"The Rights of the Player": Evidence of Mimi and Histriones in Early Medieval Scandinavia

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In the past, Scandinavia has tended not to figure very highly in the history of drama in medieval Europe. Only one paragraph in the recent Companion to the Medieval Theatre is dedicated to Scandinavian drama prior to 1500, and that is limited to the few liturgical plays that have been unearthed in Sweden. The implication is that for some reason medieval Scandinavia was, to all intents and purposes, void of any other dramatic activity. The Scandinavians were allegedly not interested in such antics.

The essential problem is that for most theater scholars, including E. K. Chambers, Old Norse seems to have remained a relatively closed book. The majority have had to rely on the Old Norse scholars of the past, for whom, in many cases, the concept of drama continued to be based on Aristotelian definitions and confined within the decorative frame of the proscenium arch. Notable exceptions to this rule were Bertha S. Philippot, whose untitled book The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama was published in 1920, and the Norwegian scholar Anne Holtmark, who in the years after the last World War wrote several important articles on the early evidence for the existence of drama in Scandinavia. Neither scholar’s arguments, however, made much of a lasting impression in the field of Old Norse studies. The hard facts remained that the sagas contained no obvious descriptions of dramatic performances, and that there was little evidence of liturgical drama outside southern Sweden. When the first signs of formal playwriting at last began to appear in Scandinavia, they seemed to be based wholly on foreign models.

In recent years, the increasing interest in the implications of the oral tradition that provided the material for the Edda poems and sagas has encouraged a re-examination of the evidence for early dramatic activities in Scandinavia. In a book published in
as leikar, loddar, and tráðar. Misunderstandings have arisen in the past largely because the writers of the main dictionaries of Old Norse regularly transliterated leikar, loddar, and tráðar with the restricted terms jester and juggler or their Scandinavian equivalents, gôk, gôgler, and gaukel. Another common translation in Scandinavia is the use of the term spilemand ("minstrel" or "musician"). Matters have not been improved by the fact that, with a few notable exceptions (Anne Holtmark, Didrik Anp Sørri and Per-Edvin Wallén, and most recently the Icelandic theatre historian Sveinn Einarsen?), Old Norse scholars have almost consistently failed to examine these performers within the wider context of the different traditions elsewhere in Europe during the early Middle Ages. They have simply followed the pattern set by the dictionaries and tended to ignore the dramatic associations that must have surrounded the performances of the leikar, loddar, and tráðar in Scandinavia. As will be shown below, the earliest performers to be designated as leikar appear to have been foreign, and the same applies to the other two words used to identify them (loddar and tráðar). The use of all three words in Old Norse translations and stresses that these performers were probably originally considered to be synonymous with particular foreign entertainers to which reference is made in many Latin sources—that is, minstrels, and musicians. The early Middle Ages context is clearly pertinent to the question of what the leikar were, and the comparative method is therefore especially helpful. And while the European evidence helps us to fill the gaps in the overall Scandinavian picture, the Scandinavian evidence has a great deal to offer European theatre scholars who are interested in building up a clearer picture of the performances, travels, and reception of the mîmi, historians, and local authorities in Europe during the early Middle Ages. Indeed, as earlier scholars such as Chambers, Allardyce Nicoll, Edmund Faral, J. D. A. Ogilvie, Richard Axon, and William Tydeman have shown, these multi-talented wandering performers had their roots in the traditions of the old Roman theater and seem to have planted some of the seeds for the development of professional drama throughout northern Europe. For the most part, these figures were a great deal more than mere jugglers and jesters. As the evidence given below demonstrates, the same applies to the leikar, loddar, and tráðar of early medieval Scandinavia. Probably the earliest appearance of the words leikar and tráðar in Old Norse literature is in two verses dealing with the
court of King Haraldr hárfagri of Norway (c.885–932) which are preserved solely in a manuscript known as Fregirskviða from c.1220. The verses are usually attributed to the Norwegian poet Porrjórn hornskjöld (c.900) and said to belong to a longer poem named Haraldrskviða, or Hrafnsmál, which Porrjórn composed in honor of King Haraldr. In the manuscript, the leikarar verses follow several similar verses that deal with Haraldr’s freelance retainers, such as skalds and berserkers. All of these verses are thought to belong to the same poem. The relationship between all occurs seems logical.

The passage containing the leikarar verses begins as follows: “Hér er ok sagt, at Haraldr konung hafði leikar a hlið sinni” (“There it is also said that King Haraldr had leikar in his court”). The verses are then presented as historical evidence of this fact. They begin with a question:

At leikarum ok thónum
hellr ok jáh int íregi;
hever er engi
heira Andáfr
au hánum Haraldr?

At hendi elkar Andáfr
ok hilmrur drýgr
eyrmøllum
ok jguor hliðgic
hnae eru ok áfor,
ei of eld skulu
brentaða sér þera,
logundum húfum [stúfum?]
halla sér und líndu dreip
hátíðrepi halr.11

(Off leikarar and ríðbar I have heard little. What entertainment is offered by Andáfr and the others in Haraldr’s houses?)

Andáfr dálit af
an ætali ugg,
and commiss study
and the king laughs;
and there are others
who over fire
past burning, chips
flaming caps/phalaeuses

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There is general agreement that these verses must be old and that they possibly go back to the early tenth century.12 On the other hand, there has been some dispute about the actual wording of the verse, and particularly as to whether the words “logundum húfum” (“flaming caps”) should be altered to read “logundum lífum” (“flaming locks”) or “logundum stúfum” (“flaming phalaeuses”).13 The second alternative is suggested by Gudbrandur Vigfusson, who believed that the performers might have been Irish (the word truly perhaps originating in the Old Irish word dríth, meaning “saint” so that they had “flaming” red hair which they tucked into their belts, is somewhat absurd). However, both the first and the third suggestions make logical sense, especially if the performers in question had some relationship to the foreign simíslífrinsen and traditions. For example, the expression “flaming caps” might refer to the hoods with colorful axles’ ears which were a form of insignia worn by performers related to the men and histrione as far back as Roman times. On the basis of later iconographic evidence from Denmark and Sweden, axles’ ears were a regular part of the “uniform” worn by fifteenth-century leikar in Scandinavia.14 The idea of “flaming phalaeuses” was not so far-fetched either if we accept Nicoll’s observation that similar items are depicted in certain miniatures contained in a thirteenth-century manuscript from Salzburg.15 The use of leather phalaeuses was, of course, a common feature of the classical theatrical tradition.16

