Kendra Willson

10 A Saga King in a Finnish Beijing Opera

Introduction

Sigurd Ring is a Beijing opera-style theatrical performance produced in Finland in Swedish in 2016, based on a legendary Danish-Swedish king of the eighth century, whose story is mediated through various medieval sources in Old Norse and Latin, a seventeenth-century Latin paraphrasis of a lost saga, and a nineteenth-century Swedish Romantic play. The visual, kinetic, and musical language of the opera contains some striking analogues to commonplaces of saga style. The modern fusion of traditions highlights affinities in the ethos of the worlds represented in the very different genres.

Many of the Old Norse texts written in Iceland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lend themselves naturally to dramatic performance. Some may have their origins in ritual drama.[1] Sagas and Eddic poems have been adapted for the stage in modern times in many different ways, from the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring der Nibelungen* to *Mr. Skallagrímsson*, Benedikt Erlingsson's one-man comic take on *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.

Adaptations of stories across media, centuries, and traditions show the versatility of the narratives. Different tellings, interpretations, and adaptations bring out different aspects of a story. This applies both to narratives that are retold in oral tradition and in the fluid authorship of medieval literature, as well as to dramatic texts as performed. As Reba Gostand writes, "Drama, as an art form, is a constant process of translation."[2] Each new production involves an interpretation of a text from a written medium to a live performance, tied to a specific place and time. This holds especially for productions that move the text into a different cultural idiom and tradition. Shaping the story of Sigurd Ring into a form from a non-Western culture makes it less of a period piece and shifts it away from Nordic nationalistic traditions. It highlights archetypes and universals that can be clothed in very different trappings.

Sigurd Ring in Sagas and Saxo

The eighth-century king Sigurd Ring (Sigurðr hringr Randversson) is mentioned briefly in numerous Old Norse sources, mainly of the types classified as kings'

Kendra Willson, University of Turku

https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513886-011

sagas (*konungasögur*) and legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), as well as in the twelfth-century Latin history *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus.[3] Sigurðr belongs to the time treated in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sagas as the ancient past, before the settlement of Iceland in the ninth and tenth centuries. Nonetheless, in many ways the social structures and values depicted in the legendary sagas and the modes of narration invoked are similar to those seen in sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*).[4]

Sigurðr himself is a minor character in these sources. He is described as having been the ruler of Svealand and Västergötland. He is noted primarily for having defeated his uncle King Haraldr hilditönn (Wartooth) at the battle of Brávellir, thereby becoming ruler of Sweden and Denmark. The longest preserved narrative about Sigurðr, in book 8 of *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus, focuses on this battle.[5] The fragmentary saga (*Sögubrot*) breaks off in the middle of the account of Sigurðr and the battle,[6] but the first parts of the story more or less align with Saxo. Another legendary saga, *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, mentions a lost saga of Sigurd Ring,[7] so it is likely that a longer tradition attached to him.

Sigurd Ring's main significance is as part of a succession. He belongs to one of the most famous families in Old Norse literature: Sigurðr is the father of Ragnarr loðbrók (Hairy-breeches), whose legendary saga (*Ragnars saga loðbrókar*) continues the lineage from *Völsunga saga*. This genealogical link connects the story of Sigurd Ring to the "other" Ring opera, Richard Wagner's cycle *Der Ring der Nibelungen*. Ragnarr's mother Áslaug is the daughter of the dragon-slayer Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and the Valkyrie Brynhildr. However, there are some discrepancies in the genealogies. According to *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum* and *Skjöldunga saga*, Ragnarr's mother was named Álfhildr. The genealogical connection between Ragnarr and Sigurðr Fáfnisbani is perhaps contrived in order to give a divine/mythic pedigree for the royal lineage.[8] It has been suggested that the traditions about Ragnarr and his sons conflate several (semi-) historical figures.[9]

The saga fragment known as *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum* (Fragmentary saga of some ancient kings) contains a chapter on Sigurd Ring that ends in a lacuna. It praises the lineage of Sigurðr's first wife Álfhildr, Ragnarr's mother, and begins to describe a battle that takes place in Sigurðr's old age.[10] The account of Sigurd Ring in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* comprises just a few sentences, focusing on his battle prowess and genealogical position.[11] The image of Sigurd Ring that emerges from the different sources is of a powerful warrior king, who retained authority into his older age and was ambitious in marriage.

The proximate source for the play by Stagnelius comes from *Skjöldunga saga*. The lost saga concerns the Scylding dynasty known from *Beowulf* and is one of the eventual sources for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Bjarni Guðnason believes that *Skjöldunga saga* dated from around or before 1200.[12] Although the saga has not survived as a whole, parts of it are preserved or reworked in other texts.

The Icelander Arngrímur lærði (the learned) Jónsson (1568–1648), who had access to a version of *Skjöldunga saga* that is now lost, gives a Latin retelling of the story, with some of his own interpolations and speculation.[13] Jakob Benediktsson argues that the structure of *Skjöldunga saga* can be inferred by comparing Arngrímur's account to preserved analogues for various parts of the text.[14] Bjarni Guðnason argues that Arngrímur Jónsson's seventeenth-century translation followed its source fairly closely,[15] and shows that, for the parts of Arngrímur's account for which other versions are known, Arngrímur's narrative is at least as full as the comparanda. Arngrímur's model most likely had a lacuna that extended to part of the story of Sigurd Ring.[16]

Arngrímur's text contains a narrative in which Sigurðr, following the death of his first wife, Ragnarr's mother Álfhildr, decides to take a second wife. During a sacrificial celebration (*blót*) at Skíringssalr in Vík in Norway he notices Álfsól, daughter of Álfr, a Vendel king. He asks for her hand, but her two brothers Álfr and Yngvi refuse, which enrages Sigurðr. Once the sacrificial sanctuary has ended, they fight with armies. Both brothers are slain, but they have contrived first to poison their sister so that she will not fall into the victor's hands.[17] When the victorious but wounded Sigurðr hears of Álfsól's death, he prepares and burns a funerary boat piled with corpses and boards it to sacrifice himself alive.[18]

Saxo's account of Sigurd Ring does not include this late-life wooing story, although some of the same motifs occur in different configurations: Omund appears as an unwelcome suitor to Sigurd's own daughter,[19] and Sigurd prepares an elaborate funeral pyre for his defeated uncle Harald rather than for himself.[20] *Sögubrot* breaks off early in the story of Sigurd Ring.

