Case of Óláfr Tryggvason and Hallfreðr Vandræðaskáld." *Speculum*, vol. 90, no. 1, Jan. 2015, pp. 114-157. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43577274. Accessed 7 Jul. 2019.
- Adam of Bremen. *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 20 (Winter), 1991-1192, pp. 5-32.
- Allen, Judson Boyce. Review of *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* by James J. Murphy. *Speculum*, vol. 52, no. 2, Apr. 1977, pp. 411-414. *JSTOR* <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/pdf/2850550.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A768c33c8f0fa02d0650f4e57f808f398>. Accessed 31 Jan. 2018.
- Anderson, Sarah M., and Karen Swenson, eds. *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*. Routledge, 2002.
- Andersson, Theodore M. "The King of Iceland." *Speculum*, vol. 74, no. 4, Oct. 1999, pp. 923-934. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2886968. Accessed 7 Jul. 2019.
- . *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins: A Historical Survey*. Yale UP, 1964.
- Andersson, Theodore M., and William Ian Miller. *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland: "Ljosvetninga Saga" and "Valla-Ljots Saga."* Stanford UP, 1989.
- Antonsen, Elmer H. "The Runes: The Earliest Germanic Writing System." *The Origins of Writing*, edited by Wayne M. Senner, U of Nebraska P, 1989, pp. 137-158.
- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George Kennedy, Oxford UP, 1991.
- Ballif, Michelle, ed. *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*. Southern Illinois UP, 2013.
- Barilli, Renato. *Rhetoric*. Translated by Giuliana Menozzi. U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Beowulf*. Translated by Seamus Heaney, Norton, 2000.
- The Book of Settlements*. Translated by Herman Pálsson and Paul Edwards. Winnipeg, 1972.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge UP, 1977.
- Borrowman, Shane, et al. (Eds.) *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West*. Cambridge Scholars P, 2010.
- Brownworth, Lars. *The Sea Wolves: A History of the Vikings*. Crux P, 2014.
- Byock, Jesse L. *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*. University of California Press, 1993.
- . "The Icelandic Althing: Dawn of Parliamentary Democracy." *Heritage and Identity: Shaping the Nations of the North*, ed. J. M. Fladmark. The Heyerdahl Institute and Robert Gordon University. Donhead, 2002, pp. 1-18.
- . *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power*. University of California Press, 1988.
- . "The Sagas and the Twenty First Century." *In Honor of Franz Bäuml*, eds. Ursula Schaefer and Edda Spielman. Dresden, 2001, pp. 71-84.
- . "Saga Form, Oral Prehistory, and the Icelandic Social Context." *New Literary History*, vol. 16, 1984-85, pp. 153-173.
- . *Viking Age Iceland*. Penguin, 2001.
- . *Viking Language 1*. Jules William P, 2013.
- Carlquist, Jonas. "The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts III: Old Swedish," *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, edited by Oskar Bandle et al., Mouton De Gruyter, 2002, pp. 808-816.
- Camargo, Martin. "Rhetoric." *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*. Ed. David L. Wagner. Indiana UP, 1983.
- Clark, George. "The Hero and The Theme." *A Beowulf Handbook*. Edited by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, U of Nebraska P, 1998. pp. 271-291.
- Clements, Jonathan. *The Vikings: The Last Pagans or the First Modern Europeans*. Running Press, 2005.
- Colman, Rebecca V. "Reason and Unreason in Early Medieval Law." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1974, pp. 571-91.
- Conley, Thomas M. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. U of Chicago P, 1990.