Another point of academic discussion concerning the Haraldskvið verses relates to the final words, which can be read as either “hátíðrepi” or “hátíðreiðr.” The most common explanation for these words is that they mean “worth kicking with your heel,” or “worth kicking to Hel”—that is, “to death.” To my mind, however, Gudbrandur Vigfusson’s earlier suggestion that “hátíðreiðr” could mean “tripping” (from the literal translation “heel-stamping” or “heel-kicking”) would make more sense, especially in the light of the other European evidence and of the fifteenth-century pictures of performers in Scandinavia which almost always suggest the idea of dance or rigorous movement.17

The suggestion that these entertainers were “worth killing” might be at home in a verse expressly directed against the performers but has little place in a poem of praise for King Haraldr, who seems to have welcomed these figures at court and who obviously
appreciated their brand of entertainment. The overall implications of the above verses from Haraldskvida are that Andahó and his associates formed a troupe and put on a varied show, involving juggling with burning sticks, dancing, tricks with a dog, and, most interesting of all, some kind of "foolery," a word which could imply any number of things but suggests some form of "act." The same applies to Andahó's behavior with the dog which obviously attracted attention and offers an interesting parallel to another act involving a weeping dog that seems to have been included in the performance of the Middle English Dume Sixth.38 It is unlikely that words were used in the Scandinavian performance, though, because Andahó himself was probably not Scandinavian. It is generally agreed that his real name must have been Andaháth, a name native to the German countries during this period.39

After their appearance in Haraldskvida, the leikarar disappear from the Scandinavian "scene" for almost two hundred years. The next first-hand descriptions of leikarar occur in two verses composed by the Icelandic poet Einarr Skúlason in the early twelfth century. Einarr spent time at court in both Norway and Denmark and in both countries encountered leikarar giving performances. His earliest verse on this subject is found in an early thirteenth-century manuscript known as Morkinskinna, which contains an early history of the kings of Norway. The verse is placed in the context of an account concerning the court of King Sigurðr skómblr (1136-1139 in Bergen; 1

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The verse is then quoted:

Avar tic illa crismini
Jarlsnæma fr hvatæli
græér var kona a kaelja
kifling hins er sly fllr
vondu hrekk varat la blyndini
veímathavamal a skap þustur
song leikars lengi
limur harpan prae.

(To the East, that bad Christian
Jarlsnæma who plays a fiddle
took a kid from a farmer;
the infant was greedy for meat;
the stick lashed; the9ound lay bound
over a wagon;
the well-phrased rod sang the leikari
a long, hard prime service.)

The main purpose of this account is to demonstrate how fast Einarr could compose verses. Nonetheless, the introduction emphasizes that the leikarar in questions were traveling people ("i benum var lekarar[ar]"; "leikarar were in town") and that, like Andahó's men, they worked in troupes, unlike the skalds who tended to be independent performers. The verse says little about the performance but reiterates the association between the performers and music and, for the first time, implies that they were "bad Christians," something that will be discussed further below. The name Jarlsnæma (lit. "Einar's") might be Swedish, but, as Holtsmark has suggested, may also reflect an element of sarcasm in Einarr's verse that was later misunderstood by the author of the prose account.40 It has been suggested that Einarr's supposed reference to Jarlsnæma as "faras vunni" ("Your comrade") might also be sarcastic, but that seems less convincing considering the rest of the prose account in which Einarr seems to display a degree of sympathy for the performer by composing his verse as fast as possible. Indeed, the idea of a formal "comradeship" between the various performers at court might echo the implications of Haraldskvida where the skalds, the bards, and the leikarar appear to be listed alongside each other.

Nonetheless, any vague sense of comradeship between the traveling skalds and the traveling leikarar was clearly fading during the second half of the twelfth century. When Einarr Skúlason later moved on to the Danish court of King Stjórn Eiriksson
Another Icelandic poet who felt challenged by the growing popularity of the leikarar in Scandinavia during the late twelfth century was Mání. Mání’s verses about the leikarar are found in Sverris Saga, completed in the middle of the thirteenth century, and their tone is also very different from that of the verses in Hrafnlófsskála. They describe a performance that took place less than eighty years before the saga was to be written and provide us with a vivid, yet tantalizing, image of the range of acts that were presented by groups of leikarar. Mání has newly arrived from Rome at the court of the Norwegian king, Magnús Erlings-son (1162–84), and, in spite of being in a very rugged (“ner clélaus”) state, has just presented a poem of praise for the king. The leikarar verses are then introduced into the saga as follows:

En leikarar sjá, vann í stofninn er laupa leis smaracca yfir havar stræg flytir tignum monnum, oc því hárar sem meny varo tignari, konungur narrir. Þonne þú Tungli at leikarnar si ekkj vel til þín. nu ytrela um þa vina oc ma vera at þér verði battle gagn at. þa yrði Mann. . . .

(Two leikarar were in the room, and they had a small dog sitting in front of noble men. The more noble the men were, the higher it leapt. The king said, “Mání, do you have the feeling that the leikarar don’t think much of you? Compose a verse about them that will do you a little more good.” Then Mání chanted: . . . )

The verses follow:

Staðar fer gaur með gípu gis er hémi comiti melde helde scialdār scoða

Thereafter:

þa varp at skótrli laur oc svo sigum hóðsænum hingum um þeins leicara oc gáfu viðum, oc æ þat opptali kippt oc blasna hvátap. þeins leic-urunum þotí ser sem þeir varri í eithli, oc comat ut í stofninn.