Arngrímur Jónsson's text was not published until 1894, almost eighty years after Stagnelius wrote his play *Sigurd Ring: Sorgspel*. Stagnelius may have known the Sigurd story from P. F. Suhm's *Historie af Danmark*;[21] the story was also popularized through *Swerges historia för ungdom* by Magnus Bruzelius[22] (see Henrikson[23]). Whatever the source Stagnelius used, he treated the subject freely as the basis for a Romantic tragedy. It is possible that Sigurd Ring appealed as a subject in part because he is mentioned in enough texts to be considered historical, but his story is sufficiently fragmentary and little-known to allow the poet space to shape the narrative for his own purposes.[24] The story as transmitted involves a number of conventional tropes, perhaps filling gaps in historical memory, that have potential as dramatic elements: valiant resistance

in the face of overwhelming odds, the tragic death of a reluctant would-be bride, and the pageantry of pagan rituals such as the elaborate funeral. *Sigurd Ring* is a stylized story with a simple, classical structure and widespread analogues. At the same time, the psychological depth and ambivalent view of the heroic ethos also make it modern.

Stagnelius: *Sigurd Ring: Sorgspel*

Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793–1823) was a Swedish Romantic poet and playwright, who has been compared with the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.[25] Stagnelius worked extensively with Old Norse themes as well as with classical ones. *Sigurd Ring: Sorgspel* (tragedy) was the first of his "nordiska dramer" (Nordic dramas), followed by *Wisbur* and the fragment *Svegder*,[26] both of which are based on subjects from *Völsunga saga*. *Sigurd Ring* was most likely written around 1817 (when the story of Sigurd Ring became available through Bruzelius) or a couple of years later, but was published only posthumously.[27]

Here is a brief plot summary: the powerful king Sigurd demands to marry Hilma, who was supposed to marry Ragnar that day. When he encounters resistance, Sigurd challenges Ragnar and Hilma's brother Alf to combat, defeats them and triumphantly approaches Hilma – only to find her a corpse. She had preferred death and poisoned herself. In his despair Sigurd boards his ship beside Hilma's corpse and abandons himself to the flames.

The tone of the play is tragic throughout. Even when Hilma first appears on what is supposed to be her wedding day, before Sigurd has arrived, she is already in despair, having had a premonition of doom. The focus is less on action than on mood. Stagnelius introduces a love triangle by making Ragnar Hilma's betrothed, and presents both Hilma's and Sigurd's deaths as suicides.

Henrikson notes that "*Sigurd Ring* präglas av en överflodande rikedom på bilder som på ett framträdande sätt förmedlar vanitassymbolik"[28] (*Sigurd Ring* is characterized by an overwhelming richness of images which in a prominent way convey symbolism of vanity). This is stripped out of the Beijing opera adaptation, which replaces verbal imagery with the rich multimodal language of stagecraft.

Beijing Opera

Beijing or Peking opera (*jingju*, or "capital city theater") is a codified theater form with strict rules. It is the best-known genre of Chinese theater abroad. The genre

emerged near the end of the eighteenth century. Despite its name, it did not originate in Beijing, but in provincial areas. It developed from "rustic" folk dramas known collectively as *huabu*, particularly those of the middle and lower Yangtze valley in the eighteenth century,[29] but *jingju* also absorbed influences from and eventually supplanted the previously dominant *kunqu* tradition when it was imported to the capital in the early nineteenth century.[30]

Traditional Chinese theater in general is anti-realistic, stylized, and based on types. All traditional Chinese theater forms are music-based.[31] Beijing opera does not classify stories as tragedy or comedy, but as military drama (*wuxi*) and civil drama (*wenxi*).[32] Wusheng Company's productions, including *Sigurd Ring*, are military dramas (the name *Wusheng* means "male warrior"). Characters in Beijing opera are divided into well-defined types. The main character types are *sheng* (male characters), *dan* (female characters), *jing* (painted-face characters like Sigurd Ring), and *chou* ("ugly," clown characters).[33] Types are further divided by age, military skills, and social class. One criterion in Edström's selection of *Sigurd Ring* as a subject was that the characters in the play could be fit into the types of Beijing opera.

Chinese Theater in Finland

Chinese drama has been performed in Finland since the first visit by a Chinese company in 1955.[34] From 1997 to 2016, the annual festival Aasia Helsingissä (Asia in Helsinki) brought visiting companies from different Asian countries to perform in Helsinki.[35] This festival indirectly inspired the foundation of Wusheng Company: seeing a performance of Beijing opera at the festival led Antti Silvennoinen to study the art in Beijing.[36] Silvennoinen has since spread this interest to others, including Elias Edström.

Silvennoinen and Edström founded Wusheng Company in 2011 in order to create opportunities to perform Beijing opera in Finland, the only company of its kind in the world producing professional Beijing opera abroad.[37] Over the period 2011–2016 the company produced a dozen plays, ranging from classical Beijing operas to fusion productions such as *Sigurd Ring*. Edström left Wusheng Company in 2016 and in 2017 founded Matchbox Company, which produced additional performances of *Sigurd Ring* in Kajaani in 2017.[38]

Sigurd Ring is Elias Edström's (b. 1988) debut as director and playwright. Edström (Figure 10.1) studied physical theater at Svenska yrkeshögskolan in Vaasa (now part of Novia University of Applied Sciences). Part of the program involved becoming acquainted with a different theatrical tradition, so in the

Figure 10.1: Elias Edström as Sigurd Ring (image used in production poster). Photo by Mitro Härkkönen.

third year of the four-year program, Edström spent four months on exchange in China. Beijing opera appealed to him as a way of combining his interests in martial arts and physical theater.[39] After completing the program at Vaasa he went to China to continue his studies. In 2015, Edström was the first European to complete a Master's degree at The National Academy for Chinese Theater Arts, where he was one of only five Europeans among 2000 students.[40]

The other actors, Satu Mäkelä, Niko Arola, and Talvikki Eerola, were recruited for the production via an advertisement. The performers are Finns with professional education in different performing arts. All were around thirty at the time of the production. They trained intensely for two months in the techniques of Beijing opera.