- . "Topics of Vituperation: Some Commonplaces of 4th Century Oratory." *Philosophia Antiqua, Influences on Peripatetic Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of William W. Fortenbaugh*, Edited by David C. Mirhady, Brill Online, 2007, pp. 231-238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004156685.i-286.54>. Accessed 7 July 2019.
- Crowley, Sharon. "Let Me Get This Straight." *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*. Edited by Victor Vitanza. Southern Illinois UP, 1994, pp. 128-38.
- Driscoll, Matthew J. "Introduction to Manuscript Studies." Summer School in Scandinavian Manuscript Studies, 12 Aug. 2019. University of Copenhagen. Lecture.
- . "The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New." *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, Edited by Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, UP of Southern Denmark, 2010.
- Dumville, David. *The Churches of Great Britain in the First Viking Age*. Whithorn, 1997.
- Ebenesersdóttir, S. Sunna, et al. "Ancient Genomes from Iceland Reveal the Making of a Human Population." *Science*, vol. 360, no. 6392, Jun. 2018, pp. 1028-1032, DOI: 10.1126/science.aar2625. Accessed 5 June 2018.
- Egil's Saga. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Bernard Scudder. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin Books, 2000.
- Enos, Richard Leo. "The Archaeology of Women in Rhetoric: Rhetorical Sequencing as a Research Method for Historical Studies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol.32, no. 1, Winter 2002, pp. 65-79.
- . "Rhetorical Archaeology: Established Resources, Methodological Tools, and Basic Research Methods." *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*. Ed. Andrea Lunsford. Sage, 2009, pp. 7-20. Web. Accessed 13 Feb. 2018.
- . "Scriptura Etrusca: A Prolegomenon to Roman Rhetoric." *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West*. Edited by Shane Borrowman, et al. Cambridge Scholars P., 2010. 36-61.
- . "Theory, Validity and the Historiography of Classical Rhetoric: A Discussion of Archaeological Rhetoric." *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*. Michelle Ballif ed. Southern Illinois UP, 2013, pp. 8-24.

- Eyrbyggja Saga*. Translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. Penguin, 1989.
- Fadlan, Ibn. *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North*. Penguin Classics, 2012.
- Faereyinga Saga*. Translated by Volundr Lars Agnarsson and F. York Powell. CreateSpace Independent Pub., 2012.
- Fentress, James and Chris Wickham. *Social Memory*. Blackwell, 1992.
- Ferguson, Robert. *The Vikings: A History*. Penguin, 2009.
- Fernandez-Garrido, Regla. "Stasis-theory in Judicial Speeches of Greek Novels." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 49, 2009, pp. 453-472.
- Findell, Martin. *Runes*. British Museum Press, 2014.
- The Fljotsdale Saga and The Droplaugarsons*. Translated by Eleanor Haworth and Jean Young, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1990.
- Foote, P.G. *The Viking Achievement*. Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970.
- Frederiksen, Britta Olrik. "The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts IV: Old Danish," *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, edited by Oskar Bandle et al., Mouton De Gruyter, 2002, pp.816-824.
- Friðriksdóttir, Jóhanna Katrín. *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Garipzanov, Ildar H., editor. *Conversion and Identity in the Viking Age*. Brepols Pub., 2014. Medieval Identities: Socio Cultural Spaces (Book 5).
- Gíslason, Jónas. "Acceptance of Christianity in Iceland in the Year 1000 (999)". *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, vol. 13, Jan. 1990, pp. 223-255, doi:10.30674/scripta.67178. Accessed 7 July 2019.
- Glenn, Cheryl. Glenn, Cheryl. *Classical Rhetoric Retold Re-Mapping the Territory*. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1993.
- . *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance*. Southern Illinois UP, 1997.
- Gordon, E.V. *An Introduction to Old Norse*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