(There was a great laughter at this. The members of the court formed a ring about these leikarar and chanted the verse, and most often the words “pocked mouth and blown-out cheeks.” The leikarar felt as if they were about to get burnt, and got out of the room.)
Máni's verses seethe with disdain and almost certainly jealousy at the attention that the leikarar were receiving in comparison to that given to himself, the noble skald. His verses, however, are very effective and are more informative than the prose account. This presentation obviously involved more than a jumping dog. Once more, we see performers exploiting their audience, probably making the most of Máni's inapt appearance and presenting a show that was essentially "visual" and as wide-ranging as the performance that entertained King Haraldr hárfagr. The detailed description of the player of the trumba (either a pipe or a trumpet-like horn) is perhaps merely indicative of the fact that Máni and the others were unused to seeing such an instrument played. However, the wandering eyes of the performer imply recognition of an audience and an attempt to amuse them. The most interesting feature of the verses, however, is the use of the words "gin" (meaning "trickery," or "a magician," if it is not simply another word for leikari, in the sense of a "trickster"), "scripa lat" ("grotesque antics," related to the word skrip, meaning "monster"); "scaup" ("mockery" or "cutting humor"); and "tolcra stora" ("great falsity"). These expressions are relevant to neither the music nor the jumping dog. They would be well applicable, though, to some elementary dramatic performance. Indeed, it is worth noting that the players are described as "leikarar blekki" (lit. "bleached leikarar"), an expression which might point to the use of elementary make-up. Considering that these words describe the leikarar during their performance, we are unlikely to refer to any "white-faced" fear or cowardice.

Obviously this multi-featured performance won attention at Mágni's court and perhaps even the interest of the king (certainly the king makes no attempt to punish the performers himself). Indeed, this attention is what seems to have initially upset Máni. Particularly interesting is the image of the court forming a ring about the performers and thus creating a kind of acting space for them. However, this move surely took place before Máni started chanting his new verse in an attempt to regain the attention of the court. It might also be noted that audiences are rarely, if ever, described as joining in with a chanted skaldic verse. The implication here is that there was some interaction between the verse and the music of the leikarar.

The evidence of the skaldic verses presented above testifies to the growing popularity of the so-called leikarar in Scandinavia during the early Middle Ages and stresses the fact that whatever these people were, they did more than throw balls up in the air and tell jokes. There is also a strong likelihood that many of them were foreign, which might have caused them to place greater emphasis on the visual, mimetic, and grotesque qualities of their performances. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the words loddar and trúðr, also used for such performers, both seem to have been adopted from foreign languages. The closest parallels are found in the Old English words lodder and trúðr. Interestingly enough, the later word, which is used in Old English to designate a horn player or buffoon, also appears as a direct translation for the Latin term for dramatic performers, namely histrion, mimus, pantomimus, and scurra. As will be shown below, exactly the same applies to the words leikari, loddar, and trúðr.

That the leikarar might have entered Haraldr hárfagr's Norway via the British Isles is not as strange as it may seem. Latin sources indicate that traveling performers classified as histriones and mimai had already gained a strong hold in the north of England when the earliest recorded Viking raids began in 793.

As Ogilvie emphasizes, the growing Scandinavian presence in England after this time did little to limit the popularity of these figures who must have also performed at the small courts established in the new Scandinavian centers of York and Dublin. From there, it was a short step to the Norwegian courts that were soon set up in Trondheim and Bergen, in western Norway.

As has been mentioned above, though, Andaðr appears to have been German. This points to the other logical possibility that performers were arriving simultaneously from Germany via Denmark where Einarr Skúlason found musicians dominating the attention of the Danish king in the mid-twelfth century. We can be certain that performers referred to as histriones and mimai were well known in mid-tenth-century Saxony, where Liudprand of Cremona felt capable of describing the Emperor in Constantinople as looking "histrionum minorumve more" ("like a histrion or mimus"), without any explanation. The same applies to Adam of Bremen, who wrote c. 1070 about how Bishop Alberht of Bremen gave money away to "hypocritus, medicus et histrionibus," but could not tolerate the obscene movements of the pantomimi: "Ceterum pantomimus qui obscenis corporum vulgus solent a suo conspecto prorsus eiecit." Performers of this kind were not only entering Germany via France, but must have also been coming up the rivers through Russia, from Constantinople via Kiev where they are depicted on the walls of the Hagia Sophia Cathedral.
which was built in 1037.7 This route would have brought them into direct contact with Scandinavian merchants who were regularly traveling in the same direction towards the Scandinavian courts and market places.

The so-called mini and hisrons had obviously reached the borders of Scandinavia by the time Haraldskiwlgi came to be composed. The suggestion that the leikarar, loddarar, and tréár should be regarded as being synonymous with these multi-talented figures, and that they should be given equal roots in the old Roman theatre is emphasized by the way that the words leikarar, loddarar, and tréár are used in Scandi-
navian translations from Latin and French during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These translations not only clarify the mean-
ings of these words but also give us some idea of the general associations that they had for different classes of people.

A typical example is the Old Norse translation of Honorius Augustodunensis' Elucidarium, which was completed before 1150, and would have given Einarr Skulason (who later became a priest) doctrinal support for branding the leikar Jarlmar as a "bad Christian." Elucidarium makes it clear that for the Church, at least, the leikarar and jokulaters were one and the same phenomenon. Both were doomed. The Old Norse passed comment: "Hava leikarar nokona vinn — Enga jvi at leir er pionar flendas ok taka firi sem mblt er haddng er baddng veita" ("Have leikarar any hope? - None, because they are the servants of the Devil and, as it is said, those who mock will be received with mockery"). The original Latin text reads: "Habet spem jokulatores? — Nullam. Tota namque intentione ministri sunt Satanae; de ipsi dicitur: "Deum non cognoverunt; quia dierontes derident"."8

The words jokulater, mini, and hisrons were often applied to the same kind of person by writers in England. By the twelfth century, these words (as well as the French words jeugler and jongleur) seem to have become almost interchangeable.9 It is of particular interest that in Elucidarium, the leikarar/elekator-
tores do not seem to be cursed because of their musical skills or their association with dance, but primarily because they "mock" other people. Their direct association with Satan, of course, again found in their ability to imitate others—something that is well demonstrated by the vivid descriptions of the dramatic skills of the hisrons written by John of Salisbury (c.1159) and Thomas de Celtis (c.1213).8 These descriptions are highly reminiscent of the oft-quoted epitaph outlining the artistic skills of the early

nineth-century minus Vitalis and imply a continuing tradition of drama.10 Most interesting for the present argument, however, is the fact that the Old Norse translation of Elucidarium felt able to place the word leikarar in this context of mockery and imitation without the need for any further gloss.

