

Bloodfeud and Scandinavian Mythology

The public history of Iceland lies all in the lives of private characters; it is the life of a municipality, very much spread out, it is true, but much more like the life of a country town or a group of country neighbours, than the society of a complex state of any kind that has ever existed in Europe.

— Ker 1908, 251

Medieval Iceland was hardly unique in possessing a stateless society, one in which individuals were responsible for resolving disputes without executive aid, with or without the law, and decisions reached at law had to be enforced by the plaintiffs. Such societies typically practice a variety of methods to resolve disputes, and these methods clearly work, or the societies would perish. Some legal anthropologists use the term “self-help” (Middleton and Tait 1958, 19–22; Bohannan 1977, 293–94) to describe what happens: people take the law into their own hands, as we might say, but under a highly developed if sometimes unexpressed and always unwritten set of rules. One of the means of doing so involves homicide or the threat of homicide and is called the bloodfeud or simply feuding.¹

That Icelandic society used feud is evident first and foremost from the contemporary sagas and especially the *íslendingasögur*, which are as much about feuding and other processes of dispute resolution as they are about heroic deeds and attitudes of epic proportion. The anthropologist Victor Turner recognized this fact and suggested “An Anthropological Approach to the Icelandic Saga” (1971), using the ideas he was then developing to describe the process of “social dramas,” or rents in the fabric of society and the efforts undertaken by individuals to repair them; Turner used the same framework for a later study of *Eyrbyggja saga*, written

1. Evans-Pritchard (1940, 150) distinguishes feud, a vague situation of discord, from bloodfeud, which involves kin groups and homicides. This distinction no longer seems tenable, given the recognition that homicide is only one possible strategy in the larger process of dispute resolution encompassed by feuding, but it is helpful in pointing up the recognition that feud societies themselves seem to make of the qualitative as well as quantitative distinction that homicide possesses over compensation and other forms of redress. The choice of the first word of my title is intended to stress the importance of homicide in the mythology and of blood as a symbol.

in 1980 but only published posthumously (1985). These essays were the products of a nonspecialist writing for an audience of other nonspecialists and had therefore little influence on research in the medieval Scandinavian field, although they bristle with sharp insights. However, they represent something wholly new, for Turner's analyses are founded on a knowledge of the actual processes undertaken by real people in societies he himself had observed and those which others had observed. This comparative perspective informed several subsequent studies of the sagas and culminated in William Ian Miller's *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (1990). No study of medieval Scandinavian society can be undertaken without it (see, e.g., Bagge 1991, 76–77).

At the same time, formal studies of bloodfeud were accumulating, and Christopher Boehm (1987) offered a comparative survey based on fieldwork in Montenegro. The parallels between medieval Iceland, especially as it is portrayed in the *Íslendingasögur*, and the feud society of Montenegro are eerily striking even in many particulars outside of their statelessness and means of managing conflict.² Both were peripheral cultures (even in 1964, the isolated valley studied by Boehm was accessible only by a half day's walk), focused necessarily on local events; Boehm's valley had a local school, just as medieval Iceland had the cathedral school at Skálholt, but the centers of education were in both instances very distant from much of the population. Both cultures practiced herding and transhumance, and both were located in areas lacking variety of vegetation. Each was extensively concerned with its past and maintained heroic traditions. Indeed, Boehm found in the 1960s a people still obsessed with feuding, even though it had theoretically ended a century earlier; this sounds strikingly like a people recounting longish narratives (or episodes; Clover 1986b) about disputes their forefathers had engaged in centuries earlier. Verbal dueling was characteristic of both cultures, and gossip apparently functioned as an important sanction and impetus for behavior.

Many of these characteristics can be found wherever people feud. Appalachian feuding, whose most famous manifestation, the Hatfield-McCoy feud, remains part of American consciousness and popular culture, took place “in a largely illiterate culture that was virtually without police, jails, or other forms of coercion” (Waller 1988, 96); in other words, in a culture lacking an executive branch and relying on a consensual form of local authority emphasizing litigation and courts that played both judicial and legislative roles. During the sixteenth-century “crisis” in Scotland, “the tensions in local society were all potential feuds. Most were resolved peacefully, in arbitration and compromise, but almost every lord and a great many lairds participated in at least one feud in their lifetime” (Brown 1986, 79).

[Peace was obtained by] the persuading of those within the community who sought to replace conflict with co-operation, and to a limited extent by the crown as it tried to rein-

2. Gehl (1937) adduced a few Montenegrin parallels to ancient Iceland and the Germanic society out of which he thought the sagas grew, but he seems to treat the parallels as no more relevant or compelling than those he adduced from ancient Greece.

force those pressures. The crown's role was decidedly secondary, and amounted to little more than imposing, where it could, limited periods of non-violence, offering to act as a mediator, persuading men to talk to one another, occasionally serving as an arbitrator or oversman, and adjudicating in broken agreements. In none of these roles, however, was its position institutionalized. The greater part of persuasion was done by the combined voices of local kinsmen, friends, lords and dependants who wanted peace in their community. (Brown 1986, 59)

Steps involved were assurance (of cease fire) or caution (with surety of kinsmen), mediation or arbitration leading to assyhtment, usually using cash. All these feuds took place in a context of ideological uncertainty, where the Reformation was revitalizing religious thinking, just as the *Íslendingasögur* tell us (whether truthfully or not) that the feuds of the Icelandic settlers were played out against the background of a major religious paradigm shift, the conversion from paganism to Christianity, and the contemporary sagas take place during a period of extensive structural realignments in society.

Feuding seems to be particularly suited to ecologies in which people compete for limited resources, as in the mountains of Montenegro and Appalachia, the highlands of Scotland, or the hills and lava fields of Iceland — anywhere, as Boehm put it, where “groups regularly came into contact in situations where avoidance could not easily resolve intergroup conflicts” (Boehm 1987, 240). Perhaps, as some observers have suggested, feuding serves not only to manage and limit conflict through its force as a latent social sanction (Evans-Pritchard 1940), to promote social cohesion (Black-Michaud 1975), to bring out dualities in otherwise amorphous societies (Knudsen 1985), and to keep warriors' skills sharp, but also functions as a form of population control (Boehm 1987, 175–80).

