PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SPACE IN OLD NORSE MYTH AND SAGA

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Russell Alexander Stepp

August 2016

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SPACE IN OLD NORSE MYTH AND SAGA

Russell Alexander Stepp, Ph. D.

Cornell University 2016

This dissertation takes an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to literature to form a new model of how the early Norse imagined and described space in their mythological cosmos and in the physical world, and how notions of physical space influenced their interactions with "the other." Given that there is no evidence for a native mapmaking tradition in Scandinavia until the conversion to Christianity and the introduction of Latin learning, this dissertation constructs a new, non-cartographic mode of imagining space, oriented on a first-person perspective of travel using what I term a *narrational map*. The model is based a corpus of texts drawn from a Classical, Medieval, Arabic, and Renaissance sources that give specific, point-by-point, instructions for travel. These accounts are oriented within a theoretical framework adapted from landscape archeology, cognitive mapping, odological space (the study of roads and routes), and anthropological accounts 20th century mapless cultures. This analysis reveals a radically different notion of space that relies on first-person experience, requires fluid concepts of space and time, and creates nebulous boundary zones between spatial locales. The dissertation argues that this spatial model extends beyond the Norse mythological cosmos and influences their perceptions of non-Norse peoples. The nebulous nature of the spatial model allows for areas of the cosmos to shift relative to each other and to symbolically increase, reduce, or overlap the distance between different kin-groups or species in the mythology. The same model applies to Norse interactions in the real world; physical and social distances between different groups are flexible and move in

relation to the type of interaction between peoples. The dissertation creates a cohesive model of the cosmos which is probabilistic, rather than deterministic, that is able to account for nebulosity and variability present in the Norse mythological cosmos. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a case study focusing on *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, and demonstrates that the cosmological model can also be applied to the physical and social world represented in the sagas.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Russell Alexander (Xan) Stepp spent his youth on the move, attending eleven different schools on four continents over the course of his thirteen years of pre-university education. In 1998 he enrolled in Brigham Young University as an Electrical Engineering major, but within a semester changed to Physics/Astronomy. Following a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Madrid, Spain, he returned to BYU and graduated with a B.S. degree in Physics/Astronomy and minors in Italian, Mathematics, and Scandinavian Studies. At the conclusion of his B.S. degree, he remained at BYU and began a M.A. degree in Comparative Studies. In 2008 he successfully defended a dissertation entitled "Poetic Terms for 'Ship' in Old Norse and Old English Poetry." He married his wife, Ashley, in the same year. He went on to complete a second M.A. in Medieval Icelandic Studies awarded by Háskoli Islands in 2009. He enrolled in the Medieval Studies Ph.D. program at Cornell University in the same year. When not engaged in writing about medieval topics, Xan can be found watching football, SCUBA diving, or caring for his collection of tropical frogs.

to my wife Ashley, who has stood my me, supported me,
and leapt with me into the unknown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There have been several people, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. I cannot offer enough thanks or praise to the three members of my Special Committee who have directed this dissertation: Thomas Dana Hill, Shawkat Toorawa, and William Sayers. All three of these men have gone out of their way, when not required to do so, in order to develop me as a scholar. Each has provided unique and valuable guidance to me for as long as I have known them. Tom has proven to be an invested, but not overbearing chair. His insistence that we meet weekly provided a forum to explore ideas on a regular basis and provided a constant forum for out-of-the-box thinking, which he always encouraged. I can only hope that I become half the mentor he has been. Shawkat is one of the most wonderful people I have ever met. He encouraged my Arabic habit, encouraged me to peruse my interests, and restrained me when I wandered too far. His feedback has been invaluable for the development of this dissertation. He has been both mentor and friend. Will has gone above and beyond to support and encourage me. His advice began before I began at Cornell when he very kindly answered numerous emails from a master's student with an interest in ships. His sacrifice continued as he has remained dedicated to my growth well into his own retirement.

I must also thank the three individuals who have served as Directors of Graduate Studies for the Program in Medieval Studies: Andy Galloway, Oren Falk, and David Powers. I have been fortunate to take classes with each one, and they are all fine scholars. They have also been vastly helpful in helping me navigate the requirements and logistics of the program. Special thanks also go out to the various centers and departments that have employed me while at Cornell: Classics, Art History, History, German Studies, Near Eastern Studies, and especially the Knight Writing Institute. Marilyn Migiel also deserves thanks for coming through for me in my hour of need.

Finally, I must thank my friend and medieval partner in crime Danielle Cudmore. We have both cut an unusual path in the field of Medieval Studies, and she has suffered my jokes and endured my complaints along the way. I will also be eternally grateful to her for her keen editing eye and her willingness to go far above and beyond the call of duty when editing this dissertation. Her input has me fix many errors that would have otherwise gone unnoticed and her academic insights have provoked several changes in this document. Without her help this dissertation would be significantly inferior to this copy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This dissertation has grown out of an organic blending of two of my great scholarly interests: Norse mythology and navigation. This dissertation takes two seemingly different aspects of human thought and combines them in such a way that enables us to better understand the mindset of the Scandinavian peoples during the Viking Age and just slightly beyond. Myth and navigation are both imaginative endeavors: myth postulates and elaborates a world beyond everyday experience and successful navigation requires that the navigator is able to imagine the complicated process of travel, both before setting out and while on the move. Both have real-world utility, but both navigation and myth exist only in the mind. Studies of Norse myth or Scandinavian navigation are nothing new, but it is my aim to demonstrate that when the two are studied in tandem the result becomes something greater than the sum of the component parts; it becomes a study in the notion of space and how people interact with the world around them.

Much of the theoretical groundwork for a study of human perception of space has been laid by anthropology and the closely related field of landscape archeology. These academic disciplines seek to understand the relationship between people and their physical environment and how the two shape each other. These theoretical models have shaped my approach to space in this dissertation, but I have also gleaned much inspiration the sub-field of psychology and neuroscience known as cognitive mapping and from my own personal experience with astronomy and overland navigation. I came to my study of Old Norse literature and culture through a winding road which includes a Bachelor of Science in Physics and Astronomy which has proven to be a great boon when conducting research for this dissertation as much of the history of astronomy is also the history of people using celestial markers as navigational aids. In my reading of the sagas and the myths of the Norse, as well as secondary scholarship written

about these texts, I noticed more and more that there seemed to be problems and discrepancies that arose as to how we describe and draw the strange landscape of the Norse cosmos, the universe bound together in the roots and branches of the great tree Yggdrasill. For years I attributed these discrepancies to the ambiguities in our sources and the difficulties that the Christian authors of our surviving mythological material had in understanding the pagan traditions that had been passed down to them. At some point, early in my graduate career, I began to wonder: What if our problem with describing the cosmos is not a problem of sources, but rather a problem of reading these sources through the critical eyes of twentieth- and twenty-first century scholars who are deeply rooted in modern ideas of space and landscape? Thus this dissertation was born.

My goal with this dissertation is to attempt to reconstruct the mode(s) in which the early Norse imagined space. I recognize the monumental difficulty involved when attempting any sort of reconstruction of how any person or people thought and imagined the world, so at best this dissertation represents a new way of understanding one aspect of the pagan and early Christian mindset in Scandinavia. It is certainly not the only way, but I believe it is compelling, and a worthy topic for a dissertation. My model has been adapted from theoretical models, as well as analysis of texts that not only describe space, but how people interacted with it. The first stage of this process involved texts from outside Scandinavia. I did this in part, to form a preliminary theoretical framework, which could then be adapted and adjusted based on extant Norse texts, and in part to create a general theoretical model that may be applicable to other parts of the world and at other times. The dissertation then moves on to refine this spatial model, and demonstrate specific Norse instances and applications of a generalized, pre-modern spatial model. From there I proceed to read Norse myth through the spatial model that I have developed and explain how

this sort of reading can help us better understand and perhaps more satisfyingly explain some of the quirks and seeming inconsistencies of the Norse mythological system.

Why myth? or rather, why did I make the decision to base my model of Norse space on mythological sources rather than on some other genre, such as the sagas? To some degree, the answer to this question is that any explanation of the spatial components of the Norse mythological cosmos is an end in itself. Beyond the desire to propose a new system for understanding the Norse mythological cosmos, mythical space is, by its very nature imaginary; it exists in the minds of those who participate in the system in one way or another. Since all mythological spaces are imaginary constructs, surviving myths grant us some ability to look into assumptions that the early Scandinavians made about space. They shaped the cosmos as they thought it *should* be, and that in turn shapes the manner in which they interact with the various spaces they encounter in their daily lives. In the end, the landscape of mythic space provides one of the best test cases for investigating the medieval Norse mindset on space, as they were free to imagine the cosmos in any possible orientation.

My approach to the mythological sources stems from my interest in navigation, and in this case in particular, the question of how the Norse were able to successfully navigate the open ocean to colonize the North Atlantic and conduct the Viking raids for which they are so well-known today. Most modern discussions of navigation that I have encountered rely on maps, either as an essential tool for navigation, or at the very least something we should try and construct and hold in our minds as we travel. So I began by asking: is a map an abstracted view of space, something that is an innate component of the human brain, or is it culturally constructed? No matter the answer to this question, we are also forced to ask: how do cultures who have left no trace of maps (physical maps, descriptions, or even passive mentions of maps),

think about moving through space? Do they do it the same way we do, or would any sort of mapping be an alien concept?

It is my hope that this dissertation will provide answers to these questions and in doing so, will provide a plausible model for the medieval Norse conception of space. While I hope that this discussion will be of great interest to scholars of Old Norse/Icelandic literature and culture, I believe that my treatment of a non-cartographic model of space will also be of interest to anyone with an interest in cartography, landscape, or navigation. In an attempt to make the remainder of the dissertation accessible to a non-specialist audience, I have decided to include a brief discussion of the sources of Norse myths in the introduction. This description is all too brief and can in no way provide a comprehensive description of the entire mythological system. I knowingly gloss over some important details scholarly discussion of Norse myth, but I refer any interested readers to the bibliography of this work for several fine primers on the pagan Norse system of beliefs.

The bulk of our knowledge of Norse myth comes from two sources, both confusingly known as *Edda*. The common practice has been to refer to these two *Eddas* by expanded, descriptive titles, so as to avoid confusion between the different texts. On one hand we have the *Prose Edda*, also known as the *Snorra Edda* after its thirteenth-century Icelandic author Snorri Sturluson, which is principally a handbook of Norse poetics written in largely in prose with poetic citations. On the other, we have the *Poetic* or *Elder Edda*[1] which contains several longer poems on mythological and heroic topics. The poems of the *Poetic Edda* are written in meters that are very similar to older forms of Germanic alliterative poetry. The majority of the poetry

[1] The Poetic Edda is also occasionally known as the Sæmundr Edda, after the eleventh-century Icelandic bishop-scholar, Sæmundr inn Fróði, who was regarded as the author of the text when it first came to light in the seventeenth century. Sæmundr's authorship of the Poetic Edda has since been discounted, but the name is still associated with the text of the Edda.

contained in the *Poetic Edda* is narrative, with a few digressions into gnomic literature, and all of the poems treat mythological or heroic topics. Nothing is known about the authorship or creation of the text of the *Poetic Edda*, and the text survives in a single manuscript. This small, unassuming text was unknown until it turned up in the seventeenth century when it was shipped to Denmark and given to the king where it acquired the name *Codex Regius* or the Icelandic equivalent, *Konungsbók*. The manuscript, which dates to approximately 1270, is a collection of mythological and heroic poems, most of which survive nowhere else.

The *Prose Edda* is widely regarded as the creation of the Icelandic scholar, author, and statesman Snorri Sturluson, and is believed to have been composed sometime around 1220. It survives in a total of seven manuscripts, none of which are complete, six of which are medieval and the seventh dates to the early seventeenth century. The text of the *Prose Edda* was not a collection of myths, but as a handbook for poets, and much of the text details the rules and forms of Old Norse poetry. Myth and mythological allusions were a key feature of Norse poetry and Snorri retells several myths in his poetic handbook. While it is impossible that Snorri had direct access to the *Konungsbók* manuscript, he clearly had access to at least some material. Several of the poetic citations that Snorri includes in his *Edda* are identical to lines of poetry found in the *Poetic Edda*. However, not all of the poems found in the *Poetic Edda* are cited in Snorri's work. So while it is clear that Snorri had access to some of the poems of the *Poetic Edda* (in oral or written form), it is much less clear what form these took when they reached him or even if he had access to the same set of poems. A small handful of poems in a similar style, meter, and content as those preserved in the *Konungsbók* manuscript, survives elsewhere. Thus it seems likely that Snorri had accessed some of the poetic works in the *Poetic Edda* in the same, or similar form as we currently have them, it is also probable that some of his sources have now been lost to us.

Snorri's *Edda* is divided into four distinctions: the general *Prologue*, the *Gylfaginning* (The tricking of Gylfi), the *Skaldskparmál* (The language of the poet's craft), and the *Háttatál* (The enumeration of poetic meters). The *Prologue* gives a euhemerized account of the creation of the pagan gods. In this prologue, Snorri declares that a group of refugees, known as the Æsir, left Troy after the Trojan War and traveled North, conquering and establishing kingdoms on the way. These great warriors and powerful sorcerers, Snorri tells us, were eventually considered gods by those who did not know the true, Christian God. *Gylfaginning* presents a systematized retelling of myth framed by the story of a King Gylfi, who travels to the home of the Æsir to discover more about them and their powers. Here he questions three mysterious people, Hár, Jafnhár, and Þriði (High, Just-as-High, and Third), who are understood to be the god Óðinn in disguise, about all things mythological. Through this interview process, we gain an idea of the nature of the Norse gods, their powers, and exploits as well as the creation and fate of the world. The final two sections of the *Prose Edda* focus principally on poetic structures and the nature of Old Norse poetry, and are less useful for the study of myth than the *Gylfaginning*. However, Snorri does occasionally deviate from his poetic discussion to retell a mythological or heroic story which related to the poetry he cites.

Beyond the material contained in the *Eddas*, there are other texts within the Old Norse corpus that can shed additional light onto the Norse mythological system. While citations from poems of the type found in the *Poetic Edda* (known quite logically as eddic poems) are found in Snorri's *Edda*, the bulk of Snorri's discussion of poetics focuses on another genre of poetry, known as skaldic poetry. Skaldic poetry adheres to a much stricter metrical structure, and unlike the eddic poems, skaldic poetry rarely deals with mythological subjects and is often much shorter. While skaldic poetry does not have the same immediate value for the study of myth as

the eddic poems, additional bits of mythological information can be gleaned from this body of poetry. While narrative poems about mythology were rarely recorded in skaldic meters, there are a few that have survived. These skaldic mythological poems help clarify details of myths found in the *Eddas* or tell stories found nowhere else. Additionally, skaldic poetry is littered with passing references to gods, heroes, monsters, and other myths. These brief mentions are not part of the narrative action of the poem, and are rarely helpful by themselves, but when studied as a whole, and supplemented with information found elsewhere, they can often reveal a bit more about the mythological system.

Passing references to pre-Christian beliefs and practices can be found throughout the prose of medieval Scandinavia. Most of these are small, and tell little beyond what we already know from the *Eddas*, but there are two prose works and an entire genre of prose that merits special mention in a discussion of mythology. The first of these, *Ynglinga Saga*, comes from Snorri Sturluson's other great work, *Heimskringla*. *Heimskringla* is a collection of sagas telling the history of the kings of Norway from prehistory down to Snorri's day. *Ynglinga Saga* is the first saga found in this collection and relates much of the same euhemerized history as told in Snorri's *Prologue* to the *Prose Edda.* In *Ynglinga Saga*, Snorri occasionally relates mythological details that are not found elsewhere.

The second work of minor importance for the study of the Norse mythological system is the *Gesta Danorum*, a Latin history of the kings of Denmark written by the Danish historian and scholar Saxo Grammaticus in the early thirteenth century. The *Gesta Danorum* is a massive, sixteen-volume history of Scandinavia from the beginning of time down to Saxo's day. The first nine books of this work treat the mythical and legendary history of Scandinavia. Saxo himself admits that much of his source material for this early period came from Icelanders who were

familiar with the old songs and stories, but Saxo has also clearly reworked much of this material for his educated, Latinate audience, frequently euhemerizing what appear to be mythological stories into tales of human heroes. Thus, while the *Gesta Danorum* is an extensive and interesting work in itself, it adds only a little to our corpus of Norse myths, and in some cases it is only through familiarity of the mythological material contained in the *Eddas* that we can recognize the myths that live under the surface of Saxo's tales.

The euhemerized stories contained in the *Ynglinga Saga* and the *Gesta Danorum* rest on a clear foundation of myth, but the relationship between myth and the *Fornaldarsögur* is somewhat more complicated. The designation of some of the Icelandic sagas as *Fornaldarsögur* is a modern one and does not seem to have been an operative mode of categorizing sagas during the Middle Ages. The term *Fornaldarsögur* literally translates to something like: "stories of the Ancient Age," but is more frequently rendered as "Legendary Sagas" in English critical writing. I address the *Fornaldarsögur* in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, and comment on some of the problems with how this genre has been understood, but at this juncture is it sufficient to state that the *Fornaldarsögur* are Old Norse prose works, generally set in the pre-Christian, Germanic past, and contain some element of the fantastic. Many of the *Fornaldarsögur* touch upon mythological themes, heroes, and gods found in the *Eddas*, and as such can greatly supplement our understanding of the Norse mythological system.

Note on language, editions, and conventions: This dissertation incorporates textual materials written in a variety of languages, spanning from Old Icelandic to Arabic. In an attempt to make this work more accessible to a wider audience, but also to maintain its value to specialists, I have cited texts in the original language and have also provided English translations. The majority of the translations are mine, and I alone bear the responsibility for any inaccuracies contained

therein. On some occasions, particularly for poetic works or writing in Arabic, I have opted for a published translation and cite the translator. In these cases (with the exception of texts in Greek, which I do not read) I have also gone through the text myself and commented on any issues in the original which may not be apparent in translation, but may have bearing on my argument.

I have opted to avoid Anglicizing foreign names and relevant terms as much as possible and generally reproduce names as they appear in the primary texts. For names written in non-Latin scripts, I have reproduced the conventions adhered to by the editors and translators of the texts. For names in Old Norse and Old English I reproduce names and terms in the nominative complete with all letters not found in the English alphabet. Thus I use Þórr instead of Thor and Óðinn instead of Odin or Othinn. I generally use Icelandic plurals (*heimr -> heimar*) except in cases where an Old Norse term has become the descriptive word in English as well (as in *Eddas* above).

I cite the standard *Íslenzk Fornrit* editions of Icelandic material when possible. For the *Fornaldarsögur* I use Guðni Jónsson's 1944 *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda.* I have preferred Ursula Dronke's edition of the eddic poems, but for poems not edited by Dronke, I use Neckel and Kuhn's *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern.* I have opted to use Anthony Faulkes' four-volume edition of the *Prose Edda* as my working text.

Finally, in an attempt to make this work more accessible to those who are not specialists in Old Norse/Icelandic, I have chosen to adopt a somewhat hybrid approach to citing the works of scholars with Icelandic names. Most modern Icelanders do not have true last names. Instead they are known by a patronymic based on the possessive form of their father's first name and the suffix –son (for males) and –dóttir (for women). While it is common practice to refer to an individual by their last name in Anglophone culture, the common practice in Icelandic is to use

first names for everyone. Thus the Icelanders cited in the bibliography of this work are listed in the format [first name] [patronymic] rather than the expected [patronymic] [first name] which assumes that an Icelandic patronymic is equivalent of a last name. While citing an author by first name is the most culturally appropriate idiom, I have opted to cite the full names of Icelanders in the in-text citations to help remove some of the confusion for English-speaking audiences.

Imagined Space and Narrational Maps

A 1965 publication entitled *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* (Skelton et al.) presented a document which is now known as the Vinland Map. This rather small map was brought to light in 1957 and consists of two attached parchment folia which purport to be a pre-Columbian map of the world. The map is remarkable, not for its visual appearance, but because in the upper left corner, beyond the recognizable Atlantic coastline of Europe, is a large landmass with the label "Vinlandia Insula" indicating a European knowledge of North America prior to Columbus's expeditions. The timing of the discovery and release of the map was particularly significant as it predated the 1960 discovery and subsequent excavations (from 1961-1968) of the site at L'Anse aux Meadows which conclusively demonstrated a pre-Columbian, Norse presence in North America.

Academic study subsequent to the publication of *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* has convincingly demonstrated that the Vinland Map is a modern forgery, drawn on fifteenth- or sixteenth-century parchment. Scientific analyses of the map's ink indicate that modern, rather than medieval inks were used to draw the map's contours (McNaughton 269). This extensive scientific analysis presents nearly irrefutable evidence that the map is a forgery. Even prior to these tests, stylistic concerns were cited as evidence against the map's veracity – namely that the map looks like nothing like any other map of the period or earlier.[2] I aim neither to support nor refute the authenticity of the Vinland Map, since the evidence overwhelmingly supports the thesis that the map is a forgery. Rather, the map's *forgery* indicates our attitudes and suppositions, not just about mapmaking, but about culturally constructed ideas of space.

[2] The most damning criticisms of the authenticity of the map can be found in Seaver (*Frozen Echo; Maps, Myths, and Men*) and Towe, but an adequate summary and treatment of medieval maps can also be found in McNaughton.

Arguments against the authenticity of this map revolve around the fact that the Vinland Map more closely resembles a modern map than any surviving maps from the Middle Ages and that were a medieval map to include Vinland, it would have likely imagined it as an extension of Africa rather than as an independent island in the North Atlantic (McNaughton 261-263).

At first glance the Vinland map looks very much like most maps we are accustomed to encountering in our daily lives, even if coastlines and the relative sizes of landmasses seem a bit distorted. However, even these distortions rarely present major problems; we can easily recognize Spain, Italy, Great Britain, and even further-flung places like the Arabian Peninsula or Japan. Initially the Vinland Map seems very compelling – it speaks to us in a language that we easily understand and conforms to all of the conventions which we expect from a map. These conventions include simple cartographic features like the orientation of the map, which locates North at the top, to the much more complicated shapes of coastlines. The former is a convention, albeit one steeped in tradition, but one which is actively "correct" by convention when drafting modern maps. The shape of the coastlines is likewise a convention, but one which derives from exposure to countless maps over the course of our lives and one which we often adopt without becoming consciously aware of the fact.

The cartographic arguments against the authenticity of the Vinland Map stem from precisely issues like these. While the map appears perfectly acceptable to us moderns, it does not adhere to the language developed by other maps of its purported date. The map is thoroughly modern in its presentation and construction even if it does contain archaizing features such as distorted coastlines and era-authentic parchment. It would seem that the forger of the Vinland Map was so immersed in the modern language of maps and mapmaking that his creation contains a marked "accent" of modern cartography that he was unable to escape. By the same token, the

ease by which we accept and interpret this map also illustrates how pervasively and completely the language of cartography has integrated itself into our consciousnesses to the point that we rarely realize it.

This modern "accent" may lead us to wonder about the appearance of a fifteenth-century map that included Vinland? Such hypothetical maps have, in fact, been drawn (McNaughton 262) and would seem to line up with what we understand of cartography in medieval Scandinavia. This question could also lead us to wonder about maps before maps were drawn, or more precisely: "How was space imagined before maps were drawn?" The problems with the construction of the Vinland Map demonstrate just how easy it is to project modern ideas of space and cartography back into the past, often in ways which are deeply ingrained in our minds but would have been foreign to people of the past.

The goal of this chapter is to construct a theoretical model of how medieval Scandinavians would have imagined space. We first need to examine the way in which we, as modern consumers of cartographic culture imagine space in order (1) to recognize how deeply invested we are in our ideas of space, and to point that these ideas are deeply rooted in our subconscious imaginings of space, (2) to demonstrate that these spatial constructs are rooted in developments which occurred in the last five hundred years, and (3) to recognize that our modern notions of space are completely foreign and inappropriate to the medieval Norse construction of space. Following that discussion, we will examine how space was imagined and described by other, largely Mediterranean cultures in order to provide a foundation upon which we may build a model for how the Norse did imagine space.

Medieval maps and the development of modern cartographic space

The modern world in which we live is so completely immersed in cartographic culture

that we take maps for granted. They appear in a myriad of places in our daily lives: in our cars, in the front pages of fantasy novels, and even in hotels, where they inform us of the safest way to exit in case of a fire. They range in scale from blueprints of a home to charts of stars and galaxies. They appear digitally on our computers or smartphones and we hang them on walls as decorations. We puzzle over them in shopping malls and amusements parks, looking for the dot indicating "you are here." Nearly everyone has had the experience of rotating a map several times in an attempt to find an orientation that is most useful as we walk or drive from place to place. The general pervasiveness of maps in modern life often leads to a sense that cartographic representations of space are not only common but intuitive, and that a map is a natural, even instinctive, method of describing space. However, maps in the forms that we are familiar with are a relatively recent phenomenon in the development of how people think about, interact with, and depict physical space. The diffusion of cartographic maps is so new that it would not only be irresponsible to assume that representing space through a map is instinctive, but we often take for granted the profound impact that our everyday encounters with maps have had on the way in which modern consumers of map culture conceptualize space.

Too often consumers of modern cartographic maps accept the presence of maps as part of culture and rarely devote much effort to examining how the widespread uses of maps have shaped our notions of physical space. John Rennie Short has argued that the world underwent a drastic revolution between the years 1475 and 1600, which not only caused a flourishing in modern cartographic culture but also a fundamental shift in the way that space was understood and perceived (Short 3). This assertion begs several questions: If a shift in cartographic culture has changed the manner in which physical space is understood in the last five hundred years, how was space conceptualized prior to this? To what extent do pre-cartographic concepts of

space impact a given culture's interactions with the physical world? And perhaps just as significantly: Do our own map-centered ideas of space color the way in which we understand pre-cartographic cultures? These questions are certainly both relevant and interesting, and a complete examination of them is beyond the scope or intent of this study. However, I will seek to answer some of these as they apply to the Medieval Norse, and explore how they may have conceptualized space prior to Short's spatial revolution. Before a discussion of the Norse conceptualization of space, a brief discussion of mapmaking in general is necessary.

While the form and function of an individual map may vary, at the simplest level every map is a representation of physical space in graphic form, though even terms such as "space" can be difficult to grapple with. We may remember that in high school geometry class we were told that any four non-coplanar points uniquely define a space. This definition stays with us even if we do not consciously realize the impact it has. We generally relate this definition to Euclidian coordinate systems which rest on the foundation of infinite, straight lines without paying much mind to alternate means of defining space. The most common alternative is a system of spherical coordinates.[3] These coordinate systems are nothing more than a method of mediating an abstract concept of "space" and giving it a context which allows it to be measured and discussed. For spaces which exist outside of the theoretical, and could be visited and experienced by an individual, a map is a common means of defining and measuring these spaces.

The specifics of the form of a map are determined not only by the technical and artistic skill of the cartographer but by the function of the map and its intended consumer. Most of us

[3] For most people, the most familiar system of spherical coordinate is the Longitude and Latitude system we use to map the Earth's surface. Unlike Euclidian space, the system of Longitude and Latitude defines a two dimensional space of finite, rather than infinite area, and uses finite circles to do so. Furthermore, coordinates are measured in degrees of arc from the center of the planet rather than in linear units. Thus, as the lines of Longitude converge at the poles, the linear distances between degrees of arc of Latitude shrink.

have drawn simple maps which consist of little more than roughly-sketched lines, street names, and a few landmarks. While these hand-made maps do not demonstrate the same level of technical achievement, detail, or preservation of scale as professionally produced maps, they are designed to fulfill an entirely different function. Such maps are usually produced to illustrate generally spatial relationships or, more commonly, as a navigational aid, and as such are often not simply graphical artifacts, but are accompanied by a verbal description when presented to the user. Extraneous details are omitted, and the spatial relationships between landmarks need only reflect general concerns of scale.

Such hand-drawn maps serve to illustrate how production of a map is driven by its intended purpose and as well as the process by which physical space is depicted graphically. As we draw these maps, we translate our ground-level view of space into a bird's-eye rendering of the same space. While this top-down depiction may seem like a natural mode of representing space given the abundance of such maps in modern culture, for the overwhelming majority of us, an aerial view of the area we map is something that we have rarely experienced. Even if we have witnessed the earth from above, our maps bear little resemblance to an actual aerial view. While the process of converting a first-person view to an aerial map may seem like a natural and logical process in our cartographic culture, the differences between an experiential and a cartographic view of space must force us to evaluate whether or not maps, in the form we commonly experience them, are actually a natural and intuitive representation of space and whether pre-cartographic peoples would have been able to conceptualize space in this way.

Short's position that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw drastic shift in how space was conceptualized should not be taken as indication that maps did not exist prior to 1475. He discusses the entire history of cartography in the Western tradition and includes a lengthy

description of mapmaking traditions which existed in the Classical and Medieval periods. He does, however, indicate that maps played a much less prominent role prior to the so-called Age of Discovery and that at that time there was a distinct difference in how maps were used and perceived. The best example of this phenomenon appears in the works of the second-century Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemy.

Ptolemy operated out of the great library at Alexandria where he composed two of the most influential works of astronomy and geography. The first of these, the *Mathematical Treatise*, is more commonly known by its Latinized Arabic title, the *Almagest*, the second is simply titled *Geography*. The *Almagest* provides a detailed descriptive and mathematical treatment of the motions of the heavenly bodies, while *Geography* describes the shape and form of the Earth. Ptolemy's *Geography* served as the principal geographical text well into the seventeenth century. The later books of *Geography* contain a method for dividing the globe according to longitude and latitude, a list of coordinates for prominent locations in the Classical world, and a list of twenty-six maps, which were included in the volume. None of these maps or copies of these maps survive (Short 14-15). Later copyists preserved the numerical coordinates for reasons that can only be speculated, but failed to transmit the maps.

The loss of Ptolemy's maps likely reflects prevailing attitudes towards maps and spatial relationships in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. At the very least it indicates that later copyists did not have the technical know-how to properly reproduce the maps, but could also indicate a deeper interaction with maps themselves. It may be reasonable to suggest that later audiences were simply more comfortable interacting with textual descriptions of geography than cartographic representations. Ptolemy's text would more closely replicate the process of interacting with space first-hand than the graphical representation of a map, and the maps

included with the *Geography* may have been deemed superfluous and confusing.

Short goes on to argue that technological and social developments in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance contributed to a social climate which not only facilitated the production of new maps, but an environment in which maps were a desired commodity. The first of these developments was the reintroduction of Ptolemy's works into the West through Latin translations from Arabic. Mathematical innovations and improved instrumentation allowed for more accurate charting of space. Finally, increased interest in overseas trade and exploration opened a world of trans-oceanic transportation, which created not only a greater demand for accurate charts, but a greater interest in maps and exploration in general.

We most commonly associate the production of maps with navigation, but we often forget that maps, like any other text, also serve a narrative function. The narrative function of maps becomes obvious in certain contexts. For instance, most of us have seen maps which graphically represent how various territorial borders changed over time, relating some sort of political history. However, even common and less historically oriented maps transmit a narrative of some sort. Maps can assert territorial claims in an attempt to legitimize control of certain regions. For instance national maps produced in Pakistan differ greatly from those of its eastern neighbor, India. Both nations claim sovereignty over the regions of Jammu and Kashmir near the Himalayan Mountains even though each nation only administers part of the disputed territory. Maps produced by India and Pakistan assert their territorial claims over these regions by drawing their national boundaries to include the whole of the region, including those administered by its rival. A less politically charged but equally insightful example can be seen in the common Mercator projections of world maps produced in Europe versus the United States. Each version of the map depicts landmasses of identical shape, but the relative positioning of these landmasses

is markedly different in each. The European version centers the map on the Prime Meridian which effectively centers the map on the European landmass, while the American map centers the map on the Americas.

While narrative may seem like a secondary function of maps for modern maps, the most common medieval map form was driven much more by narrative than by navigation. That the narrative role of maps played a much bigger role than their navigational function (which may have been nearly useless during most of the medieval period) and reveals intellectual attitudes toward space that drastically differ from our own. The medieval *mappaemundi*, or maps of the world, appeared not only in the Latin West, but in the Greek East and in the Islamic world and were as much depictions of Judeo-Christian thought as geographical representations of the Earth's features. These maps were constructed with East at the top rather than North, and presented a circular Earth in which all landmasses were surrounded by an all-encompassing ocean. In the most simple of these *mappaemundi*, the world is divided into three distinct landmasses; semi-circular Asia in the East, or upper portion of the map, Europe and Africa are both represented as quarter circles with Europe in the lower left and Africa in the lower right. Each continent is separated from the others by a body of water, each is represented by a straight line of equal width which intersect at the center of the map. The Mediterranean separates Europe from Africa, the Nile divides Africa from Asia, and Asia and Europe are separated from each other by the Black Sea. Maps of this type are frequently known as T-O maps, since the general form of the map resembles a capital T circumscribed by an O.

The first reaction of those unfamiliar with medieval cartographic culture is often a sort of bemused condescension toward medieval cartographers, who did not have the "sophistication" to produce an "accurate" map of the world and instead reduced it to simple geographic shapes.

However, such maps stem from cultures that traveled the Mediterranean and the Nile, and that would have understood that a T-O map was intended to serve a different purpose than to accurately chart the Greek coastlines. Symbolically, a T-O map relies on several Classical and Biblical ideas. The circular shape of the world reflects the Classical belief that a circle is the perfect shape, and the complete separation of the continents preserves the classical division between Africa, Asia, and Europe. This division is also connected with the Christian tradition that each continent was settled by one of Noah's sons (Ham, Shem, and Japheth) after the Biblical flood. A T-O map also divides the inhabited world into two halves, Asia on one side and Europe and Africa on the other, and it places the central point of the Earth at the intersection of the three main bodies of water at the precise center of the map. This orientation places the Levant, or more precisely Jerusalem, at the geographic center of the Earth. Thus, the spiritual center of the world, the place where Solomon built his temple and Jesus Christ lived and died, becomes the literal center of the world. T-O maps construct a narrative picture of the world which hinges on Classical philosophy and Judeo-Christian theology. The simplest of these maps, the ones in which the T and O are most evident, strongly promote this narrative, but the same basic framework was also used to construct maps that attempted to more accurately represent relative scale and coastlines. Even in these more accurate maps is embedded the Classical and Judeo-Christian narrative about the shape of the world and its place in history.

Mapmaking among the Norse

By far the most comprehensive text about the mapmaking traditions of the medieval Norse is Rudolf Simek's *Altnordische Kosmographie*. Simek's work discusses the cartographic traditions in the medieval North, which focus specifically on geography and cosmology, and uses saga sources as supporting evidence. In spite of the overall quality of Simek's treatment of

Nordic geographic and cartographic culture, it is of relatively little use here. Simek situates his discussion in the context of greater European geographical and cultural writing and highlights how Norse developments deviate from the continental trends and as such, Simek's source material largely taps into a learned, Latinate culture.

The extent to which Classical cosmology had been integrated into the consciousness of the medieval Norse is likely inaccessible to us since it is precisely those authors educated in the Latin tradition who wrote these geographical treatises. Simek's study does, however, reveal several interesting facets about the state of Norse cosmology in the Middle Ages. To begin with, Simek's conclusion that the educated cosmology in the North was principally Latinate with some native inclusions indicates that a native cosmological model existed which deviated from the model on the continent. Additionally, Simek's treatment includes images and discussion of several Norse maps. The oldest of these dates from the thirteenth century and structurally it falls into the category of the T-O maps that were commonplace in larger Christian world (Simek, "Kosmographie" 419). In fact, all the surviving maps from the Norse Middle Ages closely resemble Mediterranean models and show very little variation from the European norm.

From this information we can safely assume that if the Norse had a cartographic tradition prior to the introduction of educated, Christian culture, the new mapmaking models completely supplanted any native traditions. But cartography as we understand it does not seem to have been a component of pre-Christian Norse culture. To begin with, nothing resembling a map (to a modern) has been found in the archeological record. We may postulate that this absence could be nothing more than a gap in the archeological record, but the history of the written word suggests that no such maps were ever produced. The best evidence suggests that vellum production and writing on animal skins were introduced to the North along with Christianity and the

accompanying book culture (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 15-17). As such it is extremely unlikely that maps would have been recorded on skin. It is also unlikely that maps were produced in the same tradition that produced runic texts. The effort required to carve a useful map into a stone or wooden surface would have been significant, especially when trying to reproduce organic shapes like coastlines and rivers. Additionally, the bulky nature of these media significantly limit the portability of a map carved into wood or stone and drastically reduce their usefulness in many situations.

We could also certainly speculate that *ad hoc* maps may have been scratched into temporary surfaces such as a dirt floor, dust, snow, or any other, easily modified surface. Unfortunately, the perishable nature of such maps makes it impossible to confirm their existence as any examples which may have been produced would have long since been destroyed. It is not prudent to argue against the existence of such maps simply from the absence of any concrete evidence. However, the general conditions surrounding the creation and use of these impromptu maps does seem to indicate that they were, at best, of limited use in Scandinavia prior to the introduction of Mediterranean cartographic models. First of all, any maps of this sort would be completely useless for navigation since they would be bulky, difficult to transport, and subject to the elements. We might reasonably speculate that maps were drawn before embarking on some sort of journey in order to explain to an individual how to travel from one location to another, but this impromptu map would, by necessity, be accompanied by some sort of oral description or narrative structure. Since the map itself would not be portable, it would be left to the receiver of the map to remember the graphical representation as well as the oral description, which would serve as supplementary sources of information about the proposed voyage.

Would a map quickly sketched on a dirt floor would even be useful? Both the graphical

image of the map as well as the oral description which accompanied it would have to be stored in individual memory; we can naturally question how useful any such map would be for any sort of long-distance travel since it would essentially double the burden on memory. For a modern reader, an impromptu map may be useful, in spite of the fact that it would require that additional information be committed to memory, since the information presented in a map has a very different character from an oral description. However, this information is only useful if we are already part of cartographic culture. The shift from a first-person to a third-person formulation of space has become natural to us since we live in a world in which maps are relatively common. Thus, the bulk of the evidence suggests that cartographic maps as we understand them were never part of Norse culture prior to the introduction of Latin literature in the North.

However, as we have seen, no cartographic maps survive from the Viking Age, and none of the Scandinavian maps which survive from later periods indicate anything other than a complete borrowing of a cartographic culture that reached Scandinavia with the culture of Latin Christianity. It would seem reasonable to conclude that, if the Viking Age Scandinavians had made the intellectual leap between imagining space from a bird's-eye perspective and giving this perspective graphical form, they would have recorded it somewhere other than scratches in the dirt. In light of this evidence the most reasonable conclusion is that there was simply no well-developed cartographic tradition in the Norse world prior to the introduction of foreign models.

The lack of a clearly defined cartographic culture should come as no surprise to readers familiar with Norse culture, since maps or even descriptions of maps exist only in those texts which rely heavily on Latin learning. Yet, it is a well-attested historical reality that, from the Viking Age on, the Scandinavians were quite able sailors and capable of getting from place to place with a high degree of speed and accuracy. Much attention has been devoted to analyzing

Scandinavian navigational techniques in the Viking Age and early Medieval period.[4] These studies have revealed innovative methods for determining course and speed during a journey, but the knowledge of *how* to get from place to place is generally a useful skill only when the navigator has a destination in mind. This destination can be the result of previous first-hand knowledge on the part of the navigator, but in the absence of such experience, some other method of conveying information about the destination is needed.

Orientation and Odological Space

Serious academic investigations into how individuals and societies imagine space began with C.C. Trowbridge's 1910 article 'On Fundamental Methods of Orientation and "Imaginary Maps".' This article has proven to be a fundamental work in establishing theories of cognitive mapping and odological space, areas of scholarship which focus on how individuals and societies imagine, construct, and negotiate physical space.[5] In the article, Trowbridge constructs two modes of spatial orientation: the *domi-centric* mode used by animals, children, and, in limited circumstances adults, and the *ego-centric* mode used exclusively by adult humans and always in conjunction with some sort of learned system of abstracted space. Trowbridge explicitly connects this mode of orientation with the four compass points, but any system of fixed, abstract markers exterior to an individual are sufficient to provide a framework for an ego-centric mode of orientation. It is this latter mode of orientation that is employed to fix and navigate positions in spaces which lie outside of the regions through which we habitually travel.

Trowbridge's principal focus in constructing this model was to chart and systematize the variety of errors involved in the ego-centric mode of orientation, and to theorize how orientation

[4] See for example: Bernáth, Fitzhugh and Ward, Owain, Thirslund.

[5] The contributors to this field are too numerous to mention individually but, beyond Trowbridge, a handful of authors stand out: Lynch, Downs ("Maps in Minds," "Image and Environment"), and Janni.

can be more properly taught. While this latter goal is of little use in trying to understand he orientation of the Norse cosmos, later scholars (Downs in particular) have taken Trowbridge's basic model and have investigated the cognitive processes by which orientation is learned and space is processed and navigated. Downs effectively demonstrates that the process of spatial orientation is a complex one rooted in individual experience and aptitude, education, and societal notions of space, and that this mode of orientation is, as Towbridge implies, centered on the individual and their motion and travel and thus often differs greatly from what we read on the flat page of a map. This theoretical framework for understanding space is particularly useful for understanding how the medieval Norse may have imagined space since, many of the best textual descriptions of mythological space involve movement through space—and as far as we know they produced nothing that resembles a map. In fact, as we shall see, it would appear that the mode in which the Norse imagined space in general may in any case have been very difficult to depict in a cartographic map.

The later work of Downs and Janni are of additional interest to us as the former discusses the process of cognitive mapping at an individual and societal level while the latter treats space through the lens of the classical texts known as *peripli* (discussed below). This line of scholarly inquiry demonstrates that the processes by which human beings come to deal with the problems of physical space are complicated and ones we often take completely for granted (because they are an essential component of our daily lives). We rarely take the time to question how we negotiate space. Trips to and from the supermarket or even from the living room to the bathroom are processes which are often thrust into the back of our consciousness. We forget that our ideas of space and our place in it are constantly evolving and changing, and that cartographic maps rarely play a significant role in how we think of the world around us.

Narrational Maps

In the absence of a well-defined cartographic culture among the Norse, some other method must have been used to transmit information about the spatial relationships between physical points. One possible method of conveying this sort of spatial information is through a series interrelated course headings, distances, and landmarks, which combine to create a route that traveler must take to move from point A to point B. For the sort of navigational aid which takes this general form, I will use the term *Narrational Map,* largely to distinguish this process of imagining space from the drawn maps which stem from the modern cartographic tradition. Narrational Maps appear in a number of contexts, under a variety of names and in a wide range of traditions.

Narrational Maps in the Mediterranean have received much more attention and study than elsewhere in the world, due to a longer chronological range and comparative abundance of sources. The extant sources are the principal reason for investigating the tradition of Narrational Maps in Southern Europe, since literacy and written culture appeared in Scandinavia shortly before Narrational Maps began to give way to cartographic maps. An examination of the tradition of Narrational Maps in the Mediterranean allows us to define the parameters for what constitutes this sort of map and how it is used so that the features of Narrational Maps may be more clearly seen in the Scandinavian tradition. This, however, should not be taken as an indication that the tradition of Narrational Maps in Scandinavia and the Mediterranean are at all related, or even that all Narrational Maps in the Mediterranean enjoys a continuous tradition. The evidence seems to indicate the contrary.

The Periplus of Skylax

The earliest surviving texts containing of Narrational Maps come from in the form of the

ancient Greek *peripli* (s. *periplus*, Gk. περίπλους), derived from the Greek roots περί "around" and πλοϋς "a voyage," (related to πλεϊν "to swim") or literally a circumnavigation (Oxford English Dictionary "periplus"). The oldest and most complete of these is now believed to be the work of an anonymous author but has traditionally been ascribed to Skylax of Karyanda (Shipley 4-6). The author describes in detail a sailing route around the coastlines of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, beginning at the northernmost of the Pillars of Hercules (present-day Gibraltar), traveling eastward along the European coast, into the Black Sea, south along Asia Minor and the Levant, before heading east across the African coast, ending at the island of Kerne beyond the Pillars of Hercules:

> And the total of this costal voyage is, from the Pillars of Herakles to Kerne island, days, twelve, and the places beyond Kerne island are sailable no further because of the shallowness of the sea and (because of) mud and seaweed. And the seaweed is the breadth of a hand and is sharp above, so that it stabs. (Shipley 86)

In many ways the periplus of pseudo-Skylax represents both a prototype for and the pinnacle of the Greek tradition of periplus writing. It is the most detailed and extensive of the surviving peripli and the character of the text represents well the sort of information contained in these ancient peripli. The following small selection from the periplus of pseudo-Skylax is a representative example of the text and the sort of information contained therein.

> μετὰ δὲ ταύην τὴν προειρημένην ἄκραν Μαλέαν Σίδη πόλίς καὶ λινήν, Ἐπίδαυρος καὶ λιμήν, Πρασία πόλις καὶ λιμήν, Ἀνθανα πόλις καὶ λιμήν. εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ πόλεις Λακεδαιμονίων. ἐν μεσογείᾳ δὲ ἐστὶ Σπάρτη καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαί.

παράπλους δὲ τῆς Λακεδαιμονίων χώρας ἡμερῶν τριῶν.

{Κρήτη.} κατὰ Λακεδαίμονα νῆσος κεῖται Κρήτη˙ ἐγγυτατω γὰρ Λακεδαίμων κεῖται τῆς Ερώπης. διαπλους δὲ ἀπὸ Λακεδίμόνος ἕως ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκρωτριον τῆς Κρήτης ἐφ’ ᾧ ἐστὶ πόλις φαλασάρνα, ἡμέρας δρόμος.

ἀπὸ δὲ φαλασάρνων Κριοῦ Μέτωπόν ἐστιν ἀκρωτήριον. πρός νότον δὲ ἄνεμον πλοῦς εἰς Λιβύην, ἐπὶ Χερρονήσου δὲ τὰς Ἀζιρίδας τὰς Κυρηναίων πλοῦς ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

ἐστὶ δὲ ἡ Κρήτη μακρὰ στάδια βφ’, στενὴ δὲ, καὶ τέταται ἀπὸ ἡλίου δυσμῶν πρὸς ἡλίου ἀνατολάς. οἰκοῦσι δὲ ἐν Κρήτῃ Ἕλληνες, οἱ μὲν ἄποικοι Λακεδαιμονίων, οἱ δὲ Ἀργείων, οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναίων, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τῆς ἄλλης ὁπόθεν ἔτυχεν. εἰσὶ δὲ τινες αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτόχθονες. πόλεις πολλαὶ ἐν Κρήτη.

{Κρήτης θέσις} <ἐπὶ Κωρύκ>ῳ ἀκρωτηρί ἐστὶ πρώτη πόλις πρὸς ἥλιον δυόμενον ἡ προειρημένη φαλασάρνα καὶ λιμήν κλειστός. Πολυρρηνία, καὶ διήκει ἀπὸ βορέου πρὸς νότον. Δικτυνναῖον Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν πρὸς βορέαν ἄνεμον, τῆς χώρας Περγαμίας. πρὸς νότον δὲ Ὑρτακίνα. (Shipley 32)

[And after this aforementioned cape Malea are Side, a city with a harbour; Epidauros, a city with a harbour; Prasia, a city with a harbour; *Anthana,* a city with a harbour. And there are also many other cities of the Lakedaimonioi (*Lakedaimonians*). And in the interior is Sparta, and many others. And the costal voyage of the territory of the Lakedaimonioi: days, three.

By Lakedaimon lies the island of Krete (*Crete*): for Lakedaimon lies closest to it of (all) Europe. And the voyage across from Lakedaimon as far as to the promontory of Krete upon which is the city of Pharlasarna: a day's run.

And past Phalasarna is Kriou Metopon promontory. And towards the south wind is the voyage to Libyē, and up to the *Azirides* of Chershonesos, those of the Kyrenaioi (*Cyrenaeans*): the voyage of a day and a night.

And Krete is 2,500 stades long, and narrow, and extends from the settings of the sun towards the risings of the sun. And there live in Krete Hellenes, some of them colonists from the Lakedaimonioi, others from the Argeioi (*Argives*), others from the rest of Hellas from wherever it chanced. And some of them are aboriginies. (There are) many cities in Krete.

<After Koryk>os promontory the first city towards the setting sun is the aforementioned Phalasarna with an enclosed harbour. (Then) Polyrrhenia, and it extends from the north toward the south. Diktynnaion, a sanctuary of Atemis towards the north wing, belonging to the territory that is Pergamian. And towards the south Hyrtakina (trans. Shipley 64).]

There are several features of the pseudo-Skylax descriptions which warrant particular mention. The periplus focuses principally on coastal features, and when it does mention inland areas they are those of considerable note, such as very large cities like Sparta. The text uses a variety of methods to describe both distances and space: travel times, measured distances in stadia,[6] cardinal directions, and solar motions. The text also

[6] Stadia or stades, as Shipley prefers to translate them, were a unit of distance employed throughout the entire Classical world. The exact distance covered by this unit varied considerable in both time and space, but Shipley has, on a somewhat *ad hoc* basis, opted to use the standardized Roman definition which corresponds to 607 ft, but notes that the stadion in Ptolemy's day was up to 15% shorter (Shipley 8-9).

marks distinguishable landmarks, such as the promontories in this passage, but elsewhere indicates the presence of rocks, rivers, other notable terrain features, and the locations of navigational hazards. Also indicated by the periplus are features which have little intrinsic navigational value by themselves but which would be useful to sailors, such as: cities, temples, sources of fresh water, and above all, safe harbors.

While the value of many of the features listed in the pseudo-Skylax periplus would be of great benefit to traveling mariners, the document itself would be of limited usefulness for day-to-day navigation. The distances between locales are simply too great, and the details too few to make the work useful as a pilot book on a daily basis. Shipley writes that pseudo-Skylax: "seems to be attempting to assemble a systematic reckoning of the scale of the world accessible to Greeks, and an enumeration of its constituent parts. His work, in short, is a work of geography" (13). There is some validity to Shipley's claim and in many ways pseudo-Skyrax functions better as a geographical work than a mariner's guide.

However, another possibility exists that this periplus was never intended to function as a pilot's book such as those we see much later in the Mediterranean. Instead pseudo-Skyrax may have functioned as more of a modern interstate map than a true pilot's book. The work excels at showing the large-scale features of the entire known world, but would leave the ship to its own devices to navigate on the small-scale. The author's emphasis on prominent, visible coastal features also would also allow the ship to travel a considerable distance from the shore, where only the largest features would be visible, and at the same time away from many navigational hazards which tend to occur closer to land. If this were the true function of the periplus of pseudo-Skyrax, it creates an

interesting situation in which a pilot essentially navigates from safe harbor to safe harbor, but out of sight of land, and this situation would distance the sailors from features of the landscape and create a hazy, nebulous region between ports marked only by distance or an occasional landmark.

Ora Maritima

A handful of other Greek peripli survive, but none of the same scope or accuracy as that attributed to Skylax.[7] Many of the other peripli are noteworthy because they either describe a geographic area which pseudo-Skylax omits or because they describe a region in greater detail. Of these the one which is relevant to our discussion is Avienus' Latin *Ora Maritima* which preserves part of the Massiliote periplus. This poetic work plots a course from Marseilles around the Iberian Peninsula to Brittany and includes navigational directions for both Great Britain and Ireland. The content of the *Ora Maritima* is similar to the periplus of pseudo-Skyrax, but Avienus often spends more text describing inland features and inhabitants, and devotes less text to the navigational details. Avienus describes the voyage to Ireland and the Pillars of Hercules in these terms:

> ast hinc duobus in sacram, *sic* insulam / *dixere prisci,* solibus cursus rati est. / haec inter undas multa[m] caespitem iacet, / eamque late gens Hiernorum colit. / propinqua rursus insula Albionum patet. / Tartes(s)iisque in terminus Oestrumnidum / negotiandi mos erat. Carthaginis / etiam coloni[s] et vulgus inter Herculis / agitans columnas haec ad[h]ibant aequora, / quae Himilco Poenus mensibus vix quattuor, / ut ipse semet re[m] probasse re(t)ulit / enavigantem, posse transmitti adserit. / sic nulla late flabra propellant ratem, / sic segnis humor

[7] A complete summary of these early Greek pilot books can be found in Stevenson.

aequoris pigri stupet. / adicit et illud: plurimum inter gurgites / extart fuctum et saepe virgulti vice / retinere pup(p)im. dicit hic nihilominus / non in profundum terga demitti maris / parvoque aquarum vix stupertexti solum. / obire simper huc et hu(n)c ponti feras, / navigia lenta et languide repentia / internatare beluas. (Murphy 10-12)

[But from here, there is a two-day journey for a ship to the Holy Island – thus the ancients called it. This island, large in extent of land, lies between the waves. The race of Hierni inhabits it far and wide. Again, the island of the Albiones lies near, and the Tartessians were accustomed to carry on business to the ends of the Oestrymnides. Colonists of Carthage, too, and the common folk living around the Pillars of Hercules came to these seas. Himilco of Carthage reported that he himself had investigated the matter on a voyage, and he asserts that it can scarcely be crossed in four months. No breezes propel a craft, the sluggish liquid of the lazy sea is so at a standstill. He also adds this: a lot of seaweed floats in the water and often after the manner of a thicket holds the prow back. He says that there nonetheless the depth of the water does not extend much and the bottom is barely covered over with a little water. They always meet here and there monsters of the deep, and beasts swim amid the slow and sluggishly crawling ships (trans. Murphy 11-13).]

The *Ora Maritima* is important for its description of peripheral regions of Europe, closer to Scandinavia, and in particular because it is the only testament to the existence of a periplus tradition from Latin Antiquity. Stevenson suggests that mariners would have used the Greek peripli during the Roman period since Latin literature does not mention navigational books for

Roman sailors (9).

There must be at least some validity to Stevenson's claim since a vast amount of maritime trade was conducted in the Mediterranean under Roman rule, but this same assertion also raises several problems. To begin with, if the Roman mariners were using Greek peripli, what form did they take? It is extremely unlikely that every ship had or had access to a written copy of a periplus in an age when each copy had to be written by hand on perishable materials like papyrus. Furthermore, even if every ship were equipped with a periplus, it would necessitate that at least one member of the crew be literate.

The *Ora Maritima* may provide some insight into how the peripli functioned for seamen in Antiquity. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the knowledge contained in the peripli existed, at least in portions, as part of an oral narrative. We can only guess at the functional literacy Greek and Latin mariners, but it was probably not high, and the nature of the information contained in the peripli is simply too essential to the safe and timely execution of naval voyage to be ignored by these sailors. Several facets of shipboard culture would certainly facilitate the oral transmission of navigational directions of the type found in the peripli. To begin with, sailors are creatures of habit; they do the same thing in the same way time and time again. Ships, particularly those actively engaged in trade, would often follow the same route in cycles or at least confine their nautical activities to a limited geographical sphere, and thus the navigator would only be responsible for remembering the itineraries relevant to a particular region rather than those contained in an entire periplus. A ship is also inherently a social environment and it would not be incumbent on just a single individual to absorb and retain in exacting detail every stage of a voyage. Furthermore, it is unlikely that a single individual would be required to commit to memory the information contained in a periplus *before* setting sail. Instead, this sort of

knowledge would likely be acquired over the course of numerous first-hand voyages and of numerous tales swapped with other sailors throughout a maritime career.

However, in cases where a ship was forced to depart from its normal sphere of influence, the information contained in a periplus would be eminently valuable for the safety and functionality of the ship. The poetic form of the *Ora Maritima* would certainly facilitate memorization and at 714 poetic lines it is long enough to contain valuable information but also short enough to be reasonably committed to memory. Avienus' poem appears to be a more literate reworking of periplus material, but it is not difficult to imagine the existence of similar works which could be memorized and sung by mariners in the ancient Mediterranean. The existence of an oral tradition similar to the peripli among classical mariners is conjecture, and the precise details of how they navigated the seas are probably irrevocably lost to us. However, given the state of literacy in the classical world as well as the testaments of the Greek peripli and the Latin *Ora Maritima* it is not unreasonable to suppose that navigational information of a similar type found in our surviving peripli was in general circulation in the Ancient world.

Medieval Peripli

At the very least, the existence, if not the active use, of peripli among the ancient Greeks is well-established, and there is solid evidence to presume that these same traditions were continued by Roman mariners as well. However, it is not clear whether the peripli were used by medieval navigators. There are relatively few examples of texts resembling the Greek peripli, and there are grounds to suspect that the harbor books which begin to appear in the western Mediterranean in the thirteenth century represent new innovations rather than a continuation of the Greek tradition. The only periplus of considerable importance after the second century A.D. is the so-called Byzantine Stadiasmos.

The history of the Byzantine Stadiasmos is uncertain; the only surviving copy is a partial manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. The manuscript made its way to Spain with refugees fleeing Byzantium after its fall to the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century, but the text itself has been dated to the tenth century on paleographic grounds (Stevenson 9; Medas 338). The core text is certainly much older: proposed dates of composition range from the first- to the fifth-centuries A.D., but the text was clearly emended in the intervening years (Medas 339-343). The comparatively long life of the text would seem to indicate that was of some practical value to mariners, but in the absence of more information we can only speculate about how this periplus was used.