Certainly, in some translations—particularly those of the hagiographic works—the words leikar, loddar, and tréár, like the above Latin terms, are employed in a very wide sense to refer to any form of low-life parasite or "jestroos" that might accompany the same rich wastrels or follow armies.11 More commonly, leikar appears as a literal translation for a musician or singer.12 What is most interesting for the present discussion, however, is how often the words leikar, loddar, and tréár are used to translate minus, histrion, jokulator, and scurra. Elucidarium was no exception. In the translation of the Latin of De France's Loi de Lavois (c.1211) in the Breton translation of the Breton law, "leikarar" is used for "jokulater," the French equivalent of jokulaters.13

Also of interest is a very early Icelandic glossary from the twelfth century in which the word "leikarar" is used as a gloss for "parasites."14 On the surface, this might seem to add weight to the general "buffoon"/"parasite" interpretation of leikar mentioned above. The gloss, however, needs to be read in a wider context. In England, the same expression was glossed several times in the tenth and eleventh centuries with the word gilgman gleoman.15 In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, gil-
gman gleoman was also used as a gloss for the words minus, scurra, and pandemimus.16 Clearly all of these terms were synony-
mous in England and remained so up until the sixteenth century. The evidence of a late fifteenth-century Latin-Swedish glossari-
um, where parasitus is glossed in Latin as "leccator," and in medieval Swedish as "skjindegester" ("visiting entertainers"), like the words histrion, minus, and scurra, suggests that the same un-
derstanding must have existed in Scandinavia.17 Indeed, it is possible that this use of the term parasitus goes back to its use as a stock clown name in the old Roman theatre.

The above references stress that Scandinavian translators saw
a close relationship between the performers in Scandinavia and those abroad. Apart from the Euhemerus translation, however, few of these examples say anything about the dramatic associations of the words under discussion. More informative are certain compound words used in translations for which the original has unfortunately not yet been traced. In a collection of miracles related to the Virgin Mary, we read of a character named "Valterus," who was chosen as a Francisco abbe in Tavistock but who led a dissolute life, "vanrekhun" sina fragt, sao at uida um Eingland vart hani kinnini af leikamaurum, er af honum veru gerfi." ("Sao careless of his reputation that he became widely known in England as a result of the 'leikara-songs' that were made about him." This account is strongly reminiscent of the complaint made by King Edgar of England in c.520 that the monastery had become so infamous for their lax morality and decay that "mi mi cantaat es sallant in trevice"—in other words, that "mi mi sing and dance [about it] in the market place." Another interesting compound occurs in Nikolau Saga Erkihsykptfi, from the early thirteenth century. A group of monks ask their prior whether they can perform a new "song" or antiphon about St. Nicholas that they have recently composed. The prior briskly refuses their request three times, ending with the words "Hrrrjget, el ek mana leita im leikara lafti firkir mima fryr hopp ymer ok laslegu" ("Do you imagine that I would allow leikari behavior in my church for your dancing and debauchery?"). His over-reaction leads to his being whipped by St. Nicholas that night to the sound of the antiphon. This interesting link between the word leikara and the development of the form of the antiphon towards drama is echoed in the fourteenth-century Icelandic Bishop's saga Launentius Saga Holarhakupa where the term leikoraskopf (lit. "histronics") is applied to the use of two- or three-part harmonies in church ("tilpla ega asiyingsa").

The translators were not the only people to see clear connections between the leikarar and the mini and histroner. It is worth noting that when the thirteenth-century Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus wrote his Latin history of the Danish kings and wished to describe the leikarar he knew in his own country, he made use of exactly the same Latin terms as those mentioned above, albeit with little differentiation between them. Saxo's free use of terminology is particularly evident in his description of a banquet at which another "putting" flute or pipe player offends the conservative sensibilities of the aged King Starcathern. The performer is referred to with the words "scriturum de industria," "gesticulans," and "histroner" and is directly called a "mini" (twice). He is said to indulge in the tricks of "scurraramus," has been making all sorts of "scramus plausus" ("theatrical noises"), and receives a punishment befitting a "histronar" when Starcathern eventually throws a bone in his face.

It is evident, though, that the leikarar Saxo knew were also multi-talented. Especially revealing in this context is Saxo's description of the "effeminarum corporum motus saccamonicque minitum" ("the wanishian movements, the cluster of the mini on the stage") at the pagan festivities in the town of Starcathern vis-á-vis. There is little probability that Saxo was describing real mini here. Such performers are unlikely to have taken part in an important pagan festival. The description is probably an attempt to describe usual dance or elementary dramatic ritual for which Saxo had no other appropriate terminology. However, the account stresses the wider associations of the word minius in Saxo's mind as well as his links with dance. Also noteworthy as a piece of thirteenth-century evidence is the statement by Saxo that Olinois (Okon) resorted to "scarcenias atribus" ("stage tricks") by disguising himself as a female physician in order to seduce a woman.

Bearing the above in mind, we should not underestimate the implications behind Saxo's statement that a king of Ireland named Hugleikr kept "mimini ac inculatore," who also served with his army. The motif is reminiscent of a passage in Ælfric's Saga (the translation of Belas Legutrumum), where "ivre" is translated as "leikarar ok trólar." However, the range of expressions Saxo uses here seems to stress that he was well aware of what he was talking about. Once again, these figures are described as "veminarum corum" ("groups of effeminate companions"), and later on we find them referred to in the words "miniurn grege," "histroniumus," "scurrarum," as well as "inculato mistaet." Interestingly enough, when Snorri Sturluson gave another version of the same account in Ælfric's Saga (written at around the same time), he also envisaged "Hugleikr" as being associated with performers: Hugleikr, now a Swedish king, is said to love in his court "all kindar leikara, harparok gigiara, ok fílara" ("all sorts of leikara, harpsists, gigar players, and fiddlers") in addition to workers of witchcraft and all sorts of other people versed in the magic arts.