From Saga to Romantic Play to Beijing Opera

Elias Edström created this production in seeking a way to connect the Chinese theatrical tradition he had studied to his own Nordic heritage. Edström's text is freely adapted from *Sigurd Ring*. The text is distilled from approximately eight

thousand to around one thousand words: the opening monologues in which the characters introduce themselves and briefly present their situation at the start of the play, three short scenes of dialogue, and a final scene consisting of two songs. However, most of the hour-long show consists of wordless movement and music, including courtship dances by Alf and Hilma and especially fight scenes. While Stagnelius puts all the battles offstage, in Edström's version they are the center of the action. The number of characters is reduced to four, eliminating Hilma's mother Gerda, "en kämpe" (a warrior), and two choruses, one of serving girls and one of warriors. While Stagnelius wrote in rhymed couplets, Edström's script is pared down to its essence as an operatic libretto, with the dignity and distance of a slightly archaic style.

The plot is fairly simple. Hilma has ruled the kingdom of Jutland after her father's death and in her brother Alf's absence. She has refused all suitors because her heart has gone to Ragnar, her brother's ally. Alf is now home; today Ragnar will return and ask for Hilma's hand in marriage. Alf has sacrificed his dignity and made peace with their father's killer, King Sigurd of Sweden. King Sigurd has decided he needs a wife to bring him comfort and an heir in his old age, and comes to Jutland to demand Hilma's hand. Alf refuses, saying that Sigurd has gone too far. Alf has suffered enough humiliation from Sigurd, and Hilma is engaged to Ragnar. Sigurd says that Ragnar and Alf must die if he does not get Hilma's hand. Alf and Ragnar fight Sigurd, first separately and then together. In a pause, Hilma asks if the battle is over. She urges them to flee – why fight a battle that is already lost? Sigurd will return with all his army. The others say that this is why they must defeat Sigurd now while he is alone and vulnerable: "Det finns mycket här att vinna" (There is much here to gain), while Hilma warns them, "Och än mer att förlora" (and even more to lose). The fighting resumes. Sigurd slays first Alf, then Ragnar. The bereaved Hilma takes up a sword against Sigurd, but he wrests it from her and slays her with it. In the final scene Sigurd holds the dying Hilma and says that "sköna Hilma all min kärlek har" (beautiful Hilma has all my love).[41]

Edström has commented that while Stagnelius gives the text a tragic tone throughout, the adaptation combines elements of love and humor for a more varied emotional palette.[42] In contrast to the dramatic funeral pageant of the Romantic and Early Modern versions, this play has a haunting, ambiguous ending – Sigurd's words present macabre irony. The villain has lost everything and becomes almost pitiable.[43]

Scenery and Lighting

The stage was bare apart from a rectangular green mat, a station for musicians with instruments stage left (audience right), and black curtains framing the scene. Two simple chairs were used in the scene in which Alf receives Sigurd. The bare stage is in accordance with the Chinese tradition, in which the actor is supposed to evoke the environment (setting, season, mood) through use of body, costume, and sound.[44]

The lighting was designed by Milka Timosaari. The lighting filled the backdrop with solid (or gradually shading) color in ways that would change by character and mood – blue at the start, blood red after Sigurd kills Ragnar and Alf, purple when Hilma comes to avenge. Each character was associated with a color. Sigurd is associated with the color red and Alf with blue. The hues correspond to colors in their costumes. When two characters or moods meet, the light colors blend. Finnish translations of the Swedish text were also projected onto the back wall.

This use of lighting departs from traditional Beijing opera, in which, as Rosenberg put it, there are two settings: "Valot pois ja valot päällä" (lights off and lights on).[45] However, the spirit of simplicity is retained, while allowing the use of varied lighting as a dimension of the performance.

Music

Pekka Saarikorpi, best known as a jazz musician, has worked with Wusheng Company since 2011. In this production, Saarikorpi played four Chinese percussion instruments. Senni Eskelinen played the electric kantele (a modern variation on an iconic Finnish folk instrument), which was used for more melodic and lyrical moments, especially accompanying Hilma. The music for the play was based on the basic rhythms of traditional Beijing opera, with a rhythmical score written out by Edström. The music was not traditional, but the ways of combining music and movement were based on tradition. In the rehearsal process, the musicians and actors worked together to develop the music and movements.

In addition to the rhythmical music performed by the instrumentalists, the opera includes two songs sung by actors: a Finnish folk melody, "Läksin minä kesäyönä käymään" (I went out on a summer night), sung by Hilma in Western style with lyrics loosely based on text from the play by Stagnelius, and a traditional Beijing opera melody performed by Sigurd in Chinese style. These comprise the libretto for the final scene. Both are brief, just a few lines, but provide variety in the texture and emotional palette of the play.

Costumes

The costumes were authentic Beijing opera costumes ordered from China; they had originally been designed for a different production and were reused for *Sigurd Ring*. In Beijing opera tradition each element of the costume has significance. The audience can instantly see the character's age, social status and whether he is good or bad. Much of this symbolism may be lost or understood differently by a foreign audience. In the Finnish production, however, the costumes are used "incorrectly" according to tradition. Nonetheless, they have evocative connotations even to a naïve audience, as well as contributing to the spectacle.

The costumes function as an extension of the body, and shape and amplify its movement. Some central costume elements are used from the beginning of the rehearsal process as central to character development.