- Grabill, Jeffrey T. *Writing Community Change: Designing Technologies for Citizen Action*. Hampton, 2007.
- Graham Campbell, James and Sean McGrail. *The Viking World*. Frances Lincoln, 2013. Reprint Edition.
- Gray-Rosendale, Laura, and Sibylle Gruber, eds. *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*. SUNY P, 2001.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve*. Norton, 2011.
- Gross, Alan G. "Why Hermagoras Still Matters: The Fourth Stasis and Interdisciplinarity." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2004, pp. 141-155.
- Guerra, Valeschka Martins, et al. "The Importance of Honor Concerns Across Eight Countries." *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2012, pp. 298-318. *SAGE*, DOI 10.1177/1368430212463451. Date Accessed 11 Nov. 2018.
- Gunnlaugsson, Guðvarður Már. "Manuscripts and Palaeography," *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, edited by Rory McTurk, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 245-264.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. "Cosmography." *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf, vol. 1., *Garland Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, 1993, pp. 108-109.
- . *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change*. Oxford, 1985.
- . "Defining A Society: The Icelandic Free State Between Two Worlds." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 3, 1984, pp. 235-255.
- Haugen, Odd Einar. "The Spirit of Lachmann, The Spirit of Bedier: Old Norse Textual Editing in The Electronic Age." Annual Meeting of the Viking Society, University College London, Electronic version 20 Jan. 2003, <http://www.ub.uib.no/elpub/2003/a/522001>. Accessed 7 July 2019.
- Haywood, John. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings*. Penguin, 1995.
- . *North Men: The Viking Saga, AD 793-124*. Thomas Dunne, 2016.
- Heath, Malcolm. "The Substructure of Stasis-Theory from Hermagoras to Hermogenes." *The Classical Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1994, pp. 114-129.
- Heller, Agnes. "Five Approaches to the Phenomenon of Shame." *Social Research*, vol. 70, no. 4, Winter 2003, 1015-1030.

- Hoppmann, Michael J. "A Modern Theory of Stasis." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2014, pp. 273-296. *Project Muse*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/552275>. Accessed 2 May 2018.
- Hrafinkel's Saga and Other Stories*. Translated by Hermann Pálsson. Penguin Classics, 1971.
- Jakobsson, Armann, and Sverrir Jakobsson. *The Routledge Research Companion to The Medieval Icelandic Sagas*. Routledge, 2017.
- Jesch, Judith (ed.) *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, Boydell Press, 2012.
- . *The Viking Diaspora*. Routledge, 2015.
- . *Women in the Viking Age*. Boydell, 1991.
- Jochens, Jenny. "Late and Peaceful: Iceland's Conversion Through Arbitration in 1000" *Speculum*, vol. 74, no. 3, Jul. 1999, pp. 621-655. DOI: 10.2307/2886763. Accessed 12 Jul. 2019.
- . *Women in Old Norse Society*. Cornell UP, 1995.
- Johnstone, Christopher Lyle, and Richard J. Graff. "Situating Deliberative Rhetoric in Ancient Greece: The Bouleutêrion as a Venue for Oratorical Performance" *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2018, pp. 2-88. Routledge Taylor & Francis, DOI: 10.1080/15362426.2018.1419744. Accessed 15 June 2018.
- Jones, Gwyn. *A History of the Vikings*. Revised ed. Oxford UP, 1984.
- Karlsson, Stefán. "The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts." *Saga-Book*. Vol. XXV Part 2, Viking Society for Northern Research, 1999.
- Kennedy, George. *Aristotle: On Rhetoric*. Oxford UP, 1991.
- . *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian and Secular Tradition: From Ancient to Modern Times*. 2nd ed., UNC Press, 1999.
- . Review of *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* by James J. Murphy. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1978, p. 181-185. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/40236984?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Accessed 31 Jan. 2018.