Definitions of bloodfeud range greatly. Boehm (1987, 218–20) constructs an elaborate twelve-point scheme of elements, which is similar to the list of “distinctive features” of feuding adduced by Miller preparatory to his discussion of the medieval Icelandic situation (1990, 180–81). I summarize Miller's list. (1) Feud is a relationship between two groups that (2) are recruited according to various principles, with (3) occasional musterings for purposes of controlled violence. (4) Liability is collective within the groups, which (5) take turns exacting vengeance and (6) keep score. (7) Feud is associated with honor. (8) The class of possible expiators is limited. (9) Hostility may be terminated temporarily or permanently. To this list I would add the observation that as processes of dispute management, feuds follow a roughly predictable course from start to potential finish. Boehm treats this course as a “trajectory” from an Opening Move (the first homicide, which often follows an escalating series of mostly verbal, honor-related disputes) through a lengthy and complicated Middle Game (to which Miller's list would apply) to an Endgame in which the conflict is finally resolved. It is important to note that decisions are taken by individuals involved and that at nearly every point of decision an option may exist to end the feud; the full trajectory may therefore be more a theoretical construct than something actually completed with any regularity.

How fundamentally bloodfeud was rooted in Icelandic consciousness is indicated by the fifth chapter of the *Íslendingabók* of Ari Þorgilsson fróði, the informal written charter for Icelandic history. The chapter bears the title “Frá fjórðungadeild” [On the division into quarters] and is situated between chapters on the establishment of the calendar and the settlement of Greenland. Thus, in Ari’s mythologizing of the origin of his land and people, which begins with the settlement of Iceland and runs through its conversion to Christianity and first native bishops, this chapter initiates the marking out of space following the systematization of time.

According to Ari, a great “thing quarrel” (*þingadeild mikil*) arose between Þórðr gellir, the son of Óláfr feilan of Breiðafjörður, and Tungu-Oddr from Borgarfjörður. His son Þorvaldr had been present at the burning of Þorkell Blund-Ketilson with Hen-Þórir in Örnólfsdalur. It fell to Þórðr gellir to prosecute the case because Hersteinn Þorkelsson, the grandson of Blund-Ketill, was married to Þórunn, the daughter of his sister. Thus far the elements of this feud (which are enumerated in somewhat different form and at far greater length in *Hænsa-Þóris saga*), fit the mold that can generally be extracted both from ethnographic models and from the *íslendingasögur*. The feud has escalated to the level of the most powerful men in Iceland and has acquired something of a territorial aspect (Byock 1982), which in turn is connected with local geopolitics. The lead plaintiff has been drawn into the affair because of a family relationship, in this case through a marriage with a niece related to him through his sister. Although she will play no larger role in this particular account, Ari nevertheless gives additional information about the niece’s genealogy, linking her through her sister with another important and powerful family.

What Ari goes on to recount, and the ostensible reason for mentioning this feud at all, is that it revealed a flaw in the then-prevailing legal system and led to change. Þórðr had to prosecute the case at the local thing in Borgarfjörður, where apparently he could not receive a fair hearing and where the parties came to blows and one man was killed. Þórðr then addressed the case to the Althing, but again fighting broke out. Ari has Þórðr ascend the law hill at the Althing and complain about the difficulties of obtaining a fair hearing at an unfamiliar thing; he finishes by adding that some improvement must be found. Then, Ari tells us, the country was divided into quarters in such a way that there were three things in each quarter, except the North, where geographical disputes led men to establish four things. Quarter courts were also set up at the Althing.

Bloodfeud, therefore, was fundamental to the spatial organization of Iceland into four jurisdictional quarters, based on the cardinal points. Though hardly identical with the cardinal points on a map, these divisions are conceptually valid and significant (Hastrup 1985, 52–57; Lindow 1994), and they held up throughout the free state. Later the Church was to embed its own organization in the geographic lexicon, since it established episcopal sees for the south and north.

At the end of his description of the foundation of the quarter system following the feud between Óláfr feilan and Þórðr gellir, Ari takes care to note that his source for this information was Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson, the law speaker. Since there is very little fat in Ari's *Libellus*, and since he verifies his source carefully, we may infer that the story was of considerable importance to Ari and presumably also to other intellectually and historically inclined Icelanders in the early part of the twelfth century. Bloodfeud was therefore, in effect, a part of the social charter, and therefore myth in a Malinowskian sense. Armed dispute and feud were social givens that had functioned to make Iceland look as it did to Ari and his contemporaries. We may be justified in assuming that Ari's story was known to his followers during the next century, who recorded the mythology, and that it held similar importance. The fact that Þórðr gellir's speech at the Althing is included (according to many scholars, interpolated) in *Hœnsa-Þóris saga* certainly suggests that people had not lost sight of the story.³

Like the pithy accounts of early Icelanders recounted by Ari, the texts of Scandinavian mythology were set in the past, and through the mechanism of the "learned prehistory" they could also be understood (and manipulated; Klingenberg 1992, 1993, 1994) as explanations of the foundation of the world in which medieval Icelanders lived. The distant world in which the æsir and jǫtnar played out their struggles resembled that of the consumers of the mythology, especially conceptually (Hastrup 1985), and the hostilities between groups, the raids undertaken, can hardly have been unfamiliar in their general forms even though the actual details were exotic. Thus, even if the fit between the mythology and bloodfeud as described both ethnographically and in the sagas may be far from perfect, the relationship is worth considering. It is also possible that feuding may have characterized the culture(s) in which the mythology or individual parts of it were created, but here discretion is certainly required. If we take a fairly conservative stance and accept the evidence of skaldic poetry that the later Viking Age knew Scandinavian mythology, we can only infer the existence of feuding; resources were presumably scarce, and feuding is attested in contemporary (ninth-century) Germany among

3. The account of the feud given in Ari involves two large groups headed by powerful men and had earlier included an attack in which Þorkell Blund-Ketilsson had died in a fire. Just before the quarter system is established, armed battles have occurred in judicial contexts and at least one additional fatality has occurred. Þórðr gellir's lawsuit represents a reaction to the burning and will neatly illustrate two important aspects of feud when viewed from a comparative perspective: actions can be of a violent or legal nature, and the two sides take turns. Thus Þórðr is now on the offensive, and Tungu-Oddr is on the defensive. Þórðr might optionally have pursued a violent course from the first and slain someone from the opposing camp, and in opting for a legal solution he was still playing fully by the rules. Anthropologists insist that homicide, compensation, and settlement are all parts of feuding (e.g., Boehm 1987, *passim*), a fact recognized in the feuds of the Icelandic sagas just after the turn of the century by Andreas Heusler, who conjoined homicide, lawsuit, and informal arbitration in his discussion of the phenomenon (Heusler 1911, 1912; cf. Miller 1990, 180).

the nobility over land fragmentation caused by inheritance laws (Leyser 1968). To the extent that one is willing to make this inference, feuding must be considered important within the context of the formation of the mythology as well as in the society that recorded it.