Edström as Sigurd (Figures. 10.1 and 10.2) wore a white silk robe with elaborate brocade, red trousers, and knee-high boots with platform soles. His face

Figure 10.2: Sigurd Ring (Elias Edström) holds the dying Hilma (Talvikki Eerola). Photo by Kari Rosenberg.

was painted white with black details as a mask, whereas the other characters had pink faces with emphasized rising diagonals at the temples but more "naturalistic" makeup. The painted-face type (*jing*) is the role-type that Edström had studied in China. *Jing* characters are typically powerful and high-ranking. A white face in a *jing* character "indicates cunning and treachery."[46] The symbolism of white in Chinese tradition is the opposite of the canonical association of white with "good" and black with "evil" in Western tradition, but gives him in Western eyes perhaps the appearance of a ghost or otherworldly figure. High platform shoes with wedged angles at toe and heel emphasized his height over the other characters and shaped his movements.[47]

Also in contrast to the Western convention of black costumes for "bad guys" and white for good, the "good guy" warriors had costumes that were predominantly black. Ragnar wore a black martial arts uniform with orange and red trim, drawing attention to an orange and red sash. This was a *bingyi* or *kuaiyi* costume associated with the *wusheng* "male warrior" character type.[48] Ragnar's sash and Hilma's sleeves become important foci for movement and expression. They hit each other with these costume extensions but also reach for each other longingly. Hilma drags Ragnar offstage by the sash, with erotic overtones.

Hilma's costume (Figure 10.2) combined elements of *wudan* "warrior woman" and *qingyi* "noble woman" types but departed substantially from Beijing opera tradition.[49] Hilma's expressive, overly long white sleeves (*shuixiu* "water sleeves") serve as an extension of her body. The water sleeves are an important accoutrement and support technique in Beijing opera.[50] In *Sigurd Ring*, Hilma's sleeves sometimes appear as weapons. Sometimes they are extensions of her arms reaching longingly toward her lover. They tremble to reveal emotion while the rest of her body remains restrained. In her last scene Hilma trades the pink bridal robe for a purple one that leaves her sword arm free. The rippling sleeve waves as she dies, like a white flag of surrender and a suggestion of flowing blood.

A significant departure from Beijing opera tradition was that Hilma was barefoot. In traditional Beijing opera, characters are never barefoot on stage.[51] The bare feet highlight Hilma's vulnerability and humanity, as well as the contrast with Sigurd's height and platform shoes.[52] Both Hilma and Ragnar were also bare-headed, another departure from tradition. In Beijing opera the full coverage of the costumes assists in concealing the individual features of the actors and emphasizes the types.[53] However, Western audiences may seek connection with the "human" side of the characters.

Alf's costume included a close-fitting coat over a suit, in dark blue and black. This was a *jianyi* or "archer's robe"[54] with some added decoration to suggest rank. Edström said in an interview that he would have liked to have a more elaborate costume for Alf.[55] Sigurd and Alf had long false beards, attached to wires, which they

manipulated during their speeches. Alf's was black and Sigurd's dark grey. In the symbolism of Beijing opera, a black beard means that a character is at least forty years old, a grey beard that he is at least fifty. They wore headdresses with dangling balls, which evoke royal crowns and which draw attention to the actor's face.

Saga Narration and Beijing Opera

The points of contact between Beijing opera and saga narrative are partly coincidences, partly reflections of honor-based societies which idealize a kind of warrior elite and storytelling styles refined from oral tradition, not to mention universal archetypes.

A number of points in the structure and narrative form of the *Sigurd Ring* production echo characteristic features of saga narrative, what has been termed the "folklig stil" (folk style) for its deceptive simplicity and apparent similarity to oral narrative. This style is most associated with sagas of Icelanders from the thirteenth century, but also applies to varying extents to other genres.

Character Introductions

In Beijing opera, when each character appears on the stage for the first time, he or she performs a two- to three-minute movement sequence that expresses or represents character. The character's first speech, following this "dance," states explicitly who he is, the situation, and his goal. The pattern of self-presentations can be compared to formulaic character introductions in sagas, a striking feature of saga style. The degree to which a saga personage's genealogy, appearance, and character are described indicates the importance of the character.[56] Genealogies are important for explaining loyalties, as well as being of interest to the medieval Icelandic audiences who traced their ancestry to persons mentioned in sagas.[57]

Varied Pacing

The pace of *Sigurd Ring* varies between very slow build-up and rapid fight scenes. Battle scenes are elaborately choreographed. The delay – punctuated by percussion – before a reaction evokes "the mask's time," a deliberateness and slowness common to stylized dramatic traditions. It contributes to the

sense of deliberateness and otherworldliness. It also evokes the self-discipline and emotional control valued in the saga world, where characters in the midst of battle or immediately before a violent death still take the time to make a laconic *bon mot*, and where vengeance may be plotted for years.

Dual Focus on Action and Psychology

In Beijing opera the focus is on acrobatic virtuosity, whereas Western theater is about interpersonal relationships and character development. This production had perhaps a dual focus, with the tragic story and relationships (expressed in constrained ways) coming across clearly as the frame, but a dramatic high point and substantial fraction of stage time devoted to the choreographed battles. This is reminiscent of saga narrative, where intense conflicts – with words and weapons – alternate with periods of waiting and political regrouping.

Tight, Laconic Dialogue; Songs Used to Highlight Emotions

One characteristic of saga style is its conciseness. Dialogue in particular is pithy, brief, and laconic. The characters are people of few words. Gestures all have significance. Emotions may be expressed through gesture. Characters have a restrained mode of expression. The formalized style and minimal text of the Beijing opera production resonates with this aesthetic.

The two songs in *Sigurd Ring* highlight moments of particular emotion and provide a change of rhythm from the acrobatic movement and battle scenes. Their function can be compared to some of the uses of skaldic verse in saga narration: a personal voice for a character, with somewhat more emotional openness than is seen in the highly constrained dialogue and narration.