- Ker, W. P. 1855-1923. *Collected Essays of W.P. Ker*. Macmillan, 1925.
- Klaeber, F.R., editor. *Beowulf*. 3rd ed. (with first and second supplements), Heath and Co., 1950.
- Konstan, David. "Shame in Ancient Greece." *Social Research*, vol. 70, no. 4, Winter 2003, 1031-1060.
- Larson, Laurence M. *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing and the Frostathing Law*. The Lawbook Exchange Ltd., 2011.
- "Law." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Accessed 23 Jan. 2018.
- Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*. Translated by Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins, University of Manitoba Press, 2007.
- Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II*. Translated by Andrew Dennis and Peter Foote, University of Manitoba Press, 2000.
- Laxdæla Saga*, translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. Penguin, 1988.
- Lipson, Carol S., and Roberta A. Binkley, eds. *Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics*. Parlor P, 2011. Lauer Series in Rhetoric and Composition.
- . Introduction. *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*. SUNY P, 2004, pp. 1-24.
- Logan, Donald F. *The Vikings in History*. 2nd ed. Harper Collins, 1991.
- Lönnroth, Lars. "Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1970, pp. 157-189.
- Lunsford, Andrea A. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women In The Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.
- MacAmhlaidh, Brianann. Viking Age Trade Routes in North-West Europe. The map is based off figure 12 in: Richards, JD (2013) [1991] *Viking Age England*, The History Press. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Viking_Age_trade_routes_in_north-west_Europe.png. Accessed 3 Jan. 2020.
- Magnusson, Magnus. *Vikings*. Dutton, 1980.
- "The Majority of Icelandic Female Settlers Came from the British Isles." *deCode Genetics*, deCode Genetics, 2001, <https://www.decode.com/the-majority-of-icelandic-female-settlers-came-from-the-british-isles/>. Accessed 14 June 2018.

- Mao, LuMing. "Writing the Other into Histories of Rhetorics: Theorizing the Art of Recontextualization." *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*. Edited by Michelle Ballif, Southern Illinois UP, 2013, pp. 41-57.
- Mehler, Natascha. "Þingvellir: A Place of Assembly and a Market?" *Journal of the North Atlantic*, vol. 8, Special Issue 2015, 69-81. *BioOne*, <http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.3721/037.002.sp806>. Accessed 18 June 2018.
- Melnikova, Elena. "How Christian Were Viking Christians?" *Ruthenica*, Suppl. 4, 2011, pp. 90–107.
- "The Millennium Approaches: 800-900." *Inside the Medieval World*, National Geographic, 2017, pp. 67-75.
- Miller, Thomas P. "Reinventing Rhetorical Traditions." *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*. Ed. Theresa Enos. Southern Illinois UP, 1993.
- Miller, Joseph M., Michael H. Prosser, and Thomas W. Benson. Eds. *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*. Indiana University Press, 1973.
- Miller, William Ian. "Avoiding Legal Judgement: The Submission of Disputes to Arbitration in Medieval Iceland." *American Journal of Legal History*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1984, pp. 95-135. *HeinOnline*, https://heinonline-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/HOL/Page?public=true&handle=hein.journals/amhist28&div=14&start_page=95&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=3&men_tab=srchresults. Accessed 13 Feb. 2019.
- . *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- . "Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid: Case Studies in the Negotiation and Classification of Exchange in Medieval Iceland." *Speculum*, vol. 61, no.1, 1986, pp. 18-50.
- . *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?: A Reading of Njal's Saga*. Oxford UP, 2014.
- Mommsen, Theodore[sic] E. "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1942, pp. 226–42.
- . *A History of Rome Under the Emperors*. Routledge, 1999.
- Murphy, James J. Foreword. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995. ix-xi.
- . *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*. U of California P, 1974.

- . ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction*. 3rd ed. Routledge, 2012.
- Nagy, Gregory. "The Library of Pergamon as a Classical Model." *Pergamon: Citadel of the Gods*, edited by H. Koester, U of Harvard P., 1998, pp. 185-232. Harvard Theological Studies 46.
- Njal's Saga*. Translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. Penguin, 1960.
- Norton-Smith, John. Review of *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* by James J. Murphy. *Medium Aevum*, vol. 47, Jan. 1978, pp. 326-327. *ProQuest*, https://search-proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/1293310746?accountid=4485&rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo. Accessed 31 Jan. 2018.
- Oskarsson, Thorir. "Rhetoric and Style." *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. Ed. Rory McTurk. Blackwell Pub. Ltd., 2005, pp. 354-71.
- Owen, Olwyn, ed. *Things in the Viking World*. Shetland Amenity Trust, 2012.
- Page, R.I. *Chronicles of the Vikings*. The British Museum, 1995.
- Pernot, Lauren. *Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise*. U of Texas P, 2015.
- . *Rhetoric in Antiquity*. Translated by W.E. Higgins, The Catholic U of America P, 2005.
- The Poetic Edda*. Translated by Lee M. Hollander. Texas, 2001.
- The Prose Edda*. Translated by Jesse Byock. Penguin Classics, 2006.
- Pringle, Heather. "New Visions of the Vikings." *National Geographic*, vol. 231, no.3, March 2017, pp. 30-51.
- Rindal, Magnus. "The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts II: Old Norwegian (incl. Faroese)," *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, edited by Oskar Bandle et al., Mouton De Gruyter, 2002, pp. 801-808.
- Roesdahl, Else. *The Vikings*. Penguin, 1998.
- Roesdahl, Else, and David M. Wilson, editors. *From Viking to Crusader: Scandinavia and Europe 800-1200*, Rizzoli, 1992.

- Ross, Margaret Clunies. *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*. D.S. Brewer, 2005.
- . *The Cambridge Introduction to The Old Norse-Icelandic Sagas*. Cambridge, 2010.
- The Saga of Cormac the Skald*. Translated by W.G. Collingwood and J. Stefansson, https://sagadb.org/kormaks_saga.en, Accessed 15 Mar. 2019.
- The Saga of Gisli the Outlaw*. Translated by G.W. Dasent, https://sagadb.org/files/pdf/gisla_saga_surrsonar.en.pdf, Accessed 15 Mar. 2019.
- The Saga of Grettir the Strong*. Translated by Ornólfur Thorsson and Bernard Scudder, Penguin, 2005.
- The Saga of Gunnlaug Snake-Tongue. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Katrina C. Attwood. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin, 2000.
- The Saga of Gunnlaugur Snake's Tongue*. Translated by E. Paul Durrenberger and Dorothy Durrenberger, Associated UP, 1992.
- The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*. Translated by Jesse L. Byock, Penguin, 1998.
- The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Andrew Wawn. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin, 2000.
- Sanmark, Alexandra. "The Case of the Greenlandic Assembly Sites." *Journal of the North Atlantic*, Special Volume 2, Oct. 2009, pp. 178- 192, <https://doi.org/10.3721/037.002.s218>. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- . *Power and Conversion— A Comparative Study of Christianization in Scandinavia. Occasional Papers in Archaeology 34*. Uppsala, 2004.
- . *Viking Law and Order: Places and Rituals of Assembly in the Medieval North*. Edinburgh UP, 2017.
- Sawyer, Peter. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. Oxford UP, 2001.
- Saxo Grammaticus. *The History of the Danes*. Boye6 Publishing, 1979.
- Schön, Ebbe. *Asa-Tors Hammare, Gudar Och Jättar i Tro Och tradition*. Fält & Hässler, 2004.