Whether one assigns feuding to the Viking Age or not — Bagge’s analysis (1991) of Snorri’s treatment of royal history in *Heimskringla* shows that feud is a useful concept at least in treating the medieval reception of the Viking Age —, it remains a fact that the mythology is about conflict, specifically intergroup conflict, and although medieval Iceland and the sagas evidently had several strategies for dealing with conflict, feud was the most noteworthy. It seems to me that we are therefore also obliged to consider the norms of feuding in the mythology and account for departure from them and the privileging of other forms of engaging in and managing intergroup conflict.

Viewed from a distance, the whole sweep of Scandinavian mythology — the “saga” of the *æsir* — looks quite a lot like a feud. It is set in motion by a killing, the slaying of Ymir by Odin and his brothers, which may be regarded as an Opening Move in Boehm’s terminology. To be sure, it does not proceed from any smaller honor-related disputes of which we are aware, but in fact no explanation is given. Margaret Clunies Ross (1994a, 235–36) points out that the “first period” of the mythology, which preceded the construction of the cosmos by the sons of Borr, was marked by physical reality and a social stability among the *jǫtnar* that manifested itself in a demonstrable patrilineal system and the ability of the race to nurture its young. Since Borr’s sons are themselves the third generation in the line descended from *Búri*, the possibility for social intercourse and hence discord between *jǫtnar* and *æsir* existed before the attack on Ymir; the comparative analysis of bloodfeud would predict it. In any case, like many such homicides in the ethnographic record, the Opening Move killing of Ymir is morally justifiable from the point of view of those who carried it out. As with, for example, the slaying of Helgi in *Hænsa-Þóris saga*,⁴ we must infer the moral justification, here primarily in the fact of the creation of the cosmos. Ymir’s unnatural procreation also adds to the moral justification of his slaying, for natural sexuality now must permanently replace the reproductive activity of Ymir’s limbs. Furthermore, by the logic of bloodfeud, the dismemberment of Ymir’s body and consequent impossibility for his kin to dispose properly of his remains would represent a particularly potent Opening Move. Not only would the giants’ honor be sullied, but also the head of their family is peremptorily removed. Finally, according to Snorri’s account of creation, the flood that ensued from Ymir’s blood nearly drowned the entire family of *hrímþursar*. Whether the term is to be understood literally as designating a subset of

4. I use *Hænsa-Þóris saga* as an example here because of its presentation of Ari’s “founding feud,” discussed above. The moral justification of Qrn’s shot, retaliation for the recent insult to his host, is clear, although obviously the random choice of the victim cannot be compared to the situation of the *æsir* and Ymir.

jǫtnar or metonymically as designating all of them is unclear, but in either case the motif could be read as part of a preemptory strike, a potent strategy within the Opening Move.

Much of the rest of the mythology, the apparent mythological present,⁵ appears to be a Middle Game of attack and counterattack, with some of the feuding rules extrapolated from comparative evidence in effect, some not. The points to stress here begin with the first of Miller's distinctive features: the two groups, æsir and jǫtnar, are in a relatively stable hostile relationship. When feuds begin in most cultures, it would appear that they immediately actualize latent social polarizations: by definition, feuds operate *between* factors and therefore require two groups, even though in most cases a sizeable segment of the population is outside either group and therefore remains outside the conflict. The feuding groups must, like the gods and giants, inhabit the same environment and be capable of social intercourse, and they should be of roughly the same power or size (Boehm 1987, 165). The two groups share an ancestor, Bǫlþorn according to *Gylfaginning*, and Ymir and Borr were nurtured together and might therefore even be regarded as foster brothers (Oosten 1985, 37; Ross 1994a, 158). Somehow, the two groups fell out, and in the mythological present these groups are now understood as two races.

The conception of two races locked in terrible enmity is a reality of feud, and the same metaphor has been used elsewhere in early modern Europe.

Sir Robert Gordon wrote of the feud between the MacDonald and MacLean clans: "This warr, whilk fell furth at this tyme between those *two races of people* . . . was prosecuted to the destruction almost of both their families." Such language betrayed a very profound sense of the distinctiveness a lineage and its surname bestowed on people. In Napier's *A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation* he paraphrases 'peoples' of the earth with 'kindreds', so Scotsmen of one kindred would look on those of another as virtual foreigners. (Brown 1986, 15–16)⁶

Here we may have, or so it seems to me, one of the factors contributing to the very strong dualism of the recorded mythology, as against a reconstructed Germanic religion of more diverse structure. Feud requires an absolute if temporary dualism (Knudsen 1985), and if Snorri and the redactors of eddic poetry lived in a feud society, they would have had every reason to conceive of conflict in this way. Although these groups are not recruited, a point to which I will return, they do engage in occasional musterings for limited purposes when various groups of æsir

5. In the five-part time scheme proposed by Clunies Ross (1994a, 235–36), the mythic present is preceded by the first period and the "past of active creativity" and followed by the near and distant future (Ragnarøk and its aftermath). The mythic present comprises "the period of time in which the gods lived with other kinds of beings, giants, dwarves, elves and humans, in the world they had attempted to maintain in a state of order. This mythic present is the period during which most of the exchanges between gods and giants on the horizontal plane take place but it does not constitute a single point in time" (Ross 1994a, 237). The incorporation of æsir and vanir occurred toward the beginning of this period and the death of Baldr toward its end.

6. The lineage and attendant surname Brown discusses are agnatic kin groups.

set off to Jötunheimar (the slaying of Ymir might even be placed under this rubric), and their liability appears to be collective; as victims, the jötnar are roughly interchangeable, and the murder of Baldr affects all of the æsir.