In general, while the leikarar Saxo knew might have been regarded as "vulgur," they were certainly no less limited in their skills as P. S. Allen might have imagined. The same probably...
applied to those leikarar Snorri Sturluson must have encountered on his visits to early thirteenth-century Norway. The above quotation from Ynglinga Saga says stress on music, but it has been noted that another description, found in Snorri’s Prose Edda, might be based on a scene and trace a more active comic leikari display. Certain, and the individual account of how the god Loki made a giant’s daughter naced Skáli laugh by tying a cord between his testicles as the head of a goat has a strong ring of a histrionic performance to it. Whatever its origin, this account offers some insight into the entertainment in which the pagan Scandinavian gods were thought to be interested. Even if the leikari did not get into Heaven, they would clearly have been welcomed into the Valhöll envisaged by Snorri.

The rage of talents employed by the leikarav in Scandinavia is emphasized still further by the use of the words leikari, loddirar, and truldir in the chivalric romances that were composed in Norway and Iceland from the early thirteenth century onwards. Using as models the descriptions of grand courts, banquets, and noble entrances to capitals provided by the thirteenth-century translations of the lives of Alexander and Charlemagne, for example, the authors of romances regularly drop leikari into a scene as a formulaic ingredient designed to evoke visual images of regal wonder and glory and spectacular sound effects in the mind of the common medieval reader or listener. In most cases, the leikari and loddirar appear in the plural as musicians at court or royal weddings, or at city gates. Their mention is generally accompanied by long lists of exotic sounding instruments, as in the following relatively typical description from Sigurðr Saga Fagræla (late fourteenth century):

Leid égi langur tiljne adren jînó komu leikarar, j-hilyras und allra handa bláldorunum, fyrst pípum og bousat. leikti simpóon og súp- tseirjum hegar og gigi, kúntseirum og organum, enn stjókan leikarar og sitjindum menne.

(It was not long before leikari came into the hall with all kinds of instruments. First of all there was piping and horn playing, the playing of the organarium and the panpipes, harps and gigari, quittera[,] and organ, and then there were leikars- and magicians.)

Of particular interest here is the fact that the author seems to envisage two different sorts of leikari, one of which plays music while the other was obviously involved in some other art. That this two-fold division of leikarar was no slip of the pen is em-

phazed by the fact that the same thing occurs elsewhere in the same saga. On the other occasion, however, the second group of leikarar is accompanied by another kind of performer: "kemn jm loddarar leikari og þryningarmann omm leika marga vandartega hlut..." ("loddirar, leikarar, and þryningarar make music in many, many wonderful things."). This is not the only occasion on which the multi-talented nature of the leikari is hinted at in the romances. Elsewhere we find them also singing songs, chanting poems, or telling fables ("þemisogur"), in general offering "many kinds of entertainment" ("þrægganat gleði"). In all cases, they are surrounded in wondrous. There is never any suggestion of degeneracy.

The most interesting account of al, however, is that supplied by Jóhanns Saga af Bønn, which was written in Norway in the late thirteenth century. Although the saga was based on German oral sources, it must be remembered that the author of the saga understood what he was writing about and obviously expected his audience to do the same. In this sense the saga also serves as a valid source for Scandinavian conditions. Most valuable for the present discussion is the description of Ísung, the "hævð loddirar" ("head loddirar"), who appears at a feast in Rome, and then later at the courts of Attila and Osantrix. Our first glimpse of Ísung is when he is being rewarded by Petritells dali Biturðsófn for his work in Rome:

Se leikari var ívri árðum leikarum og loddarum og fragari en harer smaðra og enn gal hann haum oll ny kíniu gyllu Svæðum oc sventum oc þývum þær varo tíning cléj oft þvíðris konungum svæðar oc lóðaði ísvingi sva sínna skæntum oc hveinni leikari gefi hann micl oðr ýhei."

(This leikari was more all the leikarar and loddirar and more famous than any of them, and Ísung also gave him all new clothes of purple, cut and sewn. These were the high-rank clothes of the son of King Ífrík. He thus rewarded Ísung for his entertain- ment, and gave each leikari one mark or two.)

The description of Ísung’s skills given elsewhere in the saga reiterates everything that has been stressed above about the performances of leikarar in Scandinavia. When King Osantrix asks him what he can do, Ísung boasts that "œmannovar, en cam sla harp ov drá legjov ov gigi o allkonar strenglæg" ("I can sing/chant poetry, I can play a harp, a fiddle, and a gigar, and all kinds of stringed instruments."). He is also a per-
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(If it is our wish that everyone know that we fully condemn pari-
colored, ragged (dagged) clothing, every kind of German cut in
clothing, and fitting on tunics or headwear. We wish women and men
to follow that which has been considered fitting in the past, except
in the case of those deserving people who are celebrating their mar-
riages, or who become knights. They may have these clothes as
they wish, and then give them to leikarar.)

A second amendment made on 8 December 1315 repeats this ban
but now extends the range of clothing to include other German
textures such as “skackörar” (“checkered”) clothing, “peninga
banad a karlamna klädrad” (lit. “money equipment on male
clothing”), and “mossa kirtle” (“tightly cut kirtle”).

The same form of payment obviously existed in Sweden. The
poetic chronicle Eriknorskrönikan tells of visiting foreign leikarar
being given clothes, horses, and other valuables at the weddings
of King Birgar in Stockholm in 1298 (II. 1389-95) and of Duke
Valdemar in 1301 (II. 1828-31). The tradition, however, was
obviously getting out of hand, and on 1 July 1345, King Magnus
Eriksson of Sweden issued a general decree in Tälje (Telege)
in which it was stated that if a bride wished to give away her
clothes, she should give them to the church or a church group
rather than to leikarar. At the same time, people were prohibited from
sending leikarar to other people for payment. Both decrees were
then taken into the section of Magnus’ Landslag ("State Law")
dealing with marriages (“Gifbalkar”) in the mid-fourteenth cen-
tury. They were also repeated in King Kristoffer’s Landslag from
1442, which implies that the devastation of the Black Death in
Sweden in the mid-fourteenth century did not put an end to the
popularity of the leikarar.

The questions remain as to what the leikarar did with the
decorative clothes that they were given, and as to why they were
allowed to own such clothes according to Norweign law.
The implication is that they were used primarily for perfor-
mancess—a use which, in true, would help to explain the use
of leikarar as a colorful motif in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-
century romances.

