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Gendered Symbolism as a Medium to Negotiate
Power as Evidenced in the Furnished Viking
Burials of Ireland

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Ph.D. Thesis

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2017

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Summary

This thesis is an examination of the gendered symbolism of grave goods as evident in the furnished burials of Ireland. The practice in Ireland is dated to between 840 and 950 CE, a period also marked by violence and warfare between the native Irish and the Viking settlers. The conflicts inherent in this time period gave rise to specific cultural responses from the Vikings. A central part of this thesis' examination was the study of how this came to impact on burial.

In order to conduct this research the category of gender was utilized, as well as the tool of deconstruction. The use of these, as well as feminist theories, enabled this thesis to conduct research into femininities and masculinities, and therefore allowed it to conclude that these nuanced expressions of gender were indeed utilized by the Vikings in burial symbolism and that gendered forms of power, myriad and nuanced, were deployed as a method to negotiate power.

For the Dublin corpus of burials, it was possible to compare the all of the grave goods to other Scandinavian areas. Specifically, this thesis compared Dublin to Norway and particularly western Norway due to its likely links with the Vikings of that area. Additionally, this thesis conducted a comparison between Dublin and other insular contexts in the Atlantic Archipelago, like England, and specifically to northwest England, again because of the likely links between the two locations.

From this examination and analysis, this thesis concluded that in terms of elite hegemonic masculinities, it is possible to see a hypermasculinization of burial strategy evident in the Dublin burials, throughout the corpus, but particularly obvious in Kilmainham and Islandbridge. This was due to an obvious inclusion of an overwhelming majority of sword display that is different from other Scandinavian and insular contexts. In Dublin as well it was apparent that gendered symbolism of power was also being deployed with symbols that may have been associated with elite forms of femininities, specifically objects relating to *seiðr*, a form of magic practice. This is particularly apparent in the Finglas brooches, as well as the so-called 'roasting spit' and whalebone plaque from Kilmainham. Un-gendered burial display in Dublin also revealed to have possible links to *seiðr* practice and high-status burial rite, as evident in grave goods like 151 animals bones and items related to spinning and weaving.

The rest of Ireland, could not be compared to the larger Scandinavian corpus because it is too broad a geographic region and the group of Vikings who inhabited these

areas might have been numerous and varied in nature. Instead, case studies were conducted. Two of these were the only other areas other than Dublin to have multiple burials all at a similar location, and then three additional studies, each representing a segment of the elite hegemonic masculinities, femininities, and un-gendered, gender neutral and tertiary burial. These were chosen due to their ties to the Dublin area, importance and function, as well as because they represented each of the aforementioned groups. It was possible to conclude that the areas that had ties to Dublin might have mimicked their practices, for example Cloghermore Cave in Co. Kerry. It was also evident that areas like Woodstown, in Co. Waterford, either had a divergent burial strategy or there are more burials to be found at that location.

Overall, this thesis was able to find meaningful explanations for the divergent methods of burials strategy in Dublin and Ireland. It is possible that the semiotics of burial were utilized by the Vikings as a way to negotiate power and dominance with the native Irish as well as other Viking peoples and groups. This thesis would suggest that the Vikings deliberately modified burial strategy, particularly in Dublin, as a response to contact with the native Irish. It would also suggest that all Irish furnished Viking burials are in some way liminal due to the status of both Viking magic practitioners and also warriors. It is possible that these were powerful, liminal, and feared groups and as such, the use of symbolism associated with them furthered goals of being perceived as dominant and dangerous.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1: Background of Viking Settlement in Ireland

In the years between 800-1150 CE the Norse and native Irish peoples created one of the distinctive cultural clashes in early medieval Europe. The Viking invaders were distinct from the native Irish in ethnic identity, which played a key role in their representations and interpretations of gender and patriarchy. Influenced by factors such as paganism or Christianity, the socially constructed nature of gender makes it apparent that the Norse and Irish manifested gender ideologies in a myriad of competing ways. In these initial collisions the divergent nature of each culture's systems of power saw gender being deployed as a method to both express domination and define the competing ethnic groups as 'Other' in order to create a discourse of fear and disgust. As this preliminary confrontation evolved into a period of settlement and ethnic amalgamation, gender ideologies and patriarchal hierarchies too would become blended. This confluence of religious ideologies and ethnically structured norms generated new representations of gender as evidenced in the Viking grave goods of Ireland. Indeed, it is evident the Viking furnished burial practices utilized gendered symbolism as a means to negotiate and express dominance, power, and violence.

Scholars have widely debated the impact of the Viking settlement on the cultural identity of Ireland. Some scholars believed that the Irish had a greater impact on Viking life than the Norse did on Irish culture, even suggesting that the Irish and Norse remained culturally distinct.¹ Donnchadh Ó Corráin argued that the Irish maintained successful resistance to the Viking invaders because of their 'strong sense of identity, achievement, and cultural cohesion'.² He contended that the Irish literate elite knowingly viewed itself as a racial group or *natio*.³ The aristocracy of Ireland had a sophisticated myth legitimizing its claims to rule and Ó Corráin contended that,

This myth was so powerful that the Vikings were given a place within its structures only towards the end of the Middle Ages and for reasons other than a concern for the Viking history. Had they been more successful they would have been fitted in.⁴

¹ Harold Mytum, 'The Vikings and Ireland: Ethnicity, Identity, and Culture Change' in *Contact*,

² Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Viking Ireland- Afterthoughts' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 4.

³ Ó Corráin, 'Viking Ireland- Afterthoughts', p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

Mary Valente contended that the Vikings began to develop closer ties with the native Irish between 853 and 873 CE through intermarriage and trade.⁵ She asserted that Irish and Scandinavian peoples had more in common than originally thought, such as the fosterage systems, and that this led these cultures to acculturation.⁶ She argued that the Norse were not an 'amorphous mass of foreigners' and that neither they themselves nor the native Irish viewed or treated them as such.⁷ She also declared that by the battle of Clontarf, intermarriage had become so prevalent that it was difficult to tell the Irish from the Vikings,⁸ and that by 1014 CE 'there were any number of people who were clearly equally members of Irish and Scandinavian society'.⁹ Else Roesdahl asserted that until 1170 CE, with the coming of the Normans, the Vikings were integrated into the Irish community.¹⁰ She added that in the Dublin excavations, as well as other archaeological sites, there is a clear indication that the culture of both ethnic groups was employed simultaneously in burial and other contexts.¹¹

Other scholars have argued for this mixed or hybrid culture of the Hiberno-Norse. John Bradley contended that, 'The material culture is neither purely Scandinavian nor purely Irish, but rather it is a common culture which one may term Hiberno-Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse'.¹² Andrew Halpin's examination of weapons and warfare in Viking Age Ireland showed clear adoptions of Viking weaponry by the Irish and Norse. One obvious example is the Irish use of the axe, and the Viking adoption of the small spear.¹³ Patrick Wallace contended that the collision of the Vikings and Irish created a unique archaeological identity and that, 'there was such a thing as a Hiberno-Norse town,' with a unique way of building construction and design.¹⁴

Bronaigh Ní Chonaill examined the process in which Scandinavian settlers became amalgamated into the native Irish culture. She stated that scholars have generally

⁵ Mary A. Valente, *The Vikings in Ireland: Settlement, Trade, and Urbanisation* (Dublin, 2008), p. 89.

⁶ Valente, *The Vikings in Ireland*, p. 91.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.101.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁰ Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London, 1998), p. 227.

¹¹ Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, pp. 229-231.

¹² John Bradley, 'The interpretation of Scandinavian settlement in Ireland' in John Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland: studies presented to F.X. Martin* (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 60.

¹³ Andrew Halpin, 'Weapons and Warfare in Viking-Age Ireland' in John Sheehan and Donnchadh Ó Corráin (eds.), *The Viking Age Ireland and the West proceedings from fifteenth Viking Congress, Cork, 18-27 August 2005* (Dublin, 2010), p. 128.

¹⁴ Patrick Wallace, 'The Archaeological Identity of the Hiberno-Norse Town' in *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Vol. 122 (1992)', p. 35.

accepted that the Vikings quickly adapted to this new environment and were fully integrated into Irish society by the tenth and eleventh centuries.¹⁵ Ní Chonaill contended that Viking culture, especially regarding children and childhood, was so similar to Irish culture that 'many aspects of Scandinavian society were well suited to being grafted or grafting themselves onto Irish society'.¹⁶ She also argued for the importance of Christianity in the process of this acculturation.¹⁷ The time frame that the Scandinavian community accepted Christianity is regarded as the reign of Sitric Silkenbeard, circa 989-1036 CE.¹⁸ Brian Ó Cuiv argued that after the 'initial shock' of invasion and the Vikings began to establish permanent colonies in Ireland that interactions between Viking peoples and the native Irish became 'fairly common and often far from hostile'.¹⁹ Ó Cuiv contended that this was evident in the rate of intermarriage as well as political alliances formed between Irish and Norse leaders.²⁰

David Griffiths argued for the importance of analyzing and assessing the Viking invasions and settlement of early medieval Ireland, stating that, '....the process of cultural admixture, assimilation, and transformation....become *the* story behind the archaeology and history'.²¹ He contended that the influence of both cultures on each other persisted past the Viking Age of expansion. Of the Vikings, he said (that), 'Much of their original cultural baggage was quickly modified, or jettisoned, as it ceased to have the same significance in their new situation as it once had in their ancestral homelands, yet other traits subtly persisted'.²² Griffiths' argument is the central tenet of this thesis, to examine the ways in which Viking gender roles and patriarchal hierarchies came to change and adapt in the face of invasion and acculturation. He contended that identities were 'far more fluid' than modern scholars might expect.

¹⁵ Bronaigh Ní Chonaill, 'Flying a Kite with Children of Hiberno-Norse Dublin: a Tentative Social Exploration' in John Bradley, Alan J. Fletcher and Anngret Simms *Dublin in the Medieval World: Studies in honour of Howard. B. Clarke* (Dublin, 2009), p. 2.

¹⁶ Ní Chonaill, 'Flying a Kite with Children of Hiberno-Norse Dublin', p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸ John Bradley, 'Topographic Development of Scandinavian Dublin' in F.H.A. Aalen and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Dublin City and County: From Prehistory to Present* (Dublin, 1992), p. 48.

¹⁹ Brian Ó Cuív, 'Personal Names as an Indicator of Relations Between Native Irish and Settlers in Viking Period' in John Bradley (ed.) *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland: Studies presented to F.X. Martin, O.S.A.* (Kilkenny, 1988), pp. 85-86.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ David Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea: Conflict and Assimilation AD 790-1050* (Gloucestershire, 2010), p. 16.

²² Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 16.

As these studies have shown, the impact of the Viking invasions and settlement on the native Irish and, conversely, the native Irish influence on the Viking settlers has been widely debated. This thesis will take the position of Griffiths, Ó Cuiv, Ní Chonail, Valente and others, that the Viking invasions and settlement led to eventual acculturation. It is evident as Ó Corráin and Mytum posited, that the cultures must have initially remained distinct. This thesis would argue, however, that after a period of time the Vikings amalgamated in many geographic areas, including locations such as Wexford, Dublin and Limerick. Conversion to Christianity and intermarriage played a key role in this acculturation.²³

These previous examinations of the Scandinavian invasions and settlement have not considered the impact that the native Irish had on the gender ideologies and burial practices of the Vikings. This thesis will examine the collision and acculturation of the Vikings and Irish to ascertain the influence ethnicity had on gender constructions, interpretation and representations as evidenced in the Viking grave goods in Ireland. Mainly, it will analyze how gender or gendered symbolism may have been deployed in Scandinavian furnished burial as a medium to express and negotiate power.

1.2 Definition of Power

Michael Foucault argued that 'mechanisms of power in general have never been much studied by history'.²⁴ He contended that there have been studies of 'those who held power', 'economic processes and infrastructures', and 'histories of institutions'.²⁵ Foucault believed in the importance of studying 'power in its strategies', and also the 'relation between power and knowledge, the articulation of each on the other'.²⁶ While it is clear that since the time of publication this approach has been adopted by historians, there is still a crucial need to apply this to Viking burial in Ireland. Therefore, a central tenet of this thesis is the investigation of the strategies involved, specifically in burial, in

²³ For more information on Viking conversion to Christianity please see J.D., 'Pagans and Christians at the frontier: Viking burial in the Danelaw' in M.O.H Carver (ed.) *The Cross goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe AD 300-1300* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 383-395. Richards argued that conversion to Christianity was not, as has been commonly argued, necessarily a 'matter of individual conscience', but rather it was 'a question of social and political expediency' (Richards, *Pagans and Christians at the Frontier*, p. 384.). This demonstrates that acculturation might have been of primary importance.

²⁴ Michael Foucault, 'Prison Talk' in Colin Gordon (ed.) *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York, 1980), p 51.

²⁵ Foucault, 'Prison Talk', p.51.

²⁶ Ibid.

maintenance and negotiation of power. Additionally, it will analyze the relationship between knowledge and power within the concept of *seiðr*, or magic practice.

Foucault argued that individuals 'are the vehicles of power, not its points of application'.²⁷ He believed that power was 'employed and exercised' in a 'net', in something like 'the form of chain'.²⁸ Crucially, he argued that people move amongst its chains, that they are always in the process of 'simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power' and that they are not only the 'target' of it, but also the means of its articulation. This thesis will consider the flux and flow of power, especially in the context of death. It will consider the non-static nature of power and its discourses as evidenced in funerary materials, created by the agents of power's articulation argued by Foucault. Critically, he also analyzed dominance and its forms, stating:

Moreover, in speaking of domination I do not have in mind that solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others, or one group over another, but the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society. Not the domination of the King in his central position, therefore, but that of his subjects in their mutual relations: not the uniform edifice of sovereignty, but the multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within the social organism.²⁹

Along with power, this thesis will consider domination, after Foucault, as having 'manifold forms' which society might seek to portray, negotiate, and reject in burial strategies.

Friedrich Nietzsche contended that 'the will to power' was an 'insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive'.³⁰ He believed that,

...every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (-its will to power:) and thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on.³¹

Therefore, he concluded, that power and the process of acquiring it were an inherent drive for humanity. This conception of a desire to acquire and wield power will be integrated into this thesis' study of burial practice. It will understand that burial

²⁷ Michael Foucault, 'Two Lectures' in Colin Gordon (ed.) *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. (New York, 1980), p. 98.

²⁸ Foucault, 'Two Lectures', p. 98.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, (trans. and ed.) Walter Kauffman and (ed.) R.J. Hollingdale (New York, 1968), p. 333, stanza 619.

³¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 340, stanza 636.

functioned as a medium in which to explore these inherent desires to maintain and acquire power.

Power in the context of this thesis will be defined as the ability to direct, control, or influence people and/or events. There will be four major types of power considered closely together. The first will be the control of, and access to, resources. The second is the ability to inflict violence. The third will be the possession of abilities that manipulate the otherworldly, as well as conduct rites or rituals in an effort to control people, outcomes, or elements, specifically *seiðr* practice. The fourth will be the power of influence, or the ability to gain and maintain social control based on perceptions or realities of social position. The key to this consideration of power is that it is derived from the people, society or group and that it is not an intrinsic character trait of those who have it, after Gene Sharp.³² In that vein, this thesis will consider the ramifications of so-called legitimate versus illegitimate power, especially when it concerns the rejection by the native Irish of both the Viking's abilities to inflict legitimate violence and their right to rule.

This thesis will also consider the impact that gender bias had on understandings of the perceptions of Viking funerary goods in Ireland. Progressing from the universal binary of man/woman, this project utilizes gender as a category of analysis, critically engaging masculinities and femininities to contribute to the better understanding of the multitude of nuances inherent in the innumerable representations and hierarchies of gender.

1.3 Ethnic Identities

Harold Mytum contended that, 'indigenous Irish and Norse identities, the nature of interaction and any resultant cultural change will clearly be major themes for future research'.³³ Within the scope of this thesis, every effort will be made to utilize medieval definitions of ethnicity. Medieval writers defined ethnicity in terms of having distinct descent, customs, language and law, as echoed in the writings of Regino of Prüm, who served as abbot of Prüm from 892-899 CE.³⁴ Distinguishing between modern conceptions

³² Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (Boston, 2010), p. 18

³³ Mytum, 'Vikings and Ireland', p. 132.

³⁴ Ibid.

of ethnic identity and medieval has been proven to be quite difficult. As Mytum argued, ethnicity is,

...socially constructed phenomena which may have some relationship with descent but which is chosen and manipulated to varying degrees in different circumstances.³⁵

His contention is of particular interest to this thesis, particularly with regard to the ways in which the socially constructed nature of ethnicity affects socially constructed gender identities.

A particular challenging example is the use of the term 'Viking' as an all-encompassing ethnic category for the Scandinavians of Ireland. Abrams considered the fact that some scholars use the term Viking specifically for ship-based raiders, but highlighted that this 'strictness is in fact impossible'; and concluded that others who utilize it in the more general sense do so to perhaps greater success.³⁶ As Mytum pointed out, the inhabitants of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and other settlements were a mixture of diverse Viking groups.³⁷ The Vikings were expelled from Dublin in 902 CE, but as, Mytum argued, this was most likely only the aristocracy and leadership, leaving behind groups that would continue to intermarry and blend with the native Irish.³⁸ When these people of higher-status returned in 917 CE after a period of settlement in England, these groups were most likely more diverse. David Griffiths argued that the Vikings were not a single homogenous or unified group. He contended that the 'Viking' term is simply a category that is convenient for modern scholars, but an identity unknown to medieval peoples.³⁹

The issues inherent in the use of the term 'Viking' are similar to 'Hiberno-Norse'. The latter is often used by scholars, such as Patrick Wallace, to describe both the group of biologically mixed individuals residing in medieval Ireland and the archaeological materials bearing evidence of both ethnic groups.⁴⁰ This term, too, is most likely an ethnic category that would not have been recognized to any degree by contemporaries and is, as with 'Viking' and 'Norse', an oversimplified term used to aid modern scholarship. It perhaps ignores the diversity of gender and age of those peoples as well, because the term

³⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

³⁶ Lesley Abrams, 'Diaspora and identity in the Viking Age', in *Early Medieval Europe* Volume 20 Issue 1 (2012), p. 18.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

³⁸ Mytum, 'The Vikings and Ireland', p. 122.

³⁹ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p.14.

⁴⁰ Wallace, 'Archaeological Identity', p. 35.

Viking perhaps has implied male warrior in the past. This is echoed by Julian Richards, 'the Vikings are victims of cultural stereotyping' as 'maruading shaggy war bands living and dying by the sword'.⁴¹ He contrasted this with an apparent scholarly bias of a 'peaceful immigrant and trader eager to take on all the trappings of the host society, including its religion'.⁴² These stereotypes, however, reflect the believed association of the term 'Viking' with maleness and men. This ideology will be challenged throughout this thesis.

This does stereotyping is not as common in morde modern scholarship as seen in the problematization of the term by scholars. As Griffiths argued these terms,

...do not sufficiently appreciate the potential for ethnic convergence and creation of new identities within individual lifetimes, even very early in the history of Viking activity in the west. These have mostly remained locked into a binary opposition of clearly defined categories of Viking and Native- something which is an increasing hindrance to understanding as the depth and complexity of inter-communal relationships are becoming clearer.⁴³

It is clear that ethnic identity, like gender, is a social construct, which scholars often utilize in a dichotomous or binary way, ignoring the fluidity and nuanced nature that it might have been understood by in its own context.

There are also issues with the term Viking due to its origins and general use. The word itself is from the Old Norse *vīkgnir*, literally a man from *vīk* (creek), but more colloquially as traveler, pirate, raider, or adventurer. Judith Jesch contended that the word could mean withdraw, deviate, or travel, and these were related to what the Vikings supposedly did.⁴⁴ The term is found throughout the Old Norse texts, with such examples as *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, for example the phrase *vinr víkinga*, which could translate to 'friend of vikings' or 'leader of vikings', but it should be noted that it is not used as a formal name.⁴⁵ Additionally, this saga was composed in 13th-century Sweden, though, like the other Norse sagas, it is claimed to include information from earlier

⁴¹ Julian Richards, 'Pagans and Christians at the frontier', p.383.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, (London, 2015), p. 7.

⁴⁵ Translation is authors own from the version, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, (ed.) G. Turville-Petr and (intro.) Christopher Tolkien (London, 1956), p. 14. This thesis will be a mix of other scholar's translations as well as this author's own, particularly when words or phrasing were critical or there were multiple translations with a some significant changes in phrasing.

accounts.⁴⁶ However, as Jesch argued, in her discussion of the term Viking, that many people 'commit the etymological fallacy, by assuming that giving an etymology of the word is equivalent to defining it'.⁴⁷ As she argued, modern conceptions of this word have 'moved far beyond' its original or early meanings.⁴⁸

The term Norse is also difficult because it makes allusions to a central state of Norway, something that would not have been recognized at the time the way that modern scholars envision it. Abrams, for example, highlighted that the term 'Norse' has difficulties in its confusion with Norwegian, for which some scholars use as a synonym. Instead, this term exists as a way for modern scholars to create binaries and categories in an attempt to understand data.

Another term for consideration for the study of Vikings in Ireland is diaspora, specifically, Scandinavian or Viking Diaspora. It is now common amongst scholars to refer to these groups of people from Scandinavia settling in overseas areas as a diaspora.⁴⁹ Abrams contended the term was more useful as opposed to colonial which is loaded with baggage.⁵⁰ Jesch also utilized the word diaspora with regards to the Vikings because it implied a strong link to homeland and traditions as well as,

....the Viking 'expansions' and 'migrations' were not the one-way movements suggested by those terms, but involved multi-directional contacts, networks, and influences over a period of time, in a far-flung geographical world held together by the common language we now call Old Norse, and by distinctive culture rooted in this language.⁵¹

This argument is echoed by Abrams, who defined diaspora as 'any community that has emigrated and remains culturally visible in the receiving nation'.⁵² This will be clear in the examination of Ireland, and its furnished Scandinavian burial practices, that the Vikings clearly retained ties to their homelands and were practicing a ritual that had been created there, though perhaps modified as a result of contact with the native Irish or other competing groups.

Abrams argued that the term diaspora can be difficult to utilize in relation to ethnicity. This is because the term ethnicity is often only conceived of in the modern

⁴⁶ A. Hall, 'Changing style and changing meaning: Icelandic historiography and the medieval redactions of *Heiðreks saga*' in *Scandinavian Studies* 77 (2005), pp. 2-4.; Christopher Tolkien, 'The Battle of the Goths and the Huns' in *Saga-Book 14, part 3* (London, 1955-6), p.141.

⁴⁷ Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Abrams, 'Diaspora', p. 17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵¹ Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, p. 4.

⁵² Abrams, 'Diaspora', p. 19.

sense, as relating to biology or genetics, as opposed to the medieval ideology that is utilized in this thesis, meaning the 'basket of attributes including language, religion, dress and art, all of it constructed'.⁵³

Abrams also states that while the term when applied to modern cultures seems to relate to economically disadvantaged, it is clear that this is not always the case for the Vikings, indeed, these people could be quite wealthy.⁵⁴ She concluded, however, that the members of these settling communities acted as a diaspora because they were

...retaining, sythesizing the expressing a sense of collective identity and constructing a common cultural discourse, while new circumstances generated innovations and developments which flowed back and forth between them.⁵⁵

It is evident that the language used to describe these Viking settlers is rife with inherent difficulties and issues. What is certain is that these are ahistorical terms which are generalizations of groups and peoples. As Abrams argued, the idea of Scandinavia as 'a single cultural unit in the Viking Age is highly contentious'.⁵⁶ To this end, she explored the nuanced nature of burial practices as evidence for diversity of ritual, and this concept will be explored in more depth throughout this thesis.⁵⁷ However, Abrams argued that there is evidence of supra-regional traditions, for example, art styles and images like Ringerike, and writings, like the distinctive skaldic verse, as well as religion.⁵⁸ This establishes that there was in fact some form of Scandinavian unifying culture throughout the regions. Therefore, within the scope of this thesis, Viking will be defined as people of Scandinavian descent; groups that had what Griffiths termed, 'convergence of mutually intelligible language, religion and warrior ideology'.⁵⁹ These will be used to describe people of all ages and genders. Their culture and religion allowed for similar systems of patriarchy and gender. Viking peoples are often so-named because of the ethnicity of their rulers, while the people were probably composed of a variety of ethnic groups in addition to those of Scandinavian descent including Picts, Welsh, Saxons, Manx, and others, and this thesis will also acknowledge this and will keep it in mind when conducting its investigations.⁶⁰ While efforts will be made to disentangle these groups, because ethnicity

⁵³ Ibid., p.20.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 24-26 and p. 29.

⁵⁹ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 14.

⁶⁰ Mytum, 'The Vikings in Ireland', p. 114-115.

is socially constructed, fluid and personal, completely distinguishing ethnic identities will prove impossible. The native Irish peoples are notably less ethnically diverse and will be defined as people of Irish custom, language, and descent. Norse will be understood to be the peoples arriving to Ireland from the region known to modern scholars as Norway, inclusive of age and gender. The problematic term 'Hiberno-Norse' will be understood within the scope of this thesis as a category for modern historians and without any real or universal contemporary meaning.

1.4 Gender: Theories and Methodological Approaches

Investigating the intersection of gender and ethnicity, this thesis will critically engage feminist theory as its principal theoretical structure. Utilizing feminist theory in historical analysis does not inflict modern perceptions on the past or force the past to conform to a modern theoretical standpoint. Instead, feminist scholarship enables this project to problematize perceived gender binaries, hierarchies and norms; interrogate terminology to illuminate bias in perceived universalities; and explore the collusion, subversion, and oppression of patriarchal systems. As feminist medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum stated,

...it is imperative to use modern concerns when we confront the past. So long as we reason by analogy rather than merely rewriting or rejecting, the present will help us see past complexity and the past will help us to understand ourselves.⁶¹

Therefore, feminist theory and the analytical category of gender will be the key methodologies employed to reach the meaningful explanations for its research questions.

The postmodernist/poststructuralist methodological tool of deconstruction will be employed in this thesis in order to analyze gender. It is defined by Joan Wallach Scott as (a),

...contest about meaning involving the introduction of new oppositions, the reversal of hierarchies, the attempt to expose repressed terms, to challenge the natural status of seemingly dichotomous pairs, and to expose their interdependence and their internal instability.⁶²

Deconstruction will be utilized to explore the man/woman binary to ascertain a more accurate picture of the social constructions of gender. This process allows for the close

⁶¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective' in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 22 No. 1 (1995), p. 31.

⁶² Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1999), p. 7.

investigation of patriarchal systems and oppression, as well as in-depth analysis of the impact these systems may have had on each other and medieval lived experiences.

Postmodernism and deconstruction are not without critics among feminist scholars. One such opponent is Joan Hoff who termed it as 'politically paralyzing', and accused it of disconnecting women with 'any material experiential base'.⁶³ Hoff even went as far as to label postmodernism as 'misogynistic in origin' and that it defines history as 'at best chaos and at worst does not exist at all'.⁶⁴ Hoff believed postmodernism and specifically, the use of gender as a category of analysis, imposed a 'benign and neutral diversity' on the past, denied male privilege and the existence of patriarchy, and had the power to silence women.⁶⁵

Hoff's views represented only a small minority of theorists. While, other historians might be cautious of applied postmodernism, the majority are not so extreme in their dismissal of deconstruction in historical analysis. Susan Kingsley Kent in her 'Reply to Joan Hoff' termed Hoff's arguments against the whole of postmodernism to be 'ridiculous,' 'unreasoned,' and 'uninformed'.⁶⁶ Another scholar, Caroline Ramazanoglu, agreed with Joan Hoff to a degree, arguing that postmodernism can reduce the realities of women's lived experience to 'nothingness' by reducing lived experience to solely a discourse.⁶⁷ On the other hand, Ramazanoglu believed that feminism can afford to borrow parts of postmodernism in order to 'ask about how we know what we know, why we think as we do, and how else we might think about the nature and effects of power'.⁶⁸

Kathleen Canning also expressed a wariness of postmodernism. However she, like Ramazanoglu, contended for the dissolution of the oppositional binaries between discourse and experience or agency, meaning that lived experience and human nature should be investigated within the context of the literary and symbolic world advocated by the postmodernist movement.⁶⁹ Another feminist historian, Anna Clark, shared Canning's

⁶³ Joan Hoff, 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 177, 178.

⁶⁴ Hoff, 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis', p. 177.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-182.

⁶⁶ Susan Kingsley Kent, "Mistrials and Distribulations: A Reply to Joan Hoff" in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 184.

⁶⁷ Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'Unravelling Postmodern Paralysis: A Response to Joan Hoff' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 189.

⁶⁸ Ramazanoglu, 'Unravelling Postmodern Paralysis', p. 190.

⁶⁹ Sonya Rose, Kathleen Canning, Anna Clark, and Mariana Valverde, 'Gender History/Women's History: Is Feminist Scholarship Losing its Critical Edge' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 168.

wariness of postmodernism, but she also argued that it can be useful in analysis. Clark contended that while gender did change throughout history, it did so because of real people and, therefore, when utilizing postmodernism and deconstruction in the study of history it is crucial to remember that these categories were not just categories, they were, and are, lived experiences.⁷⁰ Clark did see the value in postmodernism and argued that historians use its belief that gender and its relationships are always unstable. Mariana Valverde also believed in the importance of postmodernism and poststructuralism to historical research in terms of studying symbols and meaning and their subsequent fluctuations over time.⁷¹ Bynum stated that while she was 'sympathetic' to Judith Butler's assertion that gender is performative, which Butler defined as 'being what they are by performing what they choose or must choose', she warned that in this the lived body seemed to disappear.⁷²

Butler believed in the importance of postmodernism to research and historical analysis. She argued for the important and crucial role that postmodernism plays within feminist scholarship and that, contrary to what other scholars like Hoff have argued, it does not in fact do away with the lived subject. As she stated,

...to deconstruct bodies and matter is not to negate or refuse either term, to deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power⁷³

The postmodernist/ poststructuralist methodological tool of deconstruction is an indispensable component of this project. While postmodernism and deconstruction are not without pitfalls they are essential tools in analyzing historical constructions of gender and patriarchy. Deconstruction is used in the exhaustive analysis of all the contexts applicable to various source materials. The judicious use of deconstruction while maintaining the lived experience allows this project to dismantle heretofore perceived gender binaries and universalities; enables the understanding of the multitude of contexts in which gender is created to truly understand how the Irish and Norse societal constructions and interpretations fluctuated as a result of conquest, coexistence, and cultural blending; and, how in turn these changes affected systems of power.

⁷⁰ Rose, Canning, Clark, and Valverde, 'Gender History', p. 169.

⁷¹ Rose, et al, 'Gender History', p. 171

⁷² Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss About Body', p. 4.

⁷³ Judith Butler, 'Contingent Foundations Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 201.

Utilizing gender as a category of analysis instead of focusing solely on the history of women is also not without controversy among feminist scholars. Some theorists, such as Purvis and Weatherill, believed that when women are studied only alongside men it 'reinforces their position as "Other"'.⁷⁴ However, for many scholars, like Penelope Corfield, examining gender, and not just women, is imperative to feminist scholarship. In her response to Purvis and Weatherill, Corfield asserted that it is a matter of applying feminist perspectives to gender history in order to maintain legitimacy.⁷⁵ What construes gender and how people performed, created, or enforced these beliefs themselves or forced them on others is the cornerstone of this thesis. Jeanne Boydston also reiterated the importance of gender, stating that lives of women have always at some level included men and, therefore, the study of gender needs to also encompass them.⁷⁶ Boydston did, however, take issue with gender as a category of analysis, because she believed that all categories for analysis over generalize and oversimplify the lived experience and any use is potentially dangerous as it implies a universality that does not exist.⁷⁷ However, when her argument is closely analyzed, Boydston agreed with many scholars who advocate its use, so long as it is not used to justify universalities and binaries.

The key scholar that argued for the importance of gender as a tool for analysis is Joan Wallach Scott. Scott contended that,

Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships to power.⁷⁸

One reason Scott believed gender is an essential tool for analyzing history is because it aids in the search for meaningful explanation instead of an essentialist or positivist past.⁷⁹ Boydston agreed with Scott, and stressed the importance of examining our terminology of looking at existing presumed truths and reevaluating them. She stated,

Terminology is important, but equally important is our willingness, in a given historical study, to interrogate that terminology, to ask why we are using a particular critical construct, what it means to us, from whose experience it derives

⁷⁴ June Purvis and Amanda Weatherill, 'Playing the Gender Game: A Reply to Penelope J. Corfield' in Sue Morgan (ed.) *The Feminist History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 125.

⁷⁵ Penelope J. Corfield, 'From Women's History to Gender History: A Reply to Playing the Gender History Game', in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 128.

⁷⁶ Jeanne Boydston, 'Gender as a question of historical analysis' in *Gender & History* Vol. 20, No.3 (November, 2008), p. 558.

⁷⁷ Boydston, 'Gender as a Question', p. 560.

⁷⁸ Scott, *Gender*, p.141.

⁷⁹ Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' in *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), p. 1054-1055 and p. 1060.

and what it highlights and what it conceals in our work as historians. We need to problematize the way in which the category (any category) has been historically constructed.⁸⁰

Scott and Boydston are in accord in many senses. They both seek to use gender to problematize historical assumptions and to analyze how constructs came to exist. This is the point of view this thesis will apply when examining Norse and Irish gender constructs and systems of patriarchy. It will utilize gender to question preconceived binaries and universalities, but will keep in mind the arguments of Boydston and ensure this does not negate the oppression of the feminine by systems of patriarchy or the lived experience of women.

This thesis will define gender as an unnatural phenomenon that is distinct from biological sex and a performed social construct. Scott defined gender in part as a 'social organization of sexual difference', and argued that it is the 'knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences'.⁸¹ Gender is also understood within the framework of this thesis to be a complex set of relations and processes.⁸² Allen J. Frantzen contended that,

Gender is a tool for reconceptualizing male as well as female roles, reconfiguring the power struggles between the sexes, and merging sexual distinctions founded on reproductive difference. Gender studies, where those reconceptualizations are carried out, examine how males and females choose to think and act in reference to the conventions expected of the men and women of their ages.⁸³

Gender allows for the exploration of choice and performance in the lives of people and cultural symbols.⁸⁴ As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler stated, 'gender is the culturally specific process of becoming'.⁸⁵ Roberta Gilchrist defined gender as the 'cultural interpretation of sexual difference'. She argued that it can be 'conflicting, mutable and cumulative, contingent upon personal and historical circumstances'.⁸⁶ These arguments

⁸⁰ Boydston, 'Gender as a question', p. 575.

⁸¹ Scott, *Gender*, p.2.

⁸² Bock, Gisela, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 110.

⁸³ Allen J. Frantzen, 'When Women Aren't Enough' in Nancy F. Partner (ed.) *Studying Medieval Women: sex, gender, feminism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 143.

⁸⁴ Frantzen, 'When Women Aren't Enough', p. 149.

⁸⁵ Jeffery Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, 'Becoming and Unbecoming' in Jeffery Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (eds.), *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York and London, 2000), pp. vii-xx.

⁸⁶ Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London, 1999), p. 1.

make up how this thesis will define gender and consequently, provide insight into what and how this project will examine this category during the course of its investigation.

Women (and men) do not have the same historical narrative.⁸⁷ Gisela Block made a crucial argument that,

The concrete manifestations of gender difference are not the same in all societies, they are not universal, and the variations within the status of the female sex are just a manifold as those within the status of the male sex.⁸⁸

Denise Riley asserted that the category 'women' is unstable with 'no ontological foundation or underlying continuity'. The terms 'women' and 'men' have ever changing definitions. Many other feminist historians echo this argument, such as Judith Bennett, who contended that gender is 'both a performed and a historically constrained construction exceeding the binary of sexual difference...'⁸⁹ While another scholar Joan Kelly argued that historically women were conceived to be what men are not and men are what women are not,⁹⁰ this argument, without deconstruction, could potentially lead to an essentialist gender binary of man/woman. Instead, as Boydston maintained, gender is more nuanced.⁹¹

This definition of gender, as both a performance and societal construct, illustrates that the manifestations of gender are divergent over a variety of competing social categories. Masculinity and femininity are not stable or fixed categories but are instead fluid manifestations of societal constructions and individual representation. As scholars such as Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More contended, gender can only be understood within its specific context; moreover, the terms 'men' and 'women' do not represent homogenous or fixed factions.⁹² Understanding the mutable nature of gender permits this study to conduct a detailed scrutiny of gendered reactions to ethnic collision and amalgamation by enabling the nuanced approach to Irish and Norse gender systems and hierarchies.

⁸⁷ Bock, 'Women's History', p. 105.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

⁸⁹ Judith M. Bennett, 'Medieval Women, Modern Women: Across the Great Divide' in David Aers (ed.) *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing* (Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 147.

⁹⁰ Joan Kelly, *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago, 1984), p.6.

⁹¹ Boydston, 'Gender as a question', p. 575.

⁹² Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More, 'Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation and Subversion, 600-1530' in Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More (eds.), *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation and Subversion, 600-1530* (Surrey, England, 2011), p. 4.

Another vital point of this thesis is that all women do not share the same gender. This is an imperative point of this thesis, that a woman is a woman only within the confines of *her* context and cannot be separated from that.⁹³ Scott advocated strongly against assuming gender is the same for all women,

...by assuming that women have inherent characteristics and objective identities consistently and predictably different from men's and that these generate definably female needs and interests, historians imply that sexual difference is a natural rather than a social phenomenon.⁹⁴

It is a crucial part of this thesis then, to examine how different women experienced their gender. L'Estrange and More reasoned that, "'women" does not constitute a pre-existing, homogenous, stable group ready for analysis'.⁹⁵

One key implication of gender as a social construct is when and why it was constructed. As Boydston maintained, if gender was a social construction then, 'there was a time in which it was constructed, certain actors were part of the construction, and a time that it was not constructed thus it is a historical and cultural phenomena'.⁹⁶ This means that gender is both 'context specific and dependent',⁹⁷ naturally leading to the conclusion that gender was experienced differently by different men and women. Riley charged historians with the task of mapping out 'how and why differing hegemonic definitions of "women" emerged at particular historical moments',⁹⁸ and this thesis will examine, through a myriad of other categories of influence, how Norse and Irish men and women were constructed and represented and how these interpretations came to influence each other and the consequences of such interpretation within the context of invasion and settlement.

In medieval Christian Irish and pagan Norse culture there was no single definition for men or women, instead a variety of competing clerical, ecclesiastical, and scholarly ideologies are evident. Bennett contended that there is no singular 'European' medieval definition for gender.⁹⁹ She argued that gender and theories of gender need to investigate 'sex, flesh, body, race, nature, discourse and culture' and that to presume any of these is

⁹³ Ibid., p. 577.

⁹⁴ Scott, *Gender*, p. 4.

⁹⁵ L'Estrange and More, 'Representing Medieval Genders', p. 4.

⁹⁶ Boydson, 'Gender as a question', p. 564.

⁹⁷ Bock, 'Women's History', p. 107.

⁹⁸ Denise Riley, 'Does Sex Have a History?' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 149.

⁹⁹ Bennett, 'Medieval Women', p. 150.

'natural' would be categorically incorrect.¹⁰⁰ Just as gender varies across nationalities, it varies within racial and ethnic groups as well. Bynum believed that there was not a single 'medieval' concept of the body (and by proxy gender and sex), there was 'a cacophony of discourses' by a plethora of differing peoples: doctors, scholars, poets, and clergy to name a few.¹⁰¹

It seems natural then that a study of gender should be a study in intersectionalities: a study of the influence of other categories of analysis on gender. This study will investigate the influence of ethnic identity on one's gender, and by proxy this thesis will also consider to a lesser degree factors such as religious beliefs, marital status, and sexual orientation. When examined within its contemporary framework it is clear that Viking gender identities were influenced by a myriad of factors, predominantly dictated by their ethnic identity. As this thesis is concerned about gendered symbolism and gender ideologies in Viking burial practice, it will focus primarily on Scandinavian understandings of gender and gender roles and how these may have impacted on burial. To that effect, it is essential to explore the nuanced nature of these Viking gender conceptions. However, it is important to have a brief understanding that Irish gender roles were different from their Norse counterparts. The gender roles inherent in early medieval Ireland were greatly influenced by the doctrine of the Church.

One of the most relevant publications is Lisa Bitel's monograph, *Land of Women: Tales of Sex and Gender from Early Medieval Ireland*, which provided a framework for the competing Irish gender systems that this project utilized to examine the impact of incursion and settlement had on native representations. Bitel argued that the 'histories' of medieval Irish women have in essence been amalgamated to create one single status or common experience for all.¹⁰² Bitel stressed that the literati of Ireland had no one definition for men or women, but that women were defined solely in relation to the men in their lives.¹⁰³

These arguments make up a critical portion of this thesis, mainly, that 'women' and 'men' did not experience their gender the same and that among the medieval Irish there were many competing ideologies. She also found that the association between

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Bynum. 'Why All the Fuss about The Body', p. 8.

¹⁰² Lisa Bitel, *Land of Women: Tales of Sex and Gender from Early Ireland* (Ithaca and London, 1996), p.2.

¹⁰³ Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 15.

animals, women and the otherworldly was common to the Irish literati.¹⁰⁴ Although Bitel engaged in some discussion of religious women acquiring manliness to become more holy, she did not seem to completely separate the term 'woman' from 'femininity', however. Bitel also raised the vital question of whether women could become men by acquiring masculine traits, using case studies of Saint Ite, who starved herself to become androgynous, and Saint Brigit, who gouged out her eye to become unattractive, as examples.¹⁰⁵

This is an integral part of this thesis' examination of the acquisition or innateness of masculinity and femininity. By separating man from masculinity and woman from femininity, it is now possible to examine gender representations and interpretations as they varied among medieval people. Bitel's findings play an integral role in creating a framework of feminine gender constructs, which will be utilized to explore the ways in which Irish genders were affected by the influx of Norse peoples.

It is also evident among medieval people that there were a multitude of divergent definitions of 'man' both intra- and inter-culturally. In 'Body Doubles: Producing the Masculine Corpus', D. Vance Smith discussed conceptions of masculinity in the Middle Ages. Smith asserted that the medieval male body was responsible for producing and maintaining the world, and that external labor was a role for men and internal work was the realm of women.¹⁰⁶ This seems to suggest a universality of separate spheres. Smith relied heavily on Christian doctrine and while this is certainly one such conception of masculinity, it is still only one of many competing ideologies inherent in Christian European culture and indeed, while it could perhaps be seen in Christian medieval Ireland, it might not be applicable to Norse culture at all. Norse gender binaries and hierarchies have been more contested. Studies by Marianne Moen and Carol Clover have problematized the man/woman binary by arguing that Germanic peoples might have a vastly different gender system from our modern society and from Christian medieval Europe.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹⁰⁶ D.Vance Smith, 'Body Doubles: Producing the Masculine Corpus' in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (eds.), *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York and London, 2000), p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Marianne Moen, *The Gendered Landscape: A Discussion on Gender, Status and Power in the Norwegian Viking Landscape* (Oxford, 2011); Carol Clover, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe' in *Speculum* Vol. 68 No. 2 (April, 1993),

In *The Gendered Landscape*, Moen argued that the ideology of separate spheres rooted in Victorian thought is not supported in archaeological evidence and, therefore, should not be imposed upon medieval Viking women. She reasoned instead that we should not 'underestimate' Viking women by limiting their roles to those strictly defined by scholars as female or domestic.¹⁰⁸ This is a view that this thesis supports. Mainly, that it is imperative to examine Norse women in the context and understanding of their own gender ideologies.

Jesch's seminal work on Viking women furnished necessary insight into lived experiences for Norse women by assessing a multitude of contexts in which they existed. She offered both a vital background on Viking custom and culture, providing valuable material about burial practice and average daily rituals for Viking women as well as an introduction to source materials.¹⁰⁹ Jesch also analyzed the system of evaluating the gender of a burial based on the material objects it contained, for example a sword in a grave might not necessarily indicate a masculine burial.¹¹⁰ This thesis differs from her work by focusing on gender and not women, and seeking instead to deconstruct the words 'man' and 'woman'. Additionally, Jesch stated that while the Viking culture was 'a society which accorded a certain respect to women, there is no evidence that it accorded them any power to go along with that respect'.¹¹¹ This is in contrast to other scholars, who believed that Viking women could and did achieve powerful positions.

Clover's article, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe', examined gender and conceptions of masculinity and femininity among the Norse. Her arguments will form a cornerstone of this thesis, mainly that a gender binary might not necessarily be the way in which medieval people understood gender. Clover believed that the Scandinavian and Germanic peoples had a 'sex/gender system rather different from our own, and indeed rather different from that of the Christian Middle Ages'.¹¹² She contended the binary for medieval Norse culture was weak/strong and could be crossed by either gender, instead of a universal man/woman.¹¹³ Clover argued that behavior could have potentially negated the sexed body.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 5

¹⁰⁹ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2003), particularly pp. 9-41.

¹¹⁰ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, pp. 18-21.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.74.

¹¹² Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 364.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 364-366.

She cited examples of the thirteen female founders of Iceland, female inheritors, and female skalds. Clover also considered the example of the female warriors found in sagas which modern scholars deem 'extraordinary' or often times fictional or problematic. She used these examples to illustrate the potential fluidity of gender constraints for female Scandinavians.¹¹⁵ There are certainly issues with the utilization of the saga material as it was composed much later than the events they purport to contain and within a Christian milleiu. This will be explored throughout the thesis. However, these saga sources in tandem with the archaeology do suggest a very different gender ideology from Victorians, modern scholars and even other medieval contexts.

Clover argued that 'femaleness' could be overridden by other factors such as rank, marital status, finances, or 'just plain personality and ambition'.¹¹⁶ She contended that the binary for medieval Norse culture was weak/strong and could be crossed by either gender.¹¹⁷ This is an integral part of this thesis, that biologically sexed body is different from gender. It is imperative to make the distinction that femininity does not equal female and masculine does not equal male.¹¹⁸ As Nancy Partner eloquently argued,

Only the most temperate of feminist criticism was necessary to recognize that biological femaleness did not automatically or 'naturally' entail femininity when the 'Feminine' turned out to be every society's catchall category for transparent male fears, biological fantasies, and crude excuses for systematic domination.¹¹⁹

It is critical in this exploration of gender to make the distinction between socially ascribed gender and individual chosen gender

McLaughlin's article, 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe', explored the potential for Viking female warriors among the Norse people. McLaughlin argued that such women existed and enjoyed the most widespread existence in the early medieval period. She cited sanctions against fighting women as well as strict literary censure as evidence that these women's activities were curtailed in the later medieval period. She hesitated to say that they did not enjoy a period before the early medieval time, but there is scant evidence in existence to prove that. McLaughlin

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 366-367.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 368.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.380.

¹¹⁸ Boydston, *Gender as a question*, p. 558.

¹¹⁹ Nancy F. Partner, 'No Sex, No Gender' in Nancy F. Partner (ed.), *Studying Medieval Women: sex, gender, feminism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 121.

believed women warriors to be the most numerous during this period because the sources from between the tenth and thirteenth centuries contain the most references.¹²⁰

Clover's article, 'Maiden Warriors and Other Sons', discussed women warriors in literature, and, as she argued, while they may or may not have existed in reality, the 'literary fantasy of maiden warriors teaches us much about society that produced it'.¹²¹ While evidence may not be found in Ireland of Norse or Irish women warriors, the consideration of the implications of their existence in literature is essential. Clover contended that such a system can in fact be found to exist in modern times, such as the female warriors in Albania who take on male roles in the absence of male figures to claim vengeance. This could align with the Norse conception of 'male' daughters and perhaps shed some light onto the potential lived realities in the medieval period.¹²²

A significant point of investigation for this thesis is whether weapons in graves equate to a biological male or to a masculine gender role, as will be explored in Chapter Four. This allows for the consideration of power and gender in the Viking Age. By instead considering gendered symbolism, this thesis removes an insistence upon binary understandings of grave goods and biological sex and gender, and, therefore, creates the possibility of more nuanced consideration of Viking gender roles and representations.

McLaughlin also made the compelling argument that in early medieval times the lord and his warriors shared close quarters in the family home or hall. Therefore, the separate spheres ideology with a binary of public and private is not applicable. Noble women, in particular, would have had access and indeed potential daily encounters with their spouses, sons, brothers, and warriors, as well as the fighting men who served them. These encounters would have prepared them or given them a baseline knowledge of battle and warfare. It is then not a stretch that women would have taken up arms in the absence of protectors or to have engaged in conflict at all in the early medieval period. She argued that since women could take up arms after the death of a spouse or kin member, and do so quickly, suggests an inherent knowledge of warfare among the female population.¹²³

¹²⁰ Megan McLaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe' in *Women's Studies* Vol. 17 Issue 3-4 (1990), p. 194, 199.

¹²¹ Carol Clover, 'Maiden Warriors and Other Sons' in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85 (1986), p. 36.

¹²² Clover, 'Maiden Warriors and Other Sons', pp. 45-48.

¹²³ McLaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior', p. 198-203.

This thesis will examine the symbolism in burial with these possible gender roles in mind in an effort to ascertain the framework in which these people existed, and the consequences for being socially labeled into each of these particular categories. This can at times be difficult due the fact that the majority of Viking burial in Ireland was discovered during the antiquarian period. This has resulted in missing items, lost records, poor analysis of the burials to begin with, and an overall lack of detailed information. This will be considered in more depth in Chapter Three.

The masculine woman was a somewhat common character in Norse mythology. According to Clover, this female could undertake vengeance and warlike behavior as long as she remained a virgin or a widow.¹²⁴ This may appear to be subverting patriarchal norms, but perhaps another conclusion might be that these tales were created for collusion and support of patriarchy, as these women were powerful only when they behaved as the social construct of masculinity. In this thesis, then, it will not be assumed that weapons equate with a biological male or a gender role associated with a biological male. Instead it will take these as representative of a form of masculinities, one that may be divorced from biological sex.

An example of feminine men can be found in relation to *níð*, or sexual defamation that was illegal.¹²⁵ This defamation took the form of insinuating female behavior or passive homosexuality. These Norsemen were, as Clover argued, one insult away from being feminized.¹²⁶ This can perhaps be evidenced in *seiðr* or magic practice and the femininities, and perhaps forms of masculinities or third genders associated with it. This will be investigated in some depth in Chapters Six through Eight, but in particular and at length in Chapter Six.

This thesis will explore grave goods and, therefore, will include marginalized groups, defined by their inability or unwillingness to accept the socially prescribed constructs of their gender, to ascertain how society either rejected their performance or conception or forced these gender transgressors into the prescribed narrative by manipulating their individual representations to suit the cultural norms. These marginalized groups are an integral part of the broader themes of this thesis because they provide insight into the societal gender norms for each culture while also perhaps offering specific instances of how a social norm could become marginalized through

¹²⁴ Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 370.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 373.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 373-375.

acculturation. By not utilizing binaries, it is a hope that this thesis may go some way to understanding gender ideologies in Viking society.

Mrinalini Sinha in her article 'Gender and Nation', asserted that 'nations have been, and are, constituted around culturally specific constructions of gender difference'.¹²⁷ This is particularly pertinent to this thesis because the Irish and Norse experienced gender differently. Sinha believed that conquest and nation are and were associated with 'reclaiming male honor, masculinity and remasculinization of culture'.¹²⁸ This concept is prevalent in medieval Irish culture as evidenced in the *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, where the loss to an enemy in battle was depicted as tantamount to submission. For the Irish, familial honor and dynastic superiority are paramount and submission to any ruler, king or force would eliminate any claim to genealogical preeminence or distinction.¹²⁹ For the Norse, as is evident with the slanderous *ergi* accusations that will be explored in Chapter Six, submission was also viewed as cowardly and negative.¹³⁰ These conceptions create some of the key research questions posed in this thesis, mainly, how masculinity and femininity were expressed in cases of war and how gender was deployed as a method to express dominance or submission.

1.5 Violence, Gender and Medieval Ireland

Historian Daniel Lesnick said the medieval world was one of 'thin skins, short fuses and physical violence'.¹³¹ This perhaps conjures images of a period of continuous arbitrary hostility characterized by a multitude of brutal clashes between peoples. But the violence inherent in medieval Ireland was not by and large a series of random events perpetrated by uncontrolled actors. Instead, it is critical to view violent interactions in this period as discourse: a series of actions, some ritualistic in nature, designed to negotiate power. These engagements contained a series of semiotics conveyed by the perpetrators to the receivers and observing third parties.¹³²

It is crucial to examine the ethos of violence to understand its function in medieval Ireland. Violence, and specifically the right to perpetuate legitimate violence, was one of

¹²⁷ Mrinalini Sinha, 'Gender and Nation' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 324.

¹²⁸ Sinha, 'Gender and Nation', p.327

¹²⁹ Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings* (Dublin, 2001), p.4.

¹³⁰ For an in depth discussion, please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

¹³¹ Daniel R. Lesnick, 'Insults and threats in medieval Todi' in *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 17 (1991), p. 72.

¹³² Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 11.

the central methods to create, display and maintain dominance. Fighting in Ireland was a manifestation of the culture of elite male dominance and violence inherent in early medieval western culture.¹³³ As archaeologist Howard Williams elucidated, particularly for elites, violence and weapons played a crucial role in the formation and reiteration of the elite masculine social construct and in an individual's socio-political affiliations.¹³⁴ Violence and fighting were key in the creation and maintenance of elite masculinity; but, violence as the way of maintaining dominance was generally only accepted practice if it could be legitimized. It is critical to understand what constituted legitimate violence to form a framework with which to explore fighting in the context of the Viking invasions and settlement and its position in the broader corpus of war in Ireland. Legitimization of violence came from what Guy Halsall has termed the vertical and horizontal dimensions. A 'vertical' dimension encompassed attempts by the kings and nobles of Ireland to limit violence to approved measures carried out under their orders. This form of justification relied heavily on the legitimacy of the person or group who committed or ordered the act, though this could also be contested. Legitimacy also came from acceptance of actions by local communities or the Church, as justifiable; and Halsall termed this 'horizontal' legitimacy.¹³⁵

The medieval Irish placed critical amount of weight on genealogical ties, so much so that, for example, in the 11th-century context, Brian Boru and his lineage the Dal Cais, manufactured strong dynastic ties to one of the leading families of the Eoganacht in an effort to solidify and prove their right to rule.¹³⁶ The right to rule is intertwined with the right to perpetrate legitimate violence, the thought process being that violence perpetrated by the rightful ruler is, for the most part, de facto legitimate violence. The use of honor and maintenance of ancestral prestige as incitement to partake in legitimate warfare was deemed acceptable by contemporaries. The Vikings did not initially have these dynastic ties to support their claims to power. This meant that they perhaps did not have a right to inflict legitimate violence according to the cultural mores of Ireland.

One of the most critical ways in which the Vikings impacted on warfare in early medieval Ireland was the introduction of total war.¹³⁷ Total war is defined as a war in

¹³³ Howard Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length' in *Journal of Social Archaeology* Vol.5, No 2 (June, 2005), p. 264.

¹³⁴ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p.264.

¹³⁵ Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 33.

¹³⁶ *Cogadh*, Todd, p. 53 and p. 55

¹³⁷ Halpin, 'Weapons and Warfare', p. 11.

which every available resource is devoted to its cause and there is little or no distinction between military and civilian targets, everyone and everything is fair game, and the so-called rules of war are disregarded or unknown.¹³⁸

Violence in early medieval Ireland was ritualistic in nature, it followed a predictable series of aggressions.¹³⁹ Due to their pagan traditions and distinctive culture, the Vikings could not, and did not, know how to play by the 'rules' of the ritualistic violence of Ireland. For example, the Viking invaders to Ireland probably fought in groups called *lið*. These were warriors who were sworn to a leader, who in turn was responsible for rewarding, equipping and feeding them for their service.¹⁴⁰ The size of these groups was largely dependent upon the leader's wealth and prestige and these *lið* were largely autonomous and functioned together out of loyalty and 'ingroup identity fusion'.¹⁴¹ The Vikings brought with them a distinctive set of semiotics which influenced the ways in which they perpetrated and responded to violence and this was manifested by engaging in total war and deploying methods to which the Irish did not know how to respond. This, combined with their paganism, which impeded the ability to swear oaths crucial to ending conflicts inherent in this period, perhaps indicated that neither side was able to understand each other's rules of engagement.¹⁴²

Halsall divided violence into two categories: strategic and tactical. Tactical violence aims directly at the resolution of a problem, a direct attack on a rival power by killing them off or driving them away and all disputed lands or territories are annexed and wrongs are avenged. The attack is direct and the aim is achieved by open violence against opponents, such as pitched battles, but also could take the form of raid and plunder if the aim was a direct attack with large casualties to force a submission, and this is evident in the fighting during the initial periods of Viking incursions. Strategic violence, on the other hand, is characterized by violent acts on a smaller scale, sometimes ritualized or token, in an effort to draw attention to a dispute to bring about third party arbitration. The aim is not to terminate the dispute by the act. Rituals of violence, by force of their

¹³⁸ After 'total war, n.' OED Online. June 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/413103> (accessed July 20, 2016).

¹³⁹ Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p.11

¹⁴⁰ Ben Raffield, Claire Greenlow, Neil Price, and Mark Collard, 'Ingroup identification, identity fusion, and the formation of Viking war bands' in *World Archaeology* Vol. 48, Issue 1 (March 2016), p. 36.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 11.

repetitive accepted acts, proclaim to third parties the legitimacy and normalcy of the engagement.¹⁴³

It is evident that initially the Vikings utilized tactical violence in order to gain territory or land. However, as time progressed, the Vikings changed tactics to engage in more ritualistic and strategic encounters. There are many instances of the men of Dublin using these forms of violence. For example, the *Annals of Tigernach* recorded them plundering Kildare in 998 CE and capturing a son of a king of Leinster, who was probably taken as a hostage to gain further wealth or for political coercion.¹⁴⁴ This strategic play suggests that the Vikings were making efforts to utilize the rituals of violence traditional to the native Irish to establish the legitimacy of their own power and right to inflict violence.¹⁴⁵

Within this context then, this thesis will examine if gendered symbolism, particularly that which was associated with violence, was utilized by the Vikings as a way to convey their means to inflict legitimate violence. It will consider if the Norse invaders in Dublin, or indeed, the Viking groups throughout Ireland in a few cases studies, perhaps deployed such semiotics associated with violence and power as a way to negotiate their rights in the ritualistically violent world of early medieval Ireland.

1.6 Summary

As is evident, gender was not only utilized cross-culturally to justify or enable oppression. One important consequence of gender hierarchy is patriarchy, or, more accurately, patriarchies. As there are multitudes of gender expressions so too are there myriads of ways to oppress others because of it. Patriarchy is defined by Sue Morgan as a 'system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women' but this thesis will also explore how men exploit other men.¹⁴⁶ It is vital to consider that women were not just oppressed by patriarchy by other men, women colluded with patriarchy in the suppression of not only themselves but other women of the same or different

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁴⁴ AI 998: 'Ceall dara do argain do Gallaib Atha Cliath, [<< Kildare was plundered by the Foreigners of Dublin>>]' *Annals of Tigernach* (trans.) Whitley Stokes (Felinfach, 1993), p. 244.

¹⁴⁵ For further discussion on Viking and Irish violence, particularly as it relates to Dublin please see, B. Ó Donnabhain, 'Culture clashes? The human remains from the Wood Quay excavations' In J. Sheehan and D. Ó Corráin, (eds.), *The Viking Age: Ireland and the West. Proceedings of the Fifteenth Viking Congress*, (Dublin, 2010), pp. 271-282.

¹⁴⁶ Sue Morgan, 'Writing Feminist History: Theoretical Debates and Critical Practices' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 5.

ethnicities, religious beliefs, or race. Women were not necessarily just the victims of patriarchal oppression, in fact, women could be the victimizers as much as men could be, as Frantzen argued.¹⁴⁷

Bennett asserted that the division between women as agents and women as victims to be untrue. It is clear that women colluded, subverted and survived in and with patriarchal regimes as Bennett believed. She also argued that patriarchy is not transhistorical and it does not mean that 'women's oppression is unchanging, natural and inevitable'.¹⁴⁸ Bennett postulated that in order to approach history and patriarchal systems and women's oppression historians should examine periods of 'crisis to determine how patriarchal institutions have adapted and survived'.¹⁴⁹ By examining gendered symbolism in grave goods this thesis will explore how the Viking patriarchies deployed gender as a medium in burial to express dominance. It will consider how Viking masculinities and femininities might have been utilized by patriarchal systems in an effort to express power to the native Irish as well as their own peoples. It will also investigate whether this might have changed as a result of contact with the Irish systems of patriarchies.

This thesis, then, will examine how gender was deployed and utilized as a way to negotiate and represent power, dominance, and violence in early medieval Ireland. It will look at three central categories of gender laid out by modern archaeologists: masculinities, femininities, and the so-called un-gendered, gender neutral, or tertiary burials. It will deconstruct and problematize both the understandings of these categories to modern scholars as well as place them within their own Viking context. It will then reach meaningful conclusions about gendered symbolism in Viking burial practice and place it within the broader context of Scandinavian funerary ritual.

The applications for the examination of the impact of ethnicity on the gender structures in early medieval Ireland are manifold. It allows for the more nuanced study of representations of gender, which problematizes preconceived conceptions of men/women binary and works to remove modern biases from gender analysis; it contributes to greater knowledge of the ways in which pagan and Christian constructs came to influence masculinities and femininities; it enables the understanding of the role

¹⁴⁷ Frantzen 'When Women Aren't Enough', p. 149.

¹⁴⁸ Judith M Bennett, 'Feminism and History' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (London, 2006), p. 65.

¹⁴⁹ Bennett, 'Feminism and History', p. 133.

that nation, conquest, and cultural blending played in the performance and execution of socially constructed gender roles; it examines the ways in which gender was employed as a weapon to control and dominate alternate ethnic groups; and finally, as feminist medievalist Bennett argued, it contributes to the dismantling of patriarchy by examining the adaptation and survival of this structure during a 'period of crisis'.

Chapter Two: Burial as Social Ritual: Theory, Representation, and Lived Reality

2.1 Role of the Funeral to the Vikings

Before progressing to the examination of the archaeological sources from Ireland, it is essential to look at the critical role of burial and funerary rituals to the Vikings. The semiotics of Viking burial are a series of complex and nuanced metaphors which have a range of diverse meanings associated with cultural and ethnic norms. As there was a wide-range of ethnic groups contained under the umbrella term 'Viking,' it is evident that these groups also had an extensive range of ritualistic burial rites associated with them. The exploration of the general role of burial in the broader dialogue of Viking social constructs is essential for creating the backdrop with which to view the symbols inherent in furnished burial. The performance of burial could be an intricately planned ritual used to convey a bevy of subliminal, and more overt, messages to the spectators, as well as the performers. This section will explore these concepts in order to establish a baseline understanding of the role that burial, and by association, grave goods, played in the various so-called 'Viking' ethnic groups.

A brief overview of Viking belief systems and rituals will be provided in order to ascertain the broader and central role that burial rituals played in society. It will be discussed in more depth in the sections relating directly to specific grave goods and their potential use in ritual. The Vikings did not possess a singular religion; instead it is more appropriate to state that the Vikings had systems of belief. Religion, in the context of Viking culture, is almost an anachronistic term, but perhaps fits the larger implications of their system of beliefs. Claude Lévi-Strauss defined religion as 'the humanization of natural laws' and magic as the 'naturalization of human actions,' meaning, he contended, that it is 'the treatment of certain human actions *as if* they were an integral part of physical determinism'.¹⁵⁰ The belief in magic and its use in ritual was critical to the Viking belief system, and played a central role in the practice of such a system as argued by many scholars including Neil Price.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (trans.) George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (London, 1966), p. 221.

¹⁵¹ This is the subject of a number of scholarly works, see, for example, Price, *The Viking Way*.

As Price eloquently stated, 'For the Vikings the question of "believing in" the gods was irrelevant, like asking if one "believed" in the sea'.¹⁵² These complex beliefs could have been vastly different, as evidenced in, for example, the many possibilities for afterlife found in the narrative sources such as sagas and Eddic poetry. These realms include residing with Freyja at *Fólkvangr* or Odin at *Valhöll*. The latter, in particular, appears throughout the corpus of Scandinavian texts, for example, in the narrative *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*:

....at vér munum allir Óðin gista í kveld í Valhöllu.

...so that we all will be Odin's guests this evening in Valhalla.¹⁵³

Other realms emerge for victims of specific types of demise. *Hel*, presided over by a giantess or goddess of the same name, was one such place. References to this location are contained in the *Fáfnismál* from *The Poetic Edda*, which depicted battle between *Sigurðr* and a serpent or dragon called *Fáfnir*, wherein *Sigurðr*, after the mortal wounding of the beast, declared that, '*þar er þic Hel hafi*' or '...where Hel can have you'.¹⁵⁴ Drowning victims could reside with the sea goddess *Rán*, as evidenced in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*: '*ræsis rekka er þú vildir Rán gefa...*', meaning, '...you would have wished to give to *Rán* the warriors of the ruler...'.¹⁵⁵ Sagas hint at other places such as the shining fields and the fields of the undead.¹⁵⁶ A few other potential afterlife dwellings include: the dead living in their own grave or burial mound; the deceased residing in a sacred mountain; haunting the living as a ghost; or being reincarnated.¹⁵⁷ It is evident from this

¹⁵² Neil Price, 'Bodylore and the Archaeology of Embedded Religion: Dramatic Licence in the Funerals of the Vikings' in David S. Whitley and Kelley Hays-Gilpin (eds.) *Belief in the Past: Theoretical Approaches to the Archaeology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2008), p. 147.

¹⁵³ *Valhöll* is also located in throughout the corpus of Scandinavian works including the aforementioned Eddas. The example is this author's own translation from *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, G. Turville-Petr, p. 5. References to *Fólkvangr* can be found throughout the saga corpus and in *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda*, for example. One clear instance is in the poem *Grímnismál* ('*Grímnismál*' in Henry Adams Bellows (trans. and ed.) *The Poetic Edda* (New York, 1936), pp. 90-91).

¹⁵⁴ Translation is this author's own from *Fáfnismál* in Sophus Bugge (ed.) *Sæmundar Edda* (1867) online <http://etext.old.no/Bugge/fafnis.html>. Accessed 21 July 2016.

¹⁵⁵ Translation is this author's own from '*Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*' in Sophus Bugge (ed.) *Sæmundar Edda* (1867) online <http://etext.old.no/Bugge/helga0.html>. Accessed 21 July 2016.

¹⁵⁶ The name *Rþvlsvollom* appears in stanza six of *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, for example, from '*Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*', Accessed 21 July 2016. The second letter of the word is undistinguishable and has been translated by Henry Adams Bellows as *Rothulsvoll*, a proper name meaning 'Shining Fields' ('*Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*' in Henry Adams Bellows (trans. and ed.) *The Poetic Edda* (New York, 1936), p. 277, footnote 6.).

¹⁵⁷ Anders Andrén, 'Behind "Heathendom": Archaeological Studies of Old Norse Religion' in *Scottish Archaeological Journal* Vol. 27, No. 2 (2005), p. 116.

brief survey of afterlife that the Viking system of beliefs was potentially diverse with a range of possible places for the deceased to inhabit.

The varied identity of realms of the dead most certainly and inevitably impacted on Viking burial rituals. There has been much speculation about who might have ended up with a furnished grave. Early scholars, such as A. W. Brøgger, argued that the Viking furnished burial was for ordinary Vikings, or that all members of Viking society were buried with grave goods.¹⁵⁸ More modern studies have argued for a more nuanced approach to burial. Dommasnes, for example, contended that furnished burial practice was not a custom utilized by all, indeed she stated, 'probably economic considerations limited its practice to the more affluent members of society'.¹⁵⁹ This thesis will argue that furnished burials made up a certain elite portion of the population, and this thesis would agree with the contention that most of the burials were created by the upper echelons of the social system. However, it is possible that elite status was not the only factor in the creation of elaborate, or not so elaborate, furnished burials, and that other factors, perhaps the destination, or desired destination, of the decedent, could have possibly played a role in the creation of these graves.

Critical to the current analysis of grave goods, Viking beliefs were intricately linked with a magic practice that is interpreted as a form of shamanism.¹⁶⁰ A good comparison would perhaps be to Culley's 2008 consideration of the metaphorical conceptions of the Numa, which are the indigenous people that occupy the Great Basin and its environs, including the Northern and Southern Paiute and Shoshone peoples, who practice a shamanic belief system whose abilities are interpreted by society at large to be quite powerful. These broad metaphorical concepts relate to the religious practices of the Vikings perhaps, at least as is presented in the archaeological record. For example, the Numa accept that these metaphorical conceptualizations of the shamans are in fact real to the point that they have murdered those who they believed to be evil in an attempt to stop them; much like the Vikings seemed to accept that *seiðr* practitioners really

¹⁵⁸ A.W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants: A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford, 1929), p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Late Iron Age in Western Norway. Female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* Vol 15, Issue 1 (1982), p. 71.

¹⁶⁰ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 64.

possessed the ability to inflict death or illness upon people at will.¹⁶¹ This acceptance of the realness of *seiðr* is evident in the burial practices, and the funerary rituals in Ireland.

The archaeological materials from the Vikings support this concept of the shamanistic like system of beliefs, and many scholars, such as Neil Price, have termed Viking belief systems as specifically shamanic in nature.¹⁶² Michael Winkelman conducted a cross-cultural study on the roles of shamans. He found that they share a number of roles: involvement of the entire community in overnight rituals; the use of chanting and music, dancing and enactment; an 'Altered State of Consciousness' experience; training through this ASC; initiatory experience involving death and rebirth; therapeutic processes focused on soul loss and rebirth; disease caused by attacks by spirits and sorcerers; abilities in divination, diagnosis, and prophecy; charismatic leadership; malevolent acts or sorcery; animal relations, including animal spirits; transformation into animals; and hunting magic.¹⁶³

The Vikings' systems of belief and *seiðr* fall within Winkleman's conceptions of shamanism. For example, its users could seek wisdom and communion with the gods by imbibing alcohol or taking other intoxicants like cannabis.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, as per Winkleman's list, the associations between *seiðr* and animals are particularly evident in burials, where bones and animal offerings are found.¹⁶⁵ These concepts will be explored in depth in the later chapters of this thesis, particularly Chapter Seven.¹⁶⁶

This shamanic ritual magic called *seiðr*, and, indeed, the supernatural realm as a whole, were an integral part of daily life and activity and influenced most, if not all, aspects of Viking culture; including its systems of patriarchy and power structures. Anders Andrén stated, 'people's everyday lives were ritualized in a way we can only partly recognise'.¹⁶⁷ This was certainly evident in the Norwegian practices of the Viking belief systems as exemplified in Dublin and also in the broader Scandinavian and insular corpus. As Culley contended, religious practices intersect and integrate into various social

¹⁶¹ Elisabeth Culley, 'Supernatural Metaphors and Belief in The Past: Defining An Archaeology of Religion' in David S. Whitley and Kelley Hays-Gilpin (eds.) *Belief in the Past: Theoretical Approaches to the Archaeology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2008), pp. 72-73.

¹⁶² Neil Price, *The Viking Way*, especially pp. 279-328.

¹⁶³ Michael Winkelman, 'Cross-cultural and Biogenetic Perspectives on the Origins of Shamanism', in David S. Whitley and Kelley Hays-Gilpin (eds.) *Belief in the Past: Theoretical Approaches to the Archaeology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2008), pp.43-66.

¹⁶⁴ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 347.

¹⁶⁵ For example, The Donnybrook Burial examined in Chapter Five, pp. 93-125.

¹⁶⁶ Please see Chapter Seven, pp. 174-214..

¹⁶⁷ Andrén, 'Behind "Heathendom"', p.113.

activities, religiosity supporting and being supported by non-religious ideas and behaviors.¹⁶⁸ This intersection of the mundane with the sacred, the profane with the spiritual, will be demonstrated in this thesis' consideration of grave goods in Ireland.

2.2 Sources for Viking Burial

One central issue with the understanding of the role of magic practice and burial in Viking society are the written sources where these rituals can be found. As this thesis has indicated, Viking funerary rituals were complex, symbolic, and designed to demonstrate prestige, wealth and power. Most of the historical sources that comprise what scholars know about the rites themselves come from written sources which are perhaps not particularly reliable.

The Rūs were a group of Scandinavians living in the Baltic regions and Northern Europe and were particularly active in the Volga region and around the Caspian Sea.¹⁶⁹ Modern scholars often base their arguments on the practices of Viking burial by utilizing the accounts of medieval Arabic writers created of these Rūs peoples. The most commonly utilized are the writing of Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rusta, but the Rūs were also discussed by authors such as Zuhri, Miskawayh, Ibn Hawqae, Ibn Khurradāhbīh and Mas'ūdī, to name several.¹⁷⁰ The *Hudud al-alam*, or *The Boundaries of the World*, dating between 982-983 CE, specifically considered Rūs burial, and stated that they 'bury the dead with all their belongings...clothes and ornaments...They (also) place in the grave with the dead, food and drinks...'.¹⁷¹

Another account was by a Muslim diplomat Ibn Fadlan, who composed his account circa 921-922 CE.¹⁷² His account was of his joining a group sent by the Caliph al-Muqtadir to the King of the Bulgars of the Volga region.¹⁷³ Ibn Fadlan recorded the death

¹⁶⁸ Culley, 'Supernatural Metaphors', p. 68.