The content of the Stadiasmos is similar to the pseudo-Skyrax periplus. For ease of comparison I reproduce here a section of the circumnavigation of Crete from the Stadiasmos:

> Ἀπό Βιένον εἰς Φαλάσαρναν σταδ. σξ'. ὅρμος ἐστὶν ἐμπόριον πόλις παλαιὰ νῆσος δὲ ἀπὸ σταδ. ξ'. Ἰουσάγουρα βλέπουσα πρὸς ἀνατολὰς ἔχει λιμένα· ἔχει δὲ ἱερὸν Ἀπόλλωνος ἐν τῷ λιμενι· ἐστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλη νῆσος ἀπὸ σταδίων γ'. καλεῖται Μέση καὶ ὅρμον ἔχει. ἡ δὲ τρίτη καλεῖται Μύλη· ὁ δὲ πλοῦς βαθὺς ἀγωρὺν ἔχει.
>
> (Hoffman 300-301)
>
> [From Biennon to Phalassarna is 160 stadia. Here is an anchorage, a market-place, and an old city. The island Insagura is distant 60 stadia towards the east. It has a harbor and near the harbor a temple of Apollo. Here is also another island at a distance of 3 stadia called Mese; it has an anchorage. The third island is called Myle. The channel is deep. It has a market-place (Stevenson 11).]

Like the pseudo-Skyrax, the Stadiasmos emphasizes coastal features, harbors, distances, and important man-made locations, particularly those useful to sailors.

While it seems that the periplus of pseudo-Skyrax, the *Ora Maritima*, and the Stadiasmos originate from a similar tradition of Greek geographical harbor books, there is one medieval Narrational Map which is not so clearly linked to the ancient Greek tradition. The text is found in one of the scholia of a text with particular relevance to Scandinavia, namely Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificium*. This Narrational Map, or "portolan fragment" as Kretschmer refers to it (195), appears in scholion no. 96 near the beginning of Book 4. It is not clear whether Adam of Bremen is the author of the portolan fragment or whether it was added by a later editor, since the reason for its inclusion is Adam's work is not clear. It is, however, present in the earliest manuscript. The full text of the Narrational Map reads:

> Scholion 96. De Ripa in Flandriam ad Cincfal velificari potest duobus diebus et totidem noctibus; de Cincfal ad Prol in Angliam duobus diebus et una nocte. Illud est ultimum caput Angliae versus austrum, et est processus illuc de ripa angulosus inter austrum et occidentem. De Prol in Britanniam ad Sanctum Mathiam uno die, inde ad Far iuxta Sanctum Jacobum tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, et est processus iste angularis totus inter austrum et occidentem. De Leskebone ad Narwese tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, angulariter inter orientem et austrum. De Narwese ad Arragun quatuor diebus et quatuor noctibus, angulariter inter aquilonem et orientem. De Arragun ad Barzalun uno die similiter inter aquilonem et orientem. De Brzalun ad Marsiliam uno die et una nocte, fere versus orientem, declinando tamen parum ad plagam australem. De Marsilia ad Mezcin in Sicilia quatuor diebus et quatuor noctibus, angulariter inter orientem et austrum. – De Mezcin ad Accharon 14 diebus et totidem noctibus inter orientem et austrum, magis appropiando ad orientem. (Kretschmer 235)

> [One can sail from Ribe to Flanders at Cinkfall in two days and as many nights, from Cinkfall to Prawle in England in two days and one night. That is the farthest point of England toward the south and from Ribe thither the course is into the quarter between south and west. From Prawle to Brittany at Pointe de Saint Mathieu it is one day; thence to Capo de Vares near Santiago three days and three nights; thence to Lisbon… and the course is wholly in the quarter between south and west. From Lisbon to Gibraltar it is three days and three nights in the quarter between east and south. From Gibraltar to Tarragona, four days and four nights, in the quarter between north and east. From Tarragona to Barcelona it is one day, likewise between north and east. From Barcelona to Marseilles, it is one day and one night, almost directly east, but deviating a little toward the southern quarter. From Marseilles to Messina in Sicily it is four days and four nights, in the quarter between east and south. From Messina to Acre it is fourteen days and as many nights, between east and south, by going more to the east (trans. Tschan 187).]

Several features stand out, especially when compared to the periplus tradition in the Classical world. Just like the Classical texts, the focus of this portolan fragment is principally maritime, and describes travel times from coastal landmark to coastal landmark. Unlike the Latin and Greek texts, it focuses strictly on the maritime features of the journey and gives no indicators of inland features, or other useful features such as rivers or hazardous conditions. Overall the portolan fragment from Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificium* resembles the Classical peripli enough to regard it as a Narrational Map in the same way as the Classical texts.

There are, however, several noteworthy features of the portolan fragment that indicate

that the document has its genesis in a different way of thinking about and practicing navigation. The most obvious difference is that it includes a much more detailed description of Northwestern Europe and the Western Mediterranean than the classical peripli and largely glosses over the Western Mediterranean. Adam of Bremen's work focuses on areas subject to the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, so information about Northern Europe would be both more relevant and more familiar to his readership. Additionally, since the text was written and circulated in the north, those sailors and navigators which would have informed the author of the fragment would have been much more familiar with the coastlines of Northwest Europe and the Western Mediterranean than of lands further east.

There are two other less obvious features which potentially indicate that the author's culture engaged in a very different interaction with the sea and with seafaring. The first is that the author measures distances exclusively in terms of time-distance rather than giving any sort of figure of linear distance. It would be reading too much into the text to reach any definite conclusions about this facet of the text, especially since the sample size is so small, but it could indicate a limited ability to measure linear distances, either because such units did not exist or because the technological capabilities to measure them were not available. It could simply indicate that the author did not consider linear measurements relevant or useful to maritime travel. Of more interest is that, in most cases and unlike the Mediterranean peripli, distances are given in terms of both days *and* nights. This facet of the text suggests a different approach to maritime travel, a different perspective on timekeeping or perhaps both. The implication here is that ships were now expected to travel both by day and by night instead of dropping anchor for the night as was done in the Classical period. It may reflect a concern for timekeeping. More northerly regions, like those described in Adam of Bremen's work, exhibit much greater

variations in daylight hours relative to those further south. These variations reduce the usefulness of measuring linear distances in units of time since the duration of available daylight may double or more depending on the latitude and time of year. However, time-distances measured in units of both day *and* night creates a fixed temporal unit which will not change relative to time of year or location.

The second noteworthy feature of the fragment's narration has to do with the route itself and the nature of the landmarks that the author lists. The first part of this Narrational Map closely resembles those which we have already witnessed – it originates at a large, urbanized center and travels along the coast. However, once the route arrives at the end of the British Isles, we see a very different pattern in the nature of the landmarks that the text lists. In quick succession the text lists Prol,[8] Pointe de Saint Mathieu, and Cabo de Vares, none of which are large settlements nor safe harbors. Instead, all three are terrain features of sufficient size that they can be seen from a considerable distance from the shore. This facet of these landmarks, combined with the fact that the route travels directly from southern England to Galicia in Spain indicates that this Narrational Map originated from a culture in which longer, open-water voyages were an accepted maritime practice, in contrast to the Classical peripli which narrate coastal routes.

We observe a similar pattern as the narrated route enters the Mediterranean. The route hugs the coast from Lisbon to Marseille but from there, the remainder of the voyage to the Levant is conducted in two open-water legs: from Marseille to Messina in Sicily, and the very impressive fourteen day journey from Messina to Acre. These legs represent a major departure from the Mediterranean practice of coasting, and indicate, not only a different approach to navigation in northern versus southern Europe, but that the portolan fragment in *Gesta*

[8] Both Kretschmer (196) and Tschan (187-188) Suggest that the Latin Prol corresponds to Prawle located in Devon, England; southeast of Plymouth.

Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificium, does not have its roots in the classical perilpus tradition and represents an independent evolution of Narrational Maps based in a maritime tradition which was much more accustomed to open water travel.

Narrational Maps outside Europe

Up to this point in our discussion of the history of Narrational Maps, all of our examples have come from Europe. This selection of texts may give the impression that there may be some continuous tradition of Narrational Maps within Europe or even that the Narrational Map is an exclusively European phenomenon. Part of this European bias surely comes from the European focus of this project, part from a larger corpus of surviving maritime texts from Classical and Medieval Europe, and part from my own personal familiarity with European texts and languages. As a point of counterbalance to the European focus of the Narrational Maps included thus far, I will present one Narrational Map from outside Europe. This example will demonstrate something of the universal nature of Narrational Maps across all traditions.

The example comes from the first book of the *Accounts of China and India* attributed to Abu Zayd al-Sirafi, and narrates the route from Basra in modern Iraq to China. The text dates from 237 of the Islamic calendar (851-852 C.E) (Mackintosh-Smith 5), which places it chronologically at a point after the Classical peripli but before any of the Medieval portolans we have examined. The Narrational Map is interwoven into a longer travel account in which the author describes the habits and customs of the peoples of China and India. The full text of this Narrational Map is too long to include in its entirety (but is well worth reading), so I have included only the opening section of the route from Basra to Muscat, as this is sufficient to indicate the character of this text as a whole:

وهذه وخطفوا الماء منها استعذبوا بسيراف المتاع عُبيّ فإذا .فرسخاً وعشرون ماية الماء في والسيراف البصرة بين والمسافة

مايتي نحو إليه سيراف من والمساغة .عُمان عمل آخر وهو مُسْقَط له يقال موضع إلى يُقْلِعون يعني الجر أهل يستعملها لفظة جبال البحر هذا وفي .كاوان ابن وجزيرة الصَفّاق بني سِيف البلاد من ومسقط سيراف بين فيما البحر هاذا سرقيّ وفي .فرسخ وفيها .الصيبية السفن تسلكه ولا الصغار السفن تسلكه جبلين بين مضيق وهو الدُرْدُور يُسمّى الذي الموضع وفيها عُمان له يقال موصع إلى صرنا الجبال جاوزْنا فإذا .اليسير إلّا الماء فوق منها يظهر وليس وعُوَير كُسَير لهما يقال اللذان الجبلان من غنم فية وهناك .بها بئر من مسغط من الماء فنستعذب عُمان صُحار

عُمان بلاد (Mackintosh-Smith 30).

[The sailing distance from Basra to Siraf is 120 *farsakahs*. Once the goods have been loaded at Siraf, they take on board freshwater there, then they "take off" (an expression used by seamen meaning "set sail") for a place called Muscat. This is at the end of the territory of Oman, the distance there from Siraf being about two hundred *farsakhs*. At the eastern end of this sea, the territories between Siraf and Muscat include Sif Bani l-Saffaq and the Island of Ibn Kawan. Also in this sea are the rocks of Oman. Among them is the place called "the Whirlpool," which is a narrow channel between two rocks through which small ships can pass but not the China ships. Among the rocks of Oman are also the two rocks known as Kusayr and 'Uwayr, of which only small parts appear above the surface of the water. When we have passed all these rocks we reach a place called Suhar of Omen. Then we take on board freshwater at Muscat, from a well that is there. There are also sheep and goats in plenty for sale, from the land of Oman (trans. Mackintosh-Smith 31).]

The character of this Narrational Map falls somewhere between the Classical peripli and the medieval portolans in terms of the nature of the Narrational Map and its relationship to the rest of the text. Like many of the Classical peripli, this fragment from al-Sirafi shows a level of detail beyond what we see in the medieval texts. Not only does he concern himself with distances and

prominent nautical landmarks, he relays information of importance to sailors, particularly hazards and locations of fresh water. The remainder of al-Sirafi's Narrational Map shows a similar attention to anthropological details of the route and transmits the experiences and necessities of sailors along this route in addition to the raw navigational details.

That al-Sirafi's Narrational Map so closely resembles similar texts in Europe is both interesting and informative. We cannot completely discount the possibility that this text was composed under the influence of the Greek peripli, but given the distance and antiquity of this particular route, that seems unlikely. The most likely scenario is that the text presented in *Accounts of China and India* represents a completely different evolution of Narrational Maps from anything we have seen in Europe. The fact that this text bears so many similarities to the European Narrational Maps further pushes the case that the Narrational Map represents an intuitive, pre-cartographic, human response to space.

Later Narrational Maps

Scattered fragments of Narrational Maps appear in Classical and Medieval texts, but there is an explosion of Narrational Maps beginning in the twelfth century Mediterranean. These texts were known under a variety of names; Portuguese *roteiro*, French *routier*, English *rutter*, but by far the most common term is the Italian *portolano* or the Anglicized version of the same word, portolan. At this juncture it is important to distinguish between a portolan proper and a portolan *chart* even though the two terms are often used synonymously. A portolan is a description of a maritime route that closely resembles the Classical peripli in that the description is purely textual. Portolan charts, on the other hand, are graphical representations of space that more closely resemble modern maps than *peripli* and other Narrational Maps. These charts are usually crisscrossed with lines and include written notations, occasionally so densely packed that

they lie virtually one on top of the other. Portolan charts, just like the portolans and peripli themselves are markedly nautical documents; the primary focus of the charts is precise representations of coastlines. Many portolan charts will also depict major rivers and large cities, but many do not even do that.

Portolan charts constitute a break from the tradition of medieval mapmaking, and while T-O maps seem very foreign to most modern observers, portolan charts strongly resemble modern maps. These early nautical charts helped spark the cartographic revolution of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries. However, in spite of the visual similarities between modern maps and portolan charts, they represent fundamentally very different modes of thinking about space. Unlike modern maps, the portolan charts are projectionless, that is to say that there are no mathematical principles upon which the production of the map rests. Portolan charts were produced in much the same manner as we would draw a map of our home or neighborhood, through direct observation and reproduction of landscape features instead of through a process of measuring and plotting of a projected grid. Unlike the maps that we draw, it is likely that there were detailed measurements and careful calculations involved as part of their production (Stevenson 18).

The fact that the portolan charts so closely resemble modern maps is a testament not just to the skill of the cartographers but to the detailed information and observations which likely formed the foundation of these charts. While the precise relationship between the portolan charts and the textual portolans is not entirely clear, the written texts begin to appear slightly prior to the charts (Stevenson 14). Portolans begin to appear in the late thirteenth century and correspond to a period of significant maritime and trade expansion in the western Mediterranean. Most of these early portolans were produced in one of the many Italian states, but a smaller minority are

the products of Catalan merchants, and are generally written in the local vernacular instead of Latin.[9]

The general nature of these medieval portolans closely resembles the Classical peripli, but the portolans are considerably longer and include more detail. The medieval portolans share several commonalities with Narrational Maps I have examined up to this point. As these portolans share several common features with the Classical peripli and originate from approximately the same geographical region, it is tempting to view these texts as part of a continuous, unbroken tradition of Mediterranean Narrational Maps. However, certain elements of the texts make this assumption unlikely, and it is much more probable that the similarities between the Classical and Medieval texts are the result of the necessities of maritime navigation. To begin with, Greek was not widely known in the western Mediterranean during the Middle Ages, and, with the exception of the *Ora Maritima* there is no evidence that the Greek peripli existed in Latin or Arabic translations at any period prior to the appearance of the portolan tradition. Stevenson has also argued that, in spite of the similarities between the periplus and portolan tradition that textual differences and differences between Greek maps and portolan charts indicate that they are independent developments. He writes:

> Very many of the places along the coasts have names other than those in the early periploi; a large number of new names appear; many of the old ones are omitted, which fact suggests that places once known as important had ceased to be so considered; distances are given in miles instead of stadia, and direction is usually recorded (12).

[9] By far the most useful single text of the early portolans is Kretschmer's *Die italienischen Portolane des Mittelalders*. The volume includes the full text of several portolan texts, in Latin as well as in Italian dialects, along with an extensive German introduction and commentary.

He also notes that the portolan charts, by placing North at the top of the charts, break with the Roman and Arabic traditions of locating South at the top and the Medieval tradition of facing the map's top toward the East. He attributes this change to the growing awareness and use of the compass at the time that the portolan charts were being drawn (18-19).

Given this evidence and the previous discussion of the portolan fragment in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificium*, the most likely scenario is that the Greek peripli, Adam of Bremen's portolan fragment, and the later Mediterranean portolans represent examples of convergent evolution in which three separate traditions produce similar texts. This independent evolution of Navigational Maps is of great value in studying Norse Narrational Maps. If we can be relatively certain that the commonalities exist between independent traditions, we can be more confident that these commonalities might extend to Narrational Maps in other traditions, and we can hopefully use common features of the periplus and portolan traditions to help identify Narrational Maps in the Norse world.

Criteria for Narrational Maps

Medas has identified fourteen categories of navigational features which appear in the *Stadiasmo*.[10] These categories apply specifically to this single work, and have a specific eye toward the navigational nature of the work. These descriptive categories of one single text do not however constitute general characteristics of Narrational Maps. They can provide a starting point from which more general traits of Narrational Maps can be re-constructed after a close investigation of other Narrational Maps.

[10] 1. Directions and orientations. 2. Descriptions of the particular characteristics and morphology of the shore of promontories, and of islands. 3. Promontories. 4. Islands, small islands and rocks. 5. Rivers. 6. Shoals and indicators of water depth. 7. Cities, villages, localities and topographic characteristics. 8. Ports, harbors and anchorages. 9. Temples, towers, forts, observatories and other buildings. 10. Sources of fresh water. 11. Hazard warnings and navigational advice. 12. Navigational topologies. 13. *Pieleggi*. 14. Distances and calculations (Medas 347, trans. mine).

The traits used to identify a Narrational Map should be as general as possible, but specific enough to sufficiently exclude other descriptions of space. Additionally, Narrational Maps should not be viewed as a genre per se but rather as a mode of describing space that can potentially be found within any sort of written work, thus:

> General routes and courses. Orientation can be given in terms of cardinal directions, celestial features, or terrestrial landmarks. Distances need not always be given, but often are, and when they are listed they can be indicated in terms of linear units of measurement or in travel time.
>
> Indicators. Only indicators easily visible or accessible from the indicated route are included. In maritime Narrational Maps, few inland features are described, and the text does not digress into editorial commentary.
>
> Prominent landscape features. These can include natural features of the geological or hydrological landscape, as well as prominent man-made features.
>
> Sites. In general, there is a linear and directional progression of sites. Locations are given not in general terms, but in terms of sequential routes from one location to the next. While these routes may be reversed, most locations are only accessible as part of a single sequence of directions.

In addition to these four general categories, there are two additional features common to such maps:

> Indicators of dangers or hazards. These can be either natural features such as shoals, rocks, etc. or human or natural dangers, particularly hostile inhabitants.
>
> Indicators of conditions that change with time. These are weather, ice, and so on.

One further criterion which deserves mention is implicit in number (4), namely that in a proper

Narrational Map there should be a progression of sites and indicators, rather than a simple statement of distance and direction. Thus a Narrational Map must be more expansive than stating that point A is one day north of point B—such a statement fulfills many of the criteria for a Narrational Map but only relates a spatial relationship between locales, and, from a practical level, fails to fully qualify as a map of space.

Conclusion

Surrounded as we are by cartographic maps, it is very tempting to imagine that a bird's-eye drawing of space is both an intuitive and easily-understandable method of representing physical space. A quick historical survey of the history of mapmaking demonstrates precisely how flawed this thinking is. Prior to the cartographic revolution of the fifteenth century and the portolan charts that preceded the revolution maps were relatively uncommon in Europe and the Middle East. When cartographic maps did exist they experienced limited circulation, were rooted heavily in ideological constructs of space (like the T-O maps) or were not transmitted through the Middle Ages in favor of written descriptions of space (in the case of Ptolemy's maps).

During the same period, we see several examples of texts that use words to narrate maritime routes in extensive detail and in such a way that would permit a mariner to more efficiently travel from one location to another. These Narrational Maps provide a framework which may permit us to better understand how space may have been imagined before the widespread dissimilation of the cartographic map. Narrational Maps of this type appear across a wide variety of cultures and time periods, from Classical Antiquity, through the Middle Ages, from Northern Europe to the Middle East – and all these maps share similar features. These common features present a very different model of spatial imagination than the cartographic map; space consists not of a continuum, but as a series of discrete, fixed points connected

through the experience of travel.

Narrational Maps in Scandinavia and Spatial Ambiguity

Equipped with a knowledge of how Narrational Maps operate in Europe and the Middle East from Classical Antiquity to the Age of Discovery we are now able to identify similar characteristics within the Norse tradition to determine whether a similar tradition of Narrational Maps existed in the North. It is in fact likely that any similarities reflect a convergent evolution which produces similar set of external characteristics based on common necessity. This situation would be comparable to the situation already observed between the Greek peripli and the Italian portolans; both traditions share common characteristics but likely represent individual traditions. I propose not to produce a complete catalogue of Narrational Maps in the Norse tradition, but to supply enough samples of these maps to indicate that such a tradition existed in the North.

Landnámabók

One of the most clear-cut and concise examples of a Norse Narrational Map occurs near the beginning of *Landnámabók*, *The Book of Settlements*, a history of the early years of the discovery and settlement of Iceland consisting primarily of a catalog of some of the early settlers on the island. *Landnámabók* was most likely composed in the early twelfth century, some two hundred years after the time period it describes, and exists in five manuscript copies ranging from the early thirteenth- to late seventeenth-centuries (Grønle xiv). While the bulk of the text is devoted to descriptions of the early settlers, listed by the quarters[11] where they settled, the early portion of the text describes the discovery of Iceland and the first expeditions there. It is in this early section where we find a Norse "Narrational Map" (according to the Sturlubók version of *Landnámabók*):

Svá segja vitrir menn, at ór Nóregi frá Staði sé sjau dæga sigling í vestr til Horns á

[11] Shortly after its settlement, Iceland was divided into administrative units. The largest of these were the quarters. Each corresponded to a cardinal direction in the island: North, South, East, and West.

> Íslandi austanverðu, en frá Snæfellsnesi, þar er skemmst er, er fjǫgurra dægra haf í vestr til Grænlands. En svá er sagt, ef siglt er ór Bjǫrgyn rétt í vestr til Hvarfsins á Grænlandi, at þá mun siglt vera tylft[12] fyrir sunnan Ísland. Frá Reykjanesi á sunnanverðu Íslandi er fimm dægri haf til Jǫlduhlaups á Írlandi <í suðr; en frá Langanesi á norðanverðu Íslandi er> fjǫgurra dægra haf norðr til Svalbarða í hafsbotn. (Jakob Benediktsson 32-34)
>
> [Wise men say that it is a seven day sailing westward from Stad in Norway to Horn on Iceland's east coast, and from Snæfellsnes, where it is the shortest, it is four days of open sea westward to Greenland. It is said, if you sail due west from Bjǫrgyn (Bergen) to Hvarf (Cape Farwell/Uummannarsuaq) in Greenland, that you would sail twelve knots south of Iceland. From Reykjanes on the south coast of Iceland it is five days of open sea southward to Jǫlduhlaup (Slyne Head) in Ireland, and from Langanes on the north coast of Iceland it is four days of open sea northward to Svalbard in the Arctic Ocean.]

The Hauksbók redaction of the same text differs in some areas, principally spelling variations, but between the description of the trip from Snæfellsness to Hvarf and from Reykjanes and Slyne Head, the text differs considerably:

> Af Hernum af Nóregi skal sigla jafnan í vestr til Hvarfs á Grænlandi, ok er þá siglt fyrir norðan Hjaltland, svá at þvi at eins sé þat, at allgóð sé sjóvar sýn en fyrir sunnan Færeyjar, svá at sjór er í miðjum hlíðum, en svá fyrir sunnan Ísland, at þeir hafa af fugl ok hval.
>
> [From Hernar (Hennøya) in Norway you can sail due west to Hvarf (Cape

[12] Jakob Benediktsson adds *tólf vikur sjávar*.

Farewell/Uummannarsuaq) in Greenland, and when you sail north of Hjaltland (Shetland) - so that you can barely see it (Shetland) if the visibility is good - and south of the Faeroes, so that the sea is in the middle of them, and from there south of Iceland, where they have birds and whales.]

This section of text closely resembles many of the examples of Narrational Maps that we have already seen in the Mediterranean tradition and clearly meets the first three criteria of Narrational Maps outlined in Chapter 1. As for the fourth criterion, the linearity of space, this passage from *Landnámabók* fits only from a certain perspective.

If this descriptive map is broken down into its constituent components, the bare description of routes to Iceland, each of these individually resembles the building blocks of any of the other Narrational Maps that we have seen up to this point. However, the ordering of these components in the Narrational Map to Iceland differs from the Greek peripli and the Italian portolans. Instead of a sequential series of navigational directions comprising a chain of bearings to a single destination, the map presented in *Landnámabók* has all the routes converge in a single location: Iceland. The net effect of this convergence of routes is that it creates a very different sort of Narrational Map from those we have seen of the Mediterranean. It would seem that the purpose of this map is not as much to provide navigational guidance from one location to another (even though it could certainly function in this capacity) but to situate the geographic location of Iceland in the context of other known sites.

The descriptions of routes to Iceland indicate a slightly different mode of imagining space than that presented by the Narrational Maps we have seen to this point. Instead of thinking of space in an exclusively linear sense - discrete sites connected by individual voyages—the *Landnámabók* description of Iceland begins to border on a two-dimensional representation of

physical space. The author uses a collection of individual, one-dimensional and non-sequential routes, linked together, to create a composite picture of Iceland's location in the North Atlantic. If a Medieval reader were sufficiently well-versed in greater European geography, the description in the *Landnámabók* Narrational Map should be sufficient to inform the reader of the approximate location of Iceland, and would certainly provide enough information to enable a journey there. However, the two-dimensional character of this Narrational Map does not closely resemble a cartographic representation of space, even though its character transforms the one-dimensional spatial quality of the narrative space into a more complex, two-dimensional model.

Travel and Imagining Space

The feature of the *Landnámabók* Narrational Map that prevents it from crossing the threshold into a true cartographic representation of space is not only that it is descriptive rather than graphic, but that the orientation is still solidly anchored in the routes themselves. It would certainly be conceivable for a mariner to use the *Landnámabók* Narrational Map to travel from Ireland to Norway, for example (even if the navigational details are somewhat scant). However, such travel would only be possible by way of Iceland, which is by no means the safest or most efficient route of travel between these two locations. In a modern cartographic map space is represented graphically as a series of landmarks (cities, rivers, coastal features, etc.), all placed in a static relationship with one another. Even in places of the map which seem featureless such as barren deserts or open ocean, spatial landmarks are present in the form of an artificial coordinate system, which has been superimposed onto the map, a feature that creates a fixed, measurable landmark at every point in space, even in places where none seem to exist in the physical world.

This is the key difference between this Narrational Map and a true cartographic map: much of the space is still left imprecisely defined and that this space is described in terms of

directional routes, rather than static position. The model that we have seen represented in the Classical peripli is one of finite, well-defined geographical points (usually ports or safe harbors) connected by a single, directional route. This mode of spatial imagination creates a model consisting of well-defined points in space, separated by nebulous, poorly-defined areas in which both distance and landscape features are not clearly indicated. The *Landnámabók* Narrational Map creates a model of space similar that of the Mediterranean Narrational Maps, but in two dimensions. Clearly defined points are placed on the map, but the precise relationship between them is not spelled out. They are afloat in a nebulous sea in which distance and landscape are all variable.

One additional feature of this map, found only in the Hauksbók redaction of the text, bears further comment. The section of the text which describes a voyage from Norway to Greenland meets all our established criteria for a Narrational Map, in spite of the brevity of the text. It has clear value. It suggests how Viking Age mariners may have navigated across the North Atlantic in an age before nautical charts, the magnetic compass, or accurate instruments. The route indicated in *Landnámabók* is surprisingly accurate; a ship on a course due westward from the Hordaland region in Norway will indeed pass just north of Shetland, south of the Faeroes and Iceland and arrive at the southern tip of Greenland. However, what is more important to our present discussion is that this Narrational Map, unlike those in the Mediterranean traditions, represents a voyage over open ocean rather than one which follows a coast. It is certainly true that large portions of the routes described in the peripli and the portolans would have occurred on stretches of open water from which land would not have been visible. Without the security of surrounding coastlines, the consequences of even small inaccuracies in navigation could be catastrophic. A mariner in the Mediterranean often had the comfort of

knowing that a ship would be following a coastline, even if it was not immediately visible, and could always return to land in dire need. Seafarers in the North Atlantic were in quite a different position; veer too far off course, and the open ocean would be all that they would see.

The *Hauksbók* Narrational Map does describe some features along the route to Greenland, but as often as not these indicators are not visible. The text makes it clear that both Iceland and the Faeroe Islands are not visible along the route and Shetland only on a clear day. When we take into account the meteorological conditions in Northern Europe, the likelihood is that on most voyages, conditions were such that Shetland was not visible and the entire trip would have to be conducted without any visible landmarks. This suggests that the Norse were capable of imagining space which they could not see. Even on days when Shetland was visible along this route, Iceland and the Faeroes were not, and yet, the text clearly indicates the existence of those invisible landmasses. Even more remarkably, it gives a precise figure for the distance between the route and Iceland, indicating that the Norse were sufficiently aware of the relative positions of landscape features to correctly pinpoint locations even in expanses of open water. Thus, in this passage we can see a suggestion that the Norse did not simply limit themselves to imagining space strictly in terms of known routes, which may or may not have been discovered by accident, but were also able to imagine and measure physical space well enough to mentally chart the relative positions of major landmasses.

At first glance it would seem that the ability to imagine space in this way, and do so well enough to produce accurate numerical figures for distances, would undermine my previous contention that the Norse conceptualization of space closely resembled that of the early Greek mariners, namely well-defined points separated by poorly-defined stretches of ocean. After all, if the Norse were sufficiently aware of the space they traveled to know that a straight-line path

from Norway to Greenland passed twelve leagues south of Iceland, would it not imply that they possessed a larger view of space than simply a single, one-dimensional route from point A to B? To a certain extent this is true; the Norse appear to be very well aware of the general layout of the fixed points in their sea of poorly defined space. They knew full well that the Faeroes were North of Shetland and East of Iceland. They even knew approximately how far one was from the other, but these principles alone are far from painting a precise, cartographic picture of the layout of the North Atlantic.

To illustrate this point, let us briefly imagine a Norse mariner who did undertake a voyage from Norway to Iceland, or more specifically from Bergen to Iceland, using the information given in *Landnámabók*. At first glance the simplest course of action may seem to be to sail due west from Bergen toward Greenland, and simply turn North to sail the remaining twelve leagues to Iceland. While such a plan would certainly have been possible, it probably would not have been very prudent. The Narrational Map in *Landnámabók* relates the position of Iceland relative to the east-west route between Norway and Greenland, but never indicates at what point along the route an individual would be twelve leagues south of Iceland. Quite simply, without a notion of longitude and an accurate method to measure it, changing course while in the open ocean is a risky proposition. The captain would be forced to estimate the point along the voyage based solely on dead reckoning, and perhaps past experience. Such a feat may well have been within the capacity of skilled seamen, but the risk might not have been worth the reward. Were the mariner to turn too early, he would miss Iceland completely and the polar ice cap would be the only indication that his course was in error. In all likelihood the safer, and more common, route from Bergen to Iceland would have been to follow the coast up to Staðir, and then take the seven-day trip west to Iceland as *Landnámabók* indicates.

This sort of thought experiment illustrates another salient difference between the Narrational Map in *Landnámabók* and a cartographic map as we imagine it. Let us return to the hypothetical example of a mariner, this time attempting to travel from Ireland to Norway using just the information found in *Landnámabók*, and perhaps a little local knowledge. The Narrational Map itself gives no exact method to execute, and the mariner is left with one main option, to sail from Ireland to Iceland, and from there to Norway. This is certainly not the most efficient route to take, and if the mariner were somewhat familiar with the geography of the British Isles he would probably realize that Ireland lies west of Shetland but east of Iceland, and may have the ability to travel to Shetland and from there use the information in *Landnámabók* to travel to Norway.

This sort of "shortcut" would only be possible with some knowledge of local geography, but would not be possible with the information in *Landnámabók* alone. Again, a modern reader may be tempted to look at the information and infer that if Iceland is five days north of Ireland and seven days west of Norway, then Norway should be approximately eight and a half days northwest of Ireland, and may conclude that plotting such a course would save more than four days of open-ocean travel. Not only would such an assumption be based on a knowledge of Pythagorean Geometry which would not have been available to a medieval mariner in the British Isles, it would be completely wrong. The first problem is that a route northeast of Ireland will run directly into the Scottish coast. Naturally, this is an extreme and unlikely scenario, but it does serve to illustrate the sort of information which is contained on a cartographic map which may not be relevant in any sort of Narrational Map. The second problem is more subtle. Since navigational instructions given in Narrational Maps are rooted in the travel experience itself, rather than in the landscape, it is likely that climatic factors which influence travel times and

bearings have already been factored into a narrative description of a route. Any variation from said route could potentially expose a traveler to a very different sort of journey than was intended in the Narrational Map. Such conditions are likely for our hypothetical journey as travel from Ireland to Norway would go *with* the Gulf Stream rather than against it, and because prevailing wind patterns shift from west to east to east to west as latitude increases.

In essence a Narrational Map, even one which has a two dimensional character like that in *Landnámabók*, is still firmly anchored in a first-person concept of space as something which may be traveled through. This is precisely the opposite of our modern cartographic culture. A modern mariner equipped with a map acquires near instant information about the relative spatial positioning of landmarks through the map itself. However, should that individual decide to use the map to actually *travel* from one location to another, he is forced to rely on other methods to determine the most appropriate route and the best way to execute the voyage. This sort of navigational information is precisely what is included in a Narrational Map; a mariner instantly knows how to plot and execute a course with a given destination in mind, but this knowledge comes at the expense of an understanding of space as a whole. Thus, the distinction between cartographic and Narrational Maps becomes not only one of how they represent information but how space is imagined. Cartographic maps present space as a static entity, which simply exists and can be represented graphically while space in a Narrational Map is dynamic and something through which an individual must travel, either in person or virtually by means of a written or oral narrative.

Othere's Voyage North

The Narrational Map presented in *Landnámabók* has supplied us with plenty of material to help understand the how the Norse may have constructed physical space, but a single example

does little to promote an overall picture. Fortunately, we are not forced to rely on a single text. One of the earliest indicators that we have of Narrational Maps among the Scandinavians occurs in Old English rather than Old Norse. Sometime during the ninth-century reign of King Alfred the Great of Wessex, an Old English translation of Paulus Orosius' *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri Septum* was produced. Orosius' work is a history of the world from the Creation until 417 AD, designed to justify the Roman Empire's conversion to Christianity following a pagan backlash against the Christians after the 410 sack of Rome. The history begins with an extensive geographic description of the known world. However, when Orosius was translated into Old English, the translators took it upon themselves to expand this geographical description to include regions of Europe which were not known to the Romans. Included in this expanded geography are the accounts of two, presumably Scandinavian travelers, Ohthere and Wulfstan, who describe the extreme north of Europe near the White Sea and the Baltic. The following sections cited are only those illustrating the texts' characteristics as Narrational Maps.[13]

Of these two sections added to the Old English *Orosius*, Ohthere's is both longer and more varied than Wulfstan's. While Wulfstan's description of the Baltic contains factually different information than Ohthere's account of his voyage north, Wufstan's account reveals nothing about the nature of Norse Narrational Maps that is not found in Ohthere's narrative. For this reason, combined with the fact that Ohthere's account is almost certainly the result of a Scandinavian informant, Wulfstan's description of the Baltic is omitted here. Ohthere's account begins with a brief introduction of the Norseman, after which the author of the Old English Orosius relates a description of the voyage North to the lands of the *Beormas*:

He sæde þæt he æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hu longe þæt land norþryhte læge,

[13] The full text of the Old English *Orosius* can be found in Bately and a facing page translation of the Ohthere and Wulfstan sections is provided by Lund et al.

oþþe hwæðer ænig mon be noðan þæm westenne bude. Þa for he norþryhte be þæm lande; let him ealne weg þæt weste land on ðæt steorbord 7 þa widsæ on ðæt bæcbord þrie dagas. Þa wæs he swa feor norþ swo þa hwælhuntan firrest faraþ. Þa for he þa giet norþryhte swa feor swa he meahte on þæm oþrum þrim dagum gesiglan. Þa beag þæt land þær eastryhte oþþe seo sæ in on ðæt lond, he nysse hwæðer, buton he wisse ðæt he ðær bad westanwindes 7 hwon norþan 7 siglde ða east be lande swa swa he meahte on feower dagum gesiglan. Þa sceolde he ðær bidan ryhtnorþanwindes, for ðæm þæt land beag þær suþryhte, oþþe seo sæ in on ðæt land, he nysse hwæþer. Þa siglde he þonan suðryhte be lande swa swa he mehte on fif dagum gesiglan. Ða læg þær an micel ea up in on þæt land. Þa cirdon hie up in on ða ea, for þæm hie ne dorston forþ bi þære ea siglan for unfriþe, for þæm ðæt land wæs eall gebun on oþre healfe þære eas. Ne mette he ær nan gebun land siþþan he from his agnum ham for, ac him wæs ealne weg weste land on þæt steorbord, butan fiscerum 7 fugelerum 7 huntum, 7 þæt wæron eall Finnas, 7 him wæs a widsæ on ðæt bæcbord. (Orosius 14)

[He told how he once wished to find out how far the land extended due north, or whether anyone lived to the north of the unpopulated area. He went due north along the coast, keeping the uninhabited land to starboard and the open sea to port continuously for three days He was then as far north as the whale hunters go at their furthest. He then continued due north as far as he could reach in the second three days. There the land turned due east, or the sea penetrated the land he did not know which – but he knew that he waited there for a west-north-west wind, and then sailed east along the coast as far as he could sail in four days where he

had to wait for a due northern wind, because there the land turned due south, or the sea penetrated the land he did not know which. Then from there he sailed due south along the coast as far as he could sail in five days. A great river went up into the land there. They turned up into the river, not daring to sail beyond it without permission, since the land on the far side of the river was fully settled. He had not previously come across any settled district since he left his own home, but had, the whole way, land to starboard that was uninhabited apart from fishers and bird-catchers and hunters, and they were all Finnas. To port he always had the open sea (trans. Lund et al. 18-19).]

The general character of this passage bears striking resemblance to the Mediterranean Narrational Maps which we have examined up to this point; routes, landmarks, travel distances, and a clear linear progression from waymarker to waymarker. As such it meets our defined criteria for a Narrational Map.

The information contained in Ohthere's description seems to match up relatively well with a voyage from northern Norway into the White Sea, including not only the accuracy of the route itself, but the description of the inhabitants which follows. Additionally, Ohthere, prior to outlining his voyage northward, describes his farmstead in terms which seem to match well with what we know about settlement patterns in Scandinavia in the ninth century. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the account set to parchment was based on a real description, likely from a Scandinavian informant, and not simply the invention of an Anglo-Saxon author. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary we can reasonably take the author at his word that the text included was based on an authentic oral account from a Norwegian owing allegiance to King

Alfred.[14]

The circumstances under which the account was recorded are unclear, and given the linguistic and cultural differences between Ohthere and Alfred's court, we are forced to wonder how indicative the information contained in this account actually is of Norse Narrational Maps. Christine Fell has discussed the linguistic implications of this account and sheds some insight into how the information in the account was obtained (56). Her conclusion is that the information was obtained in an interrogatory fashion, which allowed the questioner and Ohthere to clarify terms or descriptions which may hot have been clear to the interrogator on the first pass. Additionally, she concludes that at least one party involved in the information exchange was well enough acquainted with both Old English and Old Norse to translate unfamiliar terms from one language into the other. Whether this was a designated interpreter - interrogator or Ohthere himself is not clear from the text (Fell in Lund 1984, 56-63). Fell's evidence is compelling and it therefore seems likely that the Anglo-Saxon scribe took every effort to ensure that he was accurately recording Ohthere's account. There would naturally have been some interpretation on the part of Ohthere, the interrogator, and the scribe, but when we consider the circumstances of the interview process and results it seems likely that, at its core this account reflects an authentic account of an early Scandinavian Narrational Map.

Ohthere's account is useful not simply because it helps to confirm the existence of Narrational Maps among the Viking Age Scandinavians, but it also reveals something of how they conceptualized space, at least in a nautical setting. One of the most striking facets of the text is Ohthere's sense of direction and his deviation from the cardinal directions we would expect. The passage cited above as well as text from the rest of this account show that Ohthere was a

[14] For a discussion of how Alfred could be considered Ohthere's lord see Lund et al. (13) and Bately (179-180).

competent and skilled mariner, and yet his account seems to confuse basic cardinal directions. This situation is most obvious near the beginning of the cited text when Ohthere refers both to his route along the Norwegian coast and the lands that lie there as *norþryhte* or "due north," even though coastline generally runs southwest to northeast, and bends even further to the east near the extreme tip of the continent where Ohthere stops to wait for good winds. A similar discrepancy exists as Ohthere then travels west-southwest, but describes his sailing as *eastryhte*, "due east."

It may be tempting to chalk this discrepancy up to several factors: corruption of the text, a misunderstanding between interviewer and interviewee, inaccurate measurement on Ohthere's part, or even improper translation. The first two of these factors can neither be confirmed nor denied given our present evidence, and thus are of relatively little use to us. The latter can be discounted as "due north" is likely the best translation of *norþryhte* in this context even if it does not literally preserve the modern English cognates, and this translation agrees with the Bosworth-Toller entry for *norþryhte* (726).

A case for inaccurate measurement can be made for the east-bound leg of Ohthere's voyage, given that he was sailing far above the Arctic Circle. We can reasonably assume that Ohthere sailed during the summer months when conditions were best, and thus could not have used the stars to determine north. Furthermore, while Ohthere could have used the sun to sight north, it becomes increasingly difficult to do so accurately as one travels further north, and that is only possible during breaks in the near-constant overcast conditions prevalent in Northern Europe. However, while it is not beyond reason to postulate measurement errors in Ohthere's east-bound journey, he would not have made the same mistake in his journey along the Norwegian coast. This region of Norway was not some unknown venue that Ohthere had visited

only once and where he was forced to get the lay on the land as he traveled. It was his home, an area in which he would have sailed regularly in all sorts of weather conditions and at all times of the year, and which he would have known too intimately to confuse "due north" with northwest. Thus, barring scribal or interpreter error, we are forced to conclude that Ohthere said "due north" and "due east" even though he knew full well that he was traveling northeast and may well have known he was not traveling due east.

Perceptions of Space and Coordinate Shifts

I am not the first to note the discrepancy in Ohthere's text between how he describes cardinal directions and the physical geography of the area that he describes. Batley, in her commentary to *The Old English Orosius*, provides one possible explanation:

> Yet another factor might be Ohthere's recollection of the winds. Conditions in those parts render difficult any estimation of the main trend of the coast. If a marked change in the trend of the coastline coincided, as apparently here, with the need to wait for a favourable wind, then an experienced sailor would spend the intervening period not so much attempting to assess the angle of the coast as observing such phenomena as direction and speed of current and tidal flow and determining what kind of wind he would safely use. Ohthere's recollection that the wind he waited for was 'west and slightly north' would be not unlikely to influence him in his attempt to answer (hypothetical) questions about the geography of the area, some considerable time after the event. (Orosius 182-83)

It stands to reason that Ohthere's, and by possible extension the general Norse, construction of physical geography also incorporates atmospheric and hydrological conditions relevant to navigation. The importance of such environmental factors is easy to overlook in the context of

modern travel, in which our models of conveyance do not rely on the forces of the wind and tide, but these are precisely the factors that could have been very relevant to a ninth-century mariner. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that Scandinavian perceptions of physical space factored in environmental conditions which would have impacted travel, and were not a simple representation of geographical space as we tend to imagine it.

In fact, the sort of coordinate shift seen in Ohthere's account is representative of a larger phenomenon of how Scandinavian peoples discussed and imagined space, not only in the Middle Ages, but into the modern era as well. The Icelandic linguist Stefán Einarsson wrote a series of articles in which he analyzes the use of directional terms in both Old ("Old Icelandic") and Modern Icelandic ("Modern Icelandic"). In these articles he discusses how the old and modern Icelanders deploy certain adverbs and prepositions when discussing spatial orientation, direction, and in particular movement from one location to another. Stefán discusses several terms, but those most relevant to the present discussion are the four cardinal directions: *vestr, norðr, austr,* and *suðr*. He shows that there is a mixed treatment of these terms in both the modern and medieval language which often adheres to our notions of the "correct" usages of these directional terms, but quite often varies quite radically from the true cardinal directions we would anticipate. In general, when at sea, these terms were used more or less "correctly" (Stefán Einarsson, "Old Icelandic" 282) but when used for motion on land, their usage is a bit more problematic.

The most common of these "incorrect" usages describes movement from one quarter of Iceland to the other. This usage in itself is not without complication since, even though the quarter divisions in Iceland generally correspond to their cardinal orientation, it is quite possible to move from one quarter to another without actually traveling in the same cardinal direction. For instance when traveling north from the site of present-day Reykjavík an individual will only

encounter the Western Quarter and could thus be described as traveling *vestr* even though the predominant motion is northwards. Beyond the "incorrect" usages of cardinal directions when moving from quarter to quarter Stefán shows several cases of regional variation when describing motion within Iceland. These variations can range in scale from as large as variants within an entire quarter or as small as one particular valley. The character of these regionalisms is similar to that of motion between quarters; an adverb can be used to describe motion in a direction which does not necessarily correspond to the cardinal direction that corresponds to the adverb itself (Stefán Einarsson, "Old Icelandic" 283).

Even though Einarsson's treatment of directional terms in Old Norse partially helps to explain Ohthere's confusion when using directional terms, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of placing too much importance on these terms by themselves when used in conjunction with other descriptions. When Ohthere describes the initial stages of his voyage he declares that he traveled; "norþryhte be þæm lande; let hi ealne weg þæt weste land on ðæt steorbord 7 þa widsæ on ðæt bæcbord þrie dagas" (due north along the coast, keeping the uninhabited land to starboard and the open sea to port continuously for three days). Here the majority of the pertinent navigational information is included outside of the term *norþryhte*. In fact, given the other details which he includes the directional indicator, *norþryhte*, becomes completely superfluous since the nature of the Norwegian coastline is such that the only configuration which allows an individual to sail for three days with land to the starboard and open ocean to the port travels northward to the Arctic Ocean. The same situation holds true for the rest of the route that Ohthere describes, and when we consider the level of detail he uses, it becomes clear that the cardinal directions that he references are not entirely necessary.

In fact, given the difficulties in determining directions absolutely in the North we must

strongly resist the temptation to interpret any indicators of direction in Norse descriptions of physical space and anything other than vague guidelines. Not only are there compelling reasons to regard any mention of a cardinal direction as somewhat suspect either as a local idiosyncrasy, as Stefán Einarsson has shown, or simple shorthand for atmospheric or hydrologic conditions, but the evidence also indicates that the vast majority of the relevant, navigational information was contained outside of cardinal directions. Thus it is most prudent to regard any such indicators as broad guidelines alone which are intended to give general, rather than specific information about points in space.

Othere's Map of Norway and Two-Dimensional Space

In addition to Ohthere's description of his voyage to lands northward, the author of the Old English Orosius includes two other Narrational Maps which he attributes to Ohthere. One of these maps, found near the end of the text, describes the route from Ohthere's residence in Hålgoland to the port-town of Hedeby in Denmark. This description fits all the characteristics of a Narrational Map and reveals several interesting features of Scandinavian navigational and maritime culture, but provides us with little new information of interest about Scandinavian Narrational Maps or concepts of space. The second of these maps does not fully meet the criteria for Narrational Maps established above, but will be discussed here since it does closely resemble a Narrational Map and reveals interesting facets about how the Viking Age Scandinavians may have envisioned physical space.

This map is found in the middle of Ohthere's account to King Alfred after his description of the lands to the north of Norway, but prior to the Narrational Map describing the route to Hedeby. Here, Ohthere gives a general description of the shape and landscape of Norway:

He sæde ðæt Norðmanna land wære swyþe land 7 swyðe smæl. Eal þæt his man

aþer oððe ettan oððe erian mæg, þæt lið wið ða sæ; 7 þæt is þeah on sumon stowum swyðe cludig, 7 licgað wilde moras wið eastan 7 wið uppon, emnlange þæm bynum lande... þæt byne land is easteweard bradost 7 symle swa norðor swa smælre; eastewerd hit mæg bion syxtig mila brad oþþe hwene brædre, 7 middeweard þritig oððe bradre; 7 norðeweard, he cwæð, þær hit smalost wære, þæt hit mihte beon þreora mila brad to þæm more, 7 se mor syðþan on sumum stowum swa brad swa man mæg on twam wucum oferferan, 7 on sumum stowum swa brad swa man mæg on syx dagum oferferan. (Orosius 15)

[He said that the land of the Norwegians is very long and narrow. All of it that can be used for grazing or ploughing lies along the coast and even that is in some places very rocky. Wild mountains lie to the east, above and alongside the cultivated land… The cultivated land is the broadest in the south, and the further north it goes the narrower it becomes. In the south it is perhaps sixty miles broad or a little broader; and in the middle, thirty or broader; and to the north, he said, where it is narrowest, it might be three miles across to the mountains. The mountains beyond are in some places of a width that takes two weeks to cross, in others of a width that can be crossed in six days (Lund 20-21).]

This description fails to meet the criteria for a Narrational Map as defined, since, with the exception of the final sentence, the geography is described in terms of linear distance instead of traveled routes.[15] Its value lies in that it is the only land-based textual map examined so far.

The nature of this description of Norway and the area nearby is similar in nature to the

[15] We should note, however, that these linear measurements are almost certainly grounded in actual traveled routes, since other methods for measuring linear distance, accurate maps, longitude, or precision timepieces were not available to the Norse (or Anglo-Saxons) at this point in time.

Narrational Map found in *Landnámabók*; it uses one-dimensional descriptions to spatial indicators to convey a two-dimensional sense of space. From the description, the general shape of Norway becomes clear; it is a wider in the south and narrows to the extreme in the north. Additionally, the author lets us know not just that the lands surrounding Norway are rugged, but they vary in shape since certain areas take longer to cross than others. This Narrational Map by itself does not reveal much more about the nature of the Norse conceptualization of space than in the other Narrational Maps we have already seen. It does give us an indication, however, that the Norse may have been thinking about overland space in much the same way that we see represented in the nautical Narrational Maps.

Overland Travel and Norse Narrational Maps

Narrational Maps which depict overland travel are much less common than those describing maritime routes. One such Narrational Map is found toward the end of *Brennu-Njáls saga.* The Narrational Map in question occurs after the slaying of Höskuldr Þráinsson as part of the plot to attack Njáll and his sons in their home. As part of the plot to kill Njáll, Flosi Þórðarson gathers a group of conspirators and comes up with a plan of attack. Flosi and the other burners meet at Svinafell on the south coast of Iceland and then proceed to Njáll's farm by way of the church at Kirkjubær. However, the route they take travels past the north end of Eyjafjallajökull rather than along the south coast, which was the usual route (Cook 334). It is the description of the route that Flosi and the burners take that composes the Narrational Map in discussion:

> Síðan stigu þeir á hesta sína ok riðu upp á fjall ok svá til Fiskivatna ok riðu nǫkkuru fyrir vestan vǫtnin ok stefndu svá vestr á sandinn, - létu þeir þá Eyjafjallajǫkul á vinstri hǫnd, - ok svá ofan í Goðaland ok svá sil Markarfljóts ok

kómu um nónskeid annan dag viko á Þríhyrningshála ok biðu þar til miðs aptans (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 322-323).

[Then they mounted their horses and rode up the mountains until they came to the Fiskivötn lakes, and they rode a west from the lakes and went west toward Sand – and they kept the Eyjafallajökll glacier on their left hand – they then came down into Goðaland and continued to Mjarkfljótr. They came to Þríhyrningsháli around noon of the second day of the week and waited there until the middle of the evening.]

This Narrational Map found in this passage occurs as part of the story in a saga, and therefore the structure differs slightly from the other Narrational Maps that we have seen to this point, but it still meets all the necessary criteria.

This Narrational Map tells us little that we did not already know about Norse Narrational Maps, but the passage does help confirm some of our previous ideas and illustrates how they apply to terrestrial rather than maritime regions. To begin with, the Norse text indicates that they went *westward* onto Sand ("vestr á sandinn"). This may suggest that the party moved due west, but it is also well within the limits of the text to suggest that the direction of travel was simply more westward than anything else. The "sandinn" referred to in the text is most likely the Mælifellssandur region in the interior of Iceland (Cook 334), a region of volcanic sand and gravel which extends for several miles in each direction, and as such is not a precise landmark toward which the party would be traveling. Additionally, the author is not as precise as he could be when describing the route, perhaps because the map comes from a literary text, but there is still enough information for it to be useful. Unlike the maritime Narrational Maps that we have seen, this map does not list travel times for each leg of the route, but does give the total travel

time for the overland crossing and enough detail that the route can be traced with some certainty.

We would anticipate some differences between overland and maritime Narrational Maps. For one, conditions are much more variable in overland travel, and such differences have a major impact on travel time. Even though seaborne travel is at the mercy of the winds, tides, and storms, factors such as snow, heavy rain, and mud can have a much more marked impact on travel by land. Not only can these environmental conditions severely impact the travel time itself, they can often force a traveler to choose an alternate route, a course of action which can severely impact travel time. Beyond the possibility that weather conditions may impact travel times, there are simply more decisions to be made when an individual travels by land. In general, long-distance travel by water takes two forms: travel by day, resting in a safe harbor by night, or continuous twenty-four hour travel. In contrast, overland travel is generally only conducted during daylight hours. While this may not seem to be a major limitation at first, we must not forget that at the higher latitudes in Scandinavia, the amount of daylight varies significantly by season which means that there can be no standard time for a "day of traveling." Beyond issues of light, stops are more frequent when traveling overland. Individuals need to rest and replenish supplies, and will often also stop for social reasons when they encounter other people. These differences between maritime and overland travel naturally influence how travel is conducted, and may result in diminished precision in how overland travel is discussed. Surprisingly these differences seem to have very little impact on how the medieval Scandinavians imagined space.

A feature which stands out in the overland Narrational Maps in both *The Old English Orosius* and in *Brennu-Njáls Saga* (but perhaps is not entirely unexpected) is that neither author devotes much attention to descriptions of landscape. This omission may seem strange to a modern reader for multiple reasons. First of all, one of the advantages of overland travel over

maritime travel is that the landscape is frequently dotted with landmarks which can assist in following a proper course, and where these do not exist, artificial markers in the form of roads, cairns, and other visual indicators can be created. Thus we would expect that an author would at least mention these landmarks. Secondly, elaborate descriptions of landscape are quite common in modern writing. We not only have a robust tradition of travel writing which describes landscape, we often encounter detailed descriptions of landscape as a background against which narrative action unfolds. However, as strange as it may seem to us to create an overland Narrational Map without detailed descriptions of landscape, Old Norse literature in general rarely pays much attention to landscape. The terrestrial landscape closely resembles the maritime landscape: a generally featureless expanse of space. While it would certainly be too much to conclude that the Norse imagined terrestrial landscapes in precisely the same way as maritime landscapes, the evidence does seem to suggest a similar approach; fixed landmarks separated by nebulous, and somewhat variable space.

Vinland Sagas

The final Norse Narrational Map that examined here is in *Grœnlandinga Saga*, which is also the map that has received the greatest amount of scholarly commentary. The map itself is longer than the others that we have examined and also includes more details. It describes the voyage of one Bjarni Herjúlfsson who decides that he wants to sail from Iceland to the newly-discovered Greenland. However, none of the crew has yet attempted the crossing and are apprehensive about the journey. The author describes the journey in detail:

> En þó halda þeir nú í haf þegar þeir váru búnir og sigldu þrjá daga þar til er landit var vatnat en þá tók af byrina og lagði á norrænur og þokur og vissu þeir eigi hvert að þeir fóru og skipti það mǫrgum dægrum. Eptir þat sá þeir sól og máttu þá

deila áttir. Vinda nú segl og sigla þetta dægur, áðr þeir sá land og ræddu um með sér, hvat landi þetta mun vera, en Bjarni kvezk hyggja, at þat mundi eigi Grænland. Þeir spyrja, hvárt hann vill sigla at þessu landi eða eigi. Bjarni svarar: "Það er mitt ráð að sigla í nánd við landit." Og svá gera þeir og sá þat brátt at landit var ófjǫllótt og skógi vaxit, ok smár hæðir á landinu, og létu landit á bakborða og létu skaut horfa á land. Síðan sigla þeir tvau dægr áðr þeir sá land annat. Þeir spyrja, hvárt Bjarni ætlaði það enn Grænland. Hann kvazk eigi heldr ætla þetta Grænland en it fyrra, - "því að jǫklar eru mjǫk miklir sagðir á Grænlandi." Þeir nálguðust brátt þetta land ok sá þat vera slétt land og viði vaxit. Þá tók af byr fyrir þeim. Þá ræddu hásetar þat at þeim þótti þat ráð, að taka þat land en Bjarni vill þat eigi. Þeir þóttust bæði þurfa við og vatn. "At engu eru þér því óbirgir," segir Bjarni; en þó fékk hann af því nokkuð ámæli af hásetum sínum. Hann bað þá vinda segl og svá var gǫrt og settu framstafn frá landi og sigla í haf útsynnings byr þrjú dægr ok sá þá landið þriðja; en þat land var hátt og fjǫllótt og jökull á; þeir spyrja þá ef Bjarni vildi að landi láta þar, en hann kvaðst eigi það vilja, - "því að mér lízt þetta land ógagnvænlegt." Nú lǫgðu þeir eigi segl sitt, halda með landinu fram ok sá, at þat var eyland; settu enn stafn við því landi og héldu í haf hinn sama byr. En veðr óx í hǫnd og bað Bjarni þá svipta og eigi sigla meira en bæði dygði vel skipi þeirra og reiða. Sigldu nú fjǫgur dægr. Þá sáu þeir land it fjórða. Þá spurðu þeir Bjarna, hvárt hann ætlaði þetta vera Grænland eða eigi. Bjarni svarar: "Þetta er líkast því, er mér er sagt frá Grænlandi ok hér munum vér at landi halda. (*Grænlandinga saga* 246-247)

[Despite this they set sail once they had made ready and sailed for three days, until the land had disappeared below the horizon. Then the wind dropped and they were beset by winds from the north and fog; for many days they did not know where they were sailing.