Magnus Eriksson’s Landslag, however, reflects the essential
conflict in social attitudes in Sweden in the law. The law
would have been unnecessary if the leikarar had not been popular
figures. Their popularity with both royalty and the common
people of Scandinavia over the centuries is proved by the poetry,
the poetic chronicles, and their appearance in the romances.
The skalds and the Church, however, had a wholly different opinion,
and in the skald analysis the same applied to the law. The Scandinavians leikarar might have had free rights of access to all courts, but their legal position, in the early Middle Ages at least, was almost as bad as that of tramps and slaves.

The earliest laws concerning leikarar and tóðrar in Scandinavia echo the tone of the punishment meted out to the leikarar larðhautar to Einar Skúlason’s verse from the mid-twelth century. Ironically, they also seem to offer some insight into both the style of performance of many leikarar at that time and also their routes into Scandinavia from the west. The oldest of these laws appears in the Vástergötland, which applied to the area of Västergötland in Sweden and dates back to the first half of the thirteenth century. The law in question is simply entitled “leicara rætar” (“rights of leikarar”).

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Petar leicara rætar

Unþær leikara horðar þar skal sé við uræ. Væþær leikara sægræþær þen sum mági ganga afar þær mági livu for afar hindu. Þa skal kviðgu taka ætnta ok flýgtu inn hering. Þa skal alt hæg af rópm rakre, ok skyp símyria. Þa skal hauðum fa skýrmyrj. Þa skal lekerin taka goðum vor rópm, mæjar skal í þeggi þægri hauð. Göter hon haldit. Þa skal hæi þau þau goða grið, ok niðar sum hundar græs. Göter hon eign haldit havi ok pola þar sum hæi fekkvina ok skape bili hollgrir hæðar ræ um húskom [I. MS. ambíti] hútlæktum.

(These are the rights of leikarar:
If a leikar is beaten, this shall always be invalid [i.e. no compensation needs to be paid]. If a leikar is wounded, that is, one who goes with a grip or fares with a fillde or a drum, then an untamed calf should be collected and taken up on a mound. The tail should then be shaved of all hair, and grease. Then he [the leikar] should be given newly-hoed shoes. Then the leikar should take the calf by the tail, and someone should strike it with a sharp stick. If he can hold on to it, then he can have this good prize, and enjoy it as much as a dog does grass. If he cannot hold on to it, he shall have and endure that which he received, degradation and damage, and never expect any further rights than a female slave who has been whipped.)

A very similar law is found in the Östergötland, which was applicable to the Östergötland area of Sweden. The law, which deals with the slaughter of a leikar rather than mere wounding, exists in a mid-fourteenth-century manuscript, but seems to date to the late to the late thirteenth century.

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No vuttr leikar dreimp: þa bihtu area hana þrigga íslamanga gambla

knigho, ok köpna hnum nyia hanzka ok nyia sken ok smyia hópe. Þa skal taka kviðgu ok leja upa húgh. Ok hitin i hard area lekarar um settia. Þa skal bindi til hguða mæg grú byg huf. Hag hon haldit havi at botum simum. Skipper hauðum kviðgu þa skipper hnum áldar faghh-

jahar.

(If a leikar is killed: then compensate his inferior with a three-year-old calf, buy him new gloves, and new shoes, and grease both. The calf shall then be taken and led up onto a mound, and the tail placed in the hands of the leikar’s relative. Then the farmer should strike it three times with a stick. If he [the relative] holds onto it, he has it as his compensation. If he lets go, he lets go of all compensation.)

As Erik Anners has pointed out, these closely related laws seem to be designed as superficial parodies of justice, added primarily to draw a technical differentiation between a free-born leikar and a slave who had no rights at all. This approach echoes the early-twelfth-century German laws Stücksenspiegel and Schwenepsgiegel in which such performers (“Spelüütten”) are granted their offender’s shadow in recompense for any hurt. At the same time, the Swedish laws offer intriguing parallels to certain Welsh laws from the thirteenth century which offer the same form of recompense (the chance of holding onto the greased tail of a steer or bull) to newly married women who are abandoned because they were not to be virgins (Dimeyent Code, II: XVII: 8; c.1306; and Venedotian Code, II: § 27, c.1200) or to a woman who has been deserted by her lover (Gwentian Code, II: XXX: 42, c.1200). The parallels might be more coincidental. Nonetheless, as Ammers stresses, the chance of recompense is designed as a form of public performance, and is almost certainly based on the form of slap-stick entertainment that some leikarar might have offered, perhaps as the framework of a scene relating to illicit seductions like those depicted in Dante Sinth and the Interludium de Clerico de Puella. Of course, the tug-of-war between man and animal also offers a parallel to Sneri Sturlu- son’s description of Loki’s contest with the goat mentioned above.

A similar disregard for performers is found in what appears to be an amendment to the early Icelandic law Gryggés, contained in the Stúðhólsbók manuscript from 1280. The law deals with the forming of a “booth pavell” to convict someone of murder and states that one should go to the nearest three booths at the Thing meeting which can provide three men who are not disqualified by
their connections. However, "scale egi quahe isutare bjurør, ne sverp xirba bjurør, ne tridja, ne gonga manna . . ." (e.g. "no call is to be made at the booths of shoemakers or sword cutters . . . or träddar or vagrants . . .)." This article does not occur in the earlier Codex Regius version of Grágás from c.1260. The article presents the real only evidence that professional leikarar, boddarar, or träddar ever reached Iceland. They appear, naturally enough, in a tent, or "booth," at a public gathering. The context of the article, however, gives some explanation as to why leikarar were so poorly regarded by the law in both Iceland and Sweden in spite of their popularity. Apart from the fact that, all things considered, their honesty could not be trusted, they also had no fixed abode, and for the agriculturally based Scandinavian of the time, rights and respect depended on the degree to which one owned land. The irony of the Swedish laws is particularly directed at this feature. A cow is symbolic of stable farming life. While appearing valuable, it was the last thing that a travelling performer would have needed. Finally, as Anners has suggested, for the medieval German and Scandinavians, "honor" was paramount. For the leikari, honor was a saleable commodity. His performance was dependent on his preparedness to disinherit both himself and his audience. Once again, we return to that fact that the Scandinavian leikarar of the early Middle Ages should be ranked alongside the mini, histriiones, and incantatres described in other European sources. They were no mere musicians or jugglers. Everything suggests that as well as playing music and performing various circus acts, the leikarar also indulged in slap-stick mimetic comedy, told stories, sang songs, and presented elementary dramatic scenes, mocking satires, and probably also "nameless representations" ("imaginatio ibonoma") like the historion described by Thomas de Callam in c.1213. In this sense, they deserve more attention than they have been given in the past for the role they played in bringing the performing arts to Scandinavia. Clearly, in spite of the attitude to them displayed by the skalds, the Church, and the lawgivers, the popularity of the leikarar was continuously growing throughout the early Middle Ages in line with the extension of court life on the European model. In the eyes of the common people, they were a wonder and a glory. Their glory, however, was fleeting. In the final