¹⁶⁹ James E. Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of "Eloquence", the Rus, and Samanid Cosmography' in *Edebiyat: Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* Vol. 12, Issue 1 (2001), p. 75.

¹⁷⁰ For translations of these texts please see *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (trans and intro.) Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (2012).

¹⁷¹ *Hudud al-Alam. The regions of the world: a Persian geography*, 372 A.H. / 982 A.D, (ed. and trans.) V. Minorsky (Second Edition: Cambridge, 1982), p. 159. Minorsky contended that Rusta and the anonymous author of this account had the same source (*Hudud al-Alam*, Minorsky, p.436), but this thesis is convinced by Montgomery's arguments that both relied on a different one (see Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's', p.83-84.).

¹⁷² Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, 'Introduction', in Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (trans. and intro.) *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (2012), p xiii.

¹⁷³ James Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlan and the Russiyah', in *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* Volume 3 (2000), , p. 1.

of a leader of the Rūs and this text amounts to the key source scholars utilize for understanding Viking burial practices.¹⁷⁴ Scholars, such as Marianne Moen, however, have questioned the validity of Ibn Fadlan's accounts.¹⁷⁵ Moen concluded that using this source must be done with much caution and she does not put much faith in his chronicle being a 'true historical account'.¹⁷⁶ Montgomery also cited issues with this source, relating to the ethnicity of the people called the Rusiyyah, which have been labeled both Vikings and Russians.¹⁷⁷ He argued that the Rus from Fadlan's account were in the process of assimilation and absorption into Slavic culture.¹⁷⁸ This would in turn impact their cultural practices and rituals. These issues relating to the validity of the source will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

A final source is Ibn Rusta, who recorded his account on the Rūs between 903 and 913 CE.¹⁷⁹ It was contained within the compendium *Kitāb al-A'lāq al-nafīsa*, or *The Treatise on the Precious Objects*, of which there is an extant edition.¹⁸⁰ There is no context for this work except the text itself, which makes his account's validity difficult to ascertain.¹⁸¹ Ibn Rusta's work is literary, and like Fadlan, he is particularly obsessed with difference and oddity.¹⁸² Montgomery argued that it was very unlikely that Ibn Rusta even traveled to the Rūs lands or met any of their people and so was likely basing his account on other sources.¹⁸³ This makes determining the usefulness and historicity of the account questionable.

These are just a few of the issues inherent in working with these texts in relation to Viking burial. They will be carefully deconstructed later on in the thesis with specific regard to the events they purport to contain and their applicability to the Vikings in Ireland.

Another key set of written sources utilized by scholars are the Norse sagas. The Norse saga material is also somewhat suspect when discussing Viking burial practices. The written sources are not contemporary to the age that they discuss, and many

¹⁷⁴ See for example Price, 'The Archaeology of Seidr', or *The Viking Way*.

¹⁷⁵ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41. Moen concluded that using this source must be done with much caution and she does not put much faith in his chronicle being a 'true historical account'.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlan', p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 24

¹⁷⁹ Ibn Rusta, 'Ibn Rusta', in *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, p. 126

¹⁸⁰ Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of "Eloquence"', p. 73.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 87.

scholars, such as Johansen, cautioned their use, stating that they were composed in 'an age and environment quite remote from the events they describe'.¹⁸⁴ He contended that there is an 'obvious discrepancy' between the written and archaeological sources, and speculated that this could perhaps indicate that one of the sources is misleading, or perhaps, that they represent two different facets of the society.¹⁸⁵ Johansen was also cautious about the interpretation of ritual from archaeology, citing modern examples he believed future archaeologists would have difficulty interpreting without written records, such as the shamanic burial practices of the Kogi tribe of Native Americans.¹⁸⁶ He does state, however, that evidence of ritual and religious acts can be traced to the material world.¹⁸⁷ Johansen's reluctance to use the saga sources and his arguments surrounding their issues are echoed by other scholars such as Moen, who argued that these texts should be seen as 'reflections of contemporary world views, rather than true accounts of the Viking Age'.¹⁸⁸

The nature of the written sources and the inherent issues in using such will be discussed in specific relation to certain texts throughout the thesis. For example, an in depth consideration of these texts of Ibn Rusta and Ibn Fadlan will be found in Chapter Five on the Donnybrook burial, because it concerns human sacrifice and these texts are linked by modern scholars with the belief that such a practice existed. It is clear that these sagas were generally composed at least 300 years after when the events they purported to describe occurred and the people they concerned lived, and thus perhaps reflect a Christian context looking back upon a pagan past more so than an accurate interpretation of Viking society.

2.3 Burial as Social Practice

The shamanic nature of belief in Viking society perhaps resulted in specific gendered complexities inherent in the practices. Kelly Hays-Gilpin contended that, 'ritual

¹⁸⁴ Øystein Johansen, Religion and Archaeology: Revelation or Empirical Research? In Gro Steinsland (ed.) *Words and Objects: Towards a Dialogue Between Archaeology and History of Religion* (Oxford, 1987), p. 68.

¹⁸⁵ Johansen, 'Religion and Archaeology', p.68.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 72-73.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁸⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 17.

practice and iconography often involve actively manipulating gendered concepts'.¹⁸⁹ It is essential to acknowledge that this system of beliefs may have resulted in a very specific, and perhaps fluid, understanding of gender. This series of representations in ritual inevitably had a larger impact on the broader societal understandings of gender as evidenced in the introduction to this thesis. Specifically Hays-Gilpin argued,

Material culture may reflect gender norms in relatively straightforward ways, but gender indicators often may be combined or inverted in ritual contexts and in the gender identities of ritual practitioners. Religion, ritual, and belief do not transcend sex and gender. Rather, gender and religion are often inseparable.¹⁹⁰

As Clover posited, there are enough Viking female graves that contain male objects and this concept will be examined throughout this thesis.¹⁹¹ In Viking burial, the dead are not responsible for the trappings that the inhumation might contain; it is society (family, friends, and/or village, for example) who is responsible for that message. Therefore, and especially with archaeological finds, the conclusions reached in this thesis will be mostly constrained to socially constructed beliefs of gender and not those of an individual. Gilchrist argued that,

...Apparently utilitarian artefacts in graves do not necessarily reflect the subsistence activities of its occupant, but rather many represent symbolic items or mementoes placed by mourners; nor does the linking of biological male and female sex with specific tools further our understanding of the relationship between production and the social processes of gender.¹⁹²

Bitel warned against assuming certain artifacts symbolize maleness or femaleness, arguing that such thinking has 'proceeded along suspiciously Victorian lines of thinking'.¹⁹³ This will be explored in some depth in the next chapter in the consideration of the impact of Victorian ideologies on Viking archaeological data and research in Ireland.

The concept that gender and religion are inseparable is evident in the entrenched ideologies created by religious organizations or belief systems, which have a tremendous impact on systems of power. For example, Christian gender roles had an integral role in the ways in which positions of social and political power in early medieval Ireland were created and negotiated. This ideology is different from the gender roles created in the

¹⁸⁹ Kelley Hays-Gilpin, 'Archaeology and Women's Ritual Business' in David S. Whitley and Kelley Hays-Gilpin (eds.) *Belief in the Past: Theoretical Approaches to the Archaeology of Religion* (Walnut Creek, 2008), p. 247.

¹⁹⁰ Kelley Hays-Gilpin, 'Archaeology and Women's Ritual Business', p. 247.

¹⁹¹ Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 368.

¹⁹² Gilchrist, *Contesting the Past*, p. 36.

¹⁹³ Lisa Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe 400-1100* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 64.

shamanic-like belief systems of the Vikings. Both of these systems had a broad impact on power which is represented in death. This idea will be examined throughout the course of this thesis.

One of the most fundamental challenges to the human psyche is coping with the certainty of death. Funerary rites and rituals are created and recreated as part of the human rebellion to this inevitable outcome. Douglas Davies contended that burial ritual is the human adaptive response to death, as self-conscious beings, death is a challenge to this awareness.¹⁹⁴ Davies asserted that 'funerary rituals are taken to be symbolic of human nature, expressing the way people transform the given facts of biological life into values and goals of humanity'.¹⁹⁵ In this way, death is a challenge to society.¹⁹⁶ While he stated that this argument is certainly given to generalization, it is still a crucial approach to take. This line of reasoning plays a crucial role in the investigations of funerary ritual in order to understand the culture which created its burials.

Death, then, represents a major societal shift. Mary Douglas argued that the human body was a microcosm of society.¹⁹⁷ This perspective heavily influenced Davies and other anthropological studies of funerary ritual and death rite. Particularly in this thesis, the idea that the human body is a microcosm of society is apt to apply to Viking culture as an explanation for elaborate and complex funerary rites. For a large part of history most people were illiterate, the argument of human body as microcosm contends that customs, laws, power and authority are 'written' on the body of individuals.¹⁹⁸ Davies asserted that the control a society had over its members was expressed and reflected on the body.¹⁹⁹ This sort of control is evidenced in things like sumptuary law, religious dress, dress codes for specific events, ritualistic movements and words for specific rites.

It can also be embodied by certain people. Davies cited examples of judges or bishops who are closely tied to their respective ideologies, religion and law, having specific ensembles to perform their rites, but, as is particular with regards to people of high rank or 'highly symbolic' roles, they cannot take off their mantles of power because their bodies themselves become symbolic, 'their body and its behaviour is a microcosm of

¹⁹⁴ Douglas R. Davies, *Death, Ritual, and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* (London, 1997), p.1.

¹⁹⁵ Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, p. vii.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London, 1970), p. 93.

¹⁹⁸ Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, p. 10-11

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

the whole world they represent'.²⁰⁰ Therefore, according to Davies, when such a symbol dies the very ideas they represent are attacked or impugned, 'it is as though society is challenged when one of its "expressions" dies'.²⁰¹ However, through funerary rites, the challenge to society is perhaps met, as Davies contended, the body is transformed and changes from living agent to residing in the realm of the dead.²⁰² The body becomes 'Other'.

For the Vikings, this conception of the body as symbolic, could be evidenced in the warrior burials or *seiðr* practitioners, or perhaps the whole of furnished burial ritual, those who represent law and belief; and importantly, power. They were perhaps the embodiment of these ideals. These individuals perhaps could not be separated from their respective roles and were utilized as a method to express power in death- to counter the challenge the death presented to society by creating a wealthy or high status burial. Saejorg Walaker Nordeide contended that ritual was collective and that rite was central to 'legitimizing and reinforcing social order'.²⁰³ Death, and particularly funerals, Terhe Oestigaard and Jakim Glodhahn argued, are occasions wherein the living 'come together to make new alliances and re-create society'.²⁰⁴ Death represented a change among family dynamics and, specifically for elite burial, signified a change in social structure and power hierarchies. In particular to Viking elite burial practices, the death of such a member of society created a power vacuum. As Oestigaard and Goldhahn contended, it is not only the deceased who dies, but also all of their social ties, and these needed to be recreated, possibly at funerals.²⁰⁵

Price argued that in Viking burial ritual those performing the practice 'not only react and conform to an established pattern of behavior (what you do at a funeral) but also add to it and deepen its complexity at the same time'.²⁰⁶ In these cases the funeral took on a clear series of meanings meant to convey the continued power and dominance of the group which performed the ritual. Social standing within the Viking patriarchy is

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 12.

²⁰³ S.W. Nordeide, *The Viking Age as a Period of Religious Transformation: The Christianization of Norway from AD 560-1150/1200* (Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia Series 2, Turnhout, 2011), p. 37.

²⁰⁴ Terhe Oestigaard and Jakim Goldhahn, 'From the Dead to the Living: Death as Transactions and Re-negotiations' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* Vol. 39, No 1 (June 1, 2006), p. 27.

²⁰⁵ Oestigaard and Goldhahn, 'From Dead to the Living', p. 32.

²⁰⁶ Neil Price, 'Passing into Poetry: Viking-Age Mortuary Drama and the Origins of Norse Mythology' in *Medieval Archaeology* 54 Vol. 1 (October 2010), p.131.

most dynamic in death because the death of a member of the elite means that the hierarchy will have to be restructured and potential alliances will need to be re-negotiated.

It is evident, and this study will demonstrate, that not all people, even high-status people, were afforded a furnished burial. Instead, these high-status burials with a rich array of grave goods represent only a fraction of those interred in the Viking Age. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that these burials were representative of people whose bodies' themselves were symbolic, but that other factors were also impacting on this ritual. These will be explored in some depth through this thesis' investigation.

Archaeologists and scholars such as Jesch, Solberg, Valante, have argued that the objects in a grave have a direct association with role and rank of the deceased while living. However, Mike Parker Pearson contended that funerals were,

...lively, contested events where social roles are manipulated, acquired and discarded. The deceased as he/she was in life may be thoroughly misrepresented in death-the living have more to do than just express their grief and go home. Thus the material culture retrieved by archaeologists as the remains of funerary rites is not the passive 'statics' resulting from active behavioural 'dynamics' but is itself part of the active manipulation of people's perceptions, beliefs and allegiances.²⁰⁷

This thesis will demonstrate and argue that Viking funerary practices were created for the living members of society. The agency of the dead in their burial is a contentious issue, and it appears to have no definitive answer, given the perceived importance of the Viking belief system in everyday life. However, even with the overwhelmingly ritualistic and spiritual nature of the Viking belief system, and the importance placed on semiotics, to wholly ascribe the contents and performance of the burial in the Viking context as a representation of the status of the dead person is an oversimplification at best. Instead, as Parker Pearson argued, the performance of funerals and the contents of burials could be manipulated and utilized as a medium to negotiate power or represent the deceased in whatever manner suited the people creating the burial.

Parker Pearson also contended that roles are fluid and amorphous and that individuals performed such roles variably, much as this thesis argued was the case for gender. In this, he then concluded that identities symbolized in death were 'the results of many different forces acting upon the mourners and the deceased'.²⁰⁸ This supports this thesis' contention that burial ritual changed due to the presence of competing and

²⁰⁷ Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, (Stroud, 1999), p. 32.

²⁰⁸ Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death*, p. 33.

divergent ethnic groups, such as the case in early medieval Ireland. The Vikings deliberately modified ritual practice as a result of the specific conditions in each geographical region within Ireland. This means that the Dublin Vikings of mostly Norse descent probably already had divergent burial practices to the Vikings of Limerick of mostly Danish origin. These then became modified as a result of the local political and societal climate and context. Funerals then, were a tool, a method, in the discourse of power, while also maintaining a ritual role in the Viking belief systems.

Parker Pearson discussed the roles of an *emic* view, or the 'subjective perceptions of and beliefs of people within a society', and of an *etic* view, 'the objective analysis of the behaviour of those people from outside', and in many cases, the *etic* view has been deemed as the scientific or more reliable approach.²⁰⁹ This is evidenced in Price's, and indeed many scholars' largely un-problematized and deconstructed consideration of Ibn Fadlan, whose view could perhaps be considered *etic*, and clearly colored by his own cultural norms. Essentially, every person has an inherent series of biases through which they view the world determined by a myriad of factors including, language, custom, culture, law, geographical location, and temporal context. The *etic* view is biased, though in a different way from the *emic*. An interesting point of view is one Parker Pearson cited in his work from Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington regarding the critical importance of examining death rituals in particular contexts.²¹⁰ Metcalf and Huntington argued that '...caution is doubly necessary in connection with death rites because of an odd paradox.'²¹¹ Contrary to what one might expect, conceptions of death are not only elusive but highly variable...'.²¹² They contended that death was 'more intangible' than the rituals of life and that it is only in particular circumstances that death rituals begin to make sense, instead of pursuing elusive cultural universals.²¹³ So death rite is nuanced and best understood within its specific context.

To return to the multifaceted nature of funerary ritual, people come to funerals to witness, participate in and represent their role in society, which is then renegotiated or created within this context because of the gap left behind by the elite dead.²¹⁴ The

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

²¹¹ Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 74.

²¹² Metcalf and Huntington, *Celebrations of Death*, p. 74.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 74-75.

²¹⁴ Oestigaard and Goldhahn, 'From Dead to the Living', p. 33.

participants in the Viking funerary ritual in Ireland were composed of descendants and mourners of the deceased as well as people who came from competing, enemy or allied groups, both free and enslaved. For example, given the contested nature of the Viking rule of Dublin by competing Viking groups, the native Irish, and internal enemies, it becomes clear that such a ritual could play a key role in asserting power for a new leader. Gordon Childe argued that in prehistoric Europe, that more elaborate royal tombs appeared during times of crises of legitimacy and during times of transformation from kin based societies to territorial states.²¹⁵ Childe found that not all royal tombs exhibited these features of substantial wealth conspicuously destroyed and buried along with the dead, and aligns these with outside contacts with 'higher civilizations' perhaps in trade or expansion.²¹⁶ He also contended that in the cases of the emergence of 'stable states' tombs were 'less imposing and less rich when the increase of prosperity due to a regular government being taken into account'.²¹⁷

Parker Pearson supported this argument: 'big funerals often went with politically unstable and formative situations, that elite funerary ostentation contributed to political legitimization'.²¹⁸ This phenomenon is evident in many studies, including Parker Pearson's own on the dead in Victorian England and the Danish Iron Age.²¹⁹ Critically to this thesis, this was also occurring in Viking burial practice in Ireland. Clearly, then, instead of representing the specific power negotiations of an individual, 'The Funeral' could take on a societal goal.

Viking graves throughout the Scandinavian corpus follow basic broad patterns: the Vikings burned or interred their dead; there are also some burials that did not utilize either of these methods, perhaps being 'disposed in water, dissipated through exposure,' for example.²²⁰ For the ethnic groups of Vikings who possibly largely made up the populations in Ireland, the Norse and the Danes, a mix of both cremation and inhumation were used.²²¹ Overall, Viking funerary practice demonstrates many 'individual, exact, and deliberate expressions of mortuary behaviour, yet unfoldingly within a broad consistent

²¹⁵ Gordon Childe, 'Directional Changes in Funerary Practices During 50,000 Years', in *Man* Vol. 54 (Jan- Feb, 1945), p. 18.

²¹⁶ Childe, *Directional Changes*, p. 18.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death*, p. 87.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125-129.

²²⁰ Price, 'Passing into Poetry', p. 124.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

framework of funerary practice that takes a relatively small number of discrete forms'.²²² Else Roesdahl stated that Viking burials in Norway often had an emphasis on tools as evident by the grave goods they contained. She stated that weapons and status symbols of the upper classes are found throughout Scandinavia. Roesdahl believed that in Norway and Sweden it was not uncommon for people to be buried in boats. A very famous example of this would be the Oseberg ship burial, which will be discussed in length throughout this thesis.²²³ Additionally, she argued that men were buried with horses throughout the Scandinavian corpus, such as Birka in Sweden, which contained two horses.²²⁴ Women, however, are also buried with horses, especially in Iceland, and this will be investigated in Chapters Seven and Eight. In Denmark, Roesdahl asserted that women were often buried in the body of a wagon.²²⁵ An example of this is found , at Fyrkat, Jylland, Denmark where the grave labeled four by the excavators contained the remains of a so-called woman contained within body of a wagon.²²⁶ From Denmark and Northern Germany there is a total of fourteen wagon burials, of which eleven have been determined to be female.²²⁷ So there is clearly repetition of this burial custom within that geographical region.

Roesdahl argued that these burial strategies involving methods of transportation, coupled with the assertion that food and drink were often contained in these burials, indicates that the 'realm of the dead was reached by a journey'.²²⁸ In many places in Norway during the winter it would have been difficult to bury a body due to the frozen ground.²²⁹ According to Nordeide, the Norse were buried fully dressed with tools and other equipment, they were sometimes buried with animals or riding equipment and both cremation and inhumation rituals were used.²³⁰ Nordeide stated that the Norse funeral ritual required a lot of time and work: various activities and large quantities of resources were needed and so there was a large economic factor in creating such a lavish or even more modest furnished burial.²³¹ Viking funerary practices could be broadly divergent across geopolitical groups contained under this modern label scholars have used. The

²²² Ibid., p.126.

²²³ Martin Arnold, *The Vikings: Culture and Conquest* (London, 2006), p. 72.

²²⁴ Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, pp. 154-156.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

²²⁶ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 149-150.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Nordeide, *The Viking Age*, p. 44.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

term 'Viking' assumes a monolithic culture that contained very little variance in its rites and beliefs.

Oystein Johansen reasoned that archaeological finds from prehistory must be detached from their physical function, that instead they must be treated as 'ancient fossil remains of a message', and it is this message that modern scholars are charged with interpreting.²³² This is certainly applicable to Viking burial practices as well. Ian Hodder argued that symbols are actively involved in social strategies and these are manipulated and negotiated in the course of social action.²³³ Hodder contended that these must be studied within their 'particular and unique geographic and historic context in which their meaning was constructed.'²³⁴ Symbols can share the same form but have different meanings.²³⁵ Nordeide argued that grave goods which survive to date must be understood as a small percentage of the items that were originally put into the burials due to grave robberies as well as the poorly recorded and excavated nature of the Norwegian burials.²³⁶

Grave goods are any variety of items contained within the burial. There is some debate about the difference between jewelry, clothing and personal items and what constitutes an item deliberately placed in the burial by mourners. Culley cautioned against prioritizing 'formal' ritual and ceremonial items over 'informal praxis' like body adornments; this might result in failing to fully grasp the construction of religious identity due to the mundane title ascribed to the everyday.²³⁷ As Parker Pearson argued, it is essential that scholars are 'wary' of 'how we separate the material culture on the body (clothes) from the material culture of the body (posture and body modification) from the material culture off the body (weapons, furniture and other items)'. What is of particular importance to this thesis is his warning that scholars must be careful not to impose modern conceptions of 'clothing' on the past, and, for example, that this represents a distinct group from 'weapons'.²³⁸

²³² Øystein Johansen, 'Religion and Archaeology', p. 67.

²³³ Ian Hodder, *Symbols in Action. Ethnoarchaeological Studies of Material Culture* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 143.

²³⁴ Hodder, *Symbols in Action*, p. 143.

²³⁵ Nordeide, *The Viking Age*, p. 38.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²³⁷ Culley, 'Supernatural Metaphors', p. 68.

²³⁸ Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death*, p. 9.

More specifics of this debate, analysis and its applicability to Ireland will be considered more in depth in the femininities chapter. For the now, a general definition of grave goods is necessary:

...may include items which were the possessions of the deceased, or they might be mourners gifts to the dead. They may serve to equip the dead for the world of the afterlife, or to prevent the dead from coming back to haunt the living. Grave goods may be selected to serve as reminders of a person's deeds or character.²³⁹

Grave goods in burial might have been prestige goods, they were not freely accessible to all strands of society and the elite limit access in an effort to control transactions in which they are used; they are restricted to certain sections of society.²⁴⁰

For the Vikings, funerary rituals and the grave goods contained in burials were understood as an intricate series of symbols. These represented more the people who created the burial than perhaps the person interred, as it is problematic to ascribe agency to the dead in the context of their own burial. Burial and 'The Funeral' were an integral part of the process of negotiations and representations of power and dominance in Viking society. Grave goods stood as symbols and tools of power imbued in gendered symbolism as well as host of detailed levels of semiotics understood by the culture and context in which these were created. It is essential to this thesis' analysis of these symbols to contextualize the importance of the funeral and the rituals surrounding it to the Vikings in Ireland as this chapter has endeavored to do. For this survey, it is now crucial to examine the sources for the archaeological data in Ireland.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴⁰ Oestigaard and Goldhahn, 'From Dead to the Living', p. 31.

Chapter Three: The Problematic Nature of Antiquarian Archaeology

It is undeniable that antiquarian archaeology plays an influential and pivotal role in the modern study of medieval Viking funerary materials throughout the Scandinavian corpus. Ireland is no exception. For example, thirty-one of the Dublin burials were found prior to 1885. The most prolific period was between 1832 and 1866, although some were found as early as 1763. Another five were found in the early decades of the 20th century. This is significant as the majority of materials available for modern research were discovered and recorded at least eighty years ago. This makes it necessary to analyze not only the original material, but also the milieu in which it was discovered and catalogued. By attempting to understand the framework in which the content came to be found, this thesis seeks to remove bias in the antiquarian accounts from its own research. This chapter will be dedicated to interpreting how the context in which the medieval Scandinavian funerary materials were found influenced its recording; it will then examine how these Victorian sources have potentially influenced modern scholarship. First, however, this chapter will investigate the condition of these records at present in an effort to determine the dependability of these materials.

3.1 Case Study Examples of the Antiquarian Records

Before proceeding to the analysis of gender conceptions in Victorian society and how and why these came to influence the Irish Viking burial record, it is important to analyze the quality of the records of the antiquaries. This section will consider three examples of burials found prior to 1850 in order to demonstrate the condition of the antiquarian records and the ways in which burials were generally discovered.

A discovery of a probable grave in 1785 at Kilmainham yielded a double-edged sword without a pommel found amongst some 'Danish' coins, in the area George Petrie stated was 'vulgarly known' as Bully's acre.²⁴¹ In the two antiquarian accounts which discuss this burial, by Petrie and J.C. Walker, the remains are poorly catalogued, (the bones do not exist in modern collections) and the context of the burial was incorrectly

²⁴¹ George Petrie, 'Ancient Monument in the Hospital Fields, Dublin' in *Dublin Penny Journal* Vol. I, No. 9 (25 August, 1832), p. 68.

determined.²⁴² Interestingly, Petrie alluded to the fact that in popular imagination this tomb belonged to Brian Boru, which he quickly stated was incorrect, but attributed the sword to Murrough O'Brien, son of Brian Boru who fell at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 CE, or 'one of his compatriots'.²⁴³ While both antiquarian accounts contextualized the sword relating to this cemetery differently, Harrison and Ó Floinn believed both accounts were referring to the same sword.²⁴⁴

Another probable burial was found before 1840 in Cork Street, possibly adjacent to a major roadway when originally created. The exact date of discovery is unknown, however, the sword was acquired by a one Very Rev. H. Richard Dawson prior to his death in the summer of 1840, hence the approximated dating.²⁴⁵ This burial contained one double-edged sword. The pommel on the sword was missing and one of the guards is twisted.²⁴⁶ The records do not indicate where specifically the burial occurred, and the sword was not found with a body, so Harrison labeled it a probable and not definite burial, which he and Ó Floinn also considered in the 2014 publications, arguing it is a burial based 'solely on the rarity with which Viking Age swords are found in non-funerary contexts'.²⁴⁷ This reasoning is problematic, however, a careful case study analysis of this data by this thesis supports Harrison's assertion that this could likely be a burial and thus it is included in its data set.

In 1855 or 1857 came the most complete account, composed by Haliday, of a probable burial at College Green, also possibly in an extant prehistoric mound. Haliday stated that,

In Suffolk-street, formerly part of the Stein, a skeleton was recently exhumed, the skull of which being stained by contact with metal supposed to be a helmet, gave rise to the opinion that the owner had been buried in his armour.²⁴⁸

This inhumation contained a single shield boss.²⁴⁹

It is obvious from these burials that the records regarding the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries funerary materials are poorly recorded as a whole. From the above

²⁴² Petrie, 'Ancient Monument in the Hospital Fields, Dublin', p. 69, J.C. Walker, *Historical Memoirs of Irish Bards* (Dublin, 1818), p. 131;

²⁴³ Petrie, 'Ancient Monument in the Hospital Fields, Dublin', p. 69.

²⁴⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 308.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

²⁴⁶ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 668; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 521-523; Johannes Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*, in Haakon Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iii (Oslo, 1940), p.18.

²⁴⁷ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 668; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 521.

²⁴⁸ Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, p. 155.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

survey of the Dublin Viking burials it is clear that many of the items are missing, the records are incomplete, and most osseous remains are now completely nonexistent. It is improbable or impossible to place the items mentioned in original accounts amidst the modern collections as evidenced by the previous survey. This combination of integral bias and poorly recorded accounts and materials creates a myriad of problems for modern scholars who endeavor to analyze these materials. What does remain are generally biased accounts based on Victorian conceptions of gender as a fixed and universal reality rooted in biologically determined sex. These accounts have had a profound affect on modern perceptions and scholarship of Viking burial that continues to pervade research. However, these records and materials are not without value, and the biases and issues surrounding their discovery and analysis can be overcome, as this next section will show.

The absence of skeletal remains creates the obvious problem of osteologically sexing each burial. This means that scholars resort to archaeologically determined gender, which is then often conflated with biological sex. As previously stated, biological sex is not tied to socially constructed gender. Moen argued,

...without assessing both the sex and the gender, that is both the physical body and the gender identity, there can be no access to, or insight into the finer points of gender structures and negotiations.²⁵⁰

It is the contention of this thesis, that Moen's assessment of osteologically determining sex and the comparison of these findings to the archaeologically determined gender of a specific burial is a critical component to understanding social constructions of gender in culturally specific contexts, particularly when these do not match. However, as socially constructed gender is not tied to biological sex, the absence of osteologically sexing burial is not a hindrance to this study's central tenet of maintaining the separation of biological sex, and the socially constructed nature of gender. It would, however, provide an interesting category of analysis if it would become possible in future studies.

3.2 Antiquarian Bias and Victorian Gender Roles

The way in which an antiquarian scholar analyzed data is vastly different from modern scholarship, or at least it should be. Regency and Victorian scholars had inherently different understandings of gender. It is, therefore, imperative to examine Victorian comprehensions of gender to serve as a foundation to understand the framework in which informed the research of these antiquaries.

²⁵⁰ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 6.

It was largely accepted in many circles of Victorian culture that gender operated on a strict binary system. Dictated by its principle of gender as an inherent, fixed, universal reality directly corresponding to biological sex, it adhered to distinct and prescribed role for each gender construct. This system of ideas held two distinct and separate realms determined by biological sex: the domestic and the public spheres.²⁵¹ It was viewed as distinctly unnatural if either gender ventured into the opposing sphere for long, if at all.²⁵² A major part of this ideology was that women were to embody 'passionlessness' in terms of their sexuality, a term coined by Nancy Cott.²⁵³ In this classification, women were to remain in the home where their only passions were to care for the family and maintain the household.²⁵⁴ They were to be restricted to being a good helpmate to their husband and not to venture into any sort of public duty or working position. The female role was to be submissive, docile and nurturing and one whose loyalty extended only to husband and children.²⁵⁵ Male supremacy was constantly reasserted in their participation in the public sphere, where men were charged with the duties of providing and protecting their families.²⁵⁶

This is not to say that women did not, and would not, seek to subvert both binding legal doctrine and unwritten moral codes that left them as resembling little more than chattel. While many adherents argued that this ideology protected women in the household,²⁵⁷ this pervasive gender concept was decidedly more misogynistic in nature. Additionally, just because it was a prevailing ideology does not mean that every woman's lived experience held this as the primary means of shaping her world. It is important to separate pervasive ideas about women and women's roles from the lived reality of women's experiences, which were nuanced and myriad.

²⁵¹ Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood' in *American Quarterly* Vol. 18, Issue 2 (Summer, 1966), pp. 152-155.

²⁵² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 2005), p. 238.

²⁵³ Nancy F. Cott, 'Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850' in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter, 1978), p. 220.

²⁵⁴ Steven Seidman, 'The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Reconsidered' in *Journal of Social History* Vol. 24, No. 1, (Autumn, 1990), p. 48.

²⁵⁵ Aşkin Haluk Yildirim, 'The Women Question and The Victorian Literature on Gender' in *Ekev Academic Review* Vol. 16 Issue 52 (June 1, 2012), p. 46.

²⁵⁶ This is particularly evident in the issues Queen Caroline faced against her husband George IV and the public's response to it. In particular those in support of the Queen argued that George had failed in his duties as a husband, mainly that he failed to protect and provide for her. For more information please see: Thomas W. Laqueur, 'The Queen Caroline Affair: Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV' in *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 54 (September, 1982), pp. 417-466; or Alison Plowden, *Caroline and Charlotte: Regency Scandals 1795-1821* (Stroud, 2005).

²⁵⁷ Welter, 'Cult of True Womanhood', pp. 155-158.

As the Victorian era progressed, many women would continue to seek emancipation from both this moral code and the laws that kept them subjugated to males. This can be seen, for example, in the suffragette movements or among women who tried to enter universities or medical schools.²⁵⁸ It is critical to note that these systems of ideology were particularly dogmatic among the middle-class British public (though here, too, there are exceptions), and not necessarily wholly adhered to among the lower. These lower classes, for example, might have negated many of the tenets of this ideology due to the necessity of women finding work outside of the home because of poverty.²⁵⁹ While some aspects of these conceptions of gender roles might have been violated, this ideology of male and female roles was prevalent throughout all levels of society.²⁶⁰

That the scholars and antiquarians who dealt with the majority of the corpus and materials at this time represented adherents to the Victorian middle class ideology of separate spheres is evident in their own writings. The possibility that Scandinavian conceptions of gender were distinct from their own does not appear to have existed among Victorian and earlier antiquaries. Instead, they analyzed these materials as if these peoples adhered to their own Victorian gender ideologies of separate spheres. In analysis, this translated to weaponry in graves signifying these were the burials of Scandinavian male warriors. Women were relegated to materials that were deemed appropriate to the domestic sphere, such as sewing, ironing or knitting, if they were even considered at all. Grave goods were divided cleanly along the lines of the Victorian gender binary of man/woman. Alternative conceptions of gender were not considered, as disparate ideologies were not seen to exist. As stated elsewhere, in this temporal context this is normative, however, it does create the necessity of disentangling this bias from source materials. It is clear that the Victorian scholars infused the early medieval Scandinavian burials with their contemporary gender constructs. This ideology is evident in their analysis of these funerary materials. It is within this milieu that these antiquarians found and analyzed many of Dublin's early medieval Viking burials.

This is keenly apparent in the descriptions of the burials contained in the accounts. One example is W.R. Wilde's account in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, read December 10, 1866, the Vikings were overwhelmingly warriors and

²⁵⁸ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, 'The Economic Role of Middle-Class Women in Victorian Glasgow' in *Women's History Review* Vol. 9, No. 4 (2000), p. 792.

²⁵⁹ Gordon and Nair, 'The Economic Role', p. 791.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

overwhelmingly male. When describing materials and 'osseous remains' found in Islandbridge, Wilde asserted that these were warriors, either buried in the 'panoply of war' or, as he believed more likely, warriors who were killed there or died in the region and simply rested there eternally.²⁶¹ Modern scholarship now investigates these graves as deliberately furnished burials, in the fashion of Wilde's first assertion, that these were men who were buried with all the accoutrements of their living warrior status. For Victorian scholars and their predecessors, swords, spearheads, axes and any other matter of weaponry signified a male grave, of this there can be no question. In fact most burials were viewed as those of men, warriors, who had fallen in the invasions of Ireland.²⁶²

Within the Victorian system of gender, the Norse were a culture of male warriors, and there was little room for other possibilities. It follows naturally that when these Victorian antiquaries examined artifacts they analyzed all the materials within their separate sphere doctrine. Men and women and the artifacts believed to pertain to each 'sex' were divided clearly and distinctly along these biological sexed lines and there was little consideration of other possibilities. The modern conceptions of gender as a performed social construct, and even medieval Scandinavian ideas of distinctive gender systems was unfathomable to Victorian scholars. This does not negate the importance of their work, nor does it nullify the materials themselves as useful resources to the study of Scandinavian burial. Instead, it becomes critical to contextualize their work within the broader framework of their own social milieu in order to remove bias and begin to assess early medieval Scandinavian burial within its own context.

3.3 Modern Scholarship and Antiquarians

It is evident, however, as was examined in the introduction, that medieval Scandinavian people might have had a diverse and fluid interpretation of the social constructions of gender. Norse gender binaries and hierarchies have been contested. It is critical in this exploration of gender to make the distinction between socially ascribed gender and individual chosen gender. As Clover argued, there are many examples of Viking graves osteologically or archaeologically gendered female that contain objects identified as male, as will be explored later.²⁶³ In burial rite, the dead may have little or no

²⁶¹ W.R. Wilde, 'On the Scandinavian antiquities lately discovered at Islandbridge, near Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* x (December 10th, 1866), p. 14.

²⁶² Wilde, 'Islandbridge', pp. 14-15.

²⁶³ Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 368.

agency and , therefore, their representation in death is largely determined by those who create and carry out the burial ritual. These people can reject the deceased's chosen gender or skew the gender representation to suit the purposes of themselves or society. Therefore, the conclusions reached in this thesis will be constrained to socially constructed interpretations of gender as represented in the burial and not individual.²⁶⁴

In Richards work, as investigated in the introduction, he argued that cultural stereotyping represents them as violent male warriors, '...living and dying by the sword with no respect for person or property'.²⁶⁵ He contrasted this, with what he believed to be a modern scholarly bias of a representation of Vikings as 'peaceful immigrants and traders'.²⁶⁶ Both of these ideologies are largely male or associated with forms of masculinities. While one perhaps originates from antiquarian bias, the latter is perhaps a calculated response. Both, however, lack nuance and a consideration of choice. Most importantly to this section, however, is that Vikings are still predominately men in either of these stereotypes. As Richards contended, that these stereotypes 'mask a variety of strategies and circumstances' and instead argued for a nuance approach to Viking burial.²⁶⁷ Importantly, it is imperative to suspend these concepts of Vikings as male and explore the variety of ways in which gender was represented in burial.

Angela Redmond argued that members of the 'Great Army' invading England, were from variety of Scandinavian locations and that, as a result, the army should not be conceptualized as culturally homogenous.²⁶⁸ She also believed, and this thesis will support, that the Vikings would have adapted and abandoned aspects of their burial rituals as a result of immigration.²⁶⁹ Indeed, Redmond contended that people who migrate are possibly better suited for assimilation and that the Vikings in England spent many years among Anglo-Saxon culture prior to creating settlements.²⁷⁰ This cultural immersion in England may have come to have a great impact on the burial strategies of the Vikings in this region. This will be explored in more depth throughout the thesis in

²⁶⁴ A possible exception to this was the literary sources, but again it is hard to say if the individual composing such sources truly subscribed to such beliefs or if instead was forced to conform due to outside pressures, social norms, or other categories of influence.

²⁶⁵ Richards, 'Pagans and Christians at the Frontier', p. 383.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Angela Redmond, *Viking Burial in the North of England. A Study of Contact, Interaction and Reaction between Scandinavian Migrants with Resident Groups, and the effect of Immigration on Aspects of Cultural Continuity*, (Oxford, 2009), pp. 62-63.

²⁶⁹ Redmond, *Viking Burial*, pp. 6-7, p. 67.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

contrast to Ireland. Furthermore, this means that the gender representations of the native culture might have come to impact the ways in which the Vikings were choosing to bury their dead. This is coupled with the concept, as argued in Chapter Two, that the Vikings were from diverse Scandinavian groups. While Redmond is referring to the Vikings in England, the Vikings in Ireland were also from a many backgrounds, as this thesis has argued elsewhere.

J. Lucy, in arguments mirroring Richard's assessments of Viking stereotypes, asserted that in Anglo-Saxon burial archaeology there is a 'crude caricature' of women who do not venture outside the home and men who exist to work and fight. Lucy argued, as this thesis will support, that this idea is obviously stemming from the separate sphere ideology of Victorian gender roles, and not from a particular basis in medieval gender constructs or burial and funerary practice or evidence.²⁷¹ As Lucy contended in the Anglo-Saxon context, Norse burial in Ireland was examined in a similar nature: women were often identified as such by jewelry or ornaments, men by weapons, and particularly small assemblages were often assigned to a person holding a low social status, like a slave.²⁷²

Gilchrist also argued against this dichotomous interpretation of medieval gender roles. She asserted that the medieval past is often understood in modern archaeology as gender neutral; that the male is the norm, and this process is only interrupted by female and juvenile materials. She contended that when archaeology provides examples of women who do not conform to stereotypes, 'the meaning is contested', whereby scholars and archaeologists view these finds as 'problematic' and seek to force this evidence to conform to stereotypical views of the medieval past.²⁷³ Gilchrist postulated that the use of terminology such as 'housewife' is to apply 'modern, capitalistic notions' on the medieval past.²⁷⁴ Moreover, Gilchrist argued that to consider women as a single, unified group is to 'inhibit the exploration of agency, the potential of individual actors to engage in social practice'.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ S.J. Lucy, 'Housewives, Warriors, and Slaves? Sex and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Burials' in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds.), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), p. 150.

²⁷² Lucy, 'Housewives, Warriors, and Slaves?', p. 152.

²⁷³ Roberta Gilchrist, 'Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology' in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds.), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), pp 44-45.

²⁷⁴ Gilchrist, 'Writing Gender', p. 44.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

Mary Baker also disputed the use of dichotomous pairs in the analysis of archaeological material. She maintained that women are still conceived of as 'Other', and challenged scholars to strive to remove 'masculinist heterosexual norms' from our theories of the past. She reasoned that gender is not a fixed, universal truth limited to a binary male/female. It is instead a choice of many changing phenomena. She declared that, 'we are never just one gender- our genders are series of mediations and contextual behaviors, referencing culturally or temporally located gender categories,' that, 'we do not live a gender, but negotiate the categories in multifarious ways'.²⁷⁶

A scholar who has thoroughly investigated the links between gender and burial custom in Norway in particular is Moen. She discussed that the perceived prevalence of male graves is based on the generally accepted conceptions of the separate spheres doctrine; and as a result of this doctrine women are confined to the home and their 'absence' in funerary material is deemed normative.²⁷⁷ Moen also argued about the relationship with jewelry and female graves, and weapons and male graves, and the predominance of archaeological sexing versus osteologically sexing a grave, even when both options are available.²⁷⁸ Moen asserted, and this thesis supports, that both are necessary to wholly investigate the relationship between gender and biological sex in the Viking Age. The lived reality of gender can be lost to modern scholars by ignoring either of these and strict reliance on gendering artifacts to a binary system will negate the nuances of Scandinavian gender constructs.²⁷⁹ Moen disputed the reliance on artifacts to determine biological sex or gender as there are certainly multiple instances of 'males' buried with 'female' artifacts and 'females' buried with 'male' artifacts like swords.²⁸⁰ Moen stressed the importance of gender neutral finds and not relying on a supposed 'gender' for artifacts: 'In female graves, the beads are described as ornaments and indicators of fashion, whereas in male graves they become amulets or artifacts with magical properties'.²⁸¹ Beads in particular, and their existence in burial will be explored in some depth in Chapter Seven. This is often the case in the Irish archaeological record of Viking burials. Gilchrist also contended that when these sorts of artifacts that contradict

²⁷⁶ Mary Baker, 'Invisibility as a symptom of gender categories in archaeology' in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds.), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (Leicester, 1997), pp 183-184.

²⁷⁷ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 6.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

long held beliefs of gender stereotypes are assessed, the tendency is to ignore or disregard the context in which they exist or were found.²⁸² This is applicable in cases where a woman might be buried with trappings of a burial that suggest maleness.

One of the most critical analyses to the examination of gender and gender roles in the Viking period was conducted by Anne Stalsberg. Stalsberg examined Viking female burials in Russia and Norway containing scales and weighing equipment that was originally determined to have belonged to their husbands. Instead, Stalsberg contended that these women were tradeswomen who were buried with representation of their profession.²⁸³ It is impossible to determine universally what gender a tool is associated with; however, it will help to shed light into conceptions of genders when a biologically female burial may contain trappings of what might be deemed a tool found predominantly in burials of biologically sexed males. Gilchrist stated that it is in fact not unusual to find inhumations that, '...according to the criteria of physical anthropology, have the traits of one sex, yet are associated with grave goods linked culturally with the opposite gender'.²⁸⁴

As Lucy had asserted for Anglo-Saxon burial, the understanding of the nuances of Scandinavian gender roles and their role in the formation of socially constructed gender in Ireland, will also undoubtedly create a more 'dynamic' understanding of the Viking or Hiberno-Norse society and therefore, will allow for the better investigation and analysis of the inherent meanings and symbolism in burial custom and ritual.²⁸⁵ As was examined in the introduction, medieval Scandinavian gender ideologies do not adhere to the Victorian, and indeed modern, assertions of separate spheres of domestic and private to which men and women were confined.

It is apparent that modern scholarship has begun to critically analyze the link between archaeological materials, biological sex, and socially constructed gender. This has largely yet to extend to the broader corpus of the Irish archaeological study of Scandinavian burial. While it is evident that scholarship of Norwegian burials and funerary materials in other regions have begun to consider divergent representations and interpretations of Viking gender constructs, the broader corpus of archaeological investigations of Scandinavian burial in Ireland does little to shy away from separate sphere ideology and strict division of gender roles. This adherence to a stringent gender

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Anne Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in North European Viking age trade' in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow, 1991), p.77.

²⁸⁴ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 59.

²⁸⁵ Lucy, 'Housewives, Warriors, and Slaves?', p. 151.

binary of man/woman reflects a reliance on Victorian doctrine. Such an observance of Victorian gender ideology is distinctly manifested in modern scholarship's interpretation of Viking burial.

3.4 Modern Bias

The bias in modern accounts of these burials is apparent in the methods of categorization and analysis of the funerary materials. For example, in Else Roesdahl's discussion of Viking burials in Ireland, she stated, with regard to the cemeteries at Kilmainham/Islandbridge: 'Where there were graves of men with weapons (about forty swords and thirty-five spearheads were collected) and of women with oval brooches'.²⁸⁶ This she concluded, much like her Victorian predecessors, by classifying the graves by archaeologically determined gender based on the doctrine of separate spheres and biased perception of Scandinavian gender constructs. While this work was published in 1987, and arguably, theory has evolved since then, Clover's work on Norse conceptions of gender, 'Maiden Warriors and Other Sons', was published in 1986, and her later and critical research, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe', was published in 1993. Stalsberg's research on female burial and biased archaeology was published in 1991. These are all around the same time, so the argument that Roesdahl's work was early to explain the lack of engagement with gender theory, is not necessarily plausible. So it is clear, then, that this research on the applications of the social construct of gender in medieval Scandinavian culture is decades old.

Roesdahl is not alone in her repetition of this misconception. Linzi Simpson in her 2008 work, 'Pre-Viking and Early Viking-Age Dublin: Some Research Questions', described burials containing weapons as 'warrior burials,' referring to the, 'number of dead young men' again largely referring to those burials that were archaeologically determined to be so.²⁸⁷ This distinction is important because some of Simpson's own recent research has enabled the osteological biological sexing of bodies; this will be examined in Chapter Seven. Stephen Harrison's thesis divided of burials into three categories: weapon or male, oval brooch or female, and the 'tertiary' burials, those graves containing materials that do not follow the binary of weapon or brooch; there is also a

²⁸⁶ Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, p.227.

²⁸⁷ Linzi Simpson, 'Pre-Viking and early Viking-Age Dublin: Some Research Questions' in S. Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin X* (Dublin, 2008) 49-92, particularly p. 63.

subset of these tertiary graves which he deemed to be female.²⁸⁸ In his later published work based on his thesis and the Viking Graves Project, which he composed with Ragnall Ó Floinn, Harrison amended this tertiary grave category to be instead 'gender-neutral'.²⁸⁹ This group was defined as those that 'do not contain any gendered artifacts' which this study understood as weapons or brooches and beads, but contained at least one furnished burial item.²⁹⁰ This is problematic and will be returned to throughout the thesis in the course of its case study analyses where it will also consider a comparison of these tertiary and gender-neutral categories.

While certainly adhering less strigently to a doctrine of separate spheres due to the inclusion of a third category, the use of three categories still follows some semblance of a binary understanding of gender and insists upon categorizing burials into subsections and groups that perhaps are more associated with modern or Victorian understandings of wealth and gender. This also ties archaeological materials to a specific, fixed and universal socially constructed gender, if not biological sex. There is an intrinsic difference with identifying an item as a potential masculine symbol, and assuming that a sword means a male burial. A sword is an inanimate object, it does not have an inherent gender. Nevertheless, it does, potentially, have a series of symbolic meanings in any number of contexts. One, if not the most critical, hegemonic meaning is masculine power or patriarchy. This significance is not necessarily tied to either the biological sex or to the socially constructed gender of the decedent in Scandinavian burial. It could be argued that the symbol might mean nothing, but as with Viking burials, it is a symbol repeated throughout contexts, thereby proving that it does have inherent meaning. This is the focus of the next chapter.

As Moen, Gilchrist and Stalsberg have argued in other contexts, assuming that a weapon burial is automatically that of a male warrior is to negate the agency of Viking women and to also persist in imposing modern and Victorian ideology on the past. This division of graves containing weapons as only biologically and socially gendered male has been exhaustively assessed and proven inaccurate. It is clear that the possibility exists that not only did medieval Scandinavians have a gender system completely distinct from

²⁸⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 167.

²⁸⁹ Stephen Harrison and Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-goods in Ireland*, (Dublin, 2014), p. 13.

²⁹⁰ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

both Victorian and modern ideologies, but different from other medieval, particularly Christian, social constructs.

This is an exceptionally critical component of the central tenets of this thesis, which is principally, the exploration of gender constructs, interpretations, and patriarchy within the context of the Viking invasions and settlement of early medieval Ireland. It is now possible to see that Victorian ideology of separate spheres imposed its bias on modern day interpretations of Viking burial rites as well as daily life. It becomes increasingly obvious that reexamining this burial material and employing Scandinavian medieval conceptions of gender, of masculinities and femininities, and how these were expressed and interpreted, by both Scandinavians and the native Irish, will create a much more nuanced and diverse understanding of gender and, indeed, of culture within the context of early medieval Ireland.

The reliance on the separate sphere doctrine combined with the absence of carefully documented and accessible records to the antiquarian finds is particularly problematic with multiple burials. Deficiency of well preserved bones, grave positioning, and body counts has resulted in scholars assessing and numbering burial based on predetermined conceptions of Norse gender constructs, archaeologically gendered materials, and binary oppositions, based on Victorian and modern biases. The burials were not marked or identified with a specific number of bodies, nor were the collections of bones often retrieved. In most cases mention of bodies is limited to 'a row of bodies' or 'found amongst a collection of bones,' so no definite amount of bodies can be determined.²⁹¹ This, unfortunately, has led scholars to limit their understanding of these burials by designating numbers based on dividing burials by weapons and jewelry, and assigning gender accordingly. This will be reconsidered in the case studies in the later chapters.

It is quite clear that the modern scholarship on Scandinavian burial ritual in medieval Ireland has undeniably been influenced by the antiquarian records. Whether this is due to the fact most of these accounts are poorly recorded and many of the items they described are missing, forcing many scholars to overly rely on these biased accounts as the principal source of their data, or because they, like their Victorian counterparts, assumed that both the reality and interpretation of gender in Scandinavian society is a

²⁹¹ For example, Jens Worsaae's account of the Kilmainham burials: Worsaae, *Account*, p. 325 and p. 330.

fixed, universal reality tied to biological sex. Numerous modern assessments have failed to consider the more nuanced reality of Scandinavian gender constructs and representations and how these came to be affected in the context of early medieval Ireland. As gender is specific to context, conquest and settlement milieus provide an essential area of investigation into hegemonic conceptions of gender and how these came to be impacted by contact with the native Irish. By attempting to eliminate Victorian, and indeed, modern bias, from the Irish Viking burials, this thesis will examine and position these funerary materials within the broader framework of insular and Scandinavian corpus.

The following chapters will assess the utilization of gender as expression of power and domination in grave goods. They will also examine Viking gender constructions by comparing the burials of early medieval Ireland to the broader corpus of burials in the Viking world, in an effort to gain more proficient comprehension of the nuanced nature of gender. The next chapter, specifically, will examine burial contents and gender, analyzing gendered symbols in Norse hegemonic cultural understanding to examine the broader use of gender as a medium with which to assert and maintain power as evidenced in the deployment of hypermasculinized burial symbolism.

Chapter Four: Negotiating Masculinities? Hegemonic Elite Masculine Display in Dublin

4.1 Theoretical Approach to Masculinities

The Norse and Irish existed in catalysis, or the contentious environment in which new forms of identity and experience are created. In this context they created a hybridity, or new transcultural forms that arose from cross-cultural exchange. These are not necessarily peaceful. In Dublin, and largely in Ireland, they were certainly disruptive and contentious. This elision of semiotics created a critical acculturation between the ethnic groups and had broad ramifications for their gender identities and patriarchies.

When systems of patriarchy come into contact with each other several possibilities occur: one system becomes dominant and remains the hegemonic understanding of power and social standing, or there occurs an amalgamation of ideologies in which new forms of elite gender identities, and in particular new conceptions of dominant masculinities and femininities, are formed as a basis with which to demonstrate power and rank. Dublin was no exception. What is particularly interesting is the way in which this was conducted. As this study is rooted in deconstruction and postmodern theory and, therefore, holds to no universal or essentialist truth, it will reach some meaningful conclusions as to why this may have occurred.

This chapter investigates hegemonic elite masculine burial, which is defined as burial containing weapons or where the primary signifiers are weapons. It will start with an overall summary of the theoretical framework as specific to this form of masculinities evidenced in these furnished burials of Dublin. This chapter will then progress to a survey of the records and materials of the Viking burials that contain items representing hegemonic conceptions of elite masculinity, i.e. weapons. Following this analysis, it will proceed to consider these materials in comparison to data from other insular and Scandinavian contexts, particularly Norway and England, in order to position it within the broader body of Viking burials. Finally, this section will reach some conclusions based on the nature of Dublin burial as compared to the larger corpus and draw meaningful explanations as to why funerary ritual and grave goods were modified in this context.

Some scholars, such as Rebecca Boyd, have argued that the overwhelming elite male slant of burial in Dublin is indicative that there were few Norse women in the city.²⁹² Indeed, some scholars, such as James Barrett, have posited that one of key reasons for the Viking Age of expansion was a 'youth bulge' whereby there were too many men and not enough status positions leading to violent competition.²⁹³ Barrett argued that in fact one of the central purposes of these raids could have been to acquire bride wealth, dowery or money to purchase a house.²⁹⁴ Again, this reflects a largely male enterprise.

However, it is clear that Dublin was a well-established stronghold with a thriving community of all genders as evident in such examples as intermarriages, fostering relationships, and the existence of female burials, however limited they might be. Additionally, in terms specifically related to burial, many Viking scholars have argued that this also represents a somewhat significant female population. For example, Ragnall Ó Floinn argued that the number of supposed female burials in Dublin indicated a 'sizeable proportion of women of Scandinavian birth among the settlers of ninth and tenth century Dublin.'²⁹⁵

Shane McLeod conducted a detailed DNA analysis of burials in eastern England, choosing those he argued were Norse based on 'strontium and oxygen isotope analysis or obvious Norse burial forms which has also been sexed osteologically'.²⁹⁶ His study was an effort to determine the ratio of males to females in the Viking settlement of England.²⁹⁷ This was an important endeavour, he argued, as this thesis does, that to determine biological sex according to grave goods is problematic.²⁹⁸ From his study, McLeod concluded that there was a greater amount of female Vikings then previously considered, even though he cautioned against the use of such a small sample size to presume this.²⁹⁹

²⁹² Rebecca Boyd, 'From country to town: social transitions in Viking-Age housing', in D.M. Hadley and A. Ten Harkel (eds.), *Everyday Life in Viking-Age Towns* (Oxford, 2013), p. 82. Boyd contended that there was 'little evidence to suggest Scandinavian women made up a significant proportion of the population of Irish towns' and she determined this to be the case based on what she believed to be the small amounts of female burials. Instead, she argued that the majority of women in Viking towns in Ireland were native women.

²⁹³ James Barrett, 'What caused the Viking Age?', in *Antiquity* Vol. 82 (2008), p. 676

²⁹⁴ Barrett, 'What caused the Viking Age?', p. 676.

²⁹⁵ Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking Age in Ireland' in H.B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 142.

²⁹⁶ Shane McLeod, 'The sex ratio of Norse migrants in eastern England', in *Early Medieval Europe* Volume 19, Issue 3 (2011), p. 333.

²⁹⁷ McLeod, 'Sex ratio', p. 333.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350

However, his findings did indicate that women made up one-third of 'sexed' Norse burials.³⁰⁰ He also concluded that women were not simply arriving in the second wave, but were members of the first incursions.³⁰¹ He used this information to challenge the extent to which intermarriage between Anglo-Saxons and Vikings occurred, because he argued that the presence of women suggested that they were partners of warriors.³⁰² He concluded that while acculturation was a 'remarkably quick process', intermarriage 'may have played a minor role in this outcome'.³⁰³

There are, of course, several issues inherent with applying McLeod's conclusions to Ireland. Firstly, he conflated sex with biological gender. This is demonstrably false, as this thesis has considered. Secondly, applying his small sample size to Ireland is problematic. However, his study does provide some interesting insight into the possible amounts of biological female people present in eastern England, and this could have implications for the amount of biological female people in Ireland. This, however, does not necessarily reflect gender. It could be argued that people who are biologically female are perhaps more likely to also perform femininities, or 'woman', but this is not always the case and so this must be considered quite carefully. In addition, as this thesis will explore, eastern England might not have had close ties to Dublin and Irish burial customs and so the use of this area to ascertain biological sex ratios in comparison to these study areas is also fraught.

In medieval systems of patriarchy all power is gendered, and it is most often gendered masculine. This does not mean that all men are powerful or men are all-powerful.³⁰⁴ Instead, as explored in Chapter One, it means that the highest echelons of power were generally sustained by performing elite forms of masculinity. The native Irish and the Norse invaders each had a set of semiotics attached to the construction and representation of elite masculinity. These systems of signs and symbols provided the means by which a group can define itself or by which each power attempted to control or assimilate the opposing group. As previously stated, there is not only one way to 'be' a man or masculine. There is no single definition of men, nor are men a homogenous group. Instead there is a multitude of potential ways in which this gender could be represented

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 352.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Jeff Hearn, 'From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men', in *Feminist Theory* Vol. 5, No 1 (2004), p. 51.

or created. The elite forms of masculinity were also not the only ways in which 'male' or 'man' could be performed, but were ways in which perhaps the upper echelons of society portrayed their gender.

This chapter will only consider the symbolism in burial that aligns with hegemonic conceptions of Norse masculinity as evidenced in Viking burial practices in Ireland. As Jeff Hearn argued men's power and dominance can be, '...structural and interpersonal, public and/or private, accepted and taken for granted and/or recognized and resisted, obvious or subtle'.³⁰⁵ It is apparent that in Viking burial practices, men's power and dominance was a public and obvious method of display. Of particular importance is the negotiation of masculinity by hypermasculinizing or overemphasizing masculinity by the distinct focus on weaponry as evidenced in burial.

It is critical to reiterate that biological male burial does not necessarily indicate a weapon burial, and a weapon burial does not mean a biological male burial, or indeed even a gendered male burial. As Gilchrist and other scholars have asserted, it is close to impossible to determine an individual's performed gender based on burial goods with 100% accuracy and to do so incorrectly negates individual agency, the lived experience and impedes serious research into gender constructions. Instead of assigning a decedent gender based on grave goods, this discussion will investigate masculine gendered symbolism in burial and how these symbols would be understood within the Viking and Irish hegemonic constructions of elite masculinities. This current research is attempting to ascertain the broader use of gender, and specifically to this section masculinities, were used as a medium to assert and maintain power. It is the interchange of cultural symbols that this thesis will be examining.³⁰⁶

A key area of consideration for this chapter will be if the Dublin Vikings negotiated their position of power within the systems of patriarchy by hypermasculinizing their burials. D.M. Hadley's methodological approach forms the basis of this branch of research, mainly the investigation of hypermasculinization of burial as a response to invasion. In context, hypermasculinization meant the act of proving one's masculinity and power by the increased use and emphasis of socially determined elite masculine symbols, and in particular, those relating to violence, such as weapons. Grave goods of hegemonic elite

³⁰⁵ Hearn, 'From hegemonic Masculinity', p. 51.

³⁰⁶ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 36.

masculinity/ies are defined in the scope of this section as display directly relating to dominant conceptions of male identity that are pervasive throughout society.

Hadley contended that burial strategies by the Vikings in England were 'deliberately modified in response to conquest'.³⁰⁷ In order to reach this conclusion, Hadley compared burial strategy in England to the larger body of Scandinavian furnished graves to look for differing forms of representations. This is precisely what this chapter intends to do: consider Dublin in the broader corpus of furnished Viking burial in order to ascertain if funerary ritual was changed as a result of cultural contact.

The abundance of weapon-centric burials only indicates that hypermasculinization, an emphasis on elite masculinity, was considered of primary importance in the Dublin burial strategies. It does not mean all those who were buried with weapons were biological men, gendered male, or even achieved this elite masculine status in life.³⁰⁸ It only signifies that those who created the burial did so utilizing this series of semiotics which they used to suit their own purposes. This will be returned to throughout the course of this thesis. It is the interchange of cultural symbols that this thesis will be examining.

The significance of weaponry as a whole to the maintenance of hegemonic conceptions of masculinity is clearly apparent. Heinrich Härke postulated that weapons do not necessitate a warrior in his study of Anglo-Saxon burial. Instead, he contended that these were symbolic acts associated with a masculine ideology of power or warrior status not tied to actual warfare or fighting ability.³⁰⁹ Hilda Ellis Davidson and Howard Williams argued that weaponry, particularly swords, took on a myriad of social symbolisms, as will be analyzed later on in this chapter.³¹⁰

In early medieval society and culture, weaponry had strong masculine associations.³¹¹ As Williams elucidated, in medieval Europe, weapons were associated with 'the complexity and socially-embedded nature of male violence,' which incorporated

³⁰⁷ D.M. Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes, and Companions: Negotiating Masculinity in Viking-Age England' in Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 15 (Oxford, 2008), p. 272.

³⁰⁸ For more discussion on this topic please see Chapters One, Two, and Three, pp. 1-59.

³⁰⁹ Heinrich Härke, 'Warrior Graves? The Background of Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite' in *Past and Present*, Vol. 126, (1990), p. 33-38, p.36, and pp. 42-43.

³¹⁰ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p. 264; Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England: Its Archaeology and Literature* (Rochester, NY, 1994), p. 212.

³¹¹ Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes and Companions', p. 272.

a multitude of social behaviors including duels, feuds, wars, and hunting.³¹² Williams argued that, particularly for elites, violence and weapons played a crucial role in the formation and reiteration of the masculine social construct and individuals' socio-political affiliations.³¹³ Swords and weaponry played a key role in the creation and maintenance of elite masculinity. In the context of the Viking invasions and settlement of Dublin, position in the patriarchal hierarchies had to be renegotiated as a result of divergent conceptions of elite masculinities and femininities. This arbitration is demonstrable in the hypermasculinization of Viking burials in Dublin.

It is also imperative to point out that weaponry and the burials associated with it are only one facet of elite masculinities, though the hegemonic form, as evidenced in burial. For example, the *goði* were wealthy landowners and chieftains who also fulfilled a priest-like function in the rituals inherent in the Viking systems of belief.³¹⁴ This might mean that some forms of masculinities could be associated with items relating to the practice, this will be investigated in more depth in Chapter Seven. However, it is clear that swords and weaponry were primary signifiers in the Dublin context as this thesis will demonstrate. Before proceeding to the in-depth examination of hypermasculinity, an overview of these singular and multiple burials is critical to establish a context. In an effort to do so, and for convenience of the reader, a table with all of the data from this group has been created.³¹⁵

4.2 Hegemonic Masculinities in the Broader Scandinavian Corpus

It is now possible to analyze this material and what it indicates about Scandinavian furnished burial rituals relating to elite masculinities in Dublin. The following sections will deconstruct hegemonic masculine display in burial practices in order to determine broader trends and assess if the Vikings in Dublin modified or sustained their normative symbolic rituals as a result of contact with the native Irish or competing Viking groups. First, this section will first provide a brief overview of the trends of furnished Scandinavian burial in the whole of the Viking region in order to provide a general picture of Viking burial and Dublin's position in this larger body. Secondly, it will focus on assessing the Norwegian burials, specifically, Solberg's

³¹² Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p. 264.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 62.

³¹⁵ Please see Fig. 4.1, 'Table of Viking Furnished Burial in Dublin with Hegemonic Elite Symbolism Associated with Masculinities', p.299.

consideration of Norway, Dommasnes' investigation of the Norwegian corpus of burials, and Moen's analysis of the Kaupang cemeteries, due to the cultural links between Norway and Dublin which will be explored in some depth next. Thirdly, it will proceed to compare this data to both the Dublin corpus considered in this thesis' own study and the English Viking burials investigated by Hadley and Harrison. Subsequently, after contextualizing Dublin within the larger framework of Viking burial and its closest Scandinavian ties, this section will demonstrate the abundance of masculine symbolism resulted in the hypermasculinization in Dublin Viking furnished burial practices.

It is crucial to situate the Dublin material within the whole of Scandinavian furnished burial. In Fredrik Svanberg's study of cemeteries in Southern Sweden circa 800-1000 CE, gendered via grave goods, the number of graves with feminine materials was three times the amount of masculine assemblages.³¹⁶ Jutland and the Danish Islands follow a similar pattern.³¹⁷ This demonstrates that burial in these regions was generally equally distributed or more inclined to burials with feminine symbolism. This already indicates that Dublin might perhaps be an exception to a general pattern of burial practice.

Additional examples are found in Westness, Orkney where people of varying ages and genders are represented somewhat equally, from infants to people aged fifty or older at time of death.³¹⁸ This is in accordance with other areas of Scotland. For example, in Harrison's study of furnished Viking burial in northern Scotland, he found that only about 41%, or thirty-four of eighty-two burials, had an emphasis on hegemonic and overt masculine display, meaning weaponry; the remaining burials were a split with about 27%, or twenty-two, were brooch burials, and 30%, or twenty-five, containing items that could pertain to either masculine or feminine display or a mixture of both; a remaining grave did not fall within any of these categories.³¹⁹ This represents a general distribution similar to Jutland, the Danish Islands, and Sweden.

Olwyn Owen and Magnar Dalland, in their investigation of the Scar boat burial on Sanday, Orkney, attempted to disentangle the specific Scandinavian ethnic groups that

³¹⁶ Fredrik Svanberg, *Death Rituals in South-East Scandinavia AD 800-1000* (Stockholm, 2003), p. 22; Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes and Companions', p. 273.

³¹⁷ Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark, The Formation of State* (London, 1980), pp. 121-133; Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes, and Companions', p. 272.

³¹⁸ Olwyn Owen and Magnar Dalland, *Scar: A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney* (East Linton, 1999), p. 174.

³¹⁹ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 293.

settled in the Atlantic Archipelago. They contended that the settlers in eastern England came from Denmark; northern Scottish settlers arrived from Norway, western Scotland, and the Isle of Man; settlers of Ireland mainly came from Norway or via northern Scotland; and, finally, settlers of northwest England primarily originated in Norway and perhaps arrived via Ireland and Scotland.³²⁰ According to Owen and Dalland, the Vikings in the Scotland and northwest England mostly likely came from Norway, as did those residing in Ireland, and, therefore, this distribution provides a critical comparison to the Dublin body of furnished burials.³²¹ It is also clear from Owen and Dalland's conclusions that the consideration of the Norwegian corpus in some detail is crucial because many of the Vikings who resided in Dublin potentially came from Norway.³²² According to Maeve Sikora the contents of the Dublin burials reflect a Norwegian dominated presence, and many other scholars, such as Harrison and Ó Floinn, have used a comparison between Norway and Ireland due to this possibility.³²³ More specifically, Aidan Walsh in his study of Viking swords in Ireland, contended that based on sword type, it is evident that the majority of Dublin Vikings were indeed from western Norway.³²⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn argued that in Ireland, and insular contexts at large, the burial pattern is that of graves associated with farms or single graves and small cemeteries, as is found in western Norway, with the notable 'remarkable' exception of Dublin.³²⁵ Thus it is imperative to compare Dublin not only to the whole of Norway, but also more specifically to cemeteries from western Norway.

A key study of the Norwegian body of burials is Berljot Solberg's 2010 analysis. Solberg surveyed some 4629 grave finds and found about 3796 or 82%, were graves containing at least one weapon which she labeled 'men's graves'.³²⁶ This process of

³²⁰ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 183

³²¹ For an illustration of the links between Norway, Scotland, Dublin and England, please refer to Fig. 4.2, 'Map of Norwegian Links to Dublin and northwest England', p. 304.

³²² Maeve Sikora, 'Finglas Burial: Archaeology and Ethnicity in Viking-Age Dublin' in John Sheehan and Donnchadh Ó Corráin (eds.), *The Viking Age Ireland and the West proceedings from fifteenth Viking Congress, Cork, 18-27 August 2005* (Dublin, 2010), p. 413.

³²³ Sikora, 'Finglas Burial', p. 413; see Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*; and Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking Age', pp.139-140, for example.

³²⁴ Aidan Walsh, 'A summary classification of Viking Swords in Ireland' in H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 133-135.

³²⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 228.

³²⁶ Berljot Solberg, 'Social Status in Merovingian and Viking Periods in Norway from Archaeological and Historical Sources' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* Vol. 18, Issue 1-2, (1985), p. 63. The majority of the studies herein used percentages to demonstrate amounts;

archaeologically gendering people based on grave goods is exceedingly problematic, as this thesis has discussed in some length previously.³²⁷

From this data, she concluded that women's graves constitute around 25% of the total number in western Norway compared to around 20% and 14% in central and eastern Norway, respectively. There are also more 'women's graves' in coastal regions, which she argued was due to the higher social status of women in these areas, possibly because the 'wife had to take up several of her husband's responsibilities while he was away from the farm, for example on Viking voyages'.³²⁸

Solberg's methodology is problematic because she had a very broad definition of what constituted grave goods, essentially considering all finds to be from a burial context.³²⁹ This is in comparison, for example, to Hofseth who required a specific burial context, skeletal remains, a visible grave structure, or a specific combination of artifacts.³³⁰ Instead, Solberg contended that 'strict definitions of graves may result in exclusion of several grave finds', and that the interpretation of jewelry or weapons without a burial context as stray finds is 'not valid'.³³¹ She asserted that stray finds from the Middle Ages are rare and, therefore, concluded all of these items constituted burials.³³² This thesis is reticent to agree with Solberg's assertion, as it is exceedingly difficult to prove that all of these finds are conclusively burials without a context. This is in contrast to many other studies, as will be evident, that are much more stringent and specific about what constitutes a burial. Overall, this approach does not seem to adopt a highly effective methodological approach for assessing grave goods, and instead of seeking to further the field of analysis and argue that more types of finds should be included, Solberg seems quite extreme in the decision to include everything.

Equally, assuming all stray finds to be grave goods without a burial context is problematic in comparing to Irish or English contexts, where scholars have tended to be more conservative about identifying burials. For England and Ireland, and specifically

therefore, in the interest of streamlining, all ratios, fractions and numbers will be converted for ease of comparison.

³²⁷ For an in depth discussion of biological sex and socially constructed gender please see Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-45. For a comparison of Solberg, as well as the other Norwegian studies (Moen, Dommasnes) please refer to Fig. 4.3, 'Norwegian Corpus Compared to Dublin', p. 305.

³²⁸ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 75.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

³³⁰ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 65: citing and translating E. Høigård Hofseth, 'Loven om våpenting sett i lys av arkeologisk materiale' in *Universitetets Oldsaksmling Årbok* (1980/1), p. 106.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

Dublin, while skeletal remains for the most part do not exist if they were ever recovered, there generally are some indication of bodies or burial contexts noted in the antiquarian accounts, as seen in Chapter Three.

There is also a methodological problem with her inclusion of all items, or to her grave goods, from Merovingian (500-793 CE) and Viking (793-1066 CE) periods. This temporal context spans a vast time frame and does not deconstruct the influence divergent time frames have on social rituals such as burial. While she divided her study into geographical areas-western Norway, eastern Norway and central Norway-this does not negate the temporal issues of comparison. In insular contexts the period of furnished burial is approximately 840-950 CE, thus making a comparison to all of Solberg's data difficult.

Solberg mitigated some of these problems of her study by highlighting and separating the professionally excavated graves, some 112 burials, into a distinct section of her study, of these thirty-four could not be gendered via grave goods, or were gender neutral.³³³ She argued that the un-gendered graves containing items such as cremated bones, knife blades, and whetstones were less well furnished and, therefore, underrepresented in the museums.³³⁴ Solberg cited this as a reason for the discrepancy between the professionally excavated burials and the total population of her study found in museums.³³⁵

This can go some way to explaining the relatively high number of weapon burials, while some tertiary burials certainly contain fewer items or perhaps items of lesser value, un-gendered, or gender neutral, graves are not necessarily less well furnished, they just may contain many items which scholars have attributed to non-elite forms of power such as tools like scissors, shears and blacksmithing tools like hammers and pottery.³³⁶ This results in interpretation issues of her survey of the Norwegian data. The addition of these un-gendered graves to her general study of all finds in Norway would change the proportions of her ratios, perhaps arguably to something resembling the professionally excavated findings.

³³³ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 72. This is not Solberg's original number, instead this amount is including burials that contain shield bosses, etc.

³³⁴ Interestingly, whetstones can be indicative of a higher status burial as this thesis will demonstrate.

³³⁵ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 72.

³³⁶ For a discussion on this topic, please refer to Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*; the relationship of specific items, swords, to elite masculinity will be scrutinized later on in this chapter.

Barring the un-gendered burials, this leaves forty-seven weapon graves, 'men's graves', and twenty-three 'women's graves' that contained items attached to hegemonic femininity out of the total of 112.³³⁷ Western Norway had the highest concentration of weapon burials in the professionally excavated graves making up about twenty-eight of the total forty-seven.³³⁸ This is particularly interesting given the links between this region of Norway and Dublin and will be investigated later on in this chapter.