The armed hostility between æsir and jötnar does not overtly take the usual form in feuding of alternate manslaughters and the keeping of score. One may infer that the slaying of Ymir initiated or encouraged the enmity of the jötnar toward the æsir, but as a rule single actions of any kind are not embedded in a motivated sequence of events. A simultaneity of actions may typify myth in its religious context (Hubert and Mauss 1909; Eliade 1954; Zadra 1987) and if so would mitigate against the kind of turn-taking and scorekeeping ethnographers report for bloodfeud in the field, but the religious context of Scandinavian myth is not recoverable. What may be more to the point is the tendency of Snorri to link events and motivate them in his systematizations of the mythology. Thus after hearing the story of the humiliations of Thor and his companions in the hall of Útgardaloki, Gylfi/Gangleri asks whether Thor did not obtain vengeance, and Hárr responds with the story of Thor's journey to Hymir. And after learning of the failed attempt to weep Baldr away from the realm of Hel, Gylfi/Gangleri allows himself an editorial comment ("Allmiklu kom Loki á leið, er hann olli fyrst því er Baldr var veginn, ok svá því, er hann varð eigi leystr frá Helju" [normalized from Jónsson 1931, 68]) before asking whether vengeance was not extracted on him. Hárr begins his response by saying that Loki will long remember this vengeance. Snorri, then, seems to have regarded a thirst for vengeance as a plausible motivation for some of the acts of the æsir, and in this he takes a step toward the regular exchange of attacks that frequently characterize bloodfeud.

As for the tendency toward a careful keeping of score — which Boehm admits is sometimes lacking in certain long-term feuds (1987, 220) — it is lacking in the mythology.⁷ Since, however, the gods are immortal until Baldr dies — a moment I take as the beginning of the end —, only the gods can use homicide, and the keeping of score is not possible. The giants must content themselves with raiding and other sorts of harassment. That they understand the rules of feud, however, is suggested when Skaði, who evidently has no male kin, sets off dressed as a warrior to demand compensation from the gods for the slaying of her father Þjazi. Such an action is fully in accord with both the ethnographic and the Icelandic saga evidence (Clover 1986c). This story is known only to Snorri, and it would not be surprising if he created it as a means of explaining Skaði's marriage to Njörðr.⁸ Snorri did not have access to theories of fertility cult and divine marriages known to the

7. Perhaps a reflection of such score-keeping is to be glimpsed in the matching of the opponents who slay one another at Ragnarök. Here again Snorri's somewhat fuller account is worth noting: to the three pairs of opponents in *Völuspá*, Snorri adds two more, Týr vs. Garmr and Loki vs. Heimdallr. These encounters might, however, equally be read as duels.

8. In Lindow 1992 I argue that the details of the encounter between Loki and Skaði may reflect a relatively late origin.

historians of religion who explain the marriage today, but he did have access to unwritten theories and practices of appropriate feuding behavior.

Although the *æsir* avoid being killed throughout most of the mythic present, they are hard at work with one important aspect of feud, namely protecting their honor. As Clunies Ross has recently shown (1994b), much of what motivates Thor in several of his myths is a desire to protect his women and in so doing his honor. His reputation is also clearly at stake in his duel with Hrungnir, and as I have already noted, Snorri understood the treatment he received at the hands of *Útgarda-loki* as humiliating enough to require some redress. Honor is certainly also an issue for other figures, as Loki's insults (and the retorts aimed at him) in *Lokasenna* clearly show.

The mythic future is Ragnarøk. Just as the Opening Move created the cosmos, so Ragnarøk will end it, at least in its current form, and with this it will end the "feud" between gods and giants. Indeed, the new world described by *Völuspá* and Snorri lacks the discord of the mythic present, if only because it lacks giants; thus the feud is by definition at an end. But the reconciliation of Baldr and Høðr is also significant in this context, for Høðr was the killer of his brother. Continuing the examination of mythology as feud, then, we are surely justified in taking Ragnarøk as the a spectacularly realized and horribly final End Game. Lacking as it does the "Court of Good Men" which Boehm found typical of Montenegro and extrapolated to the theoretical level, the catastrophic conflagration of Ragnarøk, in which nearly all the actors in the drama perish, clearly belongs more to the realm of imagination than that of social reality. It does, however, enable the mythology to complete the trajectory of a feud. Thus both the plan and the detail of the mythology find grounding in the background of feud.

Many of the central symbols of the mythology also find parallels in the ethnographic and historical evidence regarding feuding. Of these the most obvious is blood, which is so central to feuding in general that it has almost become part of the technical vocabulary: bloodfeud, blood revenge, and so forth — and not just in English. The main title of Boehm's book is *Blood Revenge*, and he devotes a few pages to the Montenegrin vocabulary of vengeance, much of which finds expression, in the semantic realm, through blood imagery: clans are *u krvi* 'in blood' when a state of hostility exists between them in which *krvna osveta* 'blood vengeance' is an expectation. A participant in such a state of affairs was the other clan's *krvnik* 'blood revenge enemy', and the various tactics of feud were commonly expressed through the symbol of blood: one owed blood, pacified blood, paid blood money, and so forth (Boehm 1987, 51–52).⁹ Boehm summarizes:

9. As Boehm indicates (1987, 52), there was no general term for bloodfeud or feuding, as opposed to raids or war. The situation was the same in Old Norse–Icelandic; indeed, the vocabulary of feuding in medieval Scandinavia seems poorer than that of recent Montenegro. There is, however, no justification for regarding the lexical absence as significant of anything other than the possibility that the participants "did

In ending this discussion of the psychology of revenge killing, it is apparent that a number of different relationships were connected through the single symbol of blood, or *krv*. It was *krv* that was lost from the clan; it was *krv* that was owed; it was *krv* that was “pacified” by a blood court. As my own modern consultants demonstrated so clearly in their definitions, the concepts of revenge and blood were so closely connected that frequently it was not even necessary to ask them to define blood revenge: when they began to think about *osveta*, the idea of *krv* just naturally tended to come to mind as well. (Boehm 1987, 52)

Parallels abound, and not just from the Balkans. Corsican feud revolves around the proverb “blood is not for sale” (Knudsen 1985, 84). Brown reports the importance of blood symbolism in sixteenth-century Scottish feuding, in part because blood could stand for a man’s life, in part because it could stand for the bonds of kinship (1986, 28).

Blood also had a highly effective visual impact in a society where symbol and ritual were important means of communication. In 1593 some poor women from Nithsdale travelled up to Edinburgh with the bloody shirts of their husbands, sons and servants who had been slain in a raid by the Johnstones. Carrying these gory objects, they paraded through the burgh exposing the king’s inadequacy in providing protection or justice. (Brown 1986, 29)

Brown goes on to add that bloodstained clothes were sometimes even brought before courts.

