



# Kyngervi



A Letter from the Editor

Amy Jefford Franks

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# A Letter from the Editor

Amy Jefford Franks<sup>1</sup>

In 1991, Judith Jesch opened her book *Women in the Viking Age* with the statement ‘Vikings are irredeemably male in the popular imagination’.<sup>2</sup> Almost thirty years later it is hard to argue that this perception has changed at all. Indeed, even within academia, the study of gender in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and Iceland is still often viewed as a special interest subject. However, at its most basic level, gender history uncovers the experiences of around half the population of any given society.

Over the years, a number of excellent works concerning medieval Scandinavian gender have been produced. Among these notable pieces there are, aside from Jesch’s aforementioned groundbreaking work, Carol Clover’s ‘Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe’;<sup>3</sup> Jenny Jochen’s *Women in Old Norse Society*;<sup>4</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir’s *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power*;<sup>5</sup> Brit Solli’s articles on Óðinn’s queerness;<sup>6</sup> and Nancy Coleman and Nanna Løkka’s *Kvinner i vikingtid*.<sup>7</sup> As the titles above suggest, however, there is a heavy focus on gender within the fields

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<sup>1</sup> General Editor, Kyngervi; Independent Scholar; amyjefford@gmail.com.

<sup>2</sup> Jesch, Judith, *Women in the Viking Age* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Clover, Carol J., ‘Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe,’ *Speculum*, 68 (1993) 363-387.

<sup>4</sup> Jochens, Jenny, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Solli, Brit, ‘Odin the Queer? On Ergi and Shamanism in Norse Mythology,’ in *Glyfer och arkeologiska rum - En vänbok till Jarl Nordbladh* (eds.) Gustafsson, Anders; & Karlsson, Håkon (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1999) 341-349; Solli, Brit, ‘“Queer Theory” og gamle guder: Skeive perspektiv på norrøn mytologi,’ in *Kritisk kunnskapspraksis: Bidrag til feministisk vitenskapsteori*, Ann Therese Lotherington & Turid Markussen (eds.), (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag As, 1999) 241-264; Solli, Brit, ‘Queering the Cosmology of the Vikings: A Queer Analysis of the Cult of Odin and “Holy White Stones,”’ *Journal of Homosexuality*, 54 (2008) 192-208.

<sup>7</sup> Coleman, Nancy & Løkka, Nanna (eds.) *Kvinner i vikingtid* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014).

of history and literature. This is, of course, no bad thing, and there is always room for more work within history and literature. However, this also reflects the comparative dearth of work in other disciplines, including history of religion, archaeology, reception studies, and art history.

Although there remains a heavy emphasis on literature and history, there is nonetheless an ever-growing amount of scholarship on gender in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia and Iceland. This work covers a huge variety of angles and approaches: queer theory, shieldmaidens and maiden-kings, the lives of powerful women, the textile work of every day women, and so much more beyond that.

Despite this growth in scholarship, there is no dedicated space for this to be shared. Furthermore, it is my opinion that a huge amount of this scholarship is particularly coming from dedicated, fascinated, and inquisitive students. I know from my own experience how much we can learn from each other—my scholarship would not be what it is today without growing and learning from my peers. Enter: *Kyngervi*. This is a space for students to share their work with the wider community, learn from each other, and open up new areas of discussion.

*Kyngervi* is focused on, but not solely dedicated to, gender. In the words of our editor Basil Arnould Price, ‘we aim to bring the marginalised to the forefront’. Therefore, *Kyngervi* accepts work from a variety of places that centre the Other, including critical race studies, disability studies, human/animal studies, and other related topics.

We received a wide range of articles for our inaugural volume, some of which are included below. We are excited to be working with the other articles for publication in our second volume in 2020, and look forward to receiving more submissions for this.

These articles have all been kept within rigorous academic standards. Double-blind peer-reviewing has been carried out. For students who are not familiar with the process, this is where fellow researchers, in this case all students, who work on related topics, are asked to read the article and give their feedback and recommendations. The author and the peer-reviewer do not know

who each other are. All journals work to this standard, as it is a process that allows us to improve one another's work. However, our editors also review the feedback before sending it to the author. Many academics throughout the years in a variety of fields have noted that their feedback has been harsh, with 'Reviewer 2' becoming a meme in its own right. Here at *Kyngervi* we want the best for our authors, many of whom may have never submitted work for peer review before. We hope that other journals will also follow suit.

The journal could not have existed without the hard work of the team of editors. We came together after I sought out colleagues who were willing to support me in this endeavour. I found a group of people who, like me, could see how much the field needed a journal like this, and I am so grateful to them for their dedicated and hard work in balancing this with their other academic work.

Lynn Schönbeck has been our excellent website editor and designer. She designed our beautiful logo and created our fantastic website. She has been ensuring our design is perfect every step of the way.

Lee Colwill is our book reviews editor. They have been suggesting and finding books that should be reviewed for this and future volumes, and then matching those books with the perfect reviewers. If you have future suggestions for books you'd like to review, get in touch with Lee!

Our articles have then been edited by myself and our three editors: Tonicha Upham, Holly McArthur, and Basil Arnould Price. They have all diligently found peer reviewers, looked after them and their authors, and have made every step of this journey smooth and easy.

I am so proud that we have come together as such a fantastic team, and so grateful that they have helped me bring this idea to life.

*Kyngervi* grew out of the informal Norse Queer and Gender Studies Student Network. I founded the network after completing my MA, upon realising how many students were working on these topics, often without support and advice. The network primarily exists on Facebook as a closed group—it is searchable, and I invite you, reader, to join us. We have a shared Google document reading list, where anyone is welcome to add the bibliographical information of texts that they think could be useful for people

working in the area. We also provide a space for members to ask questions about ideas, share their work, engage in discussions about texts, and to pass on Calls for Papers for conferences and journal submissions.

We have exciting hopes and plans for the future of *Kyngervi*, but let's start here. In this first volume we have an introduction from Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, a number of peer reviewed articles, two book reviews, and a variety of conference reports and exhibition reports. These articles include the discussions of Óðinn's gender as a point of comparison to a Scottish hagiography; the now infamous BJ 581; and women in *Ljósvetninga saga*, among others. There is huge international interest in Viking Age and medieval Scandinavian gender, and we have an excellent showcase of it here.

I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who has got involved, supported, and shared information about *Kyngervi*. I hope you enjoy what we have to offer.

Amy Jefford Franks