After that they saw the sun and could take their bearings. Hoisting the sail, they sailed for the rest of the day before sighting land. They speculated among themselves as to what land this would be, for Bjarni said he suspected this was not Greenland.

They asked whether he wished to sail up close into the shore of this country or not. 'My advice is that we sail in close to the land.'

They did so, and soon saw that the land was not mountainous but did have small hills, and was covered with forests. Keeping it on their port side, they turned their sail-end landwards and angled away from the shore.

They sailed for another two days before sighting land once again.

They asked Barni whether he now thought this to be Greenland.

He said he thought this no more likely to be Greenland than the previous land – 'since there are said to be very large glaciers in Greenland.'

They soon approached the land and saw that it was flat and wooded. The wind died and the crew members said they thought it advisable to put ashore, but Bjarni was against it. They claimed they needed both timber and water.

'You've no shortage of those provisions,' Bjarni said, but he was criticized somewhat by his crew for this.

He told them to hoist sail and they did so, turning the stern towards shore and sailing seawards. For three days they sailed with the wind from the south-west until they saw a third land. This land had high mountains, capped by a glacier.

They asked whether Bjarni wished to make land there, but he said he did not wish to do so – 'as this land seems to me to offer nothing of use.'

This time they did not lower the sail, but followed the shoreline until they saw that the land was an island. Once more they turned their stern landwards and sailed out to sea with the same breeze. But the wind soon grew and Bjarni told them to lower the sail and not to proceed faster than both their ship and rigging could safely withstand. They sailed for four days.

Upon seeing a fourth land they asked Bjarni whether he thought this was Greenland or not.

Bjarni answered, 'This land is most like what I have been told of Greenland, and we'll head for shore here' (trans. Kunz 637-38).]

Both *Grænlandinga Saga* and the other of the Vinland Sagas, *Eiríks saga Rauða*, contain several other descriptions of the new lands and briefly mention routes taken to get there, but only this passage from *Grænlandinga Saga* fits all the criteria to properly be called a Narrational Map. However, even though this passage fits all our established criteria to be classified as a Narrational Map, and in many ways is more complete than many of the Norse Narrational Maps that we have examined, the nature of what the map describes is very different from any of the other Narrational Maps we have seen.

The Narrational Map in *Grænlandinga Saga* differs from most in two principal ways. The

first is that this map, like Ohthere's voyages, purports to describe a single, one-time journey rather than a habitual route, the more typical form of Narrational Map. Presumably, this route to lands west of Greenland not only could have been, but probably *was*, used in some form or another to travel to the New World on other occasions during the early period of Icelandic history – before decreasing timber supplies forced a greater reliance on Norwegian-owned ships. However, unlike Ohthere's Narrational Maps, the route described in *Grænlandinga Saga* was not actively traveled at the time the Narrational Map was recorded. Maritime travel from Iceland and Greenland to the North American continent seems to have been active in the eleventh century, but as Iceland and Greenland grew increasingly dependent on Norwegian trade, they visited North America with decreasing frequency. The last recorded voyage to Vínland was undertaken by Eiríkr upsi Gnúpsson the bishop of Greenland in 1121 (Gísli Sigurðsson "Medieval Icelandic Saga," 265), approximately a century before *Grænlandinga Saga* is thought to have been first written.

The connection between the text of the saga and the events (and Narrational Map) presented in it is not clear, and the relationship between the written sagas and historical events has been a major of contention in scholarship for well over a century.[16] The archeological excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows have demonstrated conclusively that the Norse did, in fact, explore and temporarily settle on the North American continent. However, arguments can and have been made which question the accuracy of the accounts of the Vinland Sagas. They were, after all written more than two centuries after the voyages supposedly took place. However, it is not the accuracy or textual history of these sagas which is of concern here, rather this saga is useful as an example of how the Norse imagined space, whether or not the descriptions are

[16] For a comprehensive survey of this scholar ship see Gísli Sigurðsson ("Medieval Icelandic Saga").

rooted in historical reality.

The actual text of the Narrational Map in *Grænlindinga Saga* adds an additional detail that we have yet to see in any of the Narrational Maps, Norse or Mediterranean. This is the only Narrational Map which includes an explicit mention of the direction of the winds. There are several possible reasons for this addition to the Narrational Map. The first is that the inclusion of the wind direction is simply a quirk of the author. The second, and a slightly more interesting motive could be that the Narrational Map in *Grænlandinga Saga* occurs as part of a closed narrative which describes a specific journey rather than the generic route which most of the Narrational Maps describe. Thus the winds are included as part of the narrative, with the implicit understanding that they should not be taken to indicate overall wind conditions. We should, however, note that Ohthere's voyage north also describes a specific, one-time trip, and it contains no mention of the winds.

The third possible motivation for the author of *Grænlandinga Saga* to include specific indications of the directionality of the wind is perhaps the most interesting. The saga and the Narrational Map found therein describe lands which quite unlike those in many of the other maps we have examined fell within the sphere of Norse consciousness but were not frequently visited by the Norse, and by the time of the saga's composition may not have been visited as all. We can reasonably postulate that the Norse mariners would have been familiar enough with the prevailing winds in various regions commonly visited by the Scandinavians that there would not be any necessity for a descriptive map. However, since the lands of the North American continent would have been sufficiently foreign to the Norse audience, the inclusion of prevailing winds in the Narrational Map may have been seen as a necessary detail for proper navigation even though they were not necessary elsewhere. The reality is that, while we may speculate

about the extra detail in the *Grænlandinga Saga* Narrational Map, there is not sufficient evidence to reach any definitive conclusion.

Beyond this single detail, the Narrational Map found in *Grænlandinga Saga* reveals little that is radically new about Narrational Maps in the Norse or Norse concepts of physical space. Its value is not specifically its content, but the fact that it and the Vínland voyages have received so much attention in both scholarly and popular circles. Since the Norse exploration of the New World has attracted so much attention, we have the benefit of a large corpus of secondary material which analyzes and discusses geography and travel described in the Vínland Sagas. This information gives us what is perhaps our best method of control when investigating this and other Norse Narrational Maps, and gives us at least some indication of how accurate or useful they may be.

As always, we must be wary of imposing modern concepts of both space and travel onto a medieval structure. The primary focus of most of the secondary literature on the Vínland Sagas attempts to map the routes and place names onto their modern equivalents in an attempt to help us understand these exploratory voyages, and where the Scandinavians may have visited. This process is worthwhile, but at the same time an inherently cartographic one. I have already outlined some of the problems with imposing modern, cartographic notions of space onto Norse texts. Fortunately, some of these complications are alleviated by the fact that, if we believe that the Vinland Sagas describe real voyages, the underlying physical geography of the voyages themselves must be the same whether or not they are imagined through a modern, cartographic notion of space or through any other method of constructing space. With this principle in mind, the use of the geographical information in the Vinland Sagas can help us check certain assumptions about Norse Narrational Maps and ideas of space, so long as we bear in mind that

the act of taking the written narratives and mapping them into cartographic space is inherently a process of translation and is bound to experience problems as we convert one system to another.

One recent book of particular value is Gísli Sigurðsson's 2004 publication, *Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, which contains an extensive summary of previous scholarship on the Vinland Sagas and how they may correspond to modern locations. It also contains what, in my opinion, is the most useful cartographic map of the Vinland voyages, largely because it constructs the shape of the voyages based on textual information rather than on any real-world geography. Gísli's survey of Vínland scholarship highlights evolving scholarly trends as well as attitudes about the nature of saga writing. The overall trend is general scholarly disagreement about how real world locations match with those in the sagas. In spite of this, there is an overwhelming trend to associate Labrador with the locations which Bjarni first visited. The northern lands in Bjarni's first voyage are a bit more tentatively located, but the general trend is to divide them between Labrador and Baffin Island (Gísli Sigurðsson "Medieval Icelandic Saga," 277).

Why did the saga author decide to include this Narrational Map in the saga itself? We can reasonably conclude that this map was never intended to be a navigational tool, since voyages to Vinland had essentially stopped. The map is also too detailed and, in spite of the disagreements in the scholarly literature, it simply matches too well with our knowledge of Canadian geography to be a complete fabrication. A possible explanation for why the author chose to incorporate this Narrational Map into his text may be related to the Narrational Map in *Landnámabók*. Both Narrational Maps are located near the beginning of the text and relate to a geographical region which features prominently in the account that follows the Narrational Maps. Both essentially serve as a means to locate a certain geographical region in terms of other locations which may be

familiar to a reader. In this way they may be functioning much like the cartographic maps that we often find in modern editions of the sagas; they serve as an aid to the reader of the text. This may seem odd to us, since the Narrational Map in *Grœnlandinga Saga* is so difficult for us to interpret, but in light of the other Norse Narrational Maps we have examined, it seems consistent with the method that the Norse used to imagine physical space.

The Value of Norse Narrational Maps

Up to this point we have investigated enough textual evidence to demonstrate that the medieval Norse had a tradition of Narrational Maps similar to those circulating in Europe and the Middle East from Antiquity to the cartographic revolution of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The precise relationship between these Norse and Mediterranean Narrational Maps is not completely clear, but seems to be the result of convergent evolution rather than direct borrowing. This situation is likely what we would expect, since the Scandinavians were a seafaring people well before the Viking Age and would have needed some method to orient themselves in space and to communicate this information to others. In fact, the similarities between the Norse, Mediterranean, and Arabic Narrational Maps are striking, the largest difference being their distribution in texts. In general, the Mediterranean Narrational Maps are much more systematized than the Norse; they are generally represented by longer routes and compiled into a single text designed to be used as a narrative aid. The Norse Narrational Maps are woven into longer texts and do not survive as stand-alone works. In spite of the fact that the text of the surviving Norse Narrational Maps are much shorter than the extended descriptions of the Classical *peripli* and the later pilot books, the Norse Maps seem to be just as accurate and useful as navigational tools.

The usefulness of the Norse Narrational Maps to us goes beyond their function as

navigational devices; they provide a window into how Norsemen may have conceptualized the space around them. Information we can glean from the few extant Norse Narrational Maps does not necessarily reveal anything about how specific individuals constructed space, since these individuals are no longer available to interview, and even if we could do so, we would be faced with the difficult problem of translating this information from the abstract realm of thought to something more concrete. However, an analysis of these Narrational Maps can reveal general trends about how the medieval Norse discussed space, which can, in turn give us some insight into larger societal ideas about space. Certain ideas of how the Norse likely imagined space have already come to light over the course of our treatment of the various texts of Narrational Maps, both from the Norse texts themselves, and from their similarities to the Classical peripli and the Medieval portolans. There is still one Narrational Map, or rather tradition of Narrational Maps, worth examining.

The Puluwat – Modern Mapless Navigators

The small Pacific island of Puluwat is part of the Federated States of Micronesia. The island has a population just over one thousand individuals, but is home to a strong tradition of maritime excellence, which was brought to light in two works of the 1970's: Thomas Gladwin's *East is a Big Bird* (1970) and David Lewis's *We, the Navigators* (1972). These books document the Puluwats' remarkable tradition of seafaring, whereby they were able to routinely make safe, open-water crossings of one hundred miles or more in outrigger canoes. The Puluwat still practiced mapless navigation in an era when they could be questioned by anthropologists, and their notions of space and travel could be understood directly from the witness of these navigators. It is my hope that the modes that this mapless culture used to understand space may provide insight into how the Norse imagined their world without creating cartographic maps. The

Puluwat were almost certainly more dependent on accurate means of navigation than the Norse, but like the Norse, they were also a seafaring people, faced with similar challenges to navigating the open ocean.

The Puluwat navigated without the use of any charts or other navigational aids, but by a combination of dead reckoning and a sidereal compass, which existed only in the minds of the navigators and in oral tradition. The sidereal compass is constructed of the rising and setting points of sixteen different stars distributed unevenly across the night sky, for a total of thirty-two reference points on the horizon. These reference points form the basis of a *star course*, a navigational aid similar in concept to our European Narrational Maps, but very different in execution. Like the Narrational Maps we have seen, the Puluwat star courses consist of a series of stars, some up to ten stars in length, which a mariner must follow to reach a particular destination. This method of navigation has the benefit of being fixed to a point which is constantly visible in the night sky so, unlike the Norse and Mediterranean Narrational Maps, the Puluwat mariners can know with some confidence that they are following the proper course, as they are able to make constant course corrections rather than relying on an initial heading and measuring travel distance in temporal or linear units.[17] Since the stars move across the sky from

[17] It is worthwhile to note however, that while the Puluwat system of navigation may seem superior to the European traditions, each system is well-suited for the geography of the area where it developed. The Puluwat system was designed to accurately find small islands in the open ocean. The stars provide a fixed landmark that is relatively easy to identify and follow. While such a system would seem ready-made for oceanic crossings, it would have been of little benefit to the Norse. To begin with, the long hours of daylight in the summer months would have made any system of stellar navigation worthless during the summer; and summer was the prime time to be sailing in the North. Additionally, the closer one travels to the equator, the stars rise at in increasing angle relative to the horizon until they the rise perpendicularly to the Earth at the Equator. This means that in Puluwat, the stars spend little time near the horizon. In Scandinavia, however, the stars rise at a much flatter angle, which means that they would have a much greater east-west variance in their motion that near the poles, and there would be little benefit to the Puluwat system of following a star course.

Mariners in the Mediterranean would have more to gain from a system like that of the Puluwat, since they are both further south and the weather conditions are more conducive to stellar navigation. The Mediterranean is further from the Equator than Puluwat, so the benefit would not be quite as great. However, the geography of the Mediterranean is such that it does not demand open ocean crossings like the South Pacific. Thus, it makes sense that their concept of navigation would develop around the ability to follow coastlines rather than celestial objects.

east to west in the course of a single night, a given star is only useful as a course indicator when it is relatively low in the sky. As a result a given star chart will contain a series of stars that must be followed over the course of a given night as the stars change positions and new stars move closer to the horizon.

While this system is both accurate and simple in structure, its practical application becomes extremely complex. In order to properly navigate the island systems around Puluwat, a mariner would have to commit to memory an astonishing array of star routes. Not only would they be required to memorize the star route from each island to each all known islands, they would have to do so for different times of the year, as the stars change positions throughout the annual cycle. Additionally, many of the Puluwats' journeys took longer than a single night of travel, so they would have to rely on the sun, winds, and currents for navigation when traveling by day, a feat which required even more information committed to memory. The memorization of this information was helped, in part, by mythology and stories connected to each route, but it is still a dazzling amount of information for a single individual to retain. As intimidating as this system may seem, the fact is that it worked, and the Puluwat navigated through their world quite successfully and quite impressively.

While the Puluwat system of star courses solves one problem of open water navigation, informing a sailor *where* to go, the system does little to inform a mariner *where* he is. To handle this problem, the Puluwat use a concept called *etak* to mentally track where they are over the course of a voyage. Of *etak*, Lewis writes:

> A voyage is conceived of as being divided into stages or segments with reference to an island lying away to one side of the course. The canoe is regarded as being stationary and the islands mobile. Thus the destination "moves" nearer to the

> vessel and the reference (etak) island "moves" back from beneath one star point to the next. Each star point the reference island "moves corresponds to the completion of one etak stage of the journey… this is a purely mental concept that allows the navigator to visualize his position. (Lewis 445)

Naturally the islanders are perfectly aware that it is the canoe rather than the islands that are actually moving, but the mental construct allows for a systematized means of imagining space while definite landmarks are not available.

The success of this system is self-evident, but it is an interesting mode of imagining space. In any given voyage there are essentially only three points of interest: the origin, the destination, and the canoe, that latter of which seems to be the central focus of imagined space because the canoe, the observable space occupied by the mariner, is stationary while the others move around it. This system essentially simplifies all space, and eliminates from the mind of the navigator all landmarks which are not part of the etak. Thus, even though etak works as a system of dead reckoning, the mental construct itself suggests a loose conceptualization of space at all points which are not the origin, destination, or canoe. All other spatial points are normalized and are essentially the same in the mind of the navigator.

The system that the Puluwat use to manage the complex space between islands differs in the details, but the overall way in which they imagine space seems very similar to that which I am proposing for the medieval Norse. The Puluwat is more fleshed out than our hypothesized Norse system, due to a greater abundance of information. Both systems of imagining space involve a web of one-dimensional courses; the star routes in the case of the Puluwat, and the somewhat ambiguous concept of a Narrational Maps defined here. Etak among the Puluwat also promotes a similar sense of nebulous space as the Norse Narrational Maps suggest. Thus, even

though the exact mental process whereby the medieval Norse imagined space is lost, the similarities to the Puluwat navigational system suggest a possible analogue.

Narrational Maps and the Norse Concept of Space

The evidence suggests that space in the minds of the medieval Norse was not cartographic. They did not have a systematized, top-down view of space, but instead space consisted of a series of defined spatial points, surrounded by nebulous, undefined space. Additionally, the Norse system of space is essentially one-dimensional rather than two even though there are suggestions that the Norse were able to extend their one-dimensional system of describing space to give at least some feel of two-dimensionality. Space was understood in terms of routes and travel from one center to another. In fact, this system is probably the key difference between our system of representing space and that of the Norse. For modern consumers of cartographic culture, space is something which is often exterior to the observer. We are accustomed to imagining space from above, in a forum which allows us to see multiple points at once and which clearly defines all spatial points simultaneously.

In contrast, the Norse system is very much rooted in the experience of *travel*. We have briefly investigated the Puluwat, a people who practiced mapless navigation well into the twentieth century. This Micronesian people developed a highly accurate system of navigation based on a combination of stellar navigation and an innovative method of imagining space oriented in the experience of travel. In a similar vein, the bulk of the surviving Norse Narrational Maps suggest that the medieval Norse notion of space was likewise rooted in the process of travel. Space is not constructed external to the observer, rather is firmly rooted in a first person perspective in linear, one-dimensional travel, in which the only clearly defined points are the origin, destination, and the space observable to the traveler.

Physical Geography

One of the most memorable and celebrated passages in the *Íslendingasögur* occurs about midway through *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and marks a key moment in the development of the saga's plot. At this moment, Gunnarr Hámundarson, one of the chief protagonists, has been judged guilty of manslaughter and exiled from Iceland for a period of three years. As Gunnarr rides from his farmstead at Hlíðarendi to the sea, where he plans to catch a ship to Norway, his horse stumbles and casts him from the saddle. He lands facing backward, looking up the hill to his farm and utters what are perhaps the most famous lines of Icelandic literature: "Fǫgr er hlíðin, svá at mér hefir hon aldri jafnfǫgr sýnzk, bleikir akrar ok slegin tún, ok mun ek ríða heim aptr ok fara hvergi." (Einar Ol. Sveinsson 182) [Beautiful is the mountainside, so much so that it has never seemed so beautiful to me, pale fields and mowed hay fields. I will now ride home again and go nowhere else.]. Not only does Gunnar's choice to return home violate the terms of his sentence and impose outlaw status on the protagonist, but it goes against the council of his close and semi-prophetic friend, Njáll Þorgeirsson, who has promised that if Gunnrar leaves Iceland he will gain great wealth and return to Iceland where he will live a long and happy life. Njáll also warns that if Gunnar stays, his death will shortly follow. Njáll's advice proves correct, and following a heroic stand at his hall, Gunnarr meets an untimely end. This episode stands out among the Icelandic sagas, not only because it proves to be crucial in the narrative of the saga, but because the episode presents a nearly unique and romanticized view of the beauty and power of the Icelandic landscape in a corpus of literature in which the landscape is rarely presented as anything beyond a practical backdrop to the narrative action.

Geography, Landscape, and Cosmology

This episode from *Njáls saga*, while not part of the mythological corpus, illustrates the

differences between two concepts which feature prominently in this and later chapters: landscape and geography. We often associate the term geography with the modern academic discipline of the same name: the study of the physical features of the Earth and how people interact with and shape these features. The term landscape does not have the same direct association with an academic discipline as geography, unless we include the sub-field of Landscape Archaeology, but like geography, landscape also indicates a connection with the physical features of planet Earth. Landscape differs from geography in that the focus rests on human perception of the Earth's physical features rather than on the features themselves (Johnson 2-4). When Gunnar of Hlíðarendi looks on the slope where his farm rests, he describes the slope and the cultivated land on it, all physical features of the land which would fall under the description of *geography*, but the remainder of his description and his subsequent behavior indicate a relationship which goes beyond mere geography. Even though the saga author does not explicitly describe Gunnar's motivation for returning to his farmstead, we can reasonably presume that his motivation goes beyond the simple physical beauty that he perceived in the landscape but is driven by his emotional attachment to the place as his *home*. Thus we, as readers of the saga, see the landscape through the lens of Gunnar's perception and it becomes more than just geography.

Even more, this episode has the capacity to transform the nature of landscape for those familiar with the saga. Admittedly, Gunnar's farm is located on a site of great natural beauty, but the location surrounding Njáll and Gunnar's farms is fairly typical of much of the settled portion of the island. There are certainly more compelling locations in Iceland, and the site of his farm consists of rather unimpressive fields and a shallow pit of an archeological dig. As such, it is a fairly unremarkable location in terms of the larger scale of Icelandic geography, but the site takes on an entirely new meaning for those who have read and know the saga. The site is indelibly

connected to the saga narrative as a whole, but more specifically to the episode described above. The physical geography of a specific location in Iceland takes on a different context and in this context is imagined differently by those familiar with *Njáls saga.* So even though a single geographical region may be identical, the landscape can be vastly different depending on how the physical geography is received and understood by an observer.

While the terms geography and landscape seem to be naturally linked, there is a third term which will feature prominently in this chapter which may not, at first, seem to be closely related to the other two – cosmology. Just as the modern usage of geography has come to be associated with a specific academic discipline, so too has cosmology come to refer specifically to a particular concentration within astrophysics which focuses on large-scale issues of the structure and formation of the universe. Historically, cosmology (or perhaps more accurately cosmography) and geography were intimately connected through Claudius Ptolemy's twin works *The Mathematical Treatise* and the *Geography*. In these treatises, Ptolemy gives detailed descriptions of the heavens and of the Earth, and precise mathematical instructions describing how to model celestial motions and how to map the Earth's surface. Under the influence of Ptolemy's writings, in the Ancient, Medieval,[18] and Renaissance view(s) of geography and cosmology, they were linked to a greater extent than are the modern academic disciplines of the same name. Both sciences were essentially modes of representing space; the distinction was merely one of scale: geography dealt with the Earth, and cosmography focused on the known universe (Short 34). However, even with this distinction the focus of these disciplines often

[18] Ptolemy lived in the second century C.E. and his works were immediately influential. However, after the decline of the Latin West, Ptolemy's work passed out of the scholastic conscience in that part of Europe. However, his works remained in circulation in the Greek-speaking East, from where they were translated into Arabic. These Arabic translations became the subject of much inquiry among scholars in the medieval Islamic world, and were eventually translated into Latin, which reintroduced knowledge of Ptolemy into Western Europe (Short 13-27).

overlapped and works of cosmography included long descriptions of terrestrial geography (Short 34-47).

In this chapter I will attempt to preserve a distinction between geography and cosmology in which the former represents a smaller subset of the cosmos and describes the physical features of the Earth. However, even a cursory glance at the body of Norse mythology should be sufficient to indicate that modern or even Ptolemaic definitions of geography and cosmology do not match well with the larger shape of the Norse universe, as a result of the vastly different structure of the Norse mythological cosmos. Thus, my general tendency is to use the term cosmology to describe large-scale features which include the organization of the universe and for features which are beyond the normal interaction of gods, giants, or men. I tend to use geography to describe features of the cosmos which are on a smaller scale, one appropriate for men and gods, and the physical features on this scale. Finally, I generally employ the term landscape in situations which indicate some "human"[19] interaction with the physical features of the universe. However, as will be explored extensively in this work, the borders of the Norse cosmos are frequently nebulous and as such, a certain amount of interpretation is necessary when employing these terms and in several situations one or more terms would be appropriate.

Survey of Mythological Cosmological Models

Investigations of the infinitely connected ideas of the cosmology, geography, and landscape of the Norse cosmos have been in place for nearly as long as scholarly attention had been paid to Norse myth. There have been numerous attempts to produce models (graphical or otherwise) of the physical geography and the landscape of the Norse universe as presented in the

[19] I use human and human geography here in the loosest sense. The Norse cosmos is populated by a plethora of beings possessing human-like intelligence and agency. Most of these beings, such as the Æsir, Jötnar, and Alfar, are anthropomorphic, but there exist other beings, such as the wolf Fenrir, who seem to be capable of the full range of human reason and speech even through they have other non-human forms.

Eddas and other mythological sources.[20] Most treatments pay relatively little attention to the *physical* geography of the cosmos but focus on the *human* geography and the interactions of the various beings which inhabit it, and on the landscape elements of the mythological narratives and how the structure of the cosmos reflects ideas of space among the Medieval Norse. Not only are arguments about the human geography of the Norse cosmos far more interesting than those about the physical geography and landscape, the sources themselves seem more interested in the inhabitants of the cosmos rather than its physical structure. However, the physical geography of the cosmos provides the background upon which the human drama of myth unfolds, and as such is worthy of our critical attention.

Most of the contrasting models of the Norse cosmos include several common features which feature prominently in the Norse cosmological model (Yggdrasill, Ásgarðr, etc.) but the organization and physical distribution of these elements often differs dramatically from author to author. One of the most lasting representations of the Norse cosmos (at least for English-speaking students of the Old Norse language) is the image presented in E.V. Gordon's *An Introduction to Old Norse* (196). Gordon's drawing strongly emphasizes the vertical nature of the cosmos and the importance of Yggdrasill in linking the various elements of the imagined universe. In his model, Yggdrasill sits on the top of the dome of the sky, borne up by the four dwarves who mark the points of the compass. The interior details of the geography under the dome are vague, but Gordon draws particular emphasis to the rainbow bridge, *Bifrost*, and to Yggdrasill's roots which connect to two different areas in or near Miðgarðr. Yggdrasill's roots extend below the world of gods and men passing the dragon *Níðhögg* and continue down to Hel, the realm of the dead.

[20] An excellent survey of the history of graphic representations can be found in Clunies Ross ("Images").

Kirsten Hastrup presents a quite different model of the Norse cosmos, showing two competing and incompatible cosmological systems in operation in Commonwealth Iceland. Hastrup's models present one cosmos oriented principally along a vertical axis and another oriented horizontally. Her discussion of these models relies heavily on the work of Meletinskiĭ ("Scandinavian Mythology") and Haugen (1970) as well as on her own anthropological models of Icelandic political and social structure. Hastrup's work is principally concerned with the anthropological structures of the Icelandic freestate and how these structures evolve over time, and her mythological models only play a small role in her overall discussion. Central to the theoretical formulation of her models is a binary system composed of opposing structures and mediated by some other structure situated between the poles.

Her vertical model resembles Gordon's model, in which the cosmos is divided into three tiers oriented vertically along Yggdrasill, the ash tree which forms the spatial and temporal axis of the cosmos. At the top of the tree lies Ásgarðr, opposed by Niflheimr, with Miðgarðr as the middle element. This model divides the cosmos into "heaven," "earth," and "underworld" but also places the forces of life and death at opposite ends of the vertical axis, mediated by the world of mankind. This structure also places in opposition above and below, paralleling the opposition between of male and female (Hastrup 149). Hastrup emphasizes that this model is inherently eschatological, oriented along Yggdrasill which stands as a marker and barometer for the creation and destruction of the cosmos and points to the eventual destruction at Ragnarök.

Hastrup's horizontal model on the other hand represents the durability and stability of the cosmos and reflects a situation where the gods hold the upper hand in their conflict with the jötnar, but where the war never ends. The structure of this model places Miðgarðr at the center, surrounded by water and opposed by Útgarðr. Hastrup locates Ásgarðr at some uncertain

location within Miðgarðr but this model does not include a placement of Niflheimr or any other realm of the dead. The structure of this model sets up the opposing poles of "inside" and "outside," "us" versus "them," and "center" and "periphery." Here the gods and giants are not only opposing forces in the cosmos, they are literally oriented at opposite ends of the world and are mediated by mankind in the aptly named Miðgarðr.

While the concept of two competing cosmological systems may seem contradictory at first, the modern world is quite content to function simultaneously with two such opposing models. Today we conceptualize an educated heliocentric model of the solar system in which a spherical Earth and other planets orbit a central star, but generally interact with a geocentric, flat-earth model in our daily lives. We happily discuss such concepts as "sunrise" and "sunset" and map the surface of the planet on flat surfaces, but actively maintain a heliocentric stance in our public conversations, often without noting our seemingly contradictory adherence to two conflicting models. However, we functionally operate with multiple simultaneous cosmological models partially because they speak to differing points of perception; one internal and the other external to the system. Each model serves a different purpose and tells a different story about our relationship to the cosmos. Hastrup's two-model system functions in a similar way; each model, even though in apparent conflict, discuses different methods of conceptualizing humanity's role in the cosmos, and this splitting of cosmological models may be Hastrup's most original and important contribution to our understanding of the Norse mythological cosmos.

Clunies-Ross ("Prolonged Echoes") proposes a model similar to Hastrup's horizontal model, but shifts the center of emphasis and introduces more nuance into the discussion of cosmic geography. To begin with, she argues that the central position in mythic space is more ideological than geographical and focuses on the principal actors of mythological narrative, the

gods—rather than on the human inhabitants of Miðgarðr who play a central role as intermediaries in Hastrup's cosmology. Clunies-Ross further argues that: "there seems more textual support for a spatial conceptualisation of a series of territories belonging to different classes of beings arranged like a series of concentric half-circles, the perimeter of each circle being imagined as a kind of protective rampart, a *garðr*" (51). A cosmological model based on a series of concentric half-circles allows for further gradation of space than a model based on center and periphery, and as Clunies-Ross points out, distances are often less than Hastrup would imply and the sources themselves seem to present varying ideas of the distance between locales at the center and on the edge (52). Her model is oriented in individual myths over anthropological or theoretical models, emphasizing the spatial division of the mythological cosmos and how her semi-circular rings reflect mythological interactions.

Given the marked differences between the various existing geographical models of the Norse cosmos, we are forced to ask whether or not it is even possible to produce a concrete mythical cosmology? Some of the differences between the models presented here are the product of the different theoretical goals and methods of the various authors who craft these cosmological models. However, the production of cosmological models is not the concern of all scholars, and several of the prominent handbooks of Scandinavian mythology pay little or no attention to cosmology beyond a brief mention of Norse cosmogony. Hilda Ellis-Davidson, who provides an in-depth mythical timeline from creation to Ragnarök, provides only the simple statement that Yggdrasill forms the center of the Norse cosmos (197), and Turville-Petre omits any discussion of large-scale cosmological structure.

Some of the confusion lies with the sources themselves. The sources of Norse myth do not present a unified, homogeneous picture of belief and practice, and this ambiguity is

particularly true of mythological geography and cosmology. However, all of the models of the Norse cosmos we have examined have one feature in common: all present a cartographic model of the cosmos. By this I mean that all our examples present a model of the cosmos which lends itself to some sort of graphic representation. In the case of Gordon's model, this representation is explicit: the map is provided for us. While neither Hastrup nor Clunies-Ross provides an explicit graphical representation in the same way as Gordon does, their descriptions of the shape and form of the cosmos easily lend themselves to being drawn as a map.

Yet, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that a cartographic concept of space would be foreign to the Scandinavians throughout much of the Middle Ages. As such we must naturally wonder about the appropriateness of any model of the Norse cosmos which can be represented in cartographic form, since any such model may in fact be antithetical to how the Norse themselves would have imagined their mythical cosmos. From this perspective, it is reasonable to wonder if part of the cause of the hugely divergent models of the Norse mythological cosmos is not the result of fragmentary sources and authorial agendas, but also because the Norse cosmos was born out of a cultural mindset for which a map would be foreign. Thus the Norse cosmos may resist any sort of active mapping. In light of these complications I will endeavor to construct an alternate model of the Norse cosmos, a model which attempts to conform more closely to how the Norse may have imagined space rather than to our modern, cartographic ideas.

Cosmology and Travel

My exploration of medieval Norse spatial constructions not only indicated that they imagined space in a looser, non-cartographic manner, but that this construction was also strongly rooted in the first-person experience of traveling along a single route. It is this second aspect of the medieval Scandinavians' spatial imagination which I will principally use in order to construct

an alternate model of the Norse mythical cosmos. I will rely primarily on episodes within the mythological cosmos which include some sort of indication of travel, whether an explicit travel narrative or only an instance of implied travel. For instance, the many named ships in the mythological corpus imply maritime travel, even if they are not depicted in a moment of sea travel. These travel narratives will form the large-scale structure of the new cosmological model upon which I will build further from other supplementary evidence in the sources. The notion of travel relies not only on movement, but also on stability. Travel is only noteworthy if it goes *somewhere*. A complete cosmological model must be constructed by examining not just fixed locales, these "somewheres," but by understanding how they link together through travel.

Yggdrasill

My investigation of the Norse mythological cosmos will begin with one of these "somewhere"s: the World-Ash, Yggdrasill. While there is a certain amount of travel (which I will examine) associated with the great tree, the majority of the information contained in our sources about the ash itself focuses on the tree as static and distant feature of the cosmos. Yggdrasill is a key component of the Norse mythological system and functions as the single largest element of the cosmos and a feature which ultimately binds the entire system together. As such, the myths which describe the tree are crucial for helping us understand the large-scale structure and general shape of the Norse cosmos.

In *Gylfaginning* 14, the great Icelandic scholar-poet, Snorri Sturluson describes several creatures which reside in or near the tree. At the top of the tree lives an unnamed eagle, and at the bottom of the cosmos, lives a dragon named Níðhöggr who gnaws at the tree's root and will eventually cut it loose at the end of cosmological time and sever the link between the tree and the underworld. These two very dissimilar beasts are connected by a squirrel named Ratatǫskr.

Snorri tells us that:

> Íkorni sá er heitir Ratatǫskr renn upp og níðr eptir askinum ok berr ǫfundarorð milli arnarins og Níðhǫggs. (*Gylfaginning* 14)
>
> [That squirrel which is called Ratatǫskr runs up and down along the ash and carries insults between the eagle and Níðhöggr.]

Casting aside the implications of an insult contest between an eagle and a dragon using a squirrel as an intermediary, this brief passage tells us much about the nature of the Norse cosmos and is just one example of the strong sense of verticality which permeates the Norse cosmos.

Yggdrasill is mentioned in several places in the mythological sources, most notably in *Völuspá*, *Grímnismál*, and *Gylfaginning*. The presentation of the Ash varies slightly from source to source, but there are several features which all the sources possess in common. To begin with, Yggdrasill's leafy branches extend over the entire cosmos and serve as a dwelling place for numerous creatures. Some of these creatures are the sort which would be natural in an arboreal habitat (snakes, an eagle, and the squirrel Ratatǫskr) but others (namely stags) have no place living in a tree. The World Ash's branches extend to the highest regions of the Norse cosmos, and its roots extend to touch the rest.

The tree is has three, and always three, roots which connect it to distinct parts of the cosmos. The poetic and prose Eddas disagree about the exact locations where the tree connects to the rest of the cosmos. The roots touch the abodes of Hel, mankind, and the frost-giants in *Grímnismál* 31 and Ásgarðr, Niflheimr, and the frost-giants in *Gylfaginning* 14. The sources are not in agreement about precisely where Yggdrasill's roots take hold, nor are the relative locations of the various places where the tree is rooted clear. Various cosmological models place these mythical areas in differing locations, either on the same horizontal plane or some above or

below others. We will not examine the relative positions of the realms where Ygdrasill's roots touch at this point in our discussion, but it is sufficient to indicate that certain models (such as Gordon's) indicate that some of these may lie below others, but the sources suggest that Yggdrasill's roots span the breadth of the inhabited cosmos.

When examined in combination, Yggdrasill's roots, branches, and the trunk along which Ratatǫskr runs give some indication of the general shape and nature of the shape of the Norse mythological cosmos. The World Ash effectively serves as both the binding and shaping force of the cosmos. Its roots span the inhabited worlds and hold them together, while its branches cover the known universe. The sources are silent when it comes to Yggdrasill's location relative to the dome of the sky, but since no myths give much of an indication that anything occurs *above* its branches, we can safely conclude that the upper reaches are likely either coterminous with the dome of the sky or that the region between Yggdrasill's top and the dome is simply uninteresting. In light of this it is reasonable to conclude that that the Norse cosmos is generally tree-shaped, or to be a bit more geometrical, that the cosmos is roughly cylindrical but topped by a hemisphere rather than a circle.

Additionally, a cosmos which is both bounded and bound by a single large tree has several implications about the shape and solidity of the limits of the cosmos. The upper reaches of a tree are defined principally by a canopy of leaves, and to a lesser extent small, thin branches, while a complex system of roots marks the lower limit of the tree. When viewed as a composite whole the space defined by a tree is more than the sum of all of its components. Taken as individual, isolated units, leaves, roots, and branches all have very clearly defined, finite boundaries; however, when taken as individual elements as part of a composite tree, these boundaries are much more difficult to define. Leaves and branches move with the wind, and thus

the volume of space occupied by the tree is constantly changing. As a result of the dynamic and fractal-like nature of the outer reaches of a tree, it is difficult to create a discrete and finite outer boundary. There are regions of space which we unambiguously regard as inside the tree and other regions which are clearly outside of it. However, there is hazy region of space which could be simultaneously within and outside of the tree. The hazy spatial nature of real-world trees naturally extends to Yggdrasill and the boundaries of the Norse cosmos. The general shape and structure of the cosmos are fairly well-defined, but the extreme edges are nebulous and subject to change.

The implication of this shape combined with Snorri's comment that Ratatǫskr runs "upp og níðr eptir askinum" (up and down along the ash) implies that the cosmos has a strong vertical component. It is important to distinguish between a vertical cosmology and one which is merely three-dimensional. Naturally, the former implies the latter, but not all three-dimensional cosmologies are necessarily vertical in the same sense as Norse cosmology. The predominant vertical cosmology in the Western world is likely the model commonly seen in Christian belief, which includes a heavenly realm located above the Earth and a Hell below it. In this system there is a clear orientation to the universe (and a corresponding value) in which there is a clear vertical thrust to the cosmology and the differing realms are clearly stacked on top of the other. In contrast to the Christian cosmological model, the modern model is three-dimensional but not vertical. Various objects (stars, planets, galaxies, etc.) are located in a clear three-dimensional matrix, but they are not *stacked* in the same way as in the Christian cosmological model and there is no strong directional thrust to the shape of the cosmos – any direction can arbitrarily be chosen as "up." The Norse model more closely resembles the Christian model, with its clear and well-defined directionality. It can be argued that some of the vertical thrust and possible

positioning of some of the mythological realms (most notably Hel/ Niflheimr and Ásgarðr), stems from later Christian insertions into the mythological cosmos, but the strongest component of the verticality of the Norse cosmos is the World Ash itself, which seems to have strong pagan antecedents (Simek, "Dictionary" 375-6). After all, a tree must grow *up*.

Yggdrasill is the clearest indicator of the vertical component of the Norse cosmos, but certain passages in both the prose and poetic *Eddas* indicate at least some idea that at locations in the cosmos were situated above or below others. Nowhere is this verticality more evident than in the twin bridges Bifröst and Gjallarbrú. Bifröst (also called Bilröst in *Grímnismál* and *Fafnismál*) is the bridge which connects the realm of the Æsir with that of men and is frequently associated with a rainbow. Snorri tells us that Bifröst was built by the gods to connect heaven and earth (*Gylfaginning* 12) and that one end of the bridge stops at Heimdallr's hall Himinbjörg, "Heaven-Fort" (*Gylfaginning* 16). These features of the bridge intimately connect certain areas of godly habitation with the sky and in doing so imply that portions of the cosmos between the limbs of Yggdrasill and mankind are settled and inhabited.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the bridge Gjallarbrú[21] is said to connect to the realm of the dead. This bridge appears only in late sources: Snorri's *Edda*, Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga*, and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. The late date of these sources combined with the manner in which the bridge is represented suggests that the bridge is a late interpolation influenced by Medieval visionary literature (Simek, "Dictionary" 110). The exact position of the bridge is never clear in the sources, but Snorri tells that Hermóðr rode nine nights to reach the

[21] The etymology of Gjallarbrú is fairly straightforward, derived from the verb *að gjalla* "to ring/to scream" and *brú* "bridge." Presumably the screaming associated with the bridge is connected to the screams of the tormented in Hel's realm. It should also be noted that Hel was not necessarily a place of torment in the early mythological sources and the screaming should provide further evidence that Gjallarbrú was added to the Norse cosmos under later, Christian influence.

bridge through valleys so deep that he did not see the sun as part of his quest to free the slain god Baldr from Hel. At the bridge, its guardian, Móðguðr informs Hermóðr that the road to Hel lies "niðr and norðr" (*Gylfaginning* 49) [Downward and northward] giving us a glimpse of both the vertical and horizontal positioning of Hel relative the gods. A parallel to this voyage to the underworld is found in the Eddic poem *Baldrs Draumr*, in which the god Óðinn travels to the realm of the dead. In this poem Hel is also located below some other region of the cosmos as "reið hann [Óðinn] niðr þaðan Niflheliar til" (*Baldrs Draumr* 2) [He [Óðinn] rode downward to Niflhel.].

The passages describing cosmic bridges have the potential to provide some insight into the vertical positioning of areas of the Norse cosmos. However, we must be cautious. First of all, the bridges which connect Miðgarðr with both the heavens and Hel have clearly been influenced by later Christian thought[22] and the reliability of the information presented by these bridges, or even their existence in the earlier mythological system must be questioned. Furthermore, even if these bridges are completely original, as Bifröst appears to be, the passages which describe them are not completely clear and give us multiple options for the vertical structure of the Norse cosmos: 1) Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, and Hel lie on three separate vertical planes connected to each other by bridges – much like Hastrup's vertical model of the Norse cosmos. 2) Ásgarðr, Miðgardr, and Hel lie on two distinct vertical planes. In this model Miðgarðr must share a plane with either Ásgarðr or Hel, since downward travel to Hel can either be from Ásgarðr or from Miðgarðr. This is the model represented in Gordon's map of the cosmos. 3) Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr,

[22] References to Bifröst appear in early mythological poems are very probably a feature of pre-Christian paganism (Simek "Dictionary," 36-37). However, as has been noted Gjallarbrú is both late and strongly connected to Christian concepts of the afterlife. Thus it seems likely that the second bridge was inserted into the cosmology Ásgarðr and Hel came to more closely resemble Christian ideas of Heaven and Hell, and by so doing the medieval authors created a parallel situation where a bridge lead to both areas of the afterlife.

and Hel all lie on the same general vertical plane but are separated in elevation. The simplest permutation of this model would be a situation in which Ásgarðr would be located on a mountain-top and Hel in a deep valley, but other variations are certainly justified based on the information in the sources, and a strong argument can be made that Hel is situated underground. No definite conclusion can be drawn from existing textual material, but all these passages further reinforce the vertical component of the Norse cosmos and indicate that the Medieval Scandinavians envisioned a cosmos which extended vertically as well as horizontally.

The Edge of the Cosmos – Þórr's Fishing Trip

In addition to imagining a strong vertical component, the mythological corpus suggests that the Norse envisioned a cosmos that possessed an outer edge, at least in the horizontal plane. There are two myths which illustrate the horizontal limit of the cosmos, and as we would expect from our investigation of Narrational Maps and Scandinavian notions of space, both involve travel. One of these myths, Þórr's voyage to Útgarðarloki is a complex myth and treats multiple facets of the Norse cosmos, and will be treated in a later chapter and discussed in light of physical *and* social space. At this stage, the myth commonly known as Þórr's fishing voyage should be sufficient to illustrate the existence of an outer boundary of the Norse mythological cosmos.

The myth of Þórr's fishing trip appears to have been known widely across the greater Scandinavian world, and appears in many instantiations; in the prose *Edda*, the poetic *Edda*, Skaldic poetry, and on monumental stones,[23] but the most extensive version is found in *Gylfaginning* 48. The climax of this myth focuses on one of Þórr's many encounters with the Miðgarðsormr, or the World Serpent, perhaps the most monstrous of the offspring from Loki and

[23] For a complete listing of the sources of this myth and a discussion of its variations, see Simek ("Dictionary," 323-324) and Turville-Petre (75-76).

the giantess Angrboða. Snorri tells us that once Loki's monstrous progeny were discovered, Óðinn cast the World Serpent into the ocean which surrounds all lands. There the serpent then grew to such a large size that it was able to completely enfold the land and bite his own tail (*Gylfaginning* 33). The Miðgarðsormr is not the only product of Loki's union with Angrboða. The other two, Fenrir the wolf, and Hel, the goddess of the dead, exhibit certain human qualities which the serpent lacks. Hel is at least vaguely anthropomorphic, half white and half blue or black, but both the goddess and Fenrir are capable of reason and speech, qualities that the World Serpent completely lacks. Instead the serpent is nothing more than a huge primal beast that shares none of the characteristics of humanity.

In the myth of Þórr's fishing trip, Þórr travels across Miðgarðr in disguise and eventually stays with a jötunn named Hymir. In the morning following Þórr's arrival, the pair decides to row out to sea to fish. At first Hymir is disdainful of Þórr's size and doubts his usefulness on such a voyage, but Þórr withholds his wrath and instead removes the head of one of Hymir's oxen to use as bait. The two row out to Hymir's usual fishing spot, but Þórr decides to press on. As they travel further, Hyrmir warns that the area is dangerous, as they will risk an encounter with the Miðgarðsormr if they continue. Þórr pushes on. When the god finally decides that they have traveled far enough, Hymir is in poor spirits, but the pair settle down to fish.

Þórr attaches the ox's head to a strong line, and after a short while, manages to hook the serpent. Snorri describes the encounter between the two in considerable detail, including a contest of strength. The serpent initially surprises Þórr, and pulls him down, but Þórr responds with great strength and pushes so hard that his foot breaks through the bottom of the boat and rests against the sea floor. Just when it seems like Þórr will overcome the serpent, Hymir panics and cuts the line and the Miðgarðsormr escapes Þórr's hammer. Once the beast escapes from

sight, Þórr punches Hymir in the head, watches him sink below the water, and then wades to shore.

This myth can be read as a conflict between two opposing forces in the form of Þórr and the Miðgarðsormr, and as a conflict mediated by Hymir. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen ("Fishing Trip") observes that this mediation occurs at the boundary of two differing classes of beings, one anthropomorphic and civilized, the other monstrous. One of Þórr's principal functions in the mythology is the defense of the Æsir against the intrusions of the outside world, principally the Jötnar. Several myths imply that without Þórr's intervention, strong arm, and deadly hammer, Ásgarðr would have been overrun by outside forces. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Miðgarðsormr is the most monstrous creature found in the cosmos. He has an inhuman form and savage, primal mind, but the creature has also been completely cast away from all the trappings of civilized life and is forced to live a solitary existence enclosing the inhabited world but never interacting with it. In essence, this conflict goes beyond a simple interaction between opposing forces, but represents the epitome of this interaction and pits the paragon of the civilized against the pinnacle of the monstrous. This interaction is so well matched that of all the beings in the cosmos it is only the Miðgarðsormr that is able to match Þórr physically (he is frequently bested intellectually), both in this episode and at their mutual deaths at Ragnarök.[24]

In terms of the physical geography of Norse cosmos, this interaction is interesting not only because it pits two paragons against each other but also where it occurs in the physical landscape. The encounter not only occurs at sea, but in a locale far from the familiar and inhabited portions of the cosmos. The Miðgarðsormr is not simply a sea creature, but one that

[24] Interestingly enough, the only other time when Þórr is overmatched occurs in Útgardarloki's castle, where a series of illusions trick the god into another confrontation with the Miðgarðsormr.

occupies only the farthest reaches of the water. As Þórr and Hymir travel outward from land, they pass through three apparent regions of water: the familiar fishing grounds, the dangerous region where Hymir warns that they may encounter the serpent, and the region where Hymir is extremely uncomfortable and where they finally encounter the Miðgarðsormr. Hymir's apprehensions are well founded, since the encounter claims both the jötunn's boat and his life, and Þórr is only able to escape through feats of strength, and probably presents a rather sorry figure wading in from the deep. It is notable that there seems to be no danger of encountering the World Serpent in the more settled waters near land, and it is only as the travelers move beyond these safe seas that they risk an encounter with the Miðgarðsormr. The serpent inhabits the area of the cosmos which has been completely given over to the wild and monstrous, a region where both Þórr, the embodiment of Norse civilizing force (Dumézil "Les Dieux Souverains", Motz "The King, the Champion and the Sorcerer"), and his common enemy, a jötunn, are unable to pass.

The Miðgarðsormr essentially functions as the marker of the outer limit of the Norse cosmos. The existence of this border predates the creation of the Miðgarðsormr in the cosmological timeline, and the myths seem to indicate that the serpent was exiled to the farthest portion of the cosmos, isolated from the rest of occupied space. The Miðgarðsormr in this way becomes the physical representation of a border beyond which no travel is possible. The World Serpent does not, however, reflect any sort of boundary; nowhere in the myths is there any indication that travel beyond the serpent would be worthwhile. There are no stories of wondrous lands on the far side the world or even the notion that it is possible to sail off the edge. Furthermore, the outer edge of the cosmos is fixed in limit but amorphous. Snorri tells us that the serpent completely encircles the land, and that he is found in deep waters away from land, but his

exact location is imprecise; he is just *somewhere* in the ocean, and not even Hymir and Þórr are sure of where this border lies until they encounter it. The indication is that this outer edge of the cosmos marks not a border between one region and another but the absolute limit of existence beyond which travel is impossible and simply nothing exists.

Viewed in tandem, the great tree Yggdrasill and the World Serpent (along with the waters which surround him) give us a relatively clear picture of the shape of the Norse cosmos in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. To begin with both the Tree and the Serpent are mythological extensions of objects commonly found in the natural world, located far beyond the limits of both human experience and even divine interaction and settlement. Thus the entirety of the Norse cosmos is inscribed by the natural world, and, since travel to the farthest reaches of the universe is possible only to magnificent figures such as Þórr, the civilized reaches in the cosmos eventually give way to wildness. Additionally, since the these structures are an extension of the natural world, they are constantly changing in shape and structure and leave the final edges of the cosmos as nebulous structures; the Serpent moves and grows, and both the roots and leaves of the Great Ash permeate the universe but have no hard edge.

Modes of Travel in the Mythic Cosmos

As useful as Yggdrasill and the Miðgarðsormr may be in defining the shape, edges, and general nature of the cosmos, they tell us little of nature of the cosmos within these borders. To examine the interior detail of the cosmos I will look at several myths which involve travel through the cosmos to see, as best we can, the first-person perspective of a traveler through the mythical landscape. Several myths involve travel in some form,[25] but we will first investigate

[25] While several myths mention travel, few delve into detail, and consequently they tell little about Norse ideas of mythical space. As an example Óðinn travels from his on hall to that of the giant Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál* 5. However, the poem relates no details of the travel itself. It simply states: "Fór Óðinn" (Óðinn went).

travel in the most general sense. Rather than specific travel narratives, we will discuss the different modes of transportation which mythological figures use to travel through the cosmos. There are six modes of transport which are indicated in the mythological corpus: flight, wagon, ship, horseback, skis, and on foot. Some of these modes feature directly in a specific myth, while others (namely travel by cart, and to a lesser degree by ship) seem to not have a specific myth associated with them, but the existence of vehicles associated with these modes indicates that such travel is at least possible.

Travel by skis appears to be the rarest of conventional modes of travel in the mythological sources and occurs in only one instance, worth mentioning only for the sake of completeness. Only the god Ullr, and his Latin counterpart, Ollerus, in Saxo are represented as traveling on skis. Snorri says that he is "bogmaðr svó góðr ok skíðfærr svá at engi má við hann keppask," (*Gylfaginning* 30) [[He is] such a good archer and skier that no one may compete with him]. Travel on horseback, while slightly more common than skis, is still relatively rare in the mythology, and most cases center around Óðinn's famed eight-legged horse Sleipnir. Sleipnir is intimately connected to Óðinn, but there are relatively few literary depictions of Óðinn riding the horse. The most notable is Óðinn's ride to Hel in *Baldrs Draumar* 2. Also, Slepnir is not exclusively Óðinn's mount. Snorri relates (*Gylfaginning* 49) that the fantastic horse was brought to Hermóðr in order to allow him to travel to Hel and plead to return the fallen Baldr to life. Snorri also relates that Sleipnir is "hestr beztr með goðum ok mönnum" (*Gylfaginning* 42) [The best horse among gods and men], implying that there are other horses among the gods. While only one of these other horses is named in the sources, both the poetic and prose *Eddas* list instances of mythical beings who ride, further implying the presence of horses in the mythical cosmos. The Valkyries ride to battlefields to collect the slain (*Gylfaginning* 36, *Völuspá* 30),

Skírnir rides to pursue the affections of the giantess Gerðr on behalf of the god Freyr (*Skírnismál*), and two horses are mentioned at Baldr's funeral: Baldr's own unnamed horse and Gulltoppr, which carries Heimdallr.

Travel by ship, or at least the presence of named ships, is more common in the mythological corpus. Freyr (or alternatively Óðinn in *Ynglinga Saga* 7) possesses a wondrous, dwarf-forged ship named Skíðblaðnir (*Gylfaginning* 42; *Skáldskaparmál* 35). This ship is large enough to accommodate all the Æsir in full-battle gear, it always found a fair wind at its back, and the design of the ship is so clever (or magical) that it could be folded up and placed in a pocket. In *Gylfaginning*, Skíðblaðnir is contrasted with the other prominent ship in the mythological system, Naglfari. Snorri informs us that Naglfari is the larger of the two ships but not as well made; it is constructed of the uncut nails of the dead (*Gylfaginning* 42), and it is the ship which brings the forces of Múspell against the Æsir at Ragnarök. There are also two other interesting mythological episodes which involve ships and the god Þórr; the tale of his fishing trip and his journey to Útgarðarloki, one of which has already been presented and the other will be discussed in a later chapter.

It would appear that the most frequent mode of travel in the mythological cosmos is the most mundane: on foot. Often the sources are vague as to the exact method of travel, using the generic verb *að fara* or the only slightly more specific *að ganga*. Usage of the former is only helpful in a specific context, as the verb encompasses as full a range of meanings as the English verb "to go" and is used to describe anything from a journey on foot to flight. *Að ganga* often has the specific meaning of "to walk" or "to travel on foot," but meaning is determined by context since it can also be more generic. Most cases of pedestrian travel are performed on a short enough scale that any other mode would seem ridiculous. Such is the case with Óðinn's

movements through Vafþrúðnir's hall in *Vafþrúðnismál*. A prose insertion in *Skírnismál* suggests that Skírnir travels on horseback from his master Freyr to Gerðr, with the use of the verb *að ríða*, "to ride," but Snorri's account of the same is more ambiguous and we are simply told that Skínir *fór* "went" to visit the giantess, leaving the exact method of travel unspecified.

In spite of this potential ambiguity, there are several instances when it is clear that a longer journey was undertaken on foot. One such narrative occurs both in *Skáldskaparmál* 18 and in the skaldic poem *Þórsdrápa*, which both describe Þórr's journey to and his fight with the giant Geirröðr. As part of this voyage, Þórr travels to Jötunheimr but before he is able to enter Geirröðr's territory he encounters the river Vimur. During his crossing, Þórr notices the level is rising since Gjálp, Geirröðr's daughter, is standing upriver and urinating in the flow. Þórr stops the flow with a rock and continues his crossing with the help of his belt of strength, a staff, and a rowan tree. The need for a staff, a tree, and enhanced strength crossing the river leaves little doubt that at least this portion of the journey was undertaken on foot, and since neither version of the myth gives any other indications of other means of travel, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Þórr simply walked from Ásgarðr to Vimur.

Most myths make no direct mention of travel by wagon.[26] But three gods, Þórr, Freyr, and Freyja, are described as doing so, each wagon drawn by an unusual draft animal. Freyja is said to travel in a wagon pulled by cats (*Gylfaginning* 23). Þórr likewise possesses a wheeled wagon drawn by two goats named, by Snorri, Tanngnóstr and Tanngrisnir (*Gylfaginning* 21). In *Skáldskaparmál* 35 Snorri relates a myth in which the gods acquire some of their greatest

[26] The terms that I have chosen to translate as "wagon" here are two distinct words in the mythological corpus: *reið* for Freyja and Þórr's vehicles, and *kerra* for Freyr's. In many English translations these terms are translated as something like "chariot" or "carriage," but I prefer to use the plainer term "wagon." Not only do terms such as "chariot" and "carriage" evoke visions of classical or Victorian modes of transport which seem out of place among the Medieval Norse, the origins of these terms imply a much simpler rendering. *Kerra* is likely a borrowing from the Latin *carrus* (by means of the late Latin *carra*) (de Vries 307) and *reið* derives from a Germanic root related to the Old Norse verb *að ríða* and is also connected to much more mundane modes of travel (de Vries 437).

treasures, including Freyr's boar; Gullinborsti or Sliðrugtanni. The boar is both a magnificent beast and a valuable treasure; Snorri tells us:

> at hann mátti renna loft ok lög nótt ok dag meira en hverr hestr ok aldri varð svá myrkt af nótt eða í myrkheimum, at eigi væri ærit ljós, þar er hann fór; svá lýsti af burstinni. (*Skáldskaparmál* 43)
>
> [That it [the boar] could run over the air and water, night and day, better than any horse and it never got so dark at night or in dark worlds that there was not enough light wherever it went; so great was the light that shone from its bristles.]

