Introduction: In this article I intend to discuss the role of the malevolent restless dead in medieval Iceland by making a case study of the so-called wonders of Fróðá (Fróðárundr) in Eyrbyggja saga. In general, for the living such creatures seem to be a source of various forms of malice and fear. I will argue that the role of the ghosts in the Fróðárundr is to represent social disequilibria caused by diverse psychosocial conflicts present in the society in question, and thus offer a discourse on various moral issues. In Eyrbyggja saga’s case, these clashes concern failures to follow certain sexual norms, and the psychosocial problems that have resulted from this, such as the birth of offspring with indeterminate social status. For the ghost-banisher the hauntings represent an opportunity to improve his own indeterminate status.

Sammendrag

The article concerns the ghost story of Eyrbyggja saga, the so-called wonders of Fróðá (Fróðárundr), and examines the symbolic meanings of this episode as they were interpreted in medieval Iceland. The analysis presupposes that, although the restless dead could be understood by medieval readers and as part of their social reality, the heterogenic nature of the audience and the learning of the writers of the sagas made possible various interpretations of the ghost-scene, both literal and symbolic. It is argued that the living dead in Eyrbyggja saga act as agents of order, whose restlessness is connected to past deeds of those still living that have caused social disequilibrium. In Fróðárundr these actions involve expressions of disapproved sexuality and birth of offspring with indeterminate social status. For the ghost-banisher the hauntings represent an opportunity to improve his own indeterminate status.

Fulltekst:

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