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analysis, those who were entertained by the leikarar made certain that their entertainers had no real rights in this world or the next.

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NOTES

1 All translations in the following article are my own, unless otherwise noted. I would like to express my gratitude to Ruti McTike and Andrew Wray of the University of Leeds for the help and advice they have given me with regard to the preparation of this article.


4 See in particular Gunnell, The Origins, pp. 182-329.


7 See Richard Cleary and Gudmundur Vigfuson, An Icelandic-English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 382 (where at least the word "play"") is also referred to "leikur." (pp. 396, 642); Jóhannes Prýnz, Oralbog over den Gamlan Horke Spægoogle (Iceland: 1888-96), II, 471-72; 350, and II, 744; Scandinavium Ethnus and Framer, Ikonik Forrini, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Ikonik Forrini, 1933), pp. 367, 373; and Jan de Vries, Almshouses in Central Europe (The Hague, 1988), 2nd ed. (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1981), pp. 382, 399. As proof that these references continue to be used, see John Liedtke, "Two Skattic Status in Gjøtenæring," Arkfor Nordisk Filologie, 92 (1972), pp. 116-29, an article which otherwise offers some very useful discussion on the present subject.

8 See Prýnz, Oralbog, pp. 471-72, 350; Scandinavium Ethnus and Framer, 484, 373; and de Vries. Waterboek, p. 342. See also Arne Øhlert, "Ildverdene: Skattic Status in Central Europe," Oslo: Synod (Oslo: 1891), pp. 74-84, 265-66.


12 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

13 See, for example, Eriksson, "Idetext", ibid, 1987, 17, 19.

14 See, for example, Eriksson, "Idetext", ibid, 1987, 17, 19. See also Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

15 See, for example, Eriksson, "Idetext", ibid, 1987, 17, 19.

16 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

17 See, for example, Eriksson, "Idetext", ibid, 1987, 17, 19.

18 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

19 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

20 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

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23 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

24 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

25 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

26 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

27 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

28 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

29 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

30 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

31 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

32 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

33 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

34 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

35 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

36 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

37 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

38 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

39 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

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43 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

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46 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

47 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

48 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

49 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

50 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

51 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

52 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

53 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.

54 See, for example, Holmström, "Lexik och Skjutn", in "Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid", X, 469-82.
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For the relevant passage in John of Salisbury's Policraticus (I.8), see Paratolos Curiel Complex, Sat. Lat., ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Jacques Paul 1844-44), CCXCV, 405-56; translation given in Tydeman, The Theatre in the Middle Ages, p. 187. For Thomas de Cartham, the original text is given in Chambers, Medieval Stage, II, 263-63, and a translation is provided in Tydeman, The Theatre in the Middle Ages, pp. 187-88.

See Austin, European Drama, p. 1.

See Römerbuehner, ed. Rudolf Mautner (Berlin: Meier and Müller, 1933), p. 16 (early thirteenth century), where "licher in die hüfte" is a translation for "Isaak" ("Camp follower") in Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum, XLIV, 5, and XLIV, 2; see Sallust, and ed. and tr. J. C. Raffe, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1950), pp. 230-31. A similar use of the word "licher" is found in the translated Maria Jareger II, in Maria Stage, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania: Oslo), 1971, I, 282, and in the references to Thomas Saga Erlikshöva (p. 76), Folgogi Saga, and Saxo Grammaticus' Gesta Danorum given below. The translation of the Brønns Lai der Lækenen as "Lezgri top" in the late-thirteenth century Stenestrøm saga seems to be based on a mistranslating involving the words "leze" and "lither"; see Stenestrom, ed. Robert Clark and Marius Tveite (Oslo: Norske Historiske Klubbkas (Innsbruck, 1979), pp. 207-09.

Gregory the Great, Dialogues, translated in the late twelfth century, where "licher" is simply a translation for a man who "can sima vuna prencis conjutit" ("was walking with a monkey, playing a clarinet"); see Helgag Maona Sagar, ed. C. D. Unger (Christiania: Oslo), B. M. Bentzen, 1871, I, 93-95, and Gesellla Gregoriai Magni, Dialogorum, Liber I, in Paratolos Curiel Complex, Sat. Lat., ed. Migne, LXXVII, 197; Vita Paivi (late thirteenth century), where "licher" is a translation for "syphonemico" in Tyrannus Rufinus Historia Monarcharum in Aegyptos: see Helgag Maona Saga, II, 411-12; Folgogi Saga, and Saxo Saga Erlikshoova, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania: Oslo), B. M. Bentzen, 1659, p. 90 (thirteenth century), where "enger lüfter eller lek irak" is used to translate "non choralis" ("no reed pipe player") in the Quintodes Vasa Sigeni Thomas: Bruno Saga (early thirteenth century), where "licher" is a translation for "cyphurarien"; see Stenestrom, ed. P. Janssen (Copenhagen: Thoas Bugarugksen, 1892-96), p. 288; and The Historic Magus Birugkato of Gregoriai Magnus, ed. Anton Grumien (London: Longmans, Green, 1929), p. 934. See also Tristian Saga (c. 1326), in Saga of Tristan og Isolde samt Målla Saga, ed. Gudl Bjornfjell (Copenhagen: Thiels, 1976), pp. 104, c.1726. The original section of Thomas' Roman de Tristan on which this was based is lost, but the context implies that the "licher" here was specifically a harp player. The same is implied by the use of the word "licher" in Burlian Saga (translated from Latin c.1250) where Burlianoki og Isfolkja Saga, ed. Magdel Ronaldo (Oslo: Norske Historiske Klubbkas (Innsbruck, 1961), p. 7.


