# Boreal Medievalism: The Imaginary of the Viking Age

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## Abstract
This article develops the notion of *boreal medievalism* through a dialogue between Nordic studies – with the concept of borealism – and History – with the notion and field of medievalism. The discourses on and representations of the Viking Age are characterised by their plasticity, their alterity from western medievalism, and their proximity to the reader. *Boreal medievalism* refers, therefore, to a specific and distinct form of medievalism constructed in an identity-based alterity (*altérité identitaire*) and established through the intertwining of three imaginaries: a geographical one with the North, a temporal one with the Middle Ages and the Viking Age, as well as an ethnic one with the figure of the Viking.

## Keywords
Medievalism; borealism; Viking Age; imaginary; boreal medievalism

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This article proposes to develop the notion of *boreal medievalism* through a dialogue between the fields of Medieval studies and Nordic studies.[i] Within the studies on the imaginary of the North,[ii] borealism has been, in the past years, the object of a theoretical development led by Sylvain Briens (2016, 2018, 2021). Besides a geographical and climatic imaginary, the concept also incorporates the cultural imaginary 'formed by the whole of the social, cultural, psychological conditions of the North' (Briens 2016: 182). Borealism can thus be defined as the dynamic constitutional process of the North. In the case of medievalism, I follow in this study the definition proposed by Louise d'Arcens: 'the reception, interpretation, or recreation of the Middle Ages in post-medieval cultures' (D'Arcens 2016: 1).[iii] The objects of study covered by this notion are characterised by their diverse nature: literature, architecture, video games, TV shows, re-enactments, medieval festivals, academic productions, etc.[iv] Due to the intrinsic link with the figure of the Viking and the Nordic deities, boreal medievalism predominantly aligns with the Viking Age, which is currently accepted as dating from the eighth to the eleventh century.

Through the intertwining of geographical, temporal, and ethnic imaginaries, the discourses and representations of the Viking Age refer to a specific and distinct form of medievalism that is constructed in an identity-based alterity (*altérité identitaire*) that I propose to call boreal medievalism. The use of the singular does not imply a homogeneity in its representations and discourses. Instead, as an imaginary,[v] boreal medievalism is heterogeneous and characterised by its plasticity (Stahl 2021: 58). It is not a uniform or unidirectional tradition. The statements of these discourses form strata, which also include discontinuities, thresholds, gaps, and ruptures (Foucault 1997 [1969]). Each reception re-semanticises the Viking Age. Its imaginary is thus not stable, but constantly evolving. The motifs of boreal medievalism can be abandoned, developed, revived, discarded or re-semanticised. A cultural or artistic production can also introduce new motifs. It is through the spatial, temporal, and ethnic components of the Viking Age imaginary that I propose to further develop this notion.

## Spatial component

The Viking Age covers a wide range of places and spaces. The stories found in cultural and artistic productions do not exclusively take place

in Scandinavia but can also be located in other regions associated with the Viking diaspora,[vi] such as the British Isles, the North Atlantic, or the East. The Viking Age can therefore serve in these spaces as a narrative identity and be part of the cultural memory (Hermann, Glauser, and Mitchell 2018). During the nineteenth century, comparative philology facilitated the appropriation and deterritorialisation of Old Norse materials by other cultural spheres for the creation of discourses on collective identity (Van Hulle and Leerssen 2008; Bønding, Martinsen, and Stahl 2021). There has been, among others, a Frisian, Rhenish, French, Russian, and British appropriation (Stahl 2022b).[vii] The latter played an important role in the reception of the Viking Age with its use in the Victorian period (Wawn 2000). The translation of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* (*Grœnlendinga saga*), and the *Saga of Erik the Red* (*Eiríks saga rauða*) in the nineteenth century by Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864) created a fascination for Vinland (Thurin 1999). In addition, the Danish scholar suggested that the Vinland region might correspond to New England. This imaginary of Vinland has led to several sites or monuments on the American continent being perceived as evidence of the presence of Scandinavians during the Viking Age. Several 'forgeries' have also appeared, testifying to the identity issues raised by these stories from the nineteenth century to the present day (Williams 2018; Pieper 2007; Godfrey 1955), such as the Kensington stone in Minnesota (Williams 2012; Bord 2011). In 1960, the discovery of a Scandinavian site at l'Anse-aux-Meadows, in Newfoundland, rekindled the imaginary of the Viking presence in America.[viii] North America, whether through Vinland or the United States, constitutes up to this date one of the main *topoi* of this Viking diaspora in boreal medievalism.[ix]