Ambivalent Portrayal of Honor Society

Both *Sigurd Ring* and sagas represent an honor society. Like many sagas, Wusheng Company's *Sigurd Ring* can be read either as endorsing or as critical of or ambivalent toward the honor society and its ethical code.[58] Alf has compromised his and his family's honor by seeking conciliation with his father's killer in the interest of

peace. However, Sigurd is uncompromising and Alf's diplomacy ill rewarded – which can be read as a warning: "Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile." Hilma advises flight after the first round: why fight a battle that is already lost? Alf and Ragnar assure her they will win, but they are mistaken and their bravado may be misguided. This contrasts with their pessimism in the version by Stagnelius. Sagas regularly portray characters going into battles or traps despite warnings that they are unlikely to come out alive, sometimes to avoid the appearance of cowardice, sometimes citing the inevitability of fate.[59]

One manifestation of the honor society is that trivial actions are imbued with significance for the power dynamics among the characters. A scene in which Alf and Sigurd make an elaborate show of each asking the other to sit down first, with politeness thinly veiling hostility, recalls scenes in sagas (notably *Brennu-Njáls saga*) in which characters quarrel over seating arrangements at feasts with their attendant symbolism of status.[60]

Warrior Women

In *Sigurd Ring*, the one female character Hilma includes elements of the type of character known in Chinese as *wudan* (female with martial skills).[61] She dies fighting Sigurd, rather than from poison as in the versions of the story by Arngrímur and Stagnelius. In her introduction, Hilma states that she has ruled Jutland justly in the absence of her male relatives. Hilma's role as a warrior gives her a stronger position than the Romantic feminine ideal represented in the nineteenth-century play. Nonetheless Hilma's character is represented as "softer" than the male characters, associated with more melodic kantele music and blue and pink colors.

The character of the woman who takes up arms after her male allies have fallen resonates with the women warriors, maiden kings, and Valkyries of Norse legendary history. The historical basis for the trope has been much debated.[62] Although in Arngrímur's version Sigurðr's desired match Álfsól is not presented as a warrior woman, there are numerous women warriors and maiden kings in book 8 of Saxo, in and around the story of Sigurd Ring,[63] and *Sögubrot* mentions shield maidens Vebjörg and Visina as leaders in the battle of Brávellir.[64]

As Grimstad discusses, express suicide is rare in Old Norse literature.[65] In *Völsunga saga* it is a solution used by women in response to conflicting loyalties and dilemmas – in fulfilling the obligation for revenge on blood kinsmen, they have transgressed against their husbands and/or children whom they are also required to avenge, and so have no other way out. This has been interpreted as reflecting Continental influence; it can also be seen as a way for

women to participate in bloodfeud. In shifting the ending from suicide and self-sacrifice to loss in a valiant but hopeless (perhaps foolhardy) battle and an ambiguous continuation, the Beijing opera moves away from Romantic melodrama and closer to modern sensibilities, as well as to general saga ethos.

"Opera"

The term "opera" evokes a grand scale of stylized musical drama and spectacle. As mentioned above, the Mandarin name for what is called Peking or Beijing opera in English is actually *jingju* "capital city theater." *Sigurd Ring* by Stagnelius has, however, been characterized as having operatic overtones. Malmström notes that while Stagnelius intended the choruses in the play to evoke Greek tragedy, in many ways their function is more reminiscent of that of choruses in Western opera,[66] as Henrikson summarizes:

> Malmströms stilistiska studier har visat hur körerna i Stagnelius' nordiska sorgspel rent formellt befinner sig i en mellanfas: de är samtidigt präglade av såväl operan och kantaten som en tydlig antikiserande ambition.[67] (Malmström's stylistic studies have shown how the choruses in the Nordic tragedies of Stagnelius are situated in an intermediate stage on a purely formal level: they simultaneously show features of opera and cantata and of a clear classisizing ambition.)

The title *Sigurd Ring* (particularly paired with the word "opera") also evokes Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The name *Sigurd* (or *Siegfried*) is of course also that of the dragon-slayer in the Nibelung material, and as mentioned above, Sigurd Ring is genealogically connected to the Volsungs. This may prime viewers to expect a visual and musical spectacle, at a grand scale and a slow pace, based on mythical materials from the Germanic past.

Renewal through Synthesis

The fusion between ancient traditions seen in *Sigurd Ring* brings a fresh view to both Beijing opera and the saga tradition. Rosenberg has speculated that if the production were to tour in China, it might help revitalize interest in Beijing Opera among a younger Chinese audience by showing its potential for renewal.[68] When excerpts from Wusheng Company's productions have been performed at festivals in China, they have received positive responses and media attention. In 2017, Wusheng Company was awarded second prize in a Global Beijing Opera Fans Contest in the Garden Expo Park in Beijing.[69]

The synthesis also revives a long-dead Viking king and a rarely performed Romantic play. The ethos of the Viking world and of the traditional Chinese opera have some features in common that are not shared with the Romantic era. Connecting different traditions produces something new. In this case, the Beijing opera form takes the story of Sigurd Ring out of the Nordic historical context and into a formalized, archetypal space, with a slowed pace and condensed script that bring focus to fundamentals. The Viking spirit is not represented by blond beards and horned helmets, but by warrior codes of conduct, problematic honor societies, pride and betrayal, valiance in the face of overwhelming odds, fatal strategic blunders, and attempts at heroic death.

The Wusheng Company artists respect Chinese expertise and seek it out, for instance taking the cast of *Viimeinen taistelija* (The Last Warrior), including the well-known ballet dancer and choreographer Tero Saarinen, to Beijing for a crash course in Beijing opera technique.[70] However, Edström has said that his goal is less to perform traditional Beijing opera than to draw on the possibilities offered by its many-sided training and techniques in conjunction with other techniques and styles.[71] Fusion productions such as *Sigurd Ring* celebrate eclectic hybridity in a way that is part of modern national and other identities in a globalized world. They belong to an inclusive artistic discourse that brings Asia to Helsinki, Finns to China, and a saga king to a Finnish Beijing opera.