The context of this Scottish example comes across clearly, as do the power and reality of such symbols, in the case of a Montenegrin mother who “repeatedly showed a container of her dead husband’s blood to her young sons to remind them, as they grew up, that since there was no one else to do the job, they must avenge him” (Boehm 1987, 63). Those familiar with the sagas will immediately recall the scene in which Hildigunnr flings the murdered Hǫskuldr’s bloody cloak in the face of Flosi, in order to incite him to vengeance (*Njáls saga* chap. 116). Clover (1986a) has convincingly associated this scene with the mechanisms of feud and is able to cite a striking Albanian parallel, in which a widow kept a piece of bloody piece of her slain husband’s clothing. Clover’s argument has to do with the possible (probable) sociohistorical background of the lament, within known parameters of feuding behavior, and these include the centrality of blood as symbol.

What, then, of blood and related symbolism in the mythology? We have already briefly considered the slaying of Ymir in the context of feuding. Here we may add that the construction of the cosmos from his remains would have the effect in a feuding society of keeping forever visible the fact of his murder and the imperative to his kin for vengeance on his killers. Clover points out the importance of one of Albania’s unwritten laws, namely the practice of constructing for a murder

not perceive feud as being a single entity in the same sense that a military engagement [war, battle, or raid] was a discrete event deserving a name of its own” (Boehm 1987, 52). See also Miller 1990, 181–82.

victim buried elsewhere a mock grave or cairn on a thoroughfare on which passers-by were expected to throw a leaf, blade of grass, or pebble while expressing a wish on behalf of the victim's soul.¹⁰ "Such memorials may have had the ostensible aim of honoring the dead, but their real function, explicitly intended and collectively understood, was to keep alive the idea of revenge" (Clover 1986a, 173). How more strongly could the idea be kept than for the victim to be embodied — literally — in the cosmos, with his precious life's blood transformed into the sea?

A feuding society, therefore, would find the constant enmity of the *jǫtnar* toward the *æsir* quite comprehensible, through the symbolic medium of Ymir's body parts and blood. From the point of view of both parties the blood is a particularly loaded symbol. For the giants, Ymir's blood was nearly the downfall of them all, as indeed it would be symbolically in a real feud, since Ymir remains unavenged through much of the mythology. For the gods the blood is dangerous in the constant mnemonic it provides the giants. Indeed, the mythology makes Ymir's transformed blood dangerous in fact by locating the Midgard serpent within it. That Odin was responsible for putting the Midgard serpent in the sea — Ymir's blood — is one of the many wonderful ambiguities of the mythology.

The gods, too, have a precious token in which blood is involved, and its operation too is quite complex: the mead of poetry. Originally a symbol of the unity of the *æsir* and *vanir*, it began and ended as liquid: first as spittle, then as mead fermented from the blood of Kvasir. The intermediate part of the story is well known; as Snorri puts it, the gods created or fashioned Kvasir because "they did not wish that token of the settlement to perish" (Jónsson 1931, 82). While he is traveling the world dispensing wisdom — he can answer any question — Kvasir is slain by the dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr. When this murderous pair dispatches the giant Gilligr and his wife, a feud is set in motion. The giant Suttungr transports the dwarfs to a tidal island — as dwarfs they would be particularly vulnerable to the rising waters — and extracts from them the mead as compensation for his father. He then delivers the mead into the safekeeping of his daughter Gunnlǫð, and, in a complex series of events in Snorri's recounting, Odin later succeeds in sleeping three nights with Gunnlǫð and thus obtaining three sips of the mead, with which he escapes in the form of an eagle, pursued by Suttungr in like form. As we all know, Odin gets most of the mead home to the gods, and Suttungr goes down in flames.

Kvasir's blood is a red flag, indicating the presence of feud. The mead was a wergild passed from one group to another,¹¹ and in this instance it terminates

10. The phenomenon is also attested in more recent Scandinavia (Erixon 1917), although since accident victims were also commemorated, the underlying notion seems to be that the death of the person in question was untimely.

11. It is worth emphasizing that Snorri reports the transfer of the mead from dwarfs to giants as being "í fǫður-gjǫld" (Jónsson 1931, 83), a notion he may or may not have picked up from the kenning "Gillings gjǫld" [Gilligr's wergild] in the first stanza of the poem *Háleygjatal*, attributed to the tenth-century Norwegian skald Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir. The kenning "sættir Áms ok Austra" [settlement of Ámr

the feud before the Middle Game can get going, as is in accordance with any model of feuding. Gilligr's wife doesn't count for much in this scheme (as would be appropriate if giants and gods relied on an agnatic system; see below). So much is obvious. What is perhaps less clear is that the gods have a claim on the dwarfs too. Although Kvasir cannot be traced agnatically to them in any ordinary way, he was their creation, he dispenses wisdom, which is their possession, and, quite simply, he was a member of their household and therefore, like the Norwegian merchant *Orn* in *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, a symbolic member of their kin group for the purposes of feuding.

Thus, in the context of feud, the gods would wish to obtain Kvasir's remains — the mead of poetry; in other words, Odin had some justification besides his thirst for wisdom and his sex drive when he set off to visit Suttungr and Gunnlǫð. And, since the mead passed as wergild between dwarfs and giants, the gods could presumably have made a prior claim on it as wergild for the murdered Kvasir, which might justify recovering it from Suttungr. A consideration of versions of the story other than that of Snorri, which I have been following up to this point, suggests precisely that Snorri's version, outside of its strange details, functions narratively and achieves causality as a feud story. The eddic poem *Hávamál* is the other main source of this myth, outside of the skaldic kennings. In stanzas 104–10 it tells, very allusively, a somewhat different version, one that focuses exclusively on Odin's exploits in acquiring the mead, taking advantage of Gunnlǫð to cheat Suttungr. It lacks the causality of Snorri's version because of the complete absence of Kvasir and the dwarfs.¹²

If the dwarfs' secret murder of Kvasir indeed may legitimately be read in terms of feud, perhaps another other moment in the mythology may be relevant, namely the story recounted in *Alvíssmál*, the unlikely contest of wisdom between Thor and a dwarf. Why should Thor keep the dwarf up all night until he bursts in the sun's first rays? The immediate answer is that a marriage between dwarf and goddess is inappropriate, as indeed, we may infer according to the rules of negative reciprocity that obtain in the mythology (Vestergaard 1991; Ross 1994a, 103–43), might be any marriage between a goddess and some other kind of being. But if the feud is still in place, we can understand the dwarf's proposal as an attempt at

(a giant) and Austri (a dwarf)], used in an occasional verse by the eleventh-century Icelandic poet Ófeigr Skíðason, probably alludes to the same story, and a few others relate to other aspects of it (Turville-Petre 1964, 39).