The imaginary of the North, of which borealism is the narrative, is one of the main components of boreal medievalism.[x] I follow Daniel Chartier's understanding of the Northern imaginary as comprising:

> […] all of the discourses stated about the North, the winter, and the Arctic, which can be retraced both synchronically – for a given period – or diachronically – for a specific culture –, derived from different cultures and forms, accumulated over the centuries according to a dual principle of synthesis and competition. (Chartier 2018: 12)

This imaginary does not negate the diversity of representations of the North but attests to the existence of a shared set of motifs and 'a common aesthetic foundation' (ibid.). The representations of the Scandinavian North use different motifs or mythemes (Mohnike 2020; Mythemes of the North 2017),[xi] some of them – such as the fjord, the mountain and the snow – help familiarise the reader with this space by providing a point of reference through a recognisable visual identity (Stahl 2018a). Although these representations are, in part, linked to a geographical and climatic reality, the motifs used are applied to all of Viking Age Scandinavia which creates a unique imaginary *topos*. However, the resulting homogenisation of representations is not specific to the discourse on the Viking Age but is one of the components of the imaginary. Viking Age Scandinavia can thus become a constructed place that does not correspond to any geographical reality with a North that does not suffice on its own.[xii]

An aesthetic shift from the Northern to the Arctic imaginary can be observed in contemporary cultural and artistic productions (ibid.: 70–4). The idea of the Arctic as a territory is relatively recent in borealist discourses and representations since it developed mainly in the nineteenth century with the explorations and scientific studies of the North Pole. The imaginary of the Viking Age in the twentieth century reflects this intertwining of winter, the North, and the Arctic described by Daniel Chartier (2018). A distinction between an imaginary of the Arctic and an imaginary of the sub-Arctic North is currently emerging. Indeed, the North is associated with a territorial representation, the place where the Scandinavians lived. It is a North that is inhabitable.[xiii] Viking Age Scandinavia is no longer the extreme, the lightless days of winter and the dark nights of summer, the white and emptiness associated with the freezing winter, the bare deciduous trees and the snow-covered conifers.[xiv] Its climate becomes milder and corresponds either to a period between autumn and winter or to summer. Ochre, brown, orange and red thus take on an increasingly central role.[xv] An aesthetic shift from the imaginary of the North to the Arctic is therefore taking place. This aesthetic shift can be explained by the growing familiarity with the Viking Age through contemporary cultural and artistic productions that have contributed to the installation of a specific aesthetic by taking into account geographical realities and the academic field. Due to climate change, the Arctic also received increased attention in the written press and TV news, which contributed to the establishment of a circumpolar imaginary that is distinct from that of the sub-Arctic North. Finally, through the

exploration of the North Atlantic, Viking Age Scandinavians are portrayed in cultural and artistic productions as pushing back the limits of the ecumene (becoming explorers, pioneers, and adventurers). Iceland represents a territory in between: its status as an Arctic space is transformed into that of a Nordic territory after its colonisation. Its preliminary function as a space for exploration and discovery fades away and Iceland becomes a junction land from which the limits of the ecumene are pushed back through the exploration of Greenland, which will lead to Vinland (Stahl 2022a: 73). This aesthetic shift from the Northern imaginary to the Arctic establishes a 'North of the North' (Bourguignon and Harrer 2019) that illustrates the dynamic dimension of borealism with the idea of North being constantly pushed back (Briens 2018: 152-153).