Bibliography

Arngrímur Jónsson. "Svíakonungatal Arngríms lærða." In *Danakonunga sǫgur. Skjǫldunga saga. Knýtlinga saga. Ágrip af sǫgu Danakonunga*, edited by Bjarni Guðnason, pp. 72–77. Íslenzk fornrit 35. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1987.

Bjarni Guðnason. *Um Skjöldungasögu*. Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1963.

Bjarni Guðnason. "Skjǫldunga saga." In *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid. Från vikingatid till reformationstid 15: Samisk språk – Skude*, edited by Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, pp. 596–98. Helsinki: Akademiska bokhandeln, 1970.

Bonds, Alexandra B. *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

"Bósa saga ok Herrauðs." In *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, vol. 3, pp. 243–72. Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1889.

Brennu-Njáls saga. Edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit 12. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954.

Bruzelius, Magnus. *Swerges historia för ungdom*. Lund: s.n., 1817.

Böök, Fredrik. *Erik Johan Stagnelius*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1919.

Callow, Christopher. "Reconstructing the Past in Medieval Iceland." *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 3 (2006): 297–304.

Clark, George. *Gender, Violence, and the Past in Edda and Saga*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Eddison, E.R. *Styrbiorn the Strong*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1926.
Edström, Elias. "Sigurd Ring." Manuscript, 2016.
Edström, Elias. Interview taken by the author, October 9, 2016.
Edström, Elias. "Taiteilijahaastatteluja: Elias Edström." In *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, edited by Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg, pp. 208–11. Teatterikorkeakoulun julkaisuja 65. Helsinki: Taideyliopiston teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018.
Einar Ólafur Sveinsson. "Íslendingasögur." In *Kulturhistoriskt leksikon for nordisk middelalder: fra vikingetid til reformationstid 7: Hovedstad – Judar*, edited by Georg Rona, pp. 496–513. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962.
Gardeła, Leszek. "Amazons of the Viking World: Between Myth and Reality." *Medieval Warfare* 7, no. 1 (2017): 8–15.
Gostand, Reba. "Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication: Drama as Translation." In *The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama*, edited by Ortrun Zuber, pp. 1–9. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980.
Granroth, Ann-Catrin and My Tengström. "Han vägrar bli kändis i Kina." X3M, February 11, 2015. https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/02/11/han-vagrar-bli-kandis-i-kina.
Grimstad, Kaaren. "Introduction." In *Völsunga saga. The Saga of the Volsungs: The Icelandic Text according to MS Nks 1824 b, 4o with an English Translation, Introduction and Notes*, edited and translated by Kaaren Grimstad, pp. 13–72. Bibliotheca Germanica, Ser. Nova 3. Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2000.
Gropper, Stephanie. "Fate." In *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, pp. 198–209. New York and London: Routledge, 2017.
Gunnell, Terry. *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995.
Hedenstierna-Jonson, Charlotte et al. "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 164, no. 4 (2017): 853–60.
Henrikson, Paula. *Dramatikern Stagnelius*. Eslöv: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004.
Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks. Edited by Gabriel Turville-Petre, introduction by Christopher Tolkien. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1956.
Holmqvist-Larsen, H. N. *Møer, skjoldmøer og krigere: En studie i og omkring 7. bog af Saxo's Gesta Danorum*. Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 304. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1983.
Hsü Tao-Ching. *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985.
Jakob Benediktsson. *Arngrímur Jónsson and His Works*. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1957.
Jesch, Judith. *The Viking Diaspora*. London: Routledge, 2015.
Malmström, Sten. *Studier över stilen i Stagnelius lyrik*. Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget / Bonniers, 1961.
McTurk, Rory. *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and Its Major Scandinavian Analogues*. Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1991.
Miettinen, Jukka O. and Veli Rosenberg. "Aasia Helsingissä 20 vuotta." Lecture at Stoa Helsinki, October 8, 2016.
Miettinen, Jukka O. and Veli Rosenberg. "Aasia Helsingissä -festivaali 1997–2016." In *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, edited by Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg, pp. 129–70. Teatterikorkeakoulun julkaisusarja 65. Helsinki: Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018.

Ney, Agneta. *Bland ormar och drakar. Hjältemyt och manligt ideal i berättartraditioner om Sigurd Fafnesbane*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2017.

Rosenberg, Veli. "Enemmän irti esityksestä: Sigurd Ring." Lecture at Kanneltalo, Helsinki, March 11, 2016.

Rosenberg, Veli. "Kuinka Kiina astui Suomen näyttämöille." In *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, edited by Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg, pp. 63–96. Teatterikorkeakoulun julkaisusarja 65. Helsinki: Taideyliopiston teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018.

Rothberg, Isabella. "För långa ben, konstigt ansikte." *Hufvudstadsbladet*, March 5, 2016. https://www.hbl.fi/artikel/for-langa-ben-konstigt-ansikte/.

Saxo Grammaticus. *The History of the Danes. Books I–IX. Volume 1: English Text. Volume 2: Commentary*. Edited and translated by Hilda Ellis Davidson and Peter Fisher. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979–1980.

Saxo Grammaticus. *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*. Edited by Karsten Friis-Jensen. Translated by Peter Fisher. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015.

Schulman, Jana K. "'A Guest Is in the Hall': Women, Feasts, and Violence in Icelandic Epic." In *Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*, edited by Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, pp. 209–33. The New Middle Ages. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Stagnelius, Erik Johan. "Sigurd Ring." In *Samlader skrifter. IV. Dramatiska dikter II. Prosa och brev*, edited by Fredrik Böök, pp. 1–57. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1915.

Strand, Birgit. "Kvinnor och män i Gesta Danorum." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Gothenburg, 1980.

Suhm, P. F. *Historie af Danmark*. 14 vols. Copenhagen: s.n., 1782–1828.