However, even the numbers Solberg gave for the professional survey are a little skewed based on her definition of weapon burials, which she limited to those graves containing swords, axes, spears. There are seven additional graves containing arrowheads and one containing a shield boss that this thesis will consider to be weapon burials; and when added to the previous forty-seven graves containing weapons Solberg termed to be men's graves, brings the total to fifty-five or 49% masculine display. The remaining are thirty-four or 30%, un-gendered, and twenty-three or 21% feminine display. These figures are markedly divergent from Solberg's total numbers for her general study, which indicated an 82% emphasis on hegemonic masculine symbolism. This thesis will argue that the data from the professionally excavated burials is more reliable due to the issues surrounding Solberg's problematic methodology.

It seems likely, then, that either the percentages for the professionally surveyed burials are more in line with the reality of the Viking Age or, that the real numbers lie in between the 49% masculine display of the professional excavations and the 82% of the larger corpus of museum finds. Solberg is conflating biological sex with socially constructed gender to determine graves to be men and women, an approach that this thesis has argued against. This results in her assumption that every weapon burial is a 'man's grave,' which is likely incorrect. Particularly with the cases of axes, which do turn up with some frequency in burials where the primary markers are tied to forms of femininities, axes can take on a more ritualistic purpose, or also be used as a tool.

In contrast to Solberg, Liv Helga Dommasnes is an archaeologist who used feminist theory and methodology as a central part of her research and studies. She too analyzed the Norwegian burials and her approach is certainly more in line with this study and that of Moen.³³⁹ In her doctoral thesis, Dommasnes began questioning the link

³³⁷ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 70.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

³³⁹ Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Two Decades of women in prehistory and in archaeology in Norway. A review', in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* Vol 25, Issue 1 (1992), p. 1.

between grave goods to provide an insight into the 'division of roles and ranks in society'.³⁴⁰ She has written extensively on the topic and the following analysis will consider her conclusions on Viking Norwegian furnished burial.

Dommasnes is focused on the Scandinavian Iron Age, 550-1050 CE, about the same time frame that Solberg put forth and still not directly in line with the insular burial frame of 840-950 CE. This approach is problematic as it encompasses both the Merovingian and Viking ages in Norway. She mitigated this by focusing on a smaller geographical region and attempting to disentangle and examine the influence time played on Viking funerary practices. Her central aim was to treat them together so she could 'disclose developments over time'.³⁴¹

Dommasnes' study encompassed some 213 graves out of an original 264 that she closely analyzed in order to determine if they were actual burials. This is in stark contrast to Solberg, but more in line with Moen, as will be evident shortly.³⁴² Dommasnes concluded that male to female graves in Norway had an overall percentage from the entire time period of 75% male to 25% female ratio, again proceeding along binary lines. However, these had variations over time and region.³⁴³ She did find that overall women's graves increased from 10% in the 7th century to 30% in the 9th century.³⁴⁴ Dommasnes also found that in northern Norway there was a high frequency of female burial.³⁴⁵

The 9th-century cemetery in the Sogn district in western Norway exemplified this high rate of male to female burials.³⁴⁶ So, about 25% of the graves in the Sogn region have graves that contain items that are tied to hegemonic conceptions of femininity. However, on average these so-called female graves were more richly furnished than those of men, and the burials themselves were often lavish.³⁴⁷ For example, in Sogn every burial that contains feminine grave goods can be interpreted as a boat burial in contrast to only one out of three for graves that contain masculine grave goods.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁰ Dommasnes, 'Two Decades of Women', p. 5.

³⁴¹ Dommasnes, 'Female roles and Ranks', p. 71.

³⁴² Ibid., p. 70.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

³⁴⁶ Dommasnes, 'Two Decades of Women', p.76. Elsewhere in Norway has been noted more even distribution according to Dommasnes (Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship and the basis of power in the Norwegian Viking Age' in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow, 1991), p. 67 citing an unpublished survey by M. Hogestol.)

³⁴⁷ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 143.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

There are exceptions to this high rate. For example, Dommasnes found that in two villages of Vik and Aurland, both of which were important trading posts and areas of dense population, the numbers for female burial are much higher than other regions; specifically, at Hopperstad, a leading farm in Vik, she discovered that six out of nine, or 67%, burials were female.³⁴⁹ She also found that generally after the year 800 CE more graves were of women in these areas. For example, in Aurland, Dommasnes found that ten out of eighteen, or 56%, burials were female.

Based on this information, she concluded that more women achieved high rank in these areas than previously because of a shift in economic and political power towards women in the Viking period perhaps due to an absence of men on military campaigns.³⁵⁰ While it is still apparent that elite masculine display was not entirely dominant across the Sogn district, or at least not across the temporal and geographical contexts, it is evident that perhaps Sogn did express a more masculine dominated burial corpus. For example, in Upper Telemark while the number of female graves increased in the 9th century, male burials still made up seventy-eight out of eight-eight, or 89%, of the graves.³⁵¹

In Moen's study of the cemeteries of Kaupang, in eastern Norway she analyzed three distinct regions: North Kaupang, Lamøya and Bikjholberget. Her time frame for burial in this region is roughly 800-1000 CE, though a small majority of the graves are dated to between 850-950 CE, well in line with Viking burial in Ireland and a much smaller time frame than in Solberg's or Dommasnes' studies. Due to the poor preservation of skeletal remains many of these graves have only been archaeologically gendered, as is common in the rest of the Norwegian corpus.³⁵² As before, this means generally graves that contain weapons are gendered male and burials that contain jewelry, often oval brooches, are deemed female; tools can be both male or female and are divided up according to separate sphere doctrine.³⁵³ Gender was also archaeologically determined in the Dublin cemeteries and therefore direct comparisons between the two studies can be made.

In Moen's first region of investigation, North Kaupang, out of the fifteen gendered graves, six are female and nine are male, making for a 40% female, 60% male spread;³⁵⁴ in

³⁴⁹ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 77.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 81.

³⁵² Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 36.

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 1-10.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p.32.

Lamøya, of the six gendered graves excavated, four are female and two are male, a 67% female to 33% male;³⁵⁵ and finally, in Bikjholberget out of the fifty-six gendered graves, twenty are female and thirty-six are male, or roughly 36% female and 64% male.³⁵⁶ It is evident from this study that of the graves that have been gendered, while there is perhaps more generally an emphasis on masculine display, the graves are not largely disparate. This is in contrast to Solberg's study, which had an overwhelmingly male corpus in the central and eastern regions of Norway, stating some 20% or 14%. Instead, it is more in line with Dommasnes village in Sogn such as Vik and Aurland, which had 67% and 56%, respectively.

Additionally, of this survey a few showed gender ambiguity, with these archaeologically sexed female burials containing weapons such as axes, spear points and arrowheads and male graves with textile production tools. For example, burial number Ka. 272 is gendered male, but contains an axe, knife, possible oval brooch, needle hone, fragment of pottery, bead, penannular brooch, strike-a light; and burial Ka. 257, also gendered male, contained items such as weapons like a double edged sword, spearhead, boss, knife or arrowhead, as well as two scissors, a looped needle case and a needle hone.³⁵⁷ Moen contended that this demonstrated a 'greater degree of gender mobility than what is often assigned to Iron Age Norway'.³⁵⁸ She also determined that because of the location of the female burials in Bikjohlberget, on a hill, that women were members of the upper social tier and also 'credited with importance as individual players'.³⁵⁹ This means that they did not only acquire power as a result of a relationship with male kin or husband.

As argued elsewhere, and evident in Moen's analysis, grave goods do not necessarily equate to biological sex or socially constructed gender. They do, however, have a symbolism that may be hegemonically tied to a specific gender. This fluidity of symbolism and strong presence of items associated with forms of femininities in high status burial in Moen's study is evident to be in contrast to other Norwegian studies. While Moen had a larger time frame than the body of grave goods from Ireland, her time

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 62 and p. 60. Further examples are a gendered female grave labeled Ka. 269 which has an axe, knife pottery and four nails; or Ka. 250 which contained among other things two oval brooches, textiles, equal armed brooch, insular strap buckle, double-edged sword, spearhead, scythe, spindle-whorl, scissors, and an iron key. (Ibid., p. 62 and p. 59).

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p.

frame is smaller than Solberg's and more easily constrained due to her specific investigation of Kaupang. It is also clearly different than Solberg who associated weapons only with 'men's graves,' but not so different from Dommasnes who did note an occurrence of weaponry in burials that contained items relating to hegemonic conceptions of femininity.

Both Moen and Dommasnes largely analyzed material on a binary scale, graves falling into male or female categories; and those that did not fit were largely ignored or not considered. While both studies were open to including weapons in female graves and a fluidity of symbolism was marked by Moen, they did not consider burials that did not proceed along these binary lines in their percentages.³⁶⁰ This is in contrast to Solberg, who divided clearly along the lines of biological sex into a binary system into her broader study. However, she did consider un-gendered burials in her examination of the professionally excavated materials. It is clear that if Moen and Dommasnes had added these numbers for the un-gendered or gender neutral burials that their overall percentages of masculine display would certainly drop; as was evident in the discrepancy between Solberg's larger study and the numbers in her professional excavated sample. It is perhaps safe to suggest that these numbers in Moen and Dommasnes' studies instead represent the top echelon of what constituted elite male display in their respective areas, as the addition of un-gendered burials would reduce the overall percentages of hegemonic elite graves.

Overall, the corpus of the Norwegian burials while containing graves with more funerary materials tied to masculine symbolism, is not entirely dominated by hegemonic elite masculinity or weaponry. As evident in Dommasnes, Moen, and Solberg's professionally excavated graves, while graves containing weapons do compose the majority of the burials in some areas, even these regions do not wholly exclude female burials. Many areas have a much more equal distribution and, indeed, some are even dominated by female burial. Dommasnes' and Moen's studies are problematic because they did not include the discussion of burials not containing items potentially linked to either gender or items that transverse hegemonic understandings of gender, the un-gendered or gender neutral burials, and thus only consider a binary, unlike Solberg's professionally excavated examples. However, Solberg is perhaps more extreme in her binary understanding when considering her entire corpus of graves and grave goods.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.; Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 77.

Based on the previous survey of furnished burial in Norway, this thesis would argue that Solberg's professionally excavated examples, Moen's study, and Dommasnes' analysis are the most reliable information. Solberg's general study is inherently problematic due to her methodological approach and, therefore, this study will rely on her findings from the professionally excavated burials as well as the conclusions of the other studies previously mentioned. This means that generally in Norway there was a somewhat even distribution, though certain areas had perhaps a proclivity towards weapon burial, as was certainly evident in the Sogn district of Norway, although even there it is clear there are villages and areas with exceptions and a large, or even majority, of graves that contain items linked to hegemonic femininities. Therefore, it is somewhat safe to conclude that while elite masculinity was a dominant force in Norwegian burial practice it was perhaps only hypermasculinized in some areas of Norway, particularly western Norway, the area scholars argue had close ties to Dublin.³⁶¹

4.3 Dublin and Insular Contexts in the Larger Framework

This section will now compare the Norwegian data to Hadley's study and the Dublin corpus. Viking graves in Ireland have an overwhelmingly masculine emphasis on display. In contrast to Moen's, Svanberg's, Dommasnes' studies and Solberg's professionally excavated graves, the Dublin corpus prodigiously demonstrated elite forms of masculinity. Out of the sixty-nine graves in Dublin, fifty-six or around 81% are archaeologically gendered male via weaponry³⁶² and six or around 9% are female via brooches or beads, the remaining portion, seven or around 10% contain tertiary, defined as containing gender neutral grave goods: graves that contain items pertaining to both sexes or those that do not hegemonically align with either male or female symbols, although Harrison does have a group he referred to as female tertiary in his thesis, these would be included in female burials in his later text.³⁶³

³⁶² Please see Fig. 4.4 'Single edged spear heads from Kilmainham 1845 group of objects', p. 306; and Fig. 4.5 'Arrowheads from Kilmainham 1845 group of objects', p. 307; for photographs of some of these weapons.

³⁶³ Data compiled from Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295 and 299. Harrison's thesis category of 'tertiary graves' will be considered in the gender neutral chapter, Chapter Seven, pp. 196-240. As previously mentioned, Harrison does acknowledge a group of female tertiary burials, Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 167, which will change in his later book with Ó Floinn whereby this category becomes gender-neutral, Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

During the later stages of this thesis' composition, Stephen Harrison and Ragnall Ó Floinn completed a study focused solely on the furnished Viking burials in Ireland. From this, new numbers were released encompassing some 81 total burials in Dublin, including 61 of what they labeled male, ten female, and ten gender-neutral: 75% male, 12.5% female, and 12.5% gender-neutral split.³⁶⁴ However, their parameters and methodological approach to what constitutes a burial have changed and this is problematic. For example, an iron sword bought by the British Museum from Walter Money in 1884, with the tag 'found in Ireland', they argue to represent a Viking grave, because they believe it was a sword found in the river Liffey during the digging of drainage ditches. They contended that if it was found in the Liffey then it is from Kilmainham and therefore, it is a Kilmainham burial.³⁶⁵ A further example of this is a so-called gender-neutral 'burial' with a discovery date of 1864. Again, this contains an item, a single Viking-Age balance beam, which was dredged from the Liffey upstream from Kilmainham and the authors make the leap that if it was in the Liffey that is from Kilmainham and, therefore, is a grave good representing a single burial.³⁶⁶ These conclusions are problematic. While Harrison's initial study does have a hierarchy of burials, and some do have difficulties with establishing a grave context, as has been explored, this thesis has been able to conduct careful analyses of these purported burials in order to reach the numbers it has analysed. Additionally, there seem to be larger parameters for this later study as the previous two examples indicated. Like Solberg, Harrison and Ó Floinn appeared to have concluded that stray finds are burials because they argued that it is unlikely to find these items outside of these contexts. As this thesis has argued against Solberg's general study because of these methodological problems, so too, will it argue against this methodological approach. Therefore, while it will include Harrison and Ó Floinn's work throughout the text to compare and investigate case studies and broader findings, this thesis will utilize its own numbers it has gleaned from its careful analysis.

To return to this analysis then, even including the un-gendered burials or gender neutral, which, as was evident in the Norwegian contexts can significantly drop the percentages of weapon burials, the Dublin furnished burials containing overt symbols of elite masculinity, weaponry, are overwhelming. While un-gendered or gender neutral burials could indeed still be those of men, they do not represent a hypermasculine burial,

³⁶⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 224.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 385

³⁶⁶ Ibid. pp. 410-411.

as they do not contain weapons or an emphasis on this dominant construction of elite male identity.

In Dublin, based on this thesis' data gathered from a close analysis of Harrison's thesis, there is 9% female display and 81% masculine display as compared to the study of Moen who found in North Kaupang for example, 40% feminine and 60% masculine. Even compared to the relatively higher numbers in other areas of Norway, such as Sogn, it is evident that burial in Dublin represents a similar or even higher rate of masculine emphasis on display and lower rates of female burials, and certainly much higher than the broader Scandinavian context.

The numbers for hegemonic or common feminine symbolism in burial in Dublin are low, in line with Hadley's study in England.³⁶⁷ As Hadley's study is in an insular context, her temporal framework aligns with Ireland, and specifically Dublin. She based her assertion of hypermasculinity on a general lack of grave goods with strong ties to hegemonic femininities. There are limited examples of Viking furnished burial in England, and Hadley's study considered graves found at thirty sites.³⁶⁸ She found that most of the display was masculine which, in addition to weapons, she also considered to be graves containing spurs, military belt fittings and riding equipment. This is slightly different from the ways in which Moen's and Solberg's, and Harrison's furnished burial were gendered, which was largely by a binary opposition of oval brooches and weapons, though riding equipment and spurs are often also associated with elite masculinity. Hadley's study still proceeded along a binary of 'men' and 'women's' burials as Hadley assumed hypermasculinity must essentially still be tied to people who were biologically or gendered male.³⁶⁹

Hadley cited four definite and two possible women's burials in England which found few containing grave goods attributed to hegemonic femininity, thus making the overwhelming majority of the burials male in her estimation.³⁷⁰ These numbers appear to be in some contrast to Harrison's findings in England. Harrison, as discussed in the preceding sections, has utilized, like Solberg, a system of three categories wherein a grave could fall under weapon, brooch, or gender neutral, un-gendered, or what Harrison's thesis called 'tertiary'. Harrison defined tertiary graves as burials containing items that

³⁶⁷ For a comparison of Dublin with other insular contexts, please see Fig. 4.6, 'Insular Contexts Compared', p. 308.

³⁶⁸ Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes and Companions', p. 272.

³⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 272-274

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

perhaps do not categorically demonstrate allegiance to hegemonic constructs of elite masculinity or femininity and might instead be divergent or non-dominant expressions of gender and status.³⁷¹ This would change in his later book with Ó Floinn, where they moved from tertiary and instead began to refer to these burials as 'gender-neutral' defined by the inclusion of items that did not have gendered symbolism.³⁷² This helps mitigate some of the issues of gendering a person based on burial goods, but he still largely ties weapons to biological male sex and brooches to biological femaleness.

For example, Harrison's study of northern England, demonstrated that twenty-five out of fifty-eight contained weapons or 43%; twenty-eight are 'tertiary' or 48% and five are brooch. Southern England had twenty-seven out of fifty-seven contained weapons, twenty-nine were tertiary burials, and one was a brooch.³⁷³ These numbers still demonstrate a very small amount of feminine display in accord with Hadley's study, but do not necessarily show a marked difference from other areas in Scandinavia in terms of elite masculine display. In fact these percentages are in line with Kaupang. These show high numbers of tertiary burials that do not contain weapons.

However, northwest England is another case. As contended by Owen and Dalland, the settlers from this area originated in Norway.³⁷⁴ If there is a marked difference between these two areas it might be representative of a divergent method of burial based on these ethnic groups and their burial practices at home. From Harrison's study of furnished insular burial this thesis determined that in the northwest of England, Harrison found thirteen out of eighteen burials contained weapons or 72%. The remaining burials consisted of four tertiary (22%), and one brooch (5%).³⁷⁵ Of the weapon burials, eight contain swords (61%), spears are also very common in this area; Ireland is dominated by swords, and Norway has a prevalence of axes.³⁷⁶ This is an interesting point that will be revisited later. This is in contrast to northeast England which had twenty-three out of

³⁷¹ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 53.

³⁷² Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

³⁷³ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295.

³⁷⁴ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 183.

³⁷⁵ Calculations are this author's own, based off data from Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295, 299. For an overview of weapon burials, the overall numbers and how this varies, please see Fig. 4.7 'One Weapon Burials in Context', p. 309; Fig. 4.8, 'Two Weapon Burials in Context', p. 310; and Fig. 4.9, 'Three Weapon Burials in Context', p. 311.

³⁷⁶ Data gathered from Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, pp. 527-543.

forty-eight burials containing weapons or 48% with one brooch and the remaining twenty-four, 50% were 'tertiary'.³⁷⁷

A specific Viking trading center with known ties to Dublin located in northern England is, of course, York. Out of the furnished burials found in York attributed to the Vikings, some sixteen in number, only one is a possible weapon burial.³⁷⁸ This burial was found in an area called Severus Hills some 3.2 kilometers west of the Viking Age city.³⁷⁹ It was alleged to have a spearhead and sword, but in his study Harrison could not find any evidence of the sword existing.³⁸⁰ The rest of the burials located in York are deemed tertiary burials by Harrison because they contained items like silver wire appliqué, combs, thread, finger rings and coins, and these will be examined in Chapter Seven.³⁸¹

It does appear that the Norwegian settlers in the northwest of England also were hypermasculinizing burial with a marked and deliberate emphasis on weaponry in contrast with the rest of England. This is also representative in the whole of the west of England versus eastern England, although not as marked a difference. Western England has twenty-two out of thirty-seven burials, 60% that have an emphasis on masculine display via weaponry as opposed to the east of England which has a 38% rate of weaponry.³⁸²

It is perhaps safe to assert that Owen and Dalland were correct and that there was a Danish presence in eastern England and a dominant Norwegian presence in the west. Indeed it is evident that the arguments by multiple scholars that were examined earlier on in this chapter that Dublin had ties to Norway are clearly reflected in its burial practice. Additionally, based on the analysis of this thesis, it is apparent that northwest England also reflected a larger Norwegian based burial custom and, therefore, this represents possible ties to Ireland, specifically Dublin. This thesis contends that there were certainly links between western Norwegian influence from northwest England to Dublin that extended in that general area and this accounts for the hypermasculinization of burial in those regions.

Therefore, perhaps even more than in England, the Vikings in Ireland adapted display to show dominance. Hadley also supported this ideal, arguing that warrior burials

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 550-559.

³⁷⁹ R.A. Hall, *Viking Age York* (London, 1994), p.44.

³⁸⁰ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 559.

³⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 550-558., Please see Chapter Seven, pp. 174-214.

³⁸² Ibid., p. 299.

are rare in urban environments in England.³⁸³ This was clear from the examination of the difference in burials in York and Dublin, even though their groups were closely tied, and indeed, travelled between the areas. Hadley also stated that this 'paucity' of masculine symbolism was apparent in warrior imagery on the 10th century stone funerary sculptures in England, where they are 'overwhelmingly' found in rural areas, and not in urban environments.³⁸⁴

The sheer amount of symbolism associated with elite forms of masculinity in burial provides a case for hypermasculinization. It is also critical to examine specifically what symbols the Vikings used in their hypermasculine display; particularly if they used universally understood displays of masculinity or ones of a specific Viking origin. This might be because as Harrison and Ó Floinn argued Dublin was an exceptionally large settlement with various kin-groups and families that vied for power.³⁸⁵ Additionally, they argued that Dublin and its surrounding areas were often under violent threat or engaging in violence themselves: Dublin functioned as a base with which to conduct raids.³⁸⁶

Hadley contended that rivalries clearly emerged within the Scandinavian groups and that 'unity of purpose may have been a fragile commodity'.³⁸⁷ She cited several instances contained within the Irish annals that depicted Scandinavian leaders being killed by their own kin groups, or fighting other Scandinavian armies. For example, the *Annals of Ulster* listed the death of Ásl, brother of Óláfr Guthfrithsson- leader of a Viking army in Ireland, who was dispatched by his own kinsman in an act of 'patricide' in 867 CE.³⁸⁸ They further detail the death of another brother, Hálfðan, at the hands of a competing Viking army in 877 CE.³⁸⁹ So it is apparent that competition between Viking groups was clearly occurring and this might have manifested itself into the symbolism of burial, along with the interactions with the native Irish. These concepts will be considered in more depth in the conclusion.

³⁸³ Dawn Hadley, 'Whither the Warrior in Viking-Age Towns' in D.M. Hadley and A. Ten Harkel (eds.), *Everyday Life in Viking-Age Towns* (Oxford, 2013), p. 106.

³⁸⁴ Hadley, 'Whither The Warrior', p. 110.

³⁸⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 298.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

³⁸⁷ Hadley, 'Whither the Warrior', p.106.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

4.4 Swords

The mutability of symbols apparent in Moen's study does not appear to occur often, or indeed at all, in the Dublin corpus. The Dublin burials containing weapons often only contain one item, generally a sword.³⁹⁰ Within the Dublin burials weapon graves containing hegemonic elite masculine items do not often include other grave goods that do not necessarily correspond to a binary gendered system such as tools, scissors. They also do not contain items generally archaeologically associated with the opposite gender such as oval brooches or sewing materials that do occur in the Kaupang cemetery. So it is apparent that not only in Dublin is there an emphasis on masculine display in grave goods amounting to hypermasculinity, there is less evidence for symbolic fluidity, supporting the idea that the Dublin Vikings had a stricter binary of gender roles not existing in other parts of the Scandinavian world perhaps as a result of contact with the Irish Christian communities.

Of the Dublin burials that contain weapons or possible armor, fifty-three of fifty-six, 95%, contain swords.³⁹¹ There are only three possible exceptions to this: two graves at South Great Georges Street excavated by Linzi Simpson, both of these contain knives and shield bosses but no swords. Another example is a probable burial discovered in 1855 or 1857 at College Green, which only contained a shield boss.³⁹²

Comparably, in Solberg's overall study of weapon graves she found that the majority that had single weapon burials contained an axe: 29% in western Norway, 28% in central, and 32% in eastern; this is in contrast with the professionally excavated, which found a higher rate of swords than axes in western and central Norway, though a smaller range in eastern (six, three, and one, respectively, compared with three, two, and two). To reiterate what was stated previously, western Norway had the highest increase in sword to axe ratio and also had the highest concentration of weapon burials in the professionally excavated graves, making up about twenty-eight of the total forty-seven.³⁹³

A sword is an inanimate object, nevertheless it does potentially have a series of symbolic meanings in any number of contexts that can be tied to hegemonic conceptions

³⁹⁰ Please see Fig. 4.10 'Jens Worsaae's Renderings of Weapons and Brooch from Kilmainham', p. 312, for an antiquarian interpretation of these objects. This is valuable because it is the closest we have to understanding and depicting what these items may have looked like soon after they were discovered, if these images can be trusted to be reliable.

³⁹¹ Please refer to Fig. 4.7; 4.8, and 4.9 (pp. 309-311) for a comparison of Dublin weaponry in burial and the broader context of Scandinavian furnished graves.

³⁹² Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, pp.77-79; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 520-521.

³⁹³ Solberg, 'Social Status', p.66

of gender. According to Aidan Walsh, '...in early Christian and medieval times the sword was both a symbol of power and means of acquiring that power'.³⁹⁴ Swords were representations of elite identity due to the expense of creating such a weapon. Ellis Davidson contended that most of the swords from Kilmainham represent a Norwegian triangular type.³⁹⁵ Walsh argued that the majority of the swords found in Dublin represented a type made in western Norway,³⁹⁶ which supports this thesis' premise of the strong links between the two areas. Overall, the origin and nature of these swords suggests that these swords were probably items from the decedent's homeland, and supports the conclusion that these were highly valued items due to the expense and ethnic links associated with such weapons.

To the Vikings, swords could represent a specific deity like Odin. As part of an individual armory they could represent the genealogical prestige of high-status families, they could be used as a way to transfer inheritance and legitimize political rule. They played a critical social role in ritual diplomatic and competitive gift-exchanging. They might have made powerful visual statements of identity.³⁹⁷ Swords in particular played a critical role in the lives of the Norse. In Eddic poetry and saga literature swords bear names. For example in *Gísla Saga*:

Kolr præll minn á sverð, er Grásida heitir...

Kol my foster-father owns a sword that is called *Gray Blade*.³⁹⁸

Other famous swords include *Mimming*, and *Ekkisax*; these swords often have long and varied histories sometimes encompassing multiple narratives such as *Kormák's Saga*.³⁹⁹ Swords, and the real and mythic tradition surrounding them, imbued these weapons with a singular level of importance in the maintenance of social position within their systems of patriarchy. These weapons were often passed down through the generations, as

³⁹⁴ Aidan Walsh, 'Viking Swords in Ireland' in *Archaeology Ireland* Vol. 9, No 3 (Autumn, 1995), p. 37.

³⁹⁵ Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 54.

³⁹⁶ Walsh, 'A summary classification of Viking Swords in Ireland', pp. 133-135. For an antiquarian rendition of the weapons from Dublin and an idea of what these appeared like to the original founders of these burials, or soon after during the Victorian period, please see Fig. 4.11 'Swords and Weapons from Kilmainham Watercolor', p. 313.

³⁹⁷ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p.264; Hadley, "Warriors, Heroes, and Companions," p. 273; Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 212.

³⁹⁸ *Gísla Saga Súrssonar* (ed.) Finnur Jónsson (Háskóli Íslands, 1903), p. 2; translation from Old Norse is this thesis author's own- the sword is also referred to as 'Graysteel' in other translations, please see, for example, *The Story of Gisli the Outlaw* (ed. and trans.) George Webbe DaSant (Edinburgh, 1866), p. 4.

³⁹⁹ Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in the Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 158.

evidenced in saga literature.⁴⁰⁰ This focus on swords in particular in the saga literature indicates the key role they played in the hierarchies of masculinity in the Viking systems of patriarchy. According to Ellis Davidson the king was a representative sword giver and this was depicted symbolically with his association with whetstones as a way to sharpen tools.⁴⁰¹ This is critical to understanding the roles that swords played in life and in death. From this connection to kingship it is evident that swords played a pivotal position in the acquisition and maintenance of power to the Vikings, and in particular their function as the demonstration of the dominant masculinity of the elite.

Swords could be acquired in various ways. For example, a young man might receive one at birth, acquire one later in life from family treasures when he ascended to manhood, win one in a deed of prowess, be gifted one by a lord to whom he had pledged himself, or take one from a burial mound from another warrior whose luck was said to imbue the weapon.⁴⁰²

The social ritual of burial and its importance to the maintenance of social position and renegotiation of alliances demonstrates that swords, when included in burial, were communicating on a semiotic level to Viking groups of various ethnic identities, and in Dublin to the native Irish, on a multitude of nuances all relating to social position and power within the systems of patriarchy.⁴⁰³ The fact that swords were so costly to make, in tandem with the Norse tradition of passing down swords from generation to generation, means that their inclusion in burial signified a deliberately placed and critical symbol of power and elite status. Ellis Davidson even contended that these swords could have been created expressly for the purpose of being buried with the dead.⁴⁰⁴

Since this symbol of a sword is often repeated particularly in Irish contexts it indicates that it did have inherent meaning in this temporal and cultural milieu.⁴⁰⁵ In burials with one weapon in Dublin, swords were the most commonly placed item; also these graves containing only one weapon, while being the most frequent, occur more

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 164-175.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 176.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 212-213.

⁴⁰³ For an in depth exploration of burial and the socially constructed nature of ritual and its importance to the maintenance of social ties and position as well as a general discussion on grave goods and their symbolic links, please see Chapter Two, pp. 30-45.

⁴⁰⁴ Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in the Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Please see Fig. 4.12, 'Collection of Viking Swords', p. 314, for a visualization of the swords from Dublin.

often than in Norway according to this thesis' analysis of Harrison's data.⁴⁰⁶ This is also reflected in Harrion and Ó Floinn.⁴⁰⁷

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that swords as hegemonic elite masculine display were ingrained with symbolism understood by both the Vikings and the native Irish. Williams made the contention that burial is a unique cultural event that is a 'symbolic text' which was read by the community.⁴⁰⁸ What could account for this proliferation of swords as emphasis of hegemonic elite masculine display is this thesis has argued as the hypermasculinization of Viking burial, also evident in Hadley's arguments, in accordance with not only their own, but also native Irish custom. This used gendered symbolism to react to Irish and Danish threats to their own patriarchal hierarchy.

This thesis contends that these burial rituals were inherently nuanced in the gendered symbolism of the items chosen for burial; and that this gendered symbolism is a critical component to understanding the symbolic text of Viking furnished burial in Dublin. Not only were the burials in Dublin overwhelmingly elite and masculine in their symbolic text, but they also chiefly contained swords, more so than in other Scandinavian contexts. This is a significant because in systems of patriarchy, all power is gendered, and dominant elite power is gendered masculine. That the Vikings responded to Irish, and perhaps divergent Scandinavian such as Danish patriarchal hierarchies and hegemonic conceptions of masculinity with their own understandings of masculinities, is a key piece to this thesis' investigation. That they then modified their own burial customs to overemphasize elite masculinity and to use items that were perhaps more universally understood is striking.

This cross-cultural symbolism and the overwhelming inclusion of weapons in burial suggests a culture that was utilizing burial rite as a way to negotiate power in a symbolic language that potentially traversed ethnic lines. Hypermasculinity in burial ritual was a method for the Vikings to both assert dominance by displaying and proving their masculinity and also to acculturate, by purposefully using a symbolic item that signified and was understood to represent a dominant masculine elite in Irish Christian, Norwegian and other Scandinavian communities such as the Danes. It becomes evident then, that this itself was a modified response, that it did not occur throughout Norway,

⁴⁰⁶ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 106.

⁴⁰⁷ See Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 75-92; p. 702.

⁴⁰⁸ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p. 255.

and though was in existence in west Norwegian contexts, was utilized and perhaps amplified in Dublin.

Chapter Five:
The Donnybrook Burial:
The Narrative of the Active Male Warrior
And the Passive Female Sacrifice

5.1 The Sources for the Donnybrook Burial: Antiquarian to Modern

As the chapter on hegemonic elite masculinities demonstrated, gender was used as a medium to negotiate power by the use and emphasis on masculine items in an effort to display dominance. It is critical to investigate how masculine grave goods and symbolism can be misconstrued and subsequently utilized to justify scholars' own perceptions of the Viking period, instead of reflecting a medieval lived reality. In this vein, this chapter will conduct a case study analysis of an inhumation that purportedly contained a warrior clad in 'full armor' with an additional two people buried at his feet, found in an extant cemetery in Donnybrook in 1879.⁴⁰⁹

The Donnybrook burials are a case of contention among scholars as little remains now from this grave. This thesis will investigate the role that preconceptions, particularly as they relate to gender, played in the Victorian historiography of the grave, which, in turn, has influenced modern scholarship of the site. This thesis will attempt to disentangle the symbolism of this burial to its contemporary audience, removing Victorian and modern bias inherent in the scholarship. This will be completed in an effort to ascertain the semiotics of this burial and its greater purpose in early medieval Dublin.

The first antiquarian to investigate the burial after it was discovered by construction workers was William Frazer.⁴¹⁰ Frazer stated that 'the first intimation to reach me of this "vast charnel heap" was on 'the 3rd day of October, 1879'.⁴¹¹ By Frazer's own words, he was friends with a Mr. Thomas Wardrop, the man who purchased the ground at Aylesbury Road to build some houses and this man gave him full access to the grounds and burial as well as placing his workmen at Frazer's disposal should he have

⁴⁰⁹ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 79; Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 675.

⁴¹⁰ William Frazer, 'Description of a Great Sepulchral Mound at Aylesbury Road, near Donnybrook, in the County of Dublin, Containing Human and Animal Remains, as well as Some Objects of Antiquarian Interest, Referable to the Tenth or Eleventh Centuries' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Polite Literature and Antiquities* Vol 2 (1879-1888) pp. 29-55.

⁴¹¹ Frazer, 'Description', p. 29. Please see Fig. 5.1, 'Donnybrook Burial Mound', p. 315.

need of them.⁴¹² It is evident that much of the work was conducted prior to the arrival of Frazer and his fellow antiquarians. The investigation of the burial was mostly carried out by a team of workmen who were certainly unfamiliar with the treatment of burial or with archaeological practice. This, naturally, leads to major methodological issues in the treatment and recordings of the burials and grave goods.

Frazer, however, did attempt to perform an excavation of the burial site as methodologically sound as could be in his temporal framework, and this is evident in his notes on the excavation. The Viking interments at Donnybrook were found amongst hundreds of other bodies which were unearthed under the excavation leadership of both Frazer and Professor McCalister of Dublin University, who he asked to assist him.⁴¹³ Frazer also used a Mr. Bailey, Paleontologist to the Geological Survey, who was tasked with aiding in identifying the animal bones and shells found among the bodies.⁴¹⁴ Finally, a Mr. G.H. Kinhan inspected the investigations, lending his expertise in geological knowledge to this process as there were several sandstone tools found at the site.⁴¹⁵

To further his determination to undertake a precise assessment of the bodies, Frazer is careful to give an exact location of the burial mound relating it to the famed Donnybrook Fair Green.⁴¹⁶ He described in some detail how the shape of the mound was determined and how the workers specifically went about their excavation noting it was done from north to south, 'cutting it open by a wide and shallow trench, averaging thirty feet in width, and progressing until they had passed through its entire extent, and for a distance of several feet beyond it'.⁴¹⁷ Frazer was also careful to discuss the soil, the quality of the clay, and whether it was artificially placed on the mound.⁴¹⁸

Therefore, it is easy perhaps to conclude that Frazer made a concerted effort to utilize what he deemed to be some of the best scholars and methods to examine the burial. Within his antiquarian context, Frazer is following what could certainly be deemed a methodologically sound practice of exploring these archaeological finds. However, he and his findings are very much a product of the Victorian period. This inherent bias,

⁴¹² Frazer, 'Description', p. 29.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

particularly how it relates to femininities and masculinities, will pervade modern research.

This thesis will now trace what precisely biased references he made in his analysis of this discovery, how these have influenced modern research, and how gender and the analysis of gendered symbolism in the burial itself has been impacted. This thesis will deconstruct the burial analysis, seeking to remove these Victorian conceptions to reach meaningful conclusions about its semiotics, particularly as it relates to the relegation of women as passive, and of femininities as insignificant.

According to Frazer, prior to his arrival, the workmen had discovered several human bones, including, 'a perfect skull of large size that had the mark of a sword-cut upon its forehead' and with this they also found an iron spear and a double-edged sword with an iron hilt and pommel which he labeled as being of 'undoubted Scandinavian origin'.⁴¹⁹ He recorded that the bones of the three Viking burials were found resting right under the top layer of soil, separated from the air above by a 'mere superficial layer of clay'.⁴²⁰ The following is Frazer's description of the burial, as related by the workmen who discovered the three bodies in question:

This man's bones were described to me as large-sized, and they appeared from the description to have belonged to some person of unusually powerful frame. At his sides were placed the iron sword and spear already mentioned, and his head was that which I first obtained, and which bore the mark of a fatal sword-cut, perforating the frontal bone. At a short distance away, and lying on either sides of his feet, the workmen next uncovered two human skeletons, each a separate interment; these bodies they described as belonging to persons of much smaller size and it is probable they were the remains of females. I regret that these bones got removed and mixed up with numerous other human remains that were soon after unearthed, as the excavations advanced, the bones themselves being broken during removal.⁴²¹

Frazer was particularly concerned with the sword contained in the burial though he does also mention three arrowheads being located close by. He argued that because the sword had a hilt with rich ornamentation, 'inlaid pattern of gold and silver, and the handle retained traces of having been bound round by some description of fine wire, possibly gold...', of which, 'all remains of the metal were lost' indicated that this person was a

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

leader or chief of the Vikings.⁴²² He compared these to other swords found at Kilmainham and the sword at Larne and viewed them as 'identical'.⁴²³

As was examined in the section relating to masculinities, swords do have a strong correlation with elite hegemonic masculinities and were utilized in burial ritual to convey power and dominance. It is therefore probable to conclude that Frazer's estimations surrounding the semiotics of the sword and the array of weapons contained in the grave were correct; specifically, their importance and potential symbolic meaning. While this thesis would not agree with his conclusion that the burial is by definition male, it is certainly demonstrating elite masculine culture. Frazer compared the Donnybrook 'warrior' burial to another so-called 'warrior' interred at Lough Larne, and he concluded that they were of an almost identical nature even down to the burial goods. He does, however, argue that the burial at Donnybrook is one of a chieftain of elevated rank due to the nature of artwork on the sword hilt.⁴²⁴

In summation, then, Frazer believed that the large skeleton was that of a male Viking chieftain, interred over the mass slaughter of Irish native peoples. He based this argument on the large cut to the skull and the armor and rich decoration of the sword. Unfortunately, most of the bones contained in the grave were broken or lost, and the graves were originally discovered by workers, so the declaration of this skeleton being of quite substantial size is, of course, hearsay, as Frazer never saw it *in situ*. This narrative of a powerful Viking chief buried over a large slaughter, however, fits within the expected dynamics of the relationship between the native Irish and the Vikings as argued by Victorian scholarship.⁴²⁵ It also demonstrates the insistence on the maintenance of the separate and distinct gender roles for a binary system of gender inherent in their middle class Victorian culture.⁴²⁶ Nowhere will this be more apparent than in the treatment of the two bodies 'buried at his feet'.

The archaeologist R.A. Hall re-examined the Donnybrook burial in 1978. He stated that Frazer's assessment of the burial is 'reasonable by the standard of the day' even though many areas are 'not as precise as might be wished'.⁴²⁷ According to Hall, the

⁴²² Ibid., p. 33 and pp. 48-49. Please see Fig. 5.2, 'Donnybrook Burial Sword', p. 316.

⁴²³ Frazer, 'Description', p. 49.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴²⁵ See Chapter Three for discussion of Victorian and Antiquarian scholarship and bias, pp. 46-59.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ R.A. Hall, 'A Viking-age Grave at Donnybrook, County Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* 22 (1978), p. 64.

objects recovered in the grave were 'dispersed without record' and so he believed that perhaps this might be the reason for what he termed that lack of attention the burial had received by the time of his publication. To reiterate, it is clear that the bones in particular were not treated with any care, as they ended up broken and lost.

The hypermasculinized burial traditions of the Norse in this early medieval Irish context, combined with the Victorian antiquarian ideologies of womanhood combined to create a wholly passive status for the so-called female burials which Frazer insisted were buried at the warrior's feet. He went so far as to say 'we may believe that the female remains found buried at his feet were additional witnesses to the esteem in which his followers held him (the central burial), and the penalty exacted for his loss'.⁴²⁸

A particularly critical point is Frazer's assessment that the separate skeletons 'at his feet' are located in separate interments a 'short distance away', a critical point.⁴²⁹ Additionally, the size of these two bodies in relation to what he deems the primary are also only at the testimony of the workers, men who had no training in archaeology or excavation methods. This is what led to the conclusion that they were female. As the bones have since been lost, this amounts to hearsay. They could have certainly been reading their own bias into the burials, implying or believing the other bodies to be female based simply on size and their understandings and perceptions of women and femininities. Additionally, based on the size of the figure with the swords, a gentlemen described as being of quite some size, it is indeed possible that these figures might be of average medieval size, which is quite smaller than that of antiquarian or modern contexts. It is only in comparison to this giant of body that these bodies appear quite small. Other possibilities emerge, including that they could have been male teenagers, sons of the person buried in the central burial. There are many options as to why these bodies were buried in this manner near this burial of what Frazer terms a warrior.

According to Hall's analysis of the skull, the large skeleton bore signs of a violent death, based on a perforation on the frontal lobe, which he attributed to a sword blow, and, well in line with Frazer's estimations, was probably a Viking chief or leader.⁴³⁰ It is possible, however, that such damage occurred after burial or during retrieval. However, this potential violent end also might explain the location and prominence of the burial. If a warrior, and especially a leader, fell in battle it follows that the power of his successors

⁴²⁸ Frazer, 'Description', p. 34.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

⁴³⁰ Hall, 'Viking Age Grave', p. 73.

might be in question. Death is a time of uncertainty, where peace treaties are renegotiated, disputes created or settled, and new enemies or allies made. This is a tenuous time. It is likely that the society that buried this person deemed it necessary to hypermasculinize his grave, in accordance with the other Viking burials in Dublin. Choosing a pre-existing burial mound and burying the person at the top would further this idea and also claim to the land by creating a visual representation of dominance.

A further scholar, Elizabeth O'Brien, considered the Donnybrook burial in 1992. O'Brien contended that instead of Frazer's insistence on the burial as an 'indiscriminate massacre' of people inflicted by the Viking invaders, that the burial mound at Donnybrook is instead a pre-existing native Irish cemetery that was reused by the Vikings.⁴³¹ She also clarified that the shape which Frazer is describing appeared to be more of a low raised platform than a great mound of earth.⁴³² Based on the east-west positioning of the burials and the way they were laid out, O'Brien concluded that they were representative of normal burial practice in Ireland from the fourth century and, therefore, Christian in nature; and this is further supported by the lack of grave goods.⁴³³

Many Viking burials choose to make use of extant Christian cemeteries in any number of contexts, including other locations in Dublin and Ireland, for example St. Michan's church in Dublin. For more broad examples in the framework of the Viking expansion, it is possible to see the reuse of native Christian or prehistoric cemeteries in such places as St. German's Cathedral on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel or churchyards such as Kirk Braddan, Malew and Kirk Michael, all on the Isle of Man.⁴³⁴ It is possible to conclude that O'Brien is correct and that these Viking burials were secondary additions to the original native Irish cemetery. She did not, however, challenge the argument that the two burials found at the 'feet' of the 'warrior' were female nor did she argue against Frazer's conclusions that they were sacrificial.⁴³⁵ Hall referred to them as an 'unaccompanied interment lay beside each of the warrior's feet'.⁴³⁶ But he is still convinced that these

⁴³¹ Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A Re-assessment of the 'Great Sepulchral Mound' Containing a Viking Burial at Donnybrook, Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology* Vol. 36 (1992)p. 170; Frazer, 'Description', pp. 52-54.

⁴³² O'Brien, 'A Re-Assessment', p. 170.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 171.

⁴³⁴ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 87.

⁴³⁵ O'Brien, 'A Re-Assessment', p. 173.

⁴³⁶ Hall, 'Viking Age Grave', p. 68.

burials are female. In fact, he suggested that based on this evidence, they could have been victims of ritual sacrifice; a claim, it is clear, O'Brien also supported.⁴³⁷

5.2 Contextualizing Sacrifice

This claim needs to be disentangled from its Victorian origins. There is no archaeological nor osteological evidence that the two burials were female. Nor were there any indications of sacrifice save for what the workers and Frazer inferred and their location to what has been deemed the primary burial. It is critical, then, to examine the broader corpus of the human sacrifice to ascertain the prevalence of this practice, if any, and to examine in what contexts it might have taken place. Only then can the Donnybrook burial be contextualized within its proper framework and meaningful conclusions, indeed alternatives, to this narrative of sacrifice and its semiotics can be reached.

Haakon Shetelig in 1910 was one of the first scholars to invoke 'suttee' or *sati* when dealing with the double burials in Scandinavia. He utilized the term specifically for double inhumations, which, while he contended were rare, were clearly the mark of a widow or bride sacrifice.⁴³⁸ Shetelig archaeologically sexed burials by means of grave goods. This is a similar practice to modern scholars, associating arms and most tools with men's graves and brooches, spindle whorls, flax combs and the like with women's graves. He does concede that there are a few items which could make their way into graves of 'both sexes' which he utilized for his study such as scissors, horse bits (this is an interesting departure from many modern scholars who argue this generally indicates a male grave), knives, and finally, sickles.⁴³⁹

Shetelig contended that while the number of double inhumations is rare as compared to the number of burials in general, they made up too many to be accidental.⁴⁴⁰ He argued that in order to determine if a grave was a *sati* burial then it must be clear that the people contained within it were husband and wife and of equal rank. This stance, that double inhumations were naturally the result of the practice of what he termed *sati* has been refuted by many scholars, such as Jesch.⁴⁴¹ His use of the term *sati* in association with Viking burial is, of course, anachronistic and extremely problematic. It assumes that

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

⁴³⁸ Haakon Shetelig, 'Traces of the Custom of "Suttee" in Norway during the Viking Age' in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club VI* (Coventry, 1908-9), p. 185.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 185-187.

⁴⁴¹ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 24.

each person sacrificed is generally female, though Shetelig does allow for the possibility of a servant to be sacrificed to follow a master if grave goods are unequal.⁴⁴² His arguments also contended that such a death was voluntary, and it also imposes an Indian (and indeed Asian) practice upon a medieval Viking people with no cultural or contextual framework for such.

At the time of Shetelig's publication *sati* was outlawed, but certainly still potentially loomed large within the contemporary mind set due to the colonization by the English of India. Price contended that scholars often portrayed Viking burial traditions as having the structures of modern beliefs and rituals but simply 'replicated in period costume'.⁴⁴³ This is perhaps evident in the invocation of *sati*. It is understandable that he would seek to use his own contemporary terminology to explain a medieval phenomenon; such a thing would have been expected and not problematized. However, when modern scholarship continues to utilize this term, in the period of post-colonial and post-modern theory, it becomes a blatant and anachronistic misuse of language that has extensive implications for the study of human sacrifice in Viking burial practice. Mainly, that the practice of human sacrifice in the Viking era was a ritualistic suicide carried out by widows.

Of particular note, Shetelig assumed that this practice was widespread. He also reasoned that this practice was voluntary. This specifically creates an image of a passive female 'Other' from a pagan culture, to be pitied in her helplessness by modern scholars, who was only considered valuable in relation to her male partner in her Viking context. This is certainly in line with the prevailing dogma on passive and helpless female figures, while also invoking the image of a horrific pagan ritual practiced by violent and aggressive Vikings; so violent that they even destroyed their own wives upon their deaths.⁴⁴⁴ This was clearly a crime of the highest calibre to the contemporary culture of both Shetelig's 1910 publication and the antiquarian archaeologists who excavated Donnybrook. Overall, this contributes to the narrative of the violent, pagan, 'barbaric', Viking 'Other', which, in turn, damages attempts to properly contextualize their burial customs and to ascertain the semiotics in their grave goods. In Shetelig's imagination and that of Frazer in Donnybrook, it is a forgone conclusion that the sacrificial victim, or victims are largely female.

⁴⁴² Shetelig, 'Traces of the Custom of Suttee', p. 187.

⁴⁴³ Price, 'Bodylore', p. 145.

⁴⁴⁴ Please see Chapter Three, pp. 46-59.

Shetelig supported his contentions with two excerpts from the Norse saga material, and one short poem. These are problematic source materials as they were composed much later than the events they purport to narrate and also under a Christian contemporary framework which changed the shape and tenor of the tales.⁴⁴⁵ It is also important to note that these are merely three examples from the range of saga material, which also leads to the question of validity. It is also crucial to point out that when modern scholars are discussing the validity of human sacrifice they generally do not utilize any of these sources, which also speaks to their perceived usefulness.⁴⁴⁶ The first was found in the *Saga of St. Olaf*, a story of the 11th-century saint composed in the 13th century. This work is clearly Christian hagiography and, therefore, largely religious propaganda and it would serve them well to demonize the pagan past. The second, *the Saga of Olaf Trygggarson* in the *Heimskringlasaga*, was composed by Snorri Sturluson circa 1230. Snorri's work is inherently biased and largely fictional or suspect. It is therefore logical to argue that these two works are not reliable sources of information to support such claims. The final source Shetelig uses in his argument in support of *sati* practice in Viking burial is *Sigurðarkviða hin Skamma* or *The Short Lay of Sigurd* found in the *Codex Regius* of the *Elder Edda* and probably dates to the late eleventh century, not long after the Christianization of Scandinavia.⁴⁴⁷ The relevant section regards the female antagonist Bryhild's orchestration of the death of Sigurd and her subsequent suicide. Shetelig is particularly interested in stanza seventy:

Því at hán um fylgja
fimm ambáttir,
átta þjónar,
eðlum góðir,
fóstrman mitt
ok faðerni,
þat er Buðli gaf
barni sínu.

Bond-women five
shall follow him,
And eight of my thralls,
well-born are they,
Children with me,
and mine they were
As gifts that Buthli

⁴⁴⁵ Please see Chapter One, pp. 1-29.

⁴⁴⁶ Most scholars use the Arabic accounts see Moen, Jesch, Foote and Wilson to name a few.

⁴⁴⁷ 'The Short Lay of Sigurd' in Henry Adams Bellows (trans. and ed.), *The Poetic Edda*, (New York, 1936), p.421.

his daughter gave.⁴⁴⁸

After ordering her husband to coordinate Sigurd's death, Byrnhild declared she will commit suicide after her scheming is successful. She created an elaborate death ceremony and pierces her own heart. She ordered that if her slaves desire her gold that they must volunteer to join her in death. This is not well-liked by the community, who believe enough people have already died. In the end, she situated herself upon Sigurd's funeral pyre, as his wife, and ordered the dead slaves to be arranged around them, two at his head and feet. This accounts for four total slaves, a number which does not match the number in stanza seventy and, therefore, was dismissed by Henry Adams Bellows citing Vigfusson in his 1936 translation of the poem.⁴⁴⁹

While this poem offers a vivid account of the burial of Sigurd, the perceived historicity of the sacrificial accounts is problematic. Certainly an obvious issue is that the account is largely fictional and while the *Edda* certainly has used historical people and battles for inspiration for its poems, such as Brunhilda of Austria, there is no evidence that these particular people in this precise situation existed, instead it is arguably largely poetic license. Secondly, the number and nature of slave deaths is contested within its own poem, as Bellows pointed out, also indicating a perhaps false nature.

Instead of seeing this as a factual account, some scholars might argue that it offers insight into general practices. That while it is easy to dismiss the historicity of the people involved it might still demonstrate pagan ritual. The idea that human sacrifice might have occurred in the Viking Age is not something easily dismissed. However, to use this poem as a source to support this argument and to analyze a specific set of rituals is suspect. Mainly, as with the previous two saga sources, this was composed after the Christianization of Scandinavia and could have served as a way to villainize Brynhild, the pagan past, and women of the Viking era in general. In any event, to base an argument on human sacrifice's existence on this poem, or indeed with the combination of the saga material, is somewhat tenuous. It is also important to note, that such burial practices were widely divergent across the Scandinavian world. As has been examined in an earlier section, Norwegian burial practice is different from Swedish and Danish rituals as

⁴⁴⁸ Old Norse is: 'Sigurðarkviða hin skamma' in Sophus Bugge (ed.) *Sæmundar Edda* (Christiania, 1867) online: <http://etext.old.no/Bugge/helga0.html>. Accessed 21 July 2016. §70; translation is 'The Short Lay of Sigurd', Bellows, p. 442.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p.441.

evidenced in the varied customs of grave goods, burial types and positions. Therefore, to attribute a poem's fictional account to all Viking burial practices is also suspect.⁴⁵⁰

Instead of relying on the Norse saga material, modern scholars often base their arguments on the reality of human sacrifice by utilizing the accounts of two medieval Arabic authors, Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rusta who wrote about the Rūs people. The Rūs were a group living in the Baltic regions and Northern Europe and were particularly active in the Volga region and the Caspian Sea.⁴⁵¹ As previously argued in Chapter Two, there are many Muslim authors who discussed the Rūs, such as Zuhri, Miskawayh, Ibn Hawqae, Ibn Khurradābhbih and Mas'ūdī, to name several.⁴⁵² These other texts did not contain vivid imagery of Rūs human sacrifice in burial ritual. It is imperative, then, to place both Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rusta within this framework as a minority of writings to specifically cite these alleged phenomena.

Ibn Fadlan was a Muslim diplomat who travelled to Northern Europe, encountering the people known as the Rūs in the early half of the tenth century, specifically dating circa to 921-922 CE.⁴⁵³ Ibn Fadlan recorded the death of a great man of the Rūs and what he argued was an example of voluntary human sacrifice. After the man died a slave girl volunteers to accompany him in death, she drinks and feasts for several days while his body and burial boat are prepared.⁴⁵⁴ The day of the ceremony arrived and along with a dog, two horses, two cows, a cock and a hen, the human girl is killed by the so-called 'Angel of Death' who Ibn Fadlan referred to as a 'witch, thick-bodied and sinister'.⁴⁵⁵ This is after what amounts to several days of rituals, including rape, culminating in a quite brutal end for the slave girl who was consequently stabbed and strangled to death.⁴⁵⁶ After placing her body on the boat along with the other sacrifices, the closest male relative to the deceased man walks backwards to the boat with a torch covering his anus to light the boat on fire and complete the funerary rituals.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁰ For a more in depth summary of this idea please see Chapter Two, pp. 30-45.

⁴⁵¹ Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta', p. 75.

⁴⁵² For translations of these texts please see *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, Lunde and Stone.

⁴⁵³ Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, 'Introduction' in *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, p. xiii.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibn Fadlan, 'Ibn Fadlan', in Paul Lund and Caroline Stone (intro. and trans.), *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness Arab Travellers in the Far North* (2012), p. 51.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.,

Some scholars, like Bersu and Wilson, appear to have accepted Ibn Fadlan's testimony as wholly trustworthy.⁴⁵⁸ A few, such as Schjødt, contended that there were strong similarities between Ibn Fadlan's work and the Old Norse saga material. This, he contended, speaks to its usefulness as a source for general knowledge. He pointed to three key parallels: the use of the term and description of paradise; the god referenced in Ibn Fadlan's account, who Schjødt argued is clearly Odin; and finally, on the scene wherein the slave girl kills the hen, throws its head to the side, and its body is flung on the boat. This final storyline he compared with Saxo Grammaticus' story of *Hadingus* wherein the titular character Hadingus is travelling the underworld with a woman to see where he would go after death, when they reach a wall he cannot cross the woman cuts off a rooster's head and throws it over the wall. The rooster then crows proclaiming it is alive again and Hadingus is returned home.⁴⁵⁹

This allusion to similarity is a problematic basis to assume the historicity of the burial for several reasons. Firstly, Ibn Fadlan's description of paradise is similar to his own Islamic one, and largely generic. Moen reasoned that he clearly is reading his own religious ideologies into his renderings of the Rūs. For example, she contended he described the Rūs version of paradise utilizing language very similar to his own Islamic version.⁴⁶⁰ Secondly, the use of Odin as god does not necessarily invite the rest of the burial to be accurate; as Odin was, of course, one of the key members of the pantheon. Therefore, he is most likely to have been invoked in a burial setting by peoples with any relation to Scandinavian belief systems. Finally, Saxo Grammaticus's work is composed in Latin well after the deaths of the people purported to have been included in Ibn Fadlan's tale. Again, using accounts that are not based on contemporary literary or textual sources is infinitely problematic when attempting to ascertain specific ritual practices.

More recent researchers, such as Moen, have questioned the validity of Ibn Fadlan's accounts.⁴⁶¹ Moen concluded that using this source must be done with much caution and she does not put much faith in his chronicle being a 'true historical

⁴⁵⁸ Gerhard Bersu and David M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man* (The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series I: London, 1966), p. 91.

⁴⁵⁹ Peter Schjødt, 'Ibn Fadlan's account of a Rus Funeral: To What Degree does it Reflect Norse Myths' in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths* (January, 2007), p. 136.

⁴⁶⁰ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.: Moen concluded that using this source must be done with much caution and she does not put much faith in his chronicle being a 'true historical account'.

account'.⁴⁶² One of the central concerns with the use of Ibn Fadlan as a source is he did not speak the language and only was able to communicate with the Rūs people through the use of a translator; a translator whose ethnic background is unknown.⁴⁶³ Jesch also commented on the difficulty of utilizing sources that make use of a translator, specifically referencing Ibn Fadlan's account, clarifying that some of the events he described he could not have seen, but must have only been told.⁴⁶⁴ This language barrier was an impediment to understanding the rituals. Thus Ibn Fadlan is perhaps an untrustworthy narrator. There might have been any number of reasons why his translator chose to present information in this way perhaps even to sway Ibn Fadlan's opinion.

Ibn Fadlan's bias against foreign rituals makes determining the historical validity and usefulness of the source difficult. This has been considered by several scholars one of whom is Laura Sitaru. Sitaru argued that Ibn Fadlan had a tendency to 'valorize' Islam, quite common in his own framework of travel accounts and is found in other authors such as Ibn Battuta.⁴⁶⁵ Ibn Fadlan spent much of his text comparing the behaviour of pagans to his own Muslim faith, citing examples of appalling, deplorable and horrific behaviour performed by these men as a way to delineate between himself and these pagan heathens. For example, he referred to the Rūs, while possessing beauty, to be the 'filthiest of God's creatures'.⁴⁶⁶ Ibn Fadlan also often discussed his efforts at attempting to get these people to behave in the manner which he deems superior; for example, trying to get women to veil and teaching converts how to pray.⁴⁶⁷ Most often, with the notable exception of the 'Angel of Death' who is viewed in an entirely disparaging light, in his text women appeared as passive actors as female slaves, wives or concubines. All this is evidence of the bias inherent in the text itself. There are also several issues surrounding how he came about his knowledge and if this is truly applicable to the Norse peoples.

Other issues with Ibn Fadlan surround his obsession with the 'exotic'. In Sitaru's investigation of the language and methodological process of Ibn Fadlan, she concluded that he exhibited a taste for the fantastic.⁴⁶⁸ Sitaru also argued that Ibn Fadlan, like many

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41; Schjødt, 'To What Degree', p. 133.

⁴⁶⁴ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 123.

⁴⁶⁵ Laura Sitaru, 'Muslim Voyagers' Representations of the World. An Archeology of Representations in Ibn Fadlan's and Ibn Battuta's *Rihlas*' in *Romano Arabica XXI Arab Linguistic, Literary and Cultural Studies* (2013), p. 341.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibn Fadlan, 'Ibn Fadlan', p. 46.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶⁸ Sitaru, 'Muslim Voyagers' Representations', p. 341.

other contemporary writers, applied the hierarchy of classical cultural Islamic and Arabic values to other cultures while also affirming 'the cult of difference by exacerbating cultural and religious superiority of the travel writer'.⁴⁶⁹ Naturally, this alters the trustworthiness and historicity of the source. This, again, is particularly evident in Ibn Fadlan's dealings with the Rūs wherein he often remarks on the cleanliness and behaviors he finds particularly deplorable as illustrated in the previous paragraphs. As Sitaru argued, Ibn Fadlan has 'the taste' for emphasizing difference, particularly 'Otherness'.⁴⁷⁰ Another key issue here is that Muslim writers often borrowed ideas from each other's work without citation or quotations. Therefore, it becomes difficult to ascertain what is Ibn Fadlan's own original thoughts and eyewitness account, versus what he has been told or read in other works.⁴⁷¹ Ibn Fadlan is clearly a biased author and his narrative leads to a largely female, passive nature of human sacrifice.

Schjødt argued that in Ibn Fadlan's account of the funeral of the leader, the slave girl changed her role from slave to wife of the chieftain.⁴⁷² He then compared this practice to widow burning. This allusion reinforces the narrative of the passive female role of the sacrifice: the ceremonial 'wife' figure was voluntarily killed to follow her 'husband' as a companion in the grave. It is the textual plot of the wife whose life ends upon her husband's demise, by choice. It is also important to note that Ibn Fadlan's experience of a Rūs burial ritual was only the singular experience and such practices could have been widely divergent. This theme of the passive female sacrificial victim is strongly evident in much of the modern scholarship and medieval sources, as this thesis has demonstrated; but this is not the only version of sacrifice in the texts. Indeed, as was seen in *Sigurd's Poem*, it is clear there is a strong theme of slave sacrifice.

Indeed, in Ibn Fadlan's own account of the Rūs, he described an instance of potential future male sacrifice. Ibn Fadlan described the king of the Rūs as having 400 men in his palace who are men who 'die when he dies and allow themselves to be killed for him'.⁴⁷³ In this thesis' research on claims and textual justifications for human sacrifice it did not encounter a single source on Viking burial practices and human sacrifice that considered this instance. This is perhaps because such an occurrence would seem fantastic. It is clearly marking an exaggeration on behalf of the narrator, or even a

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 342.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 344.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 341.

⁴⁷² Schjødt, 'To What Degree', p. 138.

⁴⁷³ Ibn Fadlan, 'Ibn Fadlan', p. 54.

misunderstanding caused by the language barrier. There would surely be strong archaeological foundation for such a level of sacrifice, if that is even the proper word to invoke here. Still, this instance should be examined by scholars of Viking burial and sacrifice. It does not, however, fit the narrative of *sati* and of the female victim, which is perhaps why it has not largely been considered.

The second Arabic source that is often utilized to discuss human sacrifice, is Ibn Rusta, who recorded his account on the Rūs between 903 and 913 CE.⁴⁷⁴ It was contained within the compendium *Kitāb al-A'lāq al- nafīsa*, or *The Treatise on the Precious Objects*, of which there is an extant edition.⁴⁷⁵ There is no context for this work except the text itself, which makes his account's validity, and particularly his accounting of the Rūs practice of human sacrifice, difficult to ascertain.⁴⁷⁶ Ibn Rusta's work is literary, and like Ibn Fadlan, he is particularly obsessed with difference and oddity.⁴⁷⁷ James Montgomery argued that it was very unlikely that Ibn Rusta even travelled to the Rūs lands or met any of their people and so was likely basing this on other sources.⁴⁷⁸ This makes determining the usefulness and historicity of the account questionable.

Ibn Rusta stated that in the Rūs lands they have 'medicine men who have power comparable to the gods, for they can order the sacrifice of women, men or horses to their creator'.⁴⁷⁹ This already contradicted the Ibn Fadlan account of voluntary sacrifice and the ritual leader being female. His account continued with the inclusion of an episode of a 'leading' man's 'favorite woman' being sealed within the grave with him upon his death.⁴⁸⁰ Again, this way to death and sacrifice is quite different from Ibn Fadlan who was writing and exploring some ten years later in 921-922 CE.

Montgomery declared that the historical value of Ibn Rusta's work has been 'universally found wanting'.⁴⁸¹ He is hesitant to assign veracity to any of his specific accounts as they seem to highlight 'exotica'; instead, he argued the general trends, such as

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁷⁵ Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of Eloquence', p. 73.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibn Rusta, 'Ibn Rusta', p. 127; other scholars have translated *aṭibbā'* as doctors- see Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of Eloquence', p. 76.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibn Rusta, 'Ibn Rusta', p. 127. There is some discrepancy in translation of this phrase; some scholars have it as 'women he loved'- see Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of Eloquence', p. 76; or 'favorite wife' translation from Peter Foote, and David M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement: The Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia* (London, 1983), p. 412.

⁴⁸¹ Montgomery, 'Ibn Rusta's Lack of Eloquence', p. 80.

the mobility and self reliance of the Rūs, would have been accurate.⁴⁸² Montgomery's analysis of Ibn Rusta's account also drew attention to the dissimilar nature in which Ibn Rusta considered the Rūs as opposed to other ethnic groups he has studied, calling this section on them 'chaotic'. Montgomery contended that this might mean that the author was unfamiliar or uncomfortable writing about them.⁴⁸³ This might support the hypothesis that Ibn Rusta never encountered them and was only recording what he had either been told by a third party or read in another Arabic source.

The accounts of Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rusta vary in the methods used to dispatch the sacrificial victims, with being stabbed and strangled in contrast to being entombed alive. While Ibn Fadlan highlighted the voluntary nature of the slave sacrifice, Ibn Rusta did not. Instead he stated that their 'medicine men' have the power to order the sacrifice of men and women. Ibn Rusta did not indicate that these people are slaves, nor does he do so with the live burial of the women with the leading man. Even though both accounts detail stories of human sacrifice, the patterns and rituals are somewhat divergent from each other. However, Montgomery argued that both writers might have had access to the same source, al-Jayhānī, the secretary of the Emir of Khurāsān, who was specifically consulted about people of the North and their customs.⁴⁸⁴ This might account for the inclusion in both of their narratives of an account of human sacrifice. They might be different simply due to artistic license, but this is difficult to ascertain.

The central issue with both accounts with regard to this thesis' research topic is whether the findings used for the Rūs are applicable to the Norse. Some scholars, such as Neil Price, support the idea that Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rusta's observations applied to the Scandinavian people. He argued that the term Al-Rūs was applied by Arab writers inconsistently and the general connotation is northern foreigners. Rūs denoted a contextualized, hybridized identity developing over time, like Anglo-Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse. Price contended that there has never been any doubt that the Rūs identity included a very major Scandinavian component and that the geographical locations occupied by this group was not a foreign place to Scandinavian peoples.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 84-85 and pp. 87-88.

⁴⁸⁵ Price, 'Passing into Poetry', p. 132.

However, this argument is not supported by all scholars. For example, many Russian scholars rejected that this is a representation of a Scandinavian ceremony.⁴⁸⁶ Schjødt suggested that the Rūs in the Volga region had possibly been there for a few generations and their customs now might be more reflective of local Slavic traditions, than their original Scandinavian practices.⁴⁸⁷ The majority of the Scandinavians who did venture to this area were of Swedish descent.⁴⁸⁸ There is also a strong possibility that the Rūs people at this time had been largely influenced by the Slavs, but also perhaps by the Volga Turks.⁴⁸⁹ The people that Ibn Fadlan discussed, however, appear to have been dressed in clothing that bears resemblance to traditional Slavic description. Brønsted argued that the person buried in the grave was perhaps a Swedish nobleman partly assimilated into Slavic culture.⁴⁹⁰ It is also imperative to return to this thesis' argument that even if this ritual was practiced by Swedish Vikings this might have little to no influence on Norwegian practices. So there is a strong possibility that even if these Arabic texts were determined to be historically accurate, that these ceremonies would not apply to the Norwegian Vikings; and, particularly for this thesis, the Norwegian Vikings who ventured to Ireland and created burials like Donnybrook.

A summary of the key arguments above indicates the difficulties surrounding the usage of these written sources as evidence for human sacrifice in Viking burial practices. This is not to dismiss them entirely, though the Arabic examples are particularly suspect, but instead to contend that it is essential to contextualize and problematize such material before applying it to the Norwegian corpus, Ireland, and particularly Donnybrook. It is imperative then, to compare this material to the broad framework of potential human sacrifice in the archaeological record to determine if any similarities exist.

5.3 The Archaeological Sources for Human Sacrifice

The archaeological record of human sacrifice varies from the textual sources. There are very few graves that could demonstrate such a phenomenon. When they do occur, scholars have been more likely to suggest that such burials were instances of slave sacrifice, a ritual which appeared to have affected people of any gender in the Viking period. This section will analyse the archaeological record on human sacrifice to ascertain

⁴⁸⁶ Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 408.

⁴⁸⁷ Schjødt, 'To What Degree', p. 133.

⁴⁸⁸ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁹ Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 407.

⁴⁹⁰ Johannes Brønsted, *The Vikings* (Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 300.

what, if any, likelihood it is that the Donnybrook burial falls into a similar category of this practice. Then, it will contrast Donnybrook with Balladoole and Ballateare, two burials that scholars have directly compared to Donnybrook.

Human sacrifice is the deliberate destruction of valuable 'property' when it concerns the ritual killing of slaves to follow masters into the afterlife. It is a bold symbolic gesture that can be read far and wide and it is not something that can be faked, as many forms of wealth destruction possibly can be.⁴⁹¹ Enclosing a grave with material possessions, such as slaves, is conspicuous destruction; the people creating the burial are deliberately making themselves poorer.⁴⁹² This then, is somewhat in line with the destruction of property exhibited by the Vikings in furnished graves. It seems that the Vikings might have engaged in the practice based on their ruin, and ritual 'killing' of other valuable goods, such as swords, in burials. Indeed this practice might even be widespread based on this idea. However, the evidence for such a practice is scarce. This suggests that should this practice have occurred, it might have meant something quite different than just the destruction of property, or indeed slaves might have had a slightly higher status than previously imagined.

A 2013 archaeological study on isotope and ancient DNA analysis by Elise Naumann, Maja Krzewinska, Anders Gotherstrom and Gunilla Eriksson examined the Northern Norwegian Island of Flakstad and a late Iron Age burial ground from circa 500 to 1030 CE. This is quite a large time frame to compare the relatively small furnished Viking burial period in Dublin. The study did produce some interesting results. They discovered human remains from ten individuals including three single, two double and one triple furnished burials, all dating to the Viking Age. These graves contained an array of grave goods, including weapons, combs, beads, garment accessories and animal bones. The burial context is suspect as it was disturbed by agricultural activity before the excavations took place and this could have been done long ago. As such, this causes the identification of some of the inhumations as double and triple burials to be questioned.⁴⁹³

The researchers hypothesized that four 'extra' individuals contained in the double and triple burials might have been slaves sacrificed to masters as they were missing their

⁴⁹¹ Peter Leeson, 'Human Sacrifice' in *Review of Behavioral Economics* Vol. 1 (2014), p. 137.

⁴⁹² Leeson, 'Human Sacrifice', p. 139.

⁴⁹³ Elise Naumann, Maja Krzewinska, Anders Gotherstrom and Gunilla Eriksson, 'Slaves as Burial Gifts in Viking Age Norway? Evidence from Stable Isotope and DNA Analysis' in *Journal of Archaeological Studies*, Vol. 41 (2014), pp. 533-534.

crania.⁴⁹⁴ The osteological analysis, however showed no signs of decapitation, but the authors argue that 'lack of evidence cannot serve as a strong argument'.⁴⁹⁵ However, this *argumenta ex silentio* does not mean that they were either.

In order to analyse the bodies the researchers ran a bioarchaeological analysis of the mitochondrial DNA and concluded that the people were not likely to be related maternally. However, they are quick to point out that this does not mean that this 'cannot be used to exclude other numerous kinship relations between individuals'.⁴⁹⁶ In the Viking period this could include fosterage, adoption, patrilineal kinship or broader familial relations. The authors were able to extract reproducible DNA from nine of the ten individuals and concluded that all fell into a previously reported Norwegian mitochondrial DNA variation.⁴⁹⁷

The researchers argued that the person buried in these graves who was completely intact was an occupier of a separate social stratum based on differences in diet and, of course, the nature of their bodies. They concluded that these burials could likely be that of a slave being sacrificed to follow their master.⁴⁹⁸ However, when these researchers compared the diet of the people contained in these graves to the furnished single occupant burials of those they believed to be free people they found that the diet was equivalent.⁴⁹⁹

To sum up the key points of this study, the authors found four headless bodies that showed no conclusive signs of decapitation in two double graves and one triple grave. These alleged multiple burials might not be such, but instead the positioning of the bodies may have been caused by agricultural disturbance. With the DNA analysis, they concluded that the people contained therein were Norwegian. They also found that the people buried within the so-called double graves who were missing crania had a less extravagant diet than the other occupant leading them to conclude they were slaves sacrificed to their masters. This is, of course, even though they also found that the diet of these 'slaves' matched the diet of the single occupant burials which were just as well furnished and buried with care as the double or triple. This seems rather tenuous evidence to suggest that these burials were human sacrifice.