Freyr's use of the boar is somewhat ambiguous in the sources. The passage from *Skáldskaparmál* would suggest that Gullinborsti could be ridden like a horse. However, the boar pulls a wagon carrying the god to Baldr's funeral in *Gylfaginning* 48, an episode in which Freyja also appears with her cats, but with no explicit mention of a wagon. Needless to say, these beasts form unusual modes of transportation that stretch the limits of believability, but even if they are somewhat unusual, they supply sufficient evidence that the gods were imagined as beings who traveled the cosmos in wheeled vehicles.

The composite picture presented by the less supernatural modes of flight, foot, horse, ship, skis, and wagons, present a recognizable landscape in the interior terrain of the Norse mythological cosmos. And as we shall see below, even the few myths which involve flight do not violate this image of the cosmos. Travel by foot, horse, ship, skis, or wagons would have been common modes of transportation throughout Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavia. We encounter the standard terrain types which would have been normal to a consumer of Scandinavian myth: oceans, mountains, rivers, and snow. We can also infer by the relative abundance of instances of travel by foot relative to travel by wagon, that the Norse may have

imagined the mythological cosmos to discourage frequent travel by wagon, much like the rugged landscapes of Iceland and Norway from which the bulk of our recorded myths likely originate. It is equally notable that the mythological cosmos contains few examples of fantastic landscapes which are so common in other mythological systems or fantastic tales. This includes other landscapes such as deserts or jungles which exist in the real world, but are outside the normal range of Scandinavian experience. The most fantastic landscape in the mythological cosmos is the fiery realm of Múspellsheimr, which may not be that much of a stretch of the imagination for those acquainted with the extensive volcanic activity in Iceland.

Flying through the Cosmos

Beyond the more mundane modes of travel, another mode of transportation is available to a select few: flying. Among the inhabitants of the mythological cosmos, flight is limited to Óðinn, Loki, and a handful of giants who pursue the flying Æsir. The ability to fly is intimately connected to the shape-shifting powers of these beings.[27] The power to change shape and fly is not limited to the Æsir but it also extends to powerful figures among the Jötnar who serve as opponents in the myths concerning Óðinn and Loki's flying. Clunies Ross points out that all of the myths which involve flight involve an interface between social worlds, often in the form of negotiating transfers of culture, and seem to be a comment on the unmanliness inherent in the subterfuge and shape-changing necessary to accomplish these transfers (Clunies Ross, "Frequent Fliers" 93).

Even though instances of flight in the mythology engage with social interfaces, the travel depicted in these myths is nothing which could not be accomplished by other means. There is no

[27] It is also worth mentioning that in one of these instances Loki is able to shape-shift only after borrowing a falcon cloak from Freyja (*Skáldskaparmál* 1). This detail seems rather strange since Loki has no problems changing form in other episodes in the mythological corpus, and Freyja never uses the cloak to transform.

parallel to the Icarus myth, wherein the flier moves from a comfortable locale to one where the conditions are radically different, nor does the ability to fly enable the Æsir to move beyond the understood confines of the cosmos and engage with a world which was previously unknown. Nor is there any notion that flight is not meant for men, since the negative associations derive from the modes used to obtain the power of flight rather than the action itself. Flight in the mythology seems to be further limited to travel to areas commonly visited by the Æsir: Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr. There are no myths in which flight takes an individual up the branches of Yggdrasill or down to regions below the earth. Instead, flight is relegated to a simple extension of other means of travel; flying does not allow travel which would not be possible by horseback, ship, wagon or even by two good feet.

Riding to Other Worlds

These generalized methods of travel reveal a great amount about how the medieval Scandinavians would have imagined the mythical cosmos. We are not limited to these generalized cases as several myths exist within the mythological corpus that either focus on the travel of the hero, or which feature significant or interesting episodes of travel. *Skírnismál* or *Fór Skírnis* (Skirnir's voyage) opens with one such episode, in which the protagonist travels from Ásgarðr to Jötunheimr.[28] The bulk of this myth, at least in its poetic form, centers on the attempts of Skírnir, Freyr's servant, to coerce the beautiful giantess, Gerðr, into a relationship with the god. However, it is not this section of the story which presently concerns us, but rather the important section of the story describes the events surrounding Freyr's discovery of the lovely giantess and Skírnir's voyage to acquire her for his master. Its spatial descriptions provide insight into the relative locations of a few locales in the Norse cosmos as well as the sort of

[28] Snorri retells the same myth in *Gylfaginning* 37.

terrain encountered therein.

Skírnismál begins with a prose introduction, which relates how Freyr sat upon Óðinn's throne, Hliðskjálf, and looked into Jötunheimr and beheld there a lovely giant maid and was immediately stricken with desire for her. Were it not for Snorri's *Edda* we would not have a clear idea of what precisely this Hliðskjálf is, as the name is appears only twice in the poetic *Edda.* However, Snorri informs us Óðinn sits on this throne, from which he can see into all the worlds and be informed of goings-on there. So while it may be tempting to infer spatial relationships from Freyr's ability to see into Jötunheimr from Ásgarðr, the magical nature of Hliðskjálf precludes any definitive conclusion. However, Freyr eventually prevails over his servant, Skirnir, and Skirnir agrees to travel to Jötunheimr to seduce the giantess in exchange for several gifts. The exchange between Skirnir and Freyr, and the former's voyage to Jötunheimr occurs as follows:

Scírnir qvað:

'Mar gefður mér þá, þann er mic um myrqvan beri,

vísan vafrloga,

oc þat sverð, er siálft vegiz

við iotna ætt.'

Freyr qvað

'Mar ec þér þann gef, er þic um myrqvan berr,

vísan vafrloga,

oc þat sverð, er siálft mun vegaz,

ef sé er horscr, er hefir.'

Scírnir mælti við hestinn:

“Myrct er úti, mál qveð ek ocr vara

úrig fjǫll yfir,

þyria þióð yfir;

báðir við komomc, eða ocr báda tekr

sá inn ámátki iotunn’ (*Skírnismál* 8-10).

[*Skirnir Said*:

’Give me that horse which will carry me through the dark,

sure, flickering flame,

and that sword which fights by itself

against the giant race.’

Freyr said:

‘I’ll give you that horse which will carry you through the dark,

sure, flickering flame,

and that sword which will fight by itself

if he who wields it is wise.’

Skirnir said to the horse:

‘It is dark outside, I declare it’s time for us to go

over the dewy mountain

to rush over nations;

we will both come back or the hideous giant

will take us both’ (trans. Larrington 62-63).]

From this poetic exchange, Snorri focuses on the fact that Freyr, in a moment of lust, has agreed to give away his sword, and thus will be forced to face Surtr at Ragnarök armed only with an

antler. However, in the poetic account it would seem that the gift of the horse is just as significant a gift, if not more so, than Freyr's sword.

In fact it would appear that this horse is in some way necessary for Skírnir to successfully travel to Jötunheimr to complete his assigned task. We know nothing of this horse beyond what the author tells us,[29] and while it may not be unreasonable to ascribe supernatural powers to any animal associated with the gods, such as Óðinn's Sleipnir or Freyr's own boar, there is no solid evidence to support such a conclusion. Skírnir's words indicate the servant and the horse form a clear partnership; they either succeed or fail as a unit, a statement which seems to imply that each member of the pair has distinct and important role to play. Since the horse only appears at two moments in the poem, when Skírnir departs for Jötunheimr and returns to Ásgarðr, we can assume that his role is only to transport Skírnir, a task which the servant may otherwise have been unable to complete on his own.

Stanza ten of the poem indicates a clear progression of travel from Ásgarðr to Jötunheimr:

Ásgarðr -> darkness[30] -> mountains -> nations -> Jötunheimr

Some of the phases of this trip are self-explanatory, others are less clear. If we assume that the *þjóð* over which they must travel refers to the nations and people of Miðgarðr, the progression of Skírnir's voyage roughly corresponds to the cosmological model presented by Hastrup. Skírnir proceeds out of Ásgarðr (which may or may not be in or near the mountains) through Miðgarðr before finally arriving in Jötunheimr. It is the darkness through which the pair must travel that is

[29] Snorri's *Nafnaþulur*, associated a horse named Blóðuhófi with *bani Belja* (Beli's slayer, i.e. Freyr), but there is not sufficient evidence to indicate whether this is the same horse which was given to Skírnir.

[30] We must note that the precise spatial duration of the darkness is not completely clear in the poem. We can be certain that the beginning and endpoints of the journey are at least possessed of a normal day-night cycle, but the language of the poem is vague as to whether the darkness comes before he arrives in the mountains or whether it lasts through all or some of his ride to Jötunheimr.

absent from Hastrup's cosmological model, the very darkness which seems to motivate Skírnir to request the horse in stanzas eight and nine. It is this region of darkness to which we must now turn our attention by examining a similar voyage found in another episode in the Snorra Edda.

As part of the much longer tale of Baldr's death and funeral, his brother Hermóðr volunteers to ride to Hel in an effort to ransom the bright god. I have already briefly mentioned this voyage as an indicator of the verticality of the Norse cosmos and the possible location of Niflheimr below Miðgarðr, but what interests us now is the portion of Hermóðr's ride which precedes his arrival at Gjallarbrú. Once Baldr is laid to rest and the funeral is complete, Snorri writes:

> Hestr Baldrs var veiddr á bálit með ǫllu reiði. En þat er at segja frá Hermóði at hann reið níu nætr døkkva dala ok djúpa svá at hann sá ekki fyrr en hann kom til árinnar Gallar ok reið á Gjallar brúna. (*Gylfaginning* 49)
>
> [Baldr's horse was lead to the fire with all its gear. But to tell of Hermóðr he rode for nine nights through valleys dark and deep so that he saw nothing until he came to the river Gjöll rode on the Gjallarbrú.]

The general nature of this portion of Hermóðr's ride has two features in common with Skírnir's voyage to Jötunheimr; both travel by horseback, and both travel through a large region of darkness. The account of Hermóðr's voyage, unlike Skírnir's, gives some indication of the duration of the trip, but further emphasizes the darkness through which the god must ride.

Darkness and Cosmological Space

Travel of this sort, through regions of darkness, especially the deep darkness Hermóðr faces, has significant implications for spatial orientation and perception. Without sufficient light, these travelers will be forced to traverse regions of the cosmos without relying on landmarks or

other visual cues for accurate navigation. A traveler must then rely on some other method of guidance, such as touch, dead reckoning, or the supernatural (which may be exactly what the authors intended as both Skírnir and Hermóðr travel on horses, one of which is clearly supernatural). Without the ability to use visual cues, these regions of darkness in the cosmos closely resemble the nebulous space which we have already seen in the Norse Narrational Maps. These dark regions fit between two known and well-defined regions of the cosmos, Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr, and Ásgarðr and Hel, but the nature of the darkness means that the precise physical and spatial relationship between these regions becomes poorly defined. Thus, like the Narrative Maps, we can view certain subsections of the cosmos as islands of well-defined space separated by oceans of darkness.

These two myths are the only instances in the mythological corpus in which the protagonists travel through darkness imposed on the landscape, but several others show a similar connection between nebulously defined space and darkness. The term *myrkviðr* (literally "dark wood/forest" but often rendered Mirkwood) appears in several locations throughout the mythological corpus both as a capitalized proper noun and as a common noun with a lower-case letter.[31] Ursula Dronke in her edition of the poetic *Edda* has supplied an extensive footnote about *myrkviðr* as it appears in the heroic poem *Atlakviða*. She writes:

> [T]he archetypal 'Black Forest,' on the edges of habitation, beyond which lay the lands of alien peoples. A messenger riding from the Danube to the Rhine would, in fact, have to cross the great mountainous forests of central Europe, part of which, the Erzgebirge, was still called Miriquidui in the eleventh century… In

[31] Myrkviðr appears in *Lokasenna* 42, *Helgakviða Hundingsbana inn fyrri* 51, *Atlakviða* 3, 5 and 13, *Hlöðskviða* (Found in *Hervarar saga og Heiðreks* 10) 9 and prose, Völundarkviða 1 and 3, *Máguss saga Jarls* 15, *Þiðreks saga af Bern* 5, and *Flateyjarbók* ii. 72,

> Norse poetic tradition, 'crossing Mirkwood' comes to signify penetrating the barriers not merely between one land and another, but between one world and another: so Múspell's sons at Ragnarǫk will ride *Myrkvið yfir*, and the swan-wives of Vǫlundr and his brothers fly *Myrkvið í gǫgnom* before they find their human mates. (Dronke, "Edda" 47-48)

Functionally, Dronke describes the sort of spatial boundary which we have also seen in *Skírnismál* and Hermóðr's ride to Hel with regions of spatial darkness. While the precise topography and physical geography between these dark valleys and the dark forest of *myrkviðr* are different, they both serve as amorphous borders between various locations within the Norse cosmos.

The diversity of sources and instances in which the term appears effectively rules out the possibility that each instance of the term *myrkviðr* refers to a specific geographic location. Rather, it seems much more likely that when *myrkviðr* appears in the mythological corpus it refers to a generic dark forest rather than a specific feature of the landscape. In spite of what a modern reader may infer from the term *myrkvidðr* (and J.R.R. Tolkien's subsequent appropriation of the name), these forests are not dark, dangerous places. In fact, these *myrkviðar* are strictly zones of travel and not of conflict. At no point in the corpus does anything happen in any of the *myrkviðar* – they are simply places a traveler crosses on his way to somewhere else.

Conclusion

At this stage in our investigation of Norse myths of travel, we have been able to construct the beginnings of a model of the mythological cosmos. There are several features of the cosmos which are relatively clear and unambiguous. First, it is roughly cylindrical, or more precisely, tree-shaped. Second, the topography and vegetation of the mythic cosmos closely resembles that

of the greater Norse world, and with the possible exception of, Múspell, the fiery realm of giants, we encounter no fantastic, imaginary terrain. Third, the cosmos exists in three dimensions. The sources are not clear as to the orientation of various regions of the cosmos, but several texts indicate that certain realms are located above or below others, and the cosmos is bound together by a huge ash tree which extends above and covers the inhabited cosmos.

By far the most interesting feature that this investigation has revealed is that the medieval Norse imagined a cosmos filled with borders and boundaries, many of them fuzzy and poorly defined. So while the physical structure of the mythological cosmos may be significantly different from that of the real world, we find that the Scandinavians shape their mythological cosmos according to the same guiding principle that shapes their perception of the real-world space as seen in Chapter 1. Namely, that the cosmos consists of discrete, well-defined points in space which are separated from each other by transitional regions which are not only poorly described but are poorly defined in size. This spatial fuzziness of the world is extended further in the cosmological model, as the outer borders are likewise fuzzy, whether they are the result of the organic haziness of Yggdrasill's leaves and roots or of the undefined space and shifting nature of the sea which surrounds the world and its serpentine barrier the Miðgarðsormr. However, our cosmological model is far from complete.

The physical geography of the cosmos only tells us so much about how the Norse may have imagined the universe and conceptualized space. The myths pay far more attention to who and what inhabits the cosmos than its topography. At this point, my investigation of the Norse cosmos turns to the human geography of the mythic cosmos, to how the myriad of sentient beings occupy and shape the universe, and perhaps more importantly to how the fuzzy barriers in the cosmos may be crossed.

Human Geography and Cosmic Center(s)

The first and perhaps most well-known poem in the *Konungsbók*[32] collection of eddic poems is the *Völuspá*, or *The Seeress's Prophecy*. The poem is a visionary monologue by an anonymous seeress, or *völva*, given to the *Valföðr*, the Father of the Slain, who is presumably Óðinn, head of the Æsir and one of the principal gods of the Norse pantheon. The poem narrates the history of the mythological cosmos from the primordial beginning, through the appearance of the Æsir and their creation of the cosmos and mankind, and ends with the destruction of the cosmos at Ragnarök and alludes to its rebirth. Since the poem essentially provides an overview of the entire extent of mythology, including the creation of the cosmos, it is of particular interest.

In the second stanza of the poem, the *völva* reflects back in her memory saying:

Ek man jǫtna ár um borna,

Þá er forðom mik fœdda hǫfðo.

Nío man ek heima, nío íviði*ur*,

Miǫtvið mæran, fyr mold neðan. (Dronke, 1997 vol. 2, 7)

[I remember giants born early in time,

who long ago reared me.

Nine worlds I remember, nine wood-ogresses,

glorious tree of good measure, under the ground (trans. Dronke).]

In this stanza, the *völva* tells that she remembers "nío… heima", "nine worlds." Several attempts have been made to catalogue and define which of the many locales that appear in the mythological sources belong to the nine worlds that the *Völuspá* mentions. But when we

[32] A slightly different version of the poem is also found in the *Hauksbók* collection, and it is apparent that Snorri knew the poem well as he quotes it often. Much of the material found in the *Gylfaginning* seems to be summarized from *Völuspá*.

consider the importance of the number nine in Germanic cult (Simek, "Dictionary" 232), combined with a mythological system which had not been rigorously systematized, it is probable that the seeress's nine should not be taken as a precise figure but as a general statement on the variety and character of the occupied cosmos. Attempts to list exactly which worlds count against the nine may therefore be somewhat futile, but are nevertheless useful in investigating how the pagan Norse divided imagined mythological space.

Heimar and Cosmological Organization

Anthony Faulkes' list of the nine worlds serves as an adequate point of departure when discussing these nine worlds. He lists: Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, Vanaheimr, Álfheimr, Jötunheimr, Niflheimr or Niflhel, Múspellsheimr, Svartálfaheimr and Gimlé, and Útgarðr (*Prologue* 105). To this list we can also add Niðavellir, Múspell, Víðbláinn, Andlangr, and Hel which appear to be either poetic variants of locations in Faulkes' list (Niðavellir, Múspell), subdivisions of those (Hel), or two additional heavens (Víðbláinn, Andlangr) which seem to be Snorri's inventions, under the influence of Christian thought (Simek, "Dictionary" 15). The names of most of these worlds have clear, transparent meanings in Old Norse and can be summarized as follows:

Name	Interpretation(s)

Ásgarðr	Ás yard, Ás enclosure
Miðgarðr	Middle yard, middle enclosure
Vanaheimr	Abode of the Vanir, world of the Vanir
Álfheimr	Elf abode, elf world
Jötunheimr	Giant abode, giant world
Niflheimr	Dark abode, dark world, fog home, fog world
Niflhel	Dark hel, fog hel
Múspellsheimr	Múspell's abode, Múspell's world
Svartálfaheimr	Black-elf abode, black-elf home
Útgarðr	Out-yard, out-enclosure
Niðavellir	Dark fields
Víðbláinn	The wide blue
Andlangr	Extremely long

The meanings of the remainder of the worlds are not as clear, but Simek proposes the interpretation "place protected from fire?" for Gimlé ("Dictionary" 109), and both Hel and Múspell are sentient beings who appear in the mythology and give their names to the areas of the cosmos they inhabit.

Many of the names of the Norse mythical worlds can be grouped into several categories based on the meanings or structure of their component elements. There are those which end with the simplex –heimr or –garðr, those which are named after their inhabitants, those named after their relative spatial positioning, and those whose names describe terrain. Clearly, most of these names belong to more than one category. These trends, and corresponding world names are

represented on the chart below:

-heimr	-garðr	Inhabitants	Location	Description
Vanaheimr	Ásgarðr	Vanaheimr	Miðgarðr	Niðavellir
Álfheimr	Miðgarðr	Álfheimr	Útgarðr	Niflheimr
Jötunheimr	Útgarðr	Jötunheimr		Niflhel
Niflheimr		Niflheimr		Víðbláinn
Múspellsheimr		Svartálfaheimr		Andlangr
Svartálfaheimr		Ásgarðr		
		Múspellsheimr		
		Múspell		
		Niflhel		
		Hel		

These groupings indicate that approximately two-thirds of the Norse world-names are derived from their inhabitants and around 60% from some concept of spatial division with –heimr or –garðr. These percentages, which admittedly are based on a semi-arbitrary categorization of mythological place names, increase to roughly 72% and 81% if we exclude those names which are obvious Christian interpolations. What stands out about these categorizations is that the Norse overwhelmingly preferred to think of the cosmos in terms of the sort of beings which occupied it rather than in terms of its physical geography.

The idea that the medieval Norse would organize their mythological cosmos according to the beings which inhabit it should not be entirely unexpected. Not only do the bulk of the Norse myths focus on interactions between different beings rather than on geography, but most

scholarly discussion of Scandinavian myth is oriented around human interactions. Recent scholarship by John McKinnell and Margaret Clunies-Ross, for example, describes this interaction as principally gendered interactions between the Æsir and Jötnar, beings capable of producing offspring. Georges Dumézil's tripartite formulation of Norse myth sees the human element, in the form of the sacral, martial, and economic social roles, as the principal interaction in Norse mythology. We may tend to imagine the various *heimar* of the Norse mythological cosmos much like we do modern political states, as arbitrary boundaries superimposed on a static and semi-permanent landscape.

Given the distribution of names of the mythological *heimar* and a more nebulous view of physical space, however, we must ask whether the Norse viewed their cosmos as units of space intimately connected with their occupants rather than space upon which these creatures have imposed their will. Part of the difficulty involved in discussing these *heimar* is the translation and meaning of the term *heimr* itself. Etymologically, *heimr* is related to the English term "home," but it is also closely associated with the two Old Norse terms *heim* and *heima*. In Modern Icelandic these terms have separate and distinct meanings; *heim* and *heima* are adverbs meaning "home" and "at home" respectively, while *heimur* is a noun meaning "world." However, the semantic distinction between these terms had not fully developed in the medieval period, and the term *heimr* is used to mean "home" as well as "world" (de Vries 218-219). As a result of this semantic overlap, the precise meaning of *–heimr* as a place name element in Norse mythology is not clear, and a term such as *Jötunheimr* could indicate either the "home" or "world" of the giants.

However, what the mythology does indicate is that *–heimr* is deployed as a term of

locational rather than genetic origin. Compounds containing the element *–heimr* describe a place where a type of being or individual (or in one case an atmospheric condition) currently *resides* rather than a locale in which these beings came into existence. This condition is made particularly clear in the case of the *álfar* and the *jötnar,* who exist in mythological time at a point before the establishment of the steady-state cosmos which includes the "Nine Worlds." In this light, a better rendering of compounds which include *–heimr* may be the rather involved "place where a being, individual, or condition has established itself" rather than terms such as "home" or "world." This interpretation of *–heimr* also implies a more ambiguous geographical distribution of space than terms such as "home" or "world" which may have distinct and finite boundaries. After all, if the *álfar* and *jötnar* did not originally occupy their respective *heimar*, they then must have moved to a location and made it their own. Implicit in the principle that *heimr* refers to a locale which is inhabited is the idea that these places do not have clearly defined borders, as these can be changed through occupation and habitation.

In what follows, I examine each of these different *heimar* in turn with an eye toward further refining my model of the Norse mythological cosmos. While I discuss any features of topography or physical geography which have not been treated in the previous chapter, the principal focus will be on the inhabitants. This treatment will extend beyond a simple list of the sort of beings which inhabit or are presumed to inhabit each world. I will emphasize how these beings impact and shape the mythological cosmos and how they interact with other inhabitants of the cosmos. Certain *heimar* feature more prominently in the mythological sources. Consequently, some *heimar* (such as Andlangr) will receive little commentary, while other places which feature prominently in the mythology (like Miðgarðr and Ásgarðr) deserve considerably more attention.

The most obvious point of departure when discussing any large-scale structure in the

organization of the mythological *heimar* comes from *Gylfaginning 9*. This section describes the early phases of mythological time and the creation of the cosmos following Ýmir's death. Here Hár answers Gylfi's question "Hverning var jǫrðinn háttuð?" [How was the land arranged?]

> Hon er kringlótt útan, ok þar útan um liggr hinn djúpi sjár, ok með þeiri sjávar strǫndu gáfu þeir lǫnd til bygðar jǫtna ættum. En fyrir inn á jǫrðunni gerðu þeir borg umhverfis heim fyrir ófriði jǫtna, en til þeirar borgar hǫfðu þeir brár Ymis jǫtuns, ok kǫlluðu þá borg Miðgarð (Faulkes 12).
>
> [It is circular on the outside, and the deep sea lies around it, and along the shores of this sea they gave lands for settlement of the race of giants. Further in on the land they made a fort surrounding the world against attack from the giants, and for this fort they used the eyelashes of Ymir the Giant, and they called this fort Miðgarðr.]

This cosmological description sets up a clear organizing structure of at least part of the cosmos. It is so clear that it is often not questioned or examined in light of other spatial descriptions in the mythological corpus, or even in Snorri's own work. In fact, this structural configuration of the cosmos seems to be the sole influence on Hastrup's binary model, which splits the cosmos into the safe regions of *innangarðr* and the dangerous *útgarðr*. Snorri's description here is so clear that we must regard it as reasonably accurate; however we know that the Norse ideas of space were nowhere near this binary, and that this description of the cosmos does not include most of the *heimar* that are mentioned in the mythological sources; a clear treatment of the cosmos should treat these regions.

Center(s) and Centrality

My treatment of the mythological *heimar* will begin at the center of the cosmos and work

its way to the outer fringes. While the decision to work from the center outward supplies a convenient structure in which to discuss the human element of the Norse cosmos, it does seem to violate one of the key postulates of my model of the mythological cosmos, namely the general inability of the cosmos to be represented in cartographic form. The choice to do so, however, has several benefits. It provides a check to the postulate of the non-cartographic nature of the cosmos; after all, if we can clearly and unambiguously define and identify a cosmological center to the Norse mythological cosmos, then we must then modify our model to engage with at least some cartographic principles. Additionally, through the process of identifying a center, or whether there is a center, to the cosmos, we can further evaluate notions of centrality and periphery and how they may operate in the Norse mindset.

The English language has several terms to indicate or at least suggest centrality, among them "center," "middle," and "between," among others. We may be tempted to assign precise spatial meaning to these terms, especially when we discuss such geometric concepts as "the center of a circle," which in most cases in common speech would likely indicate the midpoint of a circle, or a point which is equidistant from each point along the circle's circumference. However, we can just as easily be somewhat looser with our definitions and instruct a small child to stand in "the center of a circle" when we mean only that the child occupy the space inscribed by the circle itself. The above examples imagine "center" as the space, or subset of the space, enclosed by a defined boundary. However, we also use the term center in unbounded spaces, when located between two other objects such as the filling that lies at "the center of a sandwich." Additionally, these terms can also be used metaphorically and with less spatial precision. The English language abounds with phrases such as "the middle of a thought" or "the center of the argument…" which impose spatial structure onto concepts which are not spatial per se, and

many of them are in fact temporal. We must therefore be aware that there are multiple ways of imagining centrality in our own language and in our spatial orientation when we attempt to define the center of the Norse cosmos. We must also be aware that even terms which indicate some kind of centrality may be ambiguous.

Yggdrasill

The most obvious place to start when identifying a center to the Norse cosmos is the great tree Yggdrasill. This is how Hilda Ellis-Davidson defines the center of the cosmos, but without explaining her reasoning (197). It is of course not difficult to imagine the Great Ash as a cosmological center in both a physical and metaphorical sense. If we reflect back on Gordon's graphical depiction of the cosmos, Yggdrasill towers above Miðgarðr and Niflheimr and resembles an axis running through the center of the cosmos. We have already seen that the outer edges of the Great Ash partially define the shape of the Norse cosmos, and when we consider the roughly symmetrical nature of real-world tree growth, it is difficult to imagine any cosmological configuration where Yggdrasill's does not resemble a central axis thrusting upward from the center of the cosmos.

Yggdrasill can be viewed as much as a metaphorical center of the cosmos as a central feature in the spatial construction of the universe. The tree has roots in three different locations (which three depend on the source) so the Ash is literally drawing nourishment from diverse regions of the cosmos and integrating it into the physical form of the tree. In this sense Yggdrasill can easily be imagined as the center of the cosmos since it is fed and vivified by no single *heimr*, but represents instead an agglomeration of several different points in the mythical cosmos. As the roots branch out and touch upon these mythological worlds, they also act as a connector between disparate cosmological regions. The roots literally hold everything together

and provide a method of transportation between points.[33] We have already seen how the squirrel Ratatǫskr travels up and down the tree, and how Óðinn also uses the tree for transport. In Gylfaginning 54, Snorri tells us that, in anticipation of Ragnarök, Óðinn rides down Yggdrasill's roots to Mímisbrunnr to consult the head of the wise sage Mímir.

Several mythological sources indicate that Yggdrasill plays a prominent role in the mythical history of the cosmos, and several important cosmic events (most having to do with Ragnarök) take place near the tree. Besides touching the entire physical cosmos, it is very probable that Yggdrasill stood witness to all mythic history. In the second stanza of the *Völuspá*, when the seeress reflects on her oldest memories, she declares that she sees the tree: "Miǫtvið mæran, fyr mold neðan" (Dronke 7) [Wonder measure-tree under the soil]. Dronke interprets this line to mean that the *völva* first encountered Yggdrasill in a geminate state, as roots only, before the tree fully grew out of the ground. However, Dronke also admits the possibility that the *völva* first saw the roots of a full-grown tree from the underworld (Dronke 110). What does seem clear is that the Ash is at least very ancient, and nearly the same age as, if not entirely coeval with, the cosmos itself. At the other end of the mythological timeline, Yggdrasill is also one of the harbingers of Raganrök: "Skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi, / ymr it aldna tré en iǫtunn losnar" (Dronke "Edda," 19) [Yggdrasill shivers, the standing ash / the old tree howls and the giant is loosed].

Other significant passages in the mythological corpus refer to the importance of Yggdrasill and the events which occur there. The first of these is alluded to beginning in *Hávamál* 137 when Óðinn declares that he sacrificed himself to himself in order to acquire knowledge. Even though Yggdrasill is not mentioned by name, it is widely held that the event

[33] One of the markers of Ragnarök will be the dissolution of this binding system. Níðhöggr will devour one of the Ash's roots and dissolve the Ash's connection with the underworld.

occurred on Yggdrasill (see, for example, Simek, "Dictionary" 375). In Gylfaginning 15, Snorri mentions another significant function in connection with Yggdrasill, that the tree is; "hǫfuðstaðrinn eða helgistaðrinn goðanna" (Faulkes, Prologue 17) [the important-place or holy-place of the gods], and that that "Þar skulu guðin eiga dóma sína hvern dag" [There shall the gods hold their courts each day]. I have chosen to translate the Norse term hǫfuðstaðrinn as "the important place," since a more literal translation is awkward in English. The term is a compound of three individual terms *hǫfuð* "head," *staðr* "place," and *inn*, the definite article, and it is the first component which I have rendered as "important". It could also be rendered with similar terms such as "principal", "main", or even "central." In fact, in modern Icelandic the equivalent, *höfuðstaður*, means capital, as in the capital city of a country. Furthermore, the importance of Yggdrasill as a central place in the eyes of the gods is reinforced by Snorri's statement that they meet there every day. The near-eternal nature of Yggdrasill, combined with important events which occur there, and its role as a binding force in the cosmos, would seem to indicate that Yggdrasill is a central place in the Norse cosmos. In fact, the evidence seems to indicate that we should consider Yggdrasill as the central feature in the Norse cosmos both in a physical and temporal sense. This seemingly simple situation is complicated by the fact that there are other places which could also reasonably be considered the center of the Norse mythic cosmos.

Miðgarðr

An obvious place for another cosmological center is the *heimr* known as Miðgarðr. The second element of this compound; *garðr* like *heimr* has a recognizable English cognate, even if it is not quite as clear, and corresponds to modern English "yard." Naturally, meanings and usage may have changed over time. Jan de Vries provides the following definition for *garðr*: "zaun, hof, garten" (156) [fence, yard, garden]. De Vries also provides several definitions and cognates

from other Germanic languages, and while these cognates lend credence to de Vries' definitions, they shed very little additional insight into the precise implications of the Norse *garðr*. He does provide a Gothic cognate, *gards*, which he defines as "haus, familie" (ibid.) [house, family]. Part of de Vries' definition of *garðr* is also upheld by Cleasby-Vigfússon, who provide the following definitions: "1. *yard, garth, garden*… 2. a *courtyard, court and premises*… 3. esp. in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, *a house* or *building* in a town or village" (191). The common thread running through all of these definitions is that a *garðr* is somehow related to the enclosure of space, either as the space enclosed (as in yard and garden) or as the method used to enclose that space (as in fence and house/building). This relationship leads to another, less-formal, definition which circulates in many secondary sources: *enclosure*. The other major implication of the use of the term *garðr* is that it necessitates some sort of boundary, most commonly a wall or fence, which marks out physical space and can also be used to keep something in or out of the designated space. I discuss below how these boundaries appear and in myths associated mythological worlds which have *–garðr* as a component of their names. At this juncture, however, it is adequate to return to our discussion of Miðgarðr as a central place armed with only the information that the *–garðr* element in Miðgarðr implies some sort of enclosed space.

It is the *mið-* component of the compound Miðgarðr which presents the strongest case for understanding Miðgarðr as the center of the Norse mythological cosmos. Fortunately, it is much easier to render a good translation for the Norse term *mið* than for either *heimr* or *garðr*; it simply means "middle" or "the middle." Thus we may easily translate the realm of Miðgarðr as "The Middle Enclosure" or Middle Earth, as Tolkien has chosen to render and appropriate it. While this translation might seem to be a smoking gun, indicating, unambiguously that the Norse viewed Miðgarðr as the center of their mythological cosmos, we must also note that the Norse

mið carries with it the same difficulties and ambiguities as English terms like "center" and "middle." So even if Miðgarðr is placed at the center of the cosmos by virtue of its linguistic components, this does not necessarily imply that Miðgarðr must necessarily be at the spatial, temporal, or ideological center.

The arguments for placing Miðgarðr at the center do not rely solely on linguistic evidence as the narrative of several myths also supplies us with abundant points of data to fuel the argument that Miðgarðr is the center of the cosmos. In our discussion of the physical geography of the cosmos, we have already seen that the Miðgarðr was imagined as a realm surrounded by a vast sea in which lives the Miðgarðsormr, who is so large that he completely encircles the whole landmass and bites his own tail. With this formulation, it is quite easy to imagine Miðgarðr as a roughly circular landmass surrounded by ocean. Thus, Miðgarðr lies in the *middle* of the ocean, and really is a central point in the cosmos. In this understanding of the shape of the cosmos and the positioning of Miðgarðr, the middle position occupied by this *heimr* is bounded in two dimensions.

However, there is an additional method of understanding the cosmos, in which we can also understand Miðgarðr as a central place, namely as the central position of a vertical cosmos, bounded only in one dimension. In this understanding Miðgarðr would be much like the meat in a sandwich, wedged between the world above and the world below. In order to argue that Miðgarðr occupies a central position in the vertical axis, we have to understand the sources as presenting at least one *heimr* above Miðgarðr and one below. Fortunately, there is compelling evidence in many mythological sources which indicates that the Norse did imagine that certain *heimar* were generally located below the world of men, and to a lesser extent that there were *heimar* above as well. Naturally, this statement must also come with the general caveat that we

have already encountered with all attempts to map the cosmos in this way: that the sources do not always agree with one another, and that the Norse did not have the same fixed, cartographic understanding of space as we do.

Several individual myths give indications of certain mythological *heimar*, Múspellsheimr and Niflheimr, were generally understood as being located below the earth. The terms Múspellsheimr (as well as the synonymous world Múspell) appear throughout the mythological sources, but Niflheimr only appears in Snorri's *Edda*. However, Snorri treats his Niflheimr as synonymous with Niflhel, a term which does appear in the mythological poetry. Both worlds pre-date the creation of the world of gods and men in cosmological time. These primordial worlds represent primitive, opposing forces; Múspellsheimr is a realm of heat and fire while Niflheimr is a frigid land of ice and snow. The intersection of these two forces is the mild area known as Ginnungagap, where the heat of Múspellsheimr and the cold from Nilfheimr are mediated to form the area which provides conditions favorable to the creation of life. It is in the Ginnungagap where the primal frost-giant Yimir milks his cow Auðhumla and where the progenitors of the Æsir spring into being. It is also in the Ginnungagap where Óðinn, Vili, and Vé create the other worlds from Ymir's slain corpse.

This portion of the Norse cosmogony fulfills several functions, but speaking strictly in terms of spatial orientation, this myth is a clear commentary on climatic trends on the Earth extended by analogy into the mythological cosmos. It should thus come as no surprise that Snorri is very explicit in his spatial positioning of these primal worlds; Niflheimr is situated in the North where the world grows colder, opposite Múspellsheimr in the South where warmth becomes unbearable (*Gylfaginning* 4). While the joint action of these two worlds creates the conditions which spark life, the primal forces they represent are connected with death, decay,

and the destruction of the cosmos in later mythic time. Múspellsheimr does not reappear in the narrative timeline until the moment of Ragnarök, when the forces of Múspell, lead by the giant Surtr will rend the sky, trailing flame and ignite the fire which will burn the cosmos.

Niflheimr, on the other hand, is much more perduring in the mythology, featuring as both the realm of the dead and as a primal force in the genesis and destruction of the cosmos. Confusingly however, the spatial position of Niflheimr in the Norse cosmological model seems to depend on its function in a particular myth. When Niflheimr appears in myths involving the creation or destruction of the cosmos, it is located in the north, opposite Múspellsheimr; but outside these cases the general impression the myths give is that Niflheimr lies elsewhere. We have already investigated Hermóðr's voyage to Hel across Gjallarbrú which indicates that, at least in this particular myth, Hel's realm of Niflheimr was generally understood as being located beneath the world. Additionally, in *Vafþrúðnismál 43*, the wise giant states: "nío kom ec heima fyr Niflhel neðan, / hinig deyia ór helio halir" (Khun 53) [I came through nine worlds, through Niflhell below / where men die out of Hel]. Here, the poet's use of the adverb *neðan* seems unambiguously to indicate that Niflheimr was located "down" in some manner. So while texts located in both the poetic and prose *Eddas* should not be taken as unambiguous evidence it is clear that the Norse imagined that at least one *heimr* was located below the Earth.

There is also evidence that certain *heimar* may have been located above Miðgarðr, but the interpretation and sources of this evidence are more problematic. Snorri uses *Gylfaginning* 17 to describe at least some of the heavens which exist above the world of men. He writes:

> Þá mælir Gangleri: 'Hvat gætir þess staðar þá er Surtalogi brennir himin ok jǫrð?'
>
> Hár segir: 'Svá er sagt at annar himinn sé suðr ok upp frá þessum himni, ok heitir sá himinn Andlangr, en hinn þriði himinn sé enn up frá þeim ok heitir sá

> Víðbláinn, ok á þeim himni hyggjum vér þenna stað vera. En ljósálfar einir hyggjum vér at nú byggvi þá staði'. (Faulkes 20)
>
> [Then Gangleri spoke: "What may protect this place when Surt's fire burns heaven and earth?" High says: "It is said that another heaven is south and above this heaven, and this heaven is called Andlangr, and a third heaven is even further above these and is called Víðbláinn, and we believe that this place is in this heaven. But we believe that the light-elves alone now live in these places.]

Snorri's use here of the term *himinn,* "heaven" combined with these heavens are located above others, removes any ambiguity about their spatial relationship with Miðgarðr, but what remains questionable is whether or not these *himnar* are authentic parts of the Norse mythological cosmos. The terms Víðbláinn and Andlangr appear nowhere else in the mythological corpus, but Andlangr does appear in Christian writing. The Old Icelandic translation of Honorius Augustodunensis' *Elucidarius* translates the Latin phrase *coelus spiritualis*, a description of the second heaven, as *andlegr himinn*, which Snorri likely adapted as part of his pagan cosmology. Furthermore, portions of Snorri's text about the supposedly pagan Víðbláinn were also lifted from descriptions of the third heaven in the same text. The term Andlangr does appear verbatim in two Christian poems (*Guðmundardrápa, Petrsdrápa*) and in the *Þulur*, but these usages have been lifted from Snorri (Simek, "Dictionary" 15).

While it may be tempting to imagine that the *mið* element in Miðgarðr refers to the world's central position between worlds above and worlds below, we must be mindful of the fact is that it is entirely possible that this orientation of the Norse mythological cosmos is not a native tradition, but an adaptation of Christian thought. The world of mortal men does, after all, occupy a middle position between Heaven and Hell. Much of Snorri's cosmology of the worlds above

Miðgarðr is clearly lifted directly from Christian thought. However, the fact that Snorri uses Christian terminology and cosmology does not preclude the possibility that the pagan Norse would have imagined a very similar cosmological system. We have already seen that the Scandinavians seem to have believed that there was at least one world located below Miðgarðr, and it would also be a logical step to imagine that one was also located above as well. Ásgarðr may lay claim to this *heimr* above Miðgardr, but as we shall see presently, this interpretation is not without problems. It is not a dramatic logical leap to hypothesize that the Norse may have imagined that they world in which they lived occupied a medial position between the earth and the sky; between Heaven and Hell.[34]

The spatial location of Miðgarðr, combined with the literal meaning of the term, does present a reasonable argument that it is Miðgarðr which should rightly be considered the center of the Norse cosmos. However, centrality extends beyond simple physical orientation to metaphorical usage and we may naturally expect that a central place in a cosmological system will also play an important role in how that cosmology develops. We can argue that Yggdrasill does, in fact, fill that role, even if there are few myths which are directly connected with the Great Ash. The tree features in myths of great cosmic significance: the creation and destruction of the universe, and Óðinn's self-sacrifice to obtain knowledge. However, the residents of Miðgarðr, humans (and to a lesser extent other minor mythological beings such as the dwarfs and the *landvættir*), show up very infrequently in myth, and only rarely do mythological events unfold in Miðgarðr.

[34] What does seem clear however is that the term Miðgarðr has much older Germanic roots, and was not a uniquely Scandinavian construct. The cognate term *middangeard* appears frequently in Old English, in several contexts, including Christian poetry. If we imagine that that this "Middle Earth" portion of the cosmology reflected a world located between a heaven above and an underworld below, it could supply a logical argument for why the term survived in Christian literature.

Ásgarðr

Much of the material included in the *Fornaldarsögur* and in the Heroic Poems of the poetic *Edda* unfolds in Miðgarðr, and while they may contain mythological elements or have echoes of pagan belief and practice, most of this material is solidly rooted in legendary or semi-historical events and do not expound on the pagan Scandinavian mythological system. More significantly, none of this material has the same cosmological scope as the stories of the gods and giants. A handful of semi-divine heroes appear in the poems of the *Edda* and in the *Fornaldarsögur*, and historic Norwegian kings interact with the gods of myth, but these events are limited in scope and certainly have no impact on the fate or shape of the cosmos. On the other end of the spectrum it is the actions of those beings which exist solely in myth, mostly the gods and giants, which are responsible for shaping the structure and destiny of the Norse mythological cosmos. The first creature was the frost giant Ymir, from whose corpse the world as mortals experience it was shaped, and it was the ancestors of the gods who were responsible for killing this first primordial creature. Furthermore, much of the mythology can be read as the conflict between two opposing forces: the Æsir and their allies the Vanir, and -álfar, who represent order, structure, and a settled life against chaotic and primal forces in the shape of giants, particularly the elemental fire and ice giants. I will examine this oppositional structure in greater depth below, but the myths clearly demonstrate that it is the Æsir who take on the role of central importance in the myths as defenders and organizers of the cosmos. As the result of this narrative structure, it is not unreasonable to regard the home of the Æsir, Ásgarðr, as the narrative center of the cosmos from which all action derives.

Additionally, Ásgarðr could quite probably qualify as a central place according to archeological and anthropological theory. The concept of central places has been a point of

discussion within the archeological community since the late 1980s but has garnered more attention since the late 90s. In the introduction to an edited volume of articles and field reports focusing on Uppåkra, a central place in Sweden, Lars Larsson discusses the definitions and limitations of current thought about central places:

> The core of the project [at Uppåkra] was a continuous theoretical discussion of the concepts of central place and power. Both concepts have previously been used without much nuance... Central places are characterized by a degree of specialization. The specialization may concern functions associated with the base units, but also solitary physical places, or functions in society which do not need to be attached to a physical setting. What one chiefly thinks of here is a type of central place from which power and control proceeded (Callmer 1997). It is common to speak of an aristocracy.
>
> Many phenomena can be perceived as being of central character. They may be cultic cites, votive sites, magnates' farms, assembly sites, market places, or craft places. In addition, the concept of central place is often associated with the accumulation of precious metals. (Larsson 6-7)

In addition to this discussion, Lotte Hedeager provides a list of useful terms which have been used in connection with central places: "'long distance trade,' 'economy,' 'control,' 'production,' 'gold,' 'hall,' 'richness,' 'gods,' 'sacred,' and 'power' in different variations and combinations" (Hedeager 3). For practical purposes these functions are generally manifested in several ways in the archeological record: large building sites, precious metals, exotic luxury goods, and military accoutrements. These objects are the physical manifestations of a developed economic system (see Nicklasson) or, in other words, trade. It is the movement of people by

which precious objects are moved from periphery to a central place, and the accompanying increase in material wealth allows the development of large structures and cultic sites.

Using this archeological formulation, Ásgarðr easily qualifies as a central place in the mythological cosmos, if not the central place. In *Gylfaginning* 14, Snorri describes Óðinn's establishment of Ásgarðr and includes an elaborate description of the place:

> Í upphafi seti hann [Óðinn] stjórnarmenn ok beiddi þá at dœma með sér ørlǫg manna ok ráða um skipun borgarinnar [Ásgarðr]. Þat var þar sem heitir Iðavǫllr í miðri borginni. Var þat hit fyrsta þeira verk at gera hof þat er sæti þeira standa í, tólf ǫnnur en hasætit þat er Alfǫðr á. Þat hús er bezt gert á jǫrðu ok mest. Allt er þat útan ok innan svá sem gull eitt. Í þeim stað kalla menn Glaðsheim. Annan sal gerðu þeir, þat var hǫrgr er gyðjurnar áttu, ok var hann allfagr. Þat hús kalla menn Vingólf. Þar næst gerðu þeir þat at þeir lǫgðu afla ok þar til gerðu þeir hamar ok tǫng ok steða ok þaðan af ǫll tól ǫnnur. Ok því næst smíðuðu þeir málm ok stein ok tré, ok svá gnógliga þann málm er gull heitir at ǫll búsgǫgn ok ǫll reiðigǫgn hǫfðu þeir af gulli, ok er sú ǫld kǫlluð gullaldr. (Faulkes 15)
>
> [In the beginning he [Óðinn] established leaders and asked them to decide with him the fates of men and to rule the governing of the city [Ásgarðr]. It was the place that is called Iðavǫllr in the middle of the city. It was their first work to establish a temple for their seats to stand in, twelve others beside the high seat that Óðinn owns. That house is biggest and best built on earth. It is inside and outside like it were gold. Men call that place Glaðsheimr. They made another hall, that was temple that the goddesses owned, and it was very beautiful. Men call that house Vingólf. What they did next was that they laid forges and there made

hammers and tongs and anvils and from these all other tools. Next they worked metal and stone and wood, and so much of that metal that is called gold that all their furniture and equipment was gold, and that age was called the golden age.]

Snorri also includes in Gylfaginning 38-41 rather extensive descriptions of the most prominent building in the whole of the mythological cosmos: Valhöll. These descriptions are mostly given to relating the elaborate feasting and abundance of good food and drink available in Valhöll. Snorri also mentions the hall's vast size and quotes a stanza from Grímnismál which indicates its immensity; the hall is furnished with 540 doors.

These descriptions of Ásgarðr thus contain many of the elements which have come to be identified with central places in archeological theory; temples, halls, cultic centers, and plenty of gold. Additionally, at this stage in the mythological timeline Ásgarðr was an important manufacturing center from which many finished goods were produced. Given these descriptions of Ásgarðr, even if they are clearly hyperbolic, it would not be difficult to imagine a hypothetical archeological excavation at the site uncovering large, prominent buildings, extensive workshops, and large quantities of gold and other luxury goods. The natural conclusion from this evidence would naturally point to Ásgarðr as a central place as understood by current archeological theory.

Valhöll may be the most well-known of the buildings in Ásgarðr in the modern popular mindset, but it is arguably another building, Glaðsheimr, which is truly the most important. Snorri relates that it seems to be made of gold, that it is the sanctuary of thirteen gods in total, and that it is the biggest and best building ever build on Earth. This would seem to indicate that Glaðsheimr is the focal point and central building of the complex of structures known as Ásgarðr. The placement of this magnificent hall at the center of Ásgarðr, which may well be the

central place in the Norse mythological cosmos, becomes the physical manifestation of the importance of the Æsir in the cosmological system. The gods stand not only in a place of prominence in the narrative of the myths, but the largest and most important building, located at the center of the cosmos, is dedicated to those same gods.

Snorri also indicates that in Glaðsheimr are a total of thirteen thrones, twelve of which stand around the throne dedicated to Óðinn. The spatial relationship of these thrones is never precisely described in this or any other text, but we can make a reasonable estimate of their layout based on textual descriptions and archeological excavations of Viking Age halls. Viking Age halls were often large, impressive structures which served not only as practical dwelling places, but as focal points of the community and physical manifestations of the existing power structures. The halls were often long and narrow with a central fire, which served as a source of both light and heat for all those in the building. In many halls, the far end of the structure contained the high seat, which served both as the seat of the king or lord of the hall and also as the symbolic measure of his power and authority. We can reasonably presume that Óðinn's throne would have occupied this place of prominence and that the remaining twelve would have stood on the long walls of the hall, six to a side.

Gylfaginning 14 gives us very little information about the throne itself, but more details are related elsewhere in Snorri's *Edda* and in prose introductions to some of the mythological poems. In *Gylfaginning* 9 *Skirnismál*, and *Grímnismál*, Óðinn's throne is called Hliðskjálf, but in Gylfaginning 16, Hilðskjálf seems to be the name of the hall where the throne is located rather than of the throne itself. The seat has the property that whenever Óðinn sits on it, "sá hann [Óðinn] of alla heima ok hvers manns athœfi ok vissi alla hluti þá er hann sá" (Faulkes 13) [He [Óðinn] saw all of the worlds and every person's activity and understood everything he saw]. It

would appear that the ability to peer into the entire cosmos is related to the seat itself and is not explicitly connected to Óðinn. It was from this seat that Freyr peered into Jötunheimr and saw the giantess Gerðr, sparking the events recounted in *Skírnismál.* This remarkable property of Hliðskjálf quite literally makes it the focal point of the cosmos, in both a metaphorical and literal sense. It is the focal point, if not the spatial center of Glaðsheimr, which is the center of Ásgarðr, the city of the Æsir, which could be considered the central place of the Norse cosmos. Hliðskjálf is also a point of convergence in the cosmos. Thanks to the special properties of the throne, all distance in the cosmos is practically reduced to zero, as anyone who sits on it can clearly see even the farthest parts of the universe and so become the center of the cosmos by virtue of the fact that there, and only there, the entire cosmos is effectively condensed to a single point.

Cosmic Economics

A key component of the archeological formulation of a central place implies the movement of goods from the periphery – in other words, economics. Up to this point we have made no mention of this aspect of central places as regards Ásgarðr. Such an omission begs the questions: Is it possible to evaluate the economic role of Ásgarðr in the Scandinavian mythological system? What would such an economy look like? Traditional methods of examining real-world economies are clearly not available; there are no charters or bills of sale, no archeological remains to examine, and very few descriptions of trade of any kind in the mythological sources themselves. Additionally, the gods have no need of many of the staples of life which contribute to the bulk of trade goods. There are several examples of magical animals which are slain as a source of food, only to be revived the next day in perfect health, and Iðunn's apples, which grant the gods eternal life and youth, are one of the principal sources of sustenance and are a commodity they are definitely unwilling to trade.

Several of the economic principles which were present in Viking Age Scandinavia do however seem to be active among the gods, even if they do not themselves engage in trade in the conventional sense. Gold still features prominently in the mythology, but seems to serve principally as a marker of status rather than as a practical means of exchange. We have already seen that much of Ásgarðr was either covered in gold, or given over to the production of gold and other metals, presumably for prestige value. Gold also features prominently in the cosmological structure of *Völuspá*. The early cosmos enjoyed a rich abundance of gold, which was used as a medium of exchange for some game that the gods played, but this idyllic, wealthy life is shattered when three young ogresses arrive. The encounter with these women does not proceed well, and the golden age comes to an end. From then on the Æsir are generally only able to acquire gold through the dwarfs.[35] One of the fantastic treasures found among the Æsir was Óðinn's magic ring Draupnir. The ring was made of gold and every nine nights would create eight golden rings of equal size and weight. Finally, in the Völsunga Cycle, in both Snorri's version and the poetry of the *Edda*, the gold is used as compensation after the gods slay Óttr, a man in the form of an otter.

Gold reflects echoes of an exchange economy of sorts, in that it has intrinsic value and raises the social prestige of those who possess it; additional social value is often tied up in gifts of prestigious objects. This economic model appears throughout the Norse literary corpus and also in other Germanic literary traditions. This mode of economic exchange relies on promises of loyalty and military service given to a king or other prominent individual in exchange for some sort of compensation, often in the form of valuable gifts rather than simple monetary rewards. This method of exchange naturally requires a near-constant influx of new goods which can then

[35] For an in-depth discussion of gold in the early cosmology, of the ogresses, and of dwarfs, see Dronke (vol. 2, 37-38).

be doled out to a king's loyal retainers. These goods, or the funds to acquire them, were most frequently obtained through violent campaigning, rather than sound financial investments, which created a self-promoting cycle: a king needed more gold/goods in order to secure the loyalty of more soldiers in order to acquire more gold, and so on.

While we do not see the same cycle of constant raiding and gift-giving in the corpus of Old Norse mythology (after all, the Æsir were theoretically bound by bonds of kinship rather than loyalty through gift-giving), there is at least one myth in which this economic system seems to be generally applicable. In Skáldskaparmál 34-36, as part of an explanation in for why "Sif's hair" can be used as a kenning for gold, Snorri tells a myth about how the gods acquired most of their most precious treasures. Loki, engaging in his usual mischief, cuts the goddess Sif's hair. Unfortunately for the trickster, her husband Þórr, is less than happy with this situation and threatens to break Loki's bones unless he can right the situation. He swears to do so and departs to the black-elves, who in this myth seem to be equated with the dwarfs since they are able to accomplish supernatural feats of metalcraft. This first group of elves creates three fantastic treasures for Loki: a head of golden hair which can grow as normal hair, the ship Skíðblaðnir, and a spear named Gungnir. At this point Loki decides, for some reason that is not elaborated, to attempt to use these treasures to acquire other objects of great value. He then travels to a group of dwarf brothers and wagers his head against them to see if they can craft three items as wonderful as the ones he already possesses. As the brothers begin their work, a fly (presumably a shapechanged Loki) settles on one of the brothers and bites him. This small bite provides a momentary distraction as the smith wipes the blood from his eyes, but it is sufficient to cause an imperfection in his work: the handle of the hammer he was creating is too short.

Loki and one of the dwarfs depart for Ásgarðr to present their gifts to the Æsir and to

hear judgment as to who has provided the best gifts. Loki presents the spear to Óðinn, the ship to Freyr, and Sif's golden hair to Þórr as a replacement for the hair shorn from Sif. The dwarf smith, Brokkr, then presents his treasures to the gods: Óðinn gains his ring Draupnir, Freyr his boar, and finally Þórr obtains the hammer Mjöllnir, which Brokkr indicates is defective with its short handle. However, in spite of the hammer's single defect, the gods rule that it is the greatest of all the treasures and that Brokkr has won the wager. Having lost, Loki attempts to flee, but Þórr captures him and forces him to pay up. Loki escapes death by resorting to wordplay. He freely admits that his head belongs to Brokkr, but that he still retains possession of his neck, and since it is impossible to have the former without infringing on the latter, Brokkr contents himself with sewing Loki's lips shut before departing.

It would be stretching matters too far to suggest that this myth is a direct reflection of the gift-giving economy which existed in Scandinavia during the Viking Age, but it does reflect some of the notions behind this mode of exchange. Loki risks his life on multiple occasions in his quest to acquire these treasures, and uses them not as his own instruments or in exchange for other material goods. Instead he presents them to specific Æsir, presumably with the intention of currying favor with or securing the loyalty of these individuals (and in the case of Sif's hair, to assuage Þórr's wrath for his initial wrongdoing). These gifts serve the same basic function in the cosmic economy as prestige items did during the Viking Age; they cement bonds of loyalty and ease hurt feelings.

This myth also illustrates an even more important economic principle, and one which further indicates Ásgarðr's position as a central place within the cosmos. While central places often are centers of production, places where raw materials can be converted into more valuable trade goods, they are also locations through which goods, technology, and information flow. The

flow of technology and information through Ásgarðr is more significant than the trade or production of goods, especially since we see very little evidence of extensive production in Ásgarðr after the mythological golden age, when the dwarfs become the principal craftsmen in the cosmos. What we do see from this point on is Ásgarðr as a place of exchange, on occasion of goods, as in the myth we have just seen, but more often less concretely, as when ideas or technology are exchanged with Ásgarðr functioning as the principal location for this exchange.