- Sheard, Cynthia Miecznikowski. "The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric." *College English* vol. 58, no. 7, Nov., 1996, pp. 765-794. *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/378414?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Accessed 28 Dec. 2018.
- Short, William R. *Icelanders in the Viking Age*. McFarland, 2010.
- Shweder, Richard A. "Toward a Deep Cultural Psychology of Shame." *Social Research*, vol. 70, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 1109-1130.
- Sigurðsson, Gísli. *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, Center for Hellenic Studies, 2004. Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (Book 2).
- Sigurðsson, Jón Viðar. *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, C. 900-1300*. Cornell UP, 2017. eBook Comprehensive Academic Collection (*EBSCOhost*), *EBSCOhost*, unr.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e025xna&AN=1496753&site=ehost-live&scope=site. Accessed 12 Feb. 2019.
- Smith, Adam. "The Limitations of Doxa: Agency and Subjectivity from an Archaeological Point of View." *Journal of Social Archaeology*, vol. 1 no. 2, 2001, pp.155-171. JSTOR doi:10.1177/146960530100100201. Accessed 9 Feb. 2019.
- Sturluson, Snorri. *The Prose Edda: Tales from Norse Mythology*. Translated by Jean I. Young. U of California P, 1966.
- Somerville, Angus A. and R. Andrew McDonald. *The Vikings and Their Age*. U of Toronto P, 2013. Companions to Medieval Studies Series.
- Sørensen, Preben Meulengracht. *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*. Translated by Joan Turville-Petre. Odense UP, 1983.
- Stern, Charlotte. Review of *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* by James J. Murphy. *Romance Philology*, vol. 30, no. 4, May 1, 1977, pp. 663-665. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/1296909168/315CC2DD36B84CA5PQ/2?accountid=4485>. Accessed 31 Jan. 2018.
- The Story of the Heath Slayings: Heidarviga Saga*. Translated by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson. Kessinger Publishing, 2010.

- Straumsheim, Carl Frederik Schou. "Peacemaking in the Middle Ages." *Science Nordic, The Centre for Advanced Study (CAS)*, 2018, sciencenordic.com. Accessed 13 July 2018.
- Strecker, Ivo, and Stephen Tyler. *Culture and Rhetoric*. Berghahn Books, 2012.
- Svensson, Lars. "Palaeography," *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Phillip Pulsiano et al., Routledge, 1993, pp. 491-496.
- Tacitus. *Agricola and Germania*. Penguin Classics, 2012.
- Thorgilsson, Ari. *The Book of the Icelanders/The Story of the Conversion*. Translated by Siân Grønlie, University College London, 2006. Viking Society for Northern Research.
- Tómasson, Sverrir. "The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts I: Old Icelandic." *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, edited by Oskar Bandle et al., Mouton De Gruyter, 2002, pp. 793-801.
- "The Transition to Christianity." *National Museet*, National Museet, <https://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/religion-magic-death-and-rituals/the-transition-to-christianity/>. Accessed 21 June 2018.
- Van Duesen, Natalie M. "Sworn Sisterhood? On the (Near-) Absence of Female Friendship from the Íslendingasögur," *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 86, no. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 52-71.
- Vardoulakis, Dimitris. "Stasis: Notes Towards Agonist Democracy." *Theory and Event*, vol. 20, no. 3, July 2017, pp. 699-725. *Project Muse*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/552275>. Accessed 2 May 2018.
- Vickers, Brian. *In Defence of Rhetoric*. Clarendon P, 1988.
- Walker, Jeffrey. *The Genuine Teachers of This Art*. U of South Carolina P, 2011.
- . *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Wegner-Trayner, Etienne and Beverly. *Introduction to Communities of Practice*. *WordPress*, 2015, <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>. Accessed 30 August 2019.
- White, Hayden. "Historicism, History, and the Figurative Imagination." *History and Theory*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1975, pp. 48-67. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2504665. Accessed 12 Feb. 2019.

White, James Boyd. "Rhetoric and Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life." *Heracles' Bow: Essays on the Rhetoric and Poetics of the Law*. U of Wisconsin P, 1985, pp. 28-48.

---. "Reading Law and Reading Literature: Law as Language." *Heracles' Bow: Essays on the Rhetoric and Poetics of the Law*. U of Wisconsin P, 1985, pp. 77-106.

Williams, Gareth, Peter Pentz, and Matthias Wemhoff, editors. *Vikings: Life and Legends*. Cornell UP, 2014.

Winroth, Anders. *The Age of the Vikings*. Princeton, 2014.

---. *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe*. Yale UP, 2012.

Wolf, Kirsten. *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. Sterling, 2013.

Woods, Marjorie Curry. *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria Nova across Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. Ohio State UP, 2010.