See Austin, European Drama, p. 1.

See Römerbuehner, ed. Rudolf Mautner (Berlin: Meier and Müller, 1933), p. 16 (early thirteenth century), where "licher in die hüfte" is a translation for "Isaak" ("Camp follower") in Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum, XLIV, 5, and XLIV, 2; see Sallust, and ed. and tr. J. C. Raffe, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1950), pp. 230-31. A similar use of the word "licher" is found in the translated Maria Jareger II, in Maria Stage, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania: Oslo), 1971, I, 282, and in the references to Thomas Saga Erlikshöva (p. 76), Folgogi Saga, and Saxo Grammaticus' Gesta Danorum given below. The translation of the Brønns Lai der Lækenen as "Lezgri top" in the late-thirteenth century Stenestrøm saga seems to be based on a mistranslating involving the words "leze" and "lither"; see Stenestrom, ed. Robert Clark and Marius Tveite (Oslo: Norske Historiske Klubbkas (Innsbruck, 1979), pp. 207-09.

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"See Saxo above.

"See Saxo Grammaticus, Gesta Danorum", pp. 154-55, trans. in The History of the Danes, pp. 172-73. For two other references to trove, see Saxo Danorum, p. 160 (translating as a "tawse vel pacificus" after dinner) and p. 113 (a figure complaint about disposing with a "scramber" who "vexes voce militum viget", "cheers on empty jets"); translated in The History of the Danes, pp. 180 and 127. For another example of the use of the word histriarum in Denmark during this period (for musicians getting a queen), see Saxo Agnam's Compendium Regum Danorum Historia cl. (1835), Scriptores Saxo Danorum, vol. 1, Copenhagen: A. H. Godtfred, 1917, p. 30: "Qvam ingeri ductus cauponum causarum histriarum, in balit, citibus, urbis, et circumst ignosmodatere.

"Heimskringla, ed. Bjorn Matthay, 1970, vol. 3, 215; a very similar word appears in Pollux's Saga of Bor, ed. Henrik Bertelsen (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1905-11), III, 211. Two wings of the Aesir's army are said to be accompanied by "skulfi stoldi ("the kinsmen of a large army") and "meninke har hollade" ("a large army of hooligans")."

"See Philip Schuyler Allen, "The Medieval Mimic", Modern Philology, 8 (1910), 58-99, for no attempt to argue that Saxon's evidence cannot be used to prove that he was aware of the dramatic implications behind the terminology he adopted.


"Indeed, when King Gylfi visits Völusin in Gylfaginning, he sees a man juggling with swords outside, and of other forms of leikum ("games") going on inside; see Snetterton, Ede, op. cit., p. 91-120.

"Regarding Alexander Saga, see above, n. 41. See also Karlundmann Saga at Kappo heim, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania: Ottem, 1860), p. 10 (where "finn leikum" might mean either "neat leikum" or simply "amateur", i.e., "amateur" and also p. 51.


"One can add to this list a description given in Saxo's Sturmar's history of the Norwegian kings, Heimskringla, written c. 1270, telling of musicians appearing as a reception that was supposedly given by King Olaf Eirikson of Sweden in c. 1019; see Heimskringla, II, 151-152. See also the reference to

Sven Agnus's Compendium Regum Danorum Historia given above in n. 39. The icelandic romances Atlas Saga Leikra and Nikulass Saga Leikra come from the same period as the other romances. The former work, which has never been published, has nothing obvious to do with Leikra. The title of the latter saga is apparently explained by the statement that King Nikulass ("Oak" leikar-makir, mean landknaust var vor stig medaltal"; "practiced the art of the leikra, to which the people (of Hungary) were strongly opposed"). However, it is now made clear which act this is supposed to be, see Sogu of Nikulass Ramgari Leikra, ed. Helgi Assmann (Reykjavik: Guntert, 1912), p. 8. For further examples of the use of the word leikra in Swedish works from this period, see Hufred, "Munkar och Leikra", p. 33-36.


"See Svolus Saga Kvarnasvarn, p. 16 ("red saurngr"), Kirulv Saga, p. 23 ("tegning og leikia"), and p. 72 ("trengker ghilie"); and Svolus Saga a sýpur, (1963), p. 257 ("tvang og dranþuguna"). The singing of songs ("ctyrnon tungs") is also included among the skills of the leikar mentioned in the mid-thirteenth-century Old Norse translation of Barlaus Saga ok Rafaflaug; see Barlaus ok Joripatse Saga, p. 7.


"Pröfils Saga af Berv, I, 265.

"Ibid., I, 261. This provides support for Chambers's statement that the early fourteenth-century "hisormar" were "licensed vagabonds", i.e., "law free" of the presence-chambers of the dead (Ecole Medieval, I, 44).

"Pröfils Saga af Berv, I, 263.

"Ibid., I, 262.

"Ibid., I, 242, 261-67.

"Ibid., II, 116, 149-50.

"See Saga of Trjáfnas at Íslad, p. 90, and Brosa Sopur, p. 280, where the description of how Baldr cut his hair and beard and dressed as a minstrel ("cytharist") is literally translated as Icelandic as "Balder... let his hair sit on a chair. He sat like a leikra har... Once again, the readers are expected to understand what a leikra har ("leikar-makir") means. The meaning of this word (as a place where a leikar and his companions shared their heads like their fellow performers abroad, see Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Minstrels, p. 161-63.

"Soga of Nikurals at Níkur, p. 49, 54.

"Hovell, Masks, Mimes, and Minstrels, p. 160. See also above, n. 15.

"See Kirkun saga, p. 51 (Book II, the marriage of Pippen and Oif), Pröfils Saga, I, 242, and the translation of the "La de Laraus, Strengleikur, p. 214.

"On the basis of saga evidence, this same practice applied to skalds of earlier times. The skalds, however, were even more regally rewarded with weapons or arm-rags. This never applies to the leikar.

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