12. The latter may have appeared earlier in the poem, when the speaker, presumably Odin, reports that he was drunk when he visited the wise Fjalarr (st. 14); in the previous stanza, the speaker has reported being fettered in the feathers of the heron of oblivion — an unclear kenning, perhaps to be understood in the context of stanza 14 as intoxication — in the dwelling of Gunnlǫð. If this Fjalarr is indeed the dwarf, we find Odin implicated more deeply and from the start in the story of the mead of poetry. That is hardly surprising, since *Hávamál* offers yet a third explanation for Odin's possession of the mead: he obtained it, with other precious wisdom attributes, while hanging on the windswept tree (st. 140). In the face of these conflicting variants, we may accept that Snorri followed his customary practice in imposing order on the story and in this case did so in part by allowing it to follow the trajectory of feud.

reconciliation through marriage, and we can take Thor's actions as a rejection of the offer and instead as his side's turn in the feud. Thor would be acting quite rightly in killing Alvíss, even in a dwarfish way — the punishment suits the crime. More generally, if the feud between gods and dwarfs still simmers, the dwarfs must be classified, like the giants, as enemies of the gods, a classification which contributes to the dualistic nature of the extant mythology.¹³

In trajectory, actions, and symbols, then, Scandinavian mythology draws on aspects of bloodfeud as they are to be seen both in Icelandic sagas and the ethnographic and historical record. Such similarities indicate only that imaginative narratives can imitate reality. The key to extracting meaning, however, is to be found in the differences.

Medieval Iceland reckoned kin bilaterally, with privileging of agnatic connections in some contexts (Hastrup 1985, 70–104; Miller 1990, 139–78), and the old assumption that a unilineal, clan system of Germanic times gave way to a later bilateral system has been disputed by David Gaunt (1983, 186–210) and Alexander C. Murray (1983); Gaunt calls it “the myth of the kindred society,” and Murray too argues that the system was bilateral from the start (cf. Meinhard 1975). In fact, probably several systems obtained for different purposes: “Early Scandinavian kinship was patrilineal as well as matrilineal and cognatic in a well-structured and non-contradictory way” (Vestergaard 1988, 190). Indeed, it is apparent that Icelandic (Scandinavian?) kinship, insofar as it was bilateral, was open to recreation, that is, might be traced in many different ways, at least with respect to lines more than a generation or two old. This is rather like what Marshall Sahlins punningly calls “performative kinship” when discussing sexual alliances in ancient Hawaii (1985, 1–31). Extending this, we might speak of “performed structures.” James Boon discusses the situation in Bali:

Everything in Bali is tinged with rank: male/female, elder/younger, wife receivers/wife providers, and so on. Yet Bali's plentiful Machineries of status symbols do not simply stack up; nor should we presume that they ever did. Rather, they seem made for contradiction and variable constructions to satisfy different parties, each interpreting to its own advantage. What rivals share is a set of hierarchical principles that form the ground rules for the ongoing cultural argument. (Boon 1986, 246)

13. The mythology focuses only one major conflict, that between *æsir* and *jǫtnar*, and the relationship between *æsir* and dwarfs, unlike that of the principal conflict, is not constant. On the whole, the presence of the dwarfs is favorable to the *æsir*, for it is they and not the *jǫtnar* who profit from the craftsmanship of the dwarfs. Still, Snorri has Thor kick the dwarf Litr into the fire at Baldr's funeral, and this slaying is perhaps also alluded to in the version of Þorbjǫrn dísarskáld's encomium to Thor found in the Uppsala codex of *Snorra Edda* (Lindow 1988, 122), in which one of Thor's victims is called Litr, not Lútr as in the other manuscripts. The issue is complicated by the appearance of the name Litr in a kenning in Bragi gamli's *Ragnarsdrápa* 18, “fangboði flotna forns Litar” (“grasp-offerer of the men of old Litr,” that is, one who offers opportunities to grapple) for Thor. Since it hardly seems possible that Thor would wrestle with dwarfs, the men of Litr must be giants, and this Litr presumably also would be a giant. Indeed, all the other victims about whom we know anything in Þorbjǫrn's stanza are *jǫtnar* (Lindow 1988).

In fact, *Landnámabók* and the genealogies of the sagas show a bent toward such creation, and disagreement among genealogies would positively show that genealogies are constructed (that is, performed in a given context for a given purpose) rather than passed unchanged as though for antiquarian purposes. One example of a “performed” genealogy might be Ari’s discussion of his oral sources; by tracing them directly, he authenticates his version of the origin of the Icelanders. The best examples, however, are forthcoming in the feuding in the sagas, for there the recruitment of the action-groups depends precisely on the “performance” of kinship and other relationships. There is a certain apparent lack of fit here between the Icelandic and other feuding situations; Boehm reports that the Montenegrin clans shared the same surname and addressed each other as “brother,” which is consistent with the agnatic group that made up the *bratstvo* ‘brotherhood’, and accords with the general contours of nearly all the ethnographies of feuding elsewhere in the world: African, Balkan, Scottish feuding — all depend on agnatic kindreds that can quickly be mobilized. However, if such kindreds do not exist in reality, feud may itself, according to Knudsen (1985), function as a means of creating groups in opposition and may give individuals an opportunity to define their membership in the dualistic groups thus temporarily formed. Such a formulation would appear to agree with Icelandic performative kinship.

Against this social reality, insofar as it can be reconstructed from the saga evidence, stands the mythology. There the system is wholly agnatic,¹⁴ and the existence of the (in mythic time) permanent groups of the *æsir* and *jǫtnar* obviates the question of recruitment and makes clear the lines of feud. Odin sires Víðarr and Váli on giant females,¹⁵ but the two figures are clearly *æsir* and they enact vengeance on behalf of Odin.¹⁶ Furthermore, the affinal relationships created by these couplings, or more important, the marriages between Njǫrðr and Skaði and Freyr and Gerðr, are of no real importance. Even if the kinship structures at work in the mythology were unclear, membership in the feuding groups certainly could not be.

