



Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies

Lecture Announcement

12 October | 15.15-17.00 | Drift 23, 1.13



Voicing Emotion in Old Norse Literature

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The Norse literary tradition is well known for its objective narrative style and an apparent lack of interest in the emotions of its characters. The seemingly laconic mode of portraying emotions in the Icelandic sagas - when compared with continental romance, for instance - does, however, not negate the presence of underlying emotion. Many of the sagas are in fact no less emotionally laden than the romances. This difference suggests that the emotive force of a text does not necessarily rely on emotion words or gestures (noticeably absent in sagas, but abundant in romances), but rather on the emotional signifiers with which the reader engages and to which he responds.

This lecture will focus on the way in which poetic voice, i.e. versification, is used in Old Norse literature to convey interior emotionality. Given the preferred objective narratorial mode of the saga literature, poetry frequently serves as means of conveying and expressing an emotive interiority otherwise denied or suppressed in the prose text. The lecture will touch upon examples from the saga literature, including the better known sagas *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, as well as some Eddic poems to consider how emotions are conveyed in Old Norse literature.