## Temporal component

From an exogenous perspective, the Scandinavians from the eighth to the eleventh century are part of the Middle Ages.[xvi] The development of the notion of 'Nordic Antiquities' as a cultural sphere of identity linked to the North by Paul-Henri Mallet (1730–1807) in the eighteenth century, which is opposed to Greco-Roman Antiquity, contributes to the constitution of a specific period: the Viking Age. Although the idea of a 'Viking Age' was already present in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was not until the end of that century that the notion of a specific period was established using the terms 'Viking Age' or 'Viking period' in archaeological bulletins and historical journals.[xvii] This period is nowadays delimited between the eighth and eleventh centuries. These chronological markers serve primarily as benchmarks and continue to be re-evaluated regularly;[xviii] depending on the object of study, these boundaries may be further extended.[xix] The cultural and artistic productions on the Viking Age are not only connected to imagined geographies, but also to, what I propose to call, 'imagined temporalities' (Stahl 2022a: 110–11). This notion relies on studies on the reception of History (Leduc 1991), on the regimes of historicity,[xx] on periodisation (Pomian 1999), on memory, and, more generally, on historiography with the writing and rewriting of the past. It provides us with the possibility to detach ourselves from our objects (Middle Ages, Viking Age) in order to highlight the mechanisms and processes that underly each specific imaginary, namely medievalism and boreal

medievalism. Imagined temporalities include a multitude of discourses based on broad periods such as the Middle Ages or on more specific periodisations within the same period. Furthermore, boreal medievalism is mainly based on texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which testifies to an early phase of reception of what is referred to as the Viking Age – a period perceived in these texts as distinctly belonging to the past (Hermann 2009; Wanner 2008). The sagas, ballads, *Snorri's Edda* and some contemporary eddic and scaldic poems already develop an imagination of the past on which the productions of the modern and contemporary periods are based. The use of the notion of 'imagined temporalities' helps us therefore to question the different temporal scales employed in order to unravel the intertwining of their imaginaries.

The Viking Age has been and continues to be the subject of many memorial, political, religious, and identity-related uses in relation to time, place, and contexts of enunciation (Meylan and Rösli 2020; Hermann, Glauser, and Mitchell 2018). The study of boreal medievalism requires us to take the discourses and representations that were created in previous periods into account. Multiple values and visions were assigned to the Viking Age and its mythology, which served, among others: as cultural capital – especially in the thirteenth century; as counter-Antiquity to the Greco-Roman classics; as material for nation-building during the long nineteenth century; as a source of propaganda during the two World Wars; as a support for Nazi ideological uses during the Third Reich; as a re-semanticisation within conservative, far-right, and white supremacist nationalist groups; as a religious movement within the framework of neo-Paganism; as motifs for Fantasy under the impetus of William Morris and J. R. R. Tolkien; and as a source of inspiration for the metal music genre and its various styles such as Viking metal. Artistic and cultural productions are therefore placed in a discursive continuity that has enabled the establishment of certain motifs. These productions can, for example, prolong aesthetic models derived from Gothicism, the sublime, or Romanticism. They may also abandon or oppose older representations. Boreal medievalism also reflects some of the issues of contemporary society, such as: ecology, the question of the representation of non-Caucasian people or of the LGBTQ+ communities within a Viking Age traditionally associated with hyper-masculinity.[xxi] This great diversity of present and past uses testifies to the plasticity of the imaginary of the Viking Age and its capacity to be reshaped. If this plasticity is not specific to this period, since it is above all linked to the imaginary, it is nonetheless facilitated by borealism

through its notions of pioneer, place of projection of dreams, and sensitive space.