"A World Divided: 800-900." *Inside the Medieval World*, National Geographic, 2017, pp. 57-65.

APPENDIX A
MANUSCRIPTS

These manuscripts of sagas are based on translations mostly from the held collections of the The Arnamagnæan Institute, jointly held by the University of Copenhagen and the University of Iceland. The denotation of AM shows the holding of the manuscript (for example AM= Arnamagnæan; Lbs= Landsbókasafn Íslands; GKS= Codex Regius, or Konungsbók) followed by the type of manuscript, folio, quarto, octavo, etc. Many of these manuscripts can be found digitalized online at handrit.is.

1. *Egil's Saga. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Bernard Scudder. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin Books, 2000. Taken from the *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.).

2. *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. Penguin, 1989. Taken from three manuscript groups, (a) AM 448 4to, AM 442 4to. (b) AM 162 E fol. and a paper transcript AM 446 4to., and (c) AM 445 B 4to, and paper transcripts AM 445 A 4to; Lbs 982 4to, and 1489 4to.

3. *Faereyinga Saga*. Translated by Volundr Lars Agnarsson and F. York Powell. CreateSpace Independent Pub., 2012. Compiled from tales of the Faroes contained in AM 62 fol.; copies of *Olaf's Saga* AM 53 fol., AM 54 fol. and AM 61 fol.; and GkS 1005 fol.

4. *The Fljotsdale Saga and The Droplaugarsons*. Translated by Eleanor Haworth and Jean Young, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1990. These overlapping sagas are compiled from AM 132 fol. AM 946 a-e 4to, and Lbs 718 4to.

5. *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*. Translated by Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins, University of Manitoba Press, 2007. *The Grágás* text is preserved in two manuscripts the *Codex Regius* Gks 1157 fol., and *Staðarhólsbók* AM 120 4to.

6. *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás II*. Translated by Andrew Dennis and Peter Foote, University of Manitoba Press, 2000. *The Grágás* text is preserved in two manuscripts the *Codex Regius* Gks 1157 fol., and *Staðarhólsbók* AM 120 4to.

7. *Laxdæla Saga*, translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. Penguin, 1988. The earliest edition occurs in the *Möðruvallabók*, AM 132 fol. Additionally there are five fragments which contain pieces of the saga.

8. *Njal's Saga*. Translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. Penguin, 1960. *Njal's Saga* is one of the most widely copied manuscripts, at least 60 copies or fragments exist, but the scribes write very conservatively, preserving similarities in manuscripts. Two notable manuscripts are AM 468 4to and AM 132 fol.

9. *The Poetic Edda*. Translated by Lee M. Hollander. Texas, 2001. Compiled mainly from the *Codex Regius*, GKS 2365 4to, but with inclusions of materials from AM 748 I 4to.

10. *The Prose Edda*. Translated by Jesse Byock. Penguin Classics, 2006. *The Prose Edda* is contained in four manuscripts, yet no manuscript contains a complete *Edda*, DG 11 fol., CKS 2367 4to, AM 242 fol., MSS 1374.
11. *The Saga of Cormac the Skald*. Translated by W.G. Collingwood and J. Stefansson, https://sagadb.org/kormaks_saga.en, Accessed 15 Mar. 2019. The only complete version of the manuscript is found in the *Möðruvallabók* AM 132 fol.
12. *The Saga of Gisli the Outlaw*. Translated by G.W. Dasent, https://sagadb.org/files/pdf/gisla_saga_surssonar.en.pdf, Accessed 15 Mar. 2019. Three manuscripts contain portions of the saga: a fragmentary version, AM 445 c I 4to; a short version appears in *Eggertsbók*, AM 556a 4to; and a longer version AM 149 fol.
13. *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*. Translated by Ornólfur Thorsson and Bernard Scudder, Penguin, 2005. This version of *Grettir* was mainly based on AM 551 4to.
14. *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Katrina C. Attwood. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin, 2000. This saga is taken from *Holm Perg*. 18 4to, held in Stockholm Konunglega bókasafníð.
15. *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*. Translated by Jesse L. Byock, Penguin, 1998. This version is based on AM 285 4to, but AM 12 c. fol. contains a version as well.
16. *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal. The Saga of the Icelanders*. Translated by Andrew Wawn. Edited by Jane Smiley. Penguin, 2000. Based on manuscripts AM 559 4to, and AM 138 fol.
17. *The Story of the Heath Slayings: Heidarviga Saga*. Translated by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson. Kessinger Publishing, 2010. This is an extremely old manuscript, and its provenance is problematic. It survived in only 12 manuscript leaves. It was housed in Copenhagen and translated, but the Fire of Copenhagen in 1728 destroyed the originals and the translations. It was reconstructed from notes and memories of the Icelandic translator Jón Grunnvíkingur.
18. Thorgilsson, Ari. *The Book of the Icelanders/The Story of the Conversion*. Translated by Siân Grønlie, University College London, 2006. Viking Society for Northern Research. The *Íslendingabók* is preserved in two copied manuscripts AM 113 a fol. and AM 113 b fol.