⁴⁹⁴ Naumann et al, 'Slaves as Burial Gifts', p. 533.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 539.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

There are a few graves in the Scandinavian world that scholars have argued potentially demonstrate acts of human sacrifice. The Swedish burial at Birka has been cited by many scholars as an example of human sacrifice.⁵⁰⁰ This 10th- century burial is of two women, one richly attired and the other found in a somewhat twisted position. This has led scholars like Brønsted to argue that the burial is of a rich woman and her slave.⁵⁰¹ Another example of a possible slave sacrifice is a double grave from Stengade, Langeland, Denmark, dating to the tenth century. This burial has been argued to contain a master whose slave was restrained and killed at the grave-side to accompany him into the afterlife as evidenced by the 'slaves' feet being tied together and their head in an unusual position that suggested decapitation. Pearson stated that the 'slave' was wearing iron handcuffs.⁵⁰² An inlaid silver spear was placed in the burial across both bodies.⁵⁰³ There are other examples of a decapitated male in a cemetery on the island of Lejre, Denmark, having his hands bound, and a female burial containing another probably male burial.⁵⁰⁴

Of particular interest to this case study of the Donnybrook burial, given the ties between Norway and Dublin, is the Oseberg burial. The Oseberg ship burial was excavated in 1904 and dates to around 820 CE, slightly prior to the period of furnished burial practice in Dublin.⁵⁰⁵ The Oseberg burial consists of many grave goods and items, including the remains of some thirteen horses and an ox reasoned to have been sacrificed at graveside.⁵⁰⁶ The ship contained the remains of two women, one believed to be between sixty and seventy, and the other originally argued to have been between twenty-five and thirty. However, recent analysis conducted via tooth-root translucency now suggests she might be more likely to have been aged fifty to fifty-five. Arnold has associated the central female burial with the fertility of the Vanir gods, specifically the goddess Freya, and believed that the person was almost certainly a member of the Vestfold royal family.⁵⁰⁷ It has been argued by some that the younger woman was a sacrificed female slave to act as a companion to the elder person. However, this was based on a collarbone injury that recent examinations have shown to have been healing for

⁵⁰⁰ Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 411.

⁵⁰¹ Brønsted, *The Vikings*, p. 293.

⁵⁰² Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, p. 17.

⁵⁰³ Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, p. 55; Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁴ Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁵ Martin Arnold, *The Vikings: Culture and Conquest* (London, 2006), p. 72.

⁵⁰⁶ Arnold, *The Vikings*, p. 73.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

several weeks at the time of her death.⁵⁰⁸ It appears then, that this Norwegian example is most likely not a case of human sacrifice.

The archaeology demonstrates that out of these cases of potential human sacrifice that all biological sexes and genders were equally likely to have been sacrificed, and so the idea of *sati* or suttee is not supported. Human sacrifice could have been performed for a host of reasons including gifts, tribute, fines or companions for the dead, so there were potentially many different meanings.⁵⁰⁹ The sacrificial victims in these burials might not be 'sacrificed' at all, nor, if they were, considered themselves to be victims. The methods of death seem to be divergent, the men with their hands or feet bound surely experienced this ritual differently than perhaps some of the other people. Additionally, the possibility arises that none of these people were sacrificed. The bound men could have been victims of capital punishment of some sort, or murdered prisoners of war. Of the examples of potential human sacrifice, the most plausible, and indeed, the most numerous, come from Sweden, followed by Denmark. Since the study of slave burials by Naumann *et al* in Norway was largely inconclusive, with perhaps the exception of Oseberg, Norway seems to not have practiced such a ritual to the extent of other Scandinavian locations, if at all. Of course, Oseberg might not have been an example either. Pearson reasoned that human sacrifice was 'designed to abolish uncontrolled violence by substituting violent rites which serve as a warning'.⁵¹⁰ If this is the case, particularly in the face of the hypermasculinization of burial ritual in Dublin as a way to assert dominance, then it would be logical to assume perhaps, if this were widely practiced in Norway, that such a thing would have occurred with more frequency in the Dublin corpus. There should be more examples of this practice not fewer. It is possible that such a practice did not occur in Norway at all. It appears that within the larger corpus of human sacrifice, particularly as it relates to Norway, that if Donnybrook was a case of human sacrifice it would have been a very rare occurrence given the rest of the Norwegian data thus far explored.

A key insight in examining the Donnybrook burial and its potential for human sacrifice will be to once again to compare it directly to two specific Viking burials on the Isle of Man. The research on Donnybrook has by and large been contrasted with Ballateare and to Balladoole, which some scholars, such as Hall, have argued are

⁵⁰⁸Per Holck, 'The Oseberg Ship Burial, Norway: New Thoughts On the Skeletons From the Grave Mound' in *European Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 9 (August 2006), p.192

⁵⁰⁹Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, p. 11.

⁵¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 17

representatives of ritual sacrifice.⁵¹¹ Balladoole mound was located on the Isle of Man within a prehistoric earthwork enclosure and excavated by Bersu.⁵¹² It is logical perhaps to compare these two burials to Donnybrook because the Isle of Man was populated with Norwegian settlers, and these people perhaps had ties to the Vikings in Norway.⁵¹³ Wilson suggested the Vikings wished to demonstrate dominance of the islanders by placing a high ranking pagan burial in an existing cemetery.⁵¹⁴

The Balladoole burial contained two skeletons, one male, one female as determined archaeologically and all the grave goods have been attributed to the male by modern scholars.⁵¹⁵ Scholars have reasoned from the small size of bones that the remains of the body not associated with the grave goods are those of a female; and there is no precise burial context for the female body except that it was buried close to the male.⁵¹⁶ In the original archaeological report of the bones by G.H. Bunting and D.K. Verity, under the supervision of Dr. I.W. Cornwall, the Institute of Archaeology of London University concluded that these remains were 'possibly the Viking's woman'.⁵¹⁷

The decedent to whom the grave goods are attributed, the archaeologically determined male, was placed within a boat and cremated horse bones, as well as dog, cat, ox, pig, and sheep have been found in the upper layers of the mound.⁵¹⁸ The burial contained an array of grave goods, including iron stirrups, iron loops, bridal mounts, silver gilt buckle, but only a few weapons, and no sword but a shield boss and a handle as well as several knives, an iron bucket, a strike-a-light, a pierced whetstone, a fragment of linen cloth and a ringed pin.⁵¹⁹ Two other skulls have been found with the boat burial and were thought at the time to be associated with slave or female burials but they now seem to have been displaced from what lay beneath the boat burial, there are at least seventeen burials located under this grave.⁵²⁰ This recent contention eliminates the possibility of human sacrifice in this instance.

⁵¹¹ Hall, 'Viking Age Grave', pp.74-75.

⁵¹² Bersu and Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p. 1.

⁵¹³ Arnold, *The Vikings*, p. 113: citing the example of the leader from the Isle of Man sent to help fight Brian Boru.

⁵¹⁴ Bersu and Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p. 13.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵¹⁸ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 85.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p. 86.

Ballateare is a prominent barrow burial on the Isle of Man. Two iron spearheads were found 80 centimeters below the top of the central burial chamber, their points slanting marginally. There appears to also be some evidence of a coffin, though no nails remain. The lid of the coffin contained traces of the impression of sword mounts.⁵²¹ The burial mound contained a very decomposed skeleton which Bersu and Wilson in their text determined to be a male burial, which was accompanied with a variety of weapons and personal goods: a ring-headed bronze pin, knife, an iron sword and a scabbard that was intentionally broken, or killed as was common practice in many burials; a strap distributor, a bronze mount, an isolated bronze strap-end, shield boss, and some fabric remains.⁵²² The male in the burial has been determined to be aged between eighteen and thirty.⁵²³

Located close to the surface of the mound was a poorly preserved skeleton of a young adult female, the back of whose skull had been hacked off and whose interment contained no grave goods, sealed with a layer of cremated animal bone. A 1965 pathologist's report on this body, conducted by Dr. R.D. Teare, Reader in Forensic Medicine at London University, concluded that it was 'impossible to say' whether this blow to the skull had occurred peri- or post-mortem, though Teare strongly argued that if it happened after death it occurred within a forty-eight hour window.⁵²⁴ Interestingly, Bersu and Wilson were also unable to determine if the blow occurred at the site as the missing portion of the skull has not been recovered.⁵²⁵ However, Bersu and Wilson are quite convinced she was the victim of a ritual killing, referring to her as the 'woman sacrificed to the dead man'.⁵²⁶ In fact, they go as far as to utilize the term *suttee* in their examination of Ballateare, contending, 'we may therefore accept as incontrovertible the fact that "suttee" was practised in the Viking period and that archaeological finds would seem to confirm this point'.⁵²⁷

To support their stance they compared the Ballateare burial to an Anglo-Saxon grave found by P.A. Rahtz at Sewerby, Yorkshire. Dated to between the mid sixth and seventh centuries, this grave contained a secondary burial located towards the upper part

⁵²¹ Bersu and Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p. 48.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵²³ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 83.

⁵²⁴ Bersu and Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, quoting the 15, July, 1965 Pathologist's Report by Teare, pp.47-48.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 48.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 51.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 90-91.

of a grave, and of course, was determined to be female. This body had with it grave goods which Hurst and Wilson concluded to have been those related to dress. The decedent was said to have been face-down with both feet and hands raised, leading scholars to suggest she died a violent death.⁵²⁸ Bersu and Wilson contended that this Anglo-Saxon burial had clear indications of human sacrifice and these correlate to their findings in the Isle of Man.⁵²⁹ They also cited what they believe are examples of human sacrifice at Birka and Oseberg, as was previously examined. They also utilized the work of Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Rūsta to reach their conclusions.⁵³⁰ Bersu and Wilson are so convinced that this is what happened at Ballateare that they then apply this reasoning to Balladoole, stating,

In view of this high probability that there was a case of 'suttee' in what must have been a contemporary grave at Ballateare, there seems no reason why there should not have been another at Balladoole.⁵³¹

So the conclusion that Balladoole was an instance of human sacrifice was largely based on Bersu and Wilson's feeling that if Ballateare was an example, then so should Balladoole be. As is evident from more recent research, the possible secondary burials at Balladoole are not human sacrifice and probably existed from a previous burial.

The Ballateare burial as evidence of human sacrifice has also been called into question by modern scholars. Griffiths was somewhat wary of assuming automatically that this person was sacrificed based on the words of Ibn Fadlan. He stated, 'so conclusive seem these allusions that few commentators on Ballateare have sought to question whether the female was indeed sacrificed at, or for, the funeral of the male buried beneath'.⁵³² It is clear that these sweeping decisive statements of certainty with regard to sacrifice at Ballateare must be carefully examined. Griffiths also contended that the women could have died elsewhere of illness or some other such natural cause and was brought to the burial. He argued that perhaps opening up the skull of this person might be a kind of 'trepanation, as a means of liberating evil spirits, madness or internal pressure from within the head, perhaps allowing the soul to depart or otherwise find peace'.⁵³³

⁵²⁸ David M. Wilson and John G. Hurst, 'Medieval Britain in 1959' in *Medieval Archaeology* Vol. 4 (1960), p. 137.

⁵²⁹ Bersu and Wilson, *Three Viking Graves*, p. 91.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 83.

⁵³³ Ibid.

While he clarified his statements to say these cannot be proven, he was careful to state that neither can the allegations of human sacrifice.⁵³⁴

Griffith's arguments stand in contrast to other scholars such as Bersu and Wilson and even Hall, who all seemed insistent that Ballateare was demonstrative of human sacrifice. However, this burial was so far removed from the inner chamber and did not even mimic the events surrounding the account by Ibn Fadlan or Ibn Rusta. According to their accounts the sacrificial human was placed within the same burial as the dead man. There is simply not enough information here to conclude that this is evidence of female sacrifice. This is of course not to say that there are not cases of human sacrifice, but they are rare and should not be the first or even second assumptions made when assessing a burial. It is within this context then that Donnybrook and Frazer's, Hall's and O'Brien's arguments must be examined.

To reiterate, for Donnybrook, the only reason the two potential sacrificial burials have been called female is due to their location and size of the skeletons as compared to the central 'warrior' burial. Frazer himself was unable to examine the bones as they had quickly become entangled with the rest of the bodies in the burial mound and many were broken; with the notable exception of the skull that he was able to analyze from the grave that contained grave goods associated with masculinities. There is no hard evidence that these burials were smaller or female, no statements to prove this except the word of workmen who were not skilled in archaeological excavation, nor perhaps experienced in the nature of Viking burial itself. There has been no osteological analysis of the bones so there is no way to determine if these bodies were even biologically female, much less gendered that way. This is echoed by a recent study by Harrison and Ó Floinn who supported this thesis' contention that there is little evidence that these graves are female.⁵³⁵ These scholars have supported the idea that these were two women sacrificed along with the great Viking chieftain who claimed the central space, but as was demonstrated this statement is problematic at best.

Another key problem is that there is no way of knowing with certainty that these burials were made at the same time. Due to the fact that the bones were broken and lost there are no osteological remains nor burial context to know for certainty that all three graves were created at precisely the same time. It is mostly likely, given their location in

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 527.

comparison to the rest of the burials that this may be the case, but without the bones and a professional excavation report this is hard to determine. Harrison and Ó Floinn also argued that it might be possible that these are not associated with the central burial, because they were in separate internments, as this thesis has contended.⁵³⁶ This concept of separate internments is a critical part to possibly disentangling the semiotics of Donnybrook. In most of the burials that archaeologists have argued to demonstrate human sacrifice, with the exception of Ballateare which probably wasn't a sacrifice to begin with, the bodies of the alleged sacrificial victims have been placed in the same grave chamber as the body of the person that scholars believe they were killed to accompany. If the burials of the two 'women' were distinct, as was relayed to Frazer by the workmen, this could also support the argument that these were not evidence of human sacrifice.

5.4 Alternative Theories

Hadley postulated alternative explanations for the instances of unfurnished, or meagerly furnished, burials located near a well-furnished burial. Specifically relevant from this study are two burials from Repton, the one numbered 511, a lavishly furnished burial sexed as a male and its adjacent grave 295, also labeled male, which was quite sparsely furnished with a knife. Hadley argued that both were part of the same funerary display and as such should be considered together. Isotope analysis concluded that the individuals were of Scandinavian descent. The occupant with the extensive grave goods has been suggested to have been between thirty-five and forty-five years at time of death, while the individual in the other burial was aged seventeen and twenty. Both bodies exhibit signs of violent death. She suggested that perhaps because one member was buried with such elaborate display that the society that buried them did not feel it necessary to bury another member with such lavish display. This is an alternative to the suggestion the excavators put forth that this represents an older warrior buried with his weapon bearer. Hadley furthered her argument by citing male comradeship which is 'an important motif in Scandinavian armies' by citing a double male burial also at Repton with a male aged fifty years in grave number 83 adjacent to another burial of a purported male aged twenty, each buried in their own coffin but interred in the same pit.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.527.

⁵³⁷ Hadley, 'Warriors, Heroes, and Companions', p. 274.

This could be a logical alternative to the narrative of sacrificial victims. These two separate interments could instead be family members who were killed in the same battle. They were then buried adjacent to the primary burial as a way to convey their status to onlookers; the sword burial and other items contained in the 'warrior' burial relating naturally to their own interments. As the burials were disturbed by workmen it is impossible to know that all the grave goods were totally accounted for. Three arrowheads are listed as being found nearby and have been attributed to the primary burial, but could have possibly resided within either of these. It is also possible they have been buried with items that have since been destroyed. However, based on the rarity of human sacrifice, and its as yet definitively proven stance in Norwegian ritual, it seems unlikely that the people in these two burials were victims of such a practice. Instead it is just as logical to suggest that perhaps their status was conferred based on proximity to the central burial.

As was investigated in the previous chapter on the hypermasculinization of burial display in Dublin, Donnybrook is no exception. The inclusion of such a well-crafted and expensive sword is certainly the conspicuous destruction of an item of high value. Swords are clearly associated with the elite masculine realm of violence and the inclusion of such an element in burial ritual is clearly part of the semiotics of power negotiation undertaken when a person of great status has died. It is also evident from the inclusion in a pre-existing Christian burial context and due to its liminal and prominent location, that the burial of this member of elite stature was designed to express power to the other Vikings as well as native Irish by the people who carried out the ritual.

One key point about the Donnybrook burial is the array of bones of animals that were found within the burial mound. The animal bones Frazer mentioned were located right under the 'surface turf' and also contained a spindle whorl, earthenware, and fragments of a bone comb, all of which are Irish type and of which the earthenware is missing. O'Brien agreed with Frazer that these items were most likely from the emptying of a refuse heap. O'Brien reasoned that this cemetery was probably in disuse by the 9th century as the laity began to use ecclesiastical burial sites instead.⁵³⁸

Frazer included in his catalogue of bones that the burial contained those of domestic animals, a small horse, cow, calf, sheep, pig, dog and possibly wolf. Frazer suggested that these were part of an impromptu feast the invaders, or 'savages' as he terms them, may have had among their prisoners, in between executing them, as there

⁵³⁸ O'Brien, 'A Re-Assessment', p. 172.

was not a sufficient quantity of bones to indicate enough to feed a full invading force.⁵³⁹ Of particular interest are the bones of the possible wolf, which Fraser states resembles those he has worked with or seen in English museums.⁵⁴⁰ The occurrence of these bones Frazer says is an exceptional rarity.⁵⁴¹

This inclusion of animal bones in the burial might give a solid clue as to the nature of the ritual, if it can be determined where they were lain among the dead. Viking burial ceremonies could potentially be quite violent affairs with the slaughter of animals, or as Frazer argued, the slaughter of people.⁵⁴² Animal bones have been found in a variety of Viking burials and have generally been ascribed to *seiðr*, or magic practice, a topic which will be investigated in some depth in the next chapter.⁵⁴³ Creatures are chosen with care and had a part to play before being killed. For example, horses run until 'blown and lathered' and killed in precise ways that have nothing to do with the efficient methods of the slaughterhouse and there is evidence for such practices in Viking burials including Oseberg, Birka, and Valsgärde.⁵⁴⁴ For example, in the Oseberg burial the foredeck contained a heap of at least ten horses and three decapitated dogs, and a further three horses and ox beheaded outside the vessel by the prow, while the severed head of an ox had been carefully tucked up in a bed on the deck.⁵⁴⁵

There are also many examples of animal sacrifice in Dublin, as this thesis will examine in the forthcoming chapters. This might signify the high-status nature of the Vikings buried at Donnybrook. To return to the previous argument about status being conveyed by location to the central warrior burial, it might also have been conveyed by means of an elaborate ritual ceremony with the slaughter of animals.

To conclude with the Donnybrook case study, it is evident that the narrative of female sacrifice was heavily influenced by antiquarian scholars due to their own contexts. This idea has in turn been codified by more modern scholars and resulted in the continued insistence, with the notable exception of Harrison and Ó Floinn, that the Donnybrook burial is an example of suttee, often invoking the idea of passive female

⁵³⁹ Frazer, 'Description', p. 39.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 408.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 412.

⁵⁴⁴ Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 411.

⁵⁴⁵ Price, 'Passing into Poetry', p. 135.

victims of a violent pagan society.⁵⁴⁶ It is clear, based on the textual and archaeological survey of sources of this practice, that if such a ritual occurred, it was very rare, and largely limited to slave sacrifice. The sources for such a practice in Norway are few and not definitive. It is logical to conclude that Donnybrook is not an example of such a practice but instead has been influenced by patriarchal antiquarian norms which have not been sufficiently problematized by modern scholarship.

⁵⁴⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 527.

Chapter Six: Hegemonic Femininities? Magic, Violence, and Seiðr

6.1 Approaches to Female Power

We tend to see power in what men control, in the events and activities associated with men, and our questions about women and power are couched in terms of the extent to which women control similar things or engage in similar activities.⁵⁴⁷

Female power, as the quotation by Jill Dubisch illuminates, has often only been identified in relation to male power. Studies of women's power and powerful women have often limited themselves to considerations of women only in this comparison to men. Of particular consideration is the language used to describe women's power. Often women are portrayed as weak or passive, acquiring power only because it was given to them by relation to their male kin. This approach perhaps reveals more about the scholars examining Viking society than about the culture itself. Instead, it is critical to examine power in relation to women as its own entity, and not force it to conform to a pre-existing male framework or oppositional system.

The identification and analysis of the semiotics of burials of archaeologically gendered as female is perhaps in some ways more complex than identifying items that were imbued with hegemonic masculine elite status. Markers such as swords, spears and other weapons were associated with elite masculinity as evidenced in both the written sources and archaeological materials, as was shown in the previous chapters. While simplistic, given the depth of symbolism inherent in Viking culture, at a minimum it is clear that they represented violence and, in turn, power. It can be said fairly confidently that swords, or indeed weapons, were imbued with the semiotics of hegemonic masculinity, illuminating the culture of male violence as an integral element of maintaining and claiming power. Hegemonic masculine symbolism was certainly not limited to weaponry, and these symbols are not limited, by any means, to graves that modern scholars have labeled male as this thesis has demonstrated. In Dublin, the burials containing weapons often did not also contain secondary items such as tools. This indicates that for the Dublin corpus, not only were these items the primary signifiers, but

⁵⁴⁷ Jill Dubisch, *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton, 1986), p. 24.

also they were sufficient in the symbolic text of burial to convey the message created by those who made the burials and carried out the rituals.

The grave goods modern archaeologists have associated with female burials have less antiquarian consideration and therefore, less modern in-depth analysis. Generally, these items are given a cursory and simplistic analysis and the examination of nuance and contextual variance is lacking. Scholars have experienced difficulty interpreting the meanings inherent in the items tied to female burials. Due to these issues, this chapter will approach the archaeologically gendered female burials in two ways: by engaging in broad comparisons between the Dublin corpus and Solberg's, Dommasnes', Moen's, Harrison's and Hadley's studies; and by analysing and contrasting the symbolism of the items found in Dublin by a close examination of case studies in an effort to deconstruct context-specific symbols contained in the Dublin burials. Firstly, however, it will provide a framework of the theoretical approach to 'female' grave goods, power and symbolism. This will examine what the archaeological evidence reveals about female power and femininities, and if this reflects Moen's and Clover's contentions of a single power structure in which the highest echelons were attainable for all genders.

Before progressing to the comparative analysis, one crucial aspect must be considered. According to Kurtis S. Lesick, people are engendered when they become associated with a particular set of material forms and therefore he argued that, '... gender archaeology must center around the elucidation and analysis of such patterned sets of material cultures which work to structure cultural experience and create social (gender) ordering'.⁵⁴⁸ As the discussion of masculinities has shown, in burial contexts the relationship between the person buried in the grave and the objects is not known and is largely speculative. To apply a specific gender to an individual based solely on extant grave goods is incorrect. While being careful with assigning gender to each person contained in these burials, like the previous chapters, it is possible to examine and analyse symbolism and what this illuminates about the culture that created the burial. This relationship of the semiotic and femininities will be explored, because while impossible to know exactly the individual's relationship to the objects, it is possible to ascertain that they were deliberately placed and mirror other burials, implying an intrinsic symbolic

⁵⁴⁸ Kurtis S. Lesick 'Re-engendering gender: some theoretical and methodological concerns on a burgeoning archaeological pursuit' in J. Moore and E. Scott (eds.) *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (New York, 1997), p. 38.

meaning in the items. This examination will attempt to ascertain the semiotics of the items placed in the grave and their implication for the culture that created the burial.

Many antiquarians, and modern scholars, have 'Othered' the past. They have created distinctive binary systems whereby 'us,' the modern researchers, distance themselves from 'them', the peoples of the past. This is manifested in Viking studies through failing to contextualize burials within their own regional and historical context and instead forcing modern or Victorian gender ideologies upon the data. By creating strict binary understandings of burials based on their own lived experience and forcing all archaeological data to conform to this framework, researchers can miss the nuanced nature of symbolism in Viking gender representations, and, therefore, misunderstand and misinterpret meanings. This is particularly evident in Viking burial and especially for the treatment of women and grave goods deemed to be feminine or feminized. This has resulted in the creation of a false binary of weapon or female burials, a categorically incorrect assumption, which has been recently refuted by scholars and the data itself, as this thesis will show.

Items contained in what archaeologists have labeled 'women's graves' have often been understood in opposition or in relation to items contained in 'men's graves'. Specifically, that these items are defined by what they are not, men's goods. They are generally examined by how they fit within the male power hierarchy, which assumes masculinity and the power of men is what constitutes the highest echelons or, the only real, desirable, power. For example, scholars such as Gwyn Jones was quick to tease out possible male ranks, but left women as a wholly homogenous group belonging to the male high status grave holders, stating that these were 'richly furnished graves of chieftains, warriors, merchants and their womenfolk'.⁵⁴⁹

This is when women are even considered. Edmund Curtis, in his chapter, 'Norse Dublin,' a study of the Scandinavians in Dublin cited many Norse Kings, like Sitric Silkenbeard, Ivar the Boneless and others.⁵⁵⁰ The only mention of women, was in relation to language spoken in the city and consisted of two sentences mentioning Sláne, Brian Boru's daughter and wife to Sitric Silkenbeard, and her mother-in-law Gormlaith, wife of

⁵⁴⁹ Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (Second Edition: Oxford, 1973), p. 171.

⁵⁵⁰ Edmond Curtis, 'Norse Dublin' in Howard Clarke (ed.) *Medieval Dublin: The Making of a Metropolis* (Blackrock, 1990), p. 99.

Olaf Cuarán, who he referred to as 'that attractive lady' and hoped she 'knew some Norse'.⁵⁵¹

This sort of possessive passive female role is often echoed in Viking scholarship and as these examples show, is still pervasive. These contentions and language stand in opposition to Clover's arguments that were examined in the introduction that women could and did gain power within the Viking patriarchal systems. This language is critical to deconstruct when analyzing grave goods that have been aligned with femininities because they speak of modern bias. It is crucial to contextualize these artifacts within the culture that both chose and made them. This line of thinking is extended to grave goods.

Funerary goods imbued with possible feminine symbolism are often viewed as passive; for example, as items of jewelry 'given' to the decedent, a point which Harrison argued against in his thesis.⁵⁵² However, his contentions are problematic as well because he still limited women's experiences to the so-called 'domestic sphere,' believing oval brooches and the like to be symbols of this female power or status.⁵⁵³ This ideology is reflected in his later work with Ó Floinn, whereby 'women's graves' were determined by the inclusion of oval brooches and jewellery, referring to oval brooches as the 'most characteristic' 'female gendered artifact'.⁵⁵⁴ However, they do acknowledge a possibility of high ranking women in Dublin as they contended that the various items found at Kilmainham, including the linen smoother and whalebone plaque, indicate that 'women of unusually high rank' were present in Dublin.⁵⁵⁵ High rank may not however, be equal to high levels of power as defined by this thesis in Chapter One.

The ideology of passive female actors is mirrored Jones, for example, who, in one of the very few and most complete references to women in his text, alluded to this domestic sphere. In his examination of the origin story of the so-called three tiered system of the Vikings, in his study of Freeman and his wife, he stated, 'His wife managed the household, carried the keys, and held the purse-strings...'.⁵⁵⁶ The phrase 'holding the purse-strings' seems to invoke a certain image of a woman, perhaps more contemporary stereotype to Jones' 1973 work, than Viking reality. Of course this author also contended

⁵⁵¹ Curtis, 'Norse Dublin', p. 107.

⁵⁵² Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 135-137. He did not consider this point in any depth in his later work with Ó Floinn and no revision of these views is visible.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁵⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁵⁵⁶ Jones, *A History*, p.146.

that most slave owners in this period were 'reasonable' and slaves were prepared to make 'the best of their lot'.⁵⁵⁷

This association of women with the domestic sphere is echoed by many other authors. Katherine Holman, for example, stated, 'that while men were generally buried with tools and/or weapons, women's graves usually contained household utensils, such as equipment used in weaving and sewing'.⁵⁵⁸ This is an idea repeated throughout her monograph, stressing that women were buried with these so-called domestic items.⁵⁵⁹ In Holman's text, she argued that Oseberg demonstrated women could 'be accorded such an elevated social status'.⁵⁶⁰ This language is passive, women are given status, and men earn it. It is also dismissive of domestic work, seeming to imply this to be inferior to male violence and not as valued in the Viking period.

This sort of language that is either dismissive, exalting some sort of household and domestic power, or disparaging, to women of Viking societies, however, is something echoed in other, more modern, and scholarly sound, texts. For example, in Clare Downham's *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland*, she referred to the 'daughter of Cinaed' as a '*Femme Fatale*' for simply having been the subject of her brother-in-law's lust, thus, apparently, being the reason behind her husband's murder of him, instead, of course, of putting the blame squarely on her husband's shoulders.⁵⁶¹ This is the feminization of violence, a trope whereby violence is described in feminized language and at its most extreme, personified by female figures in an effort to remove the cause of violence from male shoulders.⁵⁶²

The conception of a domestic sphere is a Victorian antiquarian creation. Moen argued, female power in this period did not mirror Victorian or modern conceptions of femininity.⁵⁶³ Indeed, this binary system assumes a distinct 'domestic' sphere for women and a 'public' sphere for men, an assumption, clearly rooted in Victorian conceptions of gender.⁵⁶⁴ In this hierarchy, men achieved power through violence, wealth, and

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁵⁸ Katherine Holman, *The Northern Conquest: Vikings in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2007), p. 175.

⁵⁵⁹ Holman, *The Northern Conquest*, p.164.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p.175.

⁵⁶¹ Clare Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014*, (Edinburgh, 2007). p.140

⁵⁶² Christina Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith: Portrayals and Perceptions of a Medieval Irish Queen*, (Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, TCD, 2012), p.22.

⁵⁶³ Moen, *Gendered Landscape*, p. 42.

⁵⁶⁴ For a more in depth analysis of the Victorian influence on modern scholarship please see Chapter Three, pp. 46-59.

participation in the public sphere, women primarily from their relation to male kin and maintenance of domestic duties, jobs which did not take them into 'public'.

As explored in Chapter Three regarding the Victorian influence on Viking historiography, Mclaughlin made the compelling argument that the conception of separate spheres is not applicable to medieval people.⁵⁶⁵ As this thesis previously stated, this translates to Viking culture, in non-urban areas in particular, where the farmstead and household were integral parts of the larger community and therefore, the argument that domestic is not private is certainly applicable. This is supported in the archaeological studies by Stalsberg and Moen.⁵⁶⁶ Moen's findings, that graves do not always follow a Victorian-created gender binary will enable this thesis to better deconstruct these so-called female burials. Therefore, it is possible that graves contain items that have symbolism that traverses gender roles. Moreover, and perhaps more accurately, Viking gender roles and representations traversed a binary system created in the Victorian era with which modern scholars tend to measure medieval Viking patriarchy.

This thesis contends that because the Vikings had a complex system of gender and gender roles, divergent in many ways from those of Christian medieval Europe, these informed paths to power.⁵⁶⁷ There were other ways to gain high levels of social and political power open to women within ritualistic Viking culture. These ways perhaps have been overlooked because their associated symbols are misunderstood and misinterpreted. Therefore, it is arguable that women could have gained social power in a very different way within the Viking system of patriarchy than was achieved in other contexts. Besides taking on what has been deemed a traditional male role, *seiðr* or magic practice could have been one of these ways. This mirrors Clover's contention of a binary of weak/strong that was applied regardless of gender.⁵⁶⁸

This chapter will investigate whether there is a concept of 'feminine' or 'feminized' power in the Viking age and if this was distinct from male or 'masculinized' power. Key to this consideration is the analysis of the role of *seiðr* and ritual and how these may have aided or hindered the acquisition of power for women. It will examine whether women buried with items of this power subverted or colluded with the patriarchal paradigms, or if they did something different altogether. Furthermore, it will

⁵⁶⁵ Mclaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior', pp. 198-203; for a more in depth consideration the domestic and public spheres, please see Chapter Three, pp. 46-59.

⁵⁶⁶ Stalsberg, 'Women as actors', p.77.

⁵⁶⁷ See Chapter One for more information about the complexity of Viking gender roles, pp. 1-29.

⁵⁶⁸ See Chapter One, pp. 1-29.

attempt to illuminate how powerful women acquired their power, how this was represented in burial, and if and how this symbolism was gendered or associated with gender. Mainly, this section will analyze the ideas of subversion, collusion, and survival in the performance of femininities, the concepts of multiple hierarchies of power, and finally, the patriarchy's (ies') reactions to women's acquisition of power, both within the socially ascribed female role and also perhaps in the masculine realm. One of the key issues this thesis seeks to refute is the idea that women must always fit within the male hierarchy. While there was perhaps an overarching standard of power that encompasses all genders in the Viking era, this thesis will also investigate if within Viking culture there existed a distinct hierarchy among women that contributed to the creation of furnished burial.

6.2 Burials Associated with Femininities in Scandinavia

To understand Dublin in the broader context of Viking burial it is imperative to first examine the amount of 'female' burials in Solberg, Dommasnes, Moen, Hadley, and Harrison's studies. These studies also have slightly different, albeit similar, definitions of what constituted 'women's' graves. By comparing the divergent nature of what was defined as female within these studies, this section will problematize burials and their semiotics that were deemed hegemonically female by modern scholars. The approach in this consideration is more nuanced. In the consideration of hegemonic masculine symbolism, it was much easier to determine what was such because there are a number of primary sources that support the argument that swords corresponded to these representations of elite masculinity though not necessarily to men.

The understanding of the symbolism of the so-called 'brooch' or 'jewelry' burials, named as such because modern archaeologists have created a system wherein they attribute these items as the primary signifiers, can be more difficult to determine. To contextualize these burials, this modern hierarchy of classifying must be re-examined and deconstructed to ascertain if such a system would have applied to Viking burial practice. While this system provides a valuable tool for modern scholars to examine these burials, such a system is indeed arbitrary and does not necessarily have any relevance to Viking funerary practices. The assumption that brooch or jewelry are primary signifiers is somewhat misleading, as many other items might have been buried with the decedent that have since been destroyed, whether by time or by man. Additionally, these items might not have held as much significance as other items contained in the burial, and

instead are given such a position of prestige based on modern perceptions of wealth and status, power and gender. It is a central objective of this next section to contextualize and deconstruct the funerary goods contained in the burials of Dublin in order to begin to reach meaningful conclusions about the ways in which the Norse viewed such grave goods and why they were included in specific burials.

Furthermore, some of the burials contained items pertaining to both masculine and feminine symbolism *as determined by modern scholars*; and this last part is the critical point. This section attempts to untangle the modern interpretations of Viking funerary practice from their own contemporary contexts. Additionally, though much was done in this respect in the previous section, this exploration of femininities will investigate the methodological processes of these studies to determine what analyses' will provide the suitable data for comparison to femininities of the Dublin group. Following this assessment, this investigation will examine particular graves and funerary materials, specifically analysing the possible nuances in their symbolism. Of crucial importance to this aspect of investigation is the evaluation of case studies, and in particular items like oval brooches and the so-called 'roasting spit' from Kilmainham, and the whalebone plaque.

The issues inherent in Solberg's analysis were discussed at length in Chapter Four.⁵⁶⁹ From her overall study, Solberg concluded that the vast majority of her study area, some 4629 graves, were 'men,' some 3769 or 82%.⁵⁷⁰ The remaining burials, 833 or 18%, she determined to be 'women's' graves based solely on burial goods.⁵⁷¹ Thus she used a strict binary system to assign gender and did not consider tertiary burials in this broad study. To Solberg a 'women's' grave '...should contain at least one conical or oval brooch, five or more beads in reliable grave context and or textile utensils'.⁵⁷² She disregarded single penannular, round, trefoil or equal armed brooches because they also appear in men's graves. Interestingly, textile-working materials also traverse gender boundaries, when skeletons have been archaeologically gendered (weapons as well)

⁵⁶⁹ For example, her broad definition of grave goods in which she considered almost all finds contained in the national museums in Norway to be from a burial context, differs greatly from other studies of Viking burial. Her temporal context was also much larger than the Dublin corpus and therefore issues arise in the comparison of the two. Additionally, Solberg defined graves as men's or women's based on grave goods. As this thesis has illustrated, her approach is problematic and can negate the lived experience.

⁵⁷⁰ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 63.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

which created issues with her methodology. She also disregarded finds containing less than five beads as these too may also appear in men's graves.⁵⁷³ This is also somewhat problematic, but arises from her insistence on categorizing graves based on a gendered binary instead of allowing for a more fluid exchange of symbolism.

Additionally, Solberg divided her study of 'women's graves' into three groups. The first containing five or more beads and/or textile utensils, the second one oval or conical brooch and the third group having oval or conical brooches and a third brooch. She found that in western Norway, central Norway and eastern Norway, Group 1 comprised 44%, 24% and 33% respectively; Group 2 had 40%, 60% and 54% respectively, and Group 3 had 16%, 16% and 13% respectively.⁵⁷⁴ Solberg's distinction and categorization of female burials into more groups allows this study to make a closer comparison and also more specific analysis of the semiotics inherent in burial. This will be of critical aid in this Chapter's investigation of the symbolism of femininities in Dublin because it enables this study to examine more critically what items occurred in burials and at what rate instead of simply determining all 'women's graves' to be of equal or similar value. From this, it is possible to examine whether the burials in Dublin containing items modern scholars associate with femininity are as richly furnished as those in Solberg's study.

Context specifically, Solberg determined in her general study that in western Norway women's graves constituted around 25%, central Norway was about 20% and eastern Norway had about 14%.⁵⁷⁵ She also found that more women's graves were found in coastal regions. She attributed this to the wife having to take up responsibility when her husband was engaged in martial activities or Viking voyages.⁵⁷⁶ This division is of particular interest to this study because, as was identified in Chapter Four, Dublin has its closest ties to western Norway, which also seems to have the highest amount of female burials. Also the next study, conducted by Dommasnes, considered this specific area, so it provides a crucial area of consideration. This context specific information allows for a more nuanced comparison to the Dublin corpus of graves.

As the previous chapter articulated, Solberg's professionally excavated burials were the most reliable data from her study and the statistics gleaned from that aspect will be critical to compare to the Dublin corpus. Of the 112 burials contained in this study,

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

some twenty-three she defined as women's. While Solberg did only state that forty-seven burials were men's based on her system of categorization, Chapter Four articulated that some fifty-five were men's and for the remaining thirty-four she stated that, 'sex identification was not possible'. Twenty-three out of the 112 burials are therefore 'women's' or some 21% and based on the analysis examined in the previous section, that is perhaps the most reliable number for comparison to Dublin burials.

From Solberg's study of all of Norway, this thesis will now turn to Dommasnes' specific analysis of western Norway. Her study encompassed some 213 burials that she closely scrutinized to ensure that there was a proper burial framework, created over a period of 500 years.⁵⁷⁷ Again, this time frame is longer than the period of furnished Scandinavian burial in Dublin and does create temporal issues of comparison, which were discussed in Chapter Four.⁵⁷⁸

Unlike Solberg's professionally excavated examples, Dommasnes study operated under a strict binary of male and female burials based on the assumption that the primary signifiers for women's graves were oval brooches and jewelry, and men's were weaponry. Thus of the 213 burials, Dommasnes found an overall percentage of 25%, around fifty-three, female and 75%, around 160, male. However, these numbers varied across time and region.⁵⁷⁹ Dommasnes study found that the majority of 'women's' burials were on farms where there was known evidence of earlier agricultural settlement in the forms of men's graves or graves of undetermined gender.⁵⁸⁰ She suggested then, that this means that there is perhaps a strong connection between the agricultural economy and high status for women.⁵⁸¹ She also noted an increase in female burials from the 7th to 9th century, increasing from 10% to some 30%. Here, again, she found that what she determined to be 'women's' graves were most often found in areas with the best agriculture and oldest population.⁵⁸²

Dommasnes also found exceptions to the generally high rate of male burials in the villages of Vik and Aurland, which were both important trading posts with dense populations; here she determined, again during this period of increase, that six out of nine burials in Vik were female and ten out of eighteen in Aurland, making for much higher

⁵⁷⁷ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 73.

⁵⁷⁸ Please see Chapter Four pp. 60-85.

⁵⁷⁹ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p.73.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.76

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

percentages, 67% and 56% respectively. That Dublin was an urban centre and trading post is clear.⁵⁸³ Dommasnes cited this type of environment as a reason for high rates of female burials; as evident in the two villages of Vik and Aurland and therefore makes these two locals crucial places of comparison. Additionally, because the time frame that more women's burials occurred in these two regions, and indeed the rest of her study of Western Norway, is closer to the time frame of the Dublin burials, 840-950 CE, makes this temporal context also a more accurate source of analysis.

Dommasnes also argued that women's graves represented a narrower selection of rank than men's graves and that those buried in Sogn are women who reached a mid-high point without reaching the upper status. But as this thesis has asserted, her argument presumes a single all-encompassing hierarchy for all. This negates this thesis' contention that there were perhaps multiple hierarchies within the patriarchy in which a woman could gain or lose status. Mainly, that there was both the overarching patriarchy, but also a hierarchy of power established and controlled by women, with which they achieved and lost power. the difference perhaps, between feminine power and female power that was subsumed by the patriarchy and masculinized. This will be investigated after the comparison to Dublin to see how this might be visible in the contrasting, or indeed similar, methods for burial undertaken in divergent portions of the Norwegian Viking world.

Additionally, Dommasnes found that, what she termed 'women's' graves had a tendency to contain more types of artifact per category than 'men's'. Specifically in Aurland and Vik, she found that women's graves made up the majority in numbers and dominated in wealth of the grave goods, particularly during the Viking period; and also at this time they contained grave goods more commonly associated with men.⁵⁸⁴

Dommasnes contended that women reached higher positions of power in these agricultural regions because their husbands, fathers and other male kin, had perhaps left to go abroad during the Viking age, leaving them to rule and run the house. This coupled with internal unrest, sent men fighting in all corners of the Norwegian Viking world leaving their women behind.⁵⁸⁵

This is somewhat different from the interpretation of Viking burials in Dublin, in particular those burial groups that modern scholars have been unable to separate into

⁵⁸³ Downham, *Viking Kings*, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁸⁴ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 79.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

individual burials in Dublin. This thesis will deconstruct these burials later on without separating entire burials into male or female, but instead investigate specific items contained in each burial to identify the rates and types of female symbolism.

Dommasnes' arguments regarding the prevalence of women's high-status furnished burials stated that with the internal strife and expansion of the Norwegian empire into the Atlantic Archipelago and beyond, came more intense interactions and relationships with internal enemies, external foes, and foreign peoples. This highly contested series of exchanges and conquests resulted in a stronger desire to express and assert dominance of their claims to ownership. With the potential that many men were away fighting or conquering new lands, it became essential to bury the women in higher-status or more extravagant burials in an effort to claim dominance in the hierarchies at home now potentially challenged by outsiders and neighbors. These burials might not have been viewed as associated with violence, but instead established and reasserted links to the land by utilizing agricultural tools, instead of weapons of war. Equally, this goes some way to explaining why more hegemonic masculine or weapon burials occur in highly contested areas, which was examined early in this chapter. However, this still supposes that women acted as a sort of place-holder for male power, or, were only able to achieve or express power in the absence of men. As previously stated, this is suspect.

From Dommasnes' consideration of western Norway, this thesis will now examine Moen's analysis of the Kaupang region which provides a geographically specific and closer temporal context with which to compare the Dublin corpus. Moen, like Dommasnes and Solberg also divided these burials by archaeologically gendered lines based on grave goods. Unlike Solberg in her analysis, because Moen only used the professionally excavated finds, her study was divided strictly along binary lines. However, the appendix of burials does provide a more nuanced reading of the overall corpus of burials in the region, and will be used in this section to compare to both her study and Dublin. This will provide a critical insight into the specific items included in 'female' burials that allows for the nuanced examination of the semiotics of burials.

In her study of the professionally excavated burials, Moen concluded that of the burials in Northern Kaupang, some six out of fifteen graves were female, 40%. In Lamøya, out of six burials, four are female, 67%. Finally in Bikjohlberget, twenty out of fifty-six are 'women's' graves, 36% female. In general this shows a trend towards higher numbers of female burials in these professionally excavated graves than were found in Dommasnes'

general study and both of Solberg's. Additionally, it is clear that Moen's percentages have a wide range from a very high 67% to 36%. However, even the 36% is still a higher percentage than Dommasnes' 25% average for western Norway.⁵⁸⁶

However, as Moen's timeline is smaller than Dommasnes, 800-1000 CE, it is critical to compare her data to this specific time frame in Dommasnes' study. Dommasnes contended that more female graves occurred in the period of the ninth century. And particularly, she found in Vik and Aurland much higher percentages, some 67% and 56% respectively. This is more in line with Moen's findings and also encompasses the same temporal context, and perhaps landscape. It is clear that Moen's study area was also a critical trading post, so perhaps as Dommasnes argued, women played a crucial role here in agrarian pursuits due to a period of unrest that left women thrust into more positions of power due to the lack of male kin, as they were gone off to battle, or were dead.

It is apparent from these studies of Norway⁵⁸⁷ that graves containing items hegemonically believed by modern scholars to be 'women's' generally averaged around 25%, over the vast period of the Viking Iron Age. However, according to Dommasnes and Moen, it is evident that in certain regions, particularly during the ninth and tenth centuries that these numbers could dramatically increase due to what Dommasnes contended was a rise in female power in part because of an absence of male kin. This lack of males was the opposite context of Dublin where as an outpost in a newly conquered territory it hosted a large amount of warriors. Indeed, some scholars have accused Dublin of having little to no women because of this, but it is clearly evident that this is not the case.⁵⁸⁸

6.3 Femininities in Dublin and Insular Contexts:

Now that a baseline of comparison has been established from the Norwegian area from which is arguably where most of the Vikings in Dublin came, it is crucial to turn to insular contexts. For the purposes of comparison, this study will closely contrast Harrison's findings in England to Dublin. In particular, it will look at the differences between Dublin and northwestern England.

⁵⁸⁶ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, pp. 32, 34, 36.

⁵⁸⁷ Please refer to Figure, 4.3, 'Norwegian Corpus Compared to Dublin', p. 305.

⁵⁸⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, pp. 128-129. Also please see Chapter One pp.1-29, particularly the comments of Boyd and McLeod.

In southern England, Harrison determined there to be only one probable brooch burial; this makes one burial out of fifty-seven possible, compared to twenty-seven weapon and twenty-nine tertiary.⁵⁸⁹ In western England, Harrison determined there to be three brooch burials, two definite and one probable, out of thirty-seven total burials, compared to twenty-two weapon and twelve tertiary. He concluded that in eastern England, there to be the same, two definite and one probable. In northern England, there are a total of fifty-five burials, twenty-three weapon, five brooch and twenty-seven tertiary. He concluded that in eastern England, there to be the same, two definite and one probable.⁵⁹⁰

Northwest England, as this thesis has argued, would have had the closest ties to the Norwegians of Dublin and as a result may have had similar burial strategy. When analyzing Harrison's data from northwest England there appears to be only one brooch burial out of a total of twenty-one, 5%, the remaining are thirteen weapon burials, 62%, and seven tertiary, 33%. This is compared to northeastern England where there are four brooch burials out of thirty-four, 12%, ten weapon burials, 29%, and twenty tertiary, 59%.⁵⁹¹

This illuminates an interesting contrast in there being a majority of 'tertiary' graves in northeastern England, which is also reflected in the total of burials of northern England; two times as many tertiary burials in northeastern England as there are weapon burials. This is an important point that the next section will return to, analyzing the symbolism of these burials and determining their importance in the semiotics of Viking burials practice as well as the lived experience and social ritual. Mainly, what they were trying to convey by engaging in what modern scholars have determined tertiary burial practice and how this would have been interpreted within their own context. Again, an examination of these burials may account for the low number of brooch burials as these may have items that are imbued with feminine symbolism, and that will be considered in the next section of this thesis.

It is apparent that 'women's' graves make up about 5% based on the statistics from Harrison's study. But this percentage is somewhat misleading because it still only encompasses a single 'female' grave, regardless of what portion of the whole it may be. It

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 295 and p. 299; It is also of note that the high number of tertiary burials in this region may account for the low number of brooch burials, as these could perhaps contain items that carried feminine symbolism.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. Please refer to Fig. 4.4, 'Insular Contexts Compared', p. 306.

is interesting to note that like Dublin, northwestern England, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, has a majority of weapon burials, followed by tertiary and ending with brooch. This is in contrast to the southern and northern England, which according to Harrison's study, both had tertiary or gender neutral burials in the majority.⁵⁹²

From Harrison's study of England and the consideration of the broader Norwegian framework it is possible to now place Dublin in its Viking context. As was demonstrated in the section on masculinities six out of sixty-nine, or 9%, of burials in Dublin included oval brooches and therefore, Harrison deemed them to be 'women's graves'.⁵⁹³ This however, is possibly misleading, as Harrison deems a further two graves, which do not contain oval brooches, to be 'female tertiary' graves based on their inclusion of items of textile work.⁵⁹⁴ This would bring the percentages up to around 12%. This is in contrast to his later monograph with Ó Floinn, where they stated that while items of textile work are in 'the overwhelmingly majority' found in 'graves that are otherwise considered female, generally because of the presence of oval brooches or large numbers of beads', that the specific Islandbridge spindle whorls and needle cases need not to be considered female.⁵⁹⁵ Indeed, they argued specifically with the spindle whorls that were included in 'single male burial' in Islandbridge that they 'need not be entirely out of place'.⁵⁹⁶ This thesis will consider these types of items in more depth in the next section before asserting whether they should fall into the category of femininities wholesale, and therefore, the 9% statistic will remain in this chapter.

The 9% or six out of sixty-nine burials is somewhat in line with Harrison's findings in northwestern England where he found one burial out of twenty-one to contain these items (5%). However, this number is vastly different from Moen's study, which concluded for example in Lamøya to be 67% female, or North Kaupang to be 40%. While not an extreme difference from Solberg's 21% or Dommasnes study, which she found that an increase in 'female' burials from the seventh to the ninth centuries, closer to our period of study, wherein some 30% of burials were 'women's' graves, it is still a statistically significant difference in the number and percentage of burials containing these items in Dublin.

⁵⁹² Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., pp. 643-664.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

⁵⁹⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 167-168.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

In summation, it is apparent that Dublin certainly had many fewer of these such burials than other regions in the areas of Norwegian colonization and that this low amount of burial is also reflected in northwestern England, an area with close links to Dublin, suggesting a modification in standard Norwegian burial practice. This adaptation of funerary ritual might have been a result of contact with local cultures, and divergent ideologies like Christianity; or, might be a result of a modification or different emphasis in symbolism due to the highly contested nature of Dublin and the continued clashes between the native Irish and Vikings.

It is important to acknowledge that this low number of brooch burials is also reflected in southern England. However, where southern England has a majority of tertiary burials, Dublin and northwestern England are both overwhelmingly dominated by hegemonic masculine display: weapons. Additionally, while northwestern England has demonstrable close links to Dublin, the links between this urban center and the south of England are significantly more distant, and indeed, might be attributed to other Scandinavian groups, such as the Danes or the Swedes, which perhaps influenced their burial practice. Therefore, the burials from northwestern England, because of both their close ties to Dublin and their common ethnic origin are of the utmost importance in this scrutiny.

6.4 Oval Brooches

The subsequent examination will be an in-depth analysis of specific grave goods that were contained in these burials based on case studies. As was examined previously, scholars have often identified female burial as such due to its inclusion of an oval brooch. The burials examined within the scope of this thesis have six of the graves in Dublin containing these brooches, and thus these have been deemed female by scholars such as Harrison and Ó Floinn.⁵⁹⁷ For table containing a detailed overview of all the burials in Dublin to contain oval brooches within the scope of this thesis please refer to Figure 6.3.⁵⁹⁸

Before moving onto the case studies, it is critical to scrutinize researchers' perceptions of oval brooches. As is evident, these brooches were the crucial common

⁵⁹⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12. For images of some of the oval brooches from Dublin, please see Fig. 6.1, 'Oval Brooches From Viking Burials in Dublin', p. 317 and Fig. 6.2, 'External and Internal Views of Oval Brooches Found Among Kilmainham 1845 Group', p. 318.

⁵⁹⁸ Please See Fig. 6.3, 'Oval Brooches in Dublin', p. 319.

denominator for what many scholars deemed 'female' burials in Dublin. Oval brooches, however, were not always exclusively associated with women. Antiquarians Jens Worsaae and Wilde were not under the assumption that these were tied to women, instead, they argued that these were part of the retinue of masculine burial assemblages.⁵⁹⁹ This was largely in part because both men failed to acknowledge the possibility that women could have been buried in such a fashion. Instead, Worsaae and Wilde viewed these burials as an entirely male enterprise based on their own Victorian ideologies. However, it is important to also investigate what about these brooches may have caused them to view them this way, to ascertain whether it was simply their own ideologies or, if there was symbolism on the brooches that scholars have since dismissed.

In his examination of the burials located in Islandbridge in 1866, W.R. Wilde considered the multiple pairs of oval brooches discovered to be 'personal ornaments of great beauty'.⁶⁰⁰ He referred to them as breast clasps and stated that generally they are of similar motifs, but in the case of Islandbridge, that the brooches were identical in nature.⁶⁰¹ Wilde postulated that 'wherever the Scandinavian race have left their traces, pairs of oval bronze brooches...have been discovered in connection with human remains, arms and implements'.⁶⁰² He argued that one was worn on each breast, and concluded that they should be referred to as 'mamillary brooches' and that they were likely connected by chains.⁶⁰³ According to Wilde's research, some seven oval brooches were found in Islandbridge.⁶⁰⁴

Critically, Wilde contended that on the oval brooch labeled No. 2420, 'we have a rude representation of a soldier on each side'.⁶⁰⁵ He furthered this argument by stating that the Danish invaders, or, in his estimation, their commanders, wore conical helmets, and that such a helmet is an 'exemplification upon one of the oval brooches'.⁶⁰⁶ As was previously argued, Wilde believed the burials to be representative of a violent incursion of

⁵⁹⁹ Jens Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*, (London, 1852) pp. 255 and 325-9.

⁶⁰⁰ Wilde, 'Islandbridge', p. 20. Please see Fig. 6.4, 'Wilde's Rendering of Brooch "No. 2400,"' p. 321, for Wilde's interpretation of brooch design.

⁶⁰¹ Wilde, 'Islandbridge', p. 20

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 21

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Wilde 'Islandbridge', p. 21.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

male Viking invaders.⁶⁰⁷ It is clear that Wilde believed that these brooches were demonstrably masculine in their symbolism and were representative of warrior graves.

Since his assertion, Wilde's belief that all the Viking burials discovered in Dublin to be male has been challenged and has been proven false. It has been proven that these burials do not represent only 'males' as is evident in modern archaeological studies of Ireland and it is now common scholarly opinion that the furnished Viking graves in Dublin are representative of both male and female burials. However, this inclusion of women in the discussion of burials in Dublin has gone in tandem with the argument that oval brooches are representative symbolism of femaleness in the modern scholarly sense: i.e. a domestic sphere separate for the 'female' gender. Indeed, Harrison argued that the association between elaborate brooches and women was 'part of a general trend in nineteenth century archaeological thoughts that extended far beyond the Viking Age'.⁶⁰⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn continued to make this association between oval brooches and women, arguing that

Although early researchers, including Worsaae....seem to have assumed that these oval brooches were worn by men it later became clear that they were diagnostically female.⁶⁰⁹

Antiquarians such as Anderson and others clearly identified brooches as an exclusive part of female assemblages and this thought process was to continue well into modern scholarship.⁶¹⁰

Archaeologists such as Harrison and Ó Floinn, Dommasnes, Jesch, and Roesdahl, to name but a few, have argued that these brooches were exclusively the purview of female burials, as this thesis has demonstrated. However, the purpose of these brooches has been somewhat debated by scholars. Many have generally agreed that they were a functioning piece of jewelry used to fasten a women's tunic.⁶¹¹ Jane Kershaw argued that they were used 'exclusively' with the Viking women's apron dress.⁶¹² Kershaw contended that these were the largest and most distinctive components of Viking-Age female dress.⁶¹³ She

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁰⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 120.

⁶⁰⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.12.

⁶¹⁰ Joseph Anderson, 'Notes on the Relics of the Viking Period of the Northmen' in *The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* Vol.10, No.4 (1874), p. 562.

⁶¹¹ See, for example, Sikora, 'Finglas Burial', p. 411.

⁶¹² Jane Kershaw, 'Culture and gender in the Danelaw: Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian brooches', in *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* Volume 5, Issue 1 (2009), p. 298. And Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England*, (Oxford, 2013), p. 96

⁶¹³ Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 96

believed that they were 'highly visible, typologically distinct dress accessories worn by women in everyday dress...'.⁶¹⁴ Harrison contended that in Dublin they served as a 'physical reminder of Scandinavian descent' and that they played an integral role in retaining ties to the homelands.⁶¹⁵ He argued that this placed an emphasis on maternal descent and believed that this went some way to explaining, in the Dublin context, the 'large numbers' of women's graves at Kilmainham, where these were perhaps utilized to emphasize ancestry to competing groups within the settlement.⁶¹⁶ This link between oval brooches and Scandinavian descent was also echoed by Kershaw, who argued that Scandinavian brooches in general within the Danelaw were, 'well placed to articulate social differences and mark out a distinct Scandinavian cultural affiliation'.⁶¹⁷

Harrison's thesis postulated that modern research has confirmed this association between oval brooches and women, citing three published studies and this association was further further confirmed in his work with Ó Floinn.⁶¹⁸ These were the only three detailed osteological analyses of bodies found with these brooches published at the time of the composition of his thesis. Based on these studies, then, he contended that such an association should be accepted and 'conforms to more general international trends, where the correlation between oval brooches and women's graves is almost universally accepted'.⁶¹⁹ In his later work with Ó Floinn, this association of oval brooches with 'femaleness' and women's graves was further codified in their division and methodological approach to burials, where these were used to signify female furnished burials.⁶²⁰ This has been evident in the binary oppositions created in many of the studies examined here and even those that do not have such a strict separation, like Solberg, generally place oval brooches firmly in the category of female burial.⁶²¹ Harrison hypothesized that in the Viking age itself it is clear that weapons and oval brooches form assemblages that are essentially exclusive, and this was supported in the publication with Ó Floinn.⁶²² Harrison posited that women and men were buried with different

⁶¹⁴ Kershaw, 'Culture and gender', p. 295.

⁶¹⁵ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 131.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Kershaw, 'Culture and gender', p. 300; and Kershaw, *Viking Identities*, p. 96.

⁶¹⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 122.

⁶²⁰ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12.

⁶²¹ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 67.

⁶²² Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 101; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.12.

assemblages that 'each derived and expressed authority from subtly different sources, even if this authority was also directly related to the power of the family group'.⁶²³

This strict binary association has been refuted in the archaeological evidence. Harrison even footnoted one scholar who has pointed out exceptions to this rule, Neil Price. Price highlighted a small number of potential exceptions to this where these brooches may have instead been found in biological male graves. Harrison contended that these were not definite and if were true, represented specific exceptions to 'widely held gender identities'.⁶²⁴ However, as furnished burial was only practiced by a select group, it stands to reason that these exceptions are significant. To dismiss them out of hand simply because they do not fit neatly into a binary system is to perhaps miss the nuance inherent in the gender roles of the Vikings, or in the symbolism of the items themselves.

Moen's study found several burials containing male and female grave goods and a few were examined in the introduction to this section, but there are more. For example, the appendix of her study included all burials in Kaupang, not just the professionally excavated ones she utilized in her main analysis. When this data is assessed, out of the thirty-one burials labeled female that contained brooches, nine also contained weapons: including arrowheads, axes and spears and one instance of an oval brooch buried with a sword.⁶²⁵ There are a total of ten out of thirty-one burials with weapons and brooches, this makes for almost one third. While including information contained in non-professionally excavated graves is not without issues as was discussed previously, this draws some insight into the contents of these burials, which invariably at times contained weapons and oval brooches. Furthermore, of the archaeologically determined female burials contained in Moen's appendix, another eight contained weapons, this time without brooches. The idea of weapon/oval brooch dichotomy does not seem to exist or correlate to a male/female binary in Moen's analysis of graves in Kaupang. This perhaps reflects Dommasnes' arguments in her study, where she contended that women's graves, particularly, in the 9th century, began to contain items that had been previously reserved for male burials, which she attributed to women having to take on 'traditional' male roles because many men had since departed to go 'a viking' or were engaged in internal

⁶²³ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 137.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

⁶²⁵ See Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, pp. 48-73.

warfare.⁶²⁶ This is one explanation for this practice, though there could be other reasons for these instances.

The idea that the brooch/weapon dichotomy represented a gender ideology of strict division seems to adhere to a more Victorian conception of a separate sphere doctrine as was explored in the introduction. While oval brooches could certainly belong to a conception of femininity or a form thereof, their inclusion in biological male graves creates the clear possibility that this was tied to a non-biological component more complex than a dress item, as a gendered symbol, or instead a link to a character trait, social position, or ritual act, perhaps both.

Harrison believed that each group followed clearly defined gender roles, declaring that most are related to the domestic sphere and a unique 'female power'.⁶²⁷ Following on this then, he argued that the role of women in the 'colonizing process' of the Atlantic Archipelago was not passive and this is in no way supported by the burial evidence.⁶²⁸ These arguments relating to women migrants were supported in Harrison and Ó Floinn, where they contended that oval brooches are 'widely regarded as statements of ethnicity' and that the 'key role' these played in Scandinavian dress indicated a high status marker of importance when included in burial rite.⁶²⁹ However, to return to Harrison's arguments relating to female power, there is a critical issue in using the term 'women's power' and associating it directly with the domestic sphere. The anachronistic nature of applying Victorian separate sphere doctrine to the Viking past was explored in some depth in the earlier chapters, but should be reconsidered briefly here specifically in the context of modern research on brooch burials.⁶³⁰

Firstly, this is forcing a Victorian binary gender dichotomy upon a culture that does not necessarily adhere to such an ideology. Additionally, it inherently presumes that only men can really acquire power within the public sphere and women's power is relegated to the home and hearth, which was refuted in the introduction to this section. While it might appear that these arguments are putting forth a more enlightened interpretation of Viking society by attributing some power to women at all, it is

⁶²⁶ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 77.

⁶²⁷ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 137.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.132 and p. 284.

⁶³⁰ Harrison and Ó Floinn spent very few pages discussing gender roles, the summation of which are two. While they did sparingly engage with it elsewhere, such as pp. 284-285, they do not, as Harrison did in his thesis, consider in any real depth gender ideologies, representations or challenges.

essentially regurgitating Victorian gender norms and presuming that women only gained societal power through a performance within the home. Additionally, having power on the farmstead or within a household in Viking society is not necessarily a private matter, which is what is invoked when using the term domestic sphere.

'Women's power' seems to be some amorphous vague entity often used in tandem with terms like family, domestic and homestead, when there is clear evidence from archaeological finds, narrative texts and legal sources, *Landnámabók*, of women with tangible social and political power. Again, these are dismissed often as exceptions, but while these are indeed largely exceptions they should not be dismissed. They are a potential valuable avenue for understanding the breadth of gender ideologies of the Viking age. When items challenge strict binaries that have been created by academics the inclination is to dismiss these items, or label them as exceptions to some pre-determined scholarly rule.⁶³¹ This is exceedingly problematic as it forces the past to conform to a modern framework, instead of challenging the preconceived modern conceptions of the Viking past. Simply because these are not in the majority does not mean that they should be dismissed. Indeed, an exception could very well be a critical component to understanding Viking society that has yet to be grasped. Instead it is the contention of this thesis that oval brooches should not be forced into a specific binary opposition of man/woman. It is essential to deconstruct the multitudes of potential meanings that these held in order to be able to ascertain what these may have represented to the Vikings.

Additionally, the idea that these were mere exceptions to widely held gender identities is somewhat suspect. Without providing an analysis of these 'widely held gender identities' this is hard to define. There are several scholars, Carol Clover and Neil Price for example, who would challenge a binary system.⁶³² As has been evident in this study, gender identities for the Norse peoples were not fixed but were instead fluid manifestations of cultural norms and ideologies. Instead of looking at these as mere outliers it is valuable to understand them as potentially important roles within the communities as large. After all, scholarship has clearly determined that not all people of the Viking Age achieved furnished burial rite, indeed only a small percentage were accorded such a practice. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that even these exceptions held a high position in society. Indeed, if they held such positions of power while

⁶³¹ See, for example, Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 122.

⁶³² Please see Chapter One, pp. 1-29.

potentially subverting or adhering to a non-conforming gender identity, this can tell scholars quite a bit about the society that chose to create these burials. That these oval brooches were forms of expression for women's power in the home by relation of the wealth acquired by their male kin, as evident by their ornate imagery and expensive materials, seems overly simplistic in a ritual culture with a complex series of symbolism. Oval brooches, when viewed as women's jewelry given to them by a man does not assign women power in any tangible sense. Instead, these items are often representative of what men gave them, and that the women contained in elaborate burials with brooches are only granted this level of burial because of their relations to, or with, men. It assigns a basic set of symbolism to the items, if not ignoring this element altogether: that they represent items given to women and that these women were accorded such burials because their male partner or child earned it for them.

This portrays an entirely passive, and, in fact, dismissive role for women in the Viking Age and does not explore the potential nuanced nature of items in so-called female burials, like oval brooches. This is not to suggest that all brooches had a myriad of symbolism of power contained upon them, or that they all represent powerful women. In particular, Wilde's contention of the militaristic symbols apparent on brooch no. 2420 demonstrates a valuable alternative theory simply because it offers a more nuanced consideration of these brooches. It sets up a hypothesis that these could perhaps represent more than simple jewelry.

To ignore Wilde's assertions is to do a disservice to the people buried in these graves because it ignores the potential diversity of lived experiences in the Viking Age. After all, scholars have determined that these brooch burials clearly did not account for all women who had a furnished burial rite, nor did furnished burial rite account for all of the women. Instead they only represent a subsection of women who were buried in furnished graves.

For example, Harrison found in his study that when Dublin and Ireland were compared to his broader Scandinavian context, the numbers for brooch burials were only slightly lower; in fact northern and western Scotland were higher. If these numbers corresponded to population, then it would mean that Scotland had more women than Scandinavia, and that they would have outnumbered the men.⁶³³ Instead it is more likely that this represented a trend in burial ritual and practice. It was evident that not all

⁶³³ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 128-129.

Scandinavian women were buried with these oval brooches.⁶³⁴ Additionally, if not all women are buried with oval brooches, and oval brooches do not necessarily correspond to female population, it is possible that this item might not be as strictly tied to gender as was previously interpreted.

Therefore, burials containing oval brooches only represent a small portion of women of the Viking Age, which again reinforces the idea that these burials are more than women whose power was gained by association with male relations. It also reiterates that these brooches might not have been construed as simple, ornamental decoration. For instance, brooch no. 2420, in Wilde's estimation, displayed a soldier with conical helmet, adding to his arguments that these brooches were male. For Wilde, there was no other option so he clearly read everything as having masculine symbolism. However, this is not to say that some of the items did not. As was argued in the previous section about masculinities in Dublin, weapons and warfare were part of the broader ideology of male violence and this system of semiotics helped uphold and maintain male power structures. This is in opposition to the common modern scholarly view that such items represent femaleness and are inherently passive and feminine in nature. It is quite possible, instead, that some of these brooches could have represented violence or tools of violence and used the dominant language of the patriarchy by using masculine symbolism or symbolism associated with the highest echelons of male power in this system, weapons, warfare and the goods associated with them.

6.5 *Seiðr*

Keeping all this in mind, this thesis will now explore two case studies that contained oval brooches in Dublin that potentially demonstrate a different understanding of the power of women in Viking Age Dublin, the Finglas burial, and a set of grave goods found in a group at Kilmainham. These items appear to have in common a tie to what is known as *seiðr* practice. A brief reconsideration of *seiðr* as it relates to symbolism and gender is essential to this study now. As discussed in the Chapter Two, the Vikings did not possess a singular religion; instead it is more appropriate to state that the Vikings had a belief system. Critical to the current analysis of grave goods is the ritual magic of *seiðr*, and, indeed, the supernatural realm as a whole. These were an integral part of daily life and activity, and influenced most, if not all, aspects of Viking culture, including its systems

⁶³⁴ Ibid., p. 123-125.

of patriarchy and power structures. Graves deemed by archaeologists as female are of particular interest in the study of *seiðr*, but these, as was seen in the masculinities chapter, are not the totality of graves containing such symbolism. *Seiðr* impacted burial goods because it imbued each item with a multitude of meanings. If the everyday was so intrinsically linked to the supernatural, it holds that items that have previously been labeled with a singular utilitarian purpose might be oversimplified. These funerary goods might also function on a more symbolic level. While *seiðr* was practiced at every level, in some way by everybody, and the lines between these are somewhat blurry, it is clear that the professional practitioners gained status from such a task. These people are defined as those who travelled around society and who devoted their lives to the practice. Of particular interest to the study of women's power is the *völva* or 'wand carrier' who would have been a professional practitioner.⁶³⁵ Scholars have established that for these practitioners *seiðr* held real social and political power. For example, archaeologist Eva Marie Goransson contended that the *völva* held a seemingly different status from other women and in fact were held at a similar level of social importance as skalds: honored and feared and potentially quite powerful.⁶³⁶

As the thesis has explored, magic was a critical part of the Vikings belief system and played a key role in their lives. Price has divided the practice of *seiðr* into two distinct sections: domestic and battle magic. Domestic magic encompassed foretelling the future, granting good or bad fortune, affecting the weather, attracting fish or game, causing mild harm to animals, property or people, and communicating with the dead, unseen worlds, and gods.⁶³⁷ Battle magic was responsible for causing hindrance to enemies movements in battle, strengthening or weakening armor, instilling fear and confusion, making the practitioner or group invulnerable, fighting and killing enemy sorcerers or providing protection from said enemy sorcerers, and finally, killing people.⁶³⁸ It is evident then, that *seiðr* was a formidable force to the Vikings, one which had a far reaching influence on life, and death.

⁶³⁵ Please see Fig. 6.5 'The Volva at the Saga Museum in Iceland', p.322, for an impression of what one of these women may have looked like.

⁶³⁶ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 112, citing and translating Eva Marie Goransson, *Bildor av kvinnor och kvinnlighet: genus och kroppssprak under overgangen till kristendomen* (Stockholm, 1999), p. 177 and p. 179;

⁶³⁷ Neil Price, 'The Archaeology of *Seiðr*: circumpolar traditions in Viking pre-Christian religion' in *Brathair*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2004), p. 121.

⁶³⁸ Neil Price, 'Archaeology of *Seiðr*', p. 121.

Seiðr was intricately interconnected with violence, death and battle.⁶³⁹ The violence inherent in medieval Dublin was generally not a large series of random events perpetrated by uncontrolled actors. Instead, it is critical to view violent interactions in this period as discourse: a series of actions, some ritualistic in nature, designed to negotiate power. These engagements contained a series of semiotics conveyed by the perpetrators to the receivers and observing third parties.⁶⁴⁰ As this thesis cited earlier, and Williams contended, weaponry and violence were integral to the maintenance and creation of elite masculine identities.⁶⁴¹ Magic practice could have been another medium of inflicting legitimate violence in these ritualistic negotiations of power.

Guy Halsall contended that magic practice was non-physical violence.⁶⁴² However, this thesis would assert that within the Viking system of beliefs, there were certainly instances where magic could also be construed as *physical violence*. In *seiðr*, the person creating the ritual was not always far removed from inflicting the violence. For example, the Vikings believed that human beings potentially had multiple dimensions beyond the physical body. An applicable example of this is known as the *flygja* or fetch. A fetch was always female, even those of a man, and could be inherited. After a person's death this fetch could move on to live a completely separate existence.⁶⁴³ The fetch was able to kill and maim, creating a direct physical link between the person tied to the fetch and the person who was intended to be harmed

Price argued that 'ritual and the supernatural world-religion, in a sense, was as important to the business of fighting as the sharpening of swords'.⁶⁴⁴ *Seiðr* rituals were an integral part of warfare practiced by both professional *seiðr* users and also by Viking warriors themselves. Indeed, in Iron Age Scandinavia battle itself was also somewhat ritualized.⁶⁴⁵ In addition to the well-known mystical warrior roles of the *berserkr*s and wolf-skin wearers, there are whole sets of rituals devoted to battle magic as evidenced from the saga material and Eddic poetry. For example, it was believed that *seiðr* could

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 11.

⁶⁴¹ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead at Arm's Length', p. 264.

⁶⁴² Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 35. For medieval sources on verbal violence see, for example, 'Bald's Leechbook: Selection', in Michael Swanton (trans), *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London, 1975), pp. 180-185.

⁶⁴³ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 59.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶⁴⁵ Anders Andrén, 'World of Stone: Warrior culture, hybridity, and Old Norse cosmology' in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 33.

instill fear, confusion, cowardice and weakness in the enemy, convey courage and strength to your own troops, resurrect dead warriors to fight again, and outright kill your enemies.⁶⁴⁶ Spells were laid on weapons to assist in their ability to destroy foes and there is even evidence of *seiðr* practitioners being involved in the actual creation of weapons.⁶⁴⁷

Odin himself uses *seiðr* spells to dull his enemies' weapons as evidenced in the *Havamal*.⁶⁴⁸ In *Sogubrot af Fornkonungum* a great spell is laid on King Haraldr to make sure he is not injured by enemies swords.⁶⁴⁹ Increasing one's own protection and abilities also in turn led to creating fatal clumsiness in one's enemies. Odin is even referred to as the *Haptagud* or the 'Fetter-God' or *Herfjotur*, 'War-Fetter' for his ability to do just this.⁶⁵⁰

This demonstrates that *seiðr* was part of the ritualistic nature of battle. Its use before and during battle was an accepted practice and therefore, the violence associated with it could very well be construed as legitimate violence to the Vikings. Violence is a critical part of maintaining power and demonstrating dominance. As was argued in the masculinities section, such an emphasis on violence is manifested in the hypermasculinized Viking burial in Dublin with its overwhelming majority of weaponry display, and particularly such a high rate of swords. It is clear, that for Dublin, the emphasis on the tools of violence were deemed necessary for quite a few individuals.