Sweet, Henry. *Shelley's Nature Poetry*. London: Printed for private circulation, 1891.

"Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum." In *Danakonunga sǫgur. Skjǫldunga saga. Knýtlinga saga. Ágrip af sǫgu Danakonunga*, edited by Bjarni Guðnason, pp. 46–71. Íslenzk fornrit 35. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982.

"Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum." In *Sǫgur Danakonunga. 1. Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum. 2. Knytlinga saga*, edited by Carl af Petersens and Emil Olson, pp. 1–25. Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1919–1925.

"'Theatre of the Capital' or Peking Opera." In *Asian Traditional Theatre and Dance*, edited by Jukka O. Miettinen. Helsinki: Theatre Academy Helsinki, 2010. http://www.xip.fi/atd/china/theatre-of-the-capital-or-the-peking-opera.html.

Wawn, Andrew. "Foreword." In *Old Norse Made New: Essays on the Post-Medieval Reception of Old Norse Literature and Culture*, edited by David Clark and Carl Phelpstead, pp. v–vii. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2007.

Willson, Kendra. "Inside and Outside in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*." In *The Book of Nature and Humanity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, edited by David Hawkes and Richard G. Newhauser, pp. 287–307. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

Xu Chengbei. *Peking Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Zung, Cecilia S. L. *Secrets of the Chinese Drama: A Complete Explanatory Guide to Actions and Symbols as Seen in the Performance of Chinese Dramas. With Synopses of Fifty Popular Chinese Plays and 240 Illustrations*. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1937.

Notes

1. Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995).
2. Reba Gostand, "Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication: Drama as Translation," in *The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama*, ed. Ortrun Zuber (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980), pp. 1–9 at p. 1.
3. The main sources for Sigurd Ring – *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks, Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum*, and Arngrímur Jónsson's Latin retelling of parts of the lost **Skjöldunga saga*, as well as *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus – are discussed below. Sigurd is also mentioned in passing in some other texts, including *Hversu Noregr byggðisk, Haralds saga hárfagra* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla, Ragnars saga loðbrókar, Ragnarssona þáttr, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs, Gríms saga loðinkinna, Örvar-Odds saga*, and *Norna-gests þáttr*.
4. Kaaren Grimstad discusses this in the case of *Völsunga saga*. Kaaren Grimstad, "Introduction," in *Völsunga saga. The Saga of the Volsungs. The Icelandic Text according to MS Nks 1824 b, 4o with an English Translation, Introduction and Notes*, ed. and trans. Kaaren Grimstad. Bibliotheca Germanica, Ser. Nova 3 (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2000), pp. 13–72 at p. 41.
5. Saxo Grammaticus, *History of the Danes. Volume 1: Text*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson, trans. Peter Fisher (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979), pp. 238–46.
6. "Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum," in *Danakonunga sǫgur. Skjǫldunga saga. Knýtlinga saga. Ágrip af sǫgu Danakonunga*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982), pp. 46–71 at p. 71.
7. "þá skyldi vera bardagi á Brávöllum, er mestr hefir verit á Norðrlöndum, sem segir í sögu Sigurðar hrings, föður Ragnars loðbrókar" (then there would be a battle at Brávellir, the greatest that has taken place in the Nordic countries, as is told in the saga of Sigurðr hringr, the father of Ragnarr loðbrók). "Bósa saga ok Herrauðs," in *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson, vol. 3 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1889), pp. 243–72 at p. 259.
8. Agneta Ney, *Bland ormar och drakar. Hjältemyt och manligt ideal i berättartraditioner om Sigurd Fafnesbane* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2017), p. 68.
9. Rory McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and Its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1991); Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), vol. 1, pp. 628–29, n. 4.
10. "Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum," in *Sǫgur Danakonunga. 1. Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum. 2. Knytlinga saga*, ed. Carl af Petersens and Emil Olson (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1919–1925), pp. 1–25 at p. 25.
11. *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ed. Gabriel Turville-Petre and Christopher Tolkien (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1956), p. 68.
12. Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1963), pp. 284–85.
13. Arngrímur Jónsson, "Svíakonungatal Arngríms lærða," in *Danakonunga sǫgur. Skjǫldunga saga. Knýtlinga saga. Ágrip af sǫgu Danakonunga*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason. Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1987), pp. 72–77.

14. Jakob Benediktsson, *Arngrímur Jónsson and His Works* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1957), pp. 107–17.
15. Bjarni Guðnason, "Skjǫldunga saga," in *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid. Från vikingatid till reformationstid 15: Samisk språk – Skude*, ed. Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen (Helsinki: Akademiska bokhandeln, 1970), pp. 596–98 at p. 596.
16. Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu*, p. 307.
17. The phrasing is ambiguous as to whether she is aware that her brothers are poisoning her and whether she takes the poison willingly: "priusqvam ad bellum proficiscerentur, sorori venenum proprinant, ne victori præda foret" (before setting out to battle, they gave their sister poison to drink, so that she would not fall to the victor as booty), Arngrímur Jónsson, "Svíakonungatal Arngríms lærða," p. 74.
18. Ibid., p. 74.
19. Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, vol. 1, pp. 245–46.
20. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 243–44.
21. P. F. Suhm, *Historie af Danmark*, 14 vols. (Copenhagen: s.n., 1782–1828).
22. Magnus Bruzelius, *Swerges historia för ungdom* (Lund: s.n., 1817).
23. Paula Henrikson, *Dramatikern Stagnelius* (Eslöv: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004), p. 135.
24. The use of an obscure historical figure, allowing the modern author free rein, may also be seen in Ernest Rücker Eddison's choice of protagonist for his novel *Styrbiorn the Strong* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926); see Andrew Wawn, "Foreword," in *Old Norse Made New: Essays on the Post-Medieval Reception of Old Norse Literature and Culture*, ed. David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2007), pp. v–vii at p. vi.
25. Henry Sweet, *Shelley's Nature Poetry* (London: Printed for private circulation, 1891), p. 298.
26. Fredrik Böök, *Erik Johan Stagnelius* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1919), p. 290.
27. The play appears in Erik Johan Stagnelius, *Samlader skrifter. IV. Dramatiska dikter II. Prosa och brev*, ed. Fredrik Böök (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1915), pp. 1–57.
28. Henrikson, *Dramatikern Stagnelius*, p. 138.
29. Xu Chengbei, *Peking Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 15.
30. "'Theatre of the Capital' or Peking Opera," in *Asian Traditional Theatre and Dance*, ed. Jukka O. Miettinen (Helsinki: Theatre Academy Helsinki, 2010), http://www.xip.fi/atd/china/theatre-of-the-capital-or-the-peking-opera.html.
31. Veli Rosenberg, "Enemmän irti esityksestä: Sigurd Ring," lecture at Kanneltalo, Helsinki, March 11, 2016.
32. "'Theatre of the Capital' or Peking Opera."
33. Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), p. 3.
34. Veli Rosenberg, "Kuinka Kiina astui Suomen näyttämöille," in *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, ed. Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg (Helsinki: Taideyliopiston teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018), pp. 63–96 at pp. 78–80.
35. Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg, "Aasia Helsingissä -festivaali 1997–2016," in *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, ed. Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg (Helsinki: Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018), pp. 129–70.
36. Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg, "Aasia Helsingissä 20 vuotta," lecture at Stoa, Helsinki, October 8, 2016.