Thus there is an interesting question: the basically cognatic society of medieval Iceland apparently consumed (retained, reinterpreted, [re-]created?) a

14. The only agnatic systems Icelanders knew centered on royal or other groups with important inherited functions (Hastrup 1985, 102, citing Sørensen 1977, 35). Thus the mythology has an inherent connection with kingship. Although the possibility of a move toward a conceptual unilateral agnatic system in the mythology might possibly reflect the effect of European notions of kingship, especially given the role of “King Odin” in the Learned Prehistory, such a move would be extremely difficult to recover.

15. It should also be recalled that he sires Thor on Jǫrð or earth, a chthonic figure not connected with the *æsir*, and that Thor’s relationship with his mother was apparently far more important to the skalds who used it for kennings that it was to Thor himself.

16. That Váli takes vengeance on Hǫðr, also a son of Odin, is by nature contradictory and in my view close to the center of the entire mythology, but the textual tradition does not suggest it as inherently problematic; for example, Snorri calls Váli *happskeytr*, and kin-slaying is just the sort of thing that one would ordinarily regard as indicating *óhapp*. It is, however, perhaps significant that Snorri has little to say about the details of Váli’s vengeance on Hǫðr.

mythology on agnatic principles. In considering conflicts that took place in the more distant past than those of the first settlers of Iceland and among beings with superhuman powers, medieval Icelanders might well have translated the generally transitory nature of their own feuding groups, which like other groups within their culture were assembled for specific purposes, into a more permanent structure. In other words, the mythology could have served as a fantasy literature in which group membership based on kinship was forever clear, unlike the Icelandic situation.

The burden of ethnographic evidence is that persons' sense of group membership is indeed more complex than the intuitively reasonable description of simple in- and out-groups would suggest; in many if not most cases individuals are members of several groups, groups which in turn have varying relations with numerous other groups. Thus people's lives are more complex than simple models. Faced with actual dilemmas, whether potentially violent or not, individuals may choose to activate various of their group memberships and therefore to behave in various differing ways. Individuals in such situations are in conflict, however, if they belong to two groups that are at odds, and in such cases they may tend to work for peace; thus matrilineal societies, in which males are dispersed, tend to have less feud than patrilineal societies (example in Colson 1953), where "fraternal interest groups" may arise. Icelandic performative kinship, however, assured that men would be placed precisely in such situations of choice, and creation of vengeance groups was specific to each feud — perhaps each slaying. In this light the mythology could have offered the projection of a far simpler world, where enemies were always enemies and friends were always friends — except for Loki.

More generally, some other aspects of the mythology may make sense as projections of a culture circumscribed by the rules of feuding and interested in probing the boundaries. Elsewhere in the world, feuding offers a means of limiting homicidal conflict and in that sense is to be contrasted with war; where war is fought at close quarters and limits are necessary so that daily life must go on, it takes on feudlike aspects. This leads me to wonder whether one function of the mythology for Iceland might not have been as a kind of wish fulfillment, an alternative to the limitations of a feud society, in which it was imagined that one could attempt genocide on one's opponents without worrying about keeping score. Indeed, one striking aspect of the behavior of the two principal *æsir* is precisely that they break the rules of feuding, each in his own way. Odin frequently behaves unmanfully and shamefully,¹⁷ and his conduct of the "feud" with the giants involves magic and manipulation from afar, as well, of course, as raiding and seduction close up. Thor kills women, who are ordinarily exempted from the class of expiators, and his

17. A case that relates directly to bloodfeud is the siring of Bous according to Saxo Grammaticus (*Gesta Danorum* Book 3). The gods (euhemerized to Byzantium) find his rape of Rinda (or the cross-dressing it involved?) so repellent that they banish Othinus for it.

worshippers celebrated these killings (Lindow 1988). Indeed, the killing of Ymir can and probably should be regarded as a kin-slaying (Ross 1994a, 158).

However, even if the mythology appears to simplify the rules of bloodfeud, it still worries a central issue of performative kinship, in the identity of the prime mover of the mythology: Loki, áss or jǫtunn? When Snorri writes that Loki is “also numbered among the æsir” (Jónsson 1931, 34), he must mean that somehow Loki is not a true áss or once was not an áss, and the explanation is forthcoming in his genealogy: Loki is the son of the jǫtunn Fárbaúti, and no other member of the æsir has a jǫtunn father.¹⁸ In my view, the only plausible explanation for the inclusion of Loki among the æsir despite his jǫtunn parentage is the ritual of bloodbrotherhood he enacted with Odin at the dawn of time, and it must be recalled that according to the extant accounts of that ritual in *Gísla saga* and *Fóstbræðra saga* the participants vow to avenge one another; in other words, fictive kinship is created in the context of the bloodfeud. In the sagas the efficacy of such rituals is, like much else about bloodfeud recruitment, a more or less open question, but the mythology again offers a wholly clear interpretation: bloodbrotherhood is a failure. When push comes to shove, Loki enlists with the members of his agnatic kin group.

The mythology is equally clear on the last issue of “performative kinship”: no amount of “performance” will solve the problem of a brother killing a brother, of a slaying within the family, for the class of expiators is identical to the class of avengers. As I noted above, up to the point of Baldr’s death, only the æsir are fully successful in conducting bloodfeud, for only they kill their opponents. Thereafter the rules are changed, and æsir can perish. A sign of this is perhaps the unwillingness or inability of the æsir to take Loki’s life in exchange for that of Baldr; killing Hǫðr, another of the æsir, is no real solution. Only an extraordinary event can end a feud situated among relationships as close as those joining Baldr, Hǫðr, and Váli, and the mythology provides Ragnarǫk.

18. Concerning Loki’s mother, too, the evidence is difficult. Laufey, or Nál, is a figure (or figures) with no role other than bearing Loki. The author of *Sprla þáttur* in the great saga of Saint Óláfr in *Flateyjarbók* makes no distinction between Fárbaúti and Laufey, simply calling them *karl* and *kerling* respectively, and this would suggest that both were jǫtnar. E. N. Setälä (1912, 210–64) derives from Laufey the crone Louhi, who in *Kalevala* presides over Pohjola, a spatial equivalent to Jǫtunheimar in Scandinavian mythology, and who works against the interests of the Karelian heroes; Axel Olrik (1912) agreed with this derivation. However, none of the proposed etymologies for Laufey makes her sound threatening, and all seem to be more applicable to a goddess than to a creature of chaos (cf. Vries 1962, 347 s.v.; Simek 1984, 229 s.v.). Loki’s use of the matronymic Laufeyjarnson instead of the perhaps expected patronymic Fárbaútasson is suggestive, for such usage ordinarily indicates an absent or irredeemable father. Laufey may just have been less threatening (not likely, given the misogyny of the æsir) than her mate, or she may have been one of the æsir.