This idea of magic being crucial to the Viking war rituals coupled with the concept that violence was integral to their power systems, leads to the hypothesis that because of these aspects of *seiðr*, the tools of the practice can also be characterized and understood as a kind of weaponry in some contexts, perhaps burial. Therefore, instead of viewing oval brooches as a symbol representing some sort of highest echelon of 'women's power' closely tied to the concept of the domestic sphere, this thesis will examine the oval brooches of Dublin within their semiotic context in comparison to the broader corpus of Viking burial. It will suspend strict ideas of what women's power looked like as determined by many modern scholars and instead return to the Viking framework of power and symbolism. In order accomplish this task, this thesis will analyze two case studies: one of the Finglas burial and one in Kilmainham.

⁶⁴⁶ Price, *Viking Way*, p. 354.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 356

⁶⁴⁸ *Havamal* §148 translation by Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 355.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

6.6 The Finglas Burial

Maeve Sikora analyzed what she described as a 'female' burial located in Finglas, County Dublin. During the Viking Age, Finglas was a village in the hinterland of the Hiberno-Norse Dublin city.⁶⁵¹ While located outside of Dublin, it is evident that inhabitants of Finglas and Dublin certainly had interactions and strong links. Mary Valente has argued that people of Dublin were active within a 100 kilometre area around Dublin, in which Finglas is located.⁶⁵² Therefore, while not in the environs of Dublin city itself, this burial should be considered with the rest of the Dublin corpus due to its strong economic, societal, and cultural ties.

As briefly mentioned previously, this grave contained two oval brooches, a comb and a casket.⁶⁵³ Only one complete brooch remains from this grave, but it is clear based on the remains of the other that the two were part of the pair.⁶⁵⁴ According to Sikora, the design and work on the brooch, including silver wire and inlay, indicated a person of a high status. This brooch has been identified as Petersen Type 23/24 which was commonly found in Norway, furthers the argument of the close ties between this geographical region and Dublin.⁶⁵⁵ Critical for this thesis, is not only the exploration of the burials that contained these oval brooches, but also the consideration of the decoration contained on them. Sikora contended that besides serving a practical purpose, these brooches certainly had social and religious significance.⁶⁵⁶ This is a particularly interesting point of analysis when considering the Finglas burials.

The extraordinary animal ornamentation on the brooches supports her hypothesis. Sikora argued that these animals resemble bears, with their short snouts and rounded ears.⁶⁵⁷ The animal ornamentation consists of larger bear heads protruding from the base of the brooch on their own, and in between these are small bear heads positioned on 'four legged mounts in a cruciform fashion'.⁶⁵⁸ This protruding animal ornamentation is unmistakable on the brooches and with the small snouts and small, rounded ears, as Sikora points out, they do certainly resemble bears.

⁶⁵¹ Sikora, 'Finglas Burial', p.402.

⁶⁵² Valente, *Vikings*, p. 76

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 407

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Please see Fig. 6.6 'Finglas Brooches Still', p. 323 and Fig. 6.7, 'External and Internal View of Finglas Brooch', p 324,

⁶⁵⁵ Sikora, 'Finglas Burial', p. 411.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 412-413.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Such artwork on the brooches is not just for decoration. Indeed animal symbolism and ornamentation is tied to a complicated set of semiotics in Norse culture, and systems of belief. A variety of scholars have argued that this animal art played a crucial role in Viking society. Tania M. Dickinson supported the arguments laid down by Lotte Hedeager that distinctive animal art styles were 'cultivated as a means of self-definition by an emergent warrior elite in parallel to their myths and legends of a Nordic origin' in the 5th and 7th centuries.⁶⁵⁹ Anne-Sofie Gräslund argued that animal motifs were clear to contemporaries and that these had strong religious content.⁶⁶⁰

Archaeologist Kristina Jennbert postulated animals functioned as life style metaphors, that they also represented social identities, wealth and power and functioned as cosmological agents and this is certainly found in connection with the Viking funerary rituals.⁶⁶¹ Furthermore, Jennbert contended that death rites 'created the social world and activated cosmological ideas and relations with higher powers'.⁶⁶² According to her, animals symbolized the characteristics, abilities and social position of the dead person. She stressed the apparent importance of animals and in her study on the archaeological remains of animals she concluded that dogs and horses actually enjoyed a burial ritual quite similar to their human counterparts, when buried alone.⁶⁶³ Humans buried with animals are a phenomenon that exists across the Viking and Scandinavian world and represents a common cultural link between the various ethnic groups.

While animals as a whole clearly have ties to cosmology and the Viking conceptions of divine and magic practice, specific animals were imbued with specific series of semiotics that would have been clearly known to contemporaries. Gräslund postulated, 'Animals heads with big round eyes, open mouths, sharp teeth had without a doubt a symbolic meaning and gave signals of their owner's power and status to his or her entourage'.⁶⁶⁴ It is certainly clear that animals created with these characteristics, large eyes and huge mouths with teeth perfect for devouring enemies would certainly strike a

⁶⁵⁹ Tania M. Dickinson, 'Symbols of Protection: Significance of Animal-Ornamented Shields in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Medieval Archaeology* (2005), p. 110.

⁶⁶⁰ Anne-Sofie Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpent and Birds. Their Symbolic Meaning in Old Norse Beliefs' in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 246.

⁶⁶¹ Kristina Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead: People, Animals, and Materiality in Scandinavian Death Rituals AD 200-1000' in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 267.

⁶⁶² Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead', p. 268.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., p. 269.

⁶⁶⁴ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents, and Birds', p. 249.

symbolic cord with Vikings who could appreciate the nuance inherent in their design. This wouldn't just be understood by the Vikings themselves, however, as this sort of violent semiotics could resonate with the collective unconscious of all peoples, regardless of ethnic background.

Jennbert divided types of animals into untamed, domestic and imaginary, all of which served divergent purposes in the semiotics of Viking belief systems.⁶⁶⁵ She associated horses with war and violence; birds of prey and dogs with hunting; negotiation and community with domesticated animals, personal attraction with animal art, iconography; wealth she argued was also demonstrated with domesticated animals.⁶⁶⁶ She reiterated that both the acquisition and maintenance of social power were clearly tied closely with cosmology.⁶⁶⁷ While animals as a whole have general ties to cosmology and the Viking conceptions of divine and magic practice, each animal had an inherent series of semiotics that would have been clearly known to contemporaries. To return specifically to the Finglas brooches, due to the animal ornamentation Sikora postulated that perhaps the person who wore or commissioned the brooches was affiliated with a bear cult or cult of Odin, as the bear has strong ties to this Norse god.⁶⁶⁸

Bears and wolves were beasts of battle in the Viking Age and as such, often portrayed in the midst of warfare. The Old Norse word *bersekr* literally meant bear skin or bear-shirt and the people associated with this name were often categorized with warriors who, along with the *úlfhéðnar* or wolf-skin wearers, went into a killing rage on the battlefield with no thoughts to their own protection or defense; these warriors instead became frenzied fighters, entering a trance-like state while in battle. Additionally, these warriors were said to have been imbued with magical abilities that could kill and harm during battle, as well as possibly being able to shapeshift into their namesakes. These warriors appear throughout the saga material, for example the *Lying sagas* stated '*ok haugbroti þráins beserks*' meaning, '...and break open the grave mound of *þráinn beserkr*'.⁶⁶⁹ These bear warriors had strong ties with Odin himself. In *Yngling saga*, the group of warriors that Odin has brought with him is described as:

⁶⁶⁵ Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead', p. 273.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 271.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Sikora, 'Finglas Burial', pp. 412-413.

⁶⁶⁹ Translation is this author's own from 'Lying Sagas' in E.V. Gordon (ed.), revised by A.R. Taylor, *A1 Introduction to Old Norse* (New York, 1956), p. 150.

...brynjulausir ok váru galnir sem hundar eða vargar, bitu í skjöldu sína, váru sterkir sem birnir eða griðungar; en hvártki eldr þeir drápu mannfólkit, né járn orti á þá. Þat er kallaðr berserksgangr.

...without mail and were crazy as dogs or wolves, bit at their shields, were strong as bears or bulls; they kill the human race, but neither fire nor iron worked upon them. That is called going berserk.⁶⁷⁰

It is important to note that *berserksgangr* was a singular idea, a state of being by warriors that appeared in texts, like this one mentioned, and so the concept of 'going berserk' with its specific behaviors is what made up a *berserkr*. There has been some archaeological evidence of potential *bersekr*: claws, paw bones and bear skins have been found in graves.⁶⁷¹ Bears and animal skins were also associated with *seiðr* practice and ritual, there are examples of animal skin dances, masks, and animal head costumes.⁶⁷²

Wolves are quite common in Norse mythos and usually serve a critical component of war or battle. For example, and probably the most important example in terms of Norse myth are Odin's wolves: *Geri* and *Freki*. These wolves were often depicted gorging on fallen warriors.⁶⁷³ This semiotics of animal predation and devouring prey or enemies is a common theme running through Scandinavian animal ornamentation as this thesis is exploring.

Gräslund argued that there was deeper meaning behind dog burials; these instead could function as de facto wolf graves.⁶⁷⁴ These were functioned in an effort to assist the deceased to the afterlife, to accompany the soul. She studied the frequency of dogs in graves in the second half of the first millennium and concluded that dogs functioned not just as companions; that the dog functioned as a medium on the border between life and death.⁶⁷⁵ Dogs and wolves were connected to Odin and warrior ideology and this is evident in a variety of Old Norse writings.⁶⁷⁶

It is evident that while *úlfhéðnar* and *berserkir* were distinct groups they shared a close connection in symbolism as beasts of war. The predatory nature of the animals that they were associated with runs a common thread through both literary depictions and material culture. As Aleksander Pluskowski argued, predatory motifs can be seen on a

⁶⁷⁰ Translations are this author's own from 'Ynglinga saga' in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* (eds.) N. Linder and H.A. Haggson (Uppsala, 1870), § 6.

⁶⁷¹ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 374.

⁶⁷² Ibid., p. 375-376.

⁶⁷³ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents, and Birds', p. 248.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 247.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 248.

diverse group of material culture dating from the Viking Age, though it mostly contained to contexts believed to be martial or high status.⁶⁷⁷ The cultic and ritualistic nature of warfare makes such predatory characteristics of nature seem appealing. Skaldic poetry and kennings of warriors, as well as warrior names often reflected the predatory nature of animals.⁶⁷⁸ Warriors and their association either through a god or themselves with predatory animals effectively converted their enemies into prey according to both Price and Pluskowski.⁶⁷⁹ Furthermore, according to Pluskowski, this concept, warrior as predator, was 'paralleled in the development of exclusive hunting activities' and reflected in the animals contained in burial assemblages.⁶⁸⁰ He argued that this concept might not have been shared across Scandinavia but was 'certainly restricted to specific groups'.⁶⁸¹

Odin himself was often depicted as predatory.⁶⁸² As was explored in the introduction, Odin was known as the 'supreme master of *seiðr*', or magic practice, along with Freyja from whom he learned the skill.⁶⁸³ Odin was not an all-knowing, all-powerful deity, but, by using *seiðr* and magic practice, attempted to gain as much knowledge as possible, sacrificing an eye and even hanging himself for several days to commune with the dead and gain wisdom.⁶⁸⁴ Odin could be perceived as a shaman and as a warrior though a being of inherent good he was not. Instead, Odin was associated with trickery, depicted manipulating events into violence and chaos, and he often killed his enemies through confusion and mistake instead of some form of glorious valor in battle.⁶⁸⁵ However, as Price argued despite or even perhaps because of this, he was believed to be an 'appropriate patron of the elite, especially of kings'.⁶⁸⁶ Critical though, are the links of the bear to Odin and to *seiðr*. This might provide some insight into the Finglas brooches.

⁶⁷⁷ Aleksander Pluskowski, 'Harnessing the Hunger: Religious appropriations of animal predation in early medieval Scandinavia', in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 238.

⁶⁷⁸ Pluskowski, 'Harnessing the Hunger', p. 239

⁶⁷⁹ Neil Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 382; Pluskowski, 'Harnessing the Hunger', p. 241.

⁶⁸⁰ Pluskowski, 'Harnessing the Hunger', p. 241.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Ibid., p. 243.

⁶⁸³ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 64.

⁶⁸⁴ This is found in the saga and narrative sources. For example, in stanza 137 of the *Hávamál* in the *Poetic Edda* an anonymous collection of Old Norse poems. Here Odin described his sacrifice of himself to himself in order to gain more wisdom and power. Please see '*Hávamál*' in Gudni Jónnson (ed.), *Eddukvæði (Sæmundar-Edda): Fyrri Hluti* (Reykjavík, 1954), §137.

⁶⁸⁵ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 96.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

Referring to animal imagery and ornamentation in other contexts, Gräslund hypothesized that 'such expressive heads from female graves of the tenth century in Valsgarde and Birka may indicate a cultic function for these women by analogy of what has been proposed about the women in the Oseberg grave'.⁶⁸⁷ Due to lack of weaponry or bear bones or skins, this thesis is reticent to argue that the person interred in the Finglas burial was a *berserkr*. Instead, due to the semiotics of bear ornamentation and its associations with violence and war it is highly likely that this person was connected to the cult of Odin and therefore, quite possible that this burial was one conveying a series of symbols relating to potentially a very powerful, though perhaps liminal, person.

The lack of other Viking burials, or the lack of other high-status Viking burials indicates that the burial itself was deemed powerful enough to convey the message of power the Vikings desired to make. The items in the burial signified power. Other scholars have labeled the grave as a high-status female grave, and while Sikora does make the suggestion that the person buried within might have links to the bear cult or cult of Odin she does not really explore the possibility that this person might be a high ranking practitioner of *seiðr* and what this might mean about the society that chose to create this burial.

For example, the potential liminal position of a burial coupled with the items in the burial deems this person a feared and perhaps also reviled member of the *volva* or *seiðr* class. In life this person could have been viewed as quite powerful and capable of both great good and great evil. Therefore, they were accorded this burial position that, while including many items of a high ranking member of society, was still placed in what must have been outside the bounds of the majority of Viking burials in the Finglas area. This can be surmised because there were certainly many other Vikings living and dying in, and around, that location, yet only one, it seemed, was accorded this method of burial. By burying a person of this status among Christian burials might also suggest a way to subdue the native Irish in death as well as life. Here is included a powerful magic practitioner, with high levels of hegemonic *seiðr* symbolism associated with a form of femininities, which may suggest that this person performed a female gender in life, or that society wished to have the person represented this way in death. Buried here among the native Irish dead, it may have been an attempt to convey dominance even in death. These make for interesting hypotheses and in the opinion of this thesis are certainly as viable as

⁶⁸⁷ Gräslund, 'Wolves Serpents and Birds', p. 249.

this being a simple high status female burial. Based on the symbolism inherent in other burials and the degree to which Viking daily life was intertwined with magic it stands to reason that all burials contain a myriad of semiotics.

This study will compare the symbolism from the Finglas burial to items from Kilmainham burials. If it is very different from burial patterns from the city itself, then it is possible to consider environmental and contextual factors that living in a smaller area might have had on inhabitants related to and with strong ties to Dublin as manifested in the semiotics of burial. Or again, it might also be that this person was chosen for a liminal status burial. Based on the close proximity of Dublin to Finglas, it would not seem likely that these might have vastly dissimilar burial practices, because these groups of Vikings probably comprised similar ethnic groups who adapted to the local customs in a somewhat similar matter.

6.7 The Kilmainham Case Studies

To further the investigation of the objects that are potentially related to *seiðr* and violence, this thesis will conduct a case study of two items found among the burials located at Kilmainham in 1845 and 1849. Discovered within a series of burials unearthed in 1845, the roasting spit were found along with six swords, one sword pommel, four spearheads; three sockets (which are possible spearheads); three shield bosses; three oval brooches (single shell brooches, and one partner of the brooch found among the nine weapon and one brooch burial of another group burial); one penannular brooch; chain, two beads, an antler burr, and, finally, a Byzantine seal. These grave goods, in particular the oval brooches and swords, are generally linked with high-status burial and further the idea that *seiðr* practitioners held such a position due to this association. By division along a binary system, archaeologists believe that this group consists of a minimum seven weapon burials and one brooch, or seven male and one female.⁶⁸⁸ As previously stated, Harrison and Ó Floinn, contended instead that this represented eight male burials and one female, but as argued in the earlier sections, this thesis will be choosing the more conservative estimate.⁶⁸⁹ The grave goods were found together by railway workers who were certainly not equipped to handle archaeological finds. This, combined with poor

⁶⁸⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 657.

⁶⁸⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 362-387.

methodology and lack of records, means that the specific burial context and bodies have long since been lost, if they were ever recovered at all.⁶⁹⁰

Although originally placed along with the so-called roasting spit, the whalebone plaque is probably associated, as with a group of some seven artefacts acquired by the Royal Irish Academy in 1849.⁶⁹¹ However, this does not change the interpretation much, because as Harrison said about the 1845 acquisitions, there is no evidence to link any of them⁶⁹², and therefore a different date or acquisition group would have little to no influence on the examination of symbolism of these grave goods, as it is important that they existed in the same area, and not necessarily the same burial. Additionally, being a part of different acquisition groups or discovery dates does not necessarily negate that they may be from a related burial.

Due to the facts that modern scholars have no idea what grave goods can be attributed to what specific grave and there is no burial context for each, in addition to the issues inherent in archaeologically determined gender, this thesis will not seek to assign these grave goods to a gendered burial. Instead, it will focus its examination on the roasting spit and whalebone plaque because of their ties to *seiðr* practice.

Among the grave goods attributed to this group of burials is what modern archaeologists have called a 'roasting spit'.⁶⁹³ Scholars, such as Harrison, have alleged that the spit was placed into the grave in order for the deceased woman to continue cooking and providing for her family in her afterlife. It is deemed to be an item associated with the 'domestic sphere' and symbolic of this female power in the home. However, other scholars have challenged the idea that such an item was simply a roasting spit at all. Indeed, one such scholar is Price who contended that many of these spits are instead *seiðr* staffs, staffs used to invoke ritual practices and symbolic of high status *seiðr* practitioners. Harrison and Ó Floinn briefly outlined Price's arguments, without making a definitive claim in one direction or the other.⁶⁹⁴ This thesis disputes the idea that this staff is a roasting spit and instead, supports Neil Price's assertion that it is instead, a *seiðr* staff.

There are twenty total burials in Norway that contain staffs relating to what Price contended was sorcery, one in Denmark and five in Sweden: three in Birka and two at

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid, p. 395.

⁶⁹² Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 658.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., p. 657; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.381. Please see Fig. 6.8, "The so-called "Roasting Spit,"" p. 325.

⁶⁹⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 206-207.

other more isolated areas.⁶⁹⁵ Of these staffs, thirteen out of the twenty in Norway are associated with 'female' burials and all of the staffs in Denmark and Sweden are associated this way.⁶⁹⁶ If there is a human context, the staffs have been found in what Price called 'women's graves'.⁶⁹⁷

There are only three other graves that exist outside Scandinavia, which are known to contain these kinds of staffs and one is found in the Kilmainham burial.⁶⁹⁸ While archaeologists and historians in Ireland have been reluctant to call this object a *seiðr* staff, this thesis is convinced that it is such based on Price's arguments. The Irish staff is what Price calls the basket type and dates to the mid-ninth century, so would it would have happened to have been buried in the early series of burials, or alternatively, passed down from generation to generation and buried later.⁶⁹⁹ Based on this evidence, and Price's arguments, the possibility seems clear that the staff contained among the funeral goods from Kilmainham was utilized for *seiðr* ritual.

These staffs have been interpreted as meat roasting spits by some scholars. Price argued that this function is not justifiable; the design of these staffs makes such a purpose impossible, 'joints of beef, pork, chicken, etc. could not be forced past the polyhedral knobs without virtually destroying the meat. Additionally, several staffs have been found together with spits that undoubtedly are for roasting'.⁷⁰⁰ It is also likely that these were not items for meat roasting because the instruments are often found in connection with other items associated with shamanic religious practices such as amulets, cannabis seeds, chests, cats and cat imagery, and other items linked closely to *seiðr*.⁷⁰¹

Besides their inclusion in burial, there are several references to these staffs in the saga material. Scholars, such as Moen, have argued that the use of later saga materials is problematic and must be carefully contextualized and compared with the archaeological data. These accounts were written largely in a Christian framework looking back upon a pagan past and therefore any number of motivations could have been functioning which resulted in the society being portrayed a certain way. Scholars such as Jenny Jochens have cautioned about using such materials to shape the Viking world and she went as far as to

⁶⁹⁵ Price, 'The Archaeology of *Seiðr*', p. 115.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁹⁷ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 204. Please see Fig. 6.9, 'Kilmainham *seiðr* Staff', p.326.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

⁶⁹⁹ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 127, Please see Fig. 6.10. '*seiðr* staff', p. 327.

⁷⁰⁰ Price, 'The Archaeology of *Seiðr*', p. 116.

⁷⁰¹ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 160.

contend that the female sorceress and magic practitioners were largely characters of male imagination; however this thesis would challenge this assumption.⁷⁰² As has been argued in earlier chapters, the use of later saga materials must be carefully contextualized. An in-depth consideration and analysis of all these sources is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, the judicious use of the sagas, combined with the archaeological material, paints an interesting portrait of the use and function of the *seiðr* staff.

One account can be found in *Laxdæla saga*. This work is one of the sagas of the Icelanders and was composed in the 13th century; though the author remains unknown there is speculation that the writer was female.⁷⁰³ The account found in this saga is particularly critical because it discusses a *seiðr* in a burial context.

Þar fundusk undir bein; þau váru blá ok illilig; þar fannsk ok kinga ok seiðstafr mikill. Þottusk menn þá vita, at þar mundi verit hafa vóluleiði nökkut.

Underneath they found bones, which were blue [or 'black'] and ill-looking, together with a brooch and a great *seiðr*-staff. People then realised that volva must have been buried there.⁷⁰⁴

The saga then goes on to state that the bones were removed to a remote place so that the people were not likely to come upon the grave. It is interesting to see that the author was also clear that the staff was found with the brooch, perhaps even an oval brooch.

A second reference is contained in *Vatnsdæla saga*, another of the sagas of the Icelanders, and also purportedly composed around the middle of the thirteenth century. In this passage, Þorkell Þorgrímsson was seeking the advice of Þordis, a *spakona* or *seiðr*-practicing woman, on how to get Guðmundr to agree to the terms of a law suit:

Síðan mælti hún við Þorkel: "Far þú nú í kufl minn hinn svarta og tak stafsprotann í hönd þér er Högnuður heitir.

Afterwards she spoke with Þorkel 'Now you go in my other black cowl [hooded cloak] and take (the) staff in hand you call Högnuður'.⁷⁰⁵

She then advised him to strike Guðmundr three times on the cheek to get him to comply with his wishes. This will cause the ill-fated man to become confused and disoriented enough to further the cases in Þorkell's favor. After the proceedings have concluded, he is once again to strike Guðmundr three times on the other cheek, after which he will recover his memories and his mind will clear. A critical aspect of this passage that also

⁷⁰² Jochens, *Images of Women*, p. xiii.

⁷⁰³ Ármann Jakobsson, "Laxdæla Dreaming: A Saga Heroine Invents Her Own Life" in *Leeds Studies in English* XXXIX (2008), pp. 33-51.

⁷⁰⁴ *Laxdæla saga* §76 translation by Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 176.

⁷⁰⁵ Translation is this author's own from *Vatnsdæla saga*. Íslensk fornrit 8 (ed.) Einar Ól. Sveinsson (Reykavík, 1934), §44.

emphasizes the ties to *seiðr* and its practice is the phrase *kufl minn hinn svarta*. This is perhaps an allusion to the *huliðshjálmr*, the helmet of hiding or invisibility. There were varying ways to use such a technique which ranged from the use of magical powers to, in this instance, a hooded cloak.⁷⁰⁶ An interesting point in this particular passage that Price raised, is the Þorðis, who wields the staff in this saga is not connected with *ergi* behavior, a charge which meant cowardice or engaging in passive homosexuality, and could mean death to the accuser if proven false, a serious slander.⁷⁰⁷ There is no mention of cowardice or allusions to passive homosexuality. This idea will be returned to later on in this section.

Another reference can be found in *Eiríks saga rauða*, the *Saga of Eirik the Red*, which detailed the Norse exploration of North America. This is one of the Vinland sagas, and is said to have been composed between 1220 and 1280 CE, so as with the sagas of the Icelanders, well after the events it appears to narrate. There is an instance of a description of such a staff:

...and she had a staff in her hand with a knob at the top,
adorned with brass set with stones on top.⁷⁰⁸

This reference is valuable because it provides an insight into the appearance of these staffs which is verified in the archaeological sources. According to Price, these staffs are generally made of 'twisted iron rod, spaced at intervals with polyhedral bronze knobs decorated with dot and ring patterns, and with a hand-like feature of unidentified function at one end'.⁷⁰⁹ Most of these staffs have this unidentified handle, and some have beast motifs such as bears or wolves.⁷¹⁰ This lends some credence to the fact that this saga in particular was familiar with these staffs.

The references to these staffs in the saga materials are not without their inherent bias and contextual issues. However, one critical source to the utilization of these staffs is a reference found in the Norwegian Law Codes of the 12th century, the *Eiðsivapingslov*:

Engi maðr skal hafa í húsi sínu staf eða stalla. vítt eða blót. eða þat er til hæiðins siðar væit.

⁷⁰⁶ Hilda Ellis-Davidson, 'Hostile Magic in the Icelandic Sagas' in Venetia Newall (ed.), *The Witch Figure: Folklore Essays by a Group of Scholars in England Honouring the 75th Birthday of Katharine M. Briggs* (Boston, 1973), pp. 21-24.

⁷⁰⁷ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 176.

⁷⁰⁸ 'Eirik the Red's Saga' Keneva Kunz (trans.), in Jane Smiley (preface), and Robert Kellog (intro.), *The Sagas of the Icelanders* (New York, 2000), p. 658.

⁷⁰⁹ Price, 'The Archaeology of *Seiðr*', p.116

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

No person shall have in their house staff or altar, charms or sacrificial offering, or nothing that is concerning heathen religion.⁷¹¹

If it was deemed worthy enough to require an entry into the law codes, it would follow that such an item was in use within the framework of magic practice. That these staffs were illegal to use also demonstrates their perceived power in pagan Viking rituals, on par with an altar and other elements of supposed heathen practice. This supports the narrative sources and is confirmed in the archaeological data.

Price composed an extensively detailed consideration of grave goods and the belief system in his seminal work *The Viking Way*. Price argued that these staffs and the performance of the magic rituals with the staffs took on a sexual nature. He alleged that the staffs had sexual undertones as evident in literary depictions, which demonstrated them forcing submission to the wielders will.⁷¹² He believed that these staffs functioned as a kind of wand, capturing the wielder's magic and concentrating in such a way which enabled the user to cast spells. He contended that in ritual form these staffs functioned as pseudo-phalluses, going as far as to allege penetration and mimicking of heterosexual sex as part of ritual *seiðr* practice.⁷¹³ He thought this contributed to the accusations of male practitioners of *seiðr* as *ergi*. These *ergi seiðr*-practicing men were therefore, treated to liminal status in Viking society according to Price.⁷¹⁴

Price's beliefs about *seiðr* and staffs are mirrored by other scholars such as Jochens, who contended that those creating the sagas felt that the magic practice may have required the practitioner to have an orgasm.⁷¹⁵ Price used this to support his argument that the staff functioned as pseudo-phallus, arguing that there is 'considerable circumstantial evidence to suggest that the rituals involved either literal or simulated sexual actions, in which the various kinds of staffs played a major role as a phallic symbol'.⁷¹⁶ Price used an example found in *Olafs saga Helga*, which included a segment with the use of a horse penis to tempt the women of the household. Price here uses the term horse phallus. The women of the household then used the penis to create a ritual and it is passed around the people and used as a sacrifice to Maurnir, who Price thinks

⁷¹¹ Translation is this author's own from 'Eiðsivapingslov I:24' in R. Keyser and P.A. Munch, (eds.) *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* (Christiania, 1846), p.383.

⁷¹² Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 179.

⁷¹³ Ibid., p. 219.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., p. 217.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

might mean Mornir.⁷¹⁷ That these staffs were used within *seiðr* ritual seems to be clear, however the use of the staffs as pseudo-phallic symbols and that this was a stand in for the male penis and, therefore, that its use contributed to the *ergi* status of *seiðr* practicing men is more suspect. While other scholars have agreed with this assertion, there does not appear to be enough evidence to support these claims wholesale and might be other reasonable explanations.

There are several issues with Price's arguments. Firstly, that these staffs functioned as phalluses at all. Secondly, that a phallic symbol equates with a human male penis in a symbolic form. Thirdly, the contention that the link between sexual acts and magic is something that came from the Viking context and is not something applied to female magic practitioners by the Christian context in which the writers lived. Finally, that male practitioners of *seiðr* were all accused of *ergi* in their own temporal context, that this was not a later Christian argument. Examining these arguments and the symbolism of the *seiðr* illuminates the fluid nature of gender representation while also exploring the role that Christian bias played in the formation of modern conceptions of Viking ritual practices and gender identities.

The first issue to address is Price's conflation of penis and phallus. The argument that these staffs functioned as phallus-as-penis, as set out by Price, is worth investigating in some depth. This contention that a form of power practiced by women required a phallic element or the reintroduction of masculinity to the equation to become powerful is problematic. The hypothesis that possibly one of the most important tools in the *seiðr* practitioners' repertoire was masculine in nature, because it functioned as a penis, presupposes that masculinities were the highest echelons of power even within the supernatural and ritual realm. Price himself argued that the staff seemed to take on a powerful nature and forced the submission to the wielder's will.⁷¹⁸ The idea of a staff being used as a penis in a sexual sense as per Price's arguments indicates the opposite that the wielder submitted to the staff.

This idea insists upon inserting the masculine into a form of power not necessarily associated in its own context. It is once again reiterating the idea that women gained power from men, or more specifically from the part of the body associated with male power. Thus, the power associated with *seiðr* is seemingly dependent on the patriarchy

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., p. 217-218.

⁷¹⁸ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 179.

and women, in order to gain power on the spiritual realm must submit to the phallus, acting as stand-in for the male penis. This argument might be guilty of phallocentrism, that is the privileging of the masculine (or phallus) in the construction of meaning.

There were certainly a plethora of obvious and blatant phallic symbols in the medieval world.⁷¹⁹ For example, there is a wooden stave found in Bergen, dated to the thirteenth century, with a carved inscription that directed a person to sleep with Rannveig the Red.⁷²⁰ A somewhat famous example is a statue found at Rallinge in Sweden which depicted a naked bearded man with a large erection that scholars agree is a representation of Freyr.⁷²¹

It would appear that the Norse were capable of being very direct in their phallic symbolism as it related to the male penis. This could indicate that the link between the staffs and the male penis is somewhat tenuous, as it is not quite overt and there is no evidence from the staffs themselves they functioned in this manner. Indeed, a glance at the staffs, can quickly demonstrate that they are not at all shaped as the human male penis. Though of course this is not required of phallic symbols, it would seem to be the case if one of its chief functions was as a means of penetration. Additionally, in the examples previously mentioned by this thesis of the staffs from the saga material there is no suggestion of sexual penetration from the staff, indeed, while the examples do seem to have ties to phallic symbolism, these demonstrate a phallus used to command others.

This even appears to be in contrast to Price's own arguments about the staff being used to force submission to the wielder's will. If the wand is utilized as forcing others to submit to the wielder's will, then it functions as the phallus of the wielder, not something that would penetrate the wielder. So this might appear that Price's contention that this staff functioned as means of penetration and this mimicked sex is dubious. However, this also forms a binary of penetrator and recipient. In the Norse world of liminal status and the importance of those who could transcend boundaries, it is possible that the staff functioned as both the phallus of the wielder in some cases, and a phallus the wielder was

⁷¹⁹ One example can be found in the phallic badges, where there are examples of winged penis, belled penis, and even an erect penis in a purse.⁷¹⁹ These certainly existed within Norse culture where there are clear indications of overt phallic symbols. (British Museums Accessions Register, cited by Nicola McDonald, 'Introduction', in Nicola McDonald (ed.) *Medieval Obscenities* (Suffolk, 2006), pp. 7-8).

⁷²⁰ Stephen Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 101.

⁷²¹ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 220. For a more comprehensive view on phalluses in Viking culture, particularly for Icelandic peoples, the Icelandic Phallological Museum in Reykjavík holds an extensive collection.

penetrated by, allowing the wielder to take both an active and passive role in sexual magic. This means that both female and male practitioners of *seiðr* could have taken on a third gender, something that was reinterpreted in later medieval times as men as passive homosexuals and women as lustful, carnal deviants. This is speculative, but seems more likely given the evidence. An important aspect of this is if the phallus is masculine or has an association with human male penis.

Price's argument that *seiðr* staff performed as pseudo-phallus led him to believe that this was the reason in the later Christian texts for *seiðr* practicing men being labeled as *ergi*. This suggests that the phallus can only be masculine and attached to a male body. This contention argues that in order to acquire and perform powerful *seiðr* rituals requires the introduction of a phallus. But why then, for male practitioners who already had a penis did it require yet another phallic symbol, if it was acting as male penis? Or perhaps as Price argued that its purpose was for penetrative sexual acts. But this would assume that the male practitioner had already lost his 'phallus' or had already been determined to be outside of the bounds of active male sexuality and, therefore, required a second penis in the form of the *seiðr* staff for the ritual to take place. Therefore, instead of the practice of *seiðr* rendering him *ergi*, he was *ergi* and therefore could practice this *seiðr* ritual. This could have been easily misunderstood, perhaps deliberately, by later Christian writers. Women were commonly associated with the otherworldly and magical, and particularly magical sexual deviances and carnality. A man performing magic would have been perhaps even more subversive, upending the natural order of men being associated with reason, logic and control. So it would follow that these writers would attribute the sexual practices of these men as taking on a passive penetrative role, like a woman..

Jacques Lacan contended that no one could possess the phallus, that while men possess a penis, the phallus is symbolic, a signifier, and, therefore, cannot be owned.⁷²² He argued against Freud, who conflated the penis and the phallus as one and the same, much like Price.⁷²³ Freud also contended that all weapons were representatives of the penis.⁷²⁴ While Freud was certainly writing and considering the phallus in an earlier time period, his arguments are still considered in this regard by many scholars considering the phallus in more modern contexts, like Lacan and others.

⁷²² Jacques Lacan, 'The signification of the phallus' in Alan Sheridan (trans.) *Écrits: A Selection*. (London, 1977) pp. 316.

⁷²³ Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (trans.) A. A. Brill (New York, 1913), p. 317.

⁷²⁴ Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 316.

Derek Neal hypothesized that the body, maleness, masculinity and the penis all were elements or parts of the overall concept of the phallus and he associated it with aggression.⁷²⁵ But he also stated that the penis was not always phallic.⁷²⁶ Lacan postulated that women are the phallus as they are the phallic objects of desire, in contrast to men, who are forever trying to possess the phallus, and failing. According to him, those who have the phallus make the law, but they live forever in fear of being castrated, and the male penis can never live up to the standards set by the symbolic phallus. This, Lacan contended, is why women become objects, which men seek to own and control. Phallus is merely a theoretical possibility attributed to materiality. Lacan defined intersex relations as men and women seeking to castrate each other and control the phallus, moreover, to control the power dynamic in the relationship.⁷²⁷

In contrast to this, Butler argued that Lacan had no right to assume ownership of the phallus and thereby determine its meaning. While she did support Lacan's argument that women are the phallus for men, she questioned what they represented to each other. Butler argued for a 'lesbian phallus', a phallus that was fully transferrable and not tied to biological male sex. That the power contained therein was able to be confined to a number of items that stand in for the phallus.⁷²⁸

Brennan argued that Lacan's symbolic phallus makes patriarchy inevitable.⁷²⁹ She contended that the phallus was a neutral term that symbolizes lack which leads to the constitution of subjectivity and speech.⁷³⁰ Elizabeth Grosz argued that it was the mark of sexual difference and identity.⁷³¹ Brennan said that while in theory the symbolic phallus is neutral and not something anyone can possess, in practice it is fiercely tied to the penis.⁷³² She stated that the ties between the penis and the phallus 'exists and persist'.⁷³³ Barbara Creed contended that the phallus stands for more than a penis, it stands for the patriarchy and represents masculinity.⁷³⁴ She believed that it represented social power,

⁷²⁵ Derek Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, (Chicago, 2008), p. 134.

⁷²⁶ Neal, *Masculine Self*, p. 135.

⁷²⁷ Lacan, 'The signification of the phallus', pp. 317-321.

⁷²⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive limits of "sex"* (Hove, 1993), pp. 62-64, 73, 84-91.

⁷²⁹ Teresa Brennan, *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London, 1989), p. 3.

⁷³⁰ Brennan, *Between Feminism*, p. 3.

⁷³¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (Abingdon, 1990), p. 126.

⁷³² Brennan, *Between Feminism*, p. 3.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁷³⁴ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Abingdon, 1993), p. 381.

masculine privilege within a hierarchical system, that it even represents the state or whatever form of government that is in power.⁷³⁵ Creed stated 'only those who possess the penis, or possess someone with a penis, may lay claim to the phallus and all it represents'.⁷³⁶

It seems fairly convincing that the phallus does not equal human male penis, that instead it is representative of power. But a key point of consideration here then, does the phallus equal male power within the system of patriarchy within Viking culture; or as Butler contended, could it have been representative of a lesbian phallus, something that was transferrable. If the *seiðr* staff was a phallic symbol, then it must have been transferrable as it was used by men and women and could be given to others who were then able to wield its power, as evidenced in the saga examples. The *seiðr* staff does not appear to be the lesbian phallus of Butler's arguments because of its relationship to both men and women. However, it does not seem to represent the human male penis. It is also crucial to recall that not all *seiðr* burials have been found with staffs. So presupposing that this staff is in fact a phallic symbol, its requirement for performing Viking magic because it functions as male penis also seems phallocentric in nature, heteronormative, and privileging this male body part. The staff appears to have been a phallic symbol in a few of the written texts, but to apply this to all of the staffs in use seems dubious, as there are many examples where it does not appear to play this role. The staff being a staff itself, the shape, does play into Freud's arguments of what is phallic imagery, but this also seems phallocentric. It is critical then, to examine what the people who wrote the sagas believed about magic and how this may have influenced their writings.

One of the central issues of interpretation of the use of *seiðr* staffs in their own ritual context is once again the time difference between when the sagas were composed and the period the events within them were said to take place. As Stephen Mitchell said,

No one would, by way of a parallel, hope to use the weird sisters from the opening of *Macbeth* (ca.1605) as source material for eleventh century Scottish witchcraft beliefs rather than those of Jacobean Britain. Yet in the Old Norse field, mining an Icelandic saga known only from post Reformation articulations in order to comment on the tenth century does not seem so improbable or problematic.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁵ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine*, p. 381.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

⁷³⁷ Mitchell, *Witchcraft*, p. 12.

Mitchell goes on to declare that 'remarkable work' has been done in the interpretation of these texts and that they form a crucial piece of the 'larger cultural puzzle'.⁷³⁸ However, he reiterated that scholars must be exceedingly careful in the use of these source materials, and that is why this thesis advocates the judicious use of them with a clear eye to deconstruction and attempting to disentangle contexts.

For example, *Óláfs saga Helga*, that Price used as a source for his discussion of the use of phalluses and sexual implications of ritual, is from circa 1190 CE and only exists in fragments: The *Óláfs saga Helga* in the *Flateyjarbok*, composed in the late 14th century, is where this episode, the *Volsa Pattr*, which contained the references to the staffs, occurred. St. Olaf lived from 995 to 1030 CE, and this accounts for an almost 400 year difference. This story, the *Volsa Pattr*, does not appear in earlier versions of the tale, though, many of these only remain in fragments. As with all the sagas, these 13th and 14th- century compositions need to be placed within their own contexts.

Katherine Morris contended that sagas depicted women magic practitioners as the conception of their own context: a figure defined and motivated by lust and sex, and that this has distorted the perception of the lived reality of these figures in the Viking Age.⁷³⁹ In the late medieval period during which these tales were written down, women, and indeed female witches, were portrayed as insatiable beings of carnal lust, as evidenced in texts such as the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, which declared, 'To conclude. All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in all women insatiable'.⁷⁴⁰

What is perhaps more crucial to understanding the depictions of male and female witches in the saga materials in the late Middle Ages, is the legal codes for punishment in the Scandinavian world. By and large, women who are accused of witchcraft are done so in relation to sexuality.⁷⁴¹ Crucially, their punishments are relatively light. Women do not receive capital punishment for such a charge. This is in stark contrast to what is happening in other places in Europe.⁷⁴² Men, on the other hand, 'rarely stand accused of this crime, but rather related offenses such as apostasy and devil worship and in each case

⁷³⁸ Ibid., p. 12-13.

⁷³⁹ Katharine Morris, *Sorceress or Witch? The Image of Gender in Medieval Iceland and Northern Europe* (Lanham. 1991), pp. 2-5.

⁷⁴⁰ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, (trans. and intro.) Montague Spencer (New York, 1984), p. 47.

⁷⁴¹ Mitchell, *Witchcraft*, p. 315.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

faces a gruesome execution'.⁷⁴³ Mitchell contended that while these two charges appear different, they are interlinked and showed that men were charged with the harsher crime. He believed that this represented the fact that women were charged with sexual manipulation for witchcraft offenses, and men, in contrast were tried for rebellion against the church which was manifested in heresy, apostasy, devil worship and the like.⁷⁴⁴

This seems to be reflected in the narrative sources, as has been demonstrated. Female *seiðr* practitioners are associated with sexual magic and seducing heroes. Male witches are depicted as in rebellion to Christianizing kings. If the law codes demonstrate such a binary understanding of witchcraft, then it could be that depictions of *seiðr* in the sagas are a mere reflection of what the legal authorities and, indeed, the general populous believed to be true about their practice in their own late medieval context; instead of any reflection of the lived reality of the practitioners in the Viking Age.

In Mitchell's analysis he found that male practitioners of witchcraft in the Icelandic saga materials were 'overwhelmingly portrayed as villainous characters set in opposition to a Christianizing king or a dowdy native son, rather than dabblers in love magic and so on'.⁷⁴⁵ Solitary witches of both genders could be, and were, depicted as obstacles for the hero, but when massed together, men were made into martial enemies.⁷⁴⁶ This is evident in a variety of narrative sources, and Mitchell supported his argument by citing such a case in *Olafs saga Tryggvasonar* where the main character, King Olaf was said to have had all *seiðr* practicing men rounded up and killed. In retaliation, one who survived, Eyvindr Kelda launched a fleet against him composed of witches, sorcerers and other magic practitioners.⁷⁴⁷ What is also important to note is that when a Christian king is depicted in battle against a group of pagan forces, the group is exclusively male.⁷⁴⁸ It appears that the status of both male and female witches as written in the sagas was reflected in the Norse legal codes.

According to Mitchell and his interpretation of the Norwegian legal codes, while men and women could both practice the craft, it seems that the writers of such believed that it was something that was practiced in more depth or perhaps more capably by women. Mitchell argued that the native Norse had a perception of witchcraft that was

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 306.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 308.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 306.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 307.

fundamentally effeminate. In other words, witchcraft and magic had a great deal to do with how 'maleness' and 'femaleness' were constructed in the late medieval northern thought. This native view was further reinforced over time by the pan-European feminization of witchcraft, which held that only the weak-minded and weak in faith would be duped by the devil, traits long associated by learned society with women.⁷⁴⁹

This contention, that the Norse at the time of the composition of the sagas associated witchcraft with femaleness, is key. An important area of consideration is whether this association of magic with women was something that was created in the Christian period or if it existed in the Viking Age. Jochens contended that men never practiced *seiðr* in the same amounts as women during the Viking Age, and she believed that the involvement of men in it was a devolution.⁷⁵⁰ This is in contradiction to Price whose investigations of the sagas seem to indicate an even split, as was seen previously. Price's assertions are largely based on what the saga material contained, however, and this is somewhat suspect for the reasons this thesis has stated. It is with very careful consideration should any relationship between sexuality and female, or male, practitioners be made utilizing these sources. The lens of the periods of compositions were rife with medieval Christian misogyny and the demonization of women and witchcraft which contributed to mass witch hunts and trials. However, as was evidenced in the legal sources, women who were charged with the crimes of witchcraft in the Norse world were often given lenient sentences in comparison to their male counterparts. Indeed, it was deemed perhaps part of their nature to be sexually charged and duplicitous, instead of men, who, if they succumbed to the practice, were deemed to be in open rebellion to king and country. This was reflected in lived reality, for example, in Iceland, where witchcraft persecutions were often directed solely at men.⁷⁵¹

It follows then, if witchcraft is for women, and women are weak-minded, then a man who practiced witchcraft would be like a woman, a weak-minded, cowardly, follower. This is what could have contributed to the charges of *ragr* or *ergi*. In Scandinavia there was a single regulation that was passed in 1164 CE banning homosexual behavior. The *Gulaþingslov*, introduced by King Magnus Erlingsson and Archbishop Eysteinn, declared that if two men engaged in relations with each other and were convicted the

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 320.

⁷⁵⁰ Jenny Jochens, 'Old Norse Magic and Gender: *páttir þorvalds ens Víðfjrla*' in *Scandinavian Studies* Vol. 63, No. 3 (Summer 1991), p. 306-307.

⁷⁵¹ Jochens, 'Norse Magic and Gender', p. 314.

punishment was permanent outlawry.⁷⁵² According to Gade this was 'isolated' and there weren't any severe penalties until the end of the thirteenth century.⁷⁵³ It was deemed acceptable as long as the adult male played the role of the active or penetrator.⁷⁵⁴ In a late 12th-century addition to the church law of the *Gulaþingslov*, King Magnus Hakonarson deemed all sexual congress outside of that between a man and a woman illegal, with the punishment being outlawry and the man's possessions forfeit to the king.⁷⁵⁵ The crime of homosexuality was put on par with bestiality, its punishments the same in Norway.⁷⁵⁶ However, Gade argued that unlike bestiality, homosexuality was not considered a crime against Christianity, instead it was viewed on a par with theft, treason and murder, crimes that could not be absolved with fines.⁷⁵⁷ Gade postulated that this was 'introduced to gain control of the property of the accused and as a convenient tool to rid the church and state of their enemies' and she argued that since it disappeared from the laws and was not reintroduced later with penalties mirroring continental practices, it must not have been successful.⁷⁵⁸

When laws against homosexuality were reintroduced, it was with the same severe and brutal penalties as occurred on the continent. This perhaps goes some way to explaining why, when these were written down, men were charged with *ergi*. Homosexuality was associated with treason and threatened the social order, much like witchcraft, so it seemed fitting to apply this view to male practitioners of magic or *seiðr*. Allegations of heresy and homosexuality have long gone hand in hand in the church doctrine, as in, for example, the trial of the Templars.⁷⁵⁹ While there were not provisions against such behavior prior to the first in 1164, it was clearly the case in the later thirteenth century, when many of the sagas were composed. This would certainly have been familiar to Snorri Sturluson, himself being a speaker of the law at the Allthing, and the writer of many of the sagas.

This leads to the question of whether instances of *ragr* or *ergi* insults if the accused party is really believed to have been such a person. Would these words instead be

⁷⁵² Kari Ellen Gade, 'Homosexuality and rape of males in Old Norse Law and Literature' in *Scandinavian Studies* Vol. 58, No. 2, Early Law and Society (Spring, 1986), p. 124-125.

⁷⁵³ Gade, 'Homosexuality', p.126.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 131-135.

⁷⁵⁵ 'Gulathing-Lov §33' in R. Keyser and P.A. Munch (eds.), *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* (Christiania, 1846), pp. 19-20.

⁷⁵⁶ Gade, 'Homosexuality', p. 128.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., p.130.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

⁷⁵⁹ Malcolm Barber, *Trial of The Templars* (Cambridge, 2006), especially, p. 1, 72-74, and 215-217.

used to incite the person to fight or merely to insult, like is common in modern terminology? And if this is the case, what does that say about people accused as such in the context of *seiðr*? The narrative sources do not seem to outline the details of the possible same sex male relationships, save for their inclusions of insults of passive homosexuality. The first time this connection between homosexuality and *ergi* was made was in 1902 in an anonymous article in the *Leipzig journal Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität*. This was then repeated by several other scholars like Eduard Westermarck and then codified by Erik Noreen, who, as Price translated and paraphrased, divided the terms *argr* and *ragr* and the meanings of *ergi* into four categories, as meaning: 'morally useless', 'unmanly, with strong connotations of perversity and taking the female role in sexual acts', 'one who employs sorcery, and specifically *seiðr*', and 'cowardly'.⁷⁶⁰ According to Price, the performance of *seiðr* was acceptable by women, and 'the approbation attached to men doing these things did not reflect on the status of women who did them by right and nature'.⁷⁶¹

According to Gade, in Old Norse society it was acceptable for a freeman to practice homosexuality, in the role of penetrator, especially if practiced with slaves.⁷⁶² Preben Sørensen contended that the passive partner was relegated or viewed in such a negative way because it followed that a male that submitted in a sexual manner would submit in other affairs and become a follower.⁷⁶³ This went against the Norse beliefs of manhood, strength and the masculine ideal, the importance of leadership, independence and self-reliance. These were not words to be uttered to someone in passing. The *Grágás* are clear that there were three words that incurred outlawry and they were to call a man *ragr*, *stroðinn* and *sorðinn* (loosely meaning: sexually used by a man); and for these, a man had a right to kill in retaliation if false.⁷⁶⁴ Each of these was to refer to the man who played the passive role in a sexual encounter.⁷⁶⁵ Indeed, the *Grágás Kunungsbók*, stated, '*Ef maðr heyrir iscallðscap orð þat er maðr a vígt vm at hann se ragr eða stroðen*: If a man hears in

⁷⁶⁰ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 211, translating and citing arguments from Erik Noreen, 'Studier i fornvästnordisk diktning. Andra samlingen' in *Uppsala universitets årsskrift. Filosofi, språkvetenskap och historiska vetenskaper*, 4 (Uppsala, 1922), pp. 40-7.

⁷⁶¹ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 213.

⁷⁶² Gade, 'Homosexuality', p. 136.

⁷⁶³ Preben M. Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*. (trans.) Joan Turville-Petre. *The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 1* (Odense, 1983), p. 20.

⁷⁶⁴ Translation of *stroðinn* and *sorðinn* after Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man*, pp.17-18.

⁷⁶⁵ Gade, Homosexuality, p. 139.

poetry words that a man is able to kill about, that he is *ragr* or *stroðen*.⁷⁶⁶ This is echoed in the *Gulapingslög*:

Um fullrettes orð. Orð ero þau er fullrettis orð heita. Þat er eitt ef maðr kveðr at karlmanne oðrom at hann have barn boret. Þat er annat ef maðr kyeðr hann væra sannsorðenn. Þat er hit þriðia ef hann iamnar hanom við meri æða kallar hann grey æða portkono æða iamnar hanom við berende eitthvert.

Concerning terms of abuse or insult. There are words which are considered terms of abuse. Item one: if a man say of another man that he has borne a child. Item two: if a man says of another man that he has been homosexually used. Item three: if a man compares another man to a mare, or call him a bitch or a harlot, or compare him to any animal which bears young.⁷⁶⁷

It seems likely, as other scholars have contended, that many of the people who had the accusations of *ergi* and *ragr* thrown at them were not people who participated in such activities, but instead the words represented the worst insults to receive and a method to get another man to fight you. This seems likely to have been linked to the rise of inherent misogyny that came with the conversion to Christianity and became rife in the later Middle Ages. It is also reflected in history up to, and including, the modern period. The worst thing to call a man is a woman; and the worst thing a man could be is passive sexually like a woman. It seems that perhaps the root cause of much of this could be a misogynistic bent against the sexuality of women and that it was utilized on men in the saga material who represented enemies of the king and state as a literary device to convey the strength of their evilness.

There does not seem to be enough evidence to conclude that these staffs are phallic and utilized as pseudo-phalluses in *seiðr* rituals. It appears likely that they were utilized to concentrate a wielder's power, but this may or may not have sexual undertones. If it did take on this meaning in the period of the Viking Age this appeared to be divorced from biological male sex or even gender. The phallus in this case is fully transferrable to a form of femininities and other forms of masculinities or even third genders.

The possibility arises that during the Viking period people who took up *seiðr* roles could become a third gender. A role as a mediator between worlds, and in this case genders, is evident in the myriad of other critical moderators and mediums in the Norse

⁷⁶⁶ Translation is this author's own from *Grágás Kunungsbók*, § 238, (ed.) Vilhjálmur Finsen (Odense, 1974), pp. 183-184.

⁷⁶⁷ Translation of *Gulapingslög* by T.L. Markey, 'Nordic Níðvisur: an Instance of Ritual Inversion?' in *Studies in Medieval Culture* Vol. 10 (1977), pp. 75-85 and pp. 76 & 83.

pantheon of symbolism. This person, occupying a third gender and a position of power is evident in a variety of cultures, including many shamanic societies in which *seiðr* is associated. Perhaps this role was deliberately miscategorized and slandered under the guise of Christian society. The cases of *ergi* and its link to *seiðr* might be a Christian influence or deliberate misinterpretation of the role these people played within their own cultural context. The arguments that *seiðr* practicing men gained liminal status is slightly deceptive, as all *seiðr* probably held some form of this position, as did warriors to some degree. Additionally, not all instances of *seiðr* men are depicted as *ergi*, as was seen in one of the three references to the staff. In fact, the person using the staff is not associated with *ergi* or *ragr* whatsoever. Equally, the possibility arises that these biological males were either not viewed in this manner at all, that these depictions represent later Christian bias, or deliberate misunderstanding of positions of third gendered people by an extremely prejudicial church. Overall, though, it is clear from this brief summary that this staff played a critical role in the practice of *seiðr* and because of this someone buried with such an item could occupy a position of power. It is now critical to turn to another object with known ties to *seiðr*, the whalebone plaque.⁷⁶⁸

Only about sixty whalebone plaques exist throughout the Viking world and, therefore, they are the rarest of textile-working materials.⁷⁶⁹ Archaeologists have argued that whalebone plaques were women's artifacts used for pressing small linen garments, pleats, or seams, normally with a bun shaped glass linen smoother.⁷⁷⁰ This is not the whole story, however, as textile work, and especially weaving, were associated with ritual activities.⁷⁷¹ Owen and Dalland argued that these plaques were used primarily on ceremonial occasions, the finest of these used for pressing linens for rituals.⁷⁷²

To provide context, another key burial that had a whalebone plaque, and indeed, one quite similar in design to Kilmainham, is the Scar boat burial.⁷⁷³ Containing the remains of three people, a male in his thirties, a woman in her seventies and a juvenile of about ten years, the burial included this carved plaque, found lying with its decorated side

⁷⁶⁸ Please see Fig. 6.11, 'Kilmainham Whalebone Plaque', p. 328; and Fig. 6.12, 'Whalebone Plaque and Linen Smoother from Kilmainham', p. 329.

⁷⁶⁹ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 79.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁷⁷¹ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41; Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, p. 39.

⁷⁷² Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 79.

⁷⁷³ Please see Fig. 6.13. 'Scar Boat Burial Whalebone Plaque', p. 330.

facing down immediately to the right of the woman's feet.⁷⁷⁴ The Scar plaque shows few signs of wear and Owen and Dalland argued weaving, and by proxy the plaque demonstrated strong links to Freyja. Freyja was not only the goddess of magic, but also of war and battle, highlighting the strong links between the two. She was hostess to dead warriors on her afterlife plain and like the Valkyrie, was a chooser of the slain.⁷⁷⁵ According to the Old Norse sources, Freyja was the original god of *seiðr*, the one who taught Odin all he knew about the practice.⁷⁷⁶

The lack of wear on the plaque coupled with the intrinsic symbolic and ritualistic nature of Viking culture supports Owen and Dalland's claims that this item could very well be associated with ritual practice. That the item showed few signs of use could indicate it was made either strictly for ritual purposes or indeed that it was created for the burial itself. This seems to lead to the conjecture that this item was imbued with some significance and status. This thesis would agree with this contention that such an item had links to Freya and *seiðr* ritual. This provides a key background with which to analyze the whalebone plaque in the Kilmainham burial. Besides the ties between weaving and the Viking belief systems, the ornamentation of the whalebone plaque itself provides an integral clue as to the critical role this could have played in Viking society in Dublin.

Typically, these whalebone plaques feature two animals coming from either side of the top to curl close to, but not touching in the center as separate entities. These animals are depicted as long and thin, with almost snake-like necks and bodies that fade into the main body of the plaque. In other locations, such as the Scar boat burial, archaeologists have contended that the animal ornamentation contained on the whalebone plaques is that of horses.⁷⁷⁷ This is an obvious conclusion based on the elongated muzzle, close pointed ears and what appear to be manes running down the back.

The horse was an integral part of Viking cosmography, in large part because people believed it could travel to the next world.⁷⁷⁸ Scholar Ulla Lamond argued that horses belong to a separate category as they occupied space and a social position that was

⁷⁷⁴ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 52 and 73.

⁷⁷⁵ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p.42; Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 108.

⁷⁷⁶ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41.

⁷⁷⁷ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, pp. 73 & 79

⁷⁷⁸ Ulla Lamond, 'The Horse and its role in Icelandic Burial practices, mythology and society' in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 258.

at once both tamed and wild. Indeed, horses were depicted as dualistic in nature and their cosmological role in the Viking systems of belief was one that mediated all the realms.⁷⁷⁹ This is evident in the literary representations and cosmological references to these animals. Famous horses in Norse myth include *Hrímfaxi* and *Skinfaxi*, the horses of day and night, who run around the world every twenty-four hours, or *Árvakr* and *Alsviðr*, the horses who carry the sun.⁷⁸⁰ Another example is *Svaðilfara* who travels between *Ásgarðr*, the world of the *Æsir* group of gods, and *Útgarðar*, the world of the giants, into controlled and uncontrolled space, he can be found throughout the saga material, for example in Snorri Sturlson's *Prose Edda*, in the *Gyfaginning* detailed how Slepnir was born of a relationship between Loki and *Svaðilfara*, stating,

En Loki hafði þá ferð haft til Svaðilfara at nokkuru síðar bar hann fyl

But Loki at that time had (bondman) dealings with *Svaðilfara* so that somewhat later he bore a foal.⁷⁸¹

This introduced another famous horse in Norse mythology, Slepnir, who had eight feet, and was also mediator of sorts and was said to have been *er sá hestr beztr með goðum ok mǫnnum*, 'he is the best horse among gods and men'.⁷⁸²

All of these horses have in common an ability to transcend or cross boundaries and borders, thus making them a potential critical component in Viking burial rites; this is also evident in material culture. Lamond conducted an archaeological survey of 115 graves in Iceland. Similar to the case in Ireland, only six burials were excavated by archaeologists. Once again this highlights the difficulties in analyzing Viking burials and funerary materials. As was argued in the introduction, even given these restraints, it is still critical to investigate and use what does exist to draw some meaningful conclusions about the potential purpose and symbolism of these burials. Another thirty-two of these graves were found by road digging crews or through erosion. Out of the total burials, only forty-two were excavated. Based on this set of data, Lamond concluded that in 41% of the burials there was at least one horse; some burials contained multiple horse skeletons.⁷⁸³ Interestingly, she found that gender did not largely seem to be a big factor in whether a horse was placed in a burial or not. Indeed, Lamond found that nineteen female burials

⁷⁷⁹ Lamond, 'The Horse', p. 263.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 'The Horse', p. 263-264.

⁷⁸¹ Translation is this author's own from 'Loki and *Svaðilfara*' in E.V. Gordon (ed.), revised by A.R. Taylor, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (New York, 1956), p. 6.

⁷⁸² Ibid.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., p. 260.

had horses, compared to twenty-nine male graves. Lamond argued that the horse did not belong as part of warrior grave as equipment as had been suggested by other scholars such as Roesdahl.⁷⁸⁴ So this might also bear some weight against the belief that animal ornamentation meant different things as determined by gender because given the ratio of female to male graves in Iceland, the occurrence per grave is quite similar. This suggests a corresponding set of semiotics, at least in Iceland.

Overall then, it is evident that the horse was an integral part of Viking cosmography due to their repeated inclusion in burial rituals coupled with the later saga sources. Associated with mediation and boundary crossing, the horse was a likely compatriot in the journey to the afterlife. Also, due to its role as mediator and because it occupied a somewhat liminal space, the horses' association with magic practice and *seiðr* is also likely. As was argued earlier, horses, and in particular Slepnir, have strong connections to Odin and by proxy, to power. So it is clear then, that horse symbolism on the Scar boat burial whalebone plaque could have been signaling power and prestige to those who viewed the burial rite, as well as performing a ritual role as mediator for the dead in their journey to the afterlife.

The animal imagery on the whalebone plaque contained in the Kilmainham burial is not as clear. As the others have contained horses, it could perhaps be a more stylistic example of such an animal, but this seems unlikely. The Kilmainham plaque's animal ornamentation shows no ears or a mane and instead resembles something closer to a snake or fictional animal. The figures are long and thin with wide open mouths and sharp teeth. It is possible that this is a serpent. Besides the obvious visual resemblances, one of the key reasons that this may be the case is because the serpent is the most frequently used animal in Scandinavian art.⁷⁸⁵ That these were common symbols makes for a sound argument that this was the case with the Kilmainham plaque. There were a range of possible depictions for these serpents, some were even portrayed as ribbon shaped creatures with true beast heads or wolf heads.⁷⁸⁶ This seems similar to what can be seen in Kilmainham.

Serpents were a vital symbol in the Viking cosmography according to the saga material, but crucially this is also reflected in the archaeological sources. This suggests that the narrative sources' usage of the serpent symbolism is not a later Christian

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents, and Birds', p. 253.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 250.

invention and instead held a place of significance in the Viking period. Gräslund contended that there is no animal more important universally in religion myth and folklore than the serpent.⁷⁸⁷ For example, Gräslund argued that the Nor Parish, Gotland, image of a woman with two snakes was a cult scene of religious and mythic importance and declared it to have sexual undertones.⁷⁸⁸ She also contended that serpents were critical symbols of rebirth and life because of the sloughing of their skin.⁷⁸⁹ Snakes have also been used in literary sources as symbols of and related to him. In particular in the *Skáldskaparmál*, Odin, in his quest to acquire mead from the giant Suttung, at one point turned into a serpent and crawled into a hole in a mountain to get to it.⁷⁹⁰ Additionally, in Norse cosmography there are a variety of famous serpents, but perhaps the most famous is the Midgard serpent.

Miðgarðsormr blæss svá eitrunu, at hann dreifir loft öll ok lög, ok er hann allógurligr...

The Midgard Serpent blows poison so that he strews all air and law and he is the most terrible...⁷⁹¹

Additionally, much like the wolf and bear, the serpent was taken as a common name for men and male warriors. For example, in the *Landnámabók* there are twenty-eight men named *Ormr*.⁷⁹²

There are a small number of artifacts that have beast heads or dragon heads on them and these are distributed in important centers of power. Gräslund believed that because they were so rare this indicated an importance.⁷⁹³ Archaeological excavations in many areas of the Viking world have turned up snake amulets and pendants. One such example is found in Kilmainham. This small wooden amulet in the shape of a coiled snake was also found with a fossilized ammonite snake and Gräslund argued these were good luck charms.⁷⁹⁴ Therefore, it is possible to conclude that this ornamentation was something understood in Viking Dublin, and based on the small survey above, was imbued with a series of semiotics associated with cosmography and possibly Odin and

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 252.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Skáldskaparmál' in Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur (intro. and trans.), *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson* (New York, 1916), p. 96.

⁷⁹¹ Translation is this author's own from 'Hér hefr Gylfaginning' in Gudni Jónnson (ed.) *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar: með skáldatali* (Reykjavík, 1935), § 51.

⁷⁹² Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents, and Birds', p. 253.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., p. 251.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

Freyja. This may suggest that the owner of the plaque has some cosmological or cultic tie to these gods and that the whalebone plaque was a tool that could have been used in daily life as a sort of linen smoother but also as a ritual item with strong links to Viking cosmography.

In conclusion then, the combination of *seiðr* staff and the whalebone plaque indicates that among the Kilmainham burials there were certainly people associated with *seiðr* practice. The brooches in Finglas also hint at this cultic tie. It is clear that the Viking Dublin community that created these burials viewed these people in death as high status and that this position, perhaps as a *seiðr* practitioner, which may have been liminal, was powerful. The use of symbolism associated with *seiðr* practice and animal ornamentation was certainly found in Norway, and, in perhaps the most famous Norwegian Viking grave, the Oseberg ship burial.

The Oseberg burial contained three people, two determined to be female and one male who were buried in a boat on top of a pre-existing burial determined to be male, all buried at the same time in the 10th century. The first woman contained in the south of the boat was buried with two oval brooches, a silver ring, trefoil brooch, key, knife, weaving sword, an arrowhead and an axe. The female burial in the north of the boat was discovered with remnants of oval brooches, a dog, a hanging bowl, riding equipment and a volva staff. The male burial on the boat contained a horse, sword, arrowheads and what remained of a shield. The male burial under the boat, determined to be from the ninth century, had knives, a spearhead, a penannular brooch, a strike-a-light and a hone.⁷⁹⁵

This burial was made at a liminal position and Moen argued that this was clearly imbued with strong ritualistic implications.⁷⁹⁶ Again, as with Kilmainham, this grave of a powerful person contained a *seiðr* staff. Its liminal position coupled with this, makes for the strong argument that the person, or people, contained herein, practiced *seiðr* professionally, and reinforces the argument that such a practice was associated with power.

In her examination of the Oseberg burials, Unn Pedersen posed the question of how abnormal such elaborate graves were in the Viking period.⁷⁹⁷ She stated,

Is it really too radical that we admit the women of Oseberg into the higher tiers of social power not as anomalies or exceptions to the rule of men, but as

⁷⁹⁵ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 36.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., p.37.

independent social players, capable of forming their own destinies and attaining power enough to grant a burial such as was erected for the elite, the chosen few, who ruled well and earned a lasting tribute to their memory.⁷⁹⁸

This mirrors the arguments of this chapter, that powerful women need to be examined and understood in their own right. They gained power by their own hand and not in comparison or relation to their male kin. That a possible way to do this was *seiðr* is evident in both the Norwegian and Irish context as these powerful burials all contained items associated with the practice.

As was previously stated, *seiðr* was intricately interconnected with violence and battle.⁷⁹⁹ This thesis has argued that magic could also be construed as physical violence. In specific burial contexts these items could represent dominance and power, similar to weaponry. It is critical to view *seiðr* in this way, as an open and well understood medium, instead of some shrouded mystical sorcery practiced in secret. *Seiðr* can push women into a hidden ritual role by modern interpretations, believing that this power was only obtained in a closed cultic environment. Instead, as Moen argued, professional travelling *völva* commanded respect and fear.⁸⁰⁰ In archaeological considerations of Viking burials in Dublin and the broader corpus, weapons in male graves have been deemed to symbolize power and agency. They represent how power might have been acquired and maintained; and modern archaeologists don't seem to hesitate to label these as having a strong semiotic association with violence. In contrast, equivalent high-status female markers- brooches, jewelry, keys, caskets, staffs, and similar items- have often been labeled as household items representing the so-called sphere of domestic power, a largely passive role. This perpetuates the separate sphere ideology of the antiquarians and imposes its tenants on a distinct medieval Viking culture and context to which these do not apply. This separate sphere dichotomy is a false opposition in the Irish Viking framework. It also supposes that women only gained power as gifted to them in relation to their male kin, negating the potential power they might have acquired as *seiðr* practitioners.

Clearly not all the items found in graves deemed by modern archaeologists to be women's are objects whose symbolic ties are primarily, or most importantly, linked to *seiðr*. Based on the strong ties between daily life and magic practice it is possible that

⁷⁹⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 42, translating and paraphrasing Unn Pedersen, 'Dumme menn og troll til kjerringer' in Childis Konstantinos, Julie Lund, and Christopher Prescott (eds.), *Facets of Archaeology; Essays in honour of Lotte Hedeager on her 60th birthday* Oslo Arkeologiske Serie Vol. 10 (Oslo, 2008), p. 590.

⁷⁹⁹ Price, 'Archaeology of *Seiðr*', p. 121.

⁸⁰⁰ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41.

many of these items have some links to their belief systems and could have been overlooked. However, based on the survey of items in Dublin, and Scandinavian burial in general, it is clear that in the Finglas and Kilmainham burials, there are a few items that have strong links to *seiðr* practice.

Seiðr and its tools represent a powerful medium of violence as tangible and as real to the Vikings as swords and other weaponry. Instead of dividing grave goods along this separate sphere doctrine, this thesis argues that both items of *seiðr* and weapons were used in burial in an effort to express and display both political and supernatural power. These items also assisted the persons in the burial in their journey in the afterlife to whatever realm of the dead they might have been aiming for, though it seems perhaps best for Odin or Freyja. It is evident then, that violence and its tools played an integral role in the discourse of power.

Another point of interest is that while *seiðr* practice was associated with a form of femininities, it might not necessarily have been the sole arena of women. Instead, according to Neil Price, the written sources show an almost even divide in the practice of *seiðr* between men and women. Male practitioners are often slandered with dishonor and generally labeled *ergi* in the saga materials, a term whose exact meaning has been an area of debate amongst scholars like Carol Clover; though it is generally believed to be a state of cowardice or passive homosexuality.⁸⁰¹ However, as the exploration of *ergi* indicated in relation to *seiðr* staffs, it is highly probable that this was a deliberate misinterpretation of Viking gender identities and ritualistic practices by a Christian society. It was most likely an imposition of their views upon a pagan past that did not conform to their norms of behavior. As such, it was a way of both distancing and condemning their previous practices. It is possible that these people occupied a third gender space that would have been understood, and perhaps valued within their own contemporary society.

As was argued in the introduction to this chapter, oftentimes items linked to women or to femininities have been dismissed, viewed as goods given to women in a male dominated power structure instead of considering them as tools or representations of powerful female actors. This lack of consideration does not take into account the critical importance of magic practice and *seiðr* ritual in Viking society or the powerful roles that women held within this sphere. It is evident both from the nature of the whalebone plaque and the staff, and their inclusion in the Kilmainham burials which also held high-

⁸⁰¹ Carol Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 373-374.

status masculine items, like swords, that these represented a person of high standing in Viking Dublin.

Seiðr and its practice were integral to violence and also to demonstrating power as this paper has explored, and therefore the tools of which can easily be associated with displays and negotiations of dominance that occurred in the rituals of burial. The Vikings of Dublin were utilizing the symbolism associated with *seiðr* to convey power. That they were found buried in connection to other high status graves containing weapons furthers the link between violence, power and *seiðr* practice.

Indeed, these items associated with *seiðr* practice can be viewed as similar to weapons in a symbolic sense. Both could be utilized to negotiate power by conveying symbolism associated with violence. And, as briefly touched on this earlier, that because of their association with legitimate violence to the Vikings, symbolically both could be employed to represent claims of dominance over other groups, and both were mediums with which to actively display such social and political power in burial. In the case of these *seiðr* items, then, it seems likely that they are not in a binary opposition to weaponry as passive symbols of domestic female power, and in fact, one facet of them is another form of violence associated perhaps primarily with femininities, but as real and as powerful as a sword in Viking Dublin.

Chapter Seven: 'Tertiary', Un-gendered, or Gender Neutral Burial in Dublin

This chapter will explore the Dublin burials labeled tertiary or gender neutral. It will consider the symbolism inherent in the graves in an effort to understand how gender was utilized in ritual. It will also investigate why these burials are referred to by certain scholars as un-gendered or gender neutral, and why Harrison originally referred to them as 'tertiary' in his thesis before changing this third group to gender-neutral in his book with Ó Floinn, with some changes as well to what this group constituted as will be seen. A central aim of this chapter is to conduct careful analyses of case studies of different of graves goods to deconstruct this third category. However, it is critical to provide a theoretical backdrop with which to explore the terms 'tertiary', 'un-gendered', and 'gender neutral' as they apply to burial. Following this will be an analysis of these burial trends in Norway, utilizing the work of Moen and Solberg primarily, and finally a consideration of Harrison's investigation in England, in particular York, before delving into Dublin and conducting analysis of case studies.

7.1 Defining Tertiary, Un-gendered, or Gender Neutral

As was evident in the previous consideration, the third category that archaeologists have used to classify burials varies in definition. For example, in Solberg's study this was referred to as the graves where 'sex identification was not possible' and so these are de facto un-gendered as she conflated the two; and in Harrison's thesis he referred to this group as 'tertiary' and in his later work with Ó Floinn they would label there third group gender-neutral.⁸⁰² While these groups do contain some overlap, there are clear differences between Solberg's, and others, ideas of un-gendered, gender neutral and Harrison's identification of graves he called tertiary. For Solberg, her third category contained those that were 'sparsely equipped' and contained items like bones, knife blades, charcoal etc.⁸⁰³ Un-gendered graves are also found in Moen's study and consist of those simply not assigned a gender based on burial goods due to lack of evidence.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰² Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 70; Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 166; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

⁸⁰³ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 70 and 72.

⁸⁰⁴ See for example, Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 48 and 61.