Transmission of ideas or technology through Ásgarðr occurs in several myths, but the most developed and enduring of these focuses around the production and distribution of the mead of poetry. Snorri tells this myth in Skáldskaparmál 1 in a version which differs noticeably from the events in Hávamál 104-110 and possibly in at least one picture stone (Simek, "Dictionary" 208). While each version of the myth recounts different details, much of the core ideas remain relatively similar. In the first part of the myth, as told by Snorri, the mead is created through an elaborate process, an element of which involves the killing of a being known as Kvasir who was drawn out from a bowl of spittle that the Æsir and Vanir used as an affirmation of the ending of their hostilities with each other. The mead is then passed from one owner to another until Óðinn finally takes it upon himself to acquire the magical drink. There seem to have been at least two myths in circulation regarding the process by which he actually obtained the mead, in both of which Óðinn engages in a significant amount of deception and treachery. At this point there is a shift in the meaning of the myth: It no longer is simply a tale of some magical brewery; here Óðinn takes on the role of a culture hero and (inadvertently, according to Snorri) distributes a portion of this treasure to mankind. Of the surviving versions of the myth, only Snorri tells us how portions of the mead came to rest in human hands. After Óðinn has successfully acquired the drink, he is chased by the giant from whom he had stolen it, and in

order to get away, he swallows the mead and transforms himself into an eagle. In his haste to escape, Óðinn vomits up a small portion of the mead which falls to earth. The vomited mead then becomes the poetic portion given to hack poets.

This myth is interesting to our present discussion for two distinct points which relate to the centrality of Ásgarðr in the Norse cosmological system. One is purely spatial, and is discussed in the next chapter. The second is Óðinn's role as a culture hero, one who acquires a valuable item, skill, or idea and then distributes it to men (see Melatinsky, *Elder Edda*). The object of value, in this case the mead and the poetic inspiration which it represents, does not directly stem from the culture hero or from any of the gods for that matter. In fact, very rarely do the gods themselves directly manufacture any item of value to mortals; that task is usually taken up in the mythology by either the Jötnar or the dwarfs and elves. The gods, from both the family of the Æsir and of the Vanir, provide some of the raw materials (their spittle) which are indirectly employed in the manufacture of the mead, but most of the manufacturing process occurs by the agency of either dwarfs or giants. However, once the mead is manufactured it comes to humans via the actions of the Æsir. While the precise ordering of Óðinn's route through the myth does not pass through Ásgarðr before the mead is distributed to Miðgarðr, shifting of elements is common in mythology, and given Óðinn's close association with the physical realm of Ásgarðr, it seems that Ásgarðr, or least the symbolic representation of it, functions as a central place according to the anthropological definition of the term: Ásgarðr serves as a supplier and a distributor of a prestige product which is manufactured elsewhere.

This same general pattern of distribution of culturally valuable objects from the realm of myth to mankind is visible in a few other places in the mythological corpus, with Óðinn in particular functioning as the culture hero who facilitates distribution. The way in which runes

come to be in the possession of mankind may be similar to that of the mead of poetry, but we have far less information about this process. The bulk of what we know comes from *Hávamál,* stanzas 138 to the end of the text. In the poem Óðinn describes the process:

nam ec upp rúnar, œpandi nam,

fell ec aptr þaðan

Fimbullióð nío nam ec af inom frægja syni

Bǫlþors, Bestlo fǫður,

oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miaðar,

ausinn Óðreri (Hávamál 139-140).

[I took up the runes, screaming I took them,

then I fell back from there.

Nine mighty sells I learnt from the famous son

of Bolthor, Bestla's father,

and I got a drink of the precious mead,

poured from Odrerir (trans. Larrington).]

Following these poetic lines Óðinn completes the poem by giving a long list of runes and their use in magical practices. In the quoted text, the god claims that he grasped the knowledge of runes after hanging, wounded by a spear, for nine nights on a wind-blown tree. Wedged between the claiming of the runes and the catalog of them is a strange stanza which somehow connects the runes to the consumption of the poetic mead. In this myth, Óðinn only partially fulfills the role of a culture hero; the method by which the runes are obtained is clearly spelled-out, but the exact process by which they come into human possession is not clear here or in any other

mythological source.[36] What does seem clear, however, is that in the minds of the medieval Norse, runic power had been bestowed on mankind, presumably with Óðinn as the vector for such a transfer.

The final example of cultural transmission is of a physical technology rather than an intellectual process or idea. In Gylfaginning 50, Snorri relates how the Æsir came to capture Lóki after they had discovered his complicity in Baldr's death. Lóki had by then fled out of Ásgarðr and settled in a protected location which would allow him to be aware of approaching gods and enable him to escape. He built a hut with four doors, each facing a different direction so that he could see anyone approaching. The hut was also located near to a stream in which he would often pass the day in the form of a salmon. Snorri tells us that while Lóki was hiding: "Þá hugsaði hann fyrir sér hverja væl Æsir mundu til finna at taka hann í forsinum. En er hann sat í húsinu tók hann língarn ok reið á ræxna svá sem net er síðan" (Faulkes 48) [Then he thought what sort of device the Æsir discover to capture him in the waterfall. And when he sat in the house he took linen and tied knots in a way that nets have been afterwards]. Ironically, Lóki's invention of the net proves to be his undoing in the end. When the gods come to take him, he casts his net into the fire and takes refuge in the stream. The gods discover the burnt remains of the net and Kvasir deduces that it must be some sort of device for catching fish, builds a replica, and uses it to capture the shapechanged Lóki. This mythological episode seems to mark the moment of genesis for the net in the North, and even though the tale does not relate how the manufacture of nets came to humans, it follows a similar pattern to that which we have seen with the poetic mead and the runes. Here, however, it is a physical object which is produced, and

[36] We could easily make the logical argument that the poem itself serves as the means by which runic knowledge came to human minds. Óðinn is the supposed narrator, and he clearly outlines the runes and their magical functions, which could be interpreted as the cosmological equivalent of publishing his newly-acquired knowledge. All that would be required is to hear the poem.

presumably transferred to mankind through the agency of the Æsir.

There is also one final argument in favor of placing Ásgarðr at, or near, the center of the cosmos. In both *Ynglinga Saga* and the prologue of the prose *Edda*, Snorri Sturluson presents a euhemerized explanation of the origin of the Æsir and the Norse mythological system in general. Here Snorri explains that the Æsir were originally simply men who were so powerful and remarkable that they were elevated to the status of gods by later, pagan nations. Snorri presents a folk etymology that the Æsir were so called because they came from Asia, or more specifically from Troy. The Christian cosmological model which would have been in circulation in Snorri's day placed Jerusalem firmly at the center of the world, and the Ásgarðr of these euhemerized "men of Asia" would have not been far from the Christian center of the world. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Snorri would have chosen a location for his euhemerized Ásgarðr which corresponded generally to his notion of where Ásgarðr would have been located in the mythological cosmos; i.e. Snorri located Ásgarðr at the center of the Christian cosmos because he felt that it was also located at the center of the pagan cosmos. Admittedly, the position and correspondence of locations in different cosmologies is speculative, and by itself should not be considered sufficient to indicate that Ásgarðr was imagined as located near the center of the Norse mythological cosmos, but taken in conjunction with other evidence, it lends weight to the argument in favor of locating Ágarðr near the center of the mythic cosmos.

We now have two operative modes in which we could rightly consider Ásgarðr as the center of the Norse cosmos. The Æsir are without doubt the protagonists of the mythology, and as such Ásgarðr, as the home of these beings, could rightly be regarded as the center of the cosmos. Additionally, Ásgarðr meets many of the criteria for being considered a central place in archeological terms: it is a place of trade, production, government, religion, and prestige. How

do we reconcile this with the evidence which suggests that either Yggdrasill or Miðgarðr could be the center of the cosmos? Does there have to be only one center? In strict geometrical terms, a given space can only have one center but we have seen that there are multiple ways in which the term "center" can be defined. Additionally, the inherent nebulosity in the pre-cartographic Scandinavians' notions of space creates an environment which easily permits a cosmos with multiple centers and one which freely admits multiple methods to imagine a center.

Conclusion

The corpus of Norse myth centers on the interactions of the myriad of different beings which inhabit the mythological cosmos. The physical geography of the cosmos is little more than the backdrop against which the drama of myth unfolds. Instead it is the "human" quality of the cosmos, expressed in the numerous *heimar* or worlds which appear in the mythological corpus, by which the medieval Scandinavians imagined the organization of the cosmos. Most of the names *heimar* in the cosmological system are named either for distinct spatial elements (*garðr* and *heimr*) or for the beings which inhabit those spaces (elves, Æsir, giants, etc.). Spatial relationships between these various *heimar* or other prominent cosmological reveal important aspects of how the Norse imagined and structured their cosmos. One of the key questions examined in this chapter is: which region or feature constituted the center of the mythological cosmos?

Compelling arguments can be made that Yggdrasill, Miðgarðr, or Ásgarðr could be regarded as the cosmological midpoint. Yggdrasill features prominently as cosmological time unfolds, and since the Ash functions as a binding element in the cosmos, it would be easy to argue that it is the World Ash that lies at the cosmic center. On the other hand the realm of Miðgarðr, on the strength of the semantic element *mið* meaning "middle" also makes a strong

argument for a cosmological center. However, were we to choose only a single *heimr* or feature as the center of the mythological cosmos, the bulk of the evidence weighs in favor of Ásgarðr. Not only do certain myths suggest that Ásgarðr was carved out of the interior of Miðgarðr, the Æsir are the central protagonists in the myth and much of the technological and economic development flows through the realm of the gods. The cases for regarding Yggdrasill, Miðgarðr, and Ásgarðr are each compelling, so much so that there is a strong case to regard each as a center, which requires us to construct a cosmological model with multiple centers. How each of these areas can function as a center and the ramifications of this sort of complicated cosmological system is the topic for the next chapter.

Toward a Social-Spatial Model of the Norse Cosmos

As interesting as a multi-centered cosmos may be, it does create problems when attempting to construct a spatial model of the cosmos. For practical purposes, it is necessary to select one of these three possible centers as a starting point for a cosmic model, and refine spatial relationships and centrality issues later. Doing so will help us formulate a more precise model of the mythological cosmos, and allow us to draw several important conclusions about the relations of mythological beings. There are several reasons to prefer Ásgarðr as center. The first is that the bulk of evidence seems to indicate that if forced to choose only one locale as the cosmological center, the numbers favor Ásgarðr. Beyond that, both Yggdrasill and Miðgarðr are closely associated with functions tied to Ásgarðr, while myths which connect Yggdrasill and Miðgarðr are few and far between. We have already seen that the Great Ash was a location of particular sacredness to the Æsir, one at which they frequently met. The Æsir are one of the very few beings, and the only ones which do not actually reside in a direct relationship to the tree, who are seen interacting with the Yggdrasill. So while the precise spatial relationship between Yggdrasill and Ásgarðr is never spelled out in the mythological sources, both places are tied together by means of the Æsir's actions.

Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, and Jötunheimr

Ásgarðr's connection to Miðgarðr is much clearer. Not only are the two linked spatially, but the former may well be subdivision of the latter. To investigate this spatial relationship, we must first return to the myth of the poetic mead. We can reasonably presume that the giants who were first in possession of the mead resided in the portion of the cosmos reserved for the *jötnar*, that is to say that they were in Jötunheimr. It would also be reasonable to suppose that Óðinn would attempt to flee from these *jötnar* to a place of relative safety, i.e. Ásgarðr, where he would

have been supported by the realm's defensive apparatus and the assistance of other gods there. The final assumption is that physical laws governing an eagle vomiting up mead would be the same in the mythical cosmos as they are here on Earth, so that the droplets of the poetic mead would have fallen to the ground of the realm directly below the eagle, and since it was mankind which came to possess those droplets, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Óðinn flew over Miðgarðr as he fled from Jötunheimr to Ásgarðr.

However logical the preceding assumptions may be, myth is not always logical, and while the myth of the poetic mead may tell us something of the cosmos, we me exercise some caution before jumping to conclusions based on one myth alone. Óðinn's precise physical location during the course of this myth is never expressly stated, and as mythological physics can (and often do) diverge from what we presently observe, there is some ambiguity about the precise physical route Óðinn took as he fled. The progression of this physical route from Jötunheimr through Miðgarðr to Ásgarðr seems fairly consistent with other behaviors and locations we observe elsewhere in the mythological cosmos. This facet of the myth alone tells us something about the structural character of the mythological cosmos. It gives a rough ordering of these *heimar*, but little else. We cannot even be certain whether Ásgarðr should be regarded as occupying the same horizontal plane as Miðgarðr or whether it could be located above it, since an eagle's ability to fly allows free access to three-dimensional space. The basic ordering of the *heimar* presented in this myth provides a starting point for refining a cosmological model. To do so, we must turn to other mythic episodes in the corpus.

For the second myth which reveals something of the physical structure of the cosmos, we must turn to *Gylfaginning* 42. Here Snorri relates the myth about the construction of a great wall that encloses Valhöll:

> Þat var snimma í ǫndverða bygð goðanna, þá er goðin hǫfðu set Miðgarð og gert Valhǫll, þá kom þar smiðr nokkvorr ok bauð at gera þeim borg á þrim misserum svá góða at trú ok ørugg væri fyrir bergrisum ok hrímþursum þótt þeir komi inn um Miðgarð (Faulkes, *Prologue* 34).
>
> [It was right at the beginning of the gods' settlement, when the gods had established Miðgarðr and built Valhöll when a certain craftsman came there and offered to build in three half-years, a fortification so good that it would be reliable and secure against mountain-giants and frost-giants should they come in through Miðgarðr.]

Most retellings of this myth indicate that the Æsir desired to construct the wall to protect themselves from the various giants, and this conflict between gods and giants features prominently in the mythological corpus. However, Snorri's text indicates that this idea originated from the unnamed craftsman rather from the gods themselves, and at this point in the mythological chronology the interactions with the giants had been largely benign. Even though the protective capabilities of the wall were certainly a selling point for the Æsir, the text seems to indicate that the more important function of the fortification was the demarcation of space and foundation of Ásgarðr rather than its defensive capabilities.

The myth initially locates us at a moment of mythical time when the gods had both established and named Miðgarðr and Valhöll. The implication here is that, at this moment in mythological time, the gods live in Miðgarðr, and Valhöll is simply a building there. The mysterious craftsman indicates that, should the wall be built, it would protect from giants who "should come in through Miðgarðr" (komi inn um Miðgarð), and in so doing creates a conceptual separation between those locations inside the wall and Miðgarðr. Once the wall is

built, physically or conceptually, it creates a space that once belonged to Miðgarðr but is now something else; it is essentially the creation of Ásgarðr as a separate space for the Æsir. It is also significant that Snorri never uses the term Ásgarðr in his description of this myth, even though it occurs late in *Gylfaginning*, and the existence of Ásgarðr has already been well established in the text. In an extremely literal sense, Snorri's abandonment of Ásgarðr as a descriptive term here is completely correct; until the completion of the wall, no boundary has been created between Valhöll and Miðgarðr and as such Ásgarðr does not exist. The precise semantic meaning of the term Ásgarðr is a bit unclear by itself since the –garðr element could refer to either the enclosed space or to the wall itself, but other uses of the term in the mythological corpus reduce its ambiguity as they make it abundantly clear that Ásgarðr is where the Æsir reside.

This brief passage of Snorri's *Edda* can solve some of the unresolved spatial issues we have previously encountered in our discussion of Ásgarðr. First of all, it can be seen as a partial solution to the issue of whether Miðgarðr or Ásgarðr should be regarded as the center of the cosmos. If we understand Ásgarðr as a mere subdivision of Miðgarðr or simply as a city within a larger, more varied landmass, much like the capital city of the most prominent nation in the cosmos, then we can more comfortably imagine both Ásgarðr and Miðgarðr as occupying central positions in the cosmos. It is important to recognize, however, that this solution is only a partial one and fails to account for other cosmological features we have encountered. For one, this interpretation completely excludes any evidence that would suggest that Ásgarðr was thought to occupy a position above Miðgarðr, unless we take a more practical approach, such as the one indicated in Gordon's cosmological diagram, and locate Ásgarðr on a mountaintop where it can simultaneously be part of and above the rest of Miðgarðr. The second potential problem with the interpretation that Ásgarðr was regarded as a spatial category within Miðgarðr is the fact that in

multiple locations both Ásgarðr and Miðgarðr are regarded as *heimar*, complete with their own spatial dimensions and occupied by a distinct category of sentient beings. Unfortunately, these issues are likely irresolvable and are the product of the fragmentary nature of the Norse mythological texts, of a less-strict conceptualization of physical space, and ultimately of the lack of uniformity in the pre-Christian Norse religious system.

Fortunately, the myth of the wall builder does resolve what may be a much more important issue of space in the cosmos: it indicates that Miðgaðr uniformly separated Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr from each other. In every myth in the corpus which involves interactions between Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, and Jötunheimr, or the inhabitants of their *heimar*, the ordering of these realms remains the same, from outside in: Jötunheimr, Miðgarðr, Ásgarðr. This ordering still works whether or not we understand Ásgarðr to be co-planar in the horizontal with Miðgarðr, since Miðgarðr would have to be crossed to get from Jötunheimr to Ásgarðr. This ordering of these three (arguably most important) *heimar* would seem to fit Hastrup's cosmological model if we are happy to accept Ásgarðr as part of Miðgarðr, or with Clunies Ross's model, if we prefer a more nuanced model involving several realms forming concentric circles in the cosmos.[37] We will look at the spatial relationship and composition of Jötnheimr with regard to Miðgarðr, but first we must turn our attention to one of the mythological *heimar* that seems to be more proximate in space to Ásgarðr: Vanaheimr.

The Vanir and Vanaheimr

The term Vanaheimr appears only in Snorri's catalog of the cosmological *heimar* and nowhere else in the mythological corpus. While the term Vanaheimr is one of Snorri's own

[37] I must note that the myths we have examined suggest that Ásgarðr is completely surrounded by Mídgarðr in the horizontal plane, but do not necessarily indicate that Jötnheimr surrounds Miðgarðr in a like fashion, as all travel from through Miðgarðr from Jötnheimr is inherently linear.

constructions, it is clear that its inhabitants, the Vanir, are an old group in the mythological system, and occupied their own space within the mythological cosmos, even if this space is only named in the prose *Edda*. The position of the Vanir is an unusual one; they represent another *ætt*, or family, of gods who simultaneously seem to be equal and slightly inferior to the Æsir, the other *ætt* of gods in the mythological system. The Vanir appear sporadically in the mythological sources and we know little about their origins or destiny. In fact, only four of the Vanir are known by name: Freyr, Freyja, Njörðr,[38] and Kvasir, and that only due to their close association with the Æsir. These first three Vanir came to reside with the Æsir relatively early mythological time, and come to be so closely associated with the other *ætt* that they are often numbered among the Æsir in spite of their different lineage.

The *Völuspá*, Snorri's *Edda*, and the euhemerized mythology found in *Ynglinga Saga*, relate that the first encounters between the two *ættir* of gods was not a peaceful one, and that both sides were soon engaged in armed conflict. The exact result of this conflict is not clear. From the brief description of the war in Völuspá 24,[39] it is possible to infer that the Vanir—not the Æsir—were the victors in this divine conflict. However, given what follows the conflict, Snorri's version of events is the more likely scenario. In *Ynglinga Saga 4*, Snorri states that both sides inflicted damage on the other, and weary of the conflict, both *ættir* sought peace. In order

[38] *Ynglinga Saga* and *Lokasenna* both contain passing references to an unnamed sister to Njörðr, and list her as the father of Freyr and Freya.

[39] Fleygði Óðinn oc í fólc um scaut,
Þat var einn fólcvíg fyrst í heimi;
Brotinn var borðveggr borgar ása
Knátto vanir vígspá vǫllo sporna
(Neckel and Khun 1983, 6).
Odin shot a spear, hurled it over the host;
that was the first in the world;
the defensive wall was broken of the Æsir's stronghold;
the Vanir, indomitable, were trampling the plain
(trans. Larrington 1999, 7)

to cement the bond and secure peace, each side sent hostages to the other. The Vanir sent Njörðr along with his son Freyr, and eventually Kvasir[40] as well. The Æsir, for their part, sent Hœnir and Mímir. Freyja also comes along with the Vanir hostages as she is both Njörðr's daughter and Freyr's sister.[41] At this point, the Vanir largely fade from the mythology, with the notable exception of those Vanir residing in Ásgarðr. As for the Æsir sent to the Vanir, they largely disappear as well. Mímir is beheaded shortly after the exchange, and when his severed head is returned, Óðinn uses herbs and spells to preserve and vivify it so that he can still pass on his wisdom to the Æsir, but Hœnir simply fades from the mythology along with the Vanir.

The Vanir *ætt* is generally considered to be a group of fertility gods or divinities tied to land, in contrast to the martial and aristocratic interests of the Æsir. Freyr in particular is associated with fertility and the harvest; we have already seen the ramifications of his sexual desire in the eddic poem *Skírnismál.* His sister/wife, Freyja, is euphemistically referred to as "the goddess of love," and is frequently the object of sexual desire among the various beings of the Norse cosmos. Their father Njörðr, plays only a very small role in existing mythological sources, notably as the god of the sea, and for his ill-fated marriage with the giantess Skaði. The Vanir's place as fertility gods should not be taken as an indicator that they are particularly passive, nor that they have no role in the violent conflicts of the Norse cosmology. They are certainly nowhere as warlike as the likes of Þórr, Óðinn, or even Týrr, but Freyr himself is destined to fight and die at Ragnarök, armed with an antler. Snorri justifies Freyr's unusual choice of weapon by indicating that his sword was given to Skírnir, but a weapon of natural origin is also an appropriate choice for a god so closely related to the land.

[40] The same Kvasir whose body forms part of the brew from which the poetic mead was created.
[41] In other sources Freyja is Freyr's wife in addition to his sister.

This bifurcated system, involving two competing and cooperating groups of gods is unusual. The conflict between the Æsir and the Vanir is most often explained both as the conflict between two different ideologies of divine beings and as a mythological reflex of pre-historic conflict which has been preserved in myth. The imagined nature of this conflict has taken several forms, from a very literal interpretation which hypothesizes the conquest of one people by another, and by extension the conquest of one group of gods by another, to a more metaphorical interpretation in which the old hunter-gatherer gods are conquered by newer gods who represent technological and sociological developments such as metal working and a shift from family groups to more complex societies. The result of this two-family mythological system and the possible pre-historic events which may have given rise to the myth of the Æsir-Vanir war, have left several rather interesting fingerprints on Norse myth, and an apparent asymmetry between the two *ættir*, both in myth and in cultic practice.

The Vanir do not feature very prominently in the textual sources of Norse myth. Besides the narratives which describe the Æsir-Vanir war, the Vanir only warrant occasional passing references, usually in poetry, and the only Vanir named in the mythological corpus are those who go to live with the Æsir. There is, however, some indication that some of this asymmetry may partially be the result of the nature of the surviving sources of Norse myth. The first indicator that our written sources may not be doing proper justice to the Vanir are the names Freyr and Freyja, which literally mean "lord" and "lady" and perhaps indicate that these gods were more significant at some point in time. Snorri, in his *Ynglinga Saga*, indicates that his euhemerized Æsir war with the Vanir takes place in the latter's Swedish homeland, which may have been a region of a stronger Vanir cult than other regions of Scandinavia. In the fourth book of his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, Adam of Bremen indicates that there was a pagan temple

with idols of Thor, Wotan, and Frikko, i.e. Þórr, Óðinn, and Freyr. Place names which include the simplex Freyr as one of their elements occur much more frequently in historic Sweden than elsewhere in Scandinavia. They occur with less frequency in Norway, very sparsely in historic Denmark, and are completely absent from Iceland. This would seem to indicate that the cult of Freyr specifically, and perhaps the Vanir in general, was centered principally in eastern Scandinavia, a region from which written sources are particularly rare. Thus it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the worship of the Vanir was more developed in some regions of Scandinavia than our present sources would indicate, and that their relative absence from our corpus of written mythological works is merely the result of a smaller Vanir cult in western Scandinavia.

The net result of the lack of attention paid to the Vanir in our written sources is that we know very little about where *Vanaheimr*, or the Vanir homeland in general, may be located in the mythological cosmos. Lack of textual information forces us to guess in placing *Vanaheimr* in the cosmos. Since the principal myth involving *Vanaheimr* is that of the Æsir-Vanir war, and since the textual descriptions do not seem to indicate that either side encountered great difficulties or had to travel great distances when combating the other, it is reasonable that Vanaheimr and Ásgarðr were thought to be near one another. It is also worth noting that, in Snorri's euhemerized description of the Æsir, there are likely two places known as Ásgarðr. The first of these is that he explicitly locates in modern-day Turkey. Snorri then tells us that the Æsir traveled widely and established dynasties in what we could now call the Germanic world. Following this description, in Gylfaginning 1, Snorri tells of a Swedish king, Gylfi who, after hearing of the Æsir, decides to

seek them out — in Ásgarðr. Here Gylfi encounters Óðinn[42] in disguise who then outlines to the Swedish king the tales which comprise a significant portion of our knowledge of Norse mythology. The nature of Snorri's text indicates that king Gylfi likely did not travel to Ásgarðr in Turkey, but remained in Scandinavia, suggesting that there were two Ásgarðar in Snorri's mind. One most reflects Ásgarðr's position in the traditional Norse cosmos, near the world of men, and in a climatic zone which generally resembles Scandinavia, while the other was probably Snorri's concoction designed to link traditional mythology with Classical literature and to support Snorri's folk etymology that the term *Æsir* derives from the word "Asia." Snorri would then have imagined that this second Ásgarðr would have been somewhere within Scandinavia (most likely Sweden since Gylfi was a Swedish king, but Norway is also a possibility). This admittedly sparse body of evidence suggests that Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr were located close to each other spatially.

If we assume that the size of the Vanir *ætt* was approximately the same as that of the *Æsir* (a reasonable assumption given that neither side was able to achieve complete victory over the other), we may conclude that Vanaheimr and Ásgarðr were conceptualized as areas of roughly equal size. We may imagine that Vanaheimr could be slightly larger, since the close connection between the Vanir and land and fertility, would necessitate larger expanses of land dedicated to farming or herding. Additionally, the use of *heimr* instead of *garðr* could be seen as an indicator that Vanaheimr was not surrounded by a defensive wall. But in either case, the suggestion is that Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr are of similar sizes and several orders of magnitude smaller than Miðgarðr. These relative sizes, along with Snorri's descriptions of the *Æsir* and Vanir, seem to

[42] It is important to distinguish the Óðinn that Gylfi encounters from the Óðinn of myth. The first is the euhemerized king in Asia, while the second is a mythical figure who appears in the stories that Gylfi hears from the disguised Óðinn.

indicate that the spatial conception of Vanaheimr was much like that of Ásgarðr – an island surrounded by a sea that is Miðgarðr.

"Inside" and "Outside"

So far we have constructed the central core of a model for a mythological cosmos, with Ásgarðr at the center, Vanaheimr close by, both surrounded by Miðgarðr, and finally Jötunheimr located somewhere beyond. This model closely resembles those proposed by Hastrup and Clunies Ross and corresponds to the graphic depiction of the cosmos in Gordon's text, differing only in superficial (but occasionally important) details. However, as we work our way outward, it will become increasingly clear that these models fail to recognize many of the nuances that are present in the mythological texts. But when doing so, we must not forget that it is social concerns, not physical ones, which principally organize the cosmos. The nature of the beings which inhabit the cosmos is the primary manner in which the Norse organized their mythological cosmos, the physical structure of which is simply a reflection of the larger social issues in play. Implicit in Clunies-Ross' cosmological model of concentric semi-circles, and explicit in Hastrup's binary model is the idea that the cosmological center somehow represents a zone of comfort, safety, or at least analogy to some sort of "home," and as space extends outward from this central location, the space becomes less civilized and more dangerous. In fact, at this point in my model of the Norse mythological cosmos I would make the same, if somewhat unproven assertion: that one of the principal organizing elements of the cosmos is that the Æsir are the center of the cosmos and expanding outward from them the inhabitants of the cosmos become stranger and generally more hostile toward the Æsir. However, we must also bear in mind that, while the principal organizational component of the mythological cosmos may be social, the cosmos is also represented in physical terms, in which physical distance from Ásgarðr directly

relates to social distance from the Æsir.

What precisely lies beyond Miðgarðr, and how are the *heimr* there oriented with respect to the other locales? The binary models championed by Hastrup and Meletinskiĭ regard the regions beyond Miðgarðr as the lands of everything foreign and dangerous, and label it *útgarðr.* This division of this mythological cosmos conveniently and compellingly maps social space onto physical space and partially because the Miðgarðr-Útgarðr word pair closely reflects another such pair in Norse: *innangarðs* and *útangarðs*. These terms are well-established in Norse and occur in a wide variety of sources and describe the relationship between a farmstead and the outside world. In traditional Scandinavian farms, the hall, other important buildings, and a small agricultural area were surrounded by a wall or fence which separated the central locations of the farmstead from the agricultural and wild lands beyond (Hastrup 57-60). This analogy is particularly appealing, as it creates a cosmology which closely resembles Scandinavian settlements and creates a very definite boundary between "inside" and "outside." Modeling the cosmos in this way creates a situation where the structure of the farm reflects the cosmos, or vice versa. However, there are a few problems with the binary nature of this model and its relationship to safe and unsafe spaces.

The first issue is the nature of the barrier which encloses Miðgarðr and separates it from Útgarðr. In order for the terms *innangarðs and útangarðs* to be completely mirrored by Miðgarðr and Útgarðr we would expect there to be some barrier between them, and, as we have already seen, the use of the term *garðr* implies that some sort of boundary exists. Hastrup proposes no such border. Simek ("Dictionary," 214) proposes that the term Miðgarðr refers not only the space where men dwell, but to a wall which surrounds it. This conclusion derives from several passages in eddic poetry where the phrase *undir Miðgarði* appears as the location for mankind.

This understanding of the poetic passages would create a situation where Miðgarðr is surrounded on all sides not only by a wall, but by Útgarðr immediately external to it. While this is certainly a possible interpretation of the Miðgarðr-Útgarðr barrier, no overt references are made to a wall of this type anywhere in the mythological corpus.

Another major problem with the *innangarðs-útangarðs* parallel is that the terms themselves do not completely correspond to Miðgarðr-Útgarðr even though they seem fairly close in meaning. The lack of complete correspondence between the mið- and innan- components of these compounds should be clear to an English speaker; "the middle" is not the same as "inside." They are close enough to create some correspondence, but the lack of symmetry between the elements, and usage of *út-* and *útan-* are enough to question whether it is accurate to pair Miðgarðr and Útgarðr with *inngarðs* and *útangarðs*. While the both *út-* and *útan-* should be translated as "outside" in English, there are subtle differences between their meanings in Norse. The adverb *útan* is generally an adverb of motion, and should more accurately be translated as "from outside." Something can come *útan* "from outside" but cannot simply be *útan*, but in a genitive compound, as in *útangarðs*, the meaning becomes more static. Thus *útangarðs* would be more accurately described as "the place that lies outside the fence." *Út* on the other hand *always* implies motion of some sort, and Útgarðr may be more completely understood as "the place you reach when you *travel* outside the fence." This distinction may seem like semantic nitpicking since, in order to *be* outside, one must *travel* outside, but what distinguishes these two meanings is less the semantics than the common usages of *út* in Norse conceptions of space. Both Stefán Einarsson ("Old Icelandic," "Modern Icelandic") and Anthony Faulkes (*Prologue*) have demonstrated quite convincingly that *út* is often used for motion down and towards the sea, and therefore frequently connotes travel outside of an area with specific

geographic boundaries rather than arbitrary human ones.

Given the semantic and cultural implications of *út*, an alternate (and possibly preferable) understanding of the boundary between Miðgarðr and Útgarðr is the ocean which surrounds the former. Beyond the linguistic reasons for preferring this interpretation, there are two notable mythological episodes which seem to confirm this. The first is the Miðgarðsormr which, as we have already seen, surrounds all of Miðgarðr and bites its own tail. While it is possible the Norse cosmological model imagined that the Serpent surrounded *both* Miðgarðr and Útgarðr, the name itself would seem to imply otherwise. Further, and more revealing, is the fact that the term Útgarðr appears very infrequently in the mythological corpus. It appears nowhere in poetic corpus and only in *Gylfaginning* 45, where Snorri describes it as a fortress (not an enclosed area of land) which lies across the sea from Miðgarðr.[43]

Þórr's Voyage to Útgarða-Loki

The myth which describes Þórr's voyage to Útgarða-Loki is one of the most extended narratives in our corpus of mythological material and contains several spatial indicators. As such is worth a careful investigation. The myth is expounded in Gylfaginning 44-47 as an illustration of Þórr's great deeds. The narrative begins with a voyage through what we may reasonably assume to be Miðgarðr even though it is not explicitly named in the Edda. During his voyage, Þórr takes up lodging with some *búandar*. The term *búandi* (a less-common variation of the term *bóndi*), implies an individual of generally poor social standing and one who subsists primarily by farming, and in the context of the myth almost certainly indicates that Þórr is taken in by mortal humans and residents of Miðgarðr. Here, Þórr kills his goats to use as food for the evening meal,

[43] The term Útgarðr appears only in Snorri, but Saxo in Book VIII of the *Gesta Danorum* tells a similar tale to Snorri's in which Thorkillus (Þórr) meets a giant named Utgarthilocus, which surely corresponds to the Útgarða-Loki described in the prose *Edda*.

but insists that the bones and skins be left intact. During the night, the *búandar*'s son, Þjálfi, sneaks in and splits one of the goat's bones to get at the marrow on the inside. In the morning, Þórr gathers the skins and bones and with the help of his hammer restores the goats to life. However, since one of the bones had been split, one goat is lame - a situation which enrages Þórr. The *búandar*, fearing for their lives, offer their children to Þórr to serve as his bondservants.

From there Þórr travels (in a passage examined in more detail below) and takes shelter in a building with five chambers. Shortly thereafter the ground begins to shake, and the travelers flee from the building and discover that the trembling has been caused by a sleeping giant whose snoring has shaken the building. When the giant awakens, he introduces himself as Skrýmir and informs Þórr that they have been taking shelter in his glove. The god and giant agree to be traveling companions, combining their provisions, which Skrýmir then carries for party. When they decide to stop for the night, Skrýmir goes to sleep immediately, and Þórr tries to no avail to open the sack which contains their food. Hungry, annoyed, and perhaps intimidated by the giant's great size and strength, Þórr strikes the slumbering giant in the head three times. These mighty blows barely bother the giant; each time he wakes up and wonders if something fell on him – a leaf, an acorn, or perhaps a few twigs.

In the morning Þórr continues his journey with Skrýmir until they arrive at Útgarðr. The inhabitants of this castle have heard of great deeds performed by Þórr and his companions and they agree to a series of competitions designed to pit them against the inhabitants of Útgarðr: an eating contest, a foot race, and a drinking contest. In the eating contest Loki faces off against a giant named Logi. They start off at opposite ends of the table, and meet in the middle, but while Loki has consumed all the food, Logi has also devoured the bones and plates, and is deemed the

winner. In the foot race, Þjálfi faces off against a small man named Hugi, who defeats Þórr's servant is spite of his great speed. For the drinking competition Útgarða-Loki brings out a drinking horn and tells Þórr that most of the inhabitants of Útgarðr can drain the horn in one drink, but even the weakest among them takes no more than three. Þórr takes two drinks which hardly lower the level of the fluid in the horn, and is resolved to completely empty it with his last draught. Even though Þórr makes a heroic attempt on his third and final drink, he makes only a minor impact on the level of the drink in the horn. At this point in the contest, the inhabitants of Útgarðr are obviously not very impressed by Þórr's deeds nor those of his companions, and somewhat mockingly ask if he is able to pick up their cat. No matter how hard he tries, Þórr is only able to lift one paw off the ground. When Þórr offers to fight them, they judge that there is very little point. In fact, the only person willing to wrestle the mighty god is an old woman named Elli. However, this wrestling match goes as all the other challenges have gone; Þórr is eventually defeated by this old woman.

The entire encounter leaves Þórr and all his companions dejected and fearful after failing so miserably to contend with Útgarða-Loki and his troop. Útgarða-Loki accompanies the travelers as they depart the castle, and once they are outside the walls, Útgarða-Loki reveals that he has deceived the travelers and that Þórr's prowess has greatly intimidated the giants. The entire encounter with these giants was manipulated by magic designed to make Þórr seem much weaker than he actually was but in reality served only to illustrate just how powerful he and his companions were. In his first encounter with Skrýmir, the sack of provisions was tied with a trick wire and there was no way that Þórr would have been able to untie it. Also, the blows which Þórr struck with his hammer were actually deflected so that he struck a mountain, not the giant's head, and now that mountain contains three deep valleys.

Additionally, the contests which took place in Útgarðr were also deceptions of a similar nature. Logi (literally "fire") who defeated Loki in the eating contest turns out to be fire itself, which consumes everything in its path. Þjálfi was defeated by thought (*hugi*), which is swifter than all things. Útgarða-Loki reveals that the end of the horn which Þórr failed to empty was really placed in the ocean, and that Þórr's activity actually caused great droughts in Miðgarðr, and this activity is the cause of the tides. The cat which he failed to lift was, in reality, the Miðgarðsormr which Þórr lifted nearly to the sky. Finally, Útgarða-Loki was amazed that Þórr lasted so long against the old woman since she was really old age itself (*elli*) which defeats everyone in the end. Enraged by this deception, Þórr returns to Útgarðr only to discover that it has disappeared, and the inhabitants never appear again.

We need to note that throughout this discussion of the Útgarða-Loki myth we have referred to Útgarða-Loki himself and the other inhabitants of Útgarðr as giants, but Snorri uses no specific term when discussing them, but rather refers to them by name or as the inhabitants of Útgarða-Loki. I have used the term giant largely for convenience in retelling the myth and in accordance with general trends in secondary literature which discuss this story. The term "giant" refers to the huge size of these beings (and even that seems to change over the course of the narrative), but they should not be confused with the other "giants" which appear more frequently in the mythology: the jötnar. The jötnar are the inhabitants of the aptly-named Jötunheimr, and have little in common with the gigantic figures which reside in Útgarðr.

A variation of this myth, or at least a story which seems to bear some connection to it, appears in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*. In this version the hero is a Swedish prince named Thorkillus who undertakes a voyage to meet with a giant named Utgarthilocus, but there the similarities end. In Saxo's version, Thorkillus undertakes the journey with the express

purpose of consulting with Utgarthilocus, who is a wise oracle and does not have the same powers of illusion as the Útgarða-Loki in the prose *Edda*. The entire sequence of contests is completely absent; instead Saxo's version includes several witty exchanges of maxims which seem to delight both the prince and the giant.

In fact, the differences between Snorri's Útgarða-Loki and Saxo's Utgarthilocus make us wonder whether both stories are actually related. Additionally, Snorri's tale contains several elements which distinguish it from the other prose mythological narratives. To begin with, Þórr's voyage to Útgarðr is by far the longest single story in the *Edda*, even if we exclude Þórr's interaction with the *búandar* and goats, which is only loosely connected to the events in Útgarðr. Snorri uses the term *borg* to describe the structure in which Útgarða-Loki resides. This term can convey a wide variety of meanings from city, to fortification, to castle, and is somewhat rare in the mythological corpus and out of place in the world of Viking Age Scandinavia. Apart from this myth Snorri uses the term *borg* to describe the Asian Ásgarðr, the wall build to surround Ásgarðr after the Vanir war, and the wall surrounding Miðgarðr. The term also appears in a few quoted verses in *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*. It appears in only one of the eddic poems: *Sigurðarkviða inn skamma*, a poem of relatively late date. Even though the subject matter of the *Sigurðarkviða,* and the rest of the Sigurðr cycle as a whole, is decidedly of ancient Germanic origin, the present version has clearly been influenced by later traditions imported from the European continent (Heimerl 32). Even the *borgir* which occur in Snorri's prose often refer to large organized cities or structures which, while present in continental Europe in the thirteenth century, were still relatively rare in Scandinavia and completely absent from Iceland. The impression that Snorri's description of Útgarðr gives is decidedly not in accordance with the hall-centered culture of Scandinavia in the Viking or Iron Ages, and seems more in line with

continental chivalric literature.

Thomas D. Hill has also demonstrated that many of the events and contests depicted in this myth are closely associated with Latin riddles from diverse parts of Europe.[44] The entire narrative centers on these riddles and the illusory nature of Útgarða-Loki's magic and the fact that this realm is a fantastical region of the cosmos which does not closely resemble any other place. This myth may very well tap into the continental tradition of otherworld literature in which the hero travels to another world, often an island such as Avalon in the Arthurian tradition or the islands encountered by St. Brendan. These regions of the world are both part of and separate from the normal world of men and behave with according to their own rules. The text of the myth itself does not explicitly describe the landmass on which Útgarðr is located, but is seems reasonable to suggest that it is an island rather than an entirely different landmass or continent. A new landmass would contradict Snorri's assertion in *Gylfagynning* 9 that the world consisted of a Miðgarðr-Jötunheimr landmass surrounded by water. This configuration could admit the presence of islands without too much difficulty, but certainly would not allow another settled continent. It seems clear that the Útgarða-Loki myth as we presently have it has been influenced by some degree by contact with contemporary European culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and as such, we must regard any conclusions about Norse ideas of mythological space gleaned from it with some degree of suspicion. We should not, however, discount the myth entirely, especially when both Snorri's and Saxo's versions of the myth share common spatial features and when such conclusions generally agree with others reached based on other mythological sources.

Space and Útgarða-Loki

[44] Unpublished paper. Presented at the Medieval Studies Student Colloquium, Ithaca, 2010.

After the events with the *búandar*, Þórr leaves his goats behind and embarks on a journey which appears to be of significant length. Snorri writes:

> Lét hann þar eptir hafra ok byrjaði ferðina austr í Jǫtunheima ok allt til hafsins, ok þá fór hann út yfir hafit þat it djúpa. En er hann kom til lands þá gekk hann upp ok með honum Loki ok Þjálfi ok Rǫskva. Þá er þau hǫfðu litla hríð gengit var fyrir þeim mǫrk stór. Gengu þau þann dag allan til myrks. (Faulkes 37)
>
> [He left the goats there and began the journey east into Jötunheimr and all the way to the sea, and there he went out across the deep sea. And when he came to land, he walked up and Loki, Þjálfi, and Rǫskva were with him. When they had walked for a little while a great wood was in front them. They walked all that day until dark.]

Immediately following this text, the traveling companions come across the giant glove which they confuse with a five-chambered hall, and which the rest of the narrative suggests lies relatively close to the castle known as Útgarðr. Following, the series of encounters with Skrýmir, the giant instructs them how to reach Útgarða-Loki:

> 'En ef þér vilið fram fara, þá stefnið þér í austr, en ek á nú norðr leið til fjalla þessa er nú munuð þér sjá mega.'[...] Þórr fór fram á leið ok þeir félagar ok gekk fram til miðs dags. Þá sá þeir borg standa á vǫllum nokkvorum ok settu hnakkan á bak sér aptr áðr þeir fengu sét yfir upp, ganga til borgarinnar ok var grind fyrir borghliðinu ok lokin aptr. (Faulkes 39)
>
> ['But if you wish to go on, then head to the east, but I now have a northward course to those mountains that you may be able to see'[...] Þórr and his companions went forward on his course and walked on till mid-day. Then they

saw a fort standing on some field and, before they were able to see over it, they placed their necks on their backs. They walked to the fort and there was a gate in front of the fort's entrance and it was closed.]

This series of passages is one of the most complicated and lengthy travel narratives in the mythological corpus, and combines several elements which we have already examined individually to this point. The text explicitly outlines a sequence of *heimar* and terrain which they travel through before arriving at the giants' castle (provided of course that the episode with the *búandar* occurs in Miðgarðr):

Miðgarðr —> Jötunheimr —> A deep sea —> A huge forest —> Útgarðr

Additionally, the text indicates that from the farm to Útgarðr the entire journey progressed in an easterly direction.

These passages provide yet another example of a phenomenon that we have encountered in previous sources, that Jötunheimr abuts Miðgarðr and the outer ocean which surrounds the world. It is noteworthy that this particular myth makes no indication that there was any sort of fortification which separates these two *heimar*. More interesting by far than the confirmation of the ordering of these *heimar* is the indication that Þórr and his companions traveled through a dark forest before entering an area in which they fully interact with Útgarða-Loki. The process of passing through a dark area, either a forest or just a dark space in general, has already been observed and commented on as a feature of several myths in the corpus. The notable feature of this particular dark forest is its placement in space. The forest is found once Þórr and his companions cross the sea, and not as part of any of their travels through Miðgarðr, Jötunheimr, or as part of their oceanic voyage.

A similar distribution of darkness is observed in Saxo's account of Thorkillus' interaction

with Utgarthilocus. In a similar fashion to Þórr's journey, Saxo's hero must cross a body of water to an island where he encounters the giant. The journey to Utgarthilocus' island is a four day journey, at which point:

> quarto die ad propositum portum appulit, aggressusque cum sociis terram, apud quam continuae noctis facies alterni luminis vicissitudinem frustrabatur, aegre prospectum capientibus oculis, inusitatae molis scopulum conspicit. Cuius perlustrandi cupidus a comitibus foris stationem peragentibus extusum silicibus ignem, opportunum contra daemones tutamentum, in aditu iussit accendi. (*Gesta Danorum* 8.15.7)
>
> [They found a kindly breeze and on the fourth day put in at the intended harbour. With his companions Thorkil disembarked in a country where the unchanging face of darkness repressed any alternation of light. Though he could adjust his vision only with some difficulty, he made out an unusually vast cliff. Intent on surveying its interior, Thorkil told his comrade, who were standing as sentinels outside, to strike a flame from flints and light a fire at the point of access as a useful safeguard against fiends (trans. Fisher 269).]

My goal here is not to outline any direct links between Saxo's account and Snorri's, but rather to demonstrate similar attitudes toward space. Both myths involve an unusual encounter with beings of both gigantic proportions and superior mystical power. The unusual nature of these giants is also marked by the space they occupy, a space which is markedly distanced from the "mainland" of their respective cosmoses, and seem to be nearly unreachable except in the most remarkable of circumstances. These giants exist on islands bordered not only by water, but also by regions of extreme darkness which act as a further barrier to motion and mark their separation

from the rest of their cosmos.

The Quantum Dartboard

At this stage in our discussion of the human geography of the Norse mythic cosmos we are almost prepared to bring everything together and construct a complete model of the cosmos. There are several cosmological *heimar* which I have not yet mentioned. Our knowledge of many of these is either extremely limited or self-referential. Several of the worlds included in catalogs of the mythological *heimar* are mentioned only in the briefest terms and we know nothing beyond the fact that one author (most commonly Snorri) mentions them. Many of these terms only appear in a catalog and we can say very little about them, mostly based on meanings of the component elements of these worlds' names. Other *heimar* such as Álfheimr and Svartálfheimr (elf-home and dark elf-home) appear with enough frequency to indicate that they were a legitimate component of the mythological cosmos, but they do not appear in any context in which we can say much about their position in the cosmos. Frequently, the most we can say about these *heimar* is that a certain type of being occupies it, and perhaps a vague statement that these worlds seem to generally exist near Miðgarðr.

I have already discussed the worlds of Hel/Niflheimr and Múspellsheimr in a chapter on physical space in the cosmos, but I should briefly mention the sort of beings which inhabit these spaces. Niflheimr, as we have seen, is often conflated with the realm known as Hel[45] – named after the half white/half black (or half alive/half dead) ruler of the land of death. Hel herself is the daughter of Loki and sister to other cosmological monstrosities like the Miðgarðsormr and Fenrisúlfr, and the land itself is occupied principally by the hrímþursar (ice-giants) and the ranks

[45] We should note that, while Niflheimr appears to be an ancient component of the pagan Norse cosmology, both the figure and cosmological region known as Hel most likely developed late in the sources, well after the Christian conversion (Simek "Dictionary," 138).

of the dead – both those of mankind and at least one Ás: Baldr. The fate of other deceased beings such as the jötnar, álfar, and dwarfs is nowhere made clear in the mythological corpus. We must also indicate that, like the "giants" of Útgarðr, the giants which inhabit the frozen realm of Niflheimr or the burning Múspellsheimr are not jötnar. When these beings are given a name in the mythological sources, the most common term is *þurs*, while the fiery beings which burn the world at Ragnarök (of which Surtr is the principal representative) are simply called *Múspels synir* "the sons of Múspell."

What becomes abundantly clear from an investigation of the various regions of the Norse mythological cosmos is that it is generally structured along the lines of the sort of being which claims a certain area of space, rather than on geographical features. Also, the shape and organization of the cosmos is exceedingly confusing. At first glance, it would seem that some of the confusion about the cosmos could have been alleviated had the discussion included diagrams to aid the written descriptions. I have chosen to avoid such diagrams for several reasons. The first is obvious in light of the non-cartographic nature of the society which gave rise to this cosmological system. Were we to introduce any sort of diagram into this discussion we would immediately alter the manner in which we interact with the cosmos as we translate it onto a map. We, as modern participants in cartographic culture, have likely already constructed mental maps based in part on the evidence presented in this study, and in part on other graphical representations of the Norse mythological cosmos. This sort of contamination cannot be avoided, but we must always have in mind that in all likelihood such mental constructs would have been completely foreign to the Norse who constructed the cosmos. However, we do need a model of some sort to facilitate discussion of the cosmos and to propel this discussion forward in the next chapter. To do so, I borrow ideas and principles from a completely unrelated academic

discipline: quantum mechanics.

The thought experiment known as "Schrödinger's Cat" is familiar and serves as a good starting point for discussion of the quantum mechanical principles that I will use in describing a new model of the mythological cosmos. Most existing models or drawings of the mythical cosmos consist of one or more concentric circles, much like a dartboard. But for our model, instead of modeling the cosmos like a standard two-dimensional dartboard, we will instead imagine a *quantum dartboard*[46] governed in part by probability. We should note that modeling the Norse mythological cosmos along these lines, like all models, has certain limitations. It certainly does not directly correspond to how the medieval Norse would have imagined the cosmos, but it can serve as a close approximation for a modern reader who has become so invested in modern, cartographic that it may be difficult to think in a non-cartographic manner. Additionally, some of the conclusions gained from analyzing this model will reveal interesting features about Norse ideas of human geography.

Our quantum dartboard resembles a normal dartboard in that the space along the dartboard is divided into various segments which correspond to various number or point values. However, unlike a standard dartboard the regions and point values on a quantum dartboard are not fixed, but are probabilistic. Thus certain regions of the dartboard are more or less likely to correspond to certain point values, but we simply will not know until we toss the dart and find out. Thus the exact center of the dartboard may be the most likely place to find the bullseye, but there would also be other places on the board where it could also be found. We can investigate the quantum dartboard much like the cat-in-a-box experiment proposed by Schrödinger; we can open it (or toss the dart) and measure the system, and gain our information like that, or we can

[46] My thanks to Tom Hill for coining this term.

also come to some understanding of the system by imagining it as a probabilistic superposition of states. When viewed in this manner, large-scale trends should be obvious. Just like Schrödinger's cat is more likely to be found dead as time progresses, our quantum dartboard will begin to take on a recognizable shape when viewed as a probability distribution. That shape, we would expect, closely resembles a classical, non-quantum dartboard, but with fuzzy borders and an occasional odd outlier.

Our investigation of the Norse mythological sources paints a picture which very closely resembles this quantum dartboard; a quantum dartboard extended into the third dimension. We have seen that the bulk of the evidence in the mythological corpus suggests that Ásgarðr should rightly be regarded as the center of the of the Norse cosmos, in both absolute, geographical terms as well as metaphorical ones, but other pieces of evidence suggest that we should regard other points as center, and that it is also not inappropriate to conclude that Ásgarðr was also imagined as a location situated above the realm of men, rather than at its center. It is not worthwhile to individually revisit every cosmological example examined in this and previous chapters to demonstrate how it would fit into a quantum mechanical model, as prior discussion has at least touched on the general probabilistic trends of certain *heimar* within the cosmological model. What we can now do is compile all of this data into a single, composite model of the cosmos – a quantum mechanical "schematic" of the cosmos, if you will.[47]

This "schematic" will begin on the plane occupied by Miðgarðr, ignoring for the present anything which could lie above or below it. At the center of this plane we usually find Ásgarðr, with a certain amount of probability distribution which overlaps and intersects with Vanaheimr.

[47] Here I intentionally prefer to use the term schematic over map. Not only could the use of "map" encourage use to fall back on hold habits and treat the cosmos cartographically, but it involves a certain level of precision to which I do not aspire. Instead the schematic diagram of the cosmos which I present will be, at best, a loose representation of the cosmos which serves only to help us understand a non-cartographic space.

This means that we can reasonably expect, in most situations, that Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr are located very close to each other spatially, but it also permits these two realms to intersect or for Ásgarðr to subsume Vanaheimr.[48] Adjacent to and surrounding Ásgarðr we find Miðgarðr, beyond which Jötunheimr is located. However, Jötunheimr's probability distribution is not isotropic in all directions; it is heavily weighted to the east since it is in the east where we tend to hear of the jötnar when we are informed of any particular compass point. Additionally, there appear to be some probability events which place the borders of Jötunheimr very near to, if not adjacent to the borders of Ásgarðr.

If we were to imagine this situation as a dartboard, the ring (which we will see shortly is not precisely true either) which represents Jötunheimr would not be of even thickness. It would be much thicker in the east with narrow fingers which extend deeply into Miðgarðr and approach Ásgarðr. Finally, beyond Jötunheimr we find the ocean which surrounds this section of the cosmos. One end of the ocean forms a very solid, distinct border where it abuts the land, but as we travel farther and farther outward the limits of the ocean grow progressively hazy and irrelevant. To continue with our dartboard model we could imagine the ocean as an immensely large final ring or border to the dartboard that extends at least to the limits of vision in all directions. Where or how it ends is truly irrelevant to us since we cannot possibly throw a dart which will not fall beyond the dartboard, and even were we to walk along the board in an effort to locate its outer edge, once we leave sight of the core of the board, we can no longer distinguish one section of the ocean from the other, and in essence distance no longer matters.

[48] I should also note that we could also construct a quantum mechanical model which also factors in a time element to the probability distribution. I have not explicitly done so here, mostly to avoid confusion and additional complication. However, such a model could prove rather interesting in certain myths. The myth of the Æsir-Vanir war and its effects in the cosmos would be one such example. Earlier in the cosmological history, the distance between Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr would be greater, but these probabilities would grow closer over time as the two races of gods also grow closer together.

Additionally, there are myths which seem to indicate that certain areas of Miðgarðr also border on the ocean (which is true if we believe that the pagan Scandinavians saw themselves living in Miðgarðr and sailing on the ocean which surrounded it), so we also much have some probability distribution which includes narrow or thick fingers which extend to the sea. For this reason, we cannot regard Jötunheimr as a perfect ring; there will certainly be high-probability fingers of Miðgarðr which extend through it.[49]

While the junction of Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, Jötunheimr, that is to say the *heimar* which appear most frequently in the mythological sources, surrounded by the ocean composes the core of cosmos, there are other areas which must also be included on our schematic. Most of these other *heimar* will be isolated regions without the same large-scale, structural contributions to the form of the cosmos as Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr, Jötunheimr, and the ocean have. The most obvious is Útgarðr and the island on which the fortress lies. At first it may be tempting to imagine this island on our schematic as a hazy dot somewhere in the ocean – much like an island on a map. However, a correct probability distribution would look nothing like an island. The Útgarða-Loki myth gives us very little information about the location of the island itself; it could be of virtually any size and in any direction, so long as it lies within the ocean. At best we can say that it is unlikely to lie too far off the coast. Thus the probability distribution for the island would closely resemble the shape of the ocean itself. There would be a hard border that lines up with the hard border of the ocean, which would peak a short way off the coast and gradually disappear. Additionally, unlike regions like Miðgarðr or Jötunheimr, the total probability will never

[49] We may also interpret the myth of Baldr's funeral in a similar fashion. The funeral clearly takes place near the ocean, since his body is placed in a ship which is released from land. We may also interpret the presence of so many gods at the funeral as a sign that this spot was also in close proximity to Ásgarðr, but it was at the very least in Miðgarðr, since Jötunheimr seems to be a very inappropriate place to hold the funeral of a beloved god. While this myth may suggest that the ocean may extend all the way to Ásgarðr, a much simpler and reasonable explanation would be that there is some (albeit small) probability distribution which places Ásgarðr near the ocean.

approach 100% since the island is only a fleeting presence in the mythology: it was found only once, and never again.

Other similar "islands" of probability distribution include *heimar* such as Niflheimr/Hel, Múspellsheimr, Álfheimr, and Andlangr. Niflheimr would have strong probability distribution to the north of Miðgarðr as well as below. The strongest probability distribution for Múspellsheimr would be to the south, but it would have some distribution over the ocean, much like Útgarðr, since we are told that Loki will lead the sons of Múspell to Ásgarðr by ship when the time of Ragnarök arrives. Álfheimr is an interesting case, since the mythological sources give us no meaningful information about where it could be located in the cosmos, and thus it will have a probability distribution which spans the entire portion of the cosmos surrounded by ocean. We could make a few tweaks to this even distribution in line with what we know about the rest of the cosmos and the álfar themselves. Since evidence strongly indicates that Ásgarðr is a preferred center, we could assume that the probability distribution for Álfheimr dips there. Likewise, the álfar are somewhat associated with the Vanir, so we could increase the probability slightly there. However, even in this case, there could be very good odds of encountering this *heimr* in Miðgarðr or Jötunheimr as well. Andlagr represents one of the *heimar* which are very poorly defined. As best we can say that it *may* be located above the earth. Thus it will have a faint probability distribution in the sky, which reflects the fact that it, like the realm of Útgarða-Loki, may not be found. Finally, we must not forget that the entire cosmos is bound together by a cosmological element which seems quantum mechanical by its very nature: Yggdrasill. The tree seems to exist in a strange relationship with time, and spans the entire cosmos. The core of tree, its trunk, and the region of highest probability distribution runs through the center of the cosmos, but other parts of the tree, namely the roots and branches, span all of existence, albeit with a

diminished probability distribution.