The academic reception is part of the temporal component of boreal medievalism. Since the Viking Age is not directly observable, its 'reality' is transmitted through academic productions. In addition to the endogenous and exogenous visions of borealism (Ballotti 2018; see also Balotti in this issue), I thus propose to incorporate a third vision – commonly used within the field of medievalism – entitled 'academic' (Stahl 2020). As I stressed in a previous study, boreal medievalism can also be understood as the result of the interaction of these three visions (ibid.). The term 'academic' refers here to a vision whose main aim is to describe a historical reality based on contemporary knowledge. Indeed, research produces its own visions of the Viking Age, the reception of which can be studied in time through historiography, but also in space through the notion of places of knowledge (Livingstone 2003; Jacob 2007, 2011; Grage and Mohnike 2017). The studies produced are also central to the reception and representation of the Viking Age, if only because they provide access to translations of Norse texts such as the sagas, *Snorri's Edda* or the *Poetic Edda*, which initially require text editions. The use of the academic vision can also serve to promote the cultural or artistic production by highlighting its focus on authenticity. The productions can be punctuated with elements, descriptions, accessories which could be perceived as '*superflus*' (superfluous), as '*remplissages*' (fillings) (Barthes 1986: 84). However, these elements correspond to what Barthes calls the *effet de rée*l (reality effect) and which participate not only in the aesthetics of the works, but also in the quest for authenticity. A negotiation between this quest for authenticity and the *Erwartungshorizont* (Jauss 1982), the 'horizon of expectation', which corresponds to the knowledge and preconceptions – namely the system of references – of the reader, can also take place. This negotiation can lead the author or creator to resort to a *selective authenticity* (Salvati and Bullinger 2013: 154) by seeking to be more faithful to the sensations and emotions and which results in a *hyperreal* (Eco 1986; Baudrillard 1981; Gombrich 1980) representation that appears truer than the academic vision from which it originates (Moberly B. and K. 2010).[xxii]

## Ethnic component

Through the figure of the Viking, boreal medievalism also includes an ethnic component. The imaginary of the Scandinavians of the Viking Age was developed by the interweaving of several discourses, such as the theory of climates which, via climatic determinism, considered the peoples of the North to be more robust and courageous (Pinna 1989), or the imaginary of the barbarian (Dumézil 2016; Shillinger and Alexandre 2008; Rix 2015; Di Filippo 2020). If the term 'Viking' initially did not correspond to a specific ethnic group, it has nowadays taken on a broader meaning and represents a specific people in the imaginary.[xxiii] In Old Norse texts, the term mainly refers to an activity: the feminine *víking* refers to the seasonal sea expedition, while the masculine *víkingr* (pl. *víkingar*) refers to the person who takes part in this sea expedition. In the nineteenth century, particularly during the Victorian era, the term began to replace the previously prevailing designations *Northmen* and *Danes*.[xxiv] The use of the adjective 'viking' in academic and popular publications to refer to the art, architecture, culture, and daily life of the period, reinforced the assimilation of the term 'Viking' with the Scandinavians of the eighth to eleventh centuries.[xxv] The term has now become a 'marketing tool' and is also used in a broad sense for the advertisement of some academic works (Stahl 2022a). Some researchers, such as Judith Jesch, emphasise the advantages of using this inclusive term (Jesch 2015: 7), while others condemn this development (Driscroll 2020: 24), proposing to use the lower case to emphasise that it was primarily an activity (Gautier 2017: 104; Bauduin 2004: 16). We can therefore find the influence of the academic vision with some cultural and artistic productions that are aware of the revaluation of the term Viking and use other qualifiers such as 'Danes' (Stahl 2022a: 107–9). This does not mean that the imaginary of the traditional Viking with the horned helmet is disappearing (Frank 2000; Stahl 2018b). Indeed, the imaginary of the traditional Viking can also be detached from the figure of the historical Viking to take on, among other things, its independence within fantasy or to be used as a humorous component in certain productions. As I pointed out in a previous study:

> *Ce n'est pas le Viking historique qui est present, mais celui qui s'est construit aux XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles et qui n'a pas besoin d'être ancré entre le VIII^e^ et le XI^e^ siècle pour être compris et reconnu.* (Stahl 2018b: 227–8)

> (It is not the historical Viking who is present, but the one who was constructed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and who does not need to be anchored between the eighth and eleventh centuries in order to be understood and recognised.)