For Harrison, tertiary burials were those that he considered to be 'generally less well-furnished' and containing items that don't have 'specific gender associations'.⁸⁰⁵ Within this, he had a sub-category he labeled 'female tertiary' so clearly these are not all gender neutral graves.⁸⁰⁶ Tertiary and un-gendered are categories of easy comparison because Harrison's tertiary burials often contain items similar to, or the same as, those other scholars have labeled un-gendered, or, in the case of female tertiary, they would have simply been considered female as will become the case for Harrison himself in his later monograph with Ó Floinn.⁸⁰⁷

Harrison and Ó Floinn's third group would be known as gender-neutral. These they defined as those burials 'that do not contain gender-specific artefacts (i.e., weapons, oval brooches, or bead groups) but that are, nonetheless, accompanied by at least one artifact'.⁸⁰⁸ They referred to these burials as those that did not contain 'any gendered artefacts'.⁸⁰⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn also considered the potential difficulty with these burials stating that,

...these non-gendered graves are more difficult to identify in antiquarian records, and they contribute to the calculations of the minimum numbers of Viking graves only where a gender neutral grave is the only one present or where burials have been recovered under modern scientific conditions.⁸¹⁰

They believe that this may account for why so few of these types of burials have been found in Ireland. Indeed, they questioned whether it was realistic to refer to gender-neutral burials as Viking because Scandinavian artefacts are 'rarely found' in these graves.⁸¹¹ They contended that the Scandinavian furnished burials as a whole in Ireland are not 'at a fundamental level' Viking.⁸¹² Instead, they stated that these burials reflected settled groups, which 'rapidly took on a Hiberno-Norse character'.⁸¹³ This change could also be reflected in the small amount of materials or non-Scandinavian items contained in these gender-neutral graves. This concept of deliberate modification of burial strategy as a result of assimilation and conquest is something that this thesis has argued throughout and idea will be explored in more depth in the case studies.

⁸⁰⁵ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 168 and 170.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁰⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 354 and 395

⁸⁰⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 299.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

On the surface there does not appear to be much difference between un-gendered and gender neutral burials, after all they both represent graves that do not adhere to the labels male or female exclusively. However, un-gendered is a category assigned by archaeologists that represents a lack of information and where the scholar did not feel enough data was available to assign a specific category. So the grave remains unassigned, un-gendered. Gender neutral, in contrast, are burials that are defined within the scope of this thesis as those containing items, or the specific grave goods themselves, that traverse gender lines and could be associated with forms of commonly performed femininities and masculinities. These burials are not assigned that label because of a lack of information, but due to the contention that the objects in the grave to have been utilized by people who performed 'man,' 'woman,' or even third genders in the Viking Age. There is certainly overlap between these two categories, and often un-gendered graves remain that way because there are items associated with both aspects of the binary system, man/woman, which these studies utilized, like Solberg. Gender neutral is not necessarily a category recognized by Viking people. Its purpose in this thesis is to acknowledge that there were items and symbols in graves that were not necessarily gender specific, or could be modified and utilized by all genders in certain circumstances, contexts, or rituals. Instead of assigning an entire burial a label of 'gender neutral', like the previous chapters on masculinities and femininities have argued, this thesis will assign this label to specific items, though a burial with a singular grave good or only these items may be generalized into this category. This will be explored with examples in the case studies section. With this methodological approach noted it is imperative to establish a theoretical framework.

Solberg contended that burials, in particular prehistoric graves, indicated the social status and rank of the person they contained. She stated that 'the findings in a specific area of both richly furnished and plain graves are supposed to reflect a society with marked differences in social status'.⁸¹⁴ In fact, the main aim of her investigation, that this thesis has utilized throughout, was to deduce social rank in Norway as determined by funerary goods.⁸¹⁵ Her analysis presupposed that those graves that contain items modern scholars have labeled as less significant or less valuable were, in turn, less important to the Vikings and reflect a lower social status. Those with elaborate burials reflected people with the most money or highest social status and those less furnished, or those graves

⁸¹⁴ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 61.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

that did not contain any goods at all, represent middling or lower classes, respectively. Solberg, for example, used the amount of weapons as indicative of social status, and concluded that the better equipped a grave, the higher the status of the person interred within it, that those represent an 'aristocratic group'.⁸¹⁶ She found, however, in her professionally excavated examples, some data to contradict these neat groups. For instance, this data showed that not all graves with only one weapon represented low status men. Indeed some of these were boat burials and others had equestrian equipment; thus, she concluded, that some of these represent some men of higher status.⁸¹⁷ Though even with only one weapon, as is clear from these examples, they still had other items which marked them as high status according to Solberg.

Moen maintained 'gender as a message communicated through garment, ornament, and social role, has considerable variations that we ought not underestimate'.⁸¹⁸ Furthermore, she cautioned that the 'body is not a given', and that gender identity and representation can be modified by a variety of factors including age and status.⁸¹⁹ She contended that this results in a copious amount of gender identities in each society.⁸²⁰ A key point she made was that contemporary western society is 'relatively poor' with regards to gender categories and that this lack of understanding may result in misconstruing these identities in past societies.⁸²¹

As has been seen in the previous chapters, and will be reinvestigated here, many studies of Viking burial practice limit themselves to two strictly formed gender identities male and female. Even though it is apparent that there are many types and ways to perform masculinities and femininities, and also that these identities are fluid and can be modified and changed due to age and other factors. In particular for the Vikings, there might have been gender fluidity based on practice of *seðir*, something this chapter will investigate again more closely. Additionally, graves are a reflection of the society that buried the person, perhaps more so than the person they interred. It is essential, then, to try to read the message communicated via the funerary goods, instead of forcing the person, or people, buried within to conform to a female or male gender identity. To only impose this binary severely limits the ways in which this cultural text can be understood,

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.

⁸¹⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 5.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Ibid., p. 6.

and this is particularly critical for those graves labeled gender neutral or tertiary. Moen cautioned that the use of modern categories of male and female could result in a loss of understandings of the 'subtleties of gender' because it does not take into account gender fluidity.⁸²² She argued that modern scholars must be meticulously careful to avoid stereotypes and the application of presentism on studies of the past.⁸²³ Furthermore, and what is of crucial concern to the burials examined in this chapter, Moen postulated that deviations are to be expected.⁸²⁴

While it is valuable for scholars to accept and claim that there were burials that did not conform to the predominant binary of male/female, the term gender neutral can be somewhat misleading. It implies that the items contained in the burial are not associated with femininities or masculinities exclusively or that the grave contained objects relating to both genders. This, however, is determined by the gender categories modern archaeologists have created, weapons with male graves and oval brooches and jewelry for female graves. When a burial contained items relating to both genders scholars often either force it to conform to one gender or seemingly throw it into this large melting pot of 'gender neutral' burials. This, in reality, reflects more of a lack of knowledge or understanding of Viking gender roles than what would have been deemed gender neutral in the Vikings own context. As Moen argued, modern conceptions of Viking Age women as 'housebound and hidden' are as flawed as the idea that all Viking men were sexually aggressive warriors.⁸²⁵

The title neutral, instead of gender specific, and the studies of it, often imply that these are exceptions, when in many instances, as this thesis will demonstrate, these such burials outnumber ones assigned male or female. The groups tertiary and gender neutral often also function as a catch-all for any number of graves whose items vary greatly. They are seemingly incorporated into these categories because modern archaeologists cannot identify the gender of the decedent, hence gender neutral; or, because it is assumed that such burials contain items that were not as valuable as those included in other burials, hence lower status. This is not always the case. For example, while Harrison's thesis contended that less well-furnished did not mean lower-status, this is still assigning modern biases onto the Viking past with the assumption that the artifacts contained in the

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

tertiary burials represent 'less well-furnished burial' and that 'well-furnished' means either more items, or items that modern scholars believe to be high value.⁸²⁶ He did argue for changing or variant burial traditions that resulted in the new or different burial strategies that created these tertiary burials, something echoed also in his monograph with Ó Floinn.⁸²⁷ But he still used language like 'better furnished counterparts', which created a hierarchy of sorts. While arguably one coin in a grave does not represent physically the same amount of wealth that, for example, two double-edged swords would, there is the distinct possibility, as this thesis has argued, that modern scholars do not understand the value that Vikings placed on specific grave goods. Additionally, while Harrison is correct in his line of thinking that this might represent a different burial strategy, it might also simply be that modern researchers have applied their own conceptions of value and wealth. It might also be that items have gone missing or have decomposed. In his later work with Ó Floinn, they appear to have distanced themselves largely from assigning a material value to these burials and instead focused primarily on what they determined to be a lack of gendered symbolism.⁸²⁸

Furthermore, as will be seen in Harrison's study, to label a group female tertiary, perhaps indicates the rest of this group to be male and the norm, the adjective of female modifies tertiary, making these an exception. While Harrison argued that tertiary didn't necessarily mean male, the use of 'female tertiary' does perhaps seem to imply this unintentionally.⁸²⁹ Once again this reiterates that male is the neutral norm and female to be other. This is one of the central issues surrounding language and terminology in Viking archaeology. The term gender neutral has often been a coded term for male, much like tertiary appears to be, whether intentionally or not. Moen cited that many of these so-called gender ambiguous burials are often deemed to be male.⁸³⁰ She discussed the fact that many of the professionally excavated burial sites from the Viking Age actually turn up a higher number of female graves.⁸³¹ This seems to fly in the face of the assumption that neutral is male because there were more male burials in the Viking Age. This concept of female tertiary was thankfully jettisoned in Harrison and Ó Floinn's analysis of Viking

⁸²⁶ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 187

⁸²⁷ Ibid., pp. 187-190. Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 299.

⁸²⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.13. p. 354 and p. 395.

⁸²⁹ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 170.

⁸³⁰ Moen, *Gendered Landscape*, p. 7.

⁸³¹ Ibid.

burials in Ireland, and instead, as previously stated these two burials were simply added to his female burial count.⁸³²

When discussing the phenomena of gender neutral burial, Moen argued that this is often due to ambiguous finds and associated with the methodological process of archaeologically gendering burials.⁸³³ She maintained that gender neutral goods have been discovered with both men and women, determined osteologically. Of particular interest are beads, which have often been associated with women, but when a combination of archaeological and osteological gendering and sexing of a body has been utilized, there are 'many instances of women with only one bead and there are men with more than three beads'.⁸³⁴ In Harrison and Ó Floinn's consideration they stated that female graves are those that contain five or more beads.⁸³⁵ This is of import to this chapter because it demonstrates how these are interpreted based on the assumed gender of the decedent. As Moen asserted, when found in female graves, beads are deemed as jewelry or fashion, 'whereas in male graves they become amulets or artifacts with magical properties'.⁸³⁶ This is clearly apparent in Harrison and Ó Floinn study where they state exactly this, arguing that small numbers of beads found in so-called male graves could be worn for 'amuletic purposes'.⁸³⁷ These beads often turn up in tertiary or gender neutral burials and will be examined in more depth in the case studies section. Additionally, and critically for this chapter, she stated that men have been found with 'female grave goods' and women have been found with weapons, and therefore, she declared that there might not be such a thing as a type of grave good which belonged to one gender or the other.⁸³⁸ This idea will also be deconstructed in the case studies section.

The imposition of modern gender and social roles on Viking society has contributed greatly to the misunderstanding of gender in burial ritual; and this is particularly evident in the treatment of burials assigned gender neutral or tertiary. This will be investigated with specific examples in the case studies. It is imperative, then, to give a general overview of the trends of so-called gender neutral or tertiary burial

⁸³² Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.13, p.

⁸³³ Moen, *Gendered Landscape*, p. 7.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12.

⁸³⁶ Moen, *Gendered Landscape*, p. 7.

⁸³⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 12.

⁸³⁸ Moen, *Gendered Landscape*, p. 7.

practice in the Norwegian corpus before proceeding to insular comparisons and Viking Dublin itself.

7.2 Gender Neutral and Un-gendered Burials in Scandinavia

Solberg's larger examination of the Viking and Merovingian graves in Norway was divided along a clear gender binary, allowing only for graves to be divided into male and female.⁸³⁹ The many issues inherent in Solberg's larger study have been discussed at length in previous chapters and will not be reiterated in depth here, but the strict conformation to a binary system was a fundamental flaw. The inclusion of more categories allows for the deconstruction of Viking burial and demonstrates acceptance of the nuanced nature of gender representations and ideologies in its culture. It also makes apparent that modern conceptions of gender and strict binaries are not applicable to Viking Age conceptions and this allows for the exploration of gendered symbolism within the framework and context of the Vikings themselves. Solberg's exclusion of this in her larger study, therefore, severely limits her ability to contextualize the Vikings.

She does, however, consider this category in her professionally excavated materials. These were conducted between 1956 and 1978 and come from the '*museums tilvekst*' from the *Historisk Museum* in Bergen, *DKNVs Museet* in Trondheim, and the *Universitetets Oldsaksamling* in Oslo. Among these 112 burials were thirty-four for which 'sex-identification was not possible'.⁸⁴⁰ Solberg argued that this was a 'far larger proportion than in the total find population in the museums'.⁸⁴¹ These contained cremated bones, charcoal, knife blades, whetstones, and other such items which led her to conclude that they were furnished sparsely.⁸⁴² Due to this lack of items, she hypothesized that these graves were not reported or not even found and this is what accounted for the difference between the professionally excavated numbers and the total.⁸⁴³ As Harrison's evidence showed, and is clearly apparent in Dublin, there are any number of such burials found in the Atlantic Archipelago, many that were found in the 18th and 19th centuries. These were often found in tandem with burials with items traditionally viewed to be valuable, swords, oval brooches and the like, though not always. Therefore, it is possible that Solberg's hypothesis is somewhat applicable to this study area as well.

⁸³⁹ Solberg, 'Social Status', p. 63.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 70. Please see Figure 4.3, 'Norwegian Corpus Compared to Dublin', p. 305.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', p. 70.

Dommasnes' study focused on female roles and ranks, but she, like Solberg, posed the question as to whether social status and role could be determined based on the contents of burials.⁸⁴⁴ She was particularly interested in whether grave goods could be used to determine how biological sex or socially-constructed gender impacted these roles and social status.⁸⁴⁵ A consideration of the issues or methodological biases inherent in her study has already been conducted in the previous chapters. The analysis and data comparison here will focus primarily on the association of grave goods with social status, and, critically on the idea that fewer grave goods equals lower status as this is generally what the knowledge about gender neutral burial indicates.

She defined 'role' as a 'person's relationship to other members of society... and no hierarchical implications are intended', which she differentiated from 'rank' which is to say 'a person's place in the social hierarchy'.⁸⁴⁶ The analysis of status is crucial when considering these so-called gender neutral or tertiary graves, because often they are assumed to be those of lower status people from the Viking Age due to their lack of what modern scholars presume to be high status markers, like weapons or costly oval brooches. Dommasnes contended, for example, that furnished burial practice was only limited to those with more resources, those 'affluent members of society'.⁸⁴⁷ She argued that because those buried in the region were often found on individual farms that only the most important person of the generation was buried in this manner.⁸⁴⁸ However, she also believed that this didn't offer a satisfactory explanation for the different customs and rites associated with burial on the same farms, which formed the 'rule' rather than the exception in the Viking Age. Instead, she suggested, that perhaps the rituals reflected the deceased's life and status in society.⁸⁴⁹ This link, or supposed link has been a central focus of this study's examination, and can be somewhat problematic as it supposes agency of the deceased in their death rituals. Therefore, Dommasnes concluded that,

...variation in grave goods, treatment of the body and the grave-gifts have all been consciously made in order to symbolize different sides of the deceased's life: his/her tasks of work and responsibility, relationships to other people and groups; positions of power and influence...maybe family.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

Based on her analysis of laws from the Viking Age, which were not written down until the end of the 11th century, Dommasnes contended that this society was highly stratified. Therefore, this society with its diverse roles and ranks ranging from jarl to thrall had some symbolic representation in burial. However, she cautioned that it is 'almost impossible...to decide which symbol reflects what'.⁸⁵¹ This is what is particularly interesting for these gender neutral burials, because Dommasnes believed that a number of burial rites might not leave material traces, that there are almost an unlimited amount of elements which could hold symbolic meaning, or not; and finally, that because of the excavation of many of these burials was not carried out by experts there could be missing information or elements. Dommasnes did allow that no matter what the status of the burials or the excavation methods utilized that 'one must be allowed to make suggestions' based on the elements included in the burials, and as such she conducted her study.⁸⁵²

These arguments are of particular importance when deconstructing tertiary, un-gendered, or gender neutral burials, because, as this thesis will demonstrate, many of them do not contain vast quantities of burial goods, with some only containing one item. It has also been assumed by scholars that these represent lower status persons from the Viking Age due to this lack of number and perhaps expense of burial goods. However, like Dommasnes argued, there could have been any number of ritual activities utilized to demonstrate the power of the deceased which took place at the time of burial and left no trace in the archaeological record. That this person merited a furnished burial seems to indicate that it was a person of some status, because, as was established previously, these could not account for the whole population. Indeed, this ritual practice only represented a select amount. Therefore, even with these gender neutral, un-gendered, or tertiary burials factored in, furnished graves do not account for the total population of the Viking Age. Additionally, there are some of these graves including items which represented both masculinities and femininities, which have been placed in this category because scholars have not been able to archaeologically determine their gender. These graves can contain items associated with high status symbolism and therefore, the categories of gender neutral, un-gendered, or tertiary do not always have a small count of items, or goods that are of a lower value. Sometimes gender neutral is used interchangeably with un-gendered burial, those graves which could not be assigned a gender based on funerary goods. This

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

demonstrates the wide variance of the gender neutral or un-gendered categories and, therefore, their problematic usage. This is clearly apparent in Moen's analysis that will be explored later.

In terms of her methodological approach, Dommasnes operated along a binary system dividing male and female burials based upon jewelry and weapons, so a consideration of gender-neutral burial and a comparison here is impossible.⁸⁵³ While Dommasnes did attempt to determine biological sex via gendered symbols in burial, she construed that some items, particularly tools, do not operate along a binary system. Instead she found a few examples of so-called women's graves that contain items that have been hegemonically linked to male burials. However, she seemed to want to force a binary system upon these graves and attempted to get all of the burials to conform to either male or female gender. Forcing all data to conform to one gender or the other might miss critical or nuanced information from the Viking Age and overlook the divergent nature of gender roles as evidenced in funerary practice. While her study does acknowledge that burials did not always contain items that scholars aligned with one gender or the other, she could take this one step further and not insist on this binary understanding and instead allow for a myriad of gender role possibilities.

She further decreased her data group because she wanted to include only those burials that were 'assumed to be complete and undisturbed' and this reduced the sample size to thirty graves that she could also osteologically sex.⁸⁵⁴ The burials that she did not consider, that she deemed to have been disturbed or incomplete, could have been those other scholars have called tertiary or gender neutral. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that her study is wholly complete in the picture it paints of the Viking Age, because according to her data there are no such tertiary or gender neutral burials in the Sogn district, something which differs greatly from Solberg's consideration and what is found in Moen's appendix.

What is particularly valuable from her study for this chapter, however, is her conclusions on the use and occurrence tools and other items related to trade or similar practices. For example, she found that textile-working elements are most frequently found in women's graves, but not always. She concluded that agricultural equipment was slightly more common in female burial, but in all these cases the tools are sickles. She also

⁸⁵³ Ibid., p. 73.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

found that cooking tools are more common in female graves, 26% versus 16% in male graves, but they clearly still occur in male burials.⁸⁵⁵

Dommasnes also deduced that while trades- as determined by the tools included in the graves- were generally restricted to men, there were exceptions. One example is found in a purported female burial at Hoppstad in Vik which had boat builder's implements. Another female burial at the same farm had an awl. A further so-called woman's grave here had a weight scale. Interestingly at Aurland, Dommasnes found women's graves with arrowheads, which she believed indicated women partook in hunting activities.⁸⁵⁶

These findings are particularly important for the graves considered in this chapter because they demonstrate that tools are not an indication of gender, and, therefore, support the idea that graves containing tools are gender neutral to a degree. These graves instead contain items that could be associated with either gender, dependent on context and various other factors. Therefore, to determine a decedent's gender by the inclusion of these tools is problematic.

Most of Moen's theoretical approach was discussed in the theory section of this chapter. The specifics of how this approach affected her research will now be investigated. Moen was certainly aware of gender bias in archaeological study as her thesis demonstrated. She contended that women were often portrayed as tending to hearth and home and that tasks, such as hunting, warfare and politics, were viewed as the truly more important ones and were assigned as masculine identity.⁸⁵⁷ This is, of course, following a strict binary of male/female around a Victorian conception of separate sphere doctrine. Moen was also well aware of the seeming insistence to show that women participated in 'male' activities in an effort to demonstrate they were no less active, or worthy, than men.⁸⁵⁸ The process is contrary to the objectives of gender archaeology and privileges work that has historically been associated with men. It uses stereotypical men's work as a measurement to determine if women were powerful, or if the work women were doing was valuable. This is a return to what the previous chapter on femininities argued against, mainly, that women's power should not be forced to conform to a male power hierarchy. While Moen rejected this binary system, she did consider in her study

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 11.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

only those burials archaeologically and osteologically determined gender by professional archaeologists, leaving out the so-called gender neutral category and adhering to a strict two gender system. However, she did include in her appendix burials which did not conform to this system. It is these un-gendered or gender indeterminable burials that will be considered for this section.

When examined closely, a binary system of gendering grave goods has been proven false in several cases. In Moen's appendix, of the burials listed from the south Kaupang region, of which there are a total of eighteen, none have an assigned gender as determined osteologically.⁸⁵⁹ Of these, there are a number that appear to conform to the gender binary held by other archaeologists of sword or jewelry, of male and female. For example, burial labeled Ka. 150 contained a single-edged sword, axe, shield boss and spearhead.⁸⁶⁰ In Solberg, Dommasnes or Harrison and Ó Floinn studies this would have been labeled male. Another one, is burial Ka. 154 which held a spindle whorl, rivet and bead: based on the textile working equipment, Solberg would have associated this with a female burial.⁸⁶¹ There are others that adhere to Harrison and Ó Floinn's gender-neutral burials, Ka. 166 only had scissors, and Ka. 158 and Ka. 159 only contained iron rivets.

However, within this appendix Moen also listed multiple examples that contain items hegemonically tied by modern scholars to both male and female burials- those that traverse gendered lines. For example, burial Ka. 272 in Bikjholberget, contained an axe, knife, but also a possible oval brooch, needle hone, fragment of pottery, bead, penannular brooch, and strike-a light.⁸⁶²

It is clear then, from Moen's appendix, that even though these burials have been gendered, that the items contained within them do not always conform to the binary assumption of weapon or brooch/jewelry, and weapon or textile working equipment. Instead, it is evident that burials in the Kaupang region of Norway could contain items

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 54-56.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁶² Ibid., p. 62; Further examples are Ka. 282, gendered female, contained a spearhead, axe, knife, crampon, two mounts shaped like miniature adzes, hook, flint, hook and mount for casket, spindle whorl, burnt wood, two beads, two weights, rivets, a few other possible items including the remains of a knife, bone spindle whorl, and a soapstone spindle whorl (Ibid, p.64). Another clear example is burial Ka. 257 from Bikjholberget, also gendered male, and included a double edged sword, spearhead, boss, knife or arrowhead, but also two scissors, a looped needle case and a needle hone (Ibid., p. 60 and 62). These graves can be compared to Ka. 269, a burial gendered female which had an axe, knife, pottery and four nails; or Ka. 250 which contained among other things two oval brooches, textiles, equal armed brooch, insular strap buckle, double-edged sword, spearhead, scythe, spindle-whorl, scissors, and an iron key (Ibid., p.59 and 62).

that traverse boundaries established by modern scholars. It is now critical to turn to other insular locations, and in particular to Harrison's study of burial in England. As with the other chapters of this thesis, it is crucial to understand what Norwegian Vikings and their descendents were doing in other insular contexts in order to contextualize Dublin in its greater framework.

7.3 Insular Tertiary or Gender-Neutral Burials

As previously examined, in his study of the Norse graves in Dublin and the broader insular context, Harrison coined the term 'tertiary burial', referring to those graves that contain items that 'fail to fit the precise pattern of weapons or oval brooches'.⁸⁶³ Instead these graves hold items that may have been aligned with masculinities and femininities. They are also generally 'less well-furnished' according to Harrison, though in his theory this did not indicate less status.⁸⁶⁴ These are not always in sync with what other scholars have deemed gender neutral or un-gendered, as some contain textile-working equipment that Solberg, for example, would have used to deem them female. However, Harrison, created a subcategory of what he claimed to be female tertiary burials, and these fit among this group.⁸⁶⁵ This is in contrast to his later exploration with Ó Floinn specifically of Viking burials in Ireland, they would drop this term and instead adopt gender-neutral. These, they argued, did not contain 'any gendered artefacts' specifically they stated that they 'do not contain gender-specific artefacts (i.e., weapons, oval brooches, or bead groups) but that are, nonetheless, accompanied by at least one artifact'.⁸⁶⁶

In his thesis, Harrison contended that in the past scholars have attributed the absence of other markers as indicative of 'prior disturbance, or the poor recording of information during and after their recovery'.⁸⁶⁷ He noted the recent shift in this attitude and the fact that scholars have accepted there is another category of burials that do not contain either weapon or oval brooches.⁸⁶⁸ Critically, he claimed that the practice of these so-called tertiary burials was much more extensive than previous considered.⁸⁶⁹ This

⁸⁶³ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 166.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁶⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

⁸⁶⁷ Harrison, *Furnished Scandinavian Burial*, p. 166.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

argument is clearly reflected in his data. For example, Harrison found that in his total research area, encompassing England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, there were 126 possible examples of these burials, sixty-eight of which Harrison determined to be definite cases.⁸⁷⁰

Harrison and Ó Floinn's research noted the difficulty of identifying these such burials in the antiquarian accounts, which they stated may account for a lack of them in Ireland.⁸⁷¹ As previously cited, they also questioned whether these so-called gender-neutral burials could even be considered Viking due to the absence generally of Scandinavian items. However, as this study has argued throughout, it is also apparent that burial rituals were being modified in accordance with those around them, those they were in competition with and those who were allies. Therefore, it is possible to agree with Harrison and Ó Floinn's argument questioning the 'Vikingness' of these burials while still considering them furnished and Scandinavian in nature.

Hadley considered similar issues, albeit more generally within the context of the Viking burials in England. She argued that upon settlement ethnic divisions, if they ever existed, probably started to break down, and the Norse elite are likely to have identified more with the local Anglo-Saxon elite than with any poorer Norse settlers.⁸⁷² She contended that in England the Norse elite were quick to 'adopt the trappings of lordship prevalent in England'.⁸⁷³ However, she also argued that sometimes Norse leaders displayed their Norse identity as related to political climate, as this thesis has also argued.⁸⁷⁴ However, these arguments relate to Viking burial in England, a practice, which has been evident in this thesis, is clearly different from what occurred in Ireland. She also argued for the difficulty with the use of these gender neutral or tertiary burials as evidence for Viking burial, particularly when considered along with the high and quick rate of acculturation. This was especially evident in those with only coinage and the possibility of it appearing in Anglo-Saxon burial rite.⁸⁷⁵ However, given the high rate of acculturation, and her own arguments about this phenomena, it is possible that these do represent a modified Scandinavian burial strategy incorporating some ties to Anglo-Saxon

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁷¹ Harrison and O'Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 13.

⁸⁷² Hadley, D.M., *The Vikings in England: settlement, society and culture* (Manchester, 2006), p.83-84.

⁸⁷³ Hadley, *Vikings in England*, p. 70.

⁸⁷⁴ Hadley, *Vikings in England*, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁷⁵ For Hadley's consideration of Anglo-Saxon burial ritual, please see Hadley, *Vikings in England*, pp. 247-248.

burial while also performing a modified version of their Viking burial strategy.⁸⁷⁶ The use of these arguments, while providing an interesting contrast for the practice of furnished Scandinavian burial ritual in Ireland, are not necessarily applicable there, due to a variety of factors, most importantly ethnic identity and geographical location.

Harrison's thesis found that the average range for tertiary burial is 30-34% in his study of insular burial patterns.⁸⁷⁷ In southern England, twenty-nine tertiary burials out of a total of fifty-seven, 51%. In western England, Harrison found twelve tertiary out of a total thirty-seven total burials, 32%. In northern England, out of fifty-five burials, twenty-seven were tertiary, 49%. Northwest England, with its close ties to the Norwegians of Dublin, is home to seven tertiary out of total of twenty-one or some 33%; compared to northeast England where there are twenty tertiary out of 34, or 59%.⁸⁷⁸ This illuminates an interesting contrast in there being a majority of 'tertiary' graves in northeastern England, which is also reflected in the total of burials of northern England; and there are two times as many tertiary burials in northeastern England as there are weapon burials.

An important avenue of consideration is the range of contents for these graves. As such a brief survey of Harrison's findings is necessary for comparison to the Dublin corpus and will also illuminate some of the issues that he and Ó Floinn raised with regard to 'Vikingness'. In Cumbria, for example, he found at Brigham church, a tertiary grave with a ringed pin.⁸⁷⁹ Another tertiary grave in Ormside Church in Cumbria contained only a copper-alloy decorated bowl.⁸⁸⁰ Carlisle Cathedral in Cumbria is host to four tertiary burials found in a group buried with four copper-alloy buckles and strap ends, another strap end, pins of an unspecified number, silver hooked tag, a small whetstone with a silver mount, and a gold wire pendant and toggle. These were found in 1988, and, therefore, the sources for this assembly are much more reliable than the previous three, located during the antiquarian period.

St. Paul in the Bail in Lincoln was home to a tertiary burial that held some high-status metal work- a repaired silver Carolingian belt slider and Mercian and West Saxon

⁸⁷⁶ For an overview of Viking burial in England, particularly as it relates to Anglo-Saxon burial and the issues involved in considering the two together, please see Hadley, *Vikings in England*, pp. 239-254.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid. Please see Fig 4.6., 'Insular Contexts Compared', p. 308.

⁸⁷⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, data drawn from p. 295 and 299.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 531.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 534.

coins.⁸⁸¹ Another found in 1858 in Therfield Heath, in Hertfordshire, contained a copper alloy buckle and an annular brooch.⁸⁸² This pattern is reflected in the whole of Harrison's data, these burials contain small amounts of items that may not appear to have the high status that is inherent in objects like weapons or elaborate oval brooches and forms of jewelry. However, some of these graves had items like silver wire and objects created from gold, so surely these are representative of a person with considerable status in the Viking world. Again, as stated, while these might have small amounts of items that are not necessarily Scandinavian in origin, it is clear that the practice of furnished burial ritual was enacted, albeit in modified ways, as dependent upon those who were creating the burials and the message they desired to send, as this thesis has continuously argued. This will be investigated in some depth in the case studies.

An area of particular interest for comparison is of course York, due to its links with the Norwegian Vikings in Dublin, which was established in earlier chapters. According to Harrison's study, of the sixteen burials contained in York, fifteen were tertiary, with the remaining grave being a single weapon burial.⁸⁸³ One of the burials in York Minster contained twenty rivets and a *Denarius*, though there has been some debate amongst scholars as to how much this represents Scandinavian versus Anglo-Saxon burial practices.⁸⁸⁴ According to Harrison, the body in this grave was a middle-aged man.⁸⁸⁵ A second was found to have a coin, gold thread, and chest fittings; the third held a bone comb and a nail fragment; the fourth contained a copper-alloy dress pin and chest fittings; the fifth had within it a single silver finger ring; gold thread and a coin dating to the reign of Aethelred II were found in the sixth burial. The seventh and eighth graves both only held within them a single coin, the same piece as the sixth; and the final ninth grave contained a copper-alloy finger ring and key.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸¹ Alan Vince, 'Lincoln in the Viking Age' in James Graham-Campbell, RA Hall and Judith Jesch and David Parsons (ed.), *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress* (Oxford, 2001), p. 73.

⁸⁸² V. I. Evison, 'A Viking Grave at Sonning, Berkshire', in *Antiquities Journal* xli (1969), p. 341; T.C. Leithbridge, 'Anglo-Saxon Cambridgeshire' in L.F. Salzman (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely* (London, 1938), p. 322; Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 597.

⁸⁸³ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 567. Please see Fig. 7.1, 'York Burial Image', p. 331, for a depiction of this burial.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 550-555.

It is evident, then, that the graves that Harrison associated with tertiary burial in York had small and sparse assemblages, though some, like those with silver arm bands or silver wire, did indicate some level of wealth. Many simply contained a coin or a other single item. The most extensive appears to be an example from St. Mary Bishophill Junior with its buckle plate, whetstone, knife and coin. For this burial, the skeleton was determined to be male of at least eighteen years of age.⁸⁸⁷ Harrison contended that there are parallels between this burial style and those in other insular contexts in Britain and Ireland and, therefore, that it could be representative of a Scandinavian method.⁸⁸⁸

In Ireland, excluding Ulster as per Harrison's methodology, there are eleven tertiary burials out of a total of eighty-four graves contained on the island, some 13% according to this study's calculations from Harrison's thesis.⁸⁸⁹ Specifically in Dublin, there are a total of seven of these so-called burials out of total of sixty-nine graves, or 10%, two of which Harrison contended to be 'female tertiary' based on their inclusion of textile working tools. This is in contrast to other areas in his insular corpus, but he argued that 'this low proportion is almost certainly the result of the calculation of minimum numbers of burials at Kilmainham' and that tertiary burials in this area have been underestimated.⁸⁹⁰

In his later examination with Ó Floinn, they would argue that this amount of gender-neutral burial is ten out of a larger total of 81 graves, making up some 12%.⁸⁹¹ However, as previously stated in the consideration of masculinities, the higher numbers for burial estimates are problematic due to the inclusion of stray finds as burials that are assigned to specific locations whether or not much evidence exists for this inclusion. While Harrison's thesis does include many finds with ambiguous or unclear burial contexts, this later study does so to a greater extent. In fact, Harrison and Ó Floinn appeared to mirror Solberg's approach, which this thesis has argued it problematic and has therefore relied instead upon here archaeologically excavated examples in light of this fact. As such, this thesis will use the numbers that it has put to rigorous analysis.

7.4 Animals Bones

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 555.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 556.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid., p.299.

⁸⁹⁰ Harrison, *Furnished Viking Burial*, p. 167.

⁸⁹¹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 224

To commence these case studies of tertiary and gender-neutral burials, this thesis will begin with those burials that contain animal bones. One inhumation was discovered in Inchicore or Islandbridge by workmen on April 14th, 1934.⁸⁹² It contained a cattle jawbone, which was recorded to have been found in close proximity to the human skull.⁸⁹³ The body also appeared to have originally been placed within a wooden coffin. Islandbridge or Inchicore was also home to another tertiary or gender-neutral grave to hold animal bones: this one including two teeth, one of a cattle and another of a horse found at the feet of the skeleton.⁸⁹⁴ Discovered on the first of May 1934, Harrison stated that the details from the National Museum of Ireland records indicate that 'this was anything but a typical Christian inhumation' and he declared that it was possible that the teeth were accidental, though he doesn't seem convinced this is the case.⁸⁹⁵

The final tertiary or gender neutral graves were found and excavated in 2003 by Linzi Simpson. Found in South Great Georges Street, the first burial contained 151 animal bone fragments from cattle, horse, dog, goat, sheep, and pig.⁸⁹⁶ The skeleton has been determined to probably be that of a 'young' adult male, less than twenty-five years old. The bones had no butchery marks or knife cuts, which does much to eliminate the possibility that these were from some sort of funerary feast and then buried with the decedent.

Three of the seven so-called tertiary burials in Dublin contain animal bones, and this is not unique to these types of graves, as was seen in the examination of the Donnybrook burial mound.⁸⁹⁷ This practice was certainly not exclusive to Dublin either. In Moen's study of the Kaupang region she found multiple burials that contained either animal teeth or bones. For example, out of all the burials in her appendix, those labeled Ka. 407, Ka. 252, Ka. 270, Ka. 271, Ka. 284, Ka. 291, Ka. 294, and Ka. 305, all had animal teeth. Ka. 295 had a horse skeleton and Ka. 296 had that of a dog. Ka. 127 had cremated animal bone and Ka. 218 had a dog rib. The grave labeled Ka. 305 contained animal teeth also had a full animal skeleton, in addition to animal horn and bone.⁸⁹⁸ There does seem to be a large proportion of burials in Dublin containing these items and, critically, these

⁸⁹² Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 554-555.

⁸⁹³ Bøe, *Norse Antiquities*, p. 62; O'Brien 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p. 38-9.

⁸⁹⁴ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 650; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 556.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.; Bøe, *Norse Antiquities*, p. 59-60; O'Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p. 38.

⁸⁹⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 581.

⁸⁹⁷ Please see Chapter Four for a case study of the Donnybrook burial, pp. 60-85.

⁸⁹⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, pp. 48-73.

burials hold these items and nothing else. Whereas, in Kaupang, these items are buried among other traditional grave goods like swords, axes and the like.

The first grave for analysis is the one containing 151 animal bone fragments from South Great Georges Street. Harrison, based on the fact that there were no signs of butchery or knife marks that would have occurred in feasting or carving, concluded that these bones might very well have ties to ritual practice.⁸⁹⁹ In his later work with Ó Floinn they also highlighted this lack of evidence for feasting or consumption, stating that 'there were no signs of erosion, gnawing or butchery marks'.⁹⁰⁰ As was seen in the previous chapter on femininities, animal symbolism played a crucial role in Viking ritualistic culture. Animals present in burials represented companions, grave gifts, or, in small proportions, food.⁹⁰¹ According to Jennbert, animals functioned as metaphors for the humans they were associated with: emphasizing personality traits, social identities or acting as agents of cosmological design.⁹⁰² Additionally, she argued, that animals could have transferred their traits to the person bearing their symbol, which in the case of these graves would be the decedent whose burial contained the animal bones.⁹⁰³ She also found that animals in general were discarded in ways similar to humans, and dogs and horses were buried in ways resembling human graves.⁹⁰⁴ It is important, then, to understand the symbolism of these animals in Viking culture to get an idea of what these might have meant in burial in Dublin.

Dogs are seen in many burial contexts in the wider Norse corpus. Gräslund studied the distribution of dogs in burials in Scandinavia. She found, that they were not mere companions, but instead were crucial for the journey of the soul to the afterlife.⁹⁰⁵ Like the horse, as seen Chapter Six, the dog could represent a mediator between worlds, able to traverse the land of the living and the dead.⁹⁰⁶ Jennbert posited that the dog also represented hunting.⁹⁰⁷ Interestingly, Gräslund stated that the dog served as a representative of the wolf in some contexts, like burial.⁹⁰⁸ Both dogs and wolves played an

⁸⁹⁹ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, pp. 674-675.

⁹⁰⁰ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 581.

⁹⁰¹ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents and Birds', p. 247.

⁹⁰² Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead', p. 267.

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁹⁰⁵ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents and Birds', p. 247.

⁹⁰⁶ Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

⁹⁰⁷ Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead', p. 271

⁹⁰⁸ Gräslund, 'Wolves, Serpents and Birds', p. 247.

integral role in warrior culture and both were connected to Odin.⁹⁰⁹ Odin himself is referred to as *Hildolfr* or battle wolf.⁹¹⁰ Iconographical representations of wolves exist throughout the Viking corpus and are quite common. One particularly famous case appears in the *Gylfaginning* concerns Fenrir and his critical role in *Ragnarök*:

...en Fenrisúlfr ferr með gapandi munn, ok er inn neðri kjöftr við jörðu, en in efri við himin. Gapa myndi hann meira, ef rúm væri til. Eldar brenna ór augum hans ok nösúm.

When Fenrir goes forth with gaping mouth, and his lower jaw is near the earth, and the upper near the sky. He shall gape more, if room were obtainable; Fire burning out of his eyes and nostrils.⁹¹¹

There are many other wolves that play important roles in the saga corpus. For example, another instance in the *Gylfaginning* where wolves are referred to as the children of an old witch, who bears sons in the shape of wolves:

...and from this source are these wolves sprung. The saying runs thus: from this race shall come one that shall be mightiest of all, he that is named Moon-Hound; he shall be filled with the flesh of all those men that die, and he shall swallow the moon, and sprinkle with blood the heavens and all the lair; thereof-shall the sun lose her shining, and the winds in that day shall be unquiet and roar on every side.
912

As examined in Chapter Six, the horse played a crucial role in Viking ideas of the cosmos and, therefore, its representation in burial, as with all animal remains, demonstrates a ritual link. In Iceland specifically, there are 115 single graves with one or more horses, however only six were professionally excavated.⁹¹³ From this data, the most frequent occurrence was one horse with one person that accounted for some 41% of the burials.⁹¹⁴ There were nineteen female burials with horses and twenty-nine male; this leads to the conclusion that it was not uncommon, at least in tenth century Iceland, for women to be buried with horses.⁹¹⁵ Additionally, the horse did not necessarily make up part of what is believed to be rich burial assemblies, as some of these graves were otherwise poorly furnished.⁹¹⁶ From Iceland, then, it is clear that the gender and what

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 248.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 255.

⁹¹¹ Translation is this author's own from '*Hér hefr Gylfaginning*' in Gudni Jónnson (ed.) *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar: með skáldatali*, (Reykjavík, 1935), § 51.

⁹¹² '*Gylfaginning*' in Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur (ed. and trans.), *The Prose Edda by Snorri Sturluson, Translated from the Icelandic with an Introduction* (New York, 1916), p. 24.

⁹¹³ Ibid., p. 259.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 260.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

modern archaeologists have determined to indicate a high-status burial might not have influenced the creation of a horse burial.

Cattle, pig, sheep and goat were also domesticated animals found in Viking graves. According to Jennbert, these animals represented wealth.⁹¹⁷ They, too, could be dualistic in nature. For instance, the goat was considered a tame animal, one associated with the farm and the home.⁹¹⁸ However, it was also associated with Thor, making it metaphysical and of ritual importance.⁹¹⁹ According to the archaeological record, Jennbert stated that the domesticated animal appeared more significant, in contrast to Snorri's assertions in his saga material.⁹²⁰

In a burial context, then, these could demonstrate the vast amount of wealth of the deceased. Much like what was discussed in Chapter Five killing animals for the purpose of sacrifice is the deliberate act of destroying a groups or individual's own wealth to demonstrate power to those observers. Within the framework of burial ritual, it is a way of negotiating and claiming power to both enemy and allied observers that the status of the dead is conferred upon the living because they still possess the means to literally throw away trappings of their wealth. This is particularly important with animal sacrifice because cattle, goats, sheep, pigs are domesticated animals reared for food and dairy products and thus, probably do not function as companions. It is clear then, that their inclusion is the deliberate destruction of wealth and property of both the deceased, but also those who remain behind. It demonstrates a conscious choice by the parties involved to undertake a ritually significant sacrificial offering. While it would not have had the same impact as human sacrifice to its audience, it nonetheless would have possibly been quite loud, detailed, and designed to stay in the minds of those witnessing the ritual.

To return now to the analysis of the symbolism in these such burials in Dublin. To begin with the two burials that have animal remains at Islandbridge. The first contained a cattle jawbone and the second held two teeth, one of a cattle and another of a horse. As previously investigated animal bones in burials could represent characteristics of the person wearing or associated with them had or wanted to have. Additionally, they could also serve as companions in the afterlife. The cattle jawbone is from a domestic creature. Cattle were associated with the farm and home, therefore the inclusion of such a bone in a

⁹¹⁷ Jennbert, 'The Heroized Dead', p. 271.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

grave could represent the wealth of the person within the burial. It could symbolize the deliberate destruction of the animal in order to accompany the deceased to the afterlife, which is associated with wealth.

Two teeth are all that is contained in the other grave. While these might seem insignificant, it is clear that animal teeth in burials are common in areas of Norway. As Moen's study demonstrated, out of all the burials contained in her appendix, Ka. 252, Ka. 270, Ka. 271, Ka. 284, Ka. 291, Ka. 294, Ka. 305, and Ka. 407 all had animal teeth.⁹²¹ Therefore, it is evident that this was a custom familiar in the Norwegian context and could have been carried over to Dublin. While the inclusion of teeth in a burial does not appear to represent the conspicuous destruction of property to the level that a full animal skeleton might, they are still significant, for no other reason than their deliberate inclusion in multiple burials. Audrey Meaney argued that when teeth are encountered in Anglo-Saxon burial, 'we suspect them at once of being amulets'.⁹²² She contended that single horse teeth in burials may be linked to a horse cult or had ritual significance.⁹²³ She argued that this might have applied to all examples of teeth found in burials.⁹²⁴ So it is possible that in Viking burial, like Anglo-Saxon, these could represent amulets of some kind, given to the deceased to aid them on their journey to part of the afterlife. They could also represent totems of the animal the decedent was associated with in life, a sort of token reminder of their personality. Finally, the teeth could function as a talisman imbued with the power and spirit of the animal, in hopes it would convey that strength to the deceased to help them in the hereafter.

Extensive amounts of animal bones in burials could represent the conspicuous destruction of a multitude of creatures. This thesis would challenge the idea that the burial from South Great Georges Street containing 151 animal bone fragments is necessarily lower-status, or conversely, less well-furnished. As previously stated these fragments were from a variety of animals: horse, dog, goat, cattle, and pig. If these represent animals that were deliberately sacrificed in a ritual performance at the time of burial this could clearly be a high status grave marker. Certainly someone with a low status, or the family of a person of lower status, would not be able to afford the conspicuous destruction of so many animals in a ritual. Additionally, as previously stated,

⁹²¹ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, pp. 60, 62, 64, 65, 69, and 72.

⁹²² Audrey Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones* (Oxford, 1981), p. 131.

⁹²³ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, pp. 131-132.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

the destruction and sacrifice of animals at burial served both a ritual function in the Viking cosmography, with each animal functioning as symbolic representative of the deceased or some significant ritual function. However, they also served to show how wealthy the family was, and wealth in these cases was inextricably linked with power. The sacrifice of a great many animals at burial could represent a very powerful individual or family.

It is critical for scholars not to assign what modern perceptions believe to be power or wealth signifiers, but instead to contextualize symbolism within the Vikings' own culture. However, in any framework, it is evident that the loss of so many animals indicated that the people burying the body had a significant amount of resources in the first place, that they were able to destroy those resources purposely, and that the destruction of said resources was a critical and deliberate component of this burial. The possible conspicuous destruction of so many animals combined with the symbolism of each animal leads this thesis to conclude that this burial was that of a person of some significant social status, possibly comparable to one with sword or oval brooches. The Donnybrook burial also included a number of animal bones perhaps representative of similar symbolism. As it relates to gender, it is very much unclear if this sort of symbolism is associated with masculinities, femininities, or third genders. It is evident that the dog and wolf have associations with Odin. The horse is also tied to warrior culture and violence, but this does not necessarily mean that the person buried within performed the male gender, as it has been demonstrated in the number of female graves that contain such items, as seen in Moen's study and the Oseberg burial. It is therefore possible to conclude that animal bones, and their symbolism, traversed Viking gender roles and could be contained in burials of any gender.

7.5 Textiles:

Three out of the remaining four burials in Dublin contained beads, items relating to textile work, or both and this will be the focus of the remaining analysis. This investigation will begin with the two graves that have cloth-working equipment. The first was found with a weapon burial at Kilmainhan prior to January 1849; and contained a sword hilt, a conical mount for a possible shield boss, thirteen beads including nine glass, three soapstone and one ceramic, a linen smoother, and a cooper-alloy band or brass

hoop.⁹²⁵ As considered in the preceeding chapter, Harrison and Ó Floinn would argue, that the whalebone plaque, that Harrison previously associated with another 1845 assemblage, was in fact part of these burials.⁹²⁶ This group in particular represent the issues surrounding labeling an entire burial female or male based on grave goods. The whalebone plaque was originally attributed to a female burial while the group that Harrison would later add it to was tertiary. In his later study with Ó Floinn this grave would be female due to these beads from the acquisition group that they paired it with. There is, however, no known specific burial link between these items from this acquisition and so it will remain included in this chapter as well due to the other textile working equipment and beads. This scenario enables an exploration of changing understandings of symbolism.⁹²⁷

Harrison and Ó Floinn stated that these items were presented to the Royal Irish Academy by Thomas Young of Islandbridge, though apparently William Wilde later associated them with a one George Young.⁹²⁸ A burial context and skeletal reference depends on a reference from a prior donation by Young, according to Harrison.⁹²⁹ It is Harrison's contention that the linen smoother and beads demonstrated that this was a female tertiary grave, which would later be considered among the female burials in his examination with Ó Floinn.⁹³⁰ It will be considered gender neutral here because as this thesis has and will argue, there is not necessarily a gender specific link to beads.

A further burial was found within a group allegedly also comprised of three weapon graves, which Harrison and Ó Floinn would later argue amounted to four based on an inclusion of a further sword hilt.⁹³¹ Found before October 1866, this group contained three swords, two spearheads, three shield bosses, one bridle, two weights, a sickle, two hammers, a large whetstone, shears, two spindle whorls, copper alloy fragments and mount, and an amber stud.⁹³² Harrison and Ó Floinn would later amend

⁹²⁵ Anonymous, 'Stated Meeting, 17 March, 1849' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* iv (1849), p. 311; W.R. Wilde, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities of Stone, Earthen and Vegetable Materials in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy*, p. 165, 168, and 196.

⁹²⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 395.

⁹²⁷ This change of location will be considered in much depth in this author's forthcoming monograph, *Gendered Symbolism in Irish Burial: The Whole Corpus to Date*.

⁹²⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 395. Wilde, *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 168.

⁹²⁹ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 660.

⁹³⁰ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 660; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.395.

⁹³¹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 430.

⁹³² Wilde, 'Islandbridge', p.13. O' Brien, 'Reconsideration of Kilmainham', p. 37-38. Please see Fig. 7.2, 'Spindle Whorls', p. 332 and Fig. 7.3, 'Spindle Whorls Found in Islandbridge 1866', p. 333.

this to include a further sword hilt and spearhead, allowing them to state that this had four male burials instead of the established three.⁹³³ However, as argued throughout the thesis, these new inclusions require a careful case study analysis that is being conducted in this author's forthcoming monograph.

According to a rough draft of the *Royal Irish Academy New Register* published by Wilde, that Harrison examined and was previously 'unrecognized', the objects were said to have been found in association with 'several skeletons' though none of the skeletal material can be found today.⁹³⁴ Harrison postulated that because the goods were acquired over a 'comparatively extended period of time' that these represent more than one grave and that because of the spindle whorls and shears that one of these was female.⁹³⁵

It is essential to revisit some previously argued theory in order to commence the examination of items relating to textile work and their association by modern scholars with femininities and the domestic sphere. As was contended in the femininities chapter, the conception of a domestic sphere in the Viking age mirroring the Victorian ideology is a false equivalency. Additionally, goods associated with femininities are often only analyzed superficially and, therefore, their nuanced symbolism is ignored. Some scholars have argued that this textile-working material demonstrated that the woman buried within worked with fabrics and would need this to toil away in the afterlife, whereas the man who was buried with a sword represented power. Nasström, for instance, analyzed Byrnhildr, who she referred to as a Valkyrie, based on her preference for battle.⁹³⁶ In her consideration, she concluded that once Byrnhildr sees Sigurdr's treasure and begins to weave a tapestry, this demonstrated, 'ordinary women's work'.⁹³⁷ The use of the word ordinary seems to imply drudgery, mundane activities, or the idea that Bryhildr, formerly a Valkyrie, is now behaving as a woman ought to in accordance with the domestic sphere ideology. This is instead of analyzing the symbolic nature of weaving and its relationship to *seiðr* practice.

Weaving and textile work, as was briefly examined in the consideration of the Kilmainham whalebone plaque, had links to Freya and to the practice of *seiðr* ritual. Owen and Dalland argued that the Scar whalebone plaque, and indeed all such plaques

⁹³³ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 430.

⁹³⁴ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 663.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Britt-Mari Nasström, *Freyja, The Great Goddess of the North* (Lund, 1995), p. 140.

⁹³⁷ Nasström, *Freyja*, p. 140.

had links to Freyja.⁹³⁸ Textile work, and especially weaving, was associated with ritual activities and *seiðr*.⁹³⁹ Owen and Dalland contended that these plaques were utilized for ceremonies, the finest of which were used for pressing linens for rituals.⁹⁴⁰

The practice of *seiðr* itself had close ties and symbolic links to weaving. Eldar Heide postulated that *seiðr* 'was about spinning a mind emissary, sending forth such a spun emissary, or attracting things or doing other things with such a mind emissary'.⁹⁴¹ She argued that the etymology of *seiðr* was literally cord, string, snare.⁹⁴² So that *seiðr* was concerned with binding and attracting, of weaving and drawing spells and incantations. Heide hypothesized that the 'sorcerer's mind emissary could be regarded as something spun: a thread or rope'.⁹⁴³ She cited examples of folklore from Northern Europe where people were said to have been able to gain cow's milk from milking a rope.⁹⁴⁴ She argued that this was closely associated with the Viking concept of a magic wind from the sorcerer's mind, which could be used to pull objects or people to it, and this wind should be conceived as something spun, as a thread.⁹⁴⁵ She also claimed that such an idea of spinning fits well within the concept that *seiðr* was often practiced on a raised dais or platform because 'one will often want to stand or sit in a high place when spinning on a spindle'.⁹⁴⁶ She offered an alternative explanation for the *seiðr* staffs. Heide maintained that these were weaving distaffs or representations of distaffs. Some of these staffs had a ring at the top and she contended that this was at the same point on a distaff where a strap for securing the spinning material could be found.⁹⁴⁷ She concluded that the concept of *seiðr* as 'ecstatic kind of sorcery' is 'fully compatible' with the idea of *seiðr* as string or cord.⁹⁴⁸

This argument, of a completely interlinked system of magic practice almost inseparable from weaving and textile work, is a conception very much evident in the narrative source material. It is also found in archaeological materials, as graves with

⁹³⁸ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 79.

⁹³⁹ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41; Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, p. 39.

⁹⁴⁰ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 79.

⁹⁴¹ Eldar Heide, 'Spinning *Seiðr*' in Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions* (Lund, 2011), p. 164.

⁹⁴² Heide, 'Spinning', p. 164.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

alleged *seiðr* symbolism often contained these types of goods as well, which in turn reinforces the magical and ritual elements of those particular burials as has been evidenced in the case studies. Additionally, Heide believed that this might have been the reason for the accusations of male practitioners of *seiðr* because 'spinning was the most characteristic of women's work'.⁹⁴⁹ As was argued in Chapter Six, the accusations of homosexuality and *ergi* leveled at male practitioners largely come from sources composed several hundred years after the Viking Age and might perhaps reflect more of the standards of the society in which they were composed than the culture which they purport to discuss. Additionally, it is quite possible that weaving and *seiðr* textile work could be engaged in parties of a third gender, which was later misinterpreted to all men who practice these rituals as *ergi*.⁹⁵⁰

This conception was closely considered in Chapter Six, but this overview of its arguments as it relates to the staff as weaving distaff are important to briefly mention. There are some issues inherent in Heide's arguments. First, she assumed all or most of *seiðr* ritual is associated with weaving, that this is the primary symbolic force. The second issue follows this, that the practice of this magic art was relegated to only being a form of femininities, a concept that is most likely untrue, as this thesis, as well as scholars such as Price have argued. It is clear that *seiðr* was also practiced in battle by warriors, for instance, and so this strict association is problematic. A third issue is her apparent use of a strict separate sphere doctrine. For example, she stated that, 'women pulled the strings while men fought'.⁹⁵¹ This seems to be reiterating the binary opposition that this thesis, along with other scholars, have cautioned against. Insisting that women were the only ones who wove or that this was always women's work is problematic. Heide later referred to weaving as 'feminine' in character. While it is certainly the case that many women in the Viking period spun wool and engaged in weaving, assigning a gender to an activity and forcing all data to conform to such a binary excludes the possibility of nuance and can result in missing exceptions; exceptions are critical to understand a society.

The final concern is Heide's heavy reliance on the saga material. These sources are not without many pitfalls, but do provide a strong support for this link between *seiðr* and textile work. Weaving, in particular, seems to have been imbued with mystical properties according to the saga material. Perhaps the most famous passage referring to

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁹⁵⁰ For a longer discussion of this topic please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

⁹⁵¹ Heide, 'Spinning', p. 167.

mystical weaving occurred in *Njal's saga*. Called the *Darraðarljóð*, this skaldic poem depicted the Valkyries weaving the heads and entrails of the dead:

Blood Rains
From the cloudy web
On the broad loam
of slaughter
The web of man,
Grey are armour,
Is now being woven;
The Valkyries
Will cross it
With a crimson weft.

The warp is made
Of human entrails;
Human heads
Are used as weights;
The heddle-rods
Are blood-wet spears;
The shafts are iron-bound,
And arrows are the shuttles.
With swords we will weave
This web of battle.⁹⁵²

The Valkyries are depicted choosing the slain at the Battle of Clontarf based on this mystical work. This gruesome description demonstrates that weaving certainly had a strong symbolic function at least in the eyes of the saga writer. Again, like the examples analyzed with the *seiðr* staff, these texts were composed much later than the events they are about.

Njal's saga was composed between c. 1250 and c. 1280 CE in Old Norse,⁹⁵³ with some scholars arguing its date was closer to c.1280 CE.⁹⁵⁴ The author of this work is still unknown, but scholars have determined it was definitively composed in Iceland.⁹⁵⁵ The events described in the narrative of *Njal's saga* allegedly took place some 200-300 years before composition of the text; the majority, taking place between the years 960 and 1020 CE.⁹⁵⁶ *Njal's saga* included many events that scholars have attempted to verify; an

⁹⁵² *Njal's saga*, (trans., eds., and intro.) Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (London, 1960), p. 349.

⁹⁵³ Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Gormlaith and Her Sisters c. 750-1400' in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume 4: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, ed. Angela Bourke et al. (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002), p. 189.

⁹⁵⁴ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, 'Introduction' in Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (Intro., trans. and ed.) *Njal's saga* (Harmondstown, 1960), p.9.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

example being the excavations of the site scholars believe to be Bergthorshvol, the home of Njal and his family. These excavations have uncovered buildings that appear to have been burnt down, and while there are difficulties with dating, this has been taken to corroborate the account of the burning of Njal.⁹⁵⁷ Regardless of these excavations however, it has been established that the text is literary in nature.⁹⁵⁸ As Magnus Magnusson and Herman Paulsson stated,

It would be misleading to call it a history as to call it a historical novel. The saga is broadly based on authenticated historical event, its material is drawn from oral traditions and occasional written records, but it is given life and force and significant artistic shape by the creative genius of an unknown author.⁹⁵⁹

In their close study of the text, Magnusson and Paulsson found that the author included a few characters that were wholly fictitious and the timeline was 'wildly inconsistent'.⁹⁶⁰ They concluded therefore, that the author made free with his sources, was clearly influenced by the circumstances and events in his own life, and that this type of narrative account would have been viewed as 'serious entertainment'.⁹⁶¹

This complicates the use of saga material, and particularly *Njal's saga*, in understanding Norse cosmography, as this thesis has argued. As such, and as has been examined in the use of narrative Norse sources, it must be utilized and deconstructed quite carefully. With that caveat, it is clear that this section of the text describes a concept of mystical weaving by the Valkyries, an idea that is found throughout the genre.

Other immortal figures who were said to use weaving to control the fates of man were the Norns. For example, in the birth of Helgi Hudingsbani:

Snero þær af afli ørløgpátto,

⁹⁵⁷ Magnusson and Pálsson, 'Introduction', p. 22-23.

⁹⁵⁸ Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith*, p. 55.

⁹⁵⁹ Magnusson and Pálsson, 'Introduction', p. 9.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24. This is perhaps evident in the *Njal's saga's* consideration of the Battle of Clontarf and particularly its treatment of Gormlaith, who was portrayed as Brian Boru's vengeful and wicked ex-wife. For example, while Gormlaith was introduced as king Sitric's mother, the author made the allegation that she is not the 'the mother of Brian's children' (*Njal's saga* (intro. and trans.) Robert Cook (London, 2001), p. 296.). This accusation is clearly false, with the earlier and more reliable Irish *Annals of Tigernach* indicating in her obituary entry in 1030 CE that she was the mother of Donnchad: 'Gormlaith, daughter of Murchad, son of Finn, mother of Sitric, son of Amlaíb Cuarán, king of the Foreigners, and of Donnchad, son of Brian, king of Munster, died.' (*Annals of Tigernach*, Stokes, p. 371). This is echoed in other Irish sources like the obituary entry in *Chronicum Scotorum*: 'Gormlaith, daughter of Murchad, son of Finn, mother of the King of the Foreigners, i.e. Sitric, and of the King of Munster, i.e. Donnchad, son of Brian, dies.' (*Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from the Earliest times to A.D. 1135: With a Supplement, Containing the Events from 1141-1150* {Transcribed by Dubhaltach Machfirisigh} (ed. and trans.) William M. Hennessy (London, 1866), p. 269).

⁹⁶¹ Magnusson and Pálsson, 'Introduction', pp. 10 and 24.

<i>pá er borgir braut</i>	<i>í Brálundi</i>
<i>þær um greiddo</i>	<i>gullin símo</i>
<i>oc und mána sal</i>	<i>miðan festo</i>

Powerfully there they wove the web of fate
 When the towns have been destroyed in Bralund
 There golden threads they wove
 And in the middle of the moon's hall they made them fast.⁹⁶²

However, Nasström argued that this conception of goddesses who weave fates was not of Norse origin, and was instead the act of carving destinies on wood, which the Norns were said to have done and which predated this idea of spinning life-threads.⁹⁶³

Regardless of the concept of Norns and the fates, the concept of magical weaving is found throughout the saga material and it is not confined to mystical creatures. For example, in *Laxdaela saga* Gudrun compared her weaving to Bolli's killing of Kjartan, stating, 'Harm spurs on to hard deeds (work) I have spun yarn for twelve ells of homespun and you have killed Kjartan'.⁹⁶⁴ Heide likened this to the Norns spinning fates.⁹⁶⁵ In *Orkneya Saga*, there is a case of a shirt woven with a deadly incantation. The Earl Harold and his brother Paul were preparing to celebrate the Yule festival. Harold noticed a shirt *hvítt sem fönn*, white as snow, with *gull-saumat*, gold stitches, had been made by Frakok and her sister Helga, daughters of Moddan, for his brother Paul.⁹⁶⁶ He coveted the shirt and decided to take it when his mother and 'those sisters' vehemently implored him to leave it:

Móðir hans þreif til, ok bað hann eigi öfunda, þótt bróðir hans aetii góð klæði, Jarl Hnykti af henni, ok bjóst til í at fara, þá hnyktu þær af sér faldinum, ok reyttu sik; ok kvadu líf hans við liggja ef hann færi í klæðit. þær grétu þá báðar mjök. Jarl fór í eigi at síðr, ok lét falla ofan um sik. En jafn skjótt sem klæði hrundi ofan um hann, kom

⁹⁶² Translation is this author's own from '*Helgaqviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*', in Hans Kuhn (ed.), *Edda Die Lieder Des Codex Regius* (Heidelberg, 1962), p. 130. This translation is preferred over Bellows translation ('*HELGAQVITHA HUNDINGSBANA I, The First Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane*' in Henry Adams Bellows *The Poetic Edda* (New York, 1936, p. 292):

Mightily wove they | the web of fate,
 While Bralund's towns | were trembling all;
 And there the golden | threads they wove,
 And in the moon's hall | fast they made them.

Particularly because of his translation of *Braut* to Trembling, when it would be better translated as this author has done, as broken, destroyed or demolished.

⁹⁶³ Nasström, *Freyja*, p. 143.

⁹⁶⁴ *The Laxdale Saga*, (ed. and intro.) Peter Foote (London, 1964), p. 178.

⁹⁶⁵ Heide, 'Spinning', p.166.

⁹⁶⁶ Translation is this author's own from '*Orkneyínga saga*' in Gudbrand Vigfusson (ed.) *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on The British Isles Vol. 1: Orkneyínga Saga and Magnus Saga with appendices* (London, 1887), p. 85.

hrollr í hörund honum; ok brátt fylgdi þar verkr mikill. Ok af því lagðist jarl í rekkju, ok lá skamma stund áðr hann andaðist.

His mother groped for it and begged him not to bare a grudge, though his brother possessed good clothing. The earl pulled it violently from her, and got ready so that he could put it on. Then they pulled violently at their own hems/women's hoods and plucked themselves, and said his life lay upon (it) if he put on the clothing. They then both wept much. The earl behaved not according to/against habit, and let it flow/fall down over himself. But immediately when the clothing tumbled down over him, shivering came over his skin, and soon followed in that place severe pain. And because of that the earl lay down in bed, and laid ill a short time until he died.⁹⁶⁷

This saga was composed in the 1230s CE, some 300 years after the events it purported to describe. Like the other sagas, using this later text to understand earlier Viking society is not without its inherent issues. It does, however, demonstrate that this idea of magical weaving was certainly alive during the composition of the sagas, which may point to the practice existing in the Viking Age. Valerie Flint, for example, contended that weaving or woolen work of any kind was a method to use the supernatural.⁹⁶⁸ While the saga sources are problematic due to their compositional time frame, the inclusion of such materials in a burial context, coupled with the intensely ritualized nature of the Viking belief system, in addition to these saga writings, certainly makes a strong case, as Owen and Dalland argued, that weaving and textile work were associated with Freyja and also *seiðr* practice.

The written sources for mystical weaving are not constrained to saga material. It is clear from Christian writers that this practice was believed to be quite powerful and dangerous. Writing in the 7th century, Bishop Eligius of Noyon urged women who were weaving or dyeing not to appeal to Minerva or 'any other demon' when engaged in their textile work.⁹⁶⁹ While this is certainly in reference to Roman pagan ideals, it demonstrates a long-standing tie, and fear, by the Church and clergy, of women and weaving; one which is also certainly evident in the Norse saga material, largely composed by Snorri Sturluson who was well versed in history and law. Another example can be found in Burchard of Worms' *Corrector* which was part of a series of texts on canon law composed sometime between 1008- 1012 CE.⁹⁷⁰ Burchard wrote:

⁹⁶⁷ Translation author's own from '*Orkneyinga saga*', Vigfusson, p. 85.

⁹⁶⁸ Valerie J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1991), pp. 226-227.

⁹⁶⁹ Bernhard Maier, 'Minerva' in (trans.) Cyril Edwards, *Dictionary of Celtic Religion and Culture*, (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 195, citing *Vita Sancti Eligii* 2.16.

⁹⁷⁰ Burchard of Worms, '*Decretorum Liber Decimus Nonsus*' in John Shinnors (ed. and trans.) *Medieval Popular Religion 1000-1500: A Reader* (2nd Edition: Toronto, 1997), p. 441.

Have you been present at or approved of those foolish things that women perform while doing their wool-work or weaving, who, when they start their weaving, hope that they can make it come about either with incantations or with their first steps that the threads of both the warp and the woof get so tangled together that unless some opposing diabolical incantations again intervene the whole weave will fail? ⁹⁷¹

He goes on to decree that thirty days of penance on bread and water are the prescribed antidote to being present at such an event.⁹⁷² Buchard, of course, was writing in the early 11th century, at least sixty years after the end of furnished burial practice in Ireland. He was also writing from the Holy Roman Empire, so also removed from the Scandinavian context to a degree, but the contact with the Danes and other Viking groups at this time was well established.⁹⁷³

While it has been contended, and this thesis certainly accepts, that textile working and weaving equipment were largely associated with forms of femininities in the Viking Age, it is not as simple as assuming that all burials to contain such items were women, or that such symbolism was always associated with women or femininities. As has been previously argued, it is problematic to assign a decedent a performed gender identity based on grave goods. While Heide and Harrison, among others, have made this association of weaving with women, it is known that men also practiced *seiðr* and consequently such equipment in a burial context, particularly with this *seiðr* association, means that the person contained in the grave could be biologically male, performed a form of a third gender, or masculinity perhaps not accepted or understood at the time of the saga compositions.

Additionally, the argument that this weaving or textile equipment was associated with some Viking domestic sphere and served the purpose of allowing women to continue this 'women's work' in the afterlife appears to be overly simplistic. Indeed, it is evident that there is a strong connection with textile work, and in particular with weaving to the goddess Freyja and to *seiðr* practice. As was demonstrated, Heide hypothesized that *seiðr* itself was based on the idea of spinning and weaving threads between the practitioner and others. Also, if the intent of burial was to prepare one for the afterlife and if Freyja was the ruler of one of the domains, then it is logical that women, or men, who practiced

⁹⁷¹ Burchard of Worms, *'Decretorum Liber'*, p. 443.

⁹⁷² Ibid.

⁹⁷³ See, for example, John Haywood, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings* (New York, 1995), especially pp. 58-60; and Lauren Wood Breese, 'The Persistence of Scandinavian Connections in Normandy in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries' in *Viator* 8 (1977), pp. 47-62.

seiðr or weaving magic would bring their tools with them to engage in such a practice alongside the goddess herself. It is clear then, that textile working equipment might possibly represent a high-ranking practitioner of *seiðr* ritual, or might symbolically read as tools necessary for engaging in such activities in the afterlife. Furthermore, if these tools are linked to such a practice, then it is possible that their inclusion in burial, like other items of *seiðr*, are linked to power, and could be symbolically read as such.

7.6 Beads

There are other items within these burials that also need some in-depth examination, in particular beads. These are often assumed to be merely ornamental items of jewelry when contained in so-called women's burials, but perhaps, like the tools relating to cloth working, these might have a more nuanced or varied symbolic meaning. This next section will consider the burials in Dublin from Harrison's tertiary group that contained beads.⁹⁷⁴

Harrison pieced together a burial based on information he gleaned from the National Museum of Ireland New Register and an undated letter from Underwood to Jens Worsaae.⁹⁷⁵ By combining the information, he concluded that this grave was found in September 1845 at Kilmainham with its feet to the east and a string of beads.⁹⁷⁶ There were a few other artifacts found close by, but Harrison attributed these to a separate weapon grave or graves.⁹⁷⁷ There are twelve beads in total, with nine extant, of these two are amber and seven are glass.⁹⁷⁸ Add to this the Kilmainham burial group previously considered in the textile section that included thirteen beads of which there were nine glass, three soapstone, and one ceramic.⁹⁷⁹ The amber stud will also be included in this group because of its material. Wilde declared that one of these beads, the light green glass 'ring bead', was one of the 'rarest forms of ornamentation' that had 'as many as forty-one small circular indentations, into which originally fitted studs of yellow enamel or vitreous paste'.⁹⁸⁰ He believed eleven of the others to have possibly comprised a necklace of some

⁹⁷⁴ Please see Fig. 7.4 'Beads', p. 334.

⁹⁷⁵ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 655.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid., Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 352. Please see Fig. 7.5, 'Beads from Kilmainham 1845', p. 335.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁹ Please see Fig. 7.6, 'Beads From Kilmainham 1849', p.336.

⁹⁸⁰ Wilde, *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 165.

sort.⁹⁸¹ So it is clear that these beads could be highly ornamental and detailed in nature, and it is also apparent that the antiquarians who considered these objects originally viewed them as only jewelry.

Harrison and Ó Floinn maintained that the presence of beads and textile equipment demonstrated a female burial, but this automatic association of beads with female burial is often not the case. This is exemplified in Moen's study. In particular, burial Ka. 37 from her appendix, is gendered male, and it contained, among other items, a double-edged sword, six arrowheads, and four beads.⁹⁸² Also, Moen cited the fact that for many scholars the understanding is that a bead count higher than three indicated a female burial.⁹⁸³ In contrast to this, she argued that there are 'many instances of women with only one bead and there are men with more than three beads'.⁹⁸⁴ Another critical point which needs to be reiterated is the understanding or analysis of symbolism associated with these beads when found in so-called male or female graves. Moen contended, when found in female graves, beads are deemed as jewelry or fashion, 'whereas in male graves they become amulets or artefacts with magical properties'.⁹⁸⁵ Moen argued, after Johansen, that beads were an ambiguous gender category because the patterns of so-called male and female beads have differences and these are not universal; overall, she stated, that gender cannot be determined based on the inclusion of beads.⁹⁸⁶ Therefore, this thesis will contend that beads are associated with gender-neutral symbolism or that which traverses gender roles dependent upon context.

The idea that these beads could function as amulets or magical elements is not so far-fetched or problematic when it is applied to all genders. The beads of amber in particular are thought to have connections to magic practice or ritual. According to Meaney, amber is most frequently found in Anglo-Saxon graves and its 'use as an amulet is best attested in contemporary writings'.⁹⁸⁷ Meaney contended that by the Migration

⁹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 168.

⁹⁸² Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 52.