A Social-Spatial Model of the Norse Mythological Cosmos

This model of the Norse cosmos has several advantages over the models that have previously been presented. First of all, it can more easily help a modern reader conceptualize a cosmos which was created by a non-cartographic society when we are so used to constructing graphical models of space. Second, by modeling cosmological space in terms of probability rather than by defined borders, we can more easily account for several of the spatial oddities which occur in how the various parts of the cosmos are presented in the mythological sources. In doing so we must resist the temptation to conclude that because we are able to construct a model which accounts for some of the oddities, there exists a definitive, coherent cosmological system of pre-Christian Norse belief. The system was very diverse and never systematized, and we cannot forget that the small probability distribution for places such as Útgarðr and Andlangr is most likely because these places were either heavily adapted or entirely fabricated by later, Christian authors. The final benefit of this cosmological model is likely the most important, and certainly the most interesting: When we model the cosmos in this way it provides us with another tool by which we can analyze the myths and the role that space plays within them.

As an example, we will briefly revisit two myths which already examined: the myth of Þórr's voyage to Geirrǫðr, and that of Skírnir's journey. Both myths appear as prose retellings of earlier poetic works, both myths involve a long voyage from Ásgarðr to Jötunheimr in which the protagonist must cross through an area of demarcated space (a zone of darkness for Skírnir, and a river for Þórr), and both myths involve significant interactions with the *jötnar*. The nature of these interactions differs between the two myths, however, and likewise each myth presents a different spatial relationship between Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr. Þórr's journey to Geirrǫðr

involves an arduous trek in which the god encounters numerous barriers to his travels and a concerted effort to bar his passage. The overall impression is that this spatial separation between Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr is large and necessitates a serious effort on Þórr's part to arrive there. In contrast, Skírnir's travel to Jötunheimr appears brief and painless. It is true that, unlike Þórr, Skírnir travels on horseback, and he does have what could be a potentially unnerving experience traveling through his dark valleys. In comparison to the Geirrǫðr myth, Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr seem much more proximate. Perhaps unsurprisingly the apparent distance between the realm of the gods and the realm of the giants parallels the relationship between the gods and giants in the respective myths. The central theme of the Skírnir myth is one of unification of god and giant, even if Skírnir does use every method of coercion available to him to secure the acquiescence of the giantess, while the Geirrǫðr myth casts the jötnar in an adversarial role. Þórr's encounter not only involves physical violence on both his part and the part of the giants, but the event which precipitated the myth, namely the kidnapping of Loki, is a divisive act which separates one member of the circle of the gods from the others. Thus we can see the quantum and flexible nature of space in the mythological cosmos; physical distances reflect the nature of the social interactions which take place within the universe, and these social interactions seem to drive the manner in which the cosmos is imagined and represented.

The relationship between physical space in the cosmos and the interactions of the beings which occupy that space brings to light what is perhaps the most interesting ramification of modeling the Norse mythological cosmos as we have, using a quantum mechanical, probabilistic distribution of space. Most extended treatments of the cosmology of the pagan Scandinavians seek to explain organizational trends which shape the presentation of the cosmological model. Hastrup's cosmological model perhaps best illustrates this principle. In her view, the cosmos

directly reflects conditions which would have been very familiar to any Scandinavian during the Viking Age, namely that, at its core, the cosmos reflects a typical farmstead. In this view, the driving feature of space is into zones which are nominally safe for an agricultural or pastoral way of life, *innangarðr*, and those which are not, *útgarðr*. This model could even be modified slightly to add a finer contour to a simple binary division of space. We could easily propose that a second, fortified region with in *innangarðr*, namely Ásgarðr could represent the hall itself, more secure and more comfortable location built within the outer walls of the farmstead. Additionally, we can see an increase in the danger and hostility of the beings who reside outside the walls as we travel deeper into *útgarðr*. Certain beings like the álfar and the dwarfs occasionally pose annoyances to the Æsir, but rarely constitute a legitimate threat. The jötnar themselves are often hostile toward the gods, but simultaneously are sources of wisdom, technology, and even women, and while they do present a more pressing and ominous threat than the álfar or dwarfs, they are not universally threatening figures. However, as we move even farther outward we encounter beings that present a much more persistent and unambiguous threat to the gods and their habitations and that are also several orders of magnitude more powerful than the more proximate threat of the jötnar: the fire and frost giants, the world-serpent, and the mistress of the underworld, Hel.

An indeterminate cosmological model not only allows for multiple organizational structures in the mythological cosmos, but such a model almost seems to require them. The cosmological structure can change, within certain limits, to highlight the conditions of a given myth. Thus several additional structures, by which the pagan Norse may have imagined their cosmos present themselves, two of which I will present and briefly discuss here. If the concept of multiple cosmological models operating simultaneously strikes us as inconsistent, I would first

point out that this is the very nature of the quantum dartboard model that we have constructed. What is more, as pointed out in Chapter One, modern, scientifically-minded people are perfectly happy operating in a culture that presents two very contradictory cosmological models. We accept the spherical nature of the Earth and a heliocentricity of the Solar System as scientific facts,[50] but produce plane maps and use terms like sunrise and sunset. Likewise, we must be open to the possibility that the pagan Norse were perfectly content operating in different cosmological modes for different purposes.

One additional cosmological structure which readily presents itself is loosely based on Margaret Clunies Ross' and John McKinnell's gendered readings of the myths. This system places Ásgarðr at the cosmological center and organizes the cosmos based on decreasing reproductive suitability the farther one travels from the home of the Æsir. We should note that this is a principally patriarchal structure in that it is generally acceptable for a male to "travel down" the cosmos to encounter a reproductive partner, but not acceptable for take a wife from the same position. Thus we see Óðinn engage in frequent dalliances with giantesses in the myths and mythological poetry, and occasionally with humans in the *fornaldarsögur*. However, while these unions appear to be completely acceptable within the framework of the Norse myths, and Óðinn seems to suffer no social scorn for engaging in them, none of these giantesses appears to be a suitable partner for a legitimate union, as he is partnered to Frigg who presumably belongs to the *ætt* of the Æsir. On the other hand, the goddess Freyja is relegated to a much different situation. She is unable to have a sexual relationship with her husband and brother Freyr, since the Æsir prohibited the sort of incestuous relationships which were permitted among the Vanir. However, as one of the Vanir, Freyja is an unsuitable marriage partner for any of the Æsir,

[50] Even these two "facts" are not precisely true, and only serve as first-order approximations, albeit very good ones.

neither can she engage in a sexual union with a male of a being from farther out in the cosmic dartboard without becoming the object of scorn. Beyond these reproductive interactions it has been argued (see Clunies Ross, "Prolonged Echoes" 64-66) that Loki is such a problematic figure specifically because he violates the normal social, reproductive order of the cosmos as the product of male giant and a female goddess. The evidence of this distorted reproductive relationship is demonstrated by Loki's problematic status in the myths and his ultimate role in the destruction of the gods at Ragnarök and this reproductive stain is further magnified in Loki's own monstrous offspring.

The final organizing principle for the cosmos that I will present here can be seen as something of a mixture of Hastrup's "inside-outside" model and the reproductive model described above. In this model the cosmos is ordered according to increasing monstrosity or inhumanity. Ásgarðr could be placed at the center of the cosmos in this model as an ideal model, or a slightly alternate view would be to place humans at the center of the cosmos, but the Æsir would represent a higher specimen, higher in a metaphorical sense but quite possibly spatially as well. The realm of the gods is further divided between the Æsir and Vanir; both are divinities, but one ranks slightly above the other. The farther we travel in the cosmos away from the realm of men, the more unlike humans, and the more hostile, the beings become. Intermingled in the same space as humans are lesser mythological beings, such as the álfar and dwarfs. These creatures are certainly not human, nor are they completely benign. However, their interactions with mankind rarely benefit humans, but rarely extend to open hostility or violence. Outside the realm of humans we encounter the jötnar, who are generally similar to humans in appearance and custom, but do have an unnerving propensity toward magic and violence. Beyond the jötnar, we encounter the truly alien or monstrous beings. Here we find creatures such as the World Serpent,

Hel, the dead and the giants of Útgarðr.

All of these means of structuring the mythological cosmos fit well with a quantum dartboard model of the Norse mythological cosmos, and the indeterminate nature of this model means that we are perfectly justified using each of these (or any other model which fits the data) simultaneously. This model also introduces a greater level of nuance into an understanding of the cosmos, and helps create some distance between prior cartographic models of the mythic cosmos. However, none of these models present any information which is truly surprising in and of itself, especially when we consider how an imagined cosmos could be a reflection of real world attitudes and perceptions. It does not seem remarkable that any people would divide the world or cosmos into safe and dangerous zones or areas which are more like home and those which are completely alien. However, where the Norse cosmological model stands out is in the fuzziness inherent in the boundaries between these spaces. Throughout the mythological system we see numerous examples which seem to violate any sort of tight, neat organizational structure and ordered progression of the cosmos. In fact, it appears that the pagan Norse not only accepted these contradictions, but seemed to relish the interactions and paradoxes that these contradictions create.

We have already touched upon one of these spatial paradoxes in our discussion of the two *ættir* of the gods. The sources indicate a relatively high probability distribution that both Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr[51] were located somewhere near the center of the Norse mythological cosmos, but are particularly ambiguous. The general impression that we often get of the Vanir is that they are supporting characters in the cosmological play that is Norse myth; they make occasional cameos and perform interesting tasks, but that they are far less important than the Æsir. Consequently we

[51] Or, since the term Vanaheimr is probably Snorri's invention, wherever the Vanir actually lived.

often imagine Vanaheimr as a satellite to Ásgarðr, a rural backwater of the cosmos. In doing so, we gloss over the important role that the Vanir do play and the fact that they were powerful beings in their own right. We have seen that the cult of Freyr was alive and well in Viking Age Scandinavia, and the god is linked to numerous place names and archeological artifacts. He is also a major player in cosmological history who fights toe-to-toe with the Æsir at Ragnarök, ultimately at the cost of his own life. Freyja also plays a significant role in the mythology. She is mentioned more than any other goddess and the lust that the males among the giants and dwarfs have for her creates both problems and opportunities for the gods. It is Þrymr's lust for Freyja which induces him to steal Mjöllnir, the most valuable of the gods' treasures, and the goddess is offered as part of bargain with the giant who builds the fortification around Ásgarðr, and she therefore plays an indirect role in the acquisition of the wall and of Sleipnir. We must also not forget that, according to *Völuspá*, it is the Vanir and not the Æsir who are victorious in the Æsir-Vanir war. I know of no other mythological system which shows a similar division among the gods. Just as the spatial relationship between Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr is ambiguous so too is the social relationship between the two *ættir* of gods. On the one hand the Vanir seem like second-class citizens in the divine cosmology, but on the other they are valuable, even essential members of the cosmological order. What is even more telling is the fact that the Norse authors feel no need to explain this contradiction, which would seem to imply that they did not view this as much of a contradiction at all, and that the same nebulosity which exists in the physical space between the various *heimar* quite naturally extends to include nebulous social space between the beings who reside there.

We find that similar paradoxes exist not only among groups of beings within the cosmos but are manifest in individual beings, notably those of hybrid origin. The Norse mythological

cosmos abounds with individual beings of mixed descent, but a quick selection of three—Þórr, Fenrir, and Loki—is more than sufficient to illustrate how the complicated issue of hybridity plays out in the mythology. The fact that the Norse universe is organized in such a way that less desirable and more dangerous elements in the cosmos are placed farther from the center is unremarkable, and is something which we could reasonably anticipate. This organizational structure invites us to wonder at the social standing of individuals of mixed descent with one parent originating from a *heimr* located closer to the center than the other. We may logically anticipate that such beings would be marginal figures, considered inferior or even dangerous by one if not both of the groups of beings from which the hybrid was born. The reality within the myths, like much of the corpus of Norse mythology, is much more complex.

To the Ends of the Earth: A Case Study

Up to this point I have mainly examined how the pre-cartographic Norse may have imagined space and its role in the mythological cosmos. Now I turn to the more realistic, or perhaps more familiar, world presented in the sagas. This chapter will act as a case study, testing the ways in which the models of physical and social space that have been developed in the previous chapters can shed light on the world of the sagas. While a mythological cosmos is, by its very nature, an imaginary construct, the world of the sagas preports to be the same physical world in which the authors and audience of the texts interact on a daily basis. Do the worlds of myth and the world of the sagas share the same or similar attitudes toward space? In order to answer this larger question, there are several key questions that we must ask of the saga-texts:

> Does the world of the sagas show the same nebulosity and first-person orientation in the mythological sources and in the Narrational Maps?
>
> Does physical and social space in the sagas reflect a similar focus of the human occupants of that space as it does in the mythology?
>
> Do the saga authors delight in playing with the haziness of space and subvert our expectations of social space?

This chapter investigates how these questions play out in *Yngvars saga Víðförla*.

As a case study for physical and social space in the saga corpus, *Yngvars saga Víðförla* provides an interesting starting point. It is of intermediate length, occupying thirty-one pages in Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's 1944 edition of the text. This length makes it a manageable text to treat in some detail. More importantly, it deals extensively with travel through the known world and beyond and is one of the few sagas in the corpus that deals extensively with the unknown lands to the east of Scandinavia. The saga's action moves from

Sweden, to Russia, to unknown lands further east and allows an unusual insight into how the saga's author treats travel in the more-or-less familiar world of greater Scandinavia and how that compares to the unusual lands of the East. Additionally, as the saga action progresses, the characters move into entirely new and unexplored lands, at least according to the author. This entry into the unknown also allows us to witness "first contact" between Scandinavians and the "Other." This is not unique to *Yngvars saga*, but such moments are relatively rare in the Old Norse corpus.

Yngvars saga Víðförla

Yngvars saga is not among the most widely read of the Icelandic sagas, nor even among the *fornaldarsögur*. Several editions of the saga were produced in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, but the most recent editions of the saga to be published are Guðni Jónsson's edition in the *Fornaldarsögur Norðalanda* and Jón Helgason's edition based on a single manuscript. Both editions were published in the 1950s. Even though no new Old Norse/Icelandic editions of the text have been published in over half a century, the intervening time has seen several translations of the saga published into modern European languages. Recognizing the fact that access to the text may not be easily available I have included a plot summary of the saga in Appendix A, but full translations of the text can be found with relative ease.

The text of the saga tells not only the story of the eponymous Yngvarr, but also of his father, grandfather, and his son Sveinn. One of the more unusual facets about this saga is that, once the action of the saga is resolved, the saga author includes several interesting notes about the transmission of the saga, its accuracy, and its textual history. These notes have little relevance to the action of the saga but they should significantly influence how we receive and interpret the saga. The author remarks that some men claim that Yngvarr was the son of

Eymundr Óláfsson, but points out that:

> Eymundr, sonr Óláfs, átti son, er Önundr hét. Sá var inn líkasti Yngvari í margri náttúru ok allra helzt í víðforli sinni, svá sem til vísar í bók þeiri, er heitir Gesta Saxonum ok er svá ritat: 'Fertur, quod Emmundus, rex Sveonum, misit filium suum, Onundum, per Mare balzonum, qui, postremo ad amazones veniens, ab eis interfectus est'. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 393)
>
> [Eymund, son of Olaf, had a son called Onund. He was the most like like Yngvar in character as well as in his wide travels, as are referred to in the book called Gesta Saxonum, where it is written: (the text here switches from Norse to Latin) 'It is said that Eymund, King of the Swedes, sent his son Onund across the Baltic, who, arriving eventually among the Amazons, was killed by them.']

Following this, the author adds another tidbit about Yngvarr's voyage which he had excluded from his narrative:

> Svá segja sumir menn, at þeir Yngvarr færi tvær vikur, at þeir sáu ekki, nema þeir tendruðu kerti, því at saman luktust björgin yfir ánni, ok var sem þeir reri í helli þann hálfan mánuð. En vitrum mönnum þykkir þat ekki sannlight vera mega, nema áin felli svá þröngt, at gnúpar tæki saman eða væri skógar svá þröngir, at saman tæki þess á meðal, er gnípur stæðist á. En þó at þetta megi vera, þá er þó eigi sannligt, (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 393)
>
> [Some people say that Yngvarr's expedition travelled for two weeks; that they saw nothing, except the candles they lit because the cliffs closed over the river and they rowed through that cave for half a month. But learned men do not think

that can be true unless the river were to flow so tightly that the cliffs were to close in on themselves or that the forests were so dense that wove among themselves where the cliffs were standing. But though that is possible, it is not likely true.]

The final comment that the author includes in his text describes the transmission of the text as part of both an oral and written narrative.

> En þessa sögu höfum vér heyrt ok ritat eptir forsögn þeirar bækir, at Oddr munkr inn fróði hafði gera látit at forsögn fróða manna, þeira er hann segir sjálfr í bréfi sínu, því er hann sendi Jóni Loptssyni ok Gizuri Hallssyni. En þeir, en vita þykkjast innvirðuligar, auki við, þar sem nú þykkir á skorta. Þessa sögu segist Oddr munkr heyrt hafa segja þann prest, er Ísleifr hét, ok annan Glúm Þorgeirsson, ok inn þriði hefir Þórir heitit. Af þeira frásögn hafði hann þat, er honum þótti merkiligast. En Ísleifr sagðist heyrt hafa Yngvars sögu af einum kaupmanni, en sá kveðst hafa numit hana í hirð Svíakonungs. Glúmr hafði numit at föður sínum, en Þórir hafði numit af Klökku Sámssyni, en Klakka hafði heyrt segja ina fyrri frændr sína (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 393-394).
>
> [We have heard and written this saga according to the instructions of the book that Oddr the monk, the wise, had made according to the instructions of wise men, those whom he himself mentions in his letter that he sent to Jón Loptsson and Gizurr Hallsson. But those who think they know more, should add to it wherever they consider it lacking. Oddr the monk said that he had heard this saga from three people: a priest named Ísleifr, a second man named Glúmr Þorgeirsson, and a third man called Þórir. From their accounts he took what he considered most noteworthy. Ísleifr said that he had heard Yngvarr's Saga from a merchant, who

claimed that he got it from the court of the King of Sweden. Glúmr got it from his father, and Þórir got it from Klakka Sámsson, and Klakka had heard it from an older kinsman.]

Yngvars saga and the *fornaldarsögur*

Yngvars saga is most frequently classified among the *fornaldarsögur*, the Norse Legendary sagas, and while no generic classification of texts is without complication, locating *Yngvars saga Viðförla* within any particular genre of Old Norse literature has been especially problematic. The *fornaldarsögur* are a loosely-defined genre of stories which often take place in the legendary Germanic past and frequently contain fantastic episodes and encounters with fabulous creatures. *Yngvars saga* contains several elements which link it with the *fornaldarsögur*, but at the same time is shares several elements with the *konungasögur* and with hagiographical sagas. The saga is conspicuously absent from Carl Christian Rafn's original collection of *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, most likely because it does not adhere to the definition of the genre which he presents in his introduction: "This group of sagas is intended to include the Icelandic sagas which give an account of the events which have happened here in the North before Iceland was settled in the ninth century, or in other words, before the time when more reliable sagas were recorded" (Rafn V, translation mine).[52] Here Rafn outlines two principal features which he uses to identify the genre of the *fornaldarsögur* as he sees them: (1) the *fornaldarsögur* must take place before the ninth century, and (2) they must take place in the North, "Norðrlönd."[53] *Yngvars saga* fits neither of these criteria, since the action of the saga

[52] Söguflokkr sá… er tilætlað at innihalda skuli íslenzku sögurnar, er greina frá atburðum þeim, er orðit hafa hér á Norðrlöndum, áðr enn Island bygðst á 9du öld, eðr með öðrum orðum, fyrir tímabil það, er áreiðanligar sagnir eru frá hafðar

[53] It is also worth noting that Rafn does not necessarily employ the term Norðrlönd in the modern sense of the word. The action of certain sagas in Rafn's collection, most prominently *Völsunga saga*, develops outside of what we would often consider the North, but belong to a larger tradition of Germanic legend.

develops in the eleventh century after the introduction of Christianity in the North, and while parts of the saga occur in Sweden and the Norse-influenced areas of Eastern Europe, the bulk of the action in the saga occurs beyond the borders of "Norðrlönd." Rafn also makes an implicit judgment call about the nature of the *fornaldarsögur* by remarking that other sagas are more reliable ("áreiðanligar"). Rafn provides no discussion of why he considers the *fornaldarsögur* to be less reliable than other genres of saga writing, but this comment most likely refers to the fantastical elements in the *fornaldarsögur*, such as giants, dragons, and magic.

The second major collection of *fornaldarsögur*, Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, includes *Yngvars saga Víðförla*. Guðni Jónsson's criteria for classifying the sagas are similar to Rafn's: "They [the *fornaldarsögur*] all take place in antiquity, a long time before Iceland was discovered and settled, at the beginning of the Viking Age or earlier, but unfortunately in this respect, some of them happen outside the North."[54] (Guðni Jónsson V). Guðni Jónsson recognizes that some of his *fornaldarsögur* take place outside of the North, but still adheres to the criterion that this genre of saga literature must be set prior to the discovery of Iceland. The fact that he includes works such as *Yngvars saga* and *Eiríks saga Víðförla* in his collection indicates that his idea that the action of the sagas must take place in the ancient Germanic past is not a strict requirement when defining the genre.

More recent scholarship has also had similar difficulty classifying *Yngvars saga*. Stephen Mitchell includes the saga in his list of *fornaldarsögur* without explanation or commentary (Mitchell, "Heroic Sagas" 184), but later concedes that the saga bridges both Adventure Tales and Heroic Legends (Mitchell, "Fornaldarsögur" 206). Jónas Kristjánsson groups this saga with the *fornaldarsögur*, but admits that it "stands on the margin between heroic sagas and kings'

[54] Þær [fornaldarsögurnar] gerast allar í fornöld, alllöngu áður en Ísland fannst og byggðist, á öndverðri víkingaöld eða fyrr, en miður að því leyti, að þær gerast sumar utan Norðurlanda

sagas" (Jónas Kristjánsson 362). Kirsten Wolf likewise acknowledges that "The saga stands on the margin between *konnungasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*" (Wolf 740). At the other end of the spectrum, Torfi Tulinius omits *Yngvars saga* from his catalogue of *fornaldarsögur* (Tulinius).

Without a doubt, some of the issues that we encounter when attempting place *Yngvars saga Víðförla* into any generic category stems from the artificial nature of genres, but in the case of this saga in particular, some of the difficulty lies in how the scholarly community imagines and defines the *fornaldarsögur* as a whole. One of the consistent features identified in the classification of the *fornaldarsögur* is the presence of fantastic elements, such as magic, monsters, and gods. However, unlike the *riddarasögur* with which the *fornaldarsögur* share fantastic elements, the *fornaldarsögur* are not translations or adaptations of continental tales or texts, but stem from an older Nordic tradition. It is the presence of these fantastic elements which likely led both Mitchell and Jónas Kristjánsson to place *Yngvars saga* among the *fornaldarsögur*. Likewise, Torfi Tulinius excludes the saga from his list of *fornardarsögur* because he adds the qualification that these sagas, which belong to genre that takes place in the distant, legendary past, are set primarily in Scandinavia – which does not apply to *Yngvars saga*.

Most recently, Carl Phelpstead has approached the issue of *Yngvars saga Víðförla* from a different angle, and provided an alternate definition of the *fornaldarsögur* which expands to include a marginal saga like *Yngvars*, but still manages to maintain many of the elements which we associate with the *fornaldarsögur*. He writes:

> A *fornaldarsaga* can be defined chrontopically as an Old Icelandic prose narrative set in the Viking or 'northern' world *and* in a time that is not so much chronologically distant as *qualitatively* different from the present: not so much a saga of ancient times as a saga set in a *different kind* of time, a different world, in

> which adventures happen – the kind of world in which dragons fly through the air, beautiful maidens turn out to be death traps, and heroic quests are achieved. (Phelpstead 341-42)

Phelpstead admits that this definition may seem to be *ad hoc*, created to classify a particularly difficult saga, but points out that the feature of primary importance in even those *fornaldarsögur* which are set in 'ancient times' is not their antiquity but the fact that they occur in a different kind of "time space" than other Old Norse genres (342).

Historicity and Reception of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*

My intent in discussing the place of *Yngvars saga* within the schema of Old Norse literature is to foreground the interpretative problems we encounter when we attempt to classify a saga as complicated as *Yngvars saga* and how this classification may impact how we approach the material presented in it. Rafn's use of the expression "áreiðanligar sagnir," "less reliable sagas," in his definition of this group sagas is indicative of the general scholarly attitude toward the *fornaldarsögur* as a whole. This attitude developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is partially tied to Icelandic nationalistic movements seeking political independence from the Kingdom of Denmark. This movement presented the *íslendingasögur* and the *konungasögur* as uniquely Icelandic literary forms, with more realistic narrative and more literary sophistication than later works, composed in a golden age of the Icelandic Commonwealth prior to Iceland's assimilation into Norway.

The traditional approach toward the *fornaldarsögur* sees them as having been recorded rather late, after the golden age of saga writing had ended, representing a popular literary form with little of the sophistication and character development found in the *íslengingasögur*. Recent scholarship, most notably Steven Mitchell ("Heroic Sagas,") and Torfi Tulinius ("The Matter of

the North") have pushed back against the classical model and begun to treat the *fornaldarsögur* as worthy literary works in their own right. They have proposed earlier compositional dates for certain sagas, dates which could potentially indicate that the *fornaldarsögur* were one of the earliest literary genres written in Old Norse-Icelandic. Theodore Andersson ("Exoticism") has also pointed out that Icelandic interest in the exotic and fantastic predates the golden age of saga writing, and continued well beyond the time when interest in the *íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* had waned. In fact, Andersson presents the literature of the golden age as an exception rather than the rule to Icelandic literary tastes.

In spite of this, the general perception remains that the *fornaldarsögur* are simply entertaining fictions, filled with monsters and one-dimensional characters, and as such are rarely treated reliable sources for understanding Norse history or culture. But Torfi Tulinius has convincingly argued that, while we may question the historical accuracy or believability of this literary genre, the *fornaldarsögur* provide reliable windows into the social tensions of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. As such, we must resist the temptation to discount the cultural value of the *fornaldarsögur* and their overall value as sources. I believe that this is especially true of *Yngvars saga*, since Yngvarr's voyage to the East may well be the best recorded event from the Viking Age in Scandinavia.

Somewhere between twenty and thirty rune stones in central Sweden commemorate men who fell somewhere in the East, as part of Yngvarr's voyage. Indigenous written sources for the Viking Age in Scandinavia are very rare, and we are forced to reconstruct our knowledge of this period largely by relying on a combination of foreign sources, archeology, and Scandinavian sources written several generations after the events took place. The fact that so many runic sources mention Yngvarr's journey makes it the best documented single event in the Viking Age

in Scandinavia. The large number of rune stones commemorating the voyage are clear evidence that some sort of voyage lead by Yngvarr actually took place (the details of which likely differ considerably from those in the saga) and that this voyage brought enough wealth back to fascinate the survivors to such a degree that they were willing to expend the necessary resources to raise a large number of rune stones in memory of the fallen. It is not unreasonable to infer that an event with the magnitude of Yngvarr's voyage, as manifested by a large number of large rune stones, would have survived well in oral tradition. Additionally, the presence of so many rune stones – prominent and visible features of the landscape – could only have aided in the oral preservation of the narrative of Yngvarr's voyage.

As far as we can discern, the details concerning Yngvarr and his journey agree relatively well with the little information which is recorded on the stones. In 1910, R. Braun published an article entitled "Hvem var Yngvarr en vidforli? Ett bidrag till Sveriges historia under XI århundradets första hälft," in which he attempts to shed light into Yngvarr's identity and family relationships. Braun investigates both the runic evidence and the later written sources, and constructs a plausible family tree for Yngvarr, which places him in the Swedish royal family in the mid eleventh century. While Braun's analysis is certainly not iron-clad, the argument demonstrates a sufficient amount of agreement between the runic monuments recorded at approximately the same time as Yngvarr's ill-fated expedition and the written sources of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This close correspondence would seem to indicate at least some of the details of Yngvarr's historic voyage were preserved well enough in the oral history to appear in the later written sagas.

In addition to the witness of a historical voyage by Yngvarr presented by the Swedish rune stones, the text of the saga itself provides some indication as to how the story was

transmitted in oral tradition and how it moved into written form. The series of authorial comments at the end of the text describe a chain of oral sources who informed the composition of the saga by a monk named Oddr. Through much of the history of scholarly commentary surrounding *Yngvars saga*, this authorial material has been largely ignored in favor of a much later date of the saga, consistent with the prevailing theories that the saga, like the *fornaldarsögur* with which it shares many characteristics, was composed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. In 1981, however, Dietrich Hofmann published an article, "Die *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* und Oddr munkr inn fróði" in which he argues that Oddr Snorrason[55] composed a now-lost Latin history of Yngvarr, which Hoffman calls **Saga Yngvari*. While Hoffman's thesis was initially met with skepticism, it has gradually gained greater acceptance to the extent that Hermann Pálsson, in his introduction to the English translation of this saga (Hermann Pálsson 2-7), asserts that the saga text as we have it is an Old Norse translation of a Latin text which has now been lost, a text which he names **Vita Yngvari*.

If this theorized **Vita Ynvgari* were actually composed by Oddr Snorrason, and served as a source for our present version of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, then we are forced to considerably alter our timeline concerning the Norse saga's composition and its association with the *fornaldarsögur*. We know relatively little about the life and activity of Oddr Snorrason beyond that he was a monk at Þingeyri and was active in the latter half of the twelfth century, but this information alone is sufficient to locate the composition of the **Vita Yngvari* no more than one hundred and sixty years after the expedition and well before the compositional dates of the *fornaldarsögur* held by prevailing opinions. While we know nothing about Oddr's sources for

[55] No work attributed to Oddr Snorrason survives, but he is widely held to have composed a Latin history of Óláfr Tryggvasson which later may have served as source material for Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta.*

the **Vita Yngvari*, the Norse version of the text presents at least three different lines of oral transmission: one through Sweden and two from Iceland.

The saga also places particular emphasis on the activities of an Icelander named Ketill. The saga presents us with all we know of this Ketill, which is relatively little, but it stands to reason that this Ketill would have been one of the principal Icelandic oral informants of Yngvarr's voyage. The time gap between the expedition and Oddr's lifetime precludes the possibility that Oddr was directly informed by Ketill or another first-hand witness of Yingvarr's voyage (a fact that is also corroborated by the chain of oral transmission given in the Norse version of the text), but it is quite possible that individuals who knew Ketill personally were alive in Oddr's day and could have easily have served as oral informants for at least portions of Oddr's Latin version of Yngvarr's saga. When this shortened time gap is combined with the relatively strong testimony of the historical reality of Yngvarr's voyage in the contemporary runic and later saga texts, as well as the strong chain of oral transmission included in the Norse version, we are forced to ask serious questions about the relationship between the text and its Icelandic readership.

With this timeline in place, we no longer have the luxury to regard *Yngvars saga Víðförla* as the product of late thirteenth and early fourteenth Icelandic tastes, given to legendary material and flights of fancy. This is not to say that we should regard the Icelandic *Yngvars saga Víðförla* as a historic text, or even a historical text that lies concealed beneath the fantastical episodes within the saga. Instead, we should that ask how the text of *Yngvars saga*, fantastic episodes and all, would have been received by the Icelanders in the thirteenth century and how it may have reflected their worldview. I reiterate that we know nothing about the nature of Oddr's **Vita Yngvari*, and how prominently the fantastic, hagiographic, or kingly featured in the text. In any

case, Oddr's Latin text was composed at a time when Yngvarr's Icelandic companion, Ketill may well have been alive in popular memory, and any egregious deviations from Ketill's account may not have sat well with those who remembered the Icelander who traveled with Yngvaarr. By the same token, Oddr's Latin text presumably existed at the same time that the Norse text was composed, and the author's appeal to Oddr as a source would be seem out of place if the two texts differed drastically in tone and content.

In this light I would suggest that we not read the text of *Yngvars saga Víðförla* as nothing more than a semi-historical fantasy, but rather as a text which reflects how the Icelanders of the thirteenth century imagined the exotic East. A similar position has been argued by Margaret Clunies Ross for the *fornaldarsögur* in general. She argues for an anthropological model in which the *fornaldarsögur* function as fantastic ethnographies and provide a framework in which Icelanders understood their society:

> Thus we may say that the world depicted in the *fornaldarsögur* is both alien and familiar, remote in time and place but close enough to be recognizable to medieval Icelanders as similar to their own, socially elevated but still understandable in terms of family structures and kinship relations. It provided a mirror, often distorted and exaggerated, but still familiar, in which Icelanders of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could recognise themselves and their own society (Clunies Ross, "Ethnographies" 320).

This ethnographic interpretation of saga is especially salient in the case of *Yngvars saga*, as it embraces both the exotic and the Scandinavian, and speaks to a real, historical event which may have been very much alive in both oral and runic tradition as the time of the saga's composition. Thus, it may be much more beneficial to read the saga as a reflection of how the medieval

Icelanders imagined a voyage to the extreme east *should* have progressed rather than as a reflection of the disastrous expedition recorded in Swedish rune stones.

In this context, *Yngvars saga Víðförla* would seem to be an ideal test text for evaluating the model of Norse physical and social space developed in the preceding chapters. The narrative revolves around a series of voyages, a concept central to the ego-centric Norse understanding of space. These voyages, unlike any single narrative thread found in the mythological corpus, range across nearly the entire extent of space, from the very center to the extreme edge. In addition to these aspects of the saga, the east of *Yngvars saga* is populated with all sorts of strange and interesting creatures, much like the wider world of the Norse mythological cosmos.

Spatial transitions and the role of the river

At the core of the later sections of *Yngvars saga*, those portions which occur after the expedition departs Garðaríki, is the concept of a voyage. Travel across regions of space is an essential component of the spatial model constructed in previous chapters and is the lens through which we interpret those chapters of *Yngvars saga Víðförla* which see heroes and their men travel from the familiar to the ends of the earth. The expedition sets out to discover the source of a river, and does so by travelling along the river's course to the ocean at the end of the world. The river shapes both the objective and path of the expedition and as such plays a central role in interpreting space throughout the saga. This unnamed river serves both as a highway from the familiar to the unknown and as safe refuge from the many strange peoples and creatures which the men encounter on their quest.

One of the central features of our "quantum dartboard" model of mythological space consists of hazy, nebulous zones which form boundaries between various regions of space. It may seem that the relatively fixed course of a river would provide very little spatial ambiguity,

and there are several boundary zones found in *Yngvars saga* which seem to present clear borders between regions of terrestrial space which grow increasingly alien as the various expeditions journey further from the center and approach the edge. One of the clearest, and in many ways the least interesting, of these boundary zones is that made up of the two waterfalls which the expedition encounters as the men sail up the river. Deborah McGinnis has argued that these waterfalls indicate that the historical Yngvarr traveled the Dnieper rather than the Volga. The Dnieper rapids no longer exist due to the construction of modern hydroelectric dams, but the complicated, and likely harrowing, process of negotiating these rapids is described in detail in the Byzantine Greek *De Administrando Imperio* (McGinnis 82). However, as McGinnis herself points out, the outward trip from Scandinavia along the Dnieper would have been a downstream voyage, rather than the upstream one described in the saga. In light of this, and the scant geographical evidence in the text, it stretches the evidence too thin to make any definite conclusions about Yngvarr's route. However, it does seem very probable that the experience of traversing the Dnieper rapids would have stood out in the minds of those travelers to the Black Sea and would have become a narrative component of eastward voyages in general.

The river on which the ships travel is never given a name[56] and, even though it is an important element of the saga, it tends to fade into the background and become nothing more than a backdrop against which the saga can develop. However, the river itself is an important spatial feature and serves as more than a simple roadway from the center to the edge of the world. It is especially pertinent to discuss the river which becomes one of the central spatial features of the saga. Much of the discussion in this chapter revolves around the parallels in how

[56] Most commentators think that the river is either the Dnieper or the Volga as both were significant waterways into the Near East and both were plied by Scandinavian traders and both empty into large bodies of water. In my opinion, *Yngvars saga* likely records memories of events that occurred in various rivers in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as adapting folkloric motifs.

the medieval Norse constructed space in the mythological cosmos and how this cosmology reflects on their depiction of space in the real world. While there are occasional mentions of rivers in the mythological corpus, there is no river of size or length comparable to that on which Yngvarr's or Sveinn's expeditions travel. In the mythological sources, the rivers that do appear serve as barriers to motion but rather facilitate it.

The waterfalls encountered along the river's course mark not just nebulous border regions, but potentially mark the boundaries of different sorts of civilization. The saga places each of the two waterfalls shortly after the expedition departs one of the two cities which they encounter. The first after departing Silkisif's kingdom, and the second (which proves much more difficult to circumvent than the first) after they depart from Jólfr.[57] In essence, these waterfalls serve to signal that, even though Silkisif's and Jólfr's cities share many common features, they exist in very different spatial zones, and as the saga plays out, these cities will be treated very differently.

These waterfalls as spatial boundaries share many features with the nebulous borders between spatial regions that we have observed in the mythological corpus, but in many ways are also very distinct. To begin with, a waterfall is a much more localized and defined unit in space than any of the spatial boundaries which exist in the mythological corpus. A waterfall is nowhere near as expansive as a forest or the dark gorges through which Hermóðr rides. They do share come common features with this latter border region: they must be dark as the sides of the gorge are steep enough that the men are forced to use cables to raise their ships above the level of the

[57] In light of the prior discussion of the relationship between Yngvarr's voyage and historical voyages along the Volga or Dnieper, it is necessary to note that the positioning of the cities along the river's course adds nothing to the discussion of possible underlying historical roots to the saga narrative. While the Dnieper River did possess several rapids through which a riverine expedition must traverse, there is no evidence that there were any human settlements, like Jólfr's city, between any of the waterfalls.

waterfall. The natural action of a waterfall will also promote local conditions very similar to the hazy conditions encountered by Hermóðr in his ride to Hel. Any large waterfall like this one will produce large amounts of mist, especially when confined to a narrow gorge like the one described in the saga. Thus between the mist and the cliffs, the environment surrounding these two waterfalls can easily be imagined as a region very similar to those of other nebulous boundary zones, namely a dark, misty border. Furthermore the nature of a waterfall itself is always transitory and nebulous. A waterfall is certainly more localized in space than a dark forest, but its size, shape, and appearance will fluctuate with the seasons and the weather. The waterfalls in the saga provide distinct borders, which prove to be significant obstacles to Yngvarr's voyage while simultaneously maintaining elements of nebulous borders which we have seen in other parts of the Old Norse literary corpus.

The remaining two boundary regions included in the saga more clearly fit the nebulous boundaries encountered so far in the mythological corpus. The first of these occurs in the fifth chapter, after the expedition has departed Russia but following their first encounter with a giant (*rísi*):

> Síðan sigldu þeir marga daga ok um mörg heruð ok þar til, at þeir sáu annan sið ok lit á dýrum, ok af því skildu þeir, at þeir fjarlægðust sín heruð eða lönd. Einn aptan sáu þeir langt frá sér sem hálft tungl stæði á jörðunni. Um nóttina eptir helt Valdimarr vörð. Hann gengr á land á leit þess staðar, er þeir höfðu sét. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 373)
>
> [Then they sailed for many days and through many regions until they saw different behaviors and colors from the animals, and from that they were a long way from their region or land. One evening they saw, a long way off, that a half

moon seemed to be standing on the ground. The night after, Valdimarr kept watch. He went ashore and investigated this place that they had seen.]

This passage is a completely "realistic" depiction of transitional space – the sort that we would expect in a travelogue across unfamiliar country. The description of this spatial transition also includes several of the elements of spatial transitions which we have already observed in myth. The passage tells us that the terrain changes but gives no specific details about how – there is no mention of topography, vegetation, or weather, and the only indicators that we have of any spatial transition have to do with the changing animals and heavens. The author gives no indication that the terrain is at all unusual to the travelers, but that the transition is only noticed through the gradual observation that the animals' behaviors are changing. This serves as a marker to inform the audience, through the experiences of the saga's characters that the expedition has now entered into the exotic East, a land of strange though somewhat familiar animals, but the true indicator that they have crossed over comes with their observation of the moon.

For most modern readers of the saga lunar motions and cycles are understood as a natural phenomenon that occurs with regularity, but the precise details of how the moon moves across the night sky and how the moon's phases interact with solar motions are things to which we do not give much thought. We pass most of our lives in a comfortable, indoor world and do not have the same day-to-day connection with the moon and its cycles as pre-modern peoples would have. I believe that the lunar motions described in this passage of *Yngvars saga* suggest that expedition has truly moved away from the familiar and moved into a realm where even the motions of the moon are strange and do not conform to anything they have seen at home. The pre-modern audience of the saga would have been much more sensitive to these details and would have more

clearly recognized this as yet another indicator that the world in which the travelers moved was strange and exotic. The moon "standing" (stæði) on the ground marks a moment where the author uses celestial phenomena to indicate how drastically different the world has become.

The term *aptan,* the time of day in when the crew observes the half-moon corresponds closely to the English term *evening*, and the Cleasby-Vigfusson *An Icelandic-English* dictionary indicates that *aptan* corresponds to a time between 3 and 6 PM (23). Strictly speaking a true half-moon can only occur when the moon trails or leads the sun by ninety degrees, and in these situations the position of the moon when it touches the horizon corresponds to a very specific time. These occur either at noon (when the moon lies ninety degrees west of the sun) or at midnight (ninety degrees east of the sun) – times which do not fall under the specific definition of *aptan*. It is possible to suggest that the author is using the term *aptan* more colloquially, in the sense of the period of time of semi-darkness that precedes the dark of night. However, for there to be enough light at midnight for the author to use *aptan* in this colloquial sense, the expedition would have to occur in the summer of the extreme north during a time when there is no absolute darkness. But the author clearly indicates that shortly after they witness this half-moon, Valdimarr is standing watch *at night*. Additionally, the encounters with the giant and dragons which sandwich this observation also clearly occur at night.

I would suggest that the author is intentionally making a point about the strangeness of the landscape. Under normal conditions, those familiar to the Scandinavian audience of the saga, the configuration of half-moon, landscape, and ambient light are simply impossible. The author describes a celestial event which no one in Scandinavia would have ever observed (and is, in fact, impossible to observe anywhere on the planet). While modern readers of the saga likely gloss over this celestial event, it would have seemed remarkably strange to a medieval audience

more attuned to celestial motions, and would have clearly indicated that Yngvarr and his expedition had crossed over into a region of space that was vastly different from anything they knew.

The final notable transitional zone in the saga is by far the most interesting and most like those present in the mythology. In the unusual concluding commentary to the saga, as discussed above, the author mentions that Yngvarr and his company travelled through a region of darkness for a duration of two weeks. The nature of the comment makes it impossible to determine with certainty the author's position regarding whether Yngvarr and his company in fact traveled for two weeks in absolute darkness. He clearly states that it is unlikely at least two different instances, but at the same time he admits that this sort of scenario is possible and even goes so far as to explain the set of conditions which would make it a reality. He proposes that such a moment would only be possible if the ships traveled through a deep gorge covered by overhanging trees. It is easy to read this scenario as an authorial hint that he does not believe this particular scenario, and in turn doubts the validity of the entire saga.

The latter conclusion may be extending the author's comments too far, as he has already commented on the authenticity of the tale by appealing to Oddr Snorrason. However, the scenario which he describes fits extremely well into patterns which we have witnessed in the mythological cosmology for transitions between one distinct area of space to another, and may well represent the only way in which the author could imagine an experience which lies so far outside the norm. This theoretical voyage contains: 1) a region of darkness, 2) deep gorges which inhibit an ego-centric orientation, and 3) a forest, reflected in the overhanging trees. In many ways is closely resembles both Thorkillus' voyage to Utgarthilocus and Hermóðr's ride to Hel. The only aspect in which the description of Yngvarr's voyage does not fit the mythological

pattern is that we are given a concrete temporal component of the voyage, namely that it took two weeks.

It certainly seems possible that the author of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, by mentioning this region of space is tapping into a larger Scandinavian idea of the structure of cosmos. The narrative action of the saga transitions between areas of reasonably familiar space, namely Sweden, to the strange and exotic - all areas well beyond the author's daily experience. We have already seen that spatial transitions with these characteristics appear with some frequency in the mythological corpus, and it seems to be a well-established literary convention that travel to the strange and the exotic involves travel through a region of nebulous space. The author's attempts to justify the report that the expedition traveled through such a region, when he seems to believe that it is unlikely, seem to go beyond adherence to a simple literary motif. After all, he taps into other folkloric and literary conventions which would have been well outside his personal experience, but does not attempt to justify or explain their presence in the saga. I would suggest that the author is, in fact, trying to justify the sort of strange events which occur in the saga as a part of a real-world experience by suggesting that Yngvarr's expedition is said to have passed through the necessary conditions to transition from one region of space to another, and then explaining how it could have happened. Thus the comment: "En þó at þetta megi vera, þá er þó eigi sannligt" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 393) [But though that is possible, it is not likely true.] should not be read that the author believes that the story which he writes is untrue, rather that he feels that the conditions necessary to transition between one region of space to another are relatively rare and uncommon.

These transitional zones in *Yngvars saga* are one indicator that Scandinavian ideas of the structure and behavior of the mythological cosmos are also at work in the more historically

grounded world of the sagas. However, these transitions fit into a larger picture of the world as a whole, one which strongly reflects the cosmological model found in the mythological sources. These areas of transition naturally mark the border between *something* and *something else* and divide the action of the saga into several zones. Not only do these distinct zones generally reflect conditions which we see demonstrated in the human geography of the mythological cosmos, but we see the same amorphous, complicated, and changing borders present in the sagas.

Divisions of space within the saga

The river on which Yngvarr, Sveinn, and their men travel is the road which facilitates their expedition, but that river itself transverses several spatial boundaries. These boundaries serve to divide space into four distinct regions, bracketed by nebulous boundary conditions. The boundary of the first, the most central zone, is the region of nebulous space where the behavior of the animals shifts and in which the moon takes on its strange behavior. The second ends at the first waterfall immediately following Silkisif's kingdom. The third zone ends after Jólfr's kingdom, at the second waterfall. The fourth and final boundary marker is what the author calls Rauðahaf (the Red Sea). The action of the saga does not pass this final zone, but it is, much like the ocean which surrounds the mythological cosmos, an important boundary zone and seems to be one that is also impossible to traverse.

While the action of the saga runs along the primarily linear course of the great river, the saga gives us very little information and certainly not enough to definitively say anything about the perceived shape of the two-dimensional landmass through which the expedition travels. We can, however, infer that the landmass may have been imagined as roughly circular – reflecting the larger medieval notion of a central landmass as evidenced by the T-O maps in circulation as well as the generally circular nature of the Norse mythological cosmos. Ultimately, the shape of

this landmass is probably irrelevant as no attempt is ever made to circumnavigate its entirety, and the path that the expedition takes is predominantly linear, following the course of a single river.

With the lone exception of the encounter with the Vikings and their fire-breathing tubes, travel along the river is uneventful and peril-free. Yngvarr and Sveinn occasionally encounter people or monsters while plying the river, but invariably they must depart their ships for any legitimate conflict to occur. On several occasions, the encounter with the first giant and second dragon for instance, the ship serves as both a mode of escape and as a safe haven against the wrath of the angered beasts. No matter how vengeful and ardent the pursuit, the saga gives the impression that, if the captain's orders are followed their ships are a secure refuge against anything they may confront. It is almost as though the ships become a separate space unto themselves, a sort of mobile "center" from which the men can stage exploratory expeditions, but to which they can always return for safety and refuge. While this may seem self-evident given the nature of naval travel and exploration, we will see below how Yngvarr moves his ships, essentially creating a mobile Scandinavia, in his encounters with humans who live beyond the "center" of the Norse world.

Complicated issues of centrality

The saga's action begins in Sweden with the enumeration of Yngvarr's genealogy. In most measurable ways the opening of this saga closely resembles the introductory sections of various saga genres. In the *íslendingasögur* and the *konungasögur* the expository section frequently occurs in Norway rather than the Sweden of *Yngvars saga*, but the general thrust of the openings are the same. Action begins in a familiar way, one which is quite often rooted in the well-understood cultural norms of Scandinavia, and even if the cultural reality of continental Scandinavia during the Viking Age was significantly different than that of Iceland at the time of

the sagas' composition, they formed part of a well-established and understood literary topos. Even in the opening sections of the *fornaldarsögur*, the action often begins in Scandinavia with an expository genealogy of significant saga characters. Only after the scene has been set do the heroes leave Scandinavia to strange and exotic locales.

I need not comment extensively on the narrative structures of the various saga genres, especially since *Yngvars saga Víðförla* fits so poorly into these generic categories. It is sufficient to say that one of the central features of the opening section of several different saga genres is the establishing a concept of "home", or at least centrality. The establishment of a Scandinavian (or at a bare minimum Germanic) center at the beginning of a saga serves to provide contrast to the exotic locations the saga heroes may encounter. This feature is particularly noticeable in the *fornaldarsögur*, but is also a significant element in several of the *íslendingasögur* (England in *Egils saga* and Ireland in *Laxdæla saga* for example) or the *konungasögur* (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, *Magnússona saga*). The contrast between "home" and "other," between center and periphery, also plays strongly in *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, but the expository chapters of this saga present a much more complicated vision of what constitutes center.

The action of the expository section of the saga, the section prior to Yngvarr's departure to the east, is not limited to Sweden. The narrative shifts constantly back and forth between Sweden and Garðaríki. As a whole, the saga presents these journeys as routine and unproblematic. The saga recognizes linguistic differences between the two locales, but these never seem to hamper the heroes, and travel back and forth is routine. The author gives us none of the topographical details which characterize the latter sections of the saga, and the only difficulties that the characters encounter are those directly related to the saga's plot, indicating that we, as readers, should probably not consider Garðaríki to be all that different from Sweden.

We should note that Garðaríki is frequently translated as Russia, not just in the case of *Yngvars saga* but in many translations of Icelandic sagas. While the validity of this translation can be argued, the Garðaríki here, and in the sagas as a whole, is very different from the Russia as understood by a modern audience. At the time the saga was set, Russia or Garðaríki was a loose collection of culturally-connected cities in what is modern-day Ukraine, Belarus, and Western Russia, populated principally by Slavic speakers, but with strong cultural and historical connections to Scandinavia. The particular period in which the saga is set, the later years of the rule of Yaroslav the Wise (Norse Jarizleifr, Old East Slavic Ярославъ), was one of relatively few periods of peace and stability, and one in which relationships with the Norse kingdoms were particularly strong.

Yaroslav was strongly connected to important players in Scandinavia through both lineage and marriage. He was the descendent of the semi-mythical Rurik, the founder of the Rurikid line which dominated the leadership of the early East Slavic states, and whom the *Russian Primary Chronicle* connects with Scandinavia. The *Primary Chronicle* gives the impression that the Princes of the Rus' sought consorts among the Scandinavians at least through Yaroslav's day. The saga correctly identifies Ingegerd of Sweden as Yaroslav's wife. His mother, Rogneda, appears to have been Scandinavian as well, and his father was St. Vladimir I, the Prince of Kiev when Greek Christianity was officially adopted as the official religion of Rus', was at least half Scandinavian himself.[58] Yaroslav went on to secure marriages for his children among several prominent members of European royalty, one of which, Elizabeth, was married to Haraldr Harðráða of Norway, and upon his death to Sveinn II of Denmark.

During this early period in the development of the Kievan state, a Scandinavian presence

[58] The ethnicity of Vladimir's mother Malusha is never clearly explained in the Slavic sources and there have been various theories arguing in favor of both Slavic and Scandinavian ancestry for her.

in East Slavic territories appears to have been common. Scandinavians served in the Varangian Guard in Byzantium, engaged in trade along the Volga and Dnieper rivers, and frequently served as mercenaries in internal struggles. Vladimir I secured his throne with the help of Scandinavian mercenaries following a period of exile abroad (presumably in Scandinavia). Given the strong political, cultural, and commercial links between Scandinavia and Kievan Rus' at the time of the saga's action, there was probably some measure of truth to the author's presentation of Garðaríki. It seems likely that Scandinavian travelers in these Slavic lands would have had little difficulty in finding Norse speakers; they would have been relatively safe as travelers, and would have encountered many of the same legal and cultural institutions as in Scandinavia. In fact, in some ways Garðaríki is presented a more stable political entity than Sweden. Yaroslav does not seem to be plagued by the same internal conflicts as the Swedish kings and generally is portrayed as much nobler and more generous than any of the Swedish or foreign kings in the saga.

The saga's presentation of Garðaríki juxtaposes interestingly with that of Sweden. It might be tempting to instinctively understand the relationship between Sweden and Garðaríki as one of center and periphery, as home and abroad, especially since the saga's opening conforms closely with the sort of scene-setting presented in the Scandinavian-based other saga genres. It might also be compelling to regard Garðaríki in *Yngvars saga* as a locale akin to Permia or Lapland in the *fornaldarsögur*, namely in that they are geographically proximate to Scandinavia, but populated by some sort of "other." However, the inhabitants of Garðaríki are not the pagans, magicians, and monsters the heroes encounter in the *fornaldarsögur*. As we have already seen, in many ways Garðaríki is simply an extension of Scandinavia, perhaps with a different language. In general, the saga does not present Garðaríki as radically different from Scandinavia.

In this light, perhaps the best way to understand the relationship between Sweden and

Garðaríki is not one of center-periphery, but as one of a complex center with two foci, a concept which matches (surprisingly) well with the complex relationship between Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr in the mythological cosmos. Much like the dualistic center seen in that cosmology, the dualistic center presented in *Yngvars saga* is complex. The strongest thrust toward centrality lies in Sweden, much like the general impetus toward the center of the mythological cosmos is Ásgarðr. Sweden is both the origin and the final destination of the saga, as well as the goal for a voyage home for Yngvarr the traveler, and where he desires to experience his final rest. However, in many ways Yaroslav's Garðaríki presents a very appealing center as well. Interestingly, several characters in the saga experience difficulties from which they must flee, and Garðaríki is presented as safe destination for such exiles. It becomes something of a home-away-from-home when conditions at home become too dangerous. Part of this stability certainly appears to emanate from Yaroslav's exceptional kingliness and willingness to negotiate difficult political situations. Finally, even though the final destination for both Yngvarr's and Sveinn's voyages is ultimately Sweden, the tension in the saga and the conflicts with strange and magical creatures effectively come to an end once the travelers return to Garðaríki. It is at this point that they enter a safe space distanced from all the bizarre and terrifying experiences of their expeditions. Garðaríki is every bit as much a center, presenting a complex, bifurcated central space similar to that which seems to exist in the Norse mythological cosmos.

Human Geography and Monsters

One of the most obvious features of the Norse mythological cosmos is the general trend toward greater monstrosity or alterity as an individual travels further from the central regions of the cosmos where the gods reside to the farthest regions which tend to be inhabited by truly monstrous beings. One of the central questions shaping the discussion in this chapter is whether

or not the wider world of the sagas generally reflects the same organizational notions of space as those we see in the mythological cosmos. Given that human geography, and the relationships between the various beings which inhabit the cosmos, feature so prominently in the organized structure of the mythological cosmos, we should reasonably expect to see a similar organization reflected in the world of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*.

We do see striking similarities between the innermost and outermost regions of the world presented in *Yngvars saga* and the cosmological organization presented in mythological sources. We have already discussed the central regions of saga, Sweden and Garðaríki, and the complex relationships evidenced there. At the farthest point in Yngvarr's journey, he encounters a wide expanse of seemingly endless ocean and a dragon. It is easy to draw parallels between the landscape at the end of the world of *Yngvars saga* and the trackless ocean, inhabited by the Miðgarðsormr that marks the final and uncrossable barrier at the end of the mythological cosmos. However, we must not forget that similar features were very much part of a much broader cosmology which began in the Greco-Roman world and influenced both Judeo-Christian and Islamic cosmology and cartography in the Middle Ages. The concept of a landmass surrounded by a vast ocean is a key component and very visible in the T-O maps, and stories of dragons and other sea monsters are certainly not limited to Nordic traditions.

In fact, it would seem that certain elements of the saga's dragons were based in a Latin source. The term iaculus appears in both Lucan's Pharsalia (9; 720, 822) and Pliny the Elder's Natural History (viii, 38) and refers to an arboreal serpent. The Norse term Jacúlus[59] would seem to be a borrowing from these Latin sources, but unlike the Latin texts refers to a much larger, ground-dwelling animal, and seems to have been interpreted as the name of a particular dragon

[59] Note that the Jacúlus refers to the *first* dragon Yngvarr encounters and the one Sveinn kills, not the dragon at the end of the world.

rather than a generic species of reptile. It would be difficult to derive a definitive Nordic tradition behind the presence of a dragon at the end of the world, or unambiguously to link it to any classical tradition. At best we can say that the dragon and ocean of *Yngvars saga Víðförla* present a point of similarity to the Norse mythological cosmos, which may or may not bear direct influence from earlier Scandinavian cosmological models, but almost certainly bears a name borrowed from Classical Latin sources.