Through the figure of the Viking and his imaginary, boreal medievalism also invokes three central themes of borealism, namely exploration, adventure, and the notion of the pioneer (Toudoire-Surlapierre, et al 2021). These are intrinsically linked to the imaginary of the Viking diaspora and particularly the exploration of the North Atlantic. Moreover, one of the specificities of borealism, which differentiates it from orientalism, is the situation of the pioneer in which the enunciator is placed: 'while the one who speaks of the "Orient" is a dominator, the one who speaks of the "North" is a pioneer' (Briens 2018: 165; see also Cedergren 2019: 740). Like the North, the Viking Age 'invites the enunciator to think of himself as an explorer, pioneer or adventurer' (Toudoire-Surlapierre, et al. 2021: 5). The lack of contemporary representation on the Viking Age or on Norse mythology (compared to other periods or mythologies) places creators and authors in a pioneering position and, at the same time, offers them freedom in the representations of divinities, which can be in continuity with the aesthetic codes that were established in the nineteenth century or, conversely, can seek to establish an original, unique representation (Stahl 2022a: 130–45, 162–70). In boreal medievalism we also find the ethical issues of the imaginary of the North, with the people and cultures of the Arctic being ignored or minimised in order to make this geographical area a space of whiteness, of emptiness, outside the ecumene, 'at times with the rhetorical objective of reinforcing the image of an uninhabited and uninhabitable Arctic, often by persistent political and ethnic prejudices' (Chartier 2018: 10). Apart from the presence of the *Skrælingjar*, which is one of the central motifs of the Vinland exploration narratives, other northern peoples such as the Sámi are often absent or minimised. The non-inclusion in the discourse of 'those who lived there (Inuit, Sami, Cree, etc.)' (ibid.: 15–6) is thus one of the issues at stake in the cultural, artistic, and academic productions on the Viking Age.

The imaginary of the Scandinavians of the Viking Age, as well as the geographical imaginary, allow for the development of an aesthetic specific to boreal medievalism, which places it in alterity with western medievalism. The motifs of boreal medievalism thus enter into

altercation with those of western medievalism through a series of dichotomic mythemes/motifs:[xxvi] hammer vs. cross; *völva* vs. priest or bishop; *stavkirker* (stave churches) vs. stone churches/cathedrals; funeral pyre vs. burial; sword vs. axe; high mountain vs. low mountain.[xxvii] Boreal medievalism cannot, however, be defined in a simple opposition to western medievalism. Both belong, as we have seen above, to the same imagined temporality of the Middle Ages. There is an intertwining of the two imaginaries which participates in the re-semanticisation of the Middle Ages. Cultural and artistic productions can therefore play with the traditional discourse on the *barbarian Viking* based, among others, on the chronicles, annals and *Vitae* which mainly present the Scandinavians as invaders. The deconstruction of this traditional discourse by the artistic or cultural productions participates in their promotion and offers at the same time another image of the Scandinavians of the Viking Age with which the reader can identify. The North can thus represent, within medievalism, the place where social ascension is possible, a society of entrepreneurs in opposition to the established power of Western Europe (Stahl 2018a: 293). The North as a societal ideal is a central motif of borealism found as early as antiquity through the vision of the Hyperborean society (see introduction to this issue), which was consolidated by Montesquieu in the modern period and continues to this day through the Scandinavian model and its representation as welfare states. Artistic and cultural productions can be part of these borealist discourses and choose to deconstruct the association of the Viking Age with the traditional imaginary of the barbarian to make it a place of equity. This societal ideal is also characterised today by the role of women in boreal medievalism with women's participation in territorial defence, attacks, invasions and politics (Stahl 2018a) that is in contrast to western medievalism. These representations are based on a historical reality with the figure of the warrior woman, on the medieval imaginary through the discourses in the sagas, on the avant-garde image of the North in terms of equality between women and men, and on contemporary values. The North can thus serve as a vector of representations of the evolution of mentalities and societal realities for cultural and artistic productions on the Middle Ages.