⁹⁸³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid., translating and citing Lise-Marie Bye Johansen, 2002 'Perler i jernalder – kilde til mote i kvinnegraver og magi i mannsgraver' in Lene Melheim, Lotte Hedeager, and Kristin Oma (eds.) *Mellom Himmel og Jord: Foredrag fra et seminar om 88 religionsarkeologi* (Oslo, 1999), pp 468–490.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹⁸⁷ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 67. The comparison between Norse and Anglo-Saxon culture is one often made and the use of these sources to investigate Norse archaeological phenomena was examined in the Introduction, and also Chapter Four, pp. 60–85.

period, Germanic women had adopted the practice of wearing amber beads.⁹⁸⁸ The association of amber with magical properties traversed many cultures. Meaney postulated that it was 'virtually a panacea'.⁹⁸⁹

It might have been particularly important due to its golden color. Freyja herself was said to have cried tears of gold. Perhaps amber functioned symbolically as her tears, and, therefore, as a talisman. Freyja is also associated in mythology with something called the *Brísingamen*, a necklace which could have been composed of amber because *Brísingr* is a poetic term for fire which was synonymous with the stone.⁹⁹⁰ This necklace is quite famous and mentioned several times in the corpus of Norse sagas, for example, in the *Prymskviða*:

Vreið varð þá Freyja	ok fnasaði,
allr Ása salr	undir bifðisk,
stökk þat it mikla	men-Brísinga...
Angry then was Freya	and snorting with rage
The entire hall of the gods	trembled under the shock
Snapped was the great	Brisingmen: ⁹⁹¹

Meaney stated that 'According to Jon Steffensen, Norse sources mention 'Stones of Life' and other stones which heal, ease childbirth, staunch blood, confer invisibility, and grant wishes'.⁹⁹² Steffensen argued that these stones were found in many graves in Iceland and even contended that one grave he believed to be female was that of a doctor or physician.⁹⁹³ There is clear evidence that at least in Iceland, people were using amulets and stones in a magical manner. The *Grágás* stated,

People are not to do things with stones or fill them with magic power in order to tie on people or livestock. If a man puts his trust in stones for his own health or that of his livestock, the penalty is lesser outlawry.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 69.
⁹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 70.
⁹⁹⁰ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale: The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue*. Vol. II: *Court Poetry* (eds. & trans.) Gudbrand Vigfusson, and F. York Powell (Oxford, 1883), p. 435, line 534.
⁹⁹¹ Translation is this authors own from '*Prymskviða*' in E.V. Gordon (ed) and revised by A.R. Taylor *An Introduction to Old Norse*, p. 138. This is preferred from Henry Adams Bellows ('*Prymskviða*' Henry Adams Bellows (trans. and ed.) *The Poetic Edda* (New York, 1936), p. 177) which seems to take a few liberties with idiomatic translating, though the central meaning remains the same:
'Wrathful was Freyja, | and fiercely she snorted,
And the dwelling great | of the gods was shaken,
And burst was the mighty | Brisings' necklace.'
⁹⁹² Jon Steffensen, 'Aspects of Life in Iceland in the Heathen Period' in *Saga Book XVII* (London, 1966-1969), pp. 177-205, especially pp. 192-196.
⁹⁹³ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 103.
⁹⁹⁴ *The Laws of Early Iceland: Gragas I* (eds. and trans.) Dennis Andrew, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins (Ebook: Winnepeg, 2014), K§7, Chapter 54, p. 23.

Later canonized, Eligius of Noyon, who lived around 588-660 CE, worked in Flanders to convert the population to Christianity. He also famously condemned the practice of women wearing such amulets around their necks.⁹⁹⁵ This anxiety around wearing amulets was echoed by a variety of clerical scholars. For example, article ten of the *Indiculus Superstitionum et paganiarum* or *Little Index of Superstitious and Pagan Practices*, condemned the use of many pagan practices in some thirty articles including incantations, *De Incantationibus*; and more crucially for this section of amulets or talismans, *De Filacteriis et Ligaturis*.⁹⁹⁶ By the end of the tenth century, and within the timeline of Viking furnished burial practice, Ælfric declared that the use of stones and amulets to obtain health was to be forbidden unless they were in the shape of the cross.⁹⁹⁷ This is evident in Dublin and York, where there are examples of pendants in amber, as well as jet in York which had been carved in the shape of the cross.⁹⁹⁸

The other beads found among the bodies in Dublin were made from glass or soapstone. While these could have been merely ornamental, Meaney did not believe beads composed of these materials to be merely for show.⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, she conducted an extensive analysis of Anglo-Saxon burials containing so-called sword beads.¹⁰⁰⁰ Within this research was an example of a sword bead connected to a possible 9th-century Norse burial in Harrold Beds, England.¹⁰⁰¹ Meaney concluded that it was difficult to assume how these beads 'related to the sword or scabbard'.¹⁰⁰² She bolstered this argument for Anglo-Saxon sword beads with examples from Norse literary sources. Specifically, she contended that

⁹⁹⁵ Eligius of Noyon, 'Praedcatio de Supremo Indicio' in Bruno Krush (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovingiarum* Vol. 4 (Hannover, 1902), pp. 749-761. However, some scholars have refuted the claim that these sermons are from Eligius. See for example. Isabel Moreira *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, 2010); or James McCune, 'Rethinking the Pseudo-Eligius sermon collection' in *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 16, Issue 4, (2008), 445 – 476. McCune attributed these sermons to a ninth century author, instead of Eligius. This doesn't hurt the case here. In fact, these arguments further its tenets as it is closer to the time period this thesis is concerned with.

⁹⁹⁶ 'Forma Abrenuntiationis diaboli; Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum' in Georg Heinrich Pertz (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Capitularia regum Francorum* Vol. 1 (Hannover, 1835), p. 19.

⁹⁹⁷ *Sermones Catholici or Homilies of Aelfric*, Vol. 1 (ed.) B. Thorpe (London, 1844-6), pp. 474-476.

⁹⁹⁸ For an in depth discussion of amber and jet production and usage see Carolyn Coulter, 'Consumers and Artisans. Marketing Amber and Jet in the Early Medieval British Isles' in Gitte Hansen, Steven P. Ashby and Irene Baug (eds.) *Everyday Products in The Middle Ages: Crafts, Consumption and the Individual in Northern Europe c. 800-1600* (Ebook: Havertown, 2015), pp. 110-124.

⁹⁹⁹ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 195.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-201.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

the so-called peace strings examined by Ellis-Davidson, which tied the sword to its scabbard, could have had these sword beads at the end.¹⁰⁰³ These appear in several Norse sagas including *Sturlunga Saga* and a good example of their purpose can be found in the *Saga of Gisli*:

Sveinninn tók ok við sverðinu, ok veik sér frá líttat ok sprettir friðböndunum ok bregða sverðinu.

The boy took the sword, and moved away for a moment, and unfastened the peace-strings, and drew the sword.¹⁰⁰⁴

She also used the example of *Skofnung*, found in *Laxdaela saga*, which was said to have 'several appurtenances' including a stone that could be rubbed on the areas the sword damaged and would heal them.¹⁰⁰⁵ Based on the archaeological data, as cited previously, Meaney was clear that these were not strong and, therefore, it leaves only the possibility that they must have functioned symbolically, 'the action of unfastening them was as symbolic of breaking peace as cutting a ribbon is of opening a bridge'.¹⁰⁰⁶ Therefore, Meaney argued, 'If the beads found in men's graves were functionless, we are almost obliged to fall back on a magical or symbolic explanation for them; and they have indeed been mostly interpreted this way'.¹⁰⁰⁷ She claimed that if these beads were magically in men's burials, then so too, were they when found in women's and children's graves.¹⁰⁰⁸ Specifically, she argued that large glass beads, similar in size to the so-called sword beads, were certainly amulets, and that in fact all beads could have been regarded as magic and perhaps functioned, to the Anglo-Saxons, as symbolic eyes.¹⁰⁰⁹

The possibility then arises, that these beads in burials in Norse society functioned as amulets, as well as possible jewelry. That instead of labeling them as ornamentation and not including further analysis, it is important to consider this option in the broader context of burial in Dublin. If these items functioned as amulets then their inclusion in burial might represent a medium of power, inasmuch as they were powerful talismans linked to a god or to a power in aid of protection, healing, and the like.

So, like the textile-working equipment, it is possible that these were associated with their *seiðr* practice and represented a form of power. While not necessarily

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., p. 198; Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Translation is this author's own from *Gísli Saga Súrssonar*, Jónsson, p. 75.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 201, p. 205, and p. 209.

signifying professional practitioners, instead perhaps relating to believers of the *seiðr* rituals within the complex Viking systems of belief, these talismans or amulets might have been included to help guide the deceased to the afterlife, or also to protect, provide power, or aid them in their time in the hereafter. These might not have the same powerful symbolism, or indeed strength and power as textile working equipment or staffs in the practice of *seiðr* rituals, nonetheless, they are still a part of a retinue of items relating to the practice and to power.

It is possible that animal remains, beads and textile working equipment are forms of power relating to *seiðr* practice. This is not to say that all these symbols are equal or would have conveyed the same level of power or strength to observers. Symbolism to the Vikings was clearly nuanced and highly complex. However, it is clear that items that have often been previously regarded as merely ornamental or not investigated with the depth of analysis as more prominent items like swords or oval brooches, might also be demonstrating a series of symbolic messages relating to power by the decedent and the group of people who chose created the burial. .

In particular, with the burial containing some 151 bone fragments, while this might not appear to modern scholars to represent something as costly as a sword, if these all represent animals ritually slaughtered for the event of burial, then it is possible to assume that the person contained in that grave would have had access to quite a bit of wealth in order for their family to engage in the conspicuous destruction of so many resources. The other items, the beads and textile working equipment could also represent powerful tools or talismans of people who practiced *seiðr*. While textile working equipment might represent a professional or more advanced practitioner and a bead or beads might relate to items given to people or used by people to garner strength, power, healing properties and the like, they all demonstrate the importance Vikings placed on symbolism in their graves.

The reconsideration of the symbolism of these items also allows for the investigation of how power was gendered and utilized within burial rituals. For example, it shows that modern conceptions of Viking culture are often based on faulty logic relating more closely to Victorian ideologies and the application of the domestic sphere in this context is incorrect. Also, it demonstrates that items modern scholars may associate with one gender, might not have always been categorized that way in the Viking Age.

Furthermore, it allows for the consideration of nuance in symbolism and ideologies of power in this contemporary framework because it shows that items modern scholars have often assigned low value to could possibly have represented quite powerful rituals, practices or talismans.

To conclude, it is evident from this investigation, the assignation of a lower status to these graves, much like the binary male/female is problematic. It allocates a numeric value on burials based on our modern conceptions of wealth and power and does not account for rituals that have left no trace or for the Viking's own symbolic understanding of the items contained in the graves. This is not to say that all items have the same assigned value in the Viking Age, there is certainly some form of hierarchy. However, it is apparent that this system is much more nuanced, detailed and varied across contexts, temporal frameworks, and genders.

It is also clear that items found in graves labeled gender neutral, might not be gender neutral at all. Indeed, within the context of the other grave goods these might be part of a complex 'text' of material symbolism speaking on the nuanced and variable nature of Viking gender roles and representations in burial. Grave goods might be associated with forms of both masculinities and femininities, as may be the case with items relating to *seiðr*, or, perhaps to third forms of gender misunderstood and misinterpreted by later Christian saga writers and modern scholars. Equally, items sometimes labeled gender-specific like beads and textile-working equipment might also be gender-neutral and as is the case with the former items, it is the context in which they were created that determines their gendered symbolism. This of course, is difficult to determine. Overall, it is evident that these tertiary and gender neutral burials, and graves that remain un-gendered, need not be put into a binary system of oppositional genders. Instead, it is important that they remain as exceptions, as outliers and not be forced to conform to a dichotomous system that inherently misses the complex nature of gendered symbolism in the Viking Age.

Chapter Eight: Viking Burial in the Rest of Ireland- Some Case Studies

Now that the semiotics of Dublin have been established it is critical to turn to the rest of Ireland and see if such symbolism occurred elsewhere. However, it is crucial to note, that while the Vikings in Dublin were largely of a Norwegian descent this is not the case for the whole of Ireland. Due to this fact, and that the rest of Ireland is a large geographical corpus, after providing a brief overview of the amount and condition of burials in the rest of the island, this chapter will conduct case study analysis and comparisons. Before these case studies, however, it is critical to provide a bit more detail on why large comparisons should not be done based on the numerical data.

In all of Ireland, according to this studies analysis of Harrison's thesis data, there are only twenty-two Viking burials, many fewer than have been found in Dublin. Of these, thirteen are weapon burials, three are brooch, and the remaining six are tertiary.¹⁰¹⁰ Harrison and and Ó Floinn contended that there is evidence for some twenty-one burials with definable locations, with a further five unprovided.¹⁰¹¹ This data again is problematic. For example they concluded that Knoxpark burial ground in Co. Sligo was home to three Viking graves.¹⁰¹² This is quite controversial. Found in 1994, the research on this site in ongoing and varies greatly. Harrison and Ó Floinn, stated that the excavator, Mount, dated the burials to the Late Iron age/early medieval period, however, they argued that Kelly proposed in 2009, a Viking Age date for the site and graves and this is what forms the basis of their arguments. Harrison and Ó Floinn themselves admit that this inclusion is potentially problematic and declared, 'Future research may challenge these conclusions'.¹⁰¹³ Furthermore, many of Kelly's conclusions and Harrison and Ó Floinn's arguments on Kelly's conclusions are based on unpublished excavation records.¹⁰¹⁴ Additionally, they argued that one of these burials might be a sacrificial burial based on a possible decapitation. Here they again, cite the burials at Balladoole and Ballateare, Man as evidence of the practice, examples which this thesis has argued do not represent this practice at all.¹⁰¹⁵ Based on the tenuous evidence for this, combined with the dating issues,

¹⁰¹⁰ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, pp. 515-523, pp. 641-642, and pp. 676-685.

¹⁰¹¹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.224.

¹⁰¹² Ibid. p. 637.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid, p.639.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

the use of the conceptions of sacrifice, this thesis will not use this location as a site of multiple burials.

There are only two areas which it can be said that the graves are contained on the same burial ground: Cloghermore Cave and Church Bay in Rathlin, Co. Antrim. Harrison and Ó Floinn, argued against Cloghermore Cave as being the site of multiple burials referring to them as 'the most problematic' of the grave sites in their study.¹⁰¹⁶ Instead they believed this to be the location of only a single male Viking burial.¹⁰¹⁷ However, many other scholars, as will be evidenced in the case study of the cave have argued in opposition to their assertions. The rest of the burials are found in distinct single burials. Co. Meath and Co. Kildare, for example, have multiple burials within their geographical region, however these are far apart and not linked in a grave context. The majority of graves found in regions outside of Dublin are single burials. A comparison then, of Ireland's geographical regions as a whole will not serve, given the amount of data and the way in which it is dispersed. It becomes essential to consider these graves through case study analysis.

Unlike the last chapter, this one will not lay out the theoretical framework in advance, largely because the previous chapters have covered a general overview of female, male, and 'gender neutral' and/or 'tertiary' burials and because each case study will have to be considered in its own context instead of as a larger part of the whole framework. Therefore, this chapter will begin its case study analysis with the burials found in Cloghermore Cave.

8.1 Cloghermore Cave, County Kerry

At Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry between 1998 and 2000 a series of burials were unearthed what appeared to be the site of Viking Age pagan ritual. This location was chosen for several reasons. First and foremost, it is the site of multiple burials, one of two areas outside Dublin where this is the case in Ireland. Second, the site has been argued to have held high levels of ritual significance which is integral to the continued examination of *seiðr*. Finally, there were links between the Vikings of Dublin and the Scandinavian activity in Co. Kerry, which allows for the direct comparison between these burials and the semiotics in Dublin. For example, the Vikings were involved with another cave called

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid, p. 224; pp. 618-622.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., p.224,

Derc-Ferna, which scholars have accepted to be Dunmore Cave, Co. Kerry.¹⁰¹⁸ According to the *Annals of Ulster* in 930 CE, 'Gothfrith, grandson of Imar, with the foreigners of *Ath-cliath*, demolished *Derc-Ferna*, a thing that had not been heard from ancient times'.¹⁰¹⁹

Generally, as was the case in Dublin, the exact burial context is unknown.

However, as these were excavated more recently, there is clear knowledge of where and how they were placed and this may give more insight into the grave goods. The remains were found within what has been deemed the 'Graveyard,' one of two small chambers, the other known as 'Two-Star Temple,' at the southern end of the cave system that contained 'large quantities of bone'.¹⁰²⁰ During the excavations they concluded that a pyre site was found and utilized as a place of cremation for the animal bones found within the chamber known as the Graveyard.¹⁰²¹ Animal bones and the remains of a bone spindle whorl were recovered from this pyre.¹⁰²² There are clearly other purpose built structures within the cave chambers including one associated with a long slot-trench and which had two postholes. This chamber, Connolly and Coyne postulated, could have been part of lean-to or flat-roofed structure on the site before the final funeral rituals. Alternatively, it could have served to divide the ritual area into two distinct parts: one for use before the burial and the other for use in the burial rituals'.¹⁰²³ Connolly and Coyne believed, based on all data, that burials were centered in the Graveyard and Two Star Temple.¹⁰²⁴ Based on analysis of soil deposits, Connolly and Coyne have concluded that there is a temporal difference in use between the Two Star Temple and the other parts of the cave. This idea is supported by radiocarbon determinations and the small amounts of animal bone fragments contained in this chamber in comparison to other areas.¹⁰²⁵ These radiocarbon dates suggest that the cave might have seen its earliest use as a burial complex or site for rituals around 635-815 CE and the later phase of burial centered around 880-1010 CE, which was well within the general period of Viking burial practices in Ireland.¹⁰²⁶ However, due to the fact that only a small portion of the skeletal material was able to be

¹⁰¹⁸ Michael Connolly and Frank Coyne with Linda G. Lynch, *Underworld: Death and Burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry* (Bray, 2005), p. 40.

¹⁰¹⁹ AU 930: *Annals of Ulster: a chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D. 431 to A.D. 1540*, (ed. and trans.) William Hennessy (London, 1887), p. 451.

¹⁰²⁰ Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 4.

¹⁰²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*

dated and 'because of the disarticulated nature of the remains' Connolly and Coyne stated that 'the dates are not helpful in interpreting phases for burial...two or more dates could be from the same individual'.¹⁰²⁷ Therefore, they cautioned against its use and postulate that instead of two distinct phases, it is possible that the cave could have been in continuous use.¹⁰²⁸

According to Connolly, Coyne and Lynch there were a total of four adults from the Scandinavian phase, two men and a woman, and another presumed female cremated burial.¹⁰²⁹ Additionally, there were three 'sub-adult' burials, that of a child aged one to three, a neonate, and another child aged one to three.¹⁰³⁰ There were also several possible burials based on the presence of foot bones, but according to Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, these must 'surely represent a ritualistic treatment of the main child burial'.¹⁰³¹

The focus of this thesis is on the furnished burials and grave goods and so will focus on those found within the cave, which amounts to three. One of these was an alleged weapon burial that contained a fragmentary shield boss, a copper-alloy ringed pin, two copper-alloy flat headed pins or pieces of a buckle tongue, a copper-alloy button (possibly from a buckle), a knife and a whetstone.¹⁰³² It is evident from the weapon burial that the head of the man interred within it, aged thirty to forty, had to have been removed before the body was fully decomposed.¹⁰³³ Some scholars, such as Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, argued that this could have been done by the native Irish who originally used the cave for burial in retaliation of some sort to the Scandinavians.¹⁰³⁴ They also speculated, however, that this could have been removed as part of a funeral ritual to be reburied in their homeland or 'more secure hinterlands of the Scandinavian towns such as Limerick or Cork'.¹⁰³⁵ The cave itself contained animal remains such as cattle, horse, sheep and pig.¹⁰³⁶ This will be returned to after the overview of the finds is completed.

This site also contained a further two graves. The first contained a spindle whorl and five amber beads and the second a bone comb, gaming piece, walrus ivory sphere, and

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid.

¹⁰³² Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 683; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 623-625.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴ Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 54.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰³⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 619.

iron and copper-alloy fragments.¹⁰³⁷ This first burial, a cremation, was the one which Connolly, Coyne and Lynch viewed as female due to the inclusion of beads and textile working equipment. This is problematic as the previous chapter discussed. This shows clear evidence that the spindle whorl was burned, but the amber beads do not appear to have been. It is clear that the second grave was potentially part of the purported second phase of ritual activity in the 9th and 10th centuries. It has been suggested, that due to the level of disturbance of this grave, it, like the weapon grave, could have been deliberately desecrated.¹⁰³⁸

This thesis will begin this consideration of semiotics of the cave burials with the weapon grave. In particular, it will consider the two items tied to this label: the shield boss and the whetstone. As previously stated, according to Ellis Davidson the king was the representative sword giver and whetstones, as way to sharpen swords or weapons, were used to portray this association symbolically.¹⁰³⁹ The inclusion of such an item in this context could mean that the person associated with the whetstone was a person that either held great power, or that the people who created the burial wanted to represent the person within, or themselves, as holding great power. The whetstone might be here to represent the ability of this person to maintain and give power even in the next life, to aid them in battle and as a symbol of high status, or even the highest status, as one with the ability to convey the rights to inflict legitimate violence.

Another key item of consideration in this grave is the inclusion of the shield boss. As was examined in the masculinities chapter, most graves, 95%, in Dublin contained swords. That this burial deemed a weapon burial did not, and instead contained a shield boss, perhaps demonstrates a markedly different method of burial from its possible linked group in Dublin. However, the inclusion of the whetstone, as was evident from the previous paragraphs, might be a representative of this item, as symbolic sword giver and sharpener. It is, however, of interest that these graves, with their potential tie to the Vikings of Dublin do not include a sword.

As stated, the burial chambers at Cloghermore cave had within them cremated and partially burnt remains of animals of various kinds, in differing amounts and sizes. This led Connolly, Coyne, and Lynch to compare the Cloghermore cave burials to that of

¹⁰³⁷ Please see Fig 8.1, 'Cloghermore Cave Female Cremation Amber Beads', p. 337, and Fig. 8.2 'Cloghermore Cave Spindle Whorl', p. 338.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid., p. 685. Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 54.

¹⁰³⁹ Ellis-Davidson, *Anglo-Saxon Swords*, p. 176.

Donnybrook, in particular the central weapon burial, they noted the similarities with the cremated animal bones as part of a funeral ritual.¹⁰⁴⁰ Given the possible ties between the Vikings of Dublin and those active in Co. Kerry, a comparison in funeral ritual is logical. From the fact that both graves contained animal bones, they jumped to the postulation that this could also 'explain the presence of female remains close to the articulated male burial...'.¹⁰⁴¹ This meant that they believed that the female burial in such close proximity to the male burial was likely explained by a human sacrifice, instead of earning a right to such burial practices on her own.

They supported these arguments by attempting to find parallels between Cloghermore cave and the account of burial by Ibn Fadlan.¹⁰⁴² In particular, they draw parallels with the wooden structure Ibn Fadlan described, and pyre and remains of structures found in the cave, arguing that this could have functioned like in Ibn Fadlan's account as a resting place for the dead man until the time of his burial.¹⁰⁴³ They also compared the presence of animal bones and animal sacrifices, specifically dog and horse, to Ibn Fadlan's account where a dog and two horses were sacrificed.¹⁰⁴⁴ Connolly, Coyne, and Lynch believed that because there are only portions of horse bones that this clearly indicated that the horse had been dismembered first and then placed within the cave.¹⁰⁴⁵ There are also un-burnt horse teeth and bones within the cremation deposit.¹⁰⁴⁶ This supported the idea of it being a sacrificial animal, which it very likely was, though its mere presence in the grave and existence as such does not provide the support of the so-called female burial being a sacrifice.

Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, like Hall and his examination of Donnybrook, used the graves of Balladoole and Ballateare to support their justification for the burials to be a human sacrifice. Connolly, Coyne and Lynch made direct comparisons between the cremated animal bones buried within the mounds and found within Cloghermore cave and Donnybrook.¹⁰⁴⁷ Crucially, they made links between the supposed post holes found within the mound at Donnybrook which Hall argued held a platform for the female sacrifices and the post holes at Cloghermore, and led them to conclude that this is a very

¹⁰⁴⁰ Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

similar form of burial.¹⁰⁴⁸ They were somewhat vague here, and stated that perhaps exposure or excarnation was part of burial ritual, which would offer a completely distinct function for a platform instead of sacrificial altar.¹⁰⁴⁹

The issues inherent with the argument that a supposed female cremation found 'so close' to a male burial is an indication of sacrifice are manifold. As this thesis has argued again and again, to determine a decedent's gender based on burial goods is problematic. To argue on the basis that it is a female grave is the inclusion of a burnt spindle whorl and amber beads, is not sufficient. As was seen in the Chapter Seven, these items, particularly beads, can be found in graves that have been osteologically determined to be biologically male and female.

The concept that the supposed female grave is automatically of lower- status is predicated on the idea that items associated with femaleness indicate a person of less significance than the male burial. This seems contradictory to their other arguments about this cremation. Due to the remains of the charred animal bones found in the pyre, Connolly and Coyne postulated that these must be associated with a 'female' of some status due to the inclusion of amber beads and a spindle whorl.¹⁰⁵⁰ They contended that this person was certainly cremated as part of an elaborate burial ritual and that the 'container' with the human remains might have, like the disturbed body of the weapon burial, been deliberately desecrated, or removed for burial elsewhere.¹⁰⁵¹ Therefore, they believed that this person was of some elevated social status.

Based on the previous examination of human sacrifice in Viking burial practice, it seems unlikely that a person of some status would act as sacrifice. This instead returns to the concept of *sati* and its implications on Viking burial that are largely constructed in the Victorian and early 19th century mindset.¹⁰⁵² Therefore, given these biases and the data from the cave itself, there is little evidence that this was the case here.

Importantly, the assumption that the female grave is of lower status than the male grave is the central problem. It is based on a methodological approach that privileges male power and experience and presumes that women held little to no power or agency in the so-called public sphere, which is often deemed to be the only real or valuable form of power, as was discussed in Chapter Six. Amber beads and spindle whorls, as has been

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵² Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

seen in several chapters, are likely tied to the practice of *seiðr*. In particular, Heide argued that *seiðr* itself was likened to spinning a 'mind emissary' and that its practice was concerned with binding and attracting.¹⁰⁵³ Amber beads, as was discussed at length in the Gender Neutral chapter, as well as many types of stones, could have functioned as amulets.¹⁰⁵⁴ Amber in particular is said to have links to Freyja due to her *Brísingamen* necklace because *Brísingr* is a poetic term for fire, which was synonymous with the stone, as previously stated.¹⁰⁵⁵

Based on the inclusion of the amber and spindle whorl, it is equally likely that this person was of quite high status, possibly even a professional practitioner of *seiðr*. This will be returned to later in the specific analysis of these items. Such a person could have enjoyed a social position as both powerful and feared. Therefore, instead of representing a person of less significant status, this could have been a central or key component of the inhumations and cremations in the cave, and indicate that the cave was home to graves and cremations of people of high status and power.

Additionally, to support their argument Connolly, Coyne and Lynch used Donnybrook, which, as this thesis has argued, was not a place of human sacrifice.¹⁰⁵⁶ The extensive arguments against why Donnybrook was not a place of sacrifice were made in the chapter concerning its burial, but will be briefly summarized here in connection to Connolly, Coyne and Lynch's arguments. Donnybrook was largely assumed to be such due to the two potential sacrificial burials that have been called 'female', due to their location and size of the skeletons they purportedly contained as compared to the central 'warrior' burial. There was no osteological analysis done and there is no hard evidence to support that these bodies were indeed smaller or even certainty as to their location. There is also no way to confirm that these graves were even created at the same time, the two bodies were in separate interments and could have been placed there later, but due to when and how the bodies were discovered there is no way to know this definitively. Therefore, Donnybrook should not be used as an example of sacrifice, which is the bulk of their supposed supporting data. This only leaves Ibn Fadlan's accounts, and Balladoole and Ballateare as the remaining defense for their argument.

¹⁰⁵³ Heide, *Spinning*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Please see Chapter Seven, pp. 174-214.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, Vigfusson and Powell, p. 435, line 534. For a detailed discussion of the *Brísingamen* necklace please refer to Chapter Seven, pp. 174-214.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Please see Chapter Five, pp. 86-114.

Most of the problems with the analysing of presumed accounts of human sacrifice were considered in the Donnybrook burial chapter and do not need to be rehashed in their entirety here, but several specific points will be brought up again to compare directly with Connolly, Coyne and Lynch's arguments for Cloghermore cave. For example, like scholars did with Donnybrook, they compared the burials in the cave to Ibn Fadlan's accounts. There are several issues with the use of this as a basis for human sacrifice. The truthfulness of his recollections in the first place is of some question. Ibn Fadlan's account of paradise is largely similar to his own Islamic one.¹⁰⁵⁷ His use of Odin does not translate to the rest of the tale being accurate. Moen, for example, was very cautious when using such sources, and did not believe that these could be utilized as a 'true historical' source.

¹⁰⁵⁸

A key issue with Ibn Fadlan is that he didn't speak the language and had to communicate everything via a translator, and this would clearly be an impediment to understanding and reporting on burial traditions.¹⁰⁵⁹ Another problem, as Sitaru argued, is that Ibn Fadlan had a tendency to 'valorize' Islam, quite common in his own framework of travel accounts and is found in other authors such as Ibn Battuta.¹⁰⁶⁰ As was stated in the Donnybrook chapter, Ibn Fadlan referred to the Rūs as the 'filthiest of God's creatures'.¹⁰⁶¹

A further problem inherent with using this text as evidence for human sacrifice is whether the Rūs customs, if they were true, would even be applicable to the Norse. As was argued previously, many scholars, particularly Russian, do not believe so. Schjødt, for example, contended that the Rūs had been present in the Volga region for a few generations and their customs now might be more reflective of local Slavic traditions, than their original Scandinavian.¹⁰⁶² Brønsted argued then, that the person buried in the grave was perhaps a Swedish nobleman partly assimilated into Slavic culture.¹⁰⁶³

These are just a few of the central issues with using Ibn Fadlan's work.¹⁰⁶⁴ It is apparent then, as was previously argued, that the use of this text is problematic when

¹⁰⁵⁷ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Jesch, *Viking Women*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Sitaru, *Muslim Voyagers*, p. 341.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibn Fadlan, 'Ibn Fadlan', p. 46.

¹⁰⁶² Schjødt, 'To What Degree', p. 133.

¹⁰⁶³ Brønsted, *The Vikings*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁶⁴ For a more detailed consideration of issues inherent in Ibn Fadlan's account, see Chapter Five, pp. 86-114.

considering the supposed phenomenon of human sacrifice in Viking burial ritual. It is this thesis' argument that such a text should be used only with extremely careful contextualization and deconstruction, or not at all as it seems possible if it was an accurate tale that this likely did not even apply to the Vikings in other areas. This leaves Ballateare and Balladoole as support for the case of human sacrifice, in particular of the practice of the deliberate ritual deaths of women to accompany a male central burial.

Again, as this thesis has previously argued, when closely examined, the use of Ballateare and Balldoole as examples of ritual female sacrifice is exceedingly problematic. Ballateare, as an example of burial with a human sacrifice, has been questioned by scholars such as Griffiths.¹⁰⁶⁵ On this account there simply does not seem to be enough information. The Balldoole burial has also been found not to be that of human sacrifice. Two other skulls have been found with the boat burial and were thought at the time to be associated with slave or female burials, but now it has been concluded that they were from burials that were displaced from beneath the boat grave where there were at least seventeen bodies.¹⁰⁶⁶ This recent contention eliminates the possibility of human sacrifice in this instance. Those that examined Ballateare, as was shown in the Donnybrook chapter, simply applied their reasoning to Balladoole, that a woman's body found in a male grave must be sacrifice; literally saying: 'there seems no reasons why there should not have been another at Balladoole'.¹⁰⁶⁷ This justification for this assertion is insufficiently academic and not supported by any data or evidence.

Therefore, even if there was a more convincing burial context for sacrifice, such as the presence of chains or an obvious deathblow, the use of these burials and accounts as a means to solidify this argument is problematic. However, what is most critical, is that the use of animal bones and the possible presence of male and female bodies in close proximity is not a legitimate reason to assume sacrifice. This is tenuous at best. Indeed, as has been demonstrated in the gender neutral chapter, animal bones are found in a variety of burials regardless of perceived gender. The presence of a horse, for example, in Icelandic graves, was found in both male and female burials, so it is not methodologically sound to attribute this to the male grave automatically. Additionally, this whole line of reasoning seems predicated on the idea that female burials are automatically of less or

¹⁰⁶⁵ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid.

lower status, privileging weapons and items scholars associate with male burials and masculinities over trappings largely associated with femininities.

The cremation that Connolly, Coyne and Lynch contended was a female sacrifice and this thesis has endeavoured to argue that this is not definitive, contained five amber beads and a spindle whorl. Spindle whorls as has been explored in the proceeding paragraphs and in some depth in Chapter Seven, have possible links to magic and ritual practice as spinning and weaving were perhaps critical ritual activities. The inclusion of amber beads and their ties to Freyja, as possibly her golden tears, or as the material her famous necklace was made out of, as indicated in the earlier chapter, also present the possibility that the grave goods in this cremation when considered together also support the idea of links to *seiðr* ritual. Instead of being one of human sacrifice, it is possible that this person was of high status.

To turn now to items specifically associated with the remaining burial. This non-cremation grave, is what this thesis labels gender neutral as determined by the inclusion of a gaming piece and a walrus ivory sphere.¹⁰⁶⁸ This discussion will begin with a close consideration of the walrus ivory sphere. Meaney believed that smaller pieces of bone could be amulets in burials, because 'they are neither beautiful or useful'.¹⁰⁶⁹ In her study she came across multiple burials, for example one from Kingston in Kent, 'from the pagan period' in which small pieces of bone or ivory were found in men's and women's graves.¹⁰⁷⁰ This led Meaney to conclude that these indeed functioned as a sort of amulet.¹⁰⁷¹ She also cited that some of these, particularly those that were spherical, instead might have functioned as spindle whorls. This again might relate back to the association of spinning and *seiðr*, though a bone fragment functioning as an amulet also shows clear ties to the Viking belief system and ritual magic. So it is possible that this item may have functioned either as a spindle whorl based on its spherical nature, or, indeed as an amulet. Its deliberate inclusion in burial in a context which is highly ritualized seems to indicate that some portion of its symbolism can be associated. Therefore, it is highly probable that such an item was linked, in some way, to *seiðr* ritual, and that the person buried with this was deemed important or valuable enough to need this type of grave good on their journey to the afterlife. This may indicate that this person

¹⁰⁶⁸ Please see Fig. 8.3, 'Cloghermore Cave Gaming Pieces and Walrus Ivory Sphere', p. 339.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid.

was of a high status within the magic community, indeed their inclusion in the cave at all, might be indicative of this.

The function of a gaming piece in burial can also be tied to *seiðr* ritual. According to Rudolf Gustavsson, Andreas Henniuss, and John Ljungkvist these pieces first appear in Scandinavia around the Roman Iron Age and that from the beginning archaeologists have often found them linked with 'high-status weapon burials'.¹⁰⁷² Jesch cited, for example, the Norse poem *Völuspá*, where board games were associated with male gods.¹⁰⁷³ These pieces are crafted from a variety of materials including ivory, bone and antler.¹⁰⁷⁴ Gaming pieces have been found in burials from all over Scandinavia, for example in the Gnista Barrow, near Uppsala, over forty-two gaming pieces were found.¹⁰⁷⁵ According to this study, they have found over 100 whale bone gaming pieces from five graves in Uppsala.¹⁰⁷⁶ Gaming pieces were also found in Scar, and according to Owen and Dalland over twenty-two gaming pieces were found in the boat burial.¹⁰⁷⁷ It is evident that the occurrence of a gaming piece in a tertiary burial is apparently not the usual placement in the early Viking Age. By the 12th century, according to Jesch, board games were the most popular form of game for both genders of the upper classes.¹⁰⁷⁸ As previously stated, such items are often found linked by modern archaeologists with so-called high-status male weapon burials, so its inclusion here in a tertiary burial is something to be noted.

In the broader context deciphering what these gaming pieces might mean is more difficult. Large quantities of such pieces could have indicated that the person was buried with the game associated with such a piece, perhaps one that they enjoyed throughout their life and those that were burying them wanted them to be able to continue to play in the afterlife. Small quantities, such as at Cloghermore Cave, might also indicate that the deceased had a strong association with this game in life, could have functioned to represent the rest of the game, or have been the person's favorite piece. Additionally, given the ritual nature, it could very well be that the game functioned as a metaphor for the supernatural and to include such a piece was a charm or amulet type function, similar

¹⁰⁷² Rudolf Gustavsson, Andreas Henniuss, and John Ljungkvist, 'Are Many Vendel and Viking Period gaming pieces made of Whale bone', in *Fornvännen: Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research* Vol. 110 (2015), p. 51.

¹⁰⁷³ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Gustavsson, Henniuss, and Ljungkvist, 'Are Many Vendel', p. 51.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Owen and Dalland, *Scar*, p. 475.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 104.

to the ivory sphere. There are, then, a few possibilities for the inclusion of such an item in a grave. It is interesting again to note that the burial associated with this item has been labelled tertiary and contained no weapons. This may indicate, if gaming pieces are largely associated with weapon graves, that either this was either an exception to this practice or that this link with male weapon graves is incorrect. Instead, this may suggest that gaming pieces can be found in graves of any gender, though their association with the armaments or practice of warfare may remain. Equally, this may represent a significant exception, or different or new burial tradition of symbolism.

One of the critical signifiers found in this cemetery was the animal bones. This study is primarily associated with goods directly associated with bodies, however, it will briefly consider animal bones and a few stones found in the cave at large as they were used to justify the sacrificial argument and also because they support a highly ritualized purpose for the burials in the cave.

The horse contained within the cave is not directly associated with any particular burial. Connolly, Coyne and Lynch have argued that it may have been linked to the 'prime male'; however, due to the finding of unburnt horse bones and horse teeth within the cremation deposit it might have been associated with this grave.¹⁰⁷⁹ They postulated that this indicated ritual significance because of the horse's link to the cult of Freyr, and also with Freyja and *seiðr*.¹⁰⁸⁰ Horses could also function as mediators between the realms of living and dead.¹⁰⁸¹ The remains of at least three dogs were found at Cloghermore Cave.¹⁰⁸² As has been previously argued, dogs also functioned in a similar fashion to the horse, as a medium between worlds.¹⁰⁸³ The chapters preceding this have done much in the way of explaining the function of these animals in burial contexts, acting as companions, grave gifts, or in small increments, possibly as food.¹⁰⁸⁴ It seems most likely given the significance of the horse and dog that these animals in this context functioned as companions.

There are a variety of stones found in the cave at Cloghermore, most importantly those found at the sites with the burials included quartz and red sandstone, but Connolly, Coyne and Lynch seem to place the most importance on one particular type. In addition to

¹⁰⁷⁹ Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80-81.

¹⁰⁸¹ Lamond, 'The Horse', p. 258.

¹⁰⁸² Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁸³ Graslünd, 'Wolves, Serpents and Birds', p. 247.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

the amber, there is a presence of red jasper in the burial chamber.¹⁰⁸⁵ Described as a 'small, irregularly shaped piece of fine smooth red stone...seems to have been chipped from a larger piece'.¹⁰⁸⁶ This suggests that it was deliberately created and that its presence in the cave is not accidental. This stone was associated with Freyja, according to Connolly, Coyne and Lynch.¹⁰⁸⁷ They offer no further explanation as to this link, but they might have associated the two due to Freyja's tears of red-gold that she cried when her husband left, though these have been more directly linked to amber.¹⁰⁸⁸ In general, as Meaney argued, stones and pebbles were likely used as amulets in Iceland.¹⁰⁸⁹ This is evidenced in the Grágás entry detailing that people should not use stones or 'fill them with magical power'.¹⁰⁹⁰ The use of stones as amulets with magical properties and their occurrence in burial is well documented and has been explored in depth earlier on in this thesis.¹⁰⁹¹

Charred hazelnuts were also found at the cave.¹⁰⁹² In general the use of plants and seeds as amulets has been documented by other scholars. In Meaney's study of Anglo-Saxon burial she cited the examples of two 'exceedingly mysterious objects' that were found at the Welbeck Hill excavations on Lincolnshire in the 1960s.¹⁰⁹³ Both of these objects were found buried with adult women according to her, and they were determined to be wooden coils.¹⁰⁹⁴ In Sleaford, Lincolnshire, Meaney cited the case of several 'fragile seed capsules' very small, the size of a bean perhaps, that were found amongst necklaces, though these are no longer extant.¹⁰⁹⁵ This led her to conclude that 'quite probably seeds were frequently perforated and used in necklets by Anglo-Saxon women'.¹⁰⁹⁶ There have also been examples of seeds found among thread boxes, which Meaney contended might have also functioned as amulets.¹⁰⁹⁷ While her study focuses primarily on Anglo-Saxon people, it is evident that such practices were also conducted by the Vikings.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Please see Fig. 8.4 'Red Jasper', p. 340.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Please see Chapter Seven, 174-214.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *The Laws of Early Iceland*, Andrew, Foote and Perkins, K§7, Chapter 54, p. 23.

¹⁰⁹¹ Please see Chapter Seven pp. 174-214.

¹⁰⁹² Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁹³ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Price explored the relationship of intoxicants in burials and found there to be cases of cannabis seeds being buried with the deceased as, for example in Oseberg.¹⁰⁹⁸ He argued that these probably functioned in *seiðr* ritual as part of an ecstatic practice.¹⁰⁹⁹ This is probably a different purpose than those charred hazelnuts, which likely acted more as an amulet. Price referred to these objects as charms in Viking burials and included in this category animal bones and flora.¹¹⁰⁰ He believed that the majority of these items were utilized in 'sympathetic magic of various kinds, though the connection between the object and its perceived function was not always straightforward'.¹¹⁰¹ These hazelnuts had ties to Freyja as symbols of fertility according to Connolly, Coyne and Lynch.¹¹⁰²

It is possible, then, like the amber and animal bones examined in previous chapters, that the hazelnuts and red jasper functioned as amulets to protect or strengthen the person or people they were associated with. Their deliberate inclusion in the cave signifies their perceived importance to the person or persons that were buried in the cave, or to the society which chose to include them, or the general importance of the cave itself in a ritual context. Due to their links with ritual activity, these items could very well have functioned as a method of restoring or conserving power. They might also be directly linked to *seiðr* practice. Therefore, it is a logical conclusion that their presence in burial is a deliberate act, designed to aid the person or people which they are associated with and tied to the diverse Viking belief system and *seiðr* magic practice. It signifies that while to modern researchers such items may seem insignificant but could have played a central or critical role in the process of burial or in the practice of magic in the afterlife, or the journey to one of the various after death planes of existence. As Connolly, Coyne and Lynch stated:

Clearly, there is a ritual significance to the presences of these animals, the nut shells, and the jasper in the cave at Cloghermore, and the evidence suggests that there may be a link to between these ritual deposits and the cult of the sibling deities Freyr and Freyja.¹¹⁰³

Overall, the items contained in Cloghermore Cave illuminate a great deal about ritual and magic practice as it relates to burial in Viking Ireland. The inclusion in the cave

¹⁰⁹⁸ Price, *The Viking Way*, p. 206.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 206-207.

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 207.

¹¹⁰² Connolly and Coyne with Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 82.

¹¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 82.

of horse and dog bones, in a similar way to those found in Dublin, reiterates the importance that these played in Viking funerary practices, which was mainly, that animals could function as mediators, guides and companions to the Vikings in the afterlife. Here, as in Dublin, was also seen the inclusion of stones and crystals, probably functioning as amulets or charms to aid the decedent on their journey and life in whatever afterlife plain they ended up or believed themselves to be going to. What there isn't hard evidence for, like Donnybrook, is the case of human sacrifice. This continued insistence on the concept of *sati*, or human female ritual sacrifice to accompany a male warrior on his journey, does not hold up when the graves are carefully deconstructed and the sources used to support such a contention contextualized. The inclusion of a whetstone and shield boss, as was indicated in Chapter Four, are tied to concepts of violence. Interestingly, there is a lack of a sword, unlike what was seen in Dublin, where there was an overabundance of these in burial rituals. Given the links between the two areas, as argued by Connolly, Coyne and Lynch and seen in the annals, it is interesting that this was not the case in Cloghermore Cave. Perhaps, instead, this cave functioned as more of a ritual area for the Vikings, and violence and power were expressed more directly in relation to rituals. For example, the whetstone representing the ritualistic position of sword giver and the *seiðr* objects representing the *seiðr* practitioners, all which are tied to violence of a kind, as has been argued elsewhere.

8.2 Church Bay in Rathlin, County Antrim:

Three furnished Viking burials were found in Church Bay in Rathlin, Co. Antrim, comprising of two tertiary or gender-neutral and one weapon. The first tertiary was found before 1784, Harrison and Ó Floinn postulated circa 1780, and contained a silver bossed penannular brooch and a number of beads, which have since been lost.¹¹⁰⁴ The second one was found prior to 1851 and contained a copper-alloy ladle and composite copper-alloy and iron artefact, which was a vessel, maybe a cauldron.¹¹⁰⁵ The weapon burial had a single iron sword.¹¹⁰⁶ Harrison and Ó Floinn argued for a fourth probable burial near this site on the south-east side of church bay based on the presence in disturbed top soil of a comb and iron rivet, but without any burial context, this seems tenuous and so this thesis,

¹¹⁰⁴ Please see Fig. 8.5, 'Penannular Brooch From Church Bay, Rathlin, County Antrim', p. 341; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 612-613.

¹¹⁰⁵ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 517; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 615.

¹¹⁰⁶ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 517; and Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 615.

as in other instances will consider only the three burials here which it has subjected to analysis.¹¹⁰⁷ This set was chosen for a case study because multiple burials were found at a single site making it ideal for comparison and study.

Rathlin, in the broader Viking context, was potentially difficult ascertain as the only other Viking archaeological data on the island is largely limited to a hoard of silver coins possibly dating to the 11th century. Warner brings up the possibility of Rathlin Island being *Rechru*, though this is contested between Rathlin, Lamaby, and Rams.¹¹⁰⁸ Each of these seemed to have contained a monastic settlement which would have been vulnerable to Viking attack. This is significant because there are instances in the annals of attacks on the settlement in *Rechru*. The *Annals of Ulster* listed attacks dating to 794 CE: 'The burning of Rechra by Gentiles and Sci was pillaged and wasted'.¹¹⁰⁹ Another scholar to make this link is Ó Floinn, who referred to Church Bay in Rathlin as 'the reputed site of the first Viking landfall in Ireland'.¹¹¹⁰

Rechru was also, then, the site of other Viking attacks. *Annals of the Four Masters* listed, for example, an attack occurring in 1038 CE, 'Reachru was plundered by foreigners'.¹¹¹¹ The *Annals of Inisfallen* listed an attack 1045 CE and it is clearly stated that the Dublin Vikings played the major role in the violence:

Ragnall Ua hEochada, royal heir of Ulaid, was slain by the foreigners of Ath Cliath in Rechru, together with three hundred nobles around him.¹¹¹²

Warner is convinced that Rathlin was not aligned with the other Viking settlements in the western isles and, instead, had a political and cultural system all its own.¹¹¹³ So, this combined with the potential Viking Dublin attack gives the possibility that Rathlin was an independent political system and indeed cultural system, which may have held divergent burial patterns from those found in Dublin. They may very well have had different rituals,

¹¹⁰⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 617. Further consideration of this burial will be conducted in this author's forthcoming monograph *Gendered Symbolism in Irish Burial: The Whole Corpus to Date*.

¹¹⁰⁸ Richard Warner, 'The Re-Provenancing of Two Important Penannular Brooches of the Viking Period' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* Third series, Vol. 36/37 (1973-4), p. 63.

¹¹⁰⁹ AU 794: *Annals of Ulster*, Hennessy, p. 275.

¹¹¹⁰ Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking Age', p. 145.

¹¹¹¹ AFM 1038.13: Ó Cléirigh, Mícheál, and Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh, *Fearfeasa Ó Maol Chonaire, and Peregrine Ó Duibhgeannain, Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, / by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616, edited from MSS. in the library of the Royal Irish Academy and of Trinity College, Dublin, with a translation, and copious notes, by John O'Donovan* (ed. and trans.) John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1851), p. 836.

¹¹¹² AI 1045: *Annals of Inisfallen* (ed. and trans.) Seán Mac Airt (Dublin, 1951), p. 209.

¹¹¹³ Warner, 'Penannular Brooches', p. 63.

beliefs, and practices and this could be reflected in the grave goods contained in the burials.

The weapon burial in this case only contained a single iron sword. As was considered in the masculinities in the Dublin section of chapters, the inclusion of swords in burials represented the conscious decision to give away an item of high value instead of passing it down or keeping it in the family. As has been shown, swords were the most expensive type of weaponry to produce and most people who carried such a weapon in the Viking period could probably be said to represent an upper tier of society or warrior class. Therefore, its inclusion represents a possible high status hegemonic masculine burial. The symbolism of including a weapon was an act that clearly demonstrated to all viewing the ritual that this person and the people who carried out the burial ritual were powerful. These were people who could engage in the conspicuous destruction of a valuable weapon that was clearly needed in the course of gaining and maintaining that power, showing perhaps that those remaining alive had their own independent access to this power and strength.¹¹¹⁴

That there is only the single weapon burial here and it is outnumbered by two tertiary or gender neutral burials, make this a somewhat different system from what was evidenced in Dublin with its overwhelming majority of hegemonic masculine symbolism in burial. Instead here, it is only one third of all burials. This seems more in common with what was seen in England and the amount of tertiary burials found there.¹¹¹⁵ It is of note, that this is only three burials, so percentages and comparisons with such a small number can be somewhat difficult.

The first tertiary or gender neutral burial contained a penannular brooch and beads. As has been examined multiple times throughout this thesis, beads can be associated with either male or female graves. These beads and their function is largely determined on size, design and material. Unfortunately, not much can be made of these in this instance as the beads have since been lost. Indeed the only record of them being found is a note by Catherine Gage in 1851 of their existence.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹⁴ For a more detailed consideration of what swords meant in burial, please see Chapter Four, pp. 60-85.

¹¹¹⁵ Please see the Chapter Seven, pp. 174-214.

¹¹¹⁶ Catharine Gage, *A History of the Island of Rathlin, With Illustrations and Maps, 1851* (Coleraine, 1995), p. 9-10.

The brooch has been since identified by scholars such as Warner and O.S. Johansen using the antiquarian references.¹¹¹⁷ One such reference was made by Rev. W. Hamilton in a letter he composed 1784. In particular to Rathlin burials, he discussed various 'small tumuli' that were 'lately opened in a little plain about the middle of the island, probably the monuments of so many heroes, who in former ages, had fallen honourably in this very field of battle'.¹¹¹⁸ This is echoed by Wilde's assertions and highlights the lack of antiquarian knowledge of Viking burial practices.¹¹¹⁹ In particular reference to this brooch, he stated that 'a large fibula was found in one of the tumuli, which is deposited at the museum of Trinity College, Dublin; the workmanship is good, and argues considerable skill in the artist'.¹¹²⁰

Warner combined this data with Catharine Gage's work where she stated that 'in one of these graves was found a silver fibula of good workmanship and a number of beads'.¹¹²¹ *Fibula* and *fibulae* being the Latin term for brooch was often utilized by antiquarians. From this Warner concluded that the so-called University brooch, so named because it was held at the museum of Trinity College Dublin, is in fact the Rathlin brooch.¹¹²² Warner noted that the brooch was of mixed origin, with both Irish and Norse elements and dated it to the second half of the ninth century.¹¹²³ James Graham-Campbell concluded that almost all bossed penannular brooches were produced in Ireland.¹¹²⁴ The only exception of the some twenty-one brooches found and produced in Ireland is the Rathlin brooch.¹¹²⁵ Graham-Campbell labels this particular brooch a Norse imitation of an Irish style of brooch manufacture.¹¹²⁶ He argued that this was the work of Norse craftsman working in the insular style.¹¹²⁷ They also have stylistic and technical

¹¹¹⁷ See Warner, 'Penannular Brooches', pp. 58-70; and O.S. Johansen 'Bossed penannular brooches: a systematisation of their cultural affinities' in *Acta Archaeologica* xlv, 121-122.

¹¹¹⁸ Rev. W. Hamilton, 'Letter II' in *Letters Concerning The Northern Coast of the County of Antrim; containing observations on The Antiquities, Manners, and Customs of that country. With the Natural History of the Basaltes, Illustrated by An accurate Map of the County of Antrim and Views Of the most interesting Objects on the Coast* (1822 Edition: Belfast, 1822), p. 21.

¹¹¹⁹ Please refer to Chapter Three, pp. 46-59.

¹¹²⁰ Rev. W. Hamilton, *Letters Concerning The Northern Coast of the County of Antrim*, p. 21.

¹¹²¹ Gage, *A History of the Island of Rathlin*, p. 9-10.

¹¹²² Warner, 'Penannular Brooches', p. 61.

¹¹²³ Ibid.

¹¹²⁴ James Graham-Campbell, 'Bossed Penannular Brooches: a Review of Recent Research' in *Medieval Archaeology* Vol. 19, Issue 1 (1975), p. 42.

¹¹²⁵ Graham-Campbell, 'Bossed Penannular Brooches', p.42.

¹¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

differences to the other types of penannular brooches examined by Graham-Campbell and he argued that this furthers the contention that they were created in a Norse context.

This is significant as the brooch here represents the Norse adaption of a native style of ornamentation. It also demonstrates that such an item was created from valuable silver and was conspicuously destroyed in its inclusion in burial. It is clear from all references to the brooch and by the brooch itself, that it is a finely made item, created by a skilled craftsman which represents wealth. So it at once represents perhaps even a stylistic blending or mix of cultures, while simultaneously demonstrating wealth and power due to its inclusion, design and materials.

Harrison labeled this burial tertiary; Ó Floinn suggested that the person contained with these items was female¹¹²⁸ This is largely based on the inclusion of beads. In their study together this burial was considered gender-neutral, a departure from their methodological approach of beads equally female.¹¹²⁹ They argued that the beads could be found in male graves in small amounts and the penannular brooches could be found in both male and female graves, thereby rendering the grave gender-neutral.¹¹³⁰ This concept that small amounts of beads can equal a male burial is not without problems as this thesis has previously considered. While oval brooches have been overwhelmingly associated with female graves by modern archaeologists, penannular brooches do not have the same assignment pattern. Irish penannular brooches, whose design mirrored the Rathlin brooch, were often worn by both men and women of the Irish elite to fasten clothing. According to Lloyd Robert Laing, the *Senchas Mhor* listed a silver brooch as being required clothing of the sons of minor kings.¹¹³¹

These brooches were introduced to Norway in the ninth century and according to Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad they were initially found almost exclusively in female burials.¹¹³² At the end of the ninth century this changed dramatically, and in particular in the period between 850-950 CE, which is also the period of furnished insular burial

¹¹²⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 517; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the early Viking Age', p.145.

¹¹²⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 613.,

¹¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹¹³¹ Lloyd Robert Laing, *The archaeology of late Celtic Britain and Ireland c. 400-1200 AD* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 304.

¹¹³² Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad, 'Sign of the Times? The Transfer and Transformation of Penannular Brooches in Viking-Age Norway' in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* Vol. 45, No. 1 (2012), p. 30.

practices, these are found in supposed upper-class male weapon burials.¹¹³³ Glørstad argued that the change from female to male inclusion represents 'that these brooches were assigned new or added significance within a new social and cultural framework'.¹¹³⁴ She contended that these were highly symbolic and that their placement in burials in Norway seems consistent with their use in Ireland as cloak clasps and that they represent a 'group of men of high social and political rank'.¹¹³⁵ Furthermore, she argued that at the end of the 9th and into the 10th centuries both brooches and cloaks became 'powerful social and political symbols'.¹¹³⁶

What is a particularly significant argument made by Glørstad was related to her findings of what she termed horsemen's burials: those with the trappings of horse equipment, such as spurs and stirrups, are almost mutually exclusive from these penannular brooch burials, though both types contain weaponry.¹¹³⁷ She contended that these represent two types of high-status male burials. Out of 120 in her study area only three had overlap.¹¹³⁸ Both groups of these graves had an 'overwhelmingly' high instance of swords and spears, and these were of high quality, in comparison to other male graves according to Glørstad. She therefore asserted that these perhaps represent two groups within the highest echelons of society: one representing military, the other perhaps a political elite.

The general background of this would be then, that for the Norwegian elite of this period these penannular brooches were overwhelmingly discovered with weapon burials in the period of 850-950 CE, corresponding directly to the period of furnished burial practice in Ireland. However, there are no weapons associated with this particular burial. No other items which would lead to clues that this was a grave of a person of high political status or items directly tied to elite hegemonic masculine symbolism. In the early period of penannular brooch burial, the early ninth century, these were often buried with women, however, according to Warner this brooch likely dates to the latter half of the ninth century, and this aligns with the period of furnished burial practice.

The inclusion of beads in the grave is what has led many scholars to the conclusion that this was a female burial. However, as has been investigated throughout

¹¹³³ Glørstad, 'Sign of the Times?', p. 30.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

this thesis, such an association is not always true. The make and number of beads is lost to history and so there is no way of considering and deconstructing the symbolism of these items, except to say that in general it is clear that beads were grave goods that traversed gender boundaries.

It is evident then, that it is impossible to know for certain if this grave was that of a man or woman. As this thesis has argued many times, assigning gender based on grave goods is problematic. However, considering gender here adds an interesting dimension. By all accounts based on the knowledge that penannular brooches in this period are largely included in male burials, it seems most likely that this would automatically be the case here. However, the inclusion of beads and the insistence of many archaeologists to dismiss these as female ornamentation, as was seen in the previous chapters, in connection with the brooch has led scholars to argue that these are both merely ornamentation. Instead, it is possible that the beads could have been peace beads or sword beads, thus supporting the Glørstad argument of a political elite. They could have also been ornamentation, this also would not negate her argument. It is clear that in the time frame the penannular brooch, as Glørstad suggested, represented a high level of political and social power. Thus, its inclusion in burial shows that the people who were creating this furnished grave intended to symbolically demonstrate the power of the person in it, and by proxy their own power, to conspicuously destroy an item of this high value. This burial is clearly that of person of high status, possibly even the highest echelons of the elite, based on the perceived importance of these brooches as argued by Glørstad. The finances required to make such a brooch of silver material demonstrated both the perceived wealth of the deceased person whose burial included the item and also the group responsible for the burial with their decision to effectively destroy such an item.

The other tertiary or gender neutral burial in this location was said to have contained a copper-alloy ladle and possible cauldron.¹¹³⁹ There are some issues regarding this one as no burial context is known and it might not be associated with a grave or human remains.¹¹⁴⁰ Cauldrons were also found in other graves in Harrison's study area. Ballinaby, Islay, Argyll and Bute in Scotland, held a very well furnished weapon grave which contained, besides a double-edged sword, spearhead, two axes, a shield boss and

¹¹³⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 615

¹¹⁴⁰ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 518; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 615.

other items, a fragmentary cauldron.¹¹⁴¹ The associated brooch burial contained a bronze ladle, but also two oval brooches, twelve beads, a glass linen smoother and needle case, among other items.¹¹⁴² It is clear that both these graves were well furnished.

Cauldrons were not that uncommon in the broader context and do not necessarily have a specific tie to gender for modern archaeologists, as is evident in the Ballinaby grave. As Jesch believed, some graves deemed male by modern archaeologists contained cauldrons and she argued that the average man 'did not have great expectations of being waited on in the next life'.¹¹⁴³ Cauldrons were utilized for boiling meat, which seems to have been the preferred method of cooking in the Viking era.¹¹⁴⁴

The gender neutral nature of cauldrons is evident in Moen's examination of the burials in the Kaupang region. In Moen's study she included multiple instances of cauldrons. For example, grave labelled Ka. 259 determined to be female in Bikjholberget, contained a possible cauldron among its many items.¹¹⁴⁵ Grave labelled Ka. 285, also female from Bikjholberget, included a cauldron.¹¹⁴⁶ Grave labelled Ka. 295 in Bikjholberget, a male grave, while not containing a cauldron had a frying pan and saucepan in addition to sword, axe, arrowheads and a variety of other items in this well-furnished burial.¹¹⁴⁷ Ka. 37, determined to be male in North Kaupang, had a cauldron as well as a double edged sword, adze, and at least six arrowheads included in its well-furnished grave.¹¹⁴⁸ A final example, grave labelled Ka. 316, a supposed male burial in Bikjholberget, had a cauldron, in addition to a spearhead, two bosses, knife, fishing hooks and other items.¹¹⁴⁹ Pots were also found in Anglo-Saxon burials, and among vast arrays of amulets or other magical items according to Meaney. One such example she cited was of what she called a 'Germanic woman' at Weimar in Thuringia in East Germany, grave labeled eighteen had within it two bronze rings, a spindle whorl of black glass and a pot.¹¹⁵⁰

Ladles are less commonly found. While there are many examples of cauldrons in the Kaupang region, the examples in Moen's appendix have no ladles listed. A Viking ladle

¹¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 506

¹¹⁴² Ibid., p. 507.

¹¹⁴³ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 27.

¹¹⁴⁴ Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca, 1998), p. 131.

¹¹⁴⁵ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 61.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 66.

¹¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

¹¹⁵⁰ Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 250.

was found in Houlland, Unst, Shetland and is now housed at the National Museum of Scotland. According to the records of the museum this steatite ladle dates between 800-1100 CE and could have functioned as a symbolic representative of food or food offerings.¹¹⁵¹ Ladles have also been found at the Årby boat burial in Sweden, along with several other cooking utensils and pots. Additionally, the Oseberg ship burial had two large cauldrons and various cooking implements, including a ladle. The Oseberg ship burial had many kitchen utensils and this ladle was found in one of the buckets on the ship burial that also contained wild apples.¹¹⁵²

While sieve-spoons found in burials have been linked to crystal balls and as such functioned as a sort of amulet in a ritual purpose, ladles have largely not been examined in depth with regards to their inclusion in burial.¹¹⁵³ These spoons were well-known to have links to clarifying wine and cooling it in the snow.¹¹⁵⁴ As Meaney argued, serving wine or beer was the duty or privilege of the 'lady of the house'.¹¹⁵⁵ Thus these spoons were well made and perhaps only used for ceremonial occasions.¹¹⁵⁶ Ladles, on the other hand, seem to be believed to have had a more utilitarian purpose: to serve items from cauldrons, perhaps. However, as the record from the National Museum of Scotland suggested, they could very well have served a ritual or ceremonial purpose, representing food sacrifices or having been used themselves to conduct rituals, even at the funeral itself.

So it appears then that this grave could have been a person of any gender as the cauldron, and by proxy the ladle, are not hegemonically tied in burial practice to either gender. The cauldron and ladle together could possibly represent cooking equipment included in burial to help the deceased prepare food in the afterlife. It is equally possible that such items were included to serve a ritual purpose, perhaps representing food sacrifice or to serve as a medium to help perform rituals in the afterlife. Indeed a further possibility arises that the cauldron and ladle perhaps held a ritualistic function in burial

¹¹⁵¹ 'Steatite Ladle' on National Museum of Scotland website: (http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/collection-search-results/?item_id=75182.) Accessed 16/6/2016. {no image of this object is available}.

¹¹⁵² Kirsten Ruffoni, *Viking Age Queens, The Example of Oseberg* (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Oslo, 2011), p. 24.

¹¹⁵³ Please see Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, pp. 81-84 on sieve-spoons and crystal balls.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

rite and were included after they served this purpose, as a continuation of the ritual or even a way for the practice to be finished or practiced in the hereafter.

As previously stated, an in-depth investigation of all the furnished Viking burials in Ireland is beyond the scope of this thesis. All of the burials that have not yet been investigated are instances of single graves buried throughout the island as there are no more instances of multiple graves at a single location. The final section of investigation has chosen three of these burials for examination based on the following criteria and methodology. One central reason these three were chosen was because it was essential to examine three representing each of the major categories used by archaeologists: weapon, brooch and tertiary or gender neutral. These specifically were picked as representatives of each of these and also because of their inclusions of multiple items which should make for more compelling case studies. These burials were also chosen for their perceived importance by scholars, but this will be examined in each specific instance.

8.3 Woodstown, County Waterford

Woodstown, Co. Waterford was home to a single well-furnished Viking weapon grave. This contained a sword which was double-edged and broken, as well as a spearhead, axe head, shield boss and rivets, ringed pin, and whetstone.¹¹⁵⁷ This burial was found in 2004 and amounts to the first scientifically excavated rural Viking burial site in Ireland.¹¹⁵⁸ A large sword fragment was found on the right side of the grave and two other fragments were found at the head of the burial along with the shield boss.¹¹⁵⁹ No human remains were found at the site due to the acidic conditions of the soil.¹¹⁶⁰

The Woodstown site, active in the 9th and 10th centuries, is located about eight kilometres upstream from Waterford city. According to Griffiths, test trenching revealed some 600 archaeological features, including kilns, post-holes, stake-holes, pits and

¹¹⁵⁷ Please see Fig. 8.6, 'Post-Excavation Plan of Woodstown', p. 342; and Fig 8.7 'Woodstown Weaponry', p. 343.

¹¹⁵⁸ The scientific study of this site is Richard O'Brien and Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford', in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds.), *Recent Archaeological Discoveries on National Road Schemes 2004* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 111-124.

¹¹⁵⁹ Please see Fig. 8.8, 'Woodstown Sword', p. 344.

¹¹⁶⁰ Stephen Harrison, 'Chapter Five: Discussion of the Viking burial', in Ian Russell, Maurice Hurley, and J. Eogan (eds) *Woodstown: a Viking-Age Settlement in Co. Waterford* (Dublin, 2014), p. 92.

hearths.¹¹⁶¹ This area is believed to be the location of the Viking fleet base 'close to the strategic Suir/Barrow confluence'.¹¹⁶² It was evident from geophysical investigations that this contained rectangular and oval housing and industrial structures.¹¹⁶³ In total there are some 4600 finds from the trial trenches including gaming pieces, beads, spindle whorls, a kufic coin, lead scale pan weights, and a gilded copper-alloy book clasp to name but a few of the items.¹¹⁶⁴ According to Griffiths, this amounts to an 'extremely rich' site.¹¹⁶⁵ This was echoed by Harrison who argued that the site was 'exceptional' due to the number and quality of finds.¹¹⁶⁶

The archeological evidence found at Woodstown indicated that it was a prominent metalworking site that was producing iron and copper-alloy artefacts.¹¹⁶⁷ There are some 140 smithing hearth 'cakes' found across the site making for quite a large bit of evidence of this practice.¹¹⁶⁸ These metallurgical activities and the archaeological evidence gathered from the site led scholars to conclude that the metalworkers were influenced by practices outside of Ireland.¹¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Woodstown is believed to have been a commercial centre, industrial centre and a market place during its use in the Viking period.¹¹⁷⁰ There is, however, only this single furnished burial.

It is vital to understand the wealth and perceived importance of the site in connection with the single furnished burial. Dublin, in contrast, which was known to be a wealthy and powerful trading centre in Ireland, had multiple burials, which have been explored in previous chapters. This site at Woodstown, with its evident importance on an international scale with trading, and clear militaristic and residential purposes, was home to a single, albeit, extremely well-furnished burial. This could be significant in understanding the importance of furnished burial practice as it deviates from Dublin and other Norwegian trading areas. It potentially represents a divergent pattern in burial practice.

¹¹⁶¹ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 33.

¹¹⁶² Ibid.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁴ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 34.

¹¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁶ Stephen Harrison, 'Beyond Longphuirt? Life and death in early Viking-Age Ireland', in *Everyday Life in Viking-Age Towns: Social Approaches to Towns in England and Ireland*, p. 67.

¹¹⁶⁷ Tim Young, 'Chapter Six: Discussion of metalworking evidence', in Ian Russell, Maurice Hurley, and J. Eogan (eds) *Woodstown: a Viking-Age Settlement in Co. Waterford* (Dublin, 2014), p. 103.

¹¹⁶⁸ Harrison, 'Beyond Longphuirt', p. 67.

¹¹⁶⁹ Young, 'metalworking evidence', p.113.

¹¹⁷⁰ Maurice Hurley, 'Chapter Twelve: Discussion and conclusions', Ian Russell, Maurice Hurley, and J. Eogan (eds) *Woodstown: a Viking-Age Settlement in Co. Waterford* (Dublin, 2014), p. 347.

There are some potential issues with assuming this to be the only burial with grave goods at the site due to the fact that the excavations were recent. Griffiths questioned if there were in fact more burials to be found.¹¹⁷¹ At the time of publication for his work, 2010, there had not been any more found, though archaeological study had been ongoing, including a plan for further investigations after 2010. At the time of Harrison's thesis, 2008, there had been no further burial discoveries. In 2016 there are still only the grave goods attributed to a single weapon burial in Woodstown.

This is also a problem with other sites that were found in the antiquarian era by inexperienced workers or people who did not follow modern scientific methods. Any number of graves could have been missed or overlooked as was explored in the Victorian chapter. As this thesis has previously argued, this is also the case throughout Scandinavia, and so, as other scholars have contended, it is essential to investigate and analyse the data that is available, while noting that future finds could modify the meaningful conclusions drawn. Given the data available, then, there is only a single furnished burial existing in Woodstown. Placing Woodstown in the broader framework of Viking activity in Ireland might allow this thesis to examine why the people of Woodstown only felt a single high status weapon burial was needed or desired. Alternatively, this might allow for conclusions that this was not the practice and perhaps speculate there are more burials to be found.

It is evident that both Woodstown and the Viking settlement at Waterford possibly co-existed and were certainly linked to the same Viking groups. According to Clare Downham, Woodstown was put out of use in the early tenth century in favor of Waterford.¹¹⁷² It is essential then, to examine the Waterford region in the greater context of Ireland, to analyze its importance and how this might have impacted on the symbolism of burial and why there might have only been a single burial located at Woodstown.

The annals point to early Viking raids, particularly of churches and ecclesiastical centres near Waterford. The earliest activity, from 812 CE, is recorded in multiple annalistic accounts including the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* and *Annals of Ulster*.¹¹⁷³ The *Cogadh*, while largely a narrative tale of propaganda, also mentions a Viking fleet at

¹¹⁷¹ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 34.

¹¹⁷² Clare Downham, 'The Historical Importance of Viking Age Waterford' in *Journal of Celtic Studies*, Vol. 4 (2004), p. 84.

¹¹⁷³ AC 812 (809) CE: *The Annals of Clonmacnoise: being annals of Ireland from the earliest period of A.D. 1408* (trans.) Conell Magoghangan and (ed.) Denis Murphy (Dublin, 1896), p. 130; AU 812 (811) CE: *Annals of Ulster*, Hennessy, p. 301.

Camas, near Waterford.¹¹⁷⁴ The year 837 CE saw attacks by the Vikings at churches in Killinny and Freshford, and Downham believed that these indicated that the river Barrow and Nore were being used by the Vikings in their campaigns.¹¹⁷⁵ Valante also argued that this could have been a raiding base.¹¹⁷⁶ Downham contended that these may highlight the significance of Waterford Harbour to access inland river-routes.¹¹⁷⁷ Crucial to this study is the period of the 860's CE where there is a dramatic increase in violence emanating from the Waterford area. Downham contended that this could possibly have resulted from rivalries between the *Dubgaill* (Dark Foreigners) and *Finngaill* (Fair Foreigners), who were at this time based in Dublin and Limerick, respectively. She believed that Waterford might have represented a 'strategically significant middle-ground over which rival Viking-groups vied for control'.¹¹⁷⁸ She cited the fact that in this period the politics of this region came into the 'limelight' and the kings of these Nore valley regions were able to 'skillfully to play off one band of Vikings against another'.¹¹⁷⁹

However, when the Vikings of Dublin, who were expelled in 902 CE (in exactly what capacity and to what extent is of continued debate) returned to Ireland in 914 CE, the *Annals of Ulster* listed Waterford as their first port of call.¹¹⁸⁰ At this time though, according to Downham, it is likely that Woodstown had fallen out of favor in comparison to Waterford. This does however, demonstrate, that at least at this point in the tenth century, there were certainly ties between the Vikings of Dublin and those in Waterford.

Therefore, if Waterford and its surrounding areas including Woodstown, formed this strategic middle area during the time of Woodstown's use, and this space was incredibly important and resulted in many battles fought to gain control, based on the formula evident in Dublin, then there should be clear evidence of more burials, with items related to violence and power. This is only if Woodstown were following the burial patterns evident at Kilmainham and Islandbridge.

There are several explanations for the difference. A first possible reason is that at the time of furnished burial practice in Woodstown, its importance as this centre for

¹¹⁷⁴ For more information on the *Cogadh Gaedhl re Galliabh*, please see Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith*, especially pp. 1-21.

¹¹⁷⁵ Downham, *Viking Age Waterford*, p. 77.

¹¹⁷⁶ Valante, *The Vikings in Ireland*, pp. 42-44.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁰ AU 913 (914) CE: 'A large new fleet of Gentiles at *Loch-dacaech*', *Annals of Ulster*, Hennessy, p. 429. According to Hennessy, *Loch-dacaech* is the Old Irish word for Waterford (Ibid., p. 428).

commerce had decreased. This does not seem likely given the crucial position of the space during the Viking period of furnished burial practice in Ireland and also the timeframe of usage of the site, the late ninth century, which corresponds to the peak of Viking furnished burial practice in insular regions. An additional possibility is that the Vikings of Woodstown were practicing different methods of burial. Indeed it could be that weapons or items of *seiðr* were passed down instead of being buried with the person. A different reaction, perhaps, than what occurred in Dublin.

Woodstown functioned as a key trading and industrial centre with martial purpose.¹¹⁸¹ It was both a crucial place of manufacture and also a site to launch battles and raids into the rest of Ireland. Another theory is that the Vikings of this region could have felt that one single burial, outside the centre, with its vast accoutrements was sufficient symbolism to demonstrate their power, their ability to inflict legitimate violence, and establish ties to the local community. This, however, is also a different or modified practice from the archaeological material in Dublin Kilmainham or Islandbridge, but is similar to what is evident at the Finglas burial. The Finglas burial was one grave containing items associated with high status hegemonic forms of femininities found in perhaps a liminal space.¹¹⁸² This might be what is mirrored in Woodstown.