It seems that, in the space between the Scandinavian oriented center of the narrative and the farthest edge that there is a blending of Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian traditions. Certain elements in the saga seem to have been influenced by either the Greco-Roman tradition or by direct contact with the Mediterranean world, e.g. Cyclopes, the city of Heliopolis, and the presence of ships which shoot fire out of hollow metal tubes. The latter may be a reference to Greek fire, a sort of primitive napalm employed by the Byzantine navy, and a feature of naval combat that could have easily entered into the Norse consciousness via the activities of those Scandinavians serving the Greek emperor in the Varangian guard. The other Greek borrowings seem to be mere borrowings of terminology with scant reference to this historical or literary context behind the borrowed term. Jólfr's city of Heliopolis bears little resemblance to any Classical city of the same name, or to the literal meaning of Greek compound: "City of the Sun." Likewise the Cyclopes which appear in the saga bear only a superficial resemblance to the Cyclopes of Greek myth. The Norse Cyclopes are described as large in stature, but there is no mention of their distinctive, monocular physiology.

These borrowings from Classical sources and languages may, at first glance, suggest that large portions of classical thought or travel narratives were imported into this saga, and thus any attempt to use it as an indicator of native Scandinavian cosmology would be problematic. We

have already seen that these elements have been borrowed imperfectly, often with no indication that the Norse author knew or understood anything but the barest details of his classical sources. It would thus seem clear that there is a degree of syncretism of native Norse and Classical traditions. Those elements borrowed into the saga from the Greco-Roman tradition have been borrowed clumsily at best, and just as often appear to be merely Greek terms merged into the Norse text with little awareness of their original context.

We must not forget that the driving force which structures the Norse mythological cosmos is the relationship *between* the Æsir and the other beings, and that their physical placement in the cosmos reflects these relationships. Likewise, we should examine the various creatures which Yngvarr and Sveinn's expeditions encounter in terms not of the creatures themselves but in terms of the interactions that these beings have with the Norse adventurers. Comparisons of this type are particularly useful when the beings with similar characteristics are encountered at different points in the voyage. In the space before the transitional zone after Garðaríki we find giants. After this first transitional zone we encounter dragons and a city of humans. A second city of humans is located between the two waterfalls and the final zone at the end of the world includes giants, dragons, and the strange encounter with island-like structures that spew fire. The nature of this last encounter is ambiguous. The text seems to suggest that these are actually disguised ships, probably crewed by humans, but nowhere is this made explicitly clear. If we choose the city of Heliopolis, located between the two waterfalls, as a (perhaps arbitrary) dividing line in the course of Yngvarr's voyage, the protagonists experience one group of giants, dragons, and humans on each side of this divide (discussed below), but the nature of the interaction with the giants and dragons on each side if the divide is radically different.

The giants and dragons on the "inner" side of the boundary seem to present a much smaller threat to Yngvarr and his party than the counterparts on the "outer" side. The first of the encounters with the giants is handled with relative ease. A lone member of the crew ventures out on his own and encounters giant, and when the giant gives chase, Ketill easily escapes. In contrast to this episode, the entire crew is needed to dispatch the second giant, something they cannot do themselves. Instead they are forced to compromise the structural integrity of its dwelling and cause it to collapse on the giant.

The dragons the crew encounters are much more dangerous creatures than the giants; the entire crew escapes the giants unscathed, but each dragon claims the lives of several men. The Jakúlus claims an entire ship with its venom, but only after they are disturbed by the members of the crew. Yngvarr urges his crew to interact with the second dragon with considerably more care. They do not confront the dragon physically, and rely on trickery to lure it from its hoard long enough to steal part of its treasure. This turns out to be a prudent decision because it avoids a fight with the dragon and because the dragon's hideous appearance is enough to kill several of the men who are too curious about the nature of the dragon and witness its fury.

There is certainly an escalation in the danger these creatures present to Yngvarr and his crew as the ships move closer toward the edge of the edge of the world, but this sort of escalation is a common feature of most stories of this type. We would expect the protagonist of most stories to encounter more difficult situations as the narrative progresses. However, the differences between these encounters are more than simply one of scale – the "outer" giant and dragon are presented differently than their counterparts closer to the center. The text describes the initial sighting of the second giant in this way: "Ok er þeir höfðu lengi farit, sá þeir hús eitt ok hræðiligan risa hjá svá illiligan, at þeir hugðu, at fjándinn væri." [And when they had traveled

long, they saw a house and there a dreadful giant (*rísi*) so hideous that they thought he was the Devil.] Here the description of this giant goes beyond merely gigantic, aggressive, or dangerous: the giant is directly associated with the devil. The Norse term *fjándi* is cognate with our English word "fiend" and in many cases can be translated with simple oppositional terms such as "enemy" or "foe," but, as in English, the term has come to be associated with demons and with the inclusion of the definite article (as appears here) with the Devil himself.

The same sort of demonic language marks the presentation of the second dragon, the one who resides at the end of the earth. The tale of how the dragon came to be is related to Sóti, one of Yngvarr's men, by a demon residing at the end of the earth:

> Siggeus hét maðr styrkr ok máttugr. Hann átti þrjár dætr. Þeim gaf hann mikit gull. En er hann dó, var hann þar grafinn, sem nú sáu þér drekann. Eptir hann dauðan fyrirmundi in elzta sínum systrum gulls ok gersema. Hún spillti sér sjálf. Hennar dæmi hafði önnur systirin. In þriðja lifði þeira lengst ok tók arf eptir föður sinn ok forræði þessa staðar, egi at eins meðan hún lifði. Hún gaf nafn nesinu ok kallaði Siggeum. Hún skipar hverja nótt höllina með fjölda djöfla, ok em ek einn af þeim, sendr at sega þér tíðendi. En drekar átu hræ konungs ok dætra hans, en sumir menn ætla, at þau sé at drekum orðin. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 379-380)
>
> [There was a strong and mighty man named Siggeus. He had three daughters. He gave them much gold. When he died, he was buried where you saw the dragon. After his death, the oldest daughter begrudged her sisters their gold and treasures. She killed herself and the second sister followed her example. The third sister lived the longest and took up her father's inheritance and ruled this place beyond

her life. She named the promontory and called it Siggeum. Every night she fills the hall with demons, and I am one of them, sent to tell you this. Dragons ate the carcasses of the king and his daughters, and some believe that they transformed into dragons.]

The dragons came either to consume the corpses of Siggeus and his daughters or the corpses themselves were transformed into the reptilian beasts. The dragons do not seem to appear on the scene spontaneously; they appear only after the youngest of the sisters fills the hall with *fjölda djöfla*, quite literally "a crowd of devils," which certainly implies some causal connection between the dragon and the devils. Furthermore, it is one of these "devils" who relates the tale of Siggeus and his sisters to Yngvarr's man.

In stark contrast to the presentation of the giant and dragons closer to the Norse center of the saga, the second giant and dragon are not just more dangerous to the protagonists, but they are directly linked to language which connects them to creatures of the Christian Hell. These are not merely hostile foes for the characters to overcome, who grow increasingly ugly, wicked, and monstrous; they are quite literally *evil*. Thus, while the category of the creatures that Yngvarr and his crew encounter does not change significantly as they travel farther from the Scandinavian center of the saga, but the creatures grow more monstrous and more hostile to the very nature of mankind. This schematic presentation reflects strongly on a similar trend observed in the Norse cosmos. The creatures at the ends of the world, such as the Miðgarðrormr, and the frost and fire giants, are, by their very nature, hostile to the existence of the Æsir and Vanir and fall much closer to an idealized evil than the more common *jötnar* who occupy a space more proximate to the gods.

It is important to distinguish between the giants in this saga, called *rísar*, and the giants in

the mythological corpus, called *jötnar*. Cleasby-Vigfusson makes the following distinction: "In popular Icel. usage rísi denotes size, jötunn strength, þurs lack of intelligence" (Cleasby-Vigfusson 498). However, Ármann Jakobsson has pointed out that the representation of giants and the deployment of various terms for these beings is not consistent in the *fornaldarsögur*. At best, Cleasby-Vigfusson's definition is a rough outline. What is important is that the beings which are described as giants in *Yngvars saga* are a very different sort of creature than the mythological giants (Ármann Jakobsson 196-197). It may be intuitively tempting to observe the numerous humanoids of gigantic proportion, especially in the English translation of the saga, and relate them to the *jötnar* of mythology. This sort of intuitive connection is largely the result of terminology used in translation and is not present in the Norse text. Additionally, confusing the giants in *Yngvars saga* with the mythological *jötnar* can prompt us to look for false equivalences between these two, very different sorts of "giant," where none exist. In spite of the fact that the term *jötunn* is frequently translated as "giant" in English, they are not consistently presented as larger than the Æsir and Vanir, and their ability to engage in sexual intercourse with the gods suggests that they are not. Furthermore, the Norse terms *jötunn* and *jötnar* never appear in *Yngvars saga Víðförla*; the term used universally in the saga to describe creatures of monstrous proportions is *risa* not *jötunn*. The mythological *jötnar* are, quite unlike the *rísar* of *Yngvars saga*, are not monstrous outsiders. In spite of their frequent clashes between the gods and the *jötnar* and the somewhat antagonistic relationship between the two groups of mythological beings, the *jötnar* are not evil. They frequently interact with the gods in positive ways. They are bringers of knowledge and technology. More significantly, the *jötnar* of mythology are a source of potential reproductive partners, and female *jötnar* at least, can be successfully integrated into the society of the Norse gods. Thus, if any parallels to the *jötnar* are to be found in *Yngvars saga*

they certainly are not the monstrous *rísar* which the expedition encounters with some frequency.

Humanity and Borders

When retelling the story of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, the frequent encounters with giants, dragons, and demons make it easy to gain the impression that the thrust of the story is a group of adventurers combating monstrous beings. However, the text devotes far more effort in describing interactions with human beings: Eymundr and Yngvarr's dealings in Sweden and Garðaríki, Silkisif in Citopolis, Jólfr and Heliopolis, and several encounters with heathens and pirates. Unlike the encounters with giants and dragons, the interactions with these various human groups present much more complex and interesting relationships, relationships which run the whole spectrum of human interaction, from amorous to downright violent. These interactions, much more than dragon slaying, frame the saga and reflect the manner in which the medieval Scandinavians imagined human geography in the world around them.

In many ways, the human interactions in *Yngvars saga* are the most interesting, and they are certainly the most telling when it comes to projecting how the medieval Norse may have imagined people who lived at the edges of the known world and beyond. The saga uses many techniques including appearance, language, religion, and social customs to mark people who are "other" with respect to the Norse crew of Yngvarr's expedition. The author weaves these differences freely throughout his narrative to present a picture of the East that is consciously different but no so remote as to consistently present a solid barrier between the greater Scandinavian world and what lies beyond. It should also come as no surprise, based on a reading of myth, that the borders which divide the Norse heroes from "the other" are somewhat permeable and shift with regard to the actions of the expedition's men and the actions of the exotic people that they encounter.

For the purposes of this discussion, we will omit a large quantity of the human interactions which occur in *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, namely those that take place in Scandinavia prior to Yngvarr's voyage east and in the interlude between the return of Ketill and the first expedition and the time when Sveinn sets out in his father's footsteps. These human interactions have been excluded simply because they occur in the Norse center and as such tell us relatively little about how the medieval Norse may have imagined people on the edges of the cosmos. The interactions which occur in Sweden and in Garðaríki closely mirror those found in other saga genres and as such merit no special discussion here.

The rest of the human interactions in the saga occur between members of one of the two expeditions and individuals who resides beyond the hazy barrier that separates the known world from those outside. Some of these, namely the semi-demonic family of King Siggeus, have already been discussed. Others, principally the (presumed) human crew of the fire-belching vikings, also merit little comment as the crew's interaction with these people is minimal and strictly adversarial, and they are presented in such a context that they are completely stripped of their humanity and clearly marked as an absolute "other." In this naval encounter, we can only presume that the ships disguised as floating islands are actually powered by human crews based simply on the fact that Jólfr had previously warned Yngvarr that he would encounter such pirates. Of the remaining encounters with humans that occur beyond the central region of the saga, by far the most interesting is the relationship that both crews have with Queen Silkisif; Yngvarr's relationship with Jólfr and Sveinn's conflicts with the heathens are also worthy of comment. Through the course of these interactions, the principal trait that marks these humans as "other" is their pagan religion, but issues of language, space, and social custom also feature heavily in the saga.

Language and Borders

Few of the *íslendingasögur, konugasögur,* or *fornaldarsögur* pay particular attention to the linguistic difficulties that travelers beyond Scandinavia may encounter. There are occasional mentions of language such as St. Paul's speaking Greek in answer to Claudius in *Páls saga Postula*, or the revelation in *Laxdæla saga* that Ólafr Pái spoke Irish. However, these instances are the exception rather than the rule and often, as in the case of Ólafr Pái, serve to draw attention to a special characteristic of a character rather than to indicate an author's or audience's awareness of the diverse languages spoken throughout the world. The much more common situation resembles that in *Egils saga* where the titular character can freely travel, communicate, and recite poetry throughout England and the Baltic without any indication of linguistic difficulty. The characters in the *fornaldarsögur* travel even further, often to completely fantastic lands that correspond to no real-world location, but even in these sagas the authors rarely mention the linguistic difficulties that the principal characters may encounter and interpreters are rarely required. Going against this trend, the author of *Yngvars saga Víðförla* pays particular attention to the various languages that the voyagers encounter as they travel, and specifically uses these differences to draw attention to "the other" and even comment on their distance from the center.

In his initial encounter with Queen Silkisif, Yngvarr's first priority was to determine which languages she spoke: "ok svá reyndist, at hún kunni at tala rómversku, þýversku, dönsku ok girsku ok margar aðrar, er gengu um Austrveg" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 374). [And as it turns out, she knew how to speak Romance, German, Norse, Greek (probably Russian), and many others, that circulated in the East.] In spite of Silkisif's physical location outside the comfortable, known world that was familiar with the saga audience, Silkisif speaks several

European languages which would have been, at the very least, familiar to the audience and orient the queen with the world of Western Europe, a world familiar to the saga's Icelandic audience. Two of the languages she speaks, Norse and Russian, are precisely the languages spoken by the inhabitants of Sweden and Garðaríki. German would have also been rather well-known to both the saga audience and to Scandinavian travelers in the eleventh century. The saga author also mentions that Silkisif speaks *rómverska* and other languages that were circulating in the East. For the latter category we can safely assume that this comment could refer to languages such as Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Georgian, or any number of Turkic tongues spoken in the Eurasian steppes at this time, and that the author is simply gesturing to the fact that he knows that these languages exist and that they are of little interest to the narrative, as they are of little interest to the Icelandic audience and it would strain the limits of plausibility to suggest that these languages were known to Yngvarr.

The remaining language in this tally, what the author calls *rómverska* is a slightly more difficult to interpret. The noun, *rómverska*, appears nowhere else in the corpus of Old Norse prose and we cannot rely on other appearances of the term to guess at the author's meaning in this instance. However, the related adjective, *rómverskr,* appears nearly fifty times in the corpus and means 'Roman' with all the complexities this term carries in both modern English and in many medieval languages. The most common usage of the adjective refers to the Classical city of Rome or the Roman Empire in texts such as *Rómverja saga* and *Páls saga Postula*, but the term also appears with frequency in reference to medieval Rome or Roman law. Thus the most likely interpretation of the language known as *rómverska* should not be taken to mean French or any other vernacular Romance dialect spoken during the Middle Ages, but probably represents the language that the Medieval Icelanders believed was spoken in Rome at the time of Yngvarr's

voyage, whatever that may have been.

The author of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, by breaking with saga convention and highlighting the potential linguistic barriers which exist between Yngvarr's crew and Silkisif, simultaneously distances and integrates her and her kingdom into the wider Scandinavian world known to saga audiences. Her kingdom has already been positioned beyond the limits of the known world and the author indirectly indicates that the crew could reasonably expect to encounter a number of barriers to communication as they progress. By drawing attention to the fact that Yngvarr and his crew may well experience linguistic difficulties from here on out, the author foregrounds that the human inhabitants of Silkisif's kingdom and beyond are "the other" in that they cannot communicate with each other with the same refinement as made possible by a shared language. However, in the same moment that the saga author warns the audience to the presence of "the other" in the saga, he simultaneously strips away all the problems that his attention to linguistic differences provokes. Not only are Yngvarr and his crew not required to learn Silkisif's language or communicate through some other means, the queen herself is very well versed in practically all of the important languages of the West. What becomes clear is that Silkisif has already been looking westward, foreshadowing her romantic interest in Yngvarr and her eventual conversion to Christianity and move to greater integration with the larger Scandinavian world. From our first encounter with Queen Silkisif, we see a character in the nebulous zones between "inside" and "outside," between the familiar and "the other."

We observe a similar pattern of events in the same chapter, when Yngvarr and his crew travel further upriver to Heliopolis. Here they encounter the ruler, Jólfr, outside the city and the first contact unfolds in a similar way. The expedition encounters and number of ships from which an individual hails them and speaks several languages before finally

settling on "*girska*" (probably Russian) which Yngvarr is able to understand. Again, the saga author points out the linguistic difficulties that an expedition of this nature could encouter before they discover a language common to all parties. However, unlike Silkisif, Jólfr is nowhere near as familiar with the linguistic trends of Europe. Girska seems to be the only language they have in common, unlike Silkisif who spoke "Danish" as well as several other European languages which would have been familiar to both the members of the crew and the to the saga audience. With this initial gesture, the author points out the increasing alterity of this city when compared to Silkisif's. Not only is Heliopolis located further up the river, and thus farther in space from Scandinavia, but they are further separated from the European center by language barriers.

Finally, the author again turns to language when he describes the preparations that Sveinn makes before departing on his mission to Queen Silkisif: "Enn er sagt, at þann vetr gekk Sveinn í þann skóla, at hann nam margar tungur at tala, þær er menn vissu um Austrveg ganga" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 384). [It is said that that winter Sveinn went to school and that he learned to speak many languages that men knew to be current in the East.] Here we see a similar focus on "languages current in the East", as found in the description of the initial encounter with Silkisif – both use some form of *Austrvegr* and some form of the verb *að ganga*. However, here Sveinn specifically prepares himself to confront the potential language barriers that he expects to find. While this preparation certainly seems to be prudent, it is ironic that he does so, considering that in many ways it may not be needed. Sveinn does not undertake this voyage blindly; he has after all been informed of the route and conditions found in Silkisif's city by Ketill and the other returning members of Yngvarr's initial expedition. From this he should be well aware of the fact that Silkisif speaks several languages, including Norse and that learning the "languages current

in the east" would not be strictly necessary for his mission.[60]

Our earlier discussion of Silkisif's linguistic abilities focused on how she is presented as an Eastern ruler but with Western-leaning linguistic capabilities – foreshadowing her eventual move from the region "outside" of the Scandinavian world to a position "inside" it. We see in Sveinn the reverse process; he is a Westerner looking East. This linguistic preparation parallels Sveinn's religious mission; he is traveling to Silkisif with the intention of integrating her into his religious tradition rather than requiring that she travel to him. Just as religion serves as the bridge between cultures, relocating Silkisif and her city to the Scandinavian "inside," the saga author uses language, a feature mentioned infrequently in saga literature, as a bridge that connects the Scandinavian world with the exotic East and ultimately facilitates the relocation of one exotic location from "outside" to "inside."

Heathenism and Miscegenation

A recurring feature of both Yngvarr's and Sveinn's voyages beyond the borders of Garðaríki is the author's focus on the abundant and insidious presence of paganism and the concern that the crew members may develop sexual relationships with any of the women they encounter there. The presence of pagans beyond the European center of the saga is taken for granted; none of the expeditions encounter any form of Christianity once they leave Russia.[61]

---

[60] I should point out that there would be other, practical benefits to studying languages prior to departing on this voyage. Unlike Yngvarr, Sveinn did not spend parts of his youth in Garðaríki, and thus likely did not speak Russian. Since large portions of the voyage from Sweden to Silkisif's city would involve travel through Russian-speaking lands, it would be a prudent move on Sveinn's part to learn the language. However, the description of Sveinn's linguistic preparations occurs in conjunction with a description of his preparations for a missionary voyage (discussed in more detail in the next section), and seems intimately connected with this portion of the mission.

[61] While this may seem self-evident, there was a long-standing European tradition that Christianity was present in the East, and stories of the kingdom of Prester John circulated widely. See for example, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville.* Additionally, the Syriac Church of the East still represented a significant Christian community in Asia both at the time of Yngvarr's historical voyage and at the time *Yngvars saga Viðförla* was composed. Additionally, *Eiríks saga Viðförla,* a saga closely linked thematically to *Yngvars saga*, explicitly mentions a Christian presence in the Far East. The absence of Christianity outside this center likely reflects a state in which the tales of Eastern Christians simply had not arrived in Iceland at the time of the saga's composition, but I do find the

Both Silkisif's and Jólfr's cities abound with pagan sacrifice, and the saga's author frequently draws attention to the heathenism of the humans encountered by Sveinn and his crew.

Paganism exists in stark contrast to Christianity in the saga, and figures especially prominently in Sveinn's voyage. Paganism is also an important factor in Yngvarr's interactions with queen Silkisif and king Jólfr. The contrast between Silkisif's and Jólfr's cities proves to be one of the most interesting in *Yngvars saga* and a section dedicated to an analysis of this interaction follows later in this chapter. At this point it is sufficient to say that Yngvarr finds that Silkisif's city was "fullt… af blótskap," literally "full of pagan sacrifice-craft," and that there was "mikinn blótskap," (much pagan sacrifice-craft) in Jólfr's. Yngvarr takes multiple approaches to combating the presence of pagan activity, including sequestration of his men and encouraging prayer. Yngvarr departs Silkisif with a promise to return and, among other things, instruct her in Christianity, but the hero dies before he is able to return to the queen and complete the conversion process. The task of bringing Christianity to Silkisif and her city instead falls to Yngvarr's son Sveinn, and his voyage is principally missionary in nature rather than exploratory. As such, the section of the saga devoted to Sveinn has a decidedly more prominent Christian character than Yngvarr's.

From the very beginning of Sveinn's expedition, the saga author informs us that it will be of a very different nature from Yngvarr's. After Ketill returns to Sweden, the author describes Sveinn's preparations to travel to Silkisif as follows:

> Enn er sagt, at þann vetr gekk Sveinn í þann skóla, at hann nam margar tungur at tala, þær er menn vissu um Austrveg ganga. Síðan bjó hann þrjá tigi skipa ok kveðst halda vilja því liði á fund drottningar. Hann hafði með sér marga

possibility that the author intentionally ignored these traditions in favor of preserving a more pagan cosmology to be particularly intriguing.

> kenninmenn. Var þeira æðstr biskup sá, er Róðgeirr hét. Biskup vígði þrysvar hluti ok hlutaði þrysvar, ok hlutaðist svá til í hvert sinn, at guð vildi, at hann færi. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 384)
>
> [It is said that that winter Sveinn went to school and that he learned to speak many languages that men knew to be current in the East. Then he prepared thirty ships and declared that he intended to take this troop to meet with the queen. He had many priestly teachers with him. The most important of those was a bishop named Róðgeirr. The bishop blessed three lots and cast them three times, and the lots showed each time that God willed that he go.]

Unlike his father, Sveinn is very conscious of his task as a missionary prince and not simply an explorer. Beyond preparing the requisite men and ships he devotes effort to learning languages, employs the services of priests and a bishop, and uses Christianized divination to determine God's will. Unlike Yngvarr's voyage, Sveinn's is not one of exploration; from the very outset his goal is to convert those along the way, and as the story unfolds we realize that ultimately nothing other than this goal is possible. Those who are not converted invariably turn hostile and are destroyed.

In the chapters describing Sveinn's voyage the author vastly increases the use of the adjective *heiðinn* "heathen" as a descriptor of the peoples encountered. The term appears a total of twenty times in the saga, eighteen of which are found in the Sveinn chapters. The first encounter with heathens (Ch. 9) occurs shortly after the expedition departs: they encounter a fleet of ninety ships who are immediately hostile. In spite of the overwhelming odds, Sveinn's troop is successful and a casting of lots to determine God's will in the battle and a solemn vow to give up the viking life. From the very outset of this portion of the saga, heathens, rather than

monsters, become the primary obstacles to the success of the expedition. Sveinn encounters giants and dragons on his voyage, but the conflicts with heathens are more numerous and given more attention in the text.

Following Sveinn's encounter with the fleet of ninety heathen ships, the expedition engages with and runs afoul of pagans on two more occasions before finally arriving at its destination. Both encounters follow a similar pattern: 1) the two groups meet, 2) signs of peace are offered, 3) the two parties gather to trade, 4) Sveinn's men do something that incites hostility from the pagans and provokes physical confrontation, 5) a divine or diabolic presence is recognized, and finally 6) Sveinn's troops emerge triumphant. Both encounters with these heathens begin relatively innocuously with little hint of impending violence. In fact, with only one exception the author describes these people as *landsmenn* prior to any conflict, and uses adjective *heiðinn* only after hostilities have begun. Even though the two encounters follow a similar pattern, the two differ greatly in their presentation of the heathens and their animosity toward the Christian mission undertaken by Sveinn and his men. Sveinn triumphs against the first through his own prowess, but it is only through God's intervention that they overcome the second pagan host.

The origin of the conflict between Sveinn's men and the first group of heathens is mundane; one of Sveinn's men reneges on a trade offer. From this point the saga author refers to the other trading party as *heiðinn*, though the general tone of the conflict is ordinary. The only indication that there may be more to this conflict than a mere traders' dispute occurs after someone hurls two apples at Sveinn's feet. Both land in exactly the same spot. To this Sveinn responds: "Þessu fylgir nokkurr djöfulligr kraptr ok rammr átrúnaðr" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 386). [There is some demonic skill and strong belief behind this.] and fires an arrow into

the apple-thrower's face. Sveinn's statement highlights the demonic alterity of this group of pagans, a feature which is further reinforced when the arrow strikes and reveals that the thrower has a bird's beak rather than a human nose. This encounter with pagans occurs well after the missionary expedition has left the Scandinavian center of the saga and has moved into the same realm where Yngvarr encountered giants and dragons. These humans seem to be situated relatively close to the border, and while they are certainly pagan "others" they appear to be much less foreign and hostile than the final heathen group the expedition encounters.

The last encounter with the heathen begins innocuously enough, and the two sides also come together to trade. However, the act that causes the armed conflict is not a simple trade dispute and instantly reveals that this group is categorically worse than any of the previous heathens encountered to this point. The leader of the heathens invites the traders to a feast at which point:

> Er Sveins menn settust undir borðit, signdu þeir sik; en er heiðingjarnir sáu þá gera krossmark, þá ærðust þeir ok hljupu at þeim. Sumir börðu þá menn hnefunum, en sumir reittu þá ok kölluðu þá hvárirtveggja sér til liðs. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 388)
>
> [When Svein's men sat down at the table, they made the sign of the cross, but when the heathens saw them make the sign of the cross, they became crazy and ran at them. Some attacked them with knives while some scratched at them barehanded. Both sides called for their troops.]

Even simple signs of Christian devotion provoke extreme and violent reactions from this group of heathens. The violent hostility of this reaction, in particular when exposed to the sign of the cross, calls to mind episodes of demonic possession and suggests that this group of heathens is

less human than any others encountered on Sveinn's expedition.

Furthermore, unlike any of the previous encounters with heathen men in the saga, this final group of pagans cannot be overcome by force of arms alone. Once Sveinn observes that the heathens have arrayed forces against him, instead of simply assembling his troops, he instead consults the bishop who develops a plan that Sveinn executes to complete satisfaction:

> "Ef heiðingjar vænta sér sigrs af líkneskju nokkurs vonds manns, hyggjum þá at, hvé skyldugt oss er at vænta fulltingis af himni, þar er sjálfr Kristr drottinn lifir ok líknar; sá er höfðingi allrar kristni ok geymandi allra lifendra ok dauðra. Fyrir beri þér sigrmark Krists várs in krossfesta fyrir liðinu með ákalli hans nafns, ok væntum oss þaðan sigrs, en heiðingjum aldrtila." Eptir þessa áeggjun biskups tóku þeir heilagan kross með líkneskju drottins ok höfðu þat fyrir merki ok báru fyrir liðinu. Þá gengu þeir óhræddir í mót heiðingjum, en lærðir menn til bænar. Ok er saman laust liðinu, urðu heiðinghar blindir ok margir felmsfullir ok flýðu brátt undan, ok hljóp sinn vig hverr, sumir í ána, en sumir í fen eða skóga. Þar fórust margar þúsundir heiðingja (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 388).
>
> [If the heathens expect victory from the corpse of some evil man, let us then consider how it is our duty to expect assistance from heaven, where Christ the Lord himself lives and shows mercy, He is the leader of all Christianity and the keeper of the living and dead. Carry before the troops the victory sign of our Christ, the crucified, calling on his name, and from that we can expect victory and heathens defeat." Following the bishop's rousing speech, they took up the holy cross with the image of the Lord and held it as a banner and bore it in front of the troop. Then they advanced unafraid against the heathens, while the priests took to

prayer. When the armies collided, the heathens were struck blind and many were full of fear and fled and each one fled – some into the river, some into the swamp or forest. Many thousands of heathens perished there.]

Sveinn's victory against this assembled array of pagans rests solely on the merits of Christ and the symbols of medieval Christianity. They march under the sign of the cross, and their ultimate victory relies on the pagans' aversion to these symbols. In the end it is the Lord, rather than Sveinn who is responsible for their triumph over the assembled pagans. The battle is won by Christ's power, crippling the heathens and driving them away, and the men of the expedition achieve victory without a fight of any kind.

Following the encounter with this final group of pagans, Sveinn engages in one last conflict before arriving safely at Silkisif's city – the men engage with the first of the dragons his father encountered, the Jacúlus. We recall that this proved to be a formidable encounter for Yngvarr and his crew: they approached the dragon stealthily, but once the monster had been awakened, its venom destroyed an entire ship and its crew. Sveinn's engagement is considerably more successful and results in the death of the dragon. Even though the dragon is neither human nor pagan, it is included here as Sveinn is able to succeed where his father failed, in no small part due to the religious preparations that Sveinn took before departing Sweden. The Jacúlus perishes from a single arrow through the heart, an arrow that has been ignited by a blessed flame. Again, Sveinn's victory is enabled through the power of God.

The end result of the author's presentation of Sveinn's encounters with the pagans and his defeat of the Jacúlus emphasizes that his voyage is, at its core, very different than Yngvarr's. The voyage is missionary in nature, and has many of the trappings of a religious crusade. The crusading nature of this voyage in part explains the added focus the author places on interactions

with pagans in Sveinn's voyage, and reminds us that paganism is the principle measure of alterity when it comes to interactions with human beings. (We must not forget that paganism also plays a significant role in the presentation of Silkisif's and Jólfr's cities.) The saga's author presents these human pagans with a similar structure to his presentation of nonhuman monsters, namely that they grow progressively monstrous the further they appear from the Scandinavian/Christian center of the saga. The progressive decrease of humanity manifests in various ways: differing social customs, physical appearance, or most importantly, opposition to the presence and practice of Christianity.

The first encounter with the heathen Vikings takes place shortly after the expedition's departure from Garðaríki, or precisely at the moment when the central, known, European world crosses over into world "outside." These heathens have most of the trappings of their Scandinavian opponents, the only differences are their paganism and that they employ "galeiðar" (galleys) instead of ships. Divine intervention guides Sveinn's actions, highlighting the alterity of these vikings, but the battle progresses normally, and the people themselves are fully human and only slightly "other." The second encounter increases the distance between Scandinavian and pagan. At first these people are depicted as fully human; they look completely normal and engage in trade, but once the situation turns sour, they reveal their true nature. Not only do they engage in dark, presumably magical practices, it is later revealed that they are not fully human in appearance. The final group of humans encountered is even less human than this second group even though they appear fully human. At first they appear to be completely normal and willing to engage in trade, but they ultimately seem to be demons in disguise and a group of people whose presence is only appropriate well beyond the Scandinavian center of the world. The author constantly reminds the reader that the world outside of the central world of the saga is not only

populated by an increasingly hostile grouping of monsters, but that the people they encounter there also grow increasingly "other" the closer to the edge.

The end goal of Sveinn's voyage is the missionary conversion of Silkisif from paganism to Christianity, therefore allowing him to take up his father's mantle and, through marriage to the queen, become the king that Yngvarr was never allowed to be. The marriage is solemnized following the conversion and the union between Sveinn and Silkisif represents one of the few male-female couplings in the saga outside of the Scandinavian center. Other than the culminating act of conversion and marriage (in that order), the Sveinn section of the saga focuses relatively little on the dynamics of interactions between the sexes. In contrast, this sort of miscegenation features prominently in Yngvarr's expedition and is one of his primary concerns.

I discuss miscegenation more fully below; it is sufficient here to present one revealing example. After Yngvarr has traveled to the far end of the world, he retraces his route home. When Yngvarr arrives at Heliopolis, he fulfills his promise and joins helps Jólfr in his dynastic struggle with his brother. The battle is hard won, but eventually Yngvarr and Jólfr triumph and claim the spoils of war. After they make camp amid the treasure, they are approached by a group of strange and beautiful women:

> Þá sáu þeir mikinn kvennaflokk ganga til herbúðanna, ok tóku þeir at leika fagrt. Yngvarr bað þá svá varast korurnar sem ina verstu eitrorma. En er aptna tók ok herrin bjóst til svefns at fara, gekk kvenfólkit í herbúðir til þeira, en sú er tignust var, skipaði sér rekkju hjá Yngvari. Þá reiddist hann ok tók tygilkníf ok lagði til hennar í kvensköpin. En er liðit sá hans tiltekjur, tóku þeir at reka frá sér þessar óvendiskonur, ok þó váru nokkurir þeir, at ei stóðust þeira blíðlæti af djöfulligri fjölkynngi ok lágu hjá þeim. En er Yngvarr heyrði þetta þá snerist fagnaðr silfrs

ok gleði víns í mikin harm, því at um morguninn lágu átján menn dauðir, þá er þeir könnuðu lið sitt. Síðan bað Yngvarr jarða þá, sem dauðir váru (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 381).

[Then they saw a great crowd of women walking to their camp, and they began to play beautiful music. Yngvarr warned his men to be as aware of these women as of the worst of venomous snakes. When evening came and the army began to go to sleep, the crowd of women went into their camp, and she who was the most prominent of them decided to sleep with Yngvarr. That enraged him so much and he took his belt knife and stabbed her in her womanhood. When the troop saw his actions, they began to cast out these wonton women, still there were some of the men who did not withstand their caress of devilish magic and lay with them. When Yngvarr heard that, his pleasure from silver and wine turned to great grief because in the morning eighteen men lay dead, when they took count of his troop. Yngvarr then ordered graves prepared for those who were dead.]

The actions of these women and the reactions of Yngvarr and his men to them shape a framework in which humans encountered beyond the safe Scandinavian center of the world become monstrous.

As we will see in the next section, with each encounter with different group of pagans, Yngvarr warns his men against interaction with pagan women, and provides strong incentives to prevent any such contact. However, in this instance Yngvarr is unwilling or unable (perhaps excessively enjoying the silver and wine taken as booty) to construct a secure space for his men to live, and instead constructs a camp near the site of the battle. This inattention exposes his men to the sexual advances of these pagan women who are even able to enter Yngvarr's bed and

make a sexual advance on the expedition's leader. The encounter between Yngvarr and the women's leader is full of sexual innuendo, but instead of sleeping with the temptress, Yngvarr drives her off with a symbolic sexual act. Yngvarr drives his *tygilknífr* into the woman's *kvensköpin* in a destructive mirror of sexual penetration. This men witness Yngvarr's bold moves against his temptress, and through this act, some of his men take similar action against these women.

Up to this point in the saga, there have been several dangerous encounters with the various giants, dragons, and, but the encounter with these women is the most dangerous. The author gives a tally of the dead, eighteen in total. At no other place in the saga does the saga give a numerical account of the casualties, but a total of eighteen dead from a single encounter comes across as one of the most deadly in the saga. Prior to the encounter with the women the dragons, the Jacúlus and the dragon at the end of the world, claimed the lives of many men, either through poison or by the power of their hideous appearance. The dragons are not cast as active antagonists: they do not seek out conflict. Instead their presence and the promise of wealth lure the men to take the actions, in spite of Yngvarr's wise warnings, that result in their demise. The author casts these witch-women in much the same light; they lure the men in and kill them. Yngvarr warns that these women are like venomous serpents and those men who fall into their embrace simply do not wake; almost as if the sexual act poisoned these men. These women are more akin to the saga's dragons: alluring, poisonous, and ultimately deadly, and are the most monstrous of all the humans encountered by either Yngvarr or Sveinn.

Silkisif and Jólfr: Transition and Exclusion

Other than the two expedition leaders, the pagan queen Silkisif is the most prominent character encountered in the saga and one who shapes the unfolding saga plot. Her relationship

with Yngvarr is an unusual one, simultaneously fulfilling roles as host, love-interest, and potential convert, and it is largely by her intervention that Sveinn mounts the second voyage east. The quest for and conversion of the queen closely resembles bride-quest tales commonly found in the *fornaldarsögur*, but in *Yngvars saga Víðförla*, Silkisif has a great deal more autonomy and her character is much more developed than many of the questing princesses in continental or Icelandic romances. It is worth noting that as Yngvarr and his cohort travel outward from the center of their world and venture into the unknown, they encounter Queen Silkisif *after* they have dealt with giants, dragons, and a radical shift in landscape. Geographically Silkisif is located squarely in the space occupied by "the other" and populated by giants and dragons. In spite of her humanity the saga author establishes the initial encounter to point out the "otherness" of the queen and her realm while simultaneously suggesting that she is not completely "other" and becomes the principal figure marking the transition from "outside" to "inside."

The nature and means of this transition is one of the key features of the saga, brought into clearer focus through the author's treatment of another city and another ruler: Heliopolis and its king Jólfr. As we have already seen, the spatial positioning of Jólfr's city lies further afield than Silkisif's and in a spatial zone located between the saga's two great waterfalls. To most outward appearances, beyond the gender of their rulers and location in space, there is little difference between Jólfr and his city and Silkisif and hers. Both cities seem to be relatively safe ports in the storm of dragons, giants, and hostile natives. They are both described as cities brimming with pagan practice, as we would expect outside of the European center of the saga, but the inhabitants of these cities are unambiguously human and generally seem to exhibit the same social conventions as those of our "civilized" protagonists. In fact, the author employs many of the same descriptive motifs when describing Yingarr's first interactions with these cities and

rulers and his behavior in these cities is also quite similar. It is, however, in the differences that the author reveals issues of mobile social space; he presents Silkisif and her city as an alien and potentially dangerous locale, but one which has the potential to move "inside," while Jólfr's seems doomed to remain forever "outside."

Once Yngvarr and his men pass their initial encounter with queen Silkisif, the encounter in which they discover the breadth of her linguistic capabilities, they are invited to stay in her kingdom. At this point, the same complicated relationship between Scandinavians and "the other" remains and begins to take on a spatial and social dimension as well as a linguistic one. Following Silkisif's initial introduction to Yngvarr, the saga author describes the process by which the men of the expedition enter her city and take up residence there:

> Þá bauð hún [Silkisif] Yngvari til borgar með sér ok öllu liði hans. Hann þá þat. En borgarmenn taka skip þeira með öllum reiða ok báru upp undir borgina. Yngvarr bjó eina höll öllu liði sínu ok lukti hana vandliga, því at fullt var af blótskap allt umhverfis. Yngvarr bað þá við varast allt samneyti heiðinna manna, ok öllum konum bannaði hann at koma í sína höll utan drottningu. Nokkurir menn gáfu lítinn gaum at hans máli, ok lét þá drepa, ok síðan treystist engi at brjóta þat, er hann bauð. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 374)
>
> [Then [Silkisif] invited Yngvarr and his whole troop to the city with her. He accepted. Then the city-dwellers took the ship, with all its rigging, and carried it up to the city. Yngvarr prepared a hall for all his men and thoroughly closed it up because [the city] was everywhere full of paganism. He commanded that they completely avoid the company of heathens, and he forbade all women, except the queen, from entering the hall. Some men paid little heed to his speech, and he had

them killed, and after that no one dared do disobey his order.]

This is the first moment in the saga when any of the expeditions encounters a human "other," people or creatures which are not inherently evil or monstrous and that can be dealt with in much the same way as those they know from the Scandinavian center. It also reveals the two most pressing concerns for Yngvarr and the two largest markers of alterity in the saga – religion and miscegenation. Yngvarr employs one principal methods of control for directing these negative influences; namely, controlling space.

Silkisif's offer of hospitality (she invites Yngvarr "til borgar með sér" – literally to the town/city/castle with her) may imply that Yngvarr and his men would take up residence in the queen's dwelling, as may be expected in any offer of hospitality. But Yngvarr does something completely different and tries as much as possible not to integrate, culturally or spatially, with the city or its inhabitants. The initial encounter between these two groups occurs on the river; something of a no man's land and a safe space for the Scandinavian travelers. When the decision is made to take up residence in the city, Yngvarr does not simply store his ships and find an unoccupied space within the city, but transports his entire ship and prepares a hall of his choosing.

The language of the passage allows considerable ambiguity about the precise details of Yngvarr's initial actions and establishment of his hall. First of all, when the city-dwellers carry Yngvarr's ship they carry it "með öllum reiða." I have chosen, as does Hermann Pálsson, to interpret the noun *reiða* as the genitive plural of the noun *reiða* but it could be the plural of the less common word *reið*.[62] *Reiða* is used with some frequency

[62] *Reið* is related to the English term 'ride" but has a greater variety of potential meanings. In addition to meaning the nominalization of the process of riding (usually of a horse) it can also refer to a group of riders or a variety of vehicles. While I think it is unlikely that this is the meaning of *reiða* used in this passage of *Yngvars saga*, the possibility cannot be discounted. Furthermore, given the tendency in Old Norse literature to refer to ships as

to refer to the rudder and rigging of a ship, and suggests that Yngvarr transported the ship overland in just the same state that was used for waterborne travel rather than stowing the sail, mast, and oars for proper overland portage. I would suggest that, in this instance, the meaning of *reiða* should be understood not simply as the inanimate implements of the ship, but include everything necessary for proper propulsion – including the crew. In this way, we are presented with the image of the ship, sails full and completely rigged, sailing overland from the river to Silkisif's city, rather than dragged across the dirt. We have already seen how the river functions as something of a spatial no-man's-land and the ships serve as a mobile portion of Scandinavia in hostile territory, and by having the ship sail overland to Citopolis, Yngvarr keeps his crew distanced from these exotic people and maintains his men safe in a semi-Scandinavian space.

The next major point of ambiguity in this passage revolves around the location of Yngvarr's hall and how he establishes it. The text says that the ship is carried "undir borgina." Hermann Pálsson translates this phrase as "up to the city walls" (Hermann Pálsson 52) while I have opted for the less precise "to the city." The Old Norse term *borg* can have a wide variety of meanings ranging from fortress, to town, to wall and implies some sort of built-up, protected space but something certainly larger than a farm and better defended than a small village. We cannot be certain whether Silkisif's city was walled and whether or not the ship was carried to the border of the city or to the foot of the queen's stronghold itself. However, it is certain that the Scandinavians are still separated spatially from Silkisif, and it is there that Yngvarr decides to take up residence rather than integrating with the inhabitants.

---

steeds and their crews as riders, this interpretation could also suggest that Yinvarr's ship was carried with the crew still in the ship.

When the ship arrives at its destination, Yngvarr "bjó eina höll" and locks his crew inside. The verb underling this action, *að búa,* similarly has a multitude of meanings in Old Norse including both "build" and "prepare." From the information that the author gives us we cannot be certain whether Yngvarr constructs a hall or simply makes an existing building ready for his crew. I prefer to read this whole episode as an exaggerated parade in which Yngvarr has his ships carried, full of men, from the river to the outskirts of the city, where he has his men wait until he constructs a hall to his liking at which point the men of the expedition move from the ships to the hall. If my interpretation of the language is right, as I believe it is according the measures Yngvarr takes to control space, Yngvarr manipulates the space through which his men travel and reside and is able to insulate them from the various corrupting forces that surround them by figuratively extending Scandinavia through the river, ship, and hall.

Silkisif's city is the first human city the expedition encounters, but shortly after they depart (and on facing pages of Guðni Jónsson's edition) they come across Heliopolis, another city populated by humans. The initial encounter proceeds very much like that with Silkisif, as Yngvarr is forced to determine a common language for both parties. From here the narrative proceeds in a very similar structure to Yngvarr's initial encounter with Silkisif. Once Yngvarr begrudgingly accepts Jólfr's offer of hospitality for the winter,[63] the men move in and take up residence in Heliopolis:

> Þá fóru þar til með lið sitt til hafnar ok gengu á land ok til borgarinnar. Ok er þeim varð aptr litit, sáu þeir, at borgarmenn báru skip þeira á herðum sér upp undir borgina, þar er læsi mátti. Þar sáu þeir um öll stræti mikinn

[63] Þá bauð hann [Jólfr] homum [Yngvari] með sér til sinnar borgar vetrlangt (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga," 375). Then he [Jólfr] asked him [Yngvarr] to his city with him for the winter.

blótskap. Yngvarr bað sína menn vera bænrækna ok trúfasta. Eina höll gaf Jólfr þeim, ok þann vetr geymdi Yngvarr svá sína menn, at engi spilltist af kvenna viðskiptum eða öðrum heiðnum dómi. En þá er þeir fóru nauðsynja sinna, gengu þeir alvápnaðir ok læastu höllina á meðan. Engi maðr skyldi þar inn koma nema konungr. Hann sat hvern dag á tali við Yngvar, ok sagði hvárr þeira öðrum mörg tíðendi ór sínu landi, ný eða fórn. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 375)

[Then they set out with their men to a harbor where they disembarked and walked toward the city. When they happened to look back, they saw that the city-dwellers carried their ships up to the city on their shoulders, where they could be locked up. They saw on every street a great deal of paganism. Yngvarr bade his men to be diligent in prayer and hold to the faith. Jólfr gave them a hall, and that winter Yngvarr watched so thoroughly over his men that no one corrupted themselves with dealings with women or with other heathen practices. And when they left to take care of their business, they went about completely armed and locked the hall in the meantime. No man was allowed to enter there except the king. He would sit there every day in conversation with Yngvarr and each one would tell each other new and old news from their lands.]

The similarities between this passage and that describing the entry and residence in Silkisif's city are striking. The author here repeats several motifs from the expedition's encounter and residence with Silkisif: carrying of ships by the city-dwellers to the city (*til borgarinnar*), the abundance of paganism, an isolated and locked hall for the crew and

access granted only to the city's ruler, and aversion to association with women. These two accounts are not, however, simply mirror images of each other: Yngvarr's actions and prohibitions are slightly different and ultimately reveal a very different attitude toward Jólfr and his city than Silkisif and hers.

The description of the procession from the river and the process through which Yngvarr acquires a hall is unambiguous, in stark contrast to Yngvarr's entry into Silkisif's city. The author leaves no doubt that Yngvarr and his men walk to the city and that Jólfr offers them a pre-existing hall as their place of residence. The author also makes it clear that Yngvarr locks up his ship, something of which no mention is made earlier. Additionally, when they enter Heliopolis, there is no discussion about the ship entering with its *reiða* fully deployed. This omission combined with the mention that the ships were locked away for storage does imply that they were transported with sail and rigging stowed instead. This small detail may not seem like much, but when combined with other actions that Yngvarr takes while in Heliopolis a consistent pattern emerges that reveals that his approach to Jólfr and his city is different than to Silkisif and hers.

Once again the language used to describe Yngvarr's actions in Heliopolis is much clearer than that in Silkisif's city, but the similarity of the two episodes invites us to compare them. In both cases, Yngvarr explicitly bans anyone other than the rulers of the respective cities from entering his locked hall. However, when in Silkisif's city, the language leaves it ambiguous whether or not Yngvarr actually allows anyone to *leave* the hall. The author writes that "Yngvarr bjó eina höll öllu liði sínu ok lukti hana vandliga," [Yngvarr prepared a hall for all his men and thoroughly closed it up.] which can be read to mean that Yngvarr locked the hall with his men inside or that he simply prepared a hall

that he kept locked but allowed his men to freely enter and exit. Along locking the hall, Yngvarr places two restrictions on appropriate relationships between his men and the locals: that they contact with all pagans, and that all women, except the queen were forbidden from entering the hall. The Old Norse wording of the second of these two is very clear: no women in the hall, but the language of the first leaves open whether it is merely a suggestion or an absolute probation. Yngvarr *bað* them that they *varast við* any interaction with heathen people. The verb að *bjóða* can have meanings ranging from "to offer," "to invite," or "to command" while the verb að *varast* has a range of meanings from "to be wary of" to "to shun."

Furthermore, the noun *samneyti* leaves some room for interpretation. I have chosen to translate it as "company" in part to better fit the grammatical structure of the sentence and to preserve some of ambiguity in the word. The term is a nominal compound of the prefix *sam-* "together" and the verb *að neyta*, which has a range of meanings from "to use" to "to enjoy," often in relation to the consumption of food. Thus the literal meaning of *samneyti* would be something on the order of a shared meal, but it also occurs in a variety of contexts from a shared meal to the very specific, religious shared meal of the Communion. Thus we can interpret his first injunction as a gentle warning that his men be careful when dealing with the pagans, to a strict prohibition on engaging in any pagan sacrifices, to a general order that they shun all contact with all pagan people no matter what the context.

We know that several of his men disobey one or more of his commands and are subsequently put to death. However, the saga never makes it clear exactly what the men did to deserve their fate. Depending on how we read Yngvarr's actions we can have

anywhere from one to three absolute prohibitions that could possibly result in violations that could precipitate the executions. The first is the clear ban on women in the hall, other than the queen. The second is the somewhat less forceful warning that they *varast við samneyti heiðinna manna*. If we interpret this as a simple cautionary warning, then violations of this injunction are unlikely to warrant a death sentence; however if we interpret the warning with a different force or as a prohibition against engaging in pagan practices, then it becomes very easy to understand why violations could potentially result in the death of the perpetrator. The final prohibition is implied when Yngvarr locks the hall. The act of locking sends a clear message that he desires to prevent entrance or exit from the space that he has established. The probation against admitting women to the hall is clear (with the stated exception of Silkisif), but we can imagine scenarios in which pagan men are allowed to enter, so long as Yngvarr's Christian men are careful and do not engage in pagan rituals, or in which Yngvarr's men are allowed to leave so long as the hall is secure, or even that the men are not allowed to exit at all.

Unfortunately, the context of the saga does not give us enough information to properly determine the nature and force of all of the prohibitions that Yngvarr puts in place, and it is futile to dwell on the possibilities more than we have already done. What is clear is that Yngvarr perceives that the world outside of his hall as dangerous. The two greatest dangers seem to be the relentless forces of paganism and miscegenation. In order to keep these dangers at bay he tries in multiple ways to control space, either by locking it or by controlling who has access to various regions of space. He is very concerned with the sort of people who can enter the hall, which we can be regarded as an extension of Scandinavia, and a site which must be kept secure from "the other." Additionally, when

one or more of his prohibitions are violated, he executes the violators. That Yngvarr is willing to execute violators, and in the process reduce his fighting force, suggests the seriousness with which he views his prohibitions and his concerns over the world outside of Scandinavia, whether it be the real homeland or merely the artificial homeland constructed "outside."

Yngvarr also takes measures to control space once he arrives in Heliopolis and to limit his and his men's interaction with foreign women and pagan practice. On a first, cursory reading, it would appear that the practices that Yngvarr puts in place in Jólfr's city are much the same as when in Silkisif's; he locks the hall, allows entrance only to the city's ruler, and takes measures to ensure that the crew avoids women and paganism. In fact, it even seems as though Yngvarr relaxes his restrictions in Heliopolis. The men are told to avoid *viðskipti* with women and other pagan *dómr*, and the hall is only locked when the men went for their *nauðsynjar*. Again, there is some ambiguity in the Norse terms, but it is sufficient to note that the range of these terms is social, commercial, or legal. Even the verb that he uses to warn his men, a*ð geyma* "to warn" seems to have a much weaker force than his previous injunctions. The impression that the text gives is generally one of gentle fatherly warning or perhaps an advisory of how to properly conduct trade while they are Jólfr's guests. Furthermore, none of his men fail to heed his advice, unlike those who had previously disobeyed and were executed.

We may be tempted to ask why Yngvarr has become much more lax in his restrictions, especially since the expedition has now journeyed farther from the Scandinavian center of the saga and the landscape and creatures are growing even more hostile and dangerous – maybe because all the rebellious men have already been

executed! We may speculate that Heliopolis represents the last bastion of civilization before the truly wild lands further afield, and that it serves primarily as an oasis before the climax of the expedition. To a certain extent both of these ideas have some validity, but as we have already seen Heliopolis is by no means a completely safe space; on their return trip, the battle with Jólfr's brother and the encounter with the heathen seductresses prove to be two of the most deadly episodes in the saga. Why then does Yngvarr behave as though Silkisif's city is a more hostile, dangerous, and ultimately more "other" place than Heliopolis? I would argue that he does not; the way his men behave and the precise details of how he controls space in the two cities suggests that when the expedition reaches Heliopolis they have crossed well into the territory of "the other" and behave as such. In contrast, Silkisif's city is still "other" but abuts the border of Scandinavia and will eventually cross over from "outside" to "inside."

On their first encounter with Yngvarr, both Silkisif and Jólfr extend offers of hospitality to Yngvarr. He happily accepts Silkisif's offer and he "var… þar í góðu yfirlæti" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 374) [Was well cared for] and spent much of the winter deep in conversation with the queen. In contrast, Yngvarr first rejects Jólfr's offer but finally agrees once the king insists and Yngvarr realizes that he has no choice.[64] In Heliopolis Yngvarr also engages in conversation with the ruler, but instead of passing the time in pleasant conversation about God and his magnificence, he engages in the workaday business of planning his voyage onward as though he cannot wait to leave the city.

Yngvarr's interactions with the cities' rulers certainly do not give the impression

[64] Konungur skildi hann þá til þarvistar þann vetr (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga," 375).

that he is ill-at-ease in with Jólfr in Heliopolis but anxious about his time with Silkisif. In fact, the opposite is true and he behaves accordingly. The symbolic sailing of ship overland and the construction of a new hall do not simply represent a simple island of Scandinavian space floating in Silkisif's city, but these actions exploit the nebulous concept of space and metaphorically extend the boundaries of Scandinavia until the border becomes miniscule, but still not crossed. In contrast, once the expedition travels up the first waterfall to Heliopolis, they have entered a region of space that is completely foreign and whose borders are too remote to be moved to touch upon Scandinavia, no matter how hard Yngvarr may try.

From the moment that the expedition passes the first waterfall (which is the farthest extent of Sveinn's expedition), they are no longer simply travelers but an armed force in a hostile land. Some measure of respite is offered in Silkisif's city, but no such solace can be found in Heliopolis. The men travel the city *alvápnaðir* (armed to the teeth) and lock their hall when they depart. These are the actions of men who realize that they are in constant danger and are on their guard, and consequently Yngvarr has no need to warn or punish his men. Finally, there is no longer any need to symbolically sail their ships overland or to construct their own hall. They have simply gone too far beyond their borders and have extended the elasticity of space beyond its stretching point and find themselves firmly "outside". No means of controlling space can change that.

Shifting Borders

Our "quantum dartboard" model of space in pre-cartographic Scandinavia rests principally on two features, 1) the nebulosity and transient nature of space within certain limits, and 2) the experiential nature of traveling through space. The second of these two

principles is locked into the narrative structure of most of *Yngvars saga Víðförla*; it is a travel narrative fixed to the linear course of a single river. The first of these also plays out in how the author presents space and how the landscape changes as the characters move through it. The author has presented several regions of dark and/or poorly defined space that reflect the same sorts of terrain that characters must traverse in order to travel from one region of the mythological cosmos to another. These features in *Yngvars saga* suggest that the saga's author is working from a similar, if not identical, spatial framework as that present in the spatial construction of cosmological space.

One of the most interesting features of the mythic cosmological model is its openness and adaptability; space can appear to move and relocate in accordance to the dictates of the narrative or the actions of its characters. We see the borders of Ásgarðr and Jötunheimr grow closer and farther, and the conflicting realms of Ásgarðr and Vanaheimr collide violently but eventually merge as peace is settled. Likewise one of the most interesting spatial features in *Yngvars saga Víðförla* is how one region of space transitions from being "outside" of the Scandinavian/European center of the world and consequently "other" to a position "inside" where the previous barriers and markers of alterity are removed.

The saga roughly divides space into four main zones, the boundaries of each both clearly marked and nebulous. The saga presents us with the "baseline", so to speak, in the first four chapters of the saga. Here we see human behavior, human geography, and physical geography as it "should" be. The landscape here is known and the people behave according to accepted customs and social values. This is not to say that the area is devoid of monsters; Ketill does have a run-in with a giant, but these monsters are easily

understood, controlled, and consequently avoided. The zones outside of this center are inherently dangerous, and populated by things to avoid: heathenism, monstrosity, and miscegenation. In general these threats become more hazardous and difficult to control as the crew travels further from the center. The two expeditions in the saga create a normalizing influence as they travel outward – extending civilized behavior and controlling space so that these areas, if only briefly, more closely resemble the safe and secure borders of the central homeland.