## Conclusion: An identity-based alterity

Through boreal medievalism, we can perceive the Viking Age as a discourse, the product of a cultural construct and of symbolic stakes.

This discourse is formed through the intertwining of three imaginaries: a geographical one with the North, a temporal one with the Middle Ages and the Viking Age, as well as an ethnic one with the figure of the Viking. Boreal medievalism is characterised not only by its alterity from western medievalism, but also by its proximity to the reader. The current aesthetic shift of the Northern imaginary to the Arctic not only makes this region habitable but also brings it closer to the readers. This Scandinavian North of the Viking Age is thus situated in Europe, but at its extremity. This identity-based alterity is reflected in the periodisation with the Viking Age taking place during the Middle Ages from an exogenous perspective, while predating it from an endogenous perspective. Finally, within the ethnic component, the Viking Age becomes, in the framework of boreal medievalism, the place of expression of a societal ideal. Through its spatial, temporal, and ethnic components, boreal medievalism can thus be defined through the establishment of an identity-based alterity.

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i This notion was first introduced in one of my articles (Stahl 2020) and further developed in my habilitation (Stahl 2022a).

ii See, among others: Arndt, Blödorn, Fraesdorff & Weisner 2004; Schram 2011; Hamelin 1996; Stadius 2001; Davidson 2005; Mohnike 2007, 2016, 2022; Grage & Mohnike 2017; Oxfeldt 2005; Chartier 2008, 2018; Cedergren 2019; Toudoire-Surlapierre 2020; Ballotti, McKeown and Toudoire-Surlapierre

2020; Fülberth, Meier & Andrés Ferretti 2010; Giles, Chapot, Cooijmans, Foster & Tesio 2016; Teuber 2001; Hormuth & Schmidt 2010.

iii On medievalism, see also Utz 2017; Ferré 2011 and 2020; Fugelso 2009; Matthews 2015; di Carpegna Falconieri 2019; Pugh & Weisl 2013.

iv I will use the term 'reader' throughout this article in a broad sense to designate any person interacting with boreal medievalism, whether he or she is a viewer, a gamer, a listener, etc.

v On the imaginary see Bachelard 1943, Castoriadis 1975, Durand 1997 [1960], Taylor 2004, Sartre 2005 [1940], Wunenburger 2003.

vi On the term diaspora and the corresponding regions see Jesch 2015.

vii On the specificities of the imaginary of divinities, see Stahl 2022a.

viii This discourse on Vinland is also part of the broader discourse on the discovery of the American continents.

ix We find this *topos* notably in works related to what I have termed the 'Nouvelle vague nord-médiévale' [New North-Medieval Wave] (circa 2010-ongoing) (Stahl, 2022a 10-13). It is thus present in *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard* (2015-2017), the films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe with Thor (2011-2022), the *Vikings* (2013-2020) TV show and its spin off *Vikings: Valhalla* (2022-ongoing), the game *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* (2020) (Stahl 2022 a 76-79).

x For a discussion on the links between nordicity and medievalism, see Gautier, Wilkin, Parsis-Barubé & Dierkens 2021.

xi In order to analyze the imaginary of the North, Thomas Mohnike proposes to take as a starting point the 'mythemes of social knowledge', which he defines as the smallest narrative units. He thus adapts the notion initially developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, by proposing to make it a 'productive misunderstanding'. The mythemes are not stable narrative units, but are constantly reconfigured (Mohnike 2020, Mythemes of the North 2017).

xii This is the case for scenes set in Iceland in seasons 5 and 6 of the television series *Vikings*, in which we find an emphasis on the imagery of the North through the addition of a CGI (computer-generated imagery) geyser (Stahl 2022a: 63-66).

