

The Rhetorics of Old Norse Mythology (Scandinavian Languages and Literature, 10 ects)

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Old Norse Mythology is primarily preserved for posterity in poems and prose narratives that are redacted or summarised by medieval scribes. Most of the extant narratives are found in the two eddas, *The Poetic Edda* and *Snorri's Edda*. A thorough study of these two Medieval books is the foundation for the study of Old Norse Mythology. Both works are celebrated classics in Scandinavian literature and although they have been studied by generations of scholars from various disciplines the interest in them has not diminished the slightest and many central questions remain to be solved. In the course we will explore myths and mythic references in the eddas on three different levels:

(1) The genre in which mythology is represented, namely skaldic poetry, eddic poetry, prose narrative and didactic prose. Most clearly the role of generic conventions are seen in cases where myths are known from more than one type of narration and consequently differ significantly from genre to genre. Archetypical forms of narration such as myth, fairytale and riddle will be considered as well as theories on orality and literacy will be important points of reference for the discussion.

(2) The world-view represented in the texts which reflects both a religious and a secular approach to the daily life including views on women and men, sexuality, honor, death etc.

(3) The medieval Christian textual culture in which myth was transmitted and interpreted. The intellectual elite of Iceland edited and contextualised the vast material in fictionalised frame narratives and learned speculation in order to fit Old Norse myth into a Christian world-view. The fundamental question yet to be solved is the degree of the Christian impact on the traditional pre-Christian material and how much it means for our understanding of it.

The works will be read in English translations (Snorri's Edda 1987 (transl. Faulkes), The poetic Edda 1996 (transl. Larrington)) but the original texts will be included where relevant. Danish students can study the works in new translations (Snorris Edda 2013 and Den poetiske edda (under preparation)).

Selected literature:

Margaret Clunies Ross: *Prolonged Echoes 1-2*, Odense 1998.

Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda 2-3, von See et al, Frankfurt 1997 -

The Nordic Acopalypse. Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgment, eds. A. Lassen og T. Gunnell, Brepols 2012.