Ultimately, all lands beyond the waterfalls which stand as barriers are too far, dangerous, or "other" for the efforts of the Scandinavian adventurers to have much impact. However, through Yngvarr and Sveinn's actions, the borders of the Scandinavian center expand and extend to the first of the giant waterfalls. This process is a complicated one and requires that the dangerous and "other" elements of this space (heathenism, monstrosity, and miscegenation) be eradicated. Much of the process of civilizing this "other" is accomplished through Sveinn's crusading expedition, which we have already examined in some detail. However, it is Yngvarr who plants the first seeds that enable the transition from "outside" to "inside."

Silkisif takes immediately to Yngvarr and falls so deeply in love with him that she offers to marry him and give him what he had fought so hard for in Sweden, namely his own kingdom. It may seem surprising that Yngvarr would turn down this offer (he tells her that he will accept, but wants to explore the river first), but at this stage in the saga, Silkisif is far too "other" to make an acceptable queen for the heroic and pious Yngvarr. She is a pagan and to engage in any relationship with her beyond their theological discussions would be a clear violation of Yngvarr's own prohibition against

miscegenation or associating with heathens. Based on Silkisif's and Yngvarr's later actions in the saga it would not be unreasonable to presume that Silkisif had already accepted the Christian message at some point during Yngvarr's visit and had agreed to accept baptism as a precondition to any wedding.[65]

However, any plans that Yngvarr and Silkisif may have had never develop as Yngvarr falls sick and dies after his victory over Jólfr's brother and the attack of the heathen women. Once Yngvarr realizes that his demise is imminent, he outlines his dying wishes and cements his role as a pious hero:

> Ek hefi sótt tekit, ok get ek, at hún leiði mik til bana, ok hefi ek þá þann stað, sem ek hefi til unnit. En með guðs miskunn vænti ek, at guðs sonr veiti mér sitt fyrirheit, því at af öllum hjarta fel ek mik guði á hendi á hverju dægri, sál mína ok líkama, ok ek gætta svá þessa lýðs sem ek kunna bezt. En þat vil ek, at þér vitið, at af réttum guðs dómi eru vér lostnir þessi drepsótt, ok allra mest er sjá drepsótt ok fjölkynngi til mín ger, því at þegar sem ek em dauðr, þá mun hverfa af sóttin. En þess vil ek biðja yðr ok allra helzt þik, Ketill, at þér færið líkama minn til Svíþjóðar ok látið jarða at kirkju. En fjárhlut mínum, þeim er ek hafi hér í gulli ok silfri ok dýrligum klæðum, því vil ek skipta láta í þrjá staði: Einn þriðjung gef ek kirkjum ok kennimönnum, annan gef ek fátækum mönnum, inn þriðja skal hafa faðir minn ok sonr minn. Berið Silkisif drottningu kveðju mína! (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 382)
>
> [I have taken ill and I suspect that it shall lead to my death and I will possess that

[65] I should note however, that Yngvarr's dying distribution of his wealth: one third to the church, one third to the poor, and one third to his family, with no mention of Silkisif and the prospect of her conversion to Christianity, may also suggest that her baptism was far from a foregone conclusion in Yngvarr's mind.

> place that I have earned. I expect God's mercy and that the Son of God will fulfill his oath to me, because each day I fell into God's hands with all my heart, my soul, and body, and I have taken care of this people as best as I knew how. I want you to know that I have been stricken by this plague by God's righteous judgment and this plague and witchcraft are directed toward me most of all, and that when I am dead, then the illness will disappear. I will ask this of you, but most especially you, Ketill, that you carry my body to Sweden and have it buried in a church. I wish to have my valuables, those which I have here in gold, silver, and costly apparel, to be distributed in three places: One third I give to the church and to the clergy, the second to the poor, and a third to my father and son. Carry my greeting to queen Silkisif.]

In his dying moments, Yngvarr does remember Silkisif but seems to largely disregard his prior commitments to her and prefers to dwell on the appropriate distribution of his body and wealth. In so doing he indicates that his heart and mind rest more closely to his homeland than to the lands he has encountered during his voyage. A natural inference is that, in spite of his promises to Silkisif and her affection toward him, Yngvarr still views her as "other," and of lower overall priority than his wealth and physical remains. Following this portion of his speech, Yngvarr gives instructions to his lieutenants that they should be of one mind when returning home and places Ketill in charge of the expedition. However, Yngvarr's orders in this are not followed; the expedition splits up, with one party returning to Sweden and the other heading toward Constantinople. His request to be buried in a Swedish church also fails to come to fruition, at least in the way Yngvarr intended.

Throughout Yngvarr's travels through the East, the saga's author has presented him as both valiant and pious. He takes on the role of a holy soldier who is not only capable of defeating his enemies with force of arms, but as one who is also capable of resisting the myriad of temptations which appear. He moves through Citopolis and Heliopolis without succumbing to the embrace of heathen women or pagan practice, he resists the wiles of the chief of the witches, and resists demons at the end of the world. He alludes to all of this as he lies dying and boldly declares that he, more than any other, has been the target of plague and witchcraft. He also informs his men that the outbreak of plague will end with him. It is almost as though he has taken the entirety of the sickness into himself and purged it through his death.

At this point Yngvarr transitions from being merely a holy warrior to a *figura Christi*. He points out that he has suffered for his people and that, as a result of this suffering, his men will be able to return home. This portion of his speech resonates in particular with the words found in Hebrews 4:14-16.[66] In Hebrews, we are told that Christ has been tempted in in all things (temptatum autem per omnia), that he suffered illnesses with them (conpati infirmitatibus), and that Jesus, will ascend into heaven (penetraverit caelos). In *Yngvars saga*, Yngvarr follows the same basic pattern. First he is severely tempted, particularly by the pagan sorceresses. He then falls ill and suffers the same infirmity as his men. Finally, Yngvarr dies and receives a heavenly reward, and thus completes the pattern of suffering and redemption outlined in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

By a similar token to the manner and nature of his death, Yngvarr's burial also

[66] "habentes ergo pontificem magnum qui penetraverit caelos Iesum Filium Dei teneamus confessionem non enim habemus pontificem qui non possit conpati infirmitatibus nostris temptatum autem per omnia pro similitudine absque peccato adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae ut misericordiam consequamur et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio oportuno."

resonates with Jesus', particularly in the account found in the final verses of Matthew 27 and Luke 23. Yngvarr's initial plan to be buried in a church in Sweden is thwarted when the expedition again encounters Silkisif. When they arrive, the tone of the saga is immediately somber and the queen recognizes that something is not right. At first the men of the expedition lie to her and explain that Yngvarr's body had been buried, but when she calls them on their lie and threatens them with death, the men produce their captain's remains. Silkisif then takes possession of Yngvars corpse, buries it, and pronounces a compelling speech, which not only drives the remainder of the saga's action, but demonstrates a key moment of transition in the saga:

> Síðan fengu þeir henni líkama Yngvars. Hún lét bera hann til borgarinnar með miklum sóma ok með dýrligum smyrslum til graftar búa. Þá bað drottning þá fara í guðs frið ok Yngvars. "Er sá minn guð, sem yðvarr er. Biðið heila frændar Yngvars, er þér komið til Svíþjóðar, ok biðið nokkurn þeira hingat koma með kinnimönnum ok kristna þenna lýð, ok þá skal her kirkju gera, þá er Yngvarr skal hvíla at!" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 383)
>
> [Then they brought Yngvarr's body to her. She had it carried to the city/palace/castle with great honor and prepared for burial with precious ointments. Then the queen invited them to go in God's peace and Yngvarr's. "My God is your god. Send greetings to Yngvarr's kinsmen when you arrive in Sweden, and ask some of them to return here with priests and Christianize this people, and a church shall be built here at the place where Yngvarr will rest.]

This passage reverberates with a number of references to both the Old and New Testaments. The first of which is Silkisif's declaration that "My god is your God," (Er sá

minn guð, sem yðvarr er); a clear reflection of Ruth's statement in Ruth 1:16.[67]

Silkisif's role in Yngvarr's burial appears to be a blending of the four major figures responsible for Jesus' burial in the Gospels: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary. In all three synoptic Gospels women, not men, prepare the body for burial (John's account never explicitly states who performs the preparations), and both Luke and John's accounts make specific mention of the spices and ointments (aromata et ungenta).[68] In *Yngvars saga* we see a similar pattern; a woman (Silkisif) uses *dýrligum smyrslum* "precious ointments" to prepare the corpse of a leader whose death saves his people. The connection between Yngvarr's and Jesus' burial, taken in isolation could simply be a coincidence, especially as precious ointments were frequently used to prepare the bodies of the dead. However, in the context of the author's portrayal of Yngvarr as a *figura Christi* in this section of the saga suggests that this connection is significant.

Finally, Silkisif's efforts to procure Yngvarr's corpse for burial bring to mind Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The Evangelists are silent about what plan, if any, was originally in place for Jesus' burial, but following his death Joseph of Arimathea (along with Nicodemus in John's account) approaches Pontius Pilate and requests that he be allowed to take Jesus' body and see to its burial. Joseph has the body deposited in a place of honor, a carved tomb that Joseph had intended for himself. Similarly, Silkisif is forced to beg and threaten in order to acquire Yngvarr's body; once obtained, it is entombed in a place of honor, owned and controlled by her, possibly even in her own

[67] abeam quocumque perrexeris pergam ubi morata fueris et ego partier morabor populous tuus populous meus et Deus tuus Deus meus

[68] John 19:39 specifically mentions one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes.

palace, depending on how term *borg* is interpreted.

The author's presentation of Yngvarr as a *figura Christi* through his death and burial foreshadows Silkisif's eventual conversion to Christianity, but the parallels between Silkisif and the New Testament figures Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, suggest something much more interesting about Silkisif's relationship to Christianity. Both men were prominent members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Jews, and an organization that the Gospels portray as exceedingly hostile to Jesus and his disciples, and who are the principal engineers behind his execution. Joseph and Nicodemus are different. John's gospel relates that both men were secret followers of Jesus, Joseph because he was afraid of the Jews, and Nicodemus feared because he had received his teaching by night. However, upon learning of their master's death they effectively declare themselves open followers of Jesus by requesting his body and burying it. Joseph of Arimethea appears in all four Gospel accounts as a party to Jesus' burial, but nowhere else in the Bible. Nicodemus on the other hand appears multiple times but only in John's Gospel. In John he famously learns that a man must be "born again" before he can see the Kingdom of God.[69] Apparently, this experience is sufficient for him to believe in Jesus, even if he does not declare his allegiance openly.

Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus are both powerful men, but secret followers of Jesus who, upon the death of their master declare their belief openly and take part in burying him. Silkisif essentially does the same thing. Not only is she responsible for preparing and burying Yngvarr's corpse, the burial process forces her declaration that "My god is your God," and, in all but the most formal sense, cements her place as a

[69] amen amen dico tibi nisi quis natus fuerit denuo non potest videre regnum Dei (John 3:3)

Christian. The relationship between the saga and biblical characters seems to suggest that Silkisif, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had been a secret follower Jesus for a while. After all, in her previous encounter with Yngvarr, the two spent their time in conversation about Christianity. It seems that all she needed to declare her faith openly was the death of her Christ, Yngvarr. Silkisif's declaration of faith is the central event in the saga. Yngvarr never attains the fame he once sought as a young man. He ultimately fails in his quest to become *a* king. But through his trials and sufferings he becomes a type of *the* King: Jesus. Silkisif's conversion is also the event which triggers the second half of the saga as Sveinn attempts to fulfill the queen's desire for baptism and ultimately his father's vow to marry her.

We have already examined Sveinn's quest at some length and the details will not be repeated here. But Sveinn's voyage does much more than simply convert a queen and her people, it effectively changes space and shifts the borders of a sort of "greater Scandinavia" to include not just Sweden and Garðaríki but Silkisif's kingdom of Citopolis as well. Once Yngvarr's expedition crosses the nebulous border between "inside" and "outside" there are three principal markers of alterity: monstrosity, heathenism, and miscegenation.[70] Sveinn's voyage removes all three. In the course of his westward crusade he fights three battles with pagans and in each case kills or drives them off. Some of these pagans have gone beyond men who practice a false creed; their worship has misshapen them into monsters and demons. Sveinn's destruction of the monstrous is not limited to men twisted by paganism. He uses holy fire to slay the

[70] This is not to say that these things are not present in the Scandinavian center. Ketill encounters a giant before the company crosses the border of "greater Scandinavia." It just goes to show that nowhere is truly safe in the Scandinavian model. After all, the giants do manage to come to Ásgarðr.

Jacúlus, one of the saga's ultimate monsters. Finally, he enters Citopolis and oversees the conversion to Christianity, and ultimately marries her, removing the biggest and most dangerous threat to the Scandinavians abroad: relations with strange women.

Sveinn's voyage removes all the markers of alterity from the region of space between Garðaríki and Citopolis, but it is not until the very end of the saga that we clearly see that all spatial barriers have been removed. When Yngvarr and Sveinn depart Sweden for the East, both prepare for a long and difficult voyage and travel to places that few if any men have previously visited. But as the saga comes to a close, the author relates one more, often forgotten voyage:

> At þessum hlutum af liðnum býst Sveinn til burtferðar ok ferr sunnan, unz hann kemr í Svíþjóð. Landsmenn tóku við honum með fagnaði ok mikilli sæmd. Var honum landit boðit. En er hann heyrði þat, þá neitaði hann því skjótt ok kvaðst aflat hafa sér betra lands ok ársælla ok lézt enn mundu þess vitja. En er tveir vetr váru úti, siglir Sveinn ór Svíþjóðu. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 392)
>
> [When these things had passed, Sveinn prepared to go away and traveled northward until he came to Sweden. The people greeted him and treated him with much honor. He was invited to rule the country. But when he heard that, he quickly refused and said that he had won a better and blessed land and he made it known that he would visit it again. And when two years had passed, Sveinn sailed out of Sweden.]

This account appears at the beginning of the saga's final chapter, and just prior to the extended notes that the author appends to his narrative. This final voyage is radically different than the previous two. First of all Sveinn's final voyage is *easy*. Prior to this, the

author has regaled us with tales of the dangerous and strange encounters in the space between Garðaríki and Citopolis, but in this instance, nothing happens. They voyage may be long, but no longer is it a voyage to a strange land. Sveinn's comments also indicate a profound shift in perspective. He sails home, but his home is no longer Sweden but Citopolis, a city which is better than Scandinavia. This final voyage suggests that the boundaries of the cosmological center have moved and what was once the dangerous and exotic "outside" has transitioned to the safe and comfortable "inside."

Conclusion

I see *Yngvars saga Víðförla* as a work of literature that is very concerned with how the world works and how the Icelandic audience fits in it. The bulk of the saga's action unfolds in the distant East, a region of the world located quite literally on the other side of world. The saga is certainly a testament to the Icelandic interest in travel and in the exotic East, but it is also a commentary on how Scandinavians viewed the physical and social structure of the world around them. The saga paints a picture of the physical shape and characteristics of the world which closely follow a pattern established in the imagined cosmology of Norse myth: a pattern in which travelers are constantly presented with shifting borders and nebulous boundaries; a world where dragons, giants, seductive women, and dangerous pagans all lie in wait; a world whose final border is marked with the most dangerous presence of all, a diabolic dragon.

This world is not presented simply as a place that encloses and restricts the safe spaces of men at its center. Even the farthest-off and strange locales are accessible to intrepid heroes, who, when they travel there, discover people there, and this comes as no shock to them. Furthermore, the saga depicts the human inhabitants of the East as

complex figures. The action of the saga is not simply a matter of "us versus them." The author makes it perfectly clear that Scandinavian mores and behaviors, including Christianity, are the right and proper way to live, but the people who live beyond the borders can be interacted with, and perhaps more interestingly, can some day change and move from periphery to center.

Conclusion

Throughout my study of Norse mythology, I never cease to be amazed by the wide variety of diagrams, maps, and drawings that authors and artists produce as representations of the physical structure of the Norse mythological cosmos. It often seems as though no two are alike and that each must have been based on a related, but radically different, text. For years I chalked this problem off as the result of artistic license and texts that do not adequately describe or systematize the mythological cosmos. I speculated that that one brilliant interpretive step or the discovery of a lost document would be able to harmonize the numerous interpretations and create a single, standardized diagram of the cosmos.

The rational part of my mind realized that this unification was more likely fantasy than an achievable reality. However, the idea that all of our interpretive problems result from insufficient knowledge is an appealing one. It suggests that our lack of understanding is not our fault, but rather that the fault belongs to someone in the past who failed to record, transmit, or preserve important details which would enable us to completely understand this fascinating and confusing cosmology. My approach to studying the mythic cosmos shifted one day when I began to wonder if the problem with our ability to understand and diagram the cosmos is, in fact, our problem, and that our texts spoke to the medieval audiences to which they were directed in ways that we cannot understand. I was then forced to ask: What if the reason we face so much difficulty mapping the mythological cosmos is that it was never intended to be mapped?

Initially, this question seemed almost too illogical to earnestly peruse. I am the partial product of a twentieth- and twenty-first-century education who has been trained in map use and interpretation. For me, the notion of a cartographic representation of space is both so ingrained and intuitive that it is almost impossible for me to imagine space outside of this graphical

framework. However, once I began to investigate the history of cartography and use of maps among the medieval Scandinavians, I concluded that a world *with* maps is likely as inconceivable to them as a world without maps is to us. I realized then that I not only had an interesting research project, but that I would need to go back and question my basic assumptions and try my best to understand how mapless peoples, in particular Scandinavians may configured and understood the physical space in which they lived.

What struck me during the process of researching and writing this study was how deeply imbedded a cartographic view of space is into my own subconscious. Numerous times while writing, I found myself imagining what a map of the Norse mythological cosmos would look like, were I to attempt to draw one. The irony of this impulse was not lost on me. Throughout this work, I continually emphasize that our modern reliance on graphical representations of space may be limiting our ability to understand how the medieval Scandinavians imagined their place in the world. In spite of these admonitions, I found myself succumbing to the trap I had warned against – thinking graphically about the Norse mythological cosmos. This realization drove home to me just how embedded maps and cartography are to me. I believe that this study has presented a plausible case that existing models of space and of the mythological cosmos fail to explain several features of the surviving myths. I hope that the model I have provided is able to address some of these problems.

The corpus of texts which comprise our understanding of the pagan Norse mythological system is limited and so it is comparatively simple to compose a work such as this one which focuses solely on space and travel in the mythological cosmos. However, the mythological sources represent only a tiny fraction of the total corpus of Old Norse/Icelandic literature which could potentially be investigated to expand our understanding of how the medieval

Scandinavians may have imagined space and travel. The final chapter of this study presents a case study, written to demonstrate that the same spatial principles which inform the physical and social structure of the Norse mythological cosmos apply to the space presented in at least one saga. *Yngvars saga Víðförla* is particularly well suited for this type of analysis, but it is only a saga of short to intermediate length. Much more work remains to be done on other sagas and other saga genres which could potentially enhance our understanding of Scandinavian ideas of space and how the imagined cosmos influenced (or did not influence) how the spatial configuration of their every-day world.

I hope that the framework outlined here may also be useful to scholars who study space in times and places other than medieval Scandinavia. The theoretical framework for the Narrational Map did not grow solely out of Scandinavian texts and it should not end there. When building the idea of a Narrational Map, I selected sources that span a variety of languages and literary traditions, and supplemented my textual analysis with models from archeology and anthropology. My aim was, that by combining disparate source material, I could create a model that could apply to any mapless culture. I know that there are many cultural traditions and branches of academic study of which I am unaware but may shape how we understand Narrational Map. My presentation of the Narrational Map certainly has room to expand, and I hope that the model presented in this study will be refined, corrected, and changed through both my work and the work of scholars who may encounter it.

I also believe that the concept of the Narrational Map may also help us change the way that we read and interpret the literary works of pre-cartographic peoples. The concerns of space and "the other" show up frequently, and the Narrational Map, and the ideas about space and social interactions that it suggests, could be an useful tool for understanding how certain groups

of people conceptualized the world in which they lived. I have plans to test the utility of the Narrational Map in areas of medieval Europe other than Scandinavia. I am uncertain as to what I may find, but I hope that future projects will be as enlightening and entertaining as this one has been. I would invite other scholars to do the same and see what the Narrational Map can do for them.

Finally, as I conclude this work that has occupied so much of my time and thought, I find myself reflecting back on why I was drawn to Norse mythology to begin with. My interest with myth did not begin as an academic pursuit, and I had no interest in debating theoretical models or discussing Dumézil. I was fascinated by a universe with carts drawn by cats, by folding ships, by a universe held together by a tree, and by the concept of gods who were not just flawed but were mortal and would someday die. I was drawn to a universe that was just so *strange*. Fortunately, my academic study of Norse myth has not dampened the enthusiasm that I felt for this strange and wonderful system of beliefs. Instead I find that as I continue to dig deeper I find that, perhaps those who imagined this cosmos were just as delighted by the bizarreness of their world of myth as I am. I hope that this study has helped to uncover some of strangeness present in the Norse mythological system and has suggested that, perhaps, the medieval Norse delighted in strangeness and ambiguity almost as much as I do.

Appendix A: A Plot Summary of Yngvars saga Víðförla

Yngvars saga tells the story of four generations of men from Sweden, with the bulk of the text focusing on the last two generations: Yngvarr and his son Sveinn. The story begins with Yngvarr's grandfather, Áki who was alive in the days when King Eiríkr ruled Sweden (c. 970-995) and Hákon Jarl (c. 965-995) ruled Norway. Eiríkr had an unnamed daughter whom Áki wished to marry, but Eiríkr refused the match on account of Áki's lowly birth, and instead chose to accept a marriage offer from an unnamed king from Garðaríki.[71] Áki, along with eight other chieftains, kills the Russian prince and abducts the princess. The union between Áki and Eiríkr's daughter produces a son, Eymundr. As time passes, Eiríkr offers reconciliation to Áki and invites him and his eight co-conspirators to return home to celebrate a wedding feast. Once the party arrives, Eiríkr orders the traitors slain and receives Eymundr and his mother into his household. Eymundr resides with the king for the rest of Eiríkr's life and lives side by side with Ólafr, the king's son and heir, both of whom treat Eymundr with the respect he is due.

This situation chafes Eymundr, who feels he has been cheated out of his birthright. He decides that there is no point brooding over his situation and that it would be better to die than suffer shame, and together with companions of his own, he rallies several of the king's men who have set out to gather tribute by force of arms. Eymundr's actions precipitate a battle in which his companions are slain and he is left for dead. On the day of the battle Ólafr's daughter Ingigerðr, with whom Eymundr had developed a romantic relationship, comes across the injured Eymundr and secretly nurses him back to health. When Eymundr recovers, Ingigerðr supplies

[71] In the sagas Garðaríki refers loosely to the region of Eastern Europe in and around the city of Kiev, including much of modern-day Ukraine and parts of Russia on the borders of the Caspian Sea. In many translations of the sagas Garðaríki has been translated as Russia. In the 10th and 11th centuries Garðaríki was closely connected to Scandinavia. It is distinct from the region of modern-day Russia surrounding present-day Novgorod (known as Hólmgarðr) which was also closely tied to Scandinavia. In order to avoid confusion between Garðaríki and Hólmgarðr, Slavic-speaking regions under Norse influence, I have opted to preserve term Garðaríki in my text and not translate it.

her cousin with a ship which he uses to stage a viking expedition. Eventually Ingigerðr marries King Jarisleifr of Garðaríki (Yaroslav the Wise, Ярослав Мудрый – Grand Prince of Kiev 1015-1054), and Eymundr travels there to aid Jarisleifr in a conflict with the king's brother. Eymundr eventually marries the daughter of a Swedish hersir, has a son Yngvarr, and, with Ingigerðr's help, returns to Sweden, even though relations with Ólafr are still cold.

Yngvarr eventually plays a critical role in reconciling his father with Ólafr. Yngvarr manages to obtain permission from Eymundr to visit Ólafr and Sweden, and with this new-found approvial and copius gifts from his father, the young man departs. At Ólafr's court, Yngvarr encounters his cousin Önundr with whom he forms a fast friendship. After a period of time, Önundr desires to return with Yngvarr and visit Eymundr, but when the cousins eventually do arrive in Garðaríki, Eymundr refuses to greet them. Yngvarr then rides into the hall on horseback and criticizes his father for not extending proper courtesy to Önundr. At this point the narrative shifts to a series of exchanges in which Yngvarr visits King Ólafr or his father and presents them with gifts, claiming that they come from the other party. Neither party believes Yngvarr's claims, but at each turn they accept the gifts and reward him until eventually Yngvarr's persistence wins over the feuding warriors and Ólafr offers Eymundr a legitimate gift, and Eymundr reciprocates. This act prompts a cessation of hostilities between the two.

Yngvarr then enters into Ólafr's formal service and gains great wealth and fame, and by so doing becomes well-liked and respected by Ólafr. However, as time passes Yngvarr grows increasingly melancholy and desires the kingship which he feels he properly deserves. Ólafr responds that he would be willing to give him anything else, except a kingship, and tensions gradually rise between the two. Yngarr eventually elects to leave Ólafr's service and find a kingdom of his own. He loads up a ship with thirty men and travels to Jarisleifr in Garðaríki with

whom he resides for three years and learns a number of languages. In Garðaríki, Yngvarr hears of three large rivers which flow through Garðaríki, and decides to mount an expedition to discover the source of the largest of these. He leaves Garðaríki with a number of companions and, curiously, flint and steel that had been consecrated by a bishop

At this point in the narrative, the tone of the saga shifts radically as Yngvarr and his companions and encounter numerous strange and fantastic creatures and locales. The first encounter is with a giant (*rísi*), when Ketill, one of the companions and Yngvarr's right-hand-man, leaves the ship against Yngvarr's orders. Shortly afterward, the expedition observes several strange animals and terrains culminating in an encounter with a dragon (*dreki*) named Jakúlus. After the encounter with the dragon, the expedition moves further upriver and comes to a large and beautiful city,[72] where they encounter a woman who is much more beautiful and elegantly dressed than the others. She greets them, but Yngvarr refuses to respond until he knows which languages she speaks. She identifies herself as Silkisif, Queen of the land, and invites the expedition to stay with them. Yngvarr accepts her invitation to winter with her, but informs his men, on pain of death that they are not to mingle with the heathens nor allow any woman other than the queen into the hall. Yngvarr passes the winter in conversation with the queen, during which time he teaches her about his faith and God's power. This teaching, and likely Yngvarr's company, pleases Silkisif and she offers him all of her kingdom and the title of king to go along with it. She even offers herself to him in an effort to convince him to stay, but he replies that he will do so later, wanting to explore the river first.

In the spring, Yngvarr again begins to travel up the river and comes across a large

[72] The author does not tell his readers the city's name at this point in the saga. However, on Yngvarr's return journey he refers to it as Citopolis. Even though the city's proper name is mentioned infrequently in the saga, I will use it with some frequency in this chapter.

waterfall in a narrow gorge that requires the use of cables to raise the ship above the level of the falls. As they continue their trip, they encounter a fleet of fast-moving ships, one of which contains a man in royal clothes. The man speaks in several languages the expedition doesn't recognize, but finally speaks in Russian.[73] The man introduceds himself as Jólfr, who rules a city called Heliópólim.[74] Once Jólfr finds out who Yngvarr is and where he intends to go, he invites the Swede to stay with him. At first Yngvarr desires to continue with his voyage, but relents after Jólfr insists. In Heliópólim, the companions encounter rampant paganism, and Yngvarr repeats the same injunction against associating with the heathens as in Silkisif's kingdom. Jólfr is just as interested in Yngvarr as Silkisif was – so much so that the people of Heliópólim feel that Jólfr is neglecting his duties and threaten to depose him and choose another king. Yngvarr advises the king to return to governing. Jólfr does so and seeks Yngvarr's aid in a fight against his brother. Yngvarr promises to do so on his way home from the East.

While Yngvarr is engaged in conversation with Jólfr, he learns several important bits of information about his voyage. Jólfr is the first person that has any knowledge of source of the river on which they are sailing. Jólfr tells Yngvarr that the river flows from a spring into the Red Sea and that there is a small spit of land, called Siggeum, nearby. He also warns Yngvarr that the future course is dangerous; the river is patrolled by evil-doers who disguise their ships with reeds and attack with fire and weapons.

Yngvarr and his companions depart and encounter another waterfall in their path. This second fall seems to be much more difficult to circumvent than the previous one, and only after considerable effort does the voyage manage to move forward. Beyond the falls, they encounter yet another giant (*rísi*), one who is so hideous that they think he might be a demon or the Devil.

[73] *Girskr* in the saga text.
[74] Or Heliopolis

The giant's horrific visage frightens the companions and a cleric named Hjálmvígi sings psalms and the expedition's men promise six days of prayer and fasting. The giant then departs from the house, and the men enter and sabotage the structure by hacking at the central clay pillar. The giant returns that evening, with several dead men in his belt, locks the gate, and, after a while, Yngvarr and his companions hear snoring from within. The companions then sneak up above the house and begin pelting it with large stones and cause the structure to collapse. The commotion causes the giant to wake from his slumber and attempt to escape, but he is pinned beneath the rubble, with only a leg sticking out. Yngvarr and his men hack the leg off with axes and take the severed appendage with them on their voyage.

The expedition then continues further upriver until they encounter a fork in the waterway and five strange moving islands. It turns out that these islands are in fact ships, covered all around to look like islands that shoot fire from metal tubes, presumably the pirates Jólfr warned them about. The ships' covering protects them from most means of attack but Yngvarr lights a fire from his consecrated tinderbox (vígðu eldsvirki) and shoots a fire-arrow down the tube and instantly engulfs the ships in flames. After a victorious battle, the expedition moves even further and finally discovers the headwaters of the river. Here a dragon rests on top of a huge hoard of gold. In order to bypass the dragon, Yngvarr takes the giant's severed leg, covers it in salt, and places it by the lake. The dragon leaves his hoard and consumes the leg in one gulp, but is unable to return directly to his hoard. The dragon tries three times to return but, stricken by great thirst after his salty meal, the dragon returns three times to the river before he is able to quench his thirst. This delay gives Yngvar and his company enough time to move on, and in the process remove a valuable piece of gold from the dragon's hoard.

The company then moves on to explore the headland on which they have beached their

ships. They discover a city with a richly decorated hall. Yngvar asks if any of his men are willing to spend the night in the hall in order to learn more about it. A man named Sóti responds and spends the night there. During the course of the night, a demon (djöfullinn) appears to Sóti and tells him a tale of greed and murder in which a king's three daughters all vie for their father's wealth. When the youngest daughter finally succeeds in assassinating her rivals, she fills the castle with demons and dragons come and eat the carcasses of the dead, transforming the king and his daughters into the dragons that the expedition encounters. After the demon recounts this tale, he entrusts Sóti with the task of telling Yngvarr that Haraldr Svíakonungur had traveled to this point and perished in the Red Sea, and that Yngvarr must return Haraldr's banner to Sweden so that the men there will no longer wonder what happened to Haraldr. The demon also informs Sóti of two disheartening facts. The first is that, while Yngvarr and the rest of the company will be allowed to leave the city, Sóti, as a result of his unrighteousness, will be forced to stay. He also informs him that most of Yngvarr's men will die on the expedition. When Yngvarr hears this, he takes the banner and returns downriver to Jólfr.

As Yngvarr and his men approach Heliopolim they are immediately greeted by Jólfr who insists that they fulfill their promise to fight against his brother, Bjólfr (also known as Sölmunðr) and his eight sons, whose forces outnumber Jólfr's. Prior to the battle Yngvarr prepares wheels with spikes on them and several spiked balls. As the two armies face each other, Yngvarr releases the spiked wheels which kill many of Bjólfr's troops and cause others to flee. When Yngvarr's men start to pursue the fleeing soldiers, Yngvarr orders them to stay close and allow Jólfr's troops to attack the fleeing men. That way they can defend their ships and gather booty near them. Once Jólfr's[75] troops return, they surprise Yngvarr's men and let out a war-cry and

[75] A reason for Jólfr's seeming betrayal of Yngvarr is never given in the text.

begin to attack them. At this, Yngvarr throws the spiked balls and the enemy troops, unaware of this trick, are hobbled by the spikes and easily defeated.

Following Yngvarr's victory, the men notice a large group of women approaching the expedition and playing music. Seeing their approach, Yngvarr warns that these women are "sem ina verstu eirtorma" (like the worst poisonous snakes). The leader of these women approaches Yngvarr and attempts to sleep with him. Enraged, he stabs her in her *kvensköpin* (which Hermann Pálsson delicately translates as private parts, literally woman-genitals). This action brings many of Yngvarr's men to their senses and they drive away these witches, though some succumb to their charms. Thus, in the morning Yngvarr's joy in his plunder and military victory turns bittersweet as he discovers eighteen of his men dead and he buries them in that place.

Yngvarr departs quickly from Heliopolim, but a sickness breaks out among the expedition and kills over half of his men and strikes Yngvarr as well. Once the expedition enters the area near Silkisif's kingdom, he gathers his men, orders them to bury the dead, and calls Ketill and other companions to his side. He tells them that he is ill and knows that he will soon die, but that he is confident in an eternal reward. He orders that his body be taken back to Sweden to be buried in a church and that his wealth be split into three parts: one to the church and clergy, one to the poor, and another to his father and son. He also asks them to bid farewell to Silkisif and to seek consensus for the direction for remainder of the voyage, but stipulates that if a conflict arises, Ketill will be in charge of the expedition once Yngvarr dies.

Once Yngvarr passes, his men prepare his body for burial, lay it in a coffin and then continue the voyage to Citopolis. Silkisif recognizes Yngvarr's ships and sets out to greet the expedition, but is saddened when she learns of Yngvarr's death. However, she begs that his men deviate from Yngvarr's last orders, and instead bury Yngvarr in her kingdom and return to

Sweden and get Christian priests to return to her in order to build a church at the site of Yngvarr's burial and to convert her and her kingdom to Christianity. The saga mentions that all this happened in the year 1041. Once the men depart, they return to Garðaríki without event, but a division occurs among the voyagers with one camp heading to Constantinople and the other returning to Sweden. In Sweden, Yngvarr's son learns of his father's death and of Silkisif's request and prepares himself to make a voyage to Citopolis by learning the languages of the east and gathering a number of priests under a bishop named Róðgeirr.

Before Sveinn's expedition departs from Sweden, bishop Róðgeirr blesses lots three times and casts them three times. Each casting confirms that it is God's will they depart for the East. Once the group has been traveling for several days they come into conflict with pirates, and Sveinn casts the lots to determine whether or not God wills them to engage in battle. When the lots show that they should attack, Sveinn promises to give up the Viking life if God grants them victory. They are victorious and gain much treasure. They then continue upriver to the point where Yngvarr's initial expedition encountered the first giant, at which point the men notice several large men which people called Cyclopes. Sveinn and his men shoot at and kill several of the Cyclopes, but once they begin to flee, Sveinn orders them not to follow but to pillage an abandoned village.

They continue onward until Sveinn orders his men to follow a small creek which empties into the river. Shortly thereafter, the expedition encounters a group of people, gesturing with a feather, a gesture which Sveinn interprets as a signal of peaceful intent. The two groups meet and begin to trade until one of the men does not to honor his agreement and kills one of the natives. The natives flee, but return with a large army and attack Sveinn's host. The natives fall in large numbers since they lack protective armor, and Sveinn eventually triumphs and gathers much

plunder. Following this battle, the expedition encounters and engages in conflict with several other groups of natives. One is a man with a bird's beak who throws apples at them, another is a battle with men on strange creatures which carry towers on their backs, and the final battle is with a group of men who are angered when one of Sveinn's men makes the sign of the cross.

The men then move on to the place where Yngvarr's men first encountered the dragon Jacúlus. Sveinn sends out men to spy out the dragon, and discover that all the dragons are sleeping. They take a long spear and pick up a gold ring, but the shaft touches one of the small dragons who rouses the rest until the Jacúlus wakes and attacks. Sveinn takes an arrow with tinder the size of a man's head on it, lights it with the sacred fire and shoots at the Jacúlus. The arrow enters the dragon's mouth, strikes its heart, and kills it. Sveinn then orders his men away from the body since the smell of a dead dragon is deadly. The men generally obey, but six fall to the smell. Sveinn and his men finally reach the goal of their expedition, Silkisif's kingdom and Yngvarr's resting place.

When the party arrives, Silkisif immediately greets them, bypassing all others and attempts to kiss Sveinn. He rebuffs her advance and questions why she would attempt to kiss him of all the men. She replies: "Því, at þú einn hefir augu Yngvars, at því er mér sýnist" (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 390). [Because you alone have Yngvarr's eyes, as it seems to me] The bishop then teaches the queen about Christianity through an interpreter; she learns quickly and is soon baptized. Shortly after, Sveinn is crowned king of Silkisif's kingdom and marries the queen. The couple then travel throughout the kingdom spreading Christianity, and when the entire country has embraced the religion, Sveinn begins to make preparations to return to Sweden. Silkisif begs him to stay and send his men without him, but Sveinn replies that the road home is dangerous and he will not send his men home alone. She then points out that Christianity

is still new to her lands and that churches need to be built and eventually she persuades Sveinn to remain until they finish a great church in her city. Three years later, once the church is completed, the bishop asks her to whom she would like the church dedicated, and when she replies that she would like it to be Yngvarr's church the bishop points out that his remains have performed no miracles, and thus it is not appropriate for the building to be dedicated to Yngvarr. To which the queen replies:

> Af yðrum munni heyrða ek, at meira væri verð fyrir guði staðfesti réttrar trúar ok vani heilagrar ástar en dýrð jarteikna; en ek dæmi, sem ek reyndi, at Yngvarr var staðfastr í helagri ást við guð. (Guðni Jónsson, "Yngvars Saga" 392)
>
> [I heard it from your that steadfastness in the true faith and habit of holy love are deemed to be greater before God than the glory of miracles; and I think, from what I have experienced, that Yngvarr was the most steadfast man in holy love for God.]

This convinces the bishop, and Yngvarr's remains are moved to the church. Sveinn then returnes to Sweden where the people desire to make him king, to which he replied that he has a richer kingdom to which he will soon return. Two years later he departs but Ketill stays and eventually returns to Iceland.

At this point, the saga's action concludes as the final figure in this heroic line departs his native land to return to his inherited kingdom. Even though the action of the saga ends here, the author continues and relates something of the oral and textual sources which he claims informed his narrative. He also adds additional details about the voyage, but seems to suggest that he is uncertain of their veracity.

Works Cited

Adam of Bremen. *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. Eds. and Trans. Francis Joseph Tschan and Timothy Reuter. New York : Columbia University Press, 2002. Print.

Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir. "The Origin and Development of the Fornaldarsögur as Illustrated by Völsunga Saga." *The Legendary Sagas : Origins and Development*. Eds. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012. 59–82. Print.

Allen, N. J., W. S. F. Pickering, and William Watts Miller, eds. *On Durkheim's Elementary* Forms of Religious Life. London ; New York: Routledge, 1998.

Andersson, Theodore M. "Exoticism in Early Iceland." *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber: "Ein runder Knäuel, so rollt' es uns leicht aus den Händen."* Eds. Michael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. Trieste: Edizioni Parnaso, 2000. 19-28. Print.

Antrim, Zayde. *Routes and Realms : The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.

Ari Þorgilsson. *Íslendingabók / Landnámabók*. Reykjavík : Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968. Print.

Ashman Roe, Elizabeth. "Fornaldarsögur and the Heroic Legends of the Edda." *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*. Eds. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington. New York: Routledge, 2013. 202–218. Print.

Aston, Michael. *Landscape Archaeology: An Introduction to Fieldwork Techniques on Post-Roman Landscapes*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974. Print.

Avienus, Rufius Festus. *Ora Maritima: A Description of the Seacoast from Brittany to*

Marseilles. Chicago : Ares, 1977. Print.

Ármann Jakobsson. "Identifying the Ogre: The Legendary Saga Giants." *Fornaldarsagaerne: Myter Og Virkelighed: Studier I de Oldislandske Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Ed. Agneta Ney. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. 181–200. Print.

---. "The Earliest Legendary Saga Manuscripts." *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*. Eds. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012. 21–32. Print.

Bampi, Massimiliano. "The Development of the Fornaldarsögur as a Genre: A Polysystematic Approach." *The Legendary Sagas : Origins and Development*. Eds. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012. 185–200. Print.

Barnes, Geraldine, and Gabrielle Singleton, eds. *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2005. Print.

Bernáth, Balázs et al. "How Could the Viking Sun Compass Be Used with Sunstones before and after Sunset? Twilight Board as a New Interpretation of the Uunartoq Artefact Fragment." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 470.2166 (2014). Print.

Biskupa sögur. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1998. Print.

Bosworth, Joseph. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary : Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1976. Print.

Cederschiöld, Gustaf, ed. "Mágus Saga Jarls." *Fornsögur Suðrlanda: Magús Saga Jarls, Konraðs Saga, Bærings Saga, Flovents Saga, Bevers Saga*. Lund: F. Berlings

boktryckeri, 1884. 1–42. Print.

Clover, Carol J., and John Lindow, eds. *Old Norse--Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 2005. Print. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 42.

Clunies Ross, Margaret. "An Interpretation of the Myth of Þórr's Encounter with Geirrøðr and His Daughters." *Specvlvm Norroenvm : Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*. Odense: Odense University Press, 1981. 370–391. Print.

---. "Fornaldarsögur as Fantastic Ethnographies." *Fornaldarsagaerne: Myter Og Virkelighed : Studier I de Oldislandske Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Eds. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. 317–330. Print.

---. "Frequent Fliers in Old Norse Myth." *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*. Eds. Geraldine Barnes and Gabrielle Singleton. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2005. 79–96. Print.

---. "Images of Norse Cosmology." *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell*. Ed. John McKinnell and Daniel Anlezark. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2011. 53–73. Print. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series.

---. *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*. Odense: Odense University Press, 1994. Print.

---. "Reading Þrymskviða." *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*. Eds. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington. New York: Routledge, 2002. 177–194. Print.

Cook, Robert, ed. *Njal's Saga*. London: Penguin, 2001. Print. Penguin Classics.

Davidson, H. R. Ellis. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964. Print.

Downs, Roger M., and David Stea, eds. *Image & Environment: Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2005. Print.

Downs, Roger M, and David Stea. *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. Print.

Dumézil, Georges. *Les Dieux Souverains Des Indo-Européens*. Paris: Gallimard, 1977. Print.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.

Edda: Die Lieder Des Codex Regius Nebst Verwandten DenkmaÏern. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1962. Print.

Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933. Print.

Eyrbyggja Saga, Brands þáttr Ǫrva, Eiríks Saga Rauða; Grœnlendinga Saga; Grœnlendinga þáttr. Reykjavík : Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935. Print.

Faulkes, Anthony. *Edda*. London; Rutland, Vt.: Dent ; Charles E. Tuttle, 1995. Print.

Ferrari, Fulvio. "Possible Worlds of Sagas: The Intermingling of Different Fictional Universes in the Development of the Fornaldarsögur as a Genre." *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*. Eds. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012. 271–290. Print.

Fitzhugh, William W., Elisabeth I. Ward, and National Museum of Natural History (U.S.), eds. *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with the National Museum of Natural History, 2000. Print.

Flateyjarbók. Iceland: Flateyjarútgáfan, 1944. Print.

Ford, Ben, ed. *The Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes*. New York: Springer, 2011. Print.

Franklin, Simon. *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*. London: Longman, 1996. Print.

Frank, Roberta. *Old Norse Court Poetry : The Dróttkvaett Stanza*. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1978. Print.

Gentry, Francis G. et al., eds. *The Nibelungen Tradition: An Encyclopedia*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Gísli Sigurðsson. *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A discourse on method.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. Print.

Gísli Sigurðsson, Vésteinn Ólason, and Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, eds. *The Manuscripts of Iceland*. Reykjavík: Ární Magnússon Institute in Iceland, 2004.

Gladwin, Thomas. *East Is a Big Bird; Navigation and Logic on Puluwat Atoll*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970. Print.

Gooley, Tristan. *The Natural Navigator: the art of reading nature's own signposts.* London: Virgin Books, 2014.

Gordon, E. V. *An Introduction to Old Norse*. 2nd ed. Oxford : Clarendon Press , 1981. Print.

Grønle, Sîan. *Íslendingabók, Kristni Saga. The Book of the Icelanders, The Story of the Conversion.* London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2006. Print.

Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. *Nornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. 3 Vols. Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfn Forni, 1943.

Hårdh, Birgitta, Lars Larsson, and Sachsensymposium, eds. *Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods: Papers from the 52nd Sachsensymposium Lund, August 2001*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002. Print. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8° 39.

Harris, Joseph. *"Speak Useful Words or Say Nothing": Old Norse Studies*. Eds. Thomas Dana Hill and Susan E Deskis. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008. Print.

Hastrup, Kirsten. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.

Haugen, Einar. "The Semantics of Icelandic Spatial Orientation. *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement* 14.1 (2006), 36-45.

---. "The Mythical Sructure of the Ancient Scandinavians." *Structuralism – a reader*. Ed. M. Lane. New York: Basic Books, 1970.

---. The Semantics of Icelandic Orientation. *Word* 8.3 (1957), 447-459.

Hedeager, Lotte. "Scandinavian 'Central Places' in a Cosmological Setting." *Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods: Papers from the 52nd Sachsensymposium Lund, August 2001*. Ed. Birgitta Hårdh and Lars Larsson. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002. 3–18. Print.

Hofman, Dietrich. "Der Vision Der Oddr Snorrason." *Festskrift Til Ludwig Holm-Olsen På Hans 70-årsdag Den 9. Juni 1984*. Ed. Bjarne Fidjestøl and others. Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984. 142–151. Print.

---. "Die Yngvars Saga Víðförla Und Oddr Munkr Inn Fróði." *Specvlvm Norroenvm : Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*. Odense: Odense University Press, 1981. 188–222. Print.

---. "Zu Oddr Snorrasons Yngvars Saga Víðförla." *Skandinavistik* 14 (1984): 106–108. Print.

Isidore, Bishop of Seville. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Janni, Pietro. *La Mappa E Il Periplo : Cartografia Antica E Spazio Odologico*. Roma : G.

Bretschneider, 1984. Print.

Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity : The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia- and How It Died*. New York: HarperOne, 2008. Print.

Jensson, Gottskálk. "Were the Earliest Fornaldarsögur Written in Latin?" *Fornaldarsagaerne : Myter Og Virkelighed : Studier I de Oldislandske Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. 79–92. Print.

Jesch, Judith. *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age : The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Boydell Press, 2001. Print.

Johnson, Matthew. *Ideas of Landscape*. Malden, MA ; Blackwell Pub., 2007. Print.

Jómsvíkinga Saga. Reykjavík : Prentsmiðja Jóns Helgasonar, 1969. Print.

Kirsten, Wolf. "Yngvars Saga Víðförla." *Medieval Scandinavia : an encyclopedia* 1993: 740. Print.

Knudsen, Bo Nissen. "A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose." N.p., 6 June 2013. Web. 2 June 2016.

Kretschmer, Konrad. *Die Italienischen Portolane Des Mittelalters; Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Kartographie Und Nautik.* Hildesheim : G. Olms, 1962. Print.

Kunz, Keneva. "The Saga of the Greenlanders." *The Sagas of the Icelanders*. Ed. Jane Smilely. New York: Viking, 2001. 637–652. Print.

La Farge, Beatrice. *Glossary to the Poetic Edda : Based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg : C. Winter, 1992. Print.

Larrington, Carolyne, ed. *The Poetic Edda*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print. The World's Classics.

Larsson, Lars. "The Uppåkra Project. Preconditions, Performance and Prospects." *Centrality -*

Regionality: The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age. Ed. Lars Larsson and Birgitta Hårdh. Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003. 3–26. Print. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8o 40.

Larsson, Lars, and Birgitta Hårdh, eds. *Centrality - Regionality: The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Internat, 2003. Print. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8o 40.

Lassen, Annette, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson, eds. *Fornaldarsagaerne: myter og virkelighed: studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. Print.

Lassen, Annette. "Origines Gentium and the Learned Origin of the Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda." *The Legendary Sagas : Origins and Development*. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012. 33–58. Print.

Laxdœla saga, Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar, Stúfs þáttr. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934. Print.

Lewis, David. *We, the Navigators; the Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1972. Print.

Lund, Neils, ed. *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred: The Ventures of Ohthere and Wulfstan, Together with the Description of Northern Europe from the Old English Orosius*. York, England: Sessions, 1984. Print.

Lönnroth, Lars. "The Founding of Miðgarðr (Vǫluspá 1-8) [tr. Paul Acker]." *The Poetic Edda : Essays on Old Norse Mythology*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 1–28. Print.

Lucan. *M. Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1887. Print.

---. *Pharsalia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City.* Cambridge: Technology Press, 1960. Print.

Mandeville, John. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1983. Print.

Marcianus et al. *Markianos, Menippos, Stadiasmos - Marciani Periplus, Menippi Peripli fragmentum quod Artemidori nomine ferebatur, Peripli qui Stadiasmus magni maris inscribi solet fragmentum: Graece et Latine*. Lipsiae: Sumptibus C.L. Fritzschii, 1841. Print.

Marteinn H. Sigurðsson. "Þórr´s Travel Companion in Hymiskviða." *Gripla* XVI (2005): 197–208. Print.

McKinnell, John. *Essays on Eddic Poetry*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. Print.

---. *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend*. Cambridge : D.S. Brewer, 2005. Print.

McKinnell, John, and Daniel Anlezark, eds. *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell*. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Print. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series.

McNaughton, Douglas. "A World in Transition: Early Cartography of the North Atlantic." *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with the National Museum of Natural History. 257–269. Print.

McTurk, Rory, ed. *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005. Print. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 31.

Medas, Stefano. "Il piu antico testo portolanico attualmente noto: Stadiasmo o Periplo del Mare Grande." *Mayurqa* 33.1 (2009): 333–364. Print.

---. "Peripli E Portolani: La Concezione Della Geografia Nautica Nel Mondo Antico, Da Strumento Di Navigazione a Materia Letteraria. Il Caso Dello 'Stadiasmo O Periplo Del

Mare Grande', Il Primo Portolano Attualmente Noto." (2009): 473–480. Print.

Meletinskiĭ, E. M. *The Elder Edda and Early Forms of the Epic*. Trieste : Parnaso, 1998. Print.

---. *The Poetics of Myth*. New York : Garland Pub., 1998. Print.

---. "Scandinavian Mythology as a System of Oppositions." *Journal of Symbolic Anthropology* 1 (1973), 43-58 and 2 (1974), 87-78. Print.

Mellor, Scott A. *Analyzing Ten Poems from The Poetic Edda : Oral Formula and Mythic Patterns*. Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008. Print.

Mitchell, Stephen A. "Fornaldarsögur." *Medieval Scandinavia : an encyclopedia* 1993: 206–208. Print.

---. *Heroic Sagas and Ballads*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1991. Print.

Mittman, Asa Simon. *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*. New York : Routledge, 2006. Print.

Motz, Lotte. *The King, the Champion and the Sorcerer : A Study in Germanic Myth*. Wien : Fassbaender, 1996. Print.

Museo Correr. *Carte Da Navigar : Portolani E Carte Nautiche Del Museo Correr, 1318-1732*. 1. ed. Venezia : Marsilio, 1990. Print.

Nicklasson, Påvel. "Central Places in a Peripheral Area or Peripheral Places in a Central Area - a Discussion of Centrality in Halland." *Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods: Papers from the 52nd Sachsensymposium Lund, August 2001*. Ed. Birgitta Hårdh and Lars Larsson. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001. 111–132. Print.

"Nova Vulgata - Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio." N.p., n.d. Web. 3 June 2016.

Orosius, Paulus. *The Old English Orosius*. Ed. Janet Bately. London ; Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1980. Print.

"Oxford English Dictionary." N.p., 2000. Print.

Parry, J. H. *The Age of Reconnaissance*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1981. Print.

Phelpstead, Carl. "Adventure-Time in Yngvars Saga Víðförla." *Fornaldarsagaerne : Myter Og Virkelighed : Studier I de Oldislandske Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. 331. Print.

---. "Fantasy and History. The Limits of Plausibility in Oddr Snorrason´s Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar." *Saga-Book* 36 (2012): 27–42. Print.

Roberts, Owain T. P. "Viking Navigation - by Søren Thirslund." *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 38.1 (2009): 189–190. *Wiley Online Library*. Web.

Rómverja Saga. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2010. Print.

Ross, Alan S. C. *The Terfinnas and Beormas of Ohthere.* Leeds: Printed by T. Wilson, for members of the School of English Language in the University of Leeds, 1940. Print.

Schjøde, Jens Peter. "Kan myten være virkelighed?" *Fornaldarsagaerne : myter og virkelighed : studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet, 2009. 167–180. Print.

Seaver, Kirsten A. *Maps, Myths, and Men: The Story of the Vinland Map*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004. Print.

---. *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, Ca. A.D. 1000-1500*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995. Print.

Shipley, Graham. *Pseudo-Skylax's Periplous : The Circumnavigation of the Inhabited World Text, Translation and Commentary*. Exeter, England : Bristol Phoenix Press, 2011. Print.

Short, John R. *Making Space : Revisioning the World, 1475-1600*. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 2004. Print.

Simek, Rudolf. *Altnordische Kosmographie : Studien Und Quellen Zu Weltbild Und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen Und Island Vom 12. Bis Zum 14. Jahrhundert*. Berlin ; W. de Gruyter, 1990. Print.

---. *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993. Print.

Sīrāfī, Abū Zayd Ḥasan ibn Yazīd, and Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlān. *Two Arabic Travel Books*. Ed. Tim Mackintosh-Smith and James E. Montgomery. New York: New York University Press, 2014. Print.

Six Old Icelandic Sagas. Lanham: University Press of America, 1993. Print.

Skelton, R. A. *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*. New ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. Print.

Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: Háttatal*. Ed. Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1999. Print.

Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning.* Ed. Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1982. Print.

Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*. Ed. Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College, 1998. Print.

---. *Heimskringla; History of the Kings of Norway.* Austin: Published for the American-Scandinavian Foundation by the University of Texas Press, 1964. Print.

---. *Heimskringla : Nóregs Konunga Sögur*. Oslo : Universitetsforlaget ;, 1966. Print.

Sobecki, Sebastian I., ed. *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*. Cambridge ; Rochester, N.Y: D.S. Brewer, 2011. Print.

Sørensen, Preben Meulengracht. "Thor's Fishing Expedition." *Words and Objects: Towards a Dialogue between Archaeology and History of Religion*. Ed. Gro Steinsland. Oslo:

Norwegian University Press, 1986. 298–315. Print.

--- *Saga and Society : An Introduction to Old Norse Literature*. Odense: Odense University Press, 1993. Print.

---. "Þorr's Fishing Expedition (Hymiskviða) [Tr. Kirsten Williams]." *The Poetic Edda : Essays on Old Norse Mythology*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 119–138. Print.

Stefán Einarsson. *Terms of Direction in Modern Icelandic*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942. Print.

---. "Terms of Direction in Old Icelandic." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 43.3 (1944): 265–285. Print.

Stevenson, Edward Luther. *Portolan Charts; Their Origin and Characteristics, with a Descriptive List of Those Belonging to the Hispanic Society of America*. New York : The Knickerbocker Press, 1911. Print.

Sturla Þórðarson. *Íslendinga Saga*. Reykjavík : Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs og Þjóðvinafélagsins, 1974. Print.

Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir. "The Church and Written Culture." *The Manuscripts of Iceland*. Ed. Gísli Sigurðsson and Vésteinn Ólason. Reykjavík: Ární Magnússon Institute in Iceland. 13–23. Print.

The Book of Settlements; Landnámabók. Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, 1972. Print.

The Poetic Edda. Ed. Urusula Dronke. Oxford: Clarendon P., 1969. Print.

The Povešt' Vremennykh Let' : An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. Web. 2 June 2016.

The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text. Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953. Print.

The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise. London: Nelson, 1960. Print.

The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection. Ed. Jane Smilely. New York: Viking, 2000. Print. World of the Sagas.

Thirslund, Søren. *Viking Navigation*. Roskilde, Denmark : Viking Ship Museum, c2007. Print.

Torfi H. Tulinius. *The Matter of the North : The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland.* Denmark: Odense University Press, 2002. Print.

Towe, K.M., R.J.H. Clark, and Seaver, K.A. "Analysing the Vinland Map: A Critical Review of a Critical Review." *Archaeometry* 50.5 887–893. Print.

Trigger, Bruce G. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Trowbridge, C. C. "On Fundamental Methods of Orientation and 'Imaginary Maps.'" *Science* 38.990 (1913): 888–897. Print.

Turville-Petre, Gabriel. *Myth and Religion of the North : The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975. Print.

Valtonen, Irmeli. *The North in the Old English Orosius: A Geographical Narrative in Context*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2008. Print.

Vries, Jan de. *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch.* Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1977. Print.

Whaley, Diana. *Heimskringla : An Introduction*. London : Viking Society for Northern Research, University College, 1991. Print.

Whalley, Joyce Irene. *Pliny the Elder, Historia Naturalis*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982. Print.

Whitfield, Peter. *The Charting of the Oceans : Ten Centuries of Maritime Maps*. San Francisco : Pomegranate Artbooks, 1996. Print.

Wilken, Robert Louis. *The First Thousand Years : A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. Print.

Williamson, Tom. *Shaping Medieval Landscapes : Settlement, Society, Environment.* Bollington, Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2004. Print.

Zadeh, Travis E. *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam : Geography, Translation, and the 'Abbāsid Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011. Print.

Þiðreks Saga af Bern. Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954. Print.