xiii Iceland represents a territory in between: its status as an Arctic space is transformed into that of a Nordic territory after its colonisation. Its preliminary function as a space for exploration and discovery fades away and Iceland becomes a junction land from which the limits of the ecumene are pushed back through the exploration of Greenland, which will lead to Vinland.

xiv The imaginary of the medieval North in the 20th century reflects this intertwining between winter, the North and the Arctic, which we find, for example, in René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo's comic book series *Asterix*. The first panel representing the North in *Astérix et les Normands* (1966) contains the motifs: turbulent sea; icebergs; North; distant space; harsh winters; wind; snow; ice (Gosciny & Uderzo 1966: 9). The album *La Grande Traversée* (1975) dedicates a page to this North, its panels are entirely white except for the last blue panel, which allows for a transition to the Gaulish village (Gosciny & Uderzo 1975: 5). The protagonists discover this North after their adventures in the New World, a North that is characterized by the motifs: iceberg; silence; fog; frozen sea; white expanses; snow (ibid.: 41).

xv See, for example, the current treatment in video games such as *God of War* (2018) with Wildwoods.

xvi From an endogenous perspective, the Middle Ages refer to the period following this Viking Age. For the distinction between endogenous and exogenous visions, see Ballotti 2018.

xvii As Stefan Berger points out, periodisation plays an important role in national historiographies at this time (Berger 2011: 31-32).

xviii Judith Jesch proposes, for example, to delimit the period between 750 and 1100 (Jesch 2015: 8-10). The University of York project led by Steve Ashby and Dries Tys introduces the notion of a 'long Viking Age' from about 700 to 1100. Project title: 'Cultures in communication in the long Viking Age', University of York, 01/04/2021-30/09/2022.

xix From a religious perspective, it is possible to start the period in the second century BCE, taking into account the High, Middle and Late Iron Age (Andrén 2020).

xx The consideration of the social relationship to time is essential for the treatment of imagined temporalities. On the notion of the regime of historicity see: Hartog 2003.

xxi The discourses of hyper-masculinity and white supremacy can be linked. On hyper-masculinity, see: Davidek 2020.

xxii The Uppsala temple exemplifies this aspect well in the TV show Vikings where it is located at the top of a mountain (Season 1, Episode 8, "Sacrifice"). As I noted in a previous article (Stahl 2018a: 291-292), the flat terrain of the Uppsala region was well-known to the production team. The presence of stairs, the steep slope, and the physical effort required to reach the location serve as initiation and transition before accessing the temple. The presence of the waterfall and fog enhances the mystical dimension of this center. Through these changes, the production team sought to convey to the viewer the sensations or emotions that - in their view - the medieval Scandinavians might have experienced.

xxiii The 'Vikings' thus join the wider imaginary of the peoples of the North, notably the Hyperboreans and the Goths.

xxiv Christine E. Fell notes that the term viking is not found in the English language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Various works contributed to the establishment of the term in the nineteenth century, including Sir Walter Sclott's The Pirate, published in 1822 (Fell 1987: 114).

xxv It even takes on an ethnic meaning, with 'Vikings' being regarded as the still-living indigenous people of Scandinavia for some foreign tourists. [Informal exchange on the dinner visits to the Moesgaard Museum with Lis Møller at the University of Aarhus on 07/11/2019].

xxvi The category of 'dichotomic mythemes' I am proposing is a reference to the significant oppositions of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1973).

xxvii The promotion of Ubisoft's game *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* through the artwork by Kode Abdo (2019) illustrates the dichotomy between the mythemes/motifs of the Medieval North and those of Western Europe. The motifs of the Medieval North come into altercation with those of Western Europe through a series of dichotomous mythemes: axe vs. sword/lance; high

mountain vs. low mountain; wild nature vs. castle; dark colors vs. warm colors; Viking warrior vs. knight.