APPENDIX B
MAJOR TEXTS AND SAGAS

Major Family Sagas

1. *Egil's Saga* (*Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*)
2. *Hen-Thorir's Saga* (*Hænsa-Póris saga*)
3. *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue* (*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*)
4. *The Saga of the Slayings on the Heath* (*Heiðarviga saga*)
5. *The Saga of the People of Eyri* (*Eyrbyggja saga*)
6. *The Saga of the People of the Laxardal* (*Laxdæla saga*)
7. *Gisli Sursson's Saga* (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*)
8. *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* (*Fóstbræðra saga*)
9. *The Saga of Havard of Isafjord* (*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*)
10. *The Saga of the Confederates* (*Bandamanna saga*)
11. *Grettir's Saga* (*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*)
12. *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* (*Vatnsdæla saga*)
13. *The Saga of the People of Svarfadardal* (*Svarfdæla saga*)
14. *Field-Ljot's Saga* (*Valla-Ljóts saga*)
15. *Killer-Glum's Saga* (*Víga-Glúms saga*)
16. *The Saga of the People of Ljosvatn* (*Ljósvetninga saga*)
17. *The Saga of Reykjadal and of Killer-Skuta* (*Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skutu*)
18. *The Saga of the People of Weapon's Fjord* (*Vápnfirðinga saga*)
19. *The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Struck* (*Þorsteins þáttr strangarhöggs*)
20. *The Tale of Ale-Hood* (*Ölkofra þáttr*)
21. *The Saga of the Droplaug's Sons* (*Droplaugarsona saga*)
22. *The Saga of Hrafnkel Frey's Priest* (*Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*)
23. *Njal's Saga* (*Njáls saga*, also known as *Brenu-Njáls saga*, *The Saga of Burnt Njal*)

Sturlunga Saga (Sturlunga Saga)

- A. *The Saga of the Icelanders* (*Íslendinga saga*)
- B. *The Saga of Sturla* (*Sturlu saga*)
- C. *The Tale of Geirmund Helskin* (*Geirmundar þáttr heljarskinns*)
- D. *The Saga of Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson* (*Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*)
- E. *The Saga of Thorgils and Haflidi* (*Þorgils saga ok Haflíða*)
- F. *The Saga of Gudmund the Worthy* (*Guðmundar saga dýra*)
- G. *The Saga of the Priest Gudmund the Good* (*Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*)
- H. *The Saga of the Men of Svinfell* (*Svínfellinga saga*)
(Byock *Viking Language* 1, 68-69)

Byock draws a strong list of important writings from Iceland, of which many were used in this dissertation. Besides the sagas, *þáttr*, or short tales, were referenced. In addition to these texts, *The Grágás*, the law codes of Iceland were used to examine the laws and mindset of the Icelandic free state during the Viking Age.