37. Rosenberg, "Enemmän irti esityksestä."
38. Elias Edström, email correspondence, January 14, 2018.
39. Ann-Catrin Granroth and My Tengström, "Han vägrar bli kändis i Kina," X3M, February 11, 2015, https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/02/11/han-vagrar-bli-kandis-i-kina.
40. Isabella Rothberg, "För långa ben, konstigt ansikte," *Hufvudstadsbladet*, March 5, 2016, https://www.hbl.fi/artikel/for-langa-ben-konstigt-ansikte/.
41. Elias Edström, "Sigurd Ring," manuscript, 2016.
42. Elias Edström, interview taken by the author October 9, 2016.
43. Edström, interview.
44. "'Theatre of the Capital' or Peking Opera."
45. Rosenberg, "Enemmän irti esityksestä."
46. "'Theatre of the Capital' or Peking Opera."
47. On the use of platform shoes in Beijing opera see Hsü Tao-Ching, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1985), p. 151.
48. Elias Edström, email correspondence, April 3, 2018.
49. Ibid.
50. Cecilia S. L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama: A Complete Explanatory Guide to Actions and Symbols as Seen in the Performance of Chinese Dramas. With Synopses of Fifty Popular Chinese Plays and 240 Illustrations* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1937), p. 79.
51. Post-performance discussion March 12, 2016; Edström, interview.
52. Edström, interview.
53. Rosenberg, "Enemmän irti esityksestä."
54. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes*, p. 151.
55. Edström, interview.
56. Kendra Willson, "Inside and Outside in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*," in *The Book of Nature and Humanity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. David Hawkes and Richard G. Newhauser (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 287–307 at p. 290; Chris Callow, "Reconstructing the Past in Medieval Iceland," *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 3 (2006): 297–324 at p. 300; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, "Íslendingasögur," in *Kulturhistoriskt leksikon for nordisk middelalder: fra vikingetid til reformationstid 7: Hovedstad – Judar*, ed. Georg Rona (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962), pp. 496–513 at p. 508.
57. Callow, "Reconstructing the Past," p. 300; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, "Íslendingasögur," p. 508.
58. For a reading of Norse heroic materials as critical of vengeance, see George Clark, *Gender, Violence, and the Past in Edda and Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
59. Well-known examples include Eyvindr disregarding repeated warnings to flee Hrafnkell in chapter 8 of *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, Vésteinn ignoring attempts to warn him in chapter 12 of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, and Gunnarr deciding not to leave Iceland after he falls off his horse in chapter 75 of *Brennu-Njáls saga*. On fate and fatalism in Icelandic sagas, see Stephanie Gropper, "Fate," in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 198–209.
60. See, for instance, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslensk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954), chap. 35, pp. 90–92; c.f. Jana K. Schulman, "'A Guest Is in the Hall': Women, Feasts, and Violence in Icelandic Epic," in *Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*, ed. Sara

S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman. The New Middle Ages (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 209–33 at pp. 211 and 215.

61. Xu Chengbei, *Peking Opera*, pp. 53–54.
62. Very selected recent references include Leszek Gardeła, "Amazons of the Viking World: Between Myth and Reality," *Medieval Warfare* 7, no. 1 (2017): 8–15; Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 164, no. 4 (2017): 853–60; Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 104–7.
63. On Saxo's women warriors and maiden kings see H. N. Holmqvist-Larsen, *Møer, skjoldmøer og krigere: En studie i og omkring 7. bog af Saxo's Gesta Danorum*. Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 304 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1983); Birgit Strand, "Kvinnor och män i Gesta Danorum" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Gothenburg, 1980), pp. 110–17.
64. "Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum," ed. Bjarni Guðnason, pp. 67–68.
65. Grimstad, "Introduction," pp. 55–56.
66. Sten Malmström, *Studier över stilen i Stagnelius lyrik* (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget / Bonniers, 1961), p. 71.
67. Henrikson, *Dramatikern Stagnelius*, p. 132.
68. Rosenberg, "Enemmän irti esityksestä."
69. Elias Edström, e-mail correspondence, January 14, 2018.
70. Miettinen and Rosenberg, "Asia Helsingissä 20 vuotta"; Edström, interview.
71. Elias Edström, "Taiteilijahaastatteluja: Elias Edström," in *"Ikkunat auki itään!" 100 vuotta Aasiaa Suomen näyttämöillä*, ed. Anna Thuring, Jukka O. Miettinen and Veli Rosenberg. Teatterikorkeakoulun julkaisuja 65 (Helsinki: Taideyliopiston teatterikorkeakoulu, 2018), pp. 208–11 at pp. 209, 211.