

Call for Papers - Seminar

The Agents of Magic in Medieval Scandinavian Literature



Odin og Völven, by Lorenz Frølich, picture from *Den ældre Eddas Gudesange* by Karl Gjellerup (1895)

DATE: APRIL 9-10, 2021

PLACE: SORBONNE UNIVERSITY, PARIS, FRANCE

Call for Papers

Óðinn the sorcerer god, Egill Skalla-Grímsson cursing his opponents or Queen Gunnhildr charming the Icelanders passing through Norway, all share a common characteristic: they are agents of magic. The practice of magic has struck the imagination of medieval Scandinavians and its description gave birth to memorable scenes in the literature.

It is nowadays generally admitted that the medieval literary sources are part of a medieval imaginary reconstruction of the ancient and pre-Christian practice of magic. Yet, it is possible to see in these literary descriptions the reflections of medieval realities, such as the influence of pre-Christian elements on thirteenth-century Scandinavian practices (Biering 2004; Heide 2004; Dillmann 2006), the similarities with alleged shamanistic rituals (Schnurbein 2003), or the specifically Christian characteristics of several practices (Mitchell 2011; Meylan 2014).

More than the historical reality which may be perceived from these writings, we shall focus on the underlying worldview and conceptualizations of the texts written by thirteenth and fourteenth-century authors. Do the various names used to refer to magic such as *seiðr*, *ffölkyngi* or *fróðleikr* reflect different concepts or categories or are they mere synonymous? Is it possible to use them to construct a typology of the agents of magic? Do these agents play the same role and do they have the same function throughout the Old Norse corpus? For instance, what are the common traits between the völva of *Völuspá* and the one of *Eiríks saga rauða*? In several sources, magic is connected to the art of poetry; does this substantial affinity impact the way in which magic and those who practice it are portrayed in those poems? What can these works tell us about the world view of their authors, and more broadly, of their society?

The participants may present a paper regarding the following axes:

- ❖ The influence of literary genre on the representation of magic.
- ❖ The projection of medieval categories on older and pre-Christian practices.
- ❖ The interaction of pagan and Christian representations of magic.

Contributions from various perspectives could be submitted, both regarding case studies or theoretical reflections.

The proposals (no more than 500 words), in English or French, must include a brief resume (1 to 2 pages) and be sent before the **14th of September 2020** to:

seidr.seminar@gmail.com

Presentations will be twenty minutes followed by ten minutes for discussions.

Organization committee

Virginie Adam (Sorbonne Université)

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Jules Piet (Université de Strasbourg and Háskóli Íslands)

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Research team:

ARCHE - Arts, Civilisation et Histoire de l'Europe (Université de Strasbourg)

REIGENN - Représentations et Identités, Espaces Germaniques, Nordiques et Néerlandophones (Sorbonne Université)

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