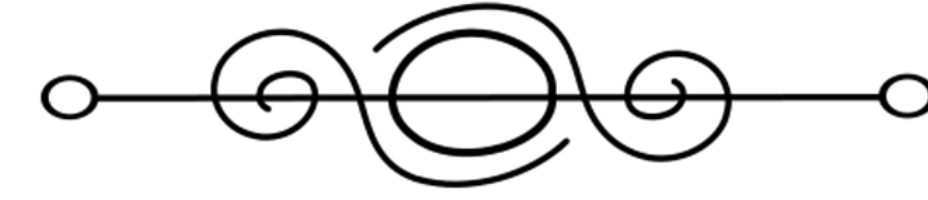


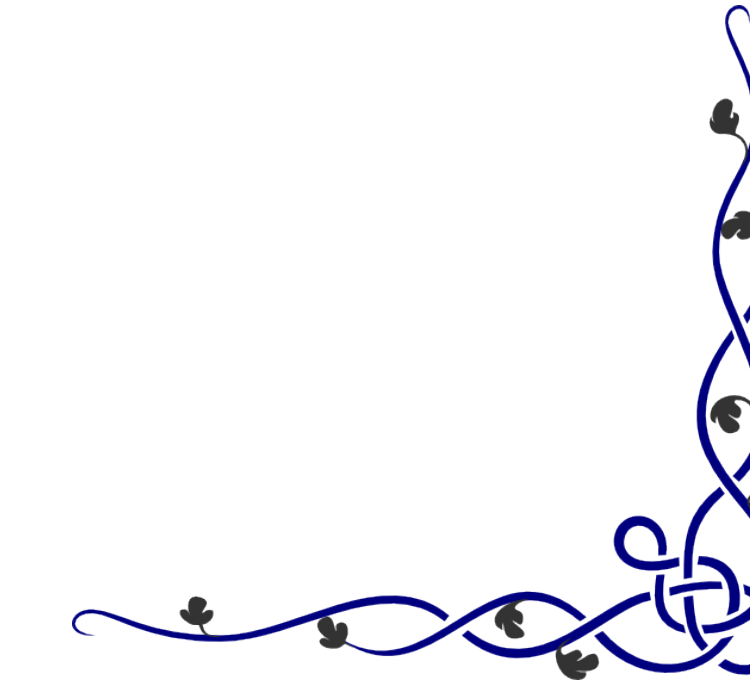
AN EXPLORATION OF MAGIC IN *THE SAGA OF HROLF KRAKI*

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Please note: This project is a work in process.



ABSTRACT:

The Saga of Hrolf Kraki, written by an anonymous author in 14th century Iceland, follows the exploits of the legendary King Hrolf and his champions as they endure the power of a corrupted king, berserker fighters, splintered family relations, and animalistic transformations. Often, the catalyst for such adventures and such suffering is that of ancient magic. This paper will be exploring these representations of magic in the Nordic Middle Ages through the lens of *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*. Through analyzing this saga and with the assistance of secondary sources (such as Stephen Mitchell's *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* and Corinne Saunders' *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance*), this research will examine the portrayal of seeresses, soothsayers, sorcerers, and the like. And through this, it will provide support behind the seemingly random appearances of magical mentions in the story and allow us to get a further glimpse into the Nordic culture during the Middle Ages.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID:

Perceptions of Magic:

- ❖ "...the people in medieval Europe who used, feared, promoted, or condemned magic, and who identified magic as such, not only assumed it worked but could give (or assumed that authorities could give for them) reasonably specific explanations of how it worked" (Kieckhefer, 814).

Magic and Gender:

- ❖ "'Women were the original and remained the most powerful magicians, whereas men gained access only later and never attained parity with women, either in numbers or power'" (Mitchells 176).

The Undead:

- ❖ [Icelandic ghosts] are more aggressive and resemble incubi or mares in that their lives are parasitic, or vampires, since their main objective seems to be to attack the living, drive them out of their wits, infect them with vampirism, and make them join their ranks" (Jakobsson 289).

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ Magic is unbounded. There are those who inherit magic from their otherworldly genes (such as elfin), and there are those who simply acquire it through immense study and practice. In this sense, it is rational, conceivable.
- ❖ Magic provides a sense of comfort in that it allows one to have agency over nearly any situation.
- ❖ Illustrations of animalistic humans and the risen Dead suggests that the affirmation of being human was nothing short of insecure for the Nordics in the Middle Ages. They perceived their humanity to be malleable and threatening to themselves and others.
- ❖ The various representations of magic throughout *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* are used to question the division between reality and the *Other*. The incorporation of magic in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* reveals that ultimately, power is not rooted in intangible forces, but in *ourselves*.

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ How does the representation of magic in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* help us to understand Nordic culture during the Middle Ages?
- ❖ What does the incorporation of magic in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* say about religion?
- ❖ What are the representations of magic in this story, and how is magic acquired?
- ❖ What is the extent of agency one has over magic?
- ❖ What are the attitudes towards magic?



Hrólfr Kraki's last stand by Louis Moe (1857-1945)

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