Bibliography

- Bagge, Sverre. 1991. *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's "Heimskringla."* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Black-Michaud, Jacob. 1975. *Cohesive Force: Feud in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.* New York: St. Martin's.
- Boehm, Christopher. 1987. *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies.* 2d ed. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bohannon, Paul J. 1977. "Anthropology and the Law." In *Horizons of Anthropology*, ed. Sol Tax and Leslie G. Freeman, 290–99. 2d ed. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Boon, James A. 1986. "Symbols, Sylphs, and Siwa: Allegorical Machineries in the Text of Balinese Culture." In *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, 239–60. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.
- Brown, Keith M. 1986. *Bloodfeud in Scotland 1573–1625: Violence, Justice and Politics in an Early Modern Society.* Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Byock, Jesse. 1982. *Feud in the Icelandic Sagas.* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Clover, Carol J. 1986a. "Hildigunnr's Lament." In *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, 141–83. Odense: Odense Univ. Press.
- . 1986b. "The Long Prose Form." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 101:10–39.
- . 1986c. "Maiden Warriors and Other Sons." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85:35–49.
- Colson, Elizabeth. 1953. "Social Control and Vengeance in Plateau Tonga Society." *Africa* 23:199–212.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1954. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series 46. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Erixon, Sigurd. 1917. "Offerkastan i Skedevi sockenallmänning samt något om offerkastar i allmänhet." *Västmanlands fornminnesförenings årsskrift* 9:1–10.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, Clarendon Press.
- Gaunt, David. 1983. *Familjeliv i Norden.* Stockholm: Gidlund.
- Gehl, Walther. 1937. *Ruhm und Ehre bei den Nordgermanen.* Berlin: Junker & Dünnhaupt.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 1985. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, Clarendon Press.
- Heusler, Andreas. 1911. *Das Strafrecht der Isländersagas.* Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- . 1912. *Zum isländischen Fehdewesen in der Sturlungenzeit.* Aus den Abhandlungen der königl. preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse. Berlin: Georg Reimer.
- Hubert, Henri, and Marcel Mauss. 1909. "La représentation du temps dans la religion et la magie." In *idem, Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, 189–229. Paris: F. Alcan.
- Jónsson, Finnur, ed. 1931. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar.* København: Gyldendal.
- Ker, W. P. 1908. *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature.* 2d ed. London: Macmillan.
- Klingenberg, Heinz. 1992. "Trór-Pórr (Thor) wie Trös Aeneas: *Snorra Edda* Prolog, Vergil-Rezeption und Altisländische Gelehrte Urgeschichte." *alvíssmál* 1:17–54.
- . 1993. "Odin und die Seinen: Altisländischer Gelehrter Urgeschichte anderer Teil." *alvíssmál* 2:31–80.
- . 1994. "Odins Wanderzug nach Schweden: Altisländische Gelehrte Urgeschichte und mittelalterliche Geographie." *alvíssmál* 3:19–42.

- Knudsen, Anne. 1985. "Internal Unrest: Corsican Vendetta — a Structured Catastrophe." *Folk* 27:65–87.
- Leyser, K. 1968 "The German Aristocracy from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century: A Historical and Cultural Sketch." *Past and Present* 41:25–33.
- Lindow, John. 1988. "Addressing Thor." *Scandinavian Studies* 60:119–36.
- . 1992. "Loki and Skaði." In *Snorrastefna, 25.–27. júlí 1990*, ed. Úlfar Bragason, 130–42. Rit Stofnunar Sigurðar Nordals 1. Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals.
- . 1994. "The Social Semantics of Cardinal Directions in Medieval Scandinavia." *The Mankind Quarterly* 34:209–24.
- Meinhard, H. H. 1975. "The Patrilineal Principle in Early Teutonic Kinship." In *Studies in Social Anthropology: Essays in Memory of E. E. Evans-Pritchard*, ed. J. H. M. Beattie and R. G. Lienhardt, 1–29. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, Clarendon Press.
- Middleton, John, and David Tait, eds. 1958. *Tribes without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Miller, William Ian. 1990. *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Murray, Alexander C. 1983. *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and in the Early Middle Ages*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- Olrik, Axel. 1912. "Efterslæt til Loke-myterne, III: Lukki og Laviatar i finske trylleformler." *Danske studier* 9:95–101.
- Oosten, Jarich G. 1985. *The War of the Gods: The Social Code in Indoeuropean Mythology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ross, Margaret Clunies. 1994a. *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Icelandic Society*. Vol. 1, *The Myths*. The Viking Collection 7. Odense: Odense Univ. Press.
- . 1994b. "Pórr's Honour." In *Studien zum Altgermanischen: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. Heiko Uecker, 48–76. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Setälä, E[mil] N[estor]. 1912. "Aus dem Gebiet der Lehnbeziehungen." In *Festgabe für Vilhelm Thomsen*, Part 1, 161–289. Helsingfors.
- Simek, Rudolf. 1984. *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner.
- Sørensen, Preben Meulengracht. 1977. *Saga og samfund: En indføring i oldislandsk litteratur*. Berlingske leksikonbibliotek 116. København: Berling.
- Turner, Victor. 1971. "An Anthropological Approach to the Icelandic Saga." In *The Translation of Culture: Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard*, ed. T. O. Beidelman, 349–74. London: Tavistock Publications.
- . 1985. "The Icelandic Family Saga as a Genre of Meaning-Assignment." In *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience*, ed. Edith L. B. Turner, 95–118. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press.
- Turville-Petre, E[dward] O[swald] G[abriel]. 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Vestergaard, Torben Anders. 1988. "The System of Kinship in Early Norwegian Law." *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12:160–93.
- . 1991. "Marriage Exchange and Social Structure in Old Norse Mythology." In *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. Ross Samson, 21–34. Glasgow: Cruithne Press.
- Vries, Jan de. 1962. *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. 2d ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Waller, Altina L. 1988. *Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Zadra, Dario. 1987. "Symbolic Time." *Encyclopedia of Religion* 14:193–98.