The items buried with the decedent do follow the Viking burial practice patterns of symbolism associated with Dublin and also found in Cloghermore Cave. This is very clearly a burial associated with hegemonic elite forms of masculinities evident in the grave goods. The inclusion of a whetstone as previously argued, suggests a symbolic representation of king or leader as sword-giver, or sharpener. This signifies the person's ability not only to inflict legitimate and accepted forms of violence but also to choose who amongst others had the right to do so. The double-edged sword, spearhead, axe head and shield boss represent a vast array of weaponry. Indeed the inclusion of all of these items in a single burial represents a very high-status burial.

As previously stated, if Woodstown was following the weapon burial patterns evident in Kilmainham and Islandbridge in Dublin there would be multiple burials. As a large trading and military centre, perhaps somewhat comparable to Dublin, it would seem likely that the Vikings in these regions would behave in a similar pattern, if they were

¹¹⁸¹ Martial is defined within the scope of this thesis as relating to fighting or war. This is preferred to military, for example, because this implies a sort of organization or hierarchy which didn't necessarily exist.

¹¹⁸² For more information of Finglas burial please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

ethnically related or tied together as a cultural group. It is apparent, though, that the burial patterns in this respect are not similar to those in Kilmainham or Islandbridge. This leads to the possible conclusion that it was not because Dublin was a martial or trading centre that resulted in its specific burial strategies. The Woodstown burial though, is similar in practice to the burial in Finglas, located and connected to the Vikings in Dublin. As was previously examined, the burial at Finglas likely had *seiðr* ritual symbolism, which could also be tied to power and violence. Its single occurrence and liminal position suggests that this person was someone feared and perhaps powerful. This could be a similar case here. The person buried in Woodstown held a position outside of the centre, liminal, but was visible, some 20 metres from the entrance, suggesting a purposeful position to convey power to observers of both the actual funerary ritual and perhaps of those viewing the burial afterwards depending on its mark on the landscape. This single burial then, may have functioned like the Finglas one, as a solitary demonstration of power deemed sufficient to express dominance.

However, the burial follows the pattern of hypermasculinization clearly evident in the Dublin burials. With the sword, axe head, spearhead, shield boss and whetstone, this grave is full of hegemonic masculine symbolism. The sword as the predominant elite, and most expensive, weapon to manufacture demonstrates, as other scholars have argued, a person of high status. The inclusion of other weapons, including a spearhead, which was often used to symbolize warrior culture to the Vikings, as previously investigated, is also present. This, combined with the axe head and shield boss, clearly demonstrate a high level of martial or political power, as the ability to inflict legitimate violence was very much intertwined with the conceptions of power. The whetstone in this instance, could very well signify the right of the person interred to inflict legitimate violence and also decide who else could inflict legitimate violence. Equally, it potentially could demonstrate that society wanted to symbolize in the burial the association with the deceased and being able to choose those who could inflict this legitimate violence. The semiotics of this burial, then, have a clear indication that the people who created this burial wanted to represent a person of high status, perhaps even one of the highest echelons of status, as evidenced in the inclusion of the various weapons.

This idea, that the symbolism of this burial, combined with the fact that it was located outside the centre with a space close to an entrance of the settlement, may mean that this furnished burial and the rituals surrounding it may have functioned as a singular

effort to demonstrate power. The inclusion of such high status weaponry and a whetstone in conjunction with its location, gives rise to the possibility that the people of Woodstown viewed one elite burial of this magnitude as sufficient in order to claim and demonstrate dominance. This is a similar case to what is perhaps seen in Finglas.¹¹⁸³ The possibility also arises that these people might have by and large a completely different set of burial rituals to Dublin and that this man was a mere exception to the normal practices inherent in the town. This is hard to know at present. Based on the data available, and given its prime location, potential links to Dublin, and degree of status present in the burial, it is possible that this was a singular instance, of the highest echelons of society, designed to convey in one burial the wealth and power of the people who created it. Still, an alternative theory is that more graves could be found in Woodstown and remain as yet undiscovered.

8.4 Athlumey, Navan, County Meath

The fourth burial site for consideration is a gender neutral or tertiary grave that was found in Athlumey, Navan in Co. Meath in 1848.¹¹⁸⁴ The artifacts included in this were a copper alloy snaffle bit, harness mount and four copper-alloy rings, seven horse trappings, a copper-alloy chain, six copper-alloy studs or buttons, and an iron pin.¹¹⁸⁵ These grave goods were found in a context with human bones and animal remains, including a horse skull.¹¹⁸⁶ Wilde noted that one intact and two fragmentary skulls were accompanied by this group of goods, but Harrison cautioned that the intact skull has since left the country and that any link between these and goods would be difficult.¹¹⁸⁷ According to Wilde, that had been found during the excavations of 'cuttings on the eastern

¹¹⁸³ Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

¹¹⁸⁴ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 589.

¹¹⁸⁵ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 641; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 589. Please see Fig. 8.9, 'Athlumney Horse Mounts and Bosses', p. 345, and Fig. 8.10, 'Athlumney Horse Trappings (Plaques)', p. 346.

¹¹⁸⁶ Mark Clinton, 'Settlement Dynamics in Co. Meath: the kingdom of Lóegaire' in *Peritia* Vol. 14 (2000), p. 388.

¹¹⁸⁷ W.R. Wilde, *Beauties of the Boyne and its Tributary, the Blackwater*, (Dublin, 1850), pp. 134-135; W.R. Wilde, *Descriptive catalogue of the antiquities of Animal materials and bronze in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1861), pp. 373-375, 592-593, 605-606, 611, 617, and 619-620; Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 641.

side' of the Boyne.¹¹⁸⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn linked this to a pre-existing Christian church on the site.¹¹⁸⁹ The six copper-alloy studs or buttons and iron pin have since been lost.

The area of Athlumney is the only site of Viking artefacts in Navan.¹¹⁹⁰ According to the Early Medieval Archaeology Project, or EMAP, Report 6.1 the area where the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers merged was a location of some form of Viking settlement in the ninth century.¹¹⁹¹ It was the contention of EMAP that it was '...more likely that the burial....belonged to a settlement, possibly *longphort* site, at Athlumney on the eastern bank of the River Boyne'.¹¹⁹² This conclusion is based on the arguments by Mark Clinton.¹¹⁹³ Clinton believed that the Vikings were active on the River Boyne, and that raiding parties would have created a base, though 'undoubtedly often of a temporary nature'.¹¹⁹⁴ He contended that the confluence of the Blackwater and Boyne Rivers was a 'natural choice' for such a site.¹¹⁹⁵ Due to the fact that no defensive features have been found, in this limited study, on the riverside, presents the possibility that this was a *longphort*.¹¹⁹⁶

The horse equipment in this burial was ornate, intricate, and demonstrated a large amount of wealth, including a bridle bit with snaffle rings attached, the harness mount, and the seven decorated plaques, which probably functioned as harness mounts.¹¹⁹⁷ The harness mount was of complex design, featuring an animal head projecting some one and one half inches from a copper-alloy disk.¹¹⁹⁸ The head of the animal was pierced with 'a bronze chain made up of two rings and double loops'.¹¹⁹⁹ Wilde postulated that this was for an attachment of a trace and Armstrong believed that these could have attached to a chariot or vehicle of some sort.¹²⁰⁰ The disc was approximately three and three quarters

¹¹⁸⁸ W.R. Wilde, *Beauties of the Boyne*, pp. 134-135.

¹¹⁸⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 591.

¹¹⁹⁰ Clinton, 'Settlement Dynamics', p. 387.

¹¹⁹¹ Thom Kerr, Maureen Doyle, Matt Seaver, Finbar McCormick, and Aidan O'Sullivan, *Industrial Activity on Rural Secular Site in Ireland, AD 400-1100. Early Medieval Archaeological Project (EMAP2) Reconstructing the Early Medieval Irish Economy. Site Gazetteer A-G EMAP Report 6.1* (2012), p. xxiii.

¹¹⁹² Kerr et al, *Industrial Activity on Rural Secular Site*, p. xxiii.

¹¹⁹³ Clinton. 'Settlement Dynamics', pp. 386-388.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁹ E.C.R. Armstrong, 'Some Irish Antiquities Unknown Use' in *Antiquaries Journal* Vol. 2 (1922), p. 6.

¹²⁰⁰ Wilde, *Antiquities of animal remains and Bronze*, p. 611; Armstrong, 'Irish Antiquities', p. 12.

inches in diameter and E.C.R. Armstrong described the animal as having a dog's head, with a human head engraved on its muzzle.¹²⁰¹ Armstrong noted that the eyes were formed by red enamel and its teeth were indicated with lines. He argued that the close positioning of the two nostrils 'make it apparent that the artist intended the head for that of a dog'.¹²⁰²

However, close inspection of the animal head on the mount shows rounded ears, similar to the bear imagery found on the Finglas brooches. While the nostrils close together clinch it for Armstrong that this was the image of a dog, it could, based on the ears, elongated muzzle, and nose, be a wolf, which given the sharp teeth and wolf's importance in warfare, seems probable. It is likely that the animal was a wolf or a bear, both of which were linked to violence and martial endeavours.

As this thesis has examined in some depth previously, bears and wolves were often depicted in war or battle sequences.¹²⁰³ *Ulfheðnar*, or wolf-skin wearer and *Bersekr*, or bear skin or bear shirt, were portrayed as fighters who took on the traits of these animals, taking on a killing rage, or even being able to shapeshift into their namesakes. This is not to forget the importance of Freki and Geri, Odin's wolves, who, according to the sagas roamed the battle fields looking for those who died so they could devour them.¹²⁰⁴ The conceptions of predation and animal violence were intricately interwoven into the practice of *seiðr* and Viking violence, and so the use of animal motifs are crucial to analyze. As has also been investigated in some length, depictions of these creatures were believed to imbue a bearer with the qualities of the animal they hoped to possess. For example a wolf or bear, might at once demonstrate fierceness and animal predation to observers, with their sharp teeth and jaws, while also containing the symbolism that the owner or bearer wanted to be aligned with the animal and take on these characteristics for themselves.

Armstrong compared the head on this mount to an animal head featured on the 'boss' from Killua Castle, County Westmeath. He stated that the Athlumney artefact remained an 'isolated specimen' until in 1920, when an 'object of similar character', the Killua boss was found, though the details of how this object had come to be discovered were not recorded.¹²⁰⁵ According to him, this Killua was a 'bronze disk coated in white

¹²⁰¹ Armstrong, 'Irish Antiquities', p. 6.

¹²⁰² Ibid., p. 8.

¹²⁰³ For a detailed analysis of Berserkers and wolf-skin wearers, please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

¹²⁰⁴ 'HELGAKVITHA HUNDINGSBANA I', Bellows, p. 295.

¹²⁰⁵ Armstrong, 'Irish Antiquities', p. 6.

metal' similar to the white metal coating he described on the grave goods from Athlumney.¹²⁰⁶ The animal projection was described as a horse, with the upper portion of the animal's face and its open mouth being gilt.¹²⁰⁷ The eyes were made of blue enamel and the snout of the horse is pierced by a ring, which threads into a series of interwoven links attached to an intricately engraved plaque.¹²⁰⁸ Again, it is clear that this is associated with a person of high status, due to the nature of the design, patterns and materials. That there are two of these items in Ireland, suggests that this item was not created in isolation and the design and pattern was in use in different areas of Ireland by the Vikings in the ninth century.

The symbolism of the harness is manifold. The use of a harness, and access to horses themselves, demonstrates a fairly significant amount of wealth. The detailed ornamentation and materials used in the creation of the disk and projected animal head indicated that skilled craftsmen were utilized in its creation signifying again a high cost. That this item was buried instead of passed down to other family members suggests that the people who created this burial, as has been echoed in the other case studies, decided to engage in the conspicuous destruction of a costly and useful item.

Measuring around two inches across, the seven gilt copper plaques are of particular interest. Number six and seven, as labeled by Armstrong, are almost identical with an equal armed cross design with intricate interlacing patterns in the center. Number four is smaller and rectangular, while number two has a rounded, almost large circular top, which almost appears to be tree-like, with two pieces branching out of the bottom; number one has detailed, interwoven birds and number five has crouching animals. More details can be seen on the images of the plaques in the appendix.¹²⁰⁹

It is evident that the designs and patterns on these items were intricate and finely made, as Armstrong stated, 'the workmanship is admirable'.¹²¹⁰ Rhoda Kavanagh postulated that these had originally been Christian ecclesiastical ornamentation of some kind, reused and repurposed by the Vikings.¹²¹¹ Armstrong also sought to examine links between the artwork and design of these and Irish craftwork. He found that the

¹²⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁰⁹ Please see Fig. 8.10, 'Athlumney Horse Trappings (Plaques)', p. 346.

¹²¹⁰ Armstrong, 'Irish Antiquities', p. 8.

¹²¹¹ Rhoda M. Kavanagh, 'The Horse in Viking Ireland', in John Bradley (ed.) *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland; studies presented to F.X. Martin* (Kilkenny, 1988), pp. 100-101.

'crouching animal looking backwards' present on these items is not 'infrequently found on Irish metal-work,' and, in fact, is found on the Killua shrine.¹²¹² This argument supports Kavanagh's assertion of an ecclesiastical beginning. According to Clinton, these decorated plaques or harness mounts, compare 'very closely' to the finds from Gausel and Soma in Rogaland, western Norway, and this was previously noted by Kavanagh.¹²¹³ That these were found in western Norway proves to be interesting, due to the links between the Norwegians, and specifically those in western Norway, to the Vikings in Dublin and perhaps, Athlumney, given the similarities.

Regardless of its perhaps initial Irish ecclesiastical origins, the harness plaques represent wealth, and therefore, power. Repurposing of items taken in raids from monasteries was not uncommon for the Vikings, as they would not have needed or used them for their original purpose. To acquire and reuse items this detailed and expensive indicates wealth on behalf of the owner or bearer. Again, as with the other harness mount, the inclusion of such items in burial indicated that the person associated with this grave and/or the people who created the burial had access to enough resources to deliberately throw away valuable property in an effort to demonstrate or negotiate power. The social group associated with these funerary goods also had access to horses and horse riding, indicating another level of wealth.

Harrison's original interpretation, in a 2001 article, with regards to the presence of the horse bones, was the conclusion that this was a gendered male burial.¹²¹⁴ This echoed the arguments by Kavanagh who believed this to be representative of a Viking single burial.¹²¹⁵ Harrison deemed this to be a tertiary burial with a horse accompaniment at the time of his thesis publication.¹²¹⁶ While tertiary burials in Harrison's study are generally labeled female if he believed that was the case, he did not label this burial male, and, indeed, stated that grave goods, while they can be used to determine if a burial is female cannot be used to determine a male gender.¹²¹⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn supported Harrison's thesis arguments and deemed the burial to be gender-neutral due to what they believed to be an absence of gendered symbolism among the

¹²¹² Armstrong, 'Irish Antiquities', p. 9.

¹²¹³ Kavanagh, 'The Horse in Viking Ireland', p. 100.

¹²¹⁴ Stephen Harrison, 'Viking Graves and Grave Goods in Ireland' in A. Larsen (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 72.

¹²¹⁵ Kavanagh, 'The Horse in Viking Ireland', p. 98.

¹²¹⁶ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 642.

¹²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

artefacts.¹²¹⁸ Clinton, on the other hand, argued that the burial was possibly female.¹²¹⁹ He supported his contention with the fact that the plaques in Rogaland, which were quite similar to those in the Athlumney burial, were found with female remains and the Gausel burial also contained a horse skeleton.¹²²⁰

As has been investigated and analysed by this thesis, there is no conclusive link between horse burials and gender. The argument that a horse burial or materials are linked to masculinity or warfare doesn't seem to hold up to the archaeological evidence. It appears to be quite the opposite, that horses can be associated with any gender. As Ulla Lamond's study in Iceland found, there did not seem to be any strong association of horses with her binary examination of male and female burials. Lamond contended, like Else Roesdahl, that the horse did not belong as part of warrior grave as equipment.¹²²¹ Therefore, the inclusion of the horse and horse related items do not give an indication one way or the other as to the gender of decedent as perceived by the people who created the ritual or to what those who designed and carried out the burial wanted observers to represent.

Horses, as has been analyzed by this thesis, functioned ritually as mediators, they could travel between the worlds of the living and the dead, of the gods and mortals.¹²²² Horses also straddled the conceptions of wild and domestic, and the horse as boundary crosser made them particularly important in the practice of *seiðr* rituals. This burial had an abundance of horse related symbolism, from the horse skull to the bridle and snaffles, to the harness mount, to the plaques which could also be harness mounts, the horse and its associated accoutrements are the central focus of this burial practice. As this is overwhelmingly so, it is largely possible that the horse in this instance was primarily of ritual importance. That the person contained in this burial either chose to, or the society that buried the person chose to, include a variety of horse related semiotics in an effort to aid the person to the other side because the horse was a known mediator. Perhaps, the person in the burial or the persons creating the burial were involved in a horse cult and wanted to have a high status burial representing their dominance on the local landscape. Equally, the person or persons carrying out the ritual could have chosen these items due to their ties to wealth and power, quite obvious symbolism to the native Irish as well as

¹²¹⁸ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 589-591.

¹²¹⁹ Clinton, 'Settlement Dynamics', p. 388.

¹²²⁰ Ibid.

¹²²¹ Lamond, 'The Horse', p. 260.

¹²²² Ibid., p. 258. For an in depth analysis on horses please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

any Viking observers. Furthermore, it could have been that all of these things played a factor in the choice and performance of this burial in Athlumney.

8.5 Ballyholme, Co. Down

The final burial for examination is located in Ballyholme in County Down. The Ballyholme Bay is located on the southern shores of Belfast Lough and would have potentially served as a strategic position for the Vikings to conduct raids in and around the Belfast Lough region. In 824 CE, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, the Vikings made a raid on Bangor monastery, where 'the oratory was broken, and the relics of Comhghall were shaken from the shrine'.¹²²³ This is located close to the burial in Ballyholme (around a mile and half), and may well be connected, as scholars like Robert Cochrane have contended.¹²²⁴ So, as with the previous burial, this grave could be linked to an area of strategic importance.

This burial contained two single-shelled oval brooches, a copper-alloy bowl and fragments of wool and linen found in autumn of 1903.¹²²⁵ According to the first account of the burial by Robert Cochrane in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* in 1906, these were found on a 'raised beach adjoining the sea' during an excavation for 'building purposes'.¹²²⁶ Cochrane described the remains as being female due to an absence of weapons.¹²²⁷ He postulated that because of its position by the beach this was a Norwegian raider and not an example of a settler.¹²²⁸ This would support the idea that Ballyholme functioned as a location to launch attacks.

Cochrane stated that the two oval brooches, which he dated to the 9th century, were complete with pins inside.¹²²⁹ He described the decoration as having 'diamond or rhombial (sic) patterns' dividing lines emphasized by silver wire, and animal ornamentation, of a uniform design.¹²³⁰ He compared the pattern and ornamentation of

¹²²³ AFM 822.3 (824): Ó Cléirigh, Mícheál *et al*, *Annals of the Kingdom*, p. 435.

¹²²⁴ Robert Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, Co. Down' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* xxxvi (1906), p. 453.

¹²²⁵ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, pp. 595-604; *Insular Furnished Burial*, p. 519. Please see Fig. 8.11, 'Brooches from Ballyholme, County Down', p. 347, and Fig. 8.12, 'Bowl from Ballyholme, County Down', p. 348.

¹²²⁶ Cochrane, 'Exhibit', p. 450.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 454.

¹²²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 451 and 453.

¹²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 453

these brooches to those found in Phoenix Park, as well as several other locations in Norway.¹²³¹ Oval brooches have been explored in-depth in the previous chapter on femininities, where this thesis argued that in addition to serving an ornamental purpose jewelry or the like, these could function as amulets with ties to *seiðr* rituals or cultic practices.¹²³² This suggests that oval brooches in burials could represent an element of high-status magic practice or as a high status token or amulet related to *seiðr*, in addition to a more practical use.

In his overview, Cochrane stated that the bowl was 'a vessel of bronze like a bowl, had a piece of fine chain attached, and a great quantity of what looked like hair inside, but experts have pronounced it to be wool'.¹²³³ He argued that the design of the fragmented bowl, 'beaten out very thin with considerable skill, the rim being turned out horizontally above a hollow moulding, which in some Norwegian specimens was filled with an iron ring'.¹²³⁴ Cochrane contended that while only one rivet hole could definitively be found on the fragments, there were 'three escutcheons of bronze, either of heater form or of bird-like outline'.¹²³⁵ The chain that was found unfortunately did not last long after discovery, with Cochrane remarking that it did not survive handling by workmen.¹²³⁶

Interestingly, he argued that the design of the bowl made it apparent that it was created to be seen from below, due to their indentation in the bottom which he stated was designed to hold an ornamental disk, 'often enamelled'.¹²³⁷ Therefore, Cochrane, concluded, that these such bowls were not designed to be used over a fire.¹²³⁸ He compared this bowl to one found at York, which still contained both of its enamelled plates and also to an 'elaborately enamelled' bowl from Bergenhus, Norway and stated that bowls of this 'peculiar pattern' are common in Norway, and were found for the most part between Lindesnas and Romsdal, on the west coast'.¹²³⁹ He is unable to discern their purpose, however, stating that 'no convincing explanation of their use has yet been given'.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³¹ Ibid., p. 453.

¹²³² Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

¹²³³ Cochrane, 'Exhibit', p. 451.

¹²³⁴ Ibid., p. 453.

¹²³⁵ Ibid.

¹²³⁶ Ibid.

¹²³⁷ Ibid.

¹²³⁸ Ibid.

¹²³⁹ Ibid., p. 454.

¹²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Hanging-bowls were not a unique Viking feature and found throughout continental Europe and in native Irish design.¹²⁴¹ There is no proof that hanging-bowls were created or manufactured in a Scandinavian context, but there is a 'strong case,' according to Cochrane, for some of the hanging-bowls of the later 8th to 11th centuries to have been made in Hiberno-Viking workshops.¹²⁴² Indeed, there were five hanging-bowls found in what has been identified as a Hiberno-Viking metalworker's hoard from the River Blackwater near Armagh.¹²⁴³ It is also clear, that in this later hanging-bowl period, specifically from the late eighth through the 11th centuries, that there was a shift to less ornately decorated bowls.¹²⁴⁴ It is probable that the earliest bowls, from an Irish or British context may have functioned in an ecclesiastical milieu, as communion bowls or vessels for holy water; however, the later ones might have served a purpose in aristocratic feasting and had a secular function.¹²⁴⁵ While bowls in early medieval aristocratic houses in Britain and Ireland functioned as an indicator of wealth and status, according to Sheila Raven the later bowls must have been present in 'less princely houses' with an expansion in function. Raven contended that perhaps with the new onset of Scandinavian customers, the Hiberno-Norse metalworkers were designing for an audience who required less detailed, ornate or expensive designs.¹²⁴⁶

When these bowls are found in Viking furnished burial it is often in female graves according to Raven, who argued that their presence in these burials, along with other 'luxury' vessels associated with liquids, 'may either signify a wealthy woman's role as hostess in the feasting hall, or alternatively her status as a woman of wealth and refinement in having at her disposal a personal "washing set"'.¹²⁴⁷

Harrison, however, argued that the idea that this might have been a hanging-bowl 'can be discounted' but does not go into any further detail of this contention.¹²⁴⁸ However, in his monograph with Ó Floinn, they argued that it was 'clearly related to the Insular hanging-bowl series but with no evidence for suspension'.¹²⁴⁹ They declared that the

¹²⁴¹ Shelia Raven, 'The Scandinavian Bowls' in Rupert Leo Scott Bruce-Mitford (author), *The Corpus of Late Celtic Hanging-bowls with an account of bowls found in Scandinavia by Sheila Raven*, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 55-56.

¹²⁴² Raven, 'Bowls', p. 58.

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁸ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 519.

¹²⁴⁹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 603.

bowl had never been fitted with estrucheons for suspension and therefore, did not class it as a hanging bowl.¹²⁵⁰ Raven, in her listing of the hanging-bowls found in Ireland does not list the bowl found at Ballyholme.¹²⁵¹ So the bowl found in the Ballyholme burial may very well not be a hanging-bowl, but the importance of this item does not change significantly even if it wasn't. According to Meaney, bowls or buckets may have been placed in Anglo-Saxon burials because of their role in burial ritual.¹²⁵² She cited several burials 'outside of Kent' that included bronze bowls.¹²⁵³ Bowls of any kind might have been viewed as an important status symbol for the Viking woman.¹²⁵⁴ Raven argued that items related to the serving of liquids in so-called female burials, emphasized the importance of women's role in hospitality and feasting as well as their wealth.¹²⁵⁵

The inclusion of bowls or vessels for liquids in burial might represent a wealthy person, or woman as Raven argued, who had access to a personal accoutrement of washing basins. However, as this thesis has reiterated it is exceedingly problematic to assume a decedent's gender based on grave goods. It can be said, though, that due to the semiotics of such items, it is possible that these represented a form of hegemonic elite female symbolism. That these items may be tied to the concept of hosting and serving, but they also, as was previously argued with the ladle and cauldron, could have served a ritual purpose.

Finally, Cochrane stated that the grave held within it 'some bones' and 'a large piece of thin linen like fine canvas'.¹²⁵⁶ This linen, in addition to the wool, are some of the few remaining pieces of cloth found in Viking burials, particularly in Ireland and represent an interesting avenue for exploration. Unfortunately, this, along with the bones and chain, have been destroyed or lost.¹²⁵⁷ This means that any consideration of these items is largely speculative and it will be impossible to know the make and creation of these items. In particular the color or design of the supposed 'linen' is not noted.

According to Jochens the production of homespun cloth served as a valuable commodity and export.¹²⁵⁸ Kirsten Marie Tibbs analyzed textile production and cloth as it

¹²⁵⁰ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 196.

¹²⁵¹ Raven, 'Bowls', p. 63.

¹²⁵² Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, p. 24.

¹²⁵³ Ibid., p. 130 and p. 152.

¹²⁵⁴ Raven, 'Bowls', p. 43.

¹²⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁵⁶ Cochrane, 'Exhibit', p. 451.

¹²⁵⁷ Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p 519.

¹²⁵⁸ Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, p.149.

relations to violence.¹²⁵⁹ Tibbs contended that the creation of textiles was 'as important in the (Icelandic) saga narrative and as central to the plot as commonly-studied themes of revenge, feud, and violence'.¹²⁶⁰ In particular, she noted the connection between the Valkyries and textile production and violence.¹²⁶¹ This link was mentioned previously by this thesis in its specific consideration of the Valkyries weaving of entrails in *Njal's saga* to determine the fates of men.¹²⁶² Tibbs also analyzed *Laxdaela saga* and the relationship between Gundrun, the leading female antagonist, and killing or violence, as she is depicted engaging in either textile production or laundry when murders and killings that she instigated are taking place.¹²⁶³ This link was also investigated by Heide.¹²⁶⁴

The symbolism of textile production tools has been considered in much depth in previous chapters of this thesis, as well as earlier in this chapter, and it has been clear that these items may represent *seiðr* ritual and indeed violence itself as tools for the creation of rituals and implementation of violent incantations or desires of the bearer.¹²⁶⁵ Textile production, and its relation of *seiðr*, as previously contended, may have some ties to hegemonic elite female symbolism, but it is evident that this was not limited to biological female people.¹²⁶⁶ It is therefore imperative not to assume gender based on burial goods.

For Tibbs, textiles and the tools of their work are linked and so, too, are the semiotics.¹²⁶⁷ Cloth itself in burial might represent garments that have not completely disintegrated. However, the inclusion of wool not yet woven or carded is particularly interesting and may be linked to the ideology of weaving, *seiðr* and ritual magic. It may represent weaving and spinning, symbolically including the raw wool as a sign of work unfinished, or a step in a ritual yet to be completed. According to Tibbs, spinning of yarn was more time consuming.¹²⁶⁸ The absence of other textile-working tools may indicate that this was placed in the burial to represent spinning and weaving in the absence of these items.

¹²⁵⁹ Kristen Marie Tibbs, *Semiotics of Cloth: Reading Medieval Norse Textile Traditions*, (Unpublished MA Thesis, Marshall University, 2012), p. 7.

¹²⁶⁰ Tibbs, *Semiotics*, p. 9.

¹²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹²⁶² Please see Chapter Seven pp. 174-214.

¹²⁶³ Tibbs, *Semiotics*, pp. 12-13.

¹²⁶⁴ Heide, 'Spinning', p.166. For more information on *Laxdaela saga* and Heide's arguments please see Chapter Seven pp. 174-214.

¹²⁶⁵ For more information please see Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, pp. 115-214.

¹²⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁶⁷ Tibbs, *Semiotics*, pp. 19-20.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.19.

In particular, important to elites is the fabric known as 'skarlet', or medieval scarlet.¹²⁶⁹ In the medieval period this textile was associated with a range of colors, and is primarily known for being a luxury woolen cloth according to Tibbs.¹²⁷⁰ The production and use of this type of fabric is found throughout the saga material, including *Laxdaela saga* and *Njal's saga*.¹²⁷¹ As has been previously noted by this thesis, the use of saga sources in analyzing archaeological material is problematic due to the vastly divergent context that they were written from when the events in the stories took place, which has undoubtedly impacted the tales contained therein.¹²⁷² The judicious use of these sources is possible so long as they are contextualized. That cloth of various forms and creation held different values in the medieval Scandinavian world is likely. The combination of the fine cloth and the uncared wool might indicate that the person buried within represented someone who had exemplary textile production skills, maybe even of something like medieval scarlet, but may also be related to *seiðr* practice, indicating a high- status burial. However, without being able to analyze the fabrics, this is speculative.

The symbolism in this burial makes apparent that this contained the semiotics of hegemonic high status elite femininities. The brooches, textiles, and bowls are possibly linked to a form or forms of femininities, though as previously stated, this is not always the case. That textiles and their working equipment may be linked with *seiðr* and the production and creation of violence, which is inextricably linked to power, signified the potential consequence of such a burial. The oval brooches, as previously argued, could have at once been amulets that also functioned as jewellery or ornamentation. The bowl could represent both the perceived importance of hosting, the wealth of the person or people who created the burial, as well as a ritual object placed in the burial for reasons tied to Viking belief practices.

What is of particular interest is the conception that this grave was female alongside the idea that this was a raiding party burial. If these items are linked to forms of hegemonic elite femininities, this suggests that either raiding parties carried with them people with the means and desire to conduct textile work and that these were represented in burial. Additionally, in the absence of specific textile working materials, such as a spindle whorl, the inclusion of raw wool suggests a sort of symbolic replacement

¹²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

¹²⁷¹ Ibid.

¹²⁷² Please see Chapter Two pp. 30-45.

for such items. However, if the bowls represented feasting or hosting, then carrying them or burying them with the person may suggest a more settled group, with access and the need for such items. If this burial related to a particular raiding party, then, with its hegemonic elite female symbolism, it obliterates the concept that raiding parties were only male or that these groups were only concerned with elite hegemonic symbolism tied to violence. Equally, it may suggest that these items were not always tied to a settled form of elite female symbolism, but instead could also be tied to mobile groups.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Over the course of the previous eight chapters this thesis has examined gender representations and negotiations as evident in funerary materials in Dublin. It has also investigated several case studies in the rest of Ireland in order to compare and contrast the semiotics of burial and grave goods. From this investigation, it has been clear that gendered symbolism was utilized in Viking burial practices to convey dominance and power, but that also this symbolism has often been misinterpreted, misunderstood, or in particular, with items tied to hegemonic femininities or perceived lower status, marginalized and dismissed. As has often been the case, supposed women's goods have been depicted as items that she was given: thereby continuing the ideology that women are passive recipients of status markers. Additionally, often objects that do not align with modern archaeologists' conceptions of wealth or power have been assumed to be of lower status, and this is evident in the examination of animal bones.

One of the central tenets of this thesis was that the Vikings of Dublin deliberately modified their burial practices as a result of contact with the native Irish, or possibly this in tandem with the unique competition with other Viking caused by the social and political environment in Ireland, and that this is evident in hypermasculinized burial patterns. Harrison and Ó Floinn argued that 9th- century Dublin was 'an exceptionally large settlement' and played a key role in the power structures in insular contexts.¹²⁷³ They believed that the furnished burial rite was confined to 'key figures, including its leaders'.¹²⁷⁴ Critically to this thesis' tenets, Harrison and Ó Floinn contended that these graves represented various kin-groups who were competing for power in ninth century Dublin.¹²⁷⁵ Hadley also contended that competition between various Viking groups could be fierce and bloody, as was evident in Chapter Four and her analysis of the Irish annalistic accounts.¹²⁷⁶ It is also apparent from the annals, as with many conquest environments, that the Vikings were in continuous conflict with the native Irish. As a result, it was clear that due to the majority of graves containing hegemonic masculine symbolism, as well as the large number of swords present in these burials, the Vikings in Dublin were using the symbolism inherent in this weaponry to convey power to the

¹²⁷³ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 298-299.

¹²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁶ Hadley, 'Whither The Warrior', p.106.

various groups viewing the funerary ritual and who would have witnessed, or heard of, the grave itself.

The case studies in Ireland also demonstrated a strong tie to sword burials and weaponry. However, there is no other geographical location with the number of swords and sword burials as there is in Dublin. Indeed, with the exception of Dublin so far there were only two places on the island of Ireland with more than one burial, Cloghermore cave and Rathlin Bay. Instead, as the case studies have shown, it was often a single male grave found elsewhere. While tempting, it is problematic to compare the Dublin corpus to burials in the rest of Ireland as a whole, because of the potential diversity of rituals and Viking groups on the island, as well as the dearth of data. Instead, it is more useful to look at specific case studies and study their relationship to the Vikings in Dublin. In this vein, there have been some striking similarities and differences in burial strategies.

Woodstown, for example, was similar to Dublin: it was an area of economic importance as a trading centre; it was located on a river; and it also had a martial purpose. However, unlike Dublin, Woodstown was only home to a single known burial. This grave, as was argued, mirrored the Dublin graves in its hypermasculinization. It was incredibly well furnished with a full accoutrement of weapons, including a spearhead, axe head, arrowheads, shield boss among other goods. So while it had only one example of this burial style, it did reflect Dublin burial practices in this way. However, if Woodstown had truly been following the Kilmainham and Islandbridge burial patterns this area would have seen a variety of graves with hegemonic masculine symbolism. Instead, this burial is a singular example, much like the Finglas burial, as this thesis has argued. Both of these graves and Woodstown and Finglas were made on the boundaries of Viking occupied spaces. This has led scholars to conclude that they are liminal burials, created on the outskirts of an area to be viewed as a show of dominance to those approaching, while also perhaps signifying the power or status of the person interred within.

To return to the comparison between Kilmainham and Islandbridge, however, while so far only one burial has been ever found at Woodstown, the symbolism is clearly created in a similar vein. This may represent two similar, but distinctive burial traditions, or equally, the same burial traditions, just not replicated due to either a lack of motivation, perceived need, or resources.

As has been evident from the Ireland case studies and the Dublin Viking burials, these may hold a position outside the bounds of society. These graves are placed directly

outside settlement or on a boundary line, like a river or body of water. The Kilmainham and Islandbridge burial areas are located near the Liffey; Woodstown burial is found outside the settlement area, but near the entrance, and the Ballyholme burial, was located essentially on the beach. The positioning of the burials is similar, and this is something that is seen in other areas of study. Viking burial mounds or graves are often located near or by rivers or bodies of water, or in pre-existing Christian or prehistoric cemeteries. Ireland is no exception. According to Lund, this may suggest that water boundaries were used to separate the realms of the living and dead.¹²⁷⁷ In Moen's analysis she argued that the position of burials within the landscape possibly reinforced boundaries.¹²⁷⁸ All of the Kaupang burials have a relationship to water, and Oseberg is located near a river.¹²⁷⁹ To some extent all of these burials located near rivers or boundaries are liminal, existing on the outskirts of settlement or on a perceived border between living and dead.

Another central point is understanding the conceptions of liminal and 'Other' within the Viking context. There is a common assumption by modern scholars and archaeologists predicated on the concept that warrior is the norm. Masculine is norm. Male is norm. Often this is reflected in the ways in which historians write and think about men and women in various temporal contexts. As was seen in Chapter Six men are deconstructed and examined. They are analyzed in somewhat nuanced categories as warriors, farmers, elites... and 'their women'. People who were perceived to be gendered female were cast into a monolithic category 'women' and not often critically examined. This has been overturned by more recent analysis by Clover and Moen, but the conception of the Viking warrior male was contained within the safe spaces of what was construed to be normal society prevails. This warrior was certainly not 'Other' instead very much the measuring stick with which to determine differing peoples Otherness.

However, this idea that the warrior was not 'Other' can be clearly challenged in the face of the evidence in Ireland and the Vikings belief systems. The Norse may very well have associated warriors, death and violence with the wild other, much like women are associated in Christian culture; and perhaps as were practitioners of *seiðr*. Native Irish Christian culture commonly associated women with violence and animals. This can be

¹²⁷⁷ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 16: citing and translating Julie Lund, *Åsted og vadested, Deponeringer, genstandsbiografier og rumlig strukurering som kilde til vikinetidens kognitive landskaber* ([Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oslo, 2009), p. 257.

¹²⁷⁸ Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 16.

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid.

found, for example in the feminization of violence used by the Irish literati.¹²⁸⁰ An instance of this trope can be found in the *Cogadh*, where it associated a lioness deprived of her whelps, 'fierce, tearing, swift, all-powerful lioness,' with the ferocity of Murchad's fighting on the battlefield of Clontarf in 1014 CE.¹²⁸¹ Here this may appear to be a favorable reference, it is describing a warrior fighting fiercely, but when placed within its early medieval Irish milieu, it is apparent that this is actually excusing Murchad's violence by wrapping it up in female language, thus removing the responsibility for his actions from his shoulders and turning his violence female and animalistic. This is in contrast to the Norse ideologies, where this animalistic frenzy of warriors in battle was not often feminized, or if done so, not because this was the common association.

In its most extreme, feminization of violence is personified in female mythological figures.¹²⁸² The *Cogadh* utilized these radical depictions in the scene of the battle of Clontarf,

...And there arose a wild, impetuous, precipitate, furious, dark, frightful, voracious, merciless, combative, contentious, *Badb*, screaming and fluttering about their heads.¹²⁸³

This is reference to the *Badb* or the Morrigan who was the personification of violence as a wicked female deity.¹²⁸⁴ Lisa Bitel argued, that the 'vocabulary of political power and vocabulary of violence were female' for the Christian literati.¹²⁸⁵ War and violence were given female embodiments, like the *Badb*; the uncontrollable nature of conflict, its 'frenzy' and its fickleness were personality traits the literati ascribed to women.¹²⁸⁶ The association between females, violence, and animals was not unique to the *Cogadh* and, is found throughout the Irish corpus of texts. *The Heptads*, the medieval Irish legal tracts, associated women with animals, stating that 'neither a jealous wife nor a domestic beast were liable for certain assaults' as it was their nature.¹²⁸⁷ In the *Tecosca Cormiac* or *The Instructions of King Cormac*, Cormac advised that (women), 'they are moths for striking you, they are serpents for cunning,'¹²⁸⁸ According to this source, King Cormac did not hold women in high esteem, with a prolix description on the nature of all women as, among

¹²⁸⁰ Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith*, p. 22.

¹²⁸¹ *Cogadh*, Todd, p. 189.

¹²⁸² Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith*, p. 23.

¹²⁸³ *Cogadh*, Todd, p. 175.

¹²⁸⁴ Wade, *Contextualizing Gormlaith*, p. 24.

¹²⁸⁵ Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 22.

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

¹²⁸⁸ *Tecosca Cormiac* (trans.) Kuno Meyer (Dublin, 1909), p. 35.

other things, 'viragos in strife... harbouring evil thoughts... dumb on useful matters... persevering in lust... dishonest in assembly...slandorous of worth,' and he makes 'no difference among them'.¹²⁸⁹ As has been seen in the course of the thesis, these misogynistic ideas on women and women's behaviour were pervasive throughout the Christian medieval Europe.¹²⁹⁰

This is in contrast to the ideas of violence and animals in Norse cosmography. As this thesis has investigated, animals and animal traits were desirable among the Norse peoples, and held a high position in ritual matters.¹²⁹¹ The idea of occupying an animalistic space, or having characteristics associated with these creatures was positive and desired. This is demonstrated in the importance of animal amulets and totems, as well as the use of animal bones as ritual companions in burials. Additionally, animals occupied the role as mediator, going between worlds and communing and transporting both gods and people. This ability to traverse roles and spaces was revered. The conception and association of wild animal 'Other' with positive warrior traits is no more clear than with the *berserker* and wolf-skin wearers as this thesis has examined in depth.¹²⁹² These people engaged in warfare and battle with the traits of the animals that they were associated. They were wild, without mail, without fear of death, and fought wildly, uncontrolled, totally animalistic. But they were not held in contempt, like the Christian literati of Ireland viewed women. No, instead, the wild uncontrolled animal nature of the Norse *beserker* warriors was associated with Odin and power. Scholars like Andrén supported this argument, contending that warriors and warfare were linked with wildness and that this in turn was something 'Other' or alien.¹²⁹³ These people could indeed occupy liminal spaces. Indeed, Indrek Jets asserted that,

...the use of foreign symbolic language could fit with perceived 'otherness' of warfare and warriors. Warriors themselves could have found it useful to differentiate themselves from the rest of the population, to emphasize their special status in society.¹²⁹⁴

¹²⁸⁹ *Tecosca Cormiac*, Meyer, p. 29, 31, 33, and 35.

¹²⁹⁰ Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173

¹²⁹¹ See Chapter Six.

¹²⁹² *Ibid.*

¹²⁹³ Anders Andrén, 'A World of Stone. Warrior Culture, hybridity and old Norse Cosmology' in A. Andren, K. Jennbert, and C. Raudvere (eds.) *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes in Interactions* (Lund, 2006), p. 35.

¹²⁹⁴ Indrek Jets, 'Scandinavian Late Viking Age Art Styles as Part of the Visual Display of Warriors in 11th Century Estonia' in *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 16, No. 2 (2012), p. 127.

This means that potentially both the single examples of graves and the multiple burials in Ireland, and indeed, the broader Scandinavian context, could all be composed of people in liminal positions in society. This is critical because it redefines the understandings of gender roles as women are often depicted as animalistic and 'Other' in Christian doctrine as just evidenced. It is certainly clear that in the Viking gender ideologies warrior could be, and perhaps was, 'Other'. That perhaps the highest echelons and most desirable positions could exist as a wild, uncontrollable, liminal, and 'Other'. To have a warrior masculine elite also, and perhaps willingly, prescribe and define themselves as animal 'Other', makes for divergent conception of gender identities as well as a new understanding and new definitions of what it meant to be 'Other,' in Norse society. For Christian culture, the animal 'Other', was a highly negative position associated with femaleness, wildness and uncontrolled behavior, all negative things in the minds of the authors. It is evident that the position of 'Other' and liminal did not hold necessarily the same negative connotations in Viking society.

This makes for interpreting gender roles of the Viking age particularly problematic, especially when seen through the eyes of the narrative saga sources composed in a Christian milieu. As was argued previously, it is very possible that many of the charges of *ergi* and *ragr* and the associations of *seiðr* with sexual magic might very well be the contemporary culture reading their own societal biases into a pagan past, of placing their own fears and issues upon a Viking society that did not understand or operate with a strict binary gender system, nor associated liminal status as negative. This is also evident in the importance of mediators in their belief system. As has been argued, horses and dogs played a crucial role in cosmography specifically for their ability to be other, to be mediators between realms and worlds, and so, like these animals, it is possible that people of liminal status to also be valued, and held in high regard, while also perhaps feared. As was previously contended, this may account for the *ergi* charges and what might have been a Christian misinterpretation of a pagan third gender.¹²⁹⁵

What is of crucial importance as well in these hegemonic male burials were their symbols of violence. Violence, and indeed, gendered violence, from the data seems to be a critical way in which the Vikings manifested their gender identities and negotiated dominance and power. While hegemonic elite male violence was perhaps manifested in symbols of weaponry, which may also have ties to the Viking systems of belief and magic

¹²⁹⁵ Please see Chapter Six, pp. 115-173.

practices, hegemonic forms of elite female violence were evident in objects relating to *seiðr* practice. Weaving tools, cloth, the whalebone plaque, the Kilmainham staff, and even items like ladles and bowls, may all have ties to ritual practice. This ritual system of beliefs, as has been argued, clearly had links to violence and the practice of legitimate violence. People who practiced *seiðr* were imbued with the abilities, or perceived to be imbued with the abilities, to engage in magic that could protect or defend the household, but also could cause the fatal clumsiness in battle and could, at the most extreme, kill one's enemies.

In this way, then, *seiðr* tools in burials are not so very different from weaponry. This concept paints an interesting portrait of Viking burial in Ireland. For example, from Kilmainham, the female burial associated with the staff should instead be labeled a *seiðr* staff grave, as that appears to be the more primary signifier. It was apparently found along with seven weapon graves, but based on the association between these items and violence, it would be more correct to label these graves as all having hegemonic symbols of violence designed to convey power and the right to commit legitimate acts of violence to the observers of the burial ritual.

This is also evident in Ireland, in Cloghermore Cave for example, where clear *seiðr* symbolism was found in the burials. This solidifies this thesis' stance that this location and its graves were not so very different in inherent semiotics to the Vikings of Dublin, due to the close ties between the group that made the Kilmainham and Islandbridge burials and those that created the ones contained in Cloghermore Cave. All of these burials follow a clear pattern of violent, ritualistic, gendered symbolism, contained in the grave goods to convey power and dominance, while also serving a key place within the burial ritual and perhaps to aid the deceased in one of the afterlife plains.

It is evident that a clear gender bias has largely influenced work, not only with femininities in burial, but also in the consideration of masculinities and their perceived importance. A fundamental area where this has been evident is in the examination of the so-called *sati* graves: those where scholars have argued for deliberate female sacrifice in relation to a central male warrior burial. When these cases have been deconstructed there is scant evidence to demonstrate that this was the case at all. Indeed, there is none. The burial mound at Donnybrook was labeled human sacrifice largely based on the assumption that two burials of allegedly smaller individuals located adjacent to the male warrior meant that they must have been sacrificial offerings. It was decided these were

such based on their size and position, even though it was reported by workers and not even antiquarians, but no bones remain and there is no evidence that these were female, apart from the perception of the people who found the burials. Even if they were female, this is not a sufficient reason to refer to them as sacrifice. With Cloghermore Cave, again, researchers seemed to reach for an explanation of a female cremation so close to a male burial and could only surmise that it must be sacrifice. Again, this idea that women could not have held any real definable power permeates throughout Viking studies and specifically Viking studies in Ireland to the detriment of the whole.

Bias is also clearly evident in the consideration of the so-called female graves. Often they are considered as passive receivers of items of value whose lives revolved around a domestic sphere. It is clear that scholars such as Moen and Clover are challenging these assumptions, so the ideology is pervasive throughout the corpus. Harrison, for example, argued against the conceptions of passive female actors in the insular settlement process, while also upholding a domestic sphere for Viking women.¹²⁹⁶ This conception that grave goods relating to forms of hegemonic femininities, and indeed, women, could indicate that women might have held some power in Viking Ireland has recently been accepted to some degree by Harrison and Ó Floinn. They contended that while the burials in Ireland overwhelming represent males, that

The female graves, some of which are well furnished, point to the presence of an influential group of Scandinavian women who may well have been more numerous and more socially important than has been previously thought, particularly in Dublin.¹²⁹⁷

They do not, however, consider that items relating to Viking magic practice might represent power on an equal field to weaponry in a symbolic sense, nor do they reconsider women's positions within their concepts of Viking patriarchy. Instead, while an improvement, women are still consigned to a different social and political position, albeit one that is 'more socially important' than previous studies had argued.

As has been argued, this is a Victorian conception that has little place in understanding the daily dynamics and gender relations between Viking men, women, and people who identified in a third or other gender roles. Victorian gender representations and ideologies remain highly influential in the world of Viking studies. However, as mentioned, Clover, Moen, Price and others are challenging this norm and seeking to

¹²⁹⁶ Please see Chapter Six pp. 115-173.

¹²⁹⁷ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 299.

identify Viking gender roles in their own context with their own unique conceptions. This is also essential to the studies of the Vikings in their insular milieus.

The third group of data that was examined in this thesis was the so-called gender neutral, un-gendered, or tertiary burials. This group has largely been argued to be of lesser status, lesser well-furnished, or of lesser importance due to the nature or number of items contained within the burials. However, as has been previously argued in this thesis, this is exceedingly problematic because it often projects modern definitions of value and wealth onto a Viking society. For example, in Dublin, there was a clear case of a burial containing some 151 different pieces of animal bones. It was evident based on the bones that these animal remains were not remnants of feast. The ability to kill and conspicuously destroy that amount of animals for a burial ritual demonstrates that the people who created this burial had access to a large amount of disposable wealth. Another example is the so-called tertiary or gender-neutral grave at Ballyholme, in County Down, with its exceedingly wealthy display of items relating to horses. These items were very well made, and seem to demonstrate a level of wealth and status on par with some of the well-furnished weapon burials. Indeed, it is clear that the horse played a critical role in Viking cosmography, and as a symbol of wealth and status. The inclusion of these items, then, is simultaneously conveying the semiotics of power and *seiðr* practice. The horse perhaps functioned as both a secular companion in the afterlife and a mediator between worlds.

It is evident in Ireland that the Vikings were using gendered symbolism in their burial strategies. It is also clear that that symbolism might not always align with modern gender identities or conceptions of wealth or power. The Vikings utilized the semiotics of violence to convey strength and power to observers and negotiate the positions of those remaining alive after an important figure, or perceived important figure, in the community died. Equally, funerals could be used as a time to reassert power, regardless of the status of the dead person. For example, a person of lesser status, but still from an elite family, might be accorded an extremely high status burial in an effort by the creators of the funerary ritual to demonstrate their continued power and importance in a time of particular conflict.

This leads naturally to the question of why the Vikings modified their burial strategies in Dublin and, indeed, in the relevant case studies. For example, what might have impacted the Vikings specifically in Dublin or in areas associated with Kilmainham

and Islandbridge to create hypermasculinized burials is of particular interest. The final section of this conclusion will be a few possible speculations as to why this might have occurred and suggestions for a few areas of further research.

Andrén argued that when the Norse encountered the Romans and their very clear vision of the gods, their own systems and beliefs became more solidified and explicit accordingly.¹²⁹⁸ He proposed that this cultural contact in fact systemized their belief systems into 'something partly new' and that this would change the character of Norse religion.¹²⁹⁹ This argument is particularly important in the consideration of the Vikings in Ireland. As was argued in Chapter One, it is clear that the Vikings had a system of beliefs that was quite distinctive from the Christian native Irish. It is possible that in initial years of contact, as it is clear that eventually the Norse converted, a similar phenomenon occurred. Faced with an enemy with largely divergent viewpoints and religious beliefs, the Norse in Ireland reacted by engaging in larger or more elaborate displays of religion, violence and dominance, and this is reflected in their burial rite, specifically in Dublin.

Hadley argued the opposite effect in Ireland and England. She contended that the Church played crucial role in establishing and supporting the Vikings of England, and therefore, the settlers here took less time to adapt to existing traditions.¹³⁰⁰ Furthermore, she argued that urban centres in England, and York in particular, were dominated by a mercantile elite who had 'no use' for warrior imagery and that it was not highly prized.¹³⁰¹ However, these groups moved between Dublin and York, so it is particularly striking, given the strong links between the two that this was jettisoned so quickly. It stands to reason that it was more useful for them to adapt to the culture of the Church and funeral tradition perhaps because it helped them further their political ambitions here, regardless of actual piety; whereas in the much more contentious areas in Ireland it served them to emphasize the tools of violence, which are seen throughout the gendered symbolism of burial practice here.

As was examined in Chapter Two, when the elite of a people, state or country are threatened, this is often reflected in the funerary rites of those of high status. This means that more elaborate burials take place during times of strife or political turmoil as a way to demonstrate authority, continuity and cultural dominance. So in Dublin, the Vikings

¹²⁹⁸ Andrén, 'World of Stone', p. 68.

¹²⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰⁰ Hadley, 'Whither the Warrior', p. 115 and p. 111.

¹³⁰¹ Ibid. p. 110.

may have felt, or may very well have been, constantly under threat. They may have responded to this threat by hosting more elite or elaborate burial practices with an emphasis on items associated with violence and status, particularly weaponry or items relating to *seiðr*. This is clearly reflected in the items contained in the Kilmainham and Islandbridge burials.

In addition to encountering a group with a clearly divergent religious belief system, the Vikings encountered a highly ritualistic society, with clear rules of engagement and war. The violence inherent in medieval Dublin was not by and large a series of random events perpetrated by uncontrolled actors. Instead, it is critical to view violent interactions in this period as discourse, a series of actions, some ritualistic in nature, designed to negotiate power. These engagements contained a series of semiotics conveyed by the perpetrators to the receivers and observing third parties.¹³⁰² As this thesis, and scholars like Williams, have previously argued, violence and weapons, especially for elite members of society, played a critical role in the creations and representations of hegemonic elite masculinities and socio-political positions and hierarchies.¹³⁰³ Violence and fighting were key in the creation and maintenance of elite masculinity; but, violence as the way of maintaining dominance was generally only accepted practice if it could be legitimized.

How violent the Vikings were in comparison to the native Irish has been an argument of great debate. Prior to the arrival of the Vikings, Ireland was a relatively closed off community. The Vikings were the first serious threat since prehistoric times and challenged the traditional nature of warfare, such as cattle raids of limited violence.¹³⁰⁴ Historian Katharine Simms argued that pre-Viking Ireland was underpopulated so that there was little to be gained by pitched battles with high casualties; instead, battle and violence aimed to gain the submission of people without killing them.¹³⁰⁵

It is apparent that the Vikings were not necessarily inherently any more violent than the native Irish, as both cultures were capable of extreme violence; though for the Irish this might have manifested in smaller scale measures such as executions. However, what is clear is that the Vikings had superior military technology and as a result the ability

¹³⁰² Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 11

¹³⁰³ Williams, 'Keeping the Dead', p. 264.

¹³⁰⁴ Halpin, 'Weapons and Warfare', p. 10-11

¹³⁰⁵ Katharine Simms, 'Warfare in Medieval Gaelic Lordships' in *Irish Sword* 47 (1975), pp. 99-100.

to inflict more casualties. The arrival of the Vikings on Irish shores saw the onset of the use of total war, increased militarization of Irish society, and the use of professional soldiers or mercenaries.¹³⁰⁶ Archaeologist Andy Halpin contended that by the late 11th century non-noble classes in Ireland were bearing weapons, which is in contrast to the earlier periods which saw violence and fighting as the primary domain of the aristocracy.¹³⁰⁷ So violence and battle, and the right to perpetuate legitimate forms of violence, were associated by the native Irish with elite members of their society when the Vikings were invading and creating settlements on their shores.

One of the most critical ways in which the Vikings impacted warfare in early medieval Ireland was the introduction of total war.¹³⁰⁸ Violence in early medieval Ireland was ritualistic in nature, it followed a predictable series of aggressions.¹³⁰⁹ Due to the Vikings pagan cultures and traditions they were largely unfamiliar with the highly ritualistic nature of violence of Ireland, as this thesis has touched on earlier. The Vikings had their own rituals which influenced the ways in which they engaged in violence and responded to it. This is particularly evident in their use of total war, for example. Additionally, as previously mentioned, due to their pagan beliefs they were unable to swear oaths crucial to ending conflicts by the native Irish.¹³¹⁰ This suggests that neither side was able to comprehend the other's behavior and methods of warfare and violence.

The Vikings did not initially have dynastic ties to support their claims to power. This perhaps meant that they did not have a right to inflict legitimate violence according to the cultural mores of Ireland. The right to rule is intertwined with the right to perpetrate legitimate violence. The reasoning was that violence perpetrated by the rightful ruler is, for the most part, *de facto* legitimate violence. It would be over the next generations that ties between the Vikings and Irish would be forged through intermarriages and alliances, helping to further their justification to rule and subsequently, to inflict socially legitimate violence.

However, the use of burial strategies and indeed elaborate elite burial rituals may have functioned as a way for the Vikings to create and solidify ties to Ireland and attempt to justify their right to inflict legitimate violence. They wanted to use symbolism that would have been understood to potential native allies as well as native Irish enemies, in

¹³⁰⁶ Halpin, 'Weapons and Warfare', p. 11; Total war was defined in Chapter One, p. 28.

¹³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³⁰⁹ Halsall, *Violence and Society*, p. 11

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

particular items relating to violence. They also would have wanted to maintain their identities as distinct, but their rule of Dublin legitimate. Therefore, tools of *seiðr* and weaponry in burial would have displayed their means to inflict this violence that they sought to legitimize in an effort to become further intertwined in the fabric of Irish society. This was perhaps a method to at once demonstrate power and dominance, while also seeking to further ties to the territory they had conquered. This might not have been as important in Viking settlements in England like York, in contrast to Dublin, because of the more culturally similar makeup of the Christianized Anglo-Saxons, who, while no longer practicing pagan furnished burial ritual, were not as far removed ethnically or perhaps culturally, as the Christian Irish.

There are many possibilities as to why Dublin in particular modified burial strategy not just by the inclusion of more swords, but also by sheer amount of graves, in relation to the rest of the Island, but these are largely speculative. It is clear that areas like Woodstown for example, were sites of constant battle as they were of strategic importance, as were Athlumney and other areas in Ireland and yet only single burials have been found here. While the semiotics in burial are clearly similar in Dublin and Woodstown, there is a clear difference over numbers. One possible explanation that this thesis examined is that there are more burials in Woodstown yet to be discovered. This would follow the pattern of Dublin, Kilmainham and Islandbridge, and seems probable based on the available data. Another theory is that while Woodstown was an area of strategic importance, the Vikings in that area appeared to have decided that one single high status burial containing hegemonic elite masculine symbolism to be sufficient, as with Finglas with a burial of elite hegemonic feminine symbolism of *seiðr*. This may suggest that the Vikings in Dublin felt more threatened, or in their response to that threat felt it necessary to convey or express power through funerary ritual in an effort to demonstrate the rights to inflict legitimate violence. Harrison and Ó Floinn contended that these furnished burials represented various families who were competing for dominance in early medieval Dublin.¹³¹¹ It may have been an effort to at once assert their own culture while also assimilating into the power hierarchy of Leinster and the rest of Ireland. This resulted in the burial groups at Kilmainham and Islandbridge for example.

But what of the other case studies in Ireland? Cloghermore Cave, with its possible links to Dublin, mirrored the semiotics found in Dublin, with the inclusion of both

¹³¹¹ Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 298

weaponry and *seiðr* tools as means to display an ability to inflict violence. Cloghermore Cave does not seem to deviate much at all in terms of symbolism from the Dublin burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge and so seems to be using the same burial strategy.

Church Bay in Rathlin was home to three burials, with two tertiary and one weapon. This perhaps appears to deviate from the strategy laid out in the Kilmainham and Islandbridge burials in Dublin, with the overwhelmingly elite hegemonic masculine symbolism of weaponry. Here again, though, the weapon burial contained a sword. The area of Rathlin itself might have been an independent political system. What is of particular interest here are the possible cauldron, ladle, beads and penannular brooch found in the two burials labeled tertiary by Harrison, and gender-neutral by Harrison and Ó Floinn. In the corpus of Dublin burials, archaeologists have drawn very strict binaries between male and female burials dependent on brooch or weapons. These so-called tertiary burials, while often present in other insular contexts, are very few in number in Dublin itself. This is clearly not the case in this location at Church Bay. Additionally, as was previously examined, these are dismissed as containing items of lesser value or significance. This idea has been challenged and it is apparent that this is not always the case. Therefore for Rathlin, the only area besides Cloghermore Cave outside of Dublin in Ireland to have more than one burial, the tertiary burials outnumber, two to one, the weapon burials. This might also suggest a divergent burial strategy. This one might have placed a greater importance on items relating to *seiðr* practice, or to those with relationship to settlement, for example the pennannular brooch or the ladle and cauldron.

The other two case studies, at Athlumney and Ballyholme might also appear to be expressing a somewhat divergent pattern from those found at Kilmainham and Islandbridge. The Athlumney burial was home to a full array of items relating to horse riding that were clearly made by highly skilled craftsmen and demonstrated a wide variety of techniques and intricate design and ornamentation. The critical role the horse played in both Viking life and death coupled with the wealth of the items in the grave as well as the animal bones, indicate that this was a burial of a high status person. Again, this area was a site of strategic importance because it was where the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers meet. So, like the others, this was placed in a boundary area, near water, and of martial importance. Thus the burial, like others in similar places, may have functioned to include and intertwine the Vikings on the landscape, while also conveying power and dominance with one single burial ritual to both enemy and allied observers. The items

placed in this burial, though, are clearly divergent from the other graves considered by this thesis. The horse symbolism here is overwhelming and this suggests that while the overall aim might have been similar, the particular rituals of this burial might have shifted or changed based on either the preferences of the people creating the burial, the perceptions of the person in the grave, or what was deemed to be of most value or would have sent the strongest message to that particular context.

The burial at Ballyholme placed a high importance on cloth and weaving. As has been argued in many sections of this thesis, weaving and textile production have clear links to the Vikings *seiðr* rituals and practices. That these items buried with the deceased have these ties can be of no doubt in the complex ritualistic world of the Vikings. As Ballyholme was perhaps, like all the other case studies and areas investigated, a site of strategic importance due to its links to Belfast Lough, burying a person with ties to *seiðr* in a prominent liminal position in this area would have functioned like Woodstown and Finglas, as a method to show and express violence, dominance and power. Due to the nature of the items contained in the burial, mainly that they are related to what has been viewed as traditional women's work, they are often dismissed as being of lower status or significance, but these tools, along with the oval brooches and bowl, make apparent that this was a potentially high status burial with clear ties to *seiðr* ritual. This would make it similar, as stated, to the Finglas burial, and would have perhaps functioned in a similar way.

It is evident that there is a clear path for more research in doing detailed analysis of every Viking furnished grave in Ireland, expanding to assess Harrison and Ó Floinn's new lists of burials as will be the focus of this author's upcoming monograph. While this thesis has touched briefly on the context of the burials in the landscape of Ireland, it would be critical to carefully examine every aspect of this framework while also meticulously considering all political and social ties. In addition to examining the items contained in the burials, in an effort to ascertain why or how burial strategies might have changed as a result of contact with the native Irish in different areas. This thesis has laid out a few possible speculations as to what may have caused the difference between those contained at Kilmainham and Islandbridge and other areas, such as Woodstown, but other avenues should be explored in further research, and could not, due to the constraints of this thesis, have been considered in full here.

It is clear that the Vikings in Dublin deliberately modified burial strategy from other areas in Scandinavia, as well as Ireland and other insular sites, in response to what must have been contact with the native Irish. It is also apparent that there are choices, resulting in either a single wealthy burial or multiple elite burials, and this may represent two distinctive burial strategies. While both convey a similar meaning, one of power and dominance, there is clearly a choice made here to have one grave versus multiple burials.

It is apparent that the Vikings in Ireland were reacting to a native Irish population that was regularly engaging them in warfare. The Vikings sought to both assimilate into the political systems on the island of Ireland while maintaining their own beliefs and rituals, at least in the beginning. Utilizing burial, and specifically deploying nuanced gendered symbolism, the Vikings negotiated and established their positions within the native Irish, and their own, power hierarchies, by displaying power and violence in grave goods.

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Figures

Fig. 4.1 Viking Furnished Burial in Dublin with Hegemonic Elite Symbolism Associated with Masculinities.

Location	Artefacts ¹³¹²	Discovered
Bride Street	Double-edged and bent sword, spearhead, shield boss iron spike or tool, a bronze halberd, and a copper alloy stick pin.	1867
College Green	Two swords- one double-edged and one single-edged, four spearheads (three insular and one uncertain), shield boss (Irish sea type), and a tinned copper-alloy and amber buckle	c.1819
College Green	One possible double-edged sword and 'armour'	c.1850
College Green	One shield boss	1855 or 1857
Cork Street	One double-edged sword	Before 1842
Dollymount	A single sword- double edged and bent with a missing pommel.	Before 1872

¹³¹² After antiquarian sources where possible confirmed in modern collection and study with comparison to Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, pp. 515-523 and 641-685.; and Griffith, *Vikings*, p. 77-79.

Donnybrook	Double-edged broken sword, spearhead, and three arrowheads.	1879
Islandbridge	Double-edged sword in three pieces, spearhead, axehead, slotted object, maybe a 'strike-a-light', composite artefact consisting of two staples or handles and four rivets.	February, 11th 1933.
Islandbridge	Double edged sword, broken and bent.	February, 11th, 1933
Islandbridge	Double-edged broken sword and spearhead.	October 12th, 1933
Kildare Street	One double-edged sword	1885
Kilmainham	Double-edged sword without pommel.	c. 1785
Kilmainham	Double-edged sword.	1832 or 1833
Kilmainham	Double-edged sword, spearhead, axehead, shield boss, and a ringed pin.	1836 or 1837; recorded by Smith in 1841

Kilmainham	Two swords and a spearhead.	November, 1845
Kilmainham	Nine swords (seven double-edged, of which two are bent, two are broken; two single edged), eight spearheads, and one ferrule; two axeheads, nine shield bosses (two of Scandinavian design and seven of Dublin), nine arrowheads, five socketed knives, oval brooch, equal armed brooch, quatrafoil brooch, three ringed pins, CA Buckle, enamel mount (insular), four gaming pieces, five tanged knives, and several miscellaneous iron objects.	November-December 1845
Kilmainham	Sword (pommel and upper guard only); spearhead.	September 1884
Kilmainham	A single broken sword.	September 1845
Kilmainham	Six swords (five double-edged, one single-edged; of which two are broken) one sword pommel, four spearheads (one bent), three sockets (possible spearheads), three shield bosses (all Dublin type), three oval brooches, one pennacular brooch, chain, two beads, roasting spit, whalebone Plaque, antler burr, and a Byzantine Seal.	c.1845
Kilmainham	Double-edged sword.	Before April 1847
Kilmainham	Two double-edged swords, spearhead, shield boss, and seven arrowheads	Before November 1848

Kilmainham	Sword hilt, a possible conical mount for shield boss, thirteen beads (nine glass, three steatite, and one ceramic)a linen smoother, and a copper-alloy band ('brass hoop').	Before January 1849
Kilmainham	Double-edged sword.	Before July 21st, 1851
Kilmainham	Single-edged sword, spearhead, copper-alloy balance, miscelleaous iron fragments, and 'faunal remains'	Before December 1860
Kilmainham	One double-edged sword, one single-edged sword, spearhead, shield boss of Dublin type, knife-tang, gilt copper-alloy spoon, and a fragmentary copper-alloy sheet.	August 1860
Kilmainham	Three swords- two double-edged and one single-edged, two spearheads, three shield bosses, a bridle (ring) bit, two weights, sickle, two hammers (one large and one small, a large whetstone, shears, two spindle whorls, copper-alloy fragments and mount, and an amber stud.	Before October 1866
Kilmainham	A double-edged sword and scabbard guard, spearhead, Shield boss, four oval brooches, beads (one ceramic, four glass, nineteen composite), a balance, two weights, needle case, two purses, penannular brooch ring, copper-alloy ringed pin, copper-alloy stick pin, two buckles, copper-alloy gilt miniature axe, copper alloy ring, and a copper-alloy disc.	Before October 1866
Kilmainham	One double-edged sword, spearhead, balance, six weights, tongs, crucible tongs, hammer, zoomorphic stick pin, buckle, steatite bead, and a zoomorphic mount.	Before October 1866

Kilmainham	A sword hilt, spearhead, six knives, three iron tools, copper alloy and wood composite artefacts, three copper-alloy rings, and nine iron fragments.	Before October 1866
Kilmainham	Two double-edged swords- one bent, two spearheads (one of Dublin type), one arrowhead, two oval brooches, three knives, tanged tool, strike-a-light, box mount, amber brooch, and a copper-alloy ring.	Before October 30th, 1869
Parnell Square	Sword, spearhead, and 'numberless' rivets.	Before 1763
Parnell Square	Double-edged sword and shield boss.	Before 1763.
Ship Street Great	Two silver rings, a glass bead and corroded iron plate. Sword blade fragment found nearby.	2005
Ship Street Great	Spearhead, copper-alloy buckle, copper alloy strap end, and a knife..	2005
South Great Georges Street	Possible shield boss.	2003
South Great Georges Street	Shield, grip and rivets, and a knife	2003

Fig. 4.2 Map of Norwegian Links to Dublin and northwest England.

This map illustrates the links between western Norway, Dublin and northwest England as argued by Owen and Dalland and this thesis. The potential links to Dublin from western Norway, possibly coming via Scotland into Ireland or directly from the western part of Norway as well as the links between Dublin and northwest England, are demonstrated with the arrows. This shows how the Vikings from Norway might have eventually ended up in Ireland and other insular contexts.

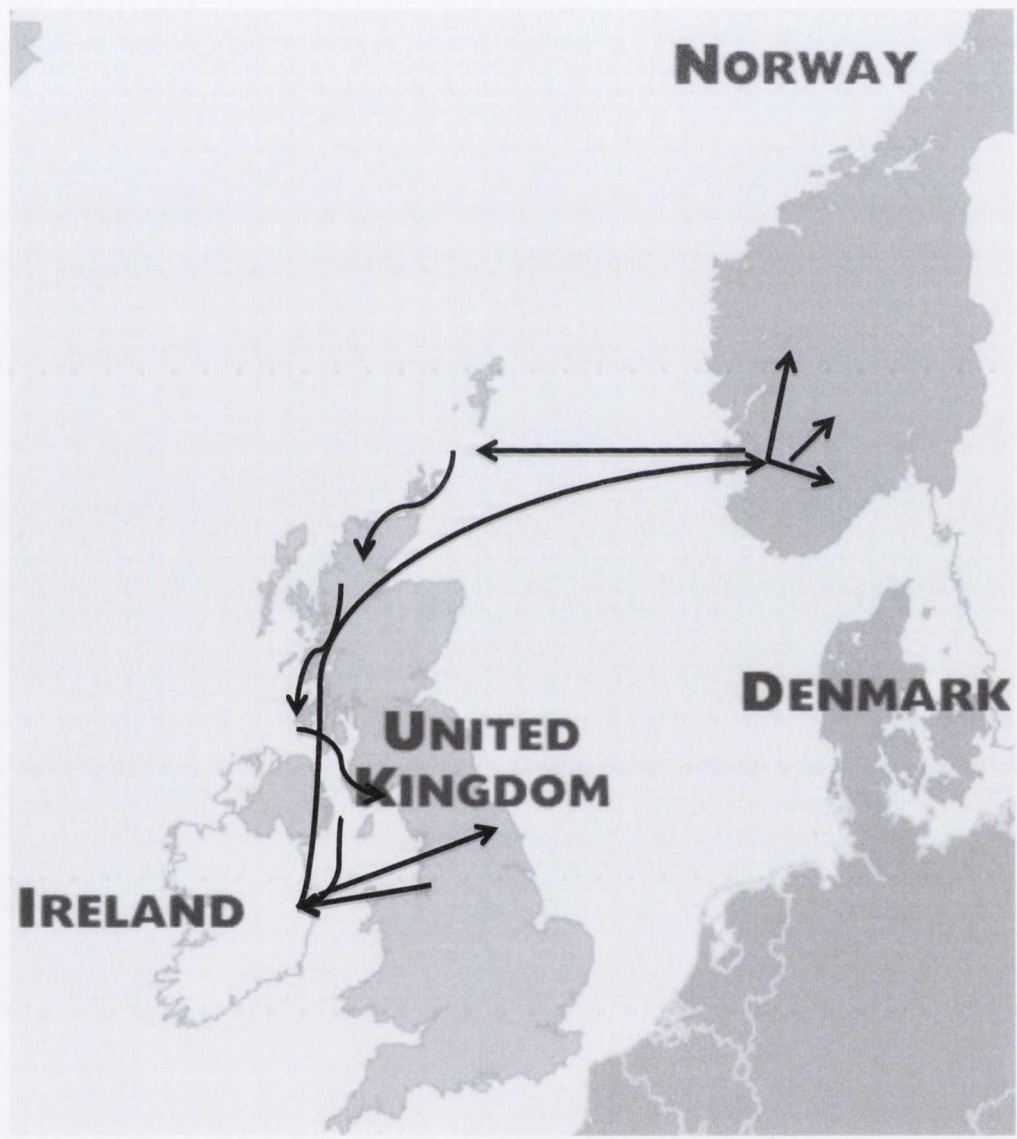


Fig. 4.3 Norwegian Corpus Compared to Dublin¹³¹³

	Norway						Dublin
	Solberg Overall	Solberg Prof. Excavated	Dommasnes Overall	Moen Lamøya	Moen N. Kaupang	Moen Bikjohlerget	
Total Burials	4,629	112	213	6	15	56	69
Weapon	3,796	55	c. 160	4	9	36	56
Elite Female Symbols (Brooch)	833	34	c. 53	2	6	20	6
Tertiary/ Gender Neutral/ Un-gendered	n/a	34	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7

¹³¹³ Data for Fig. 4.3 gathered from Solberg, 'Social Status', pp. 70-75; Dommasnes, 'Female Roles and Ranks', pp. 70-73; Moen. *The Gendered Landscape*, pp. 32-36; and Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295 and 299.

Fig. 4.4 Single Edged Spear Heads from Kilmainham 1845 group of objects. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 349.



Fig. 4.5 Arrowheads from Kilmainham 1845 group of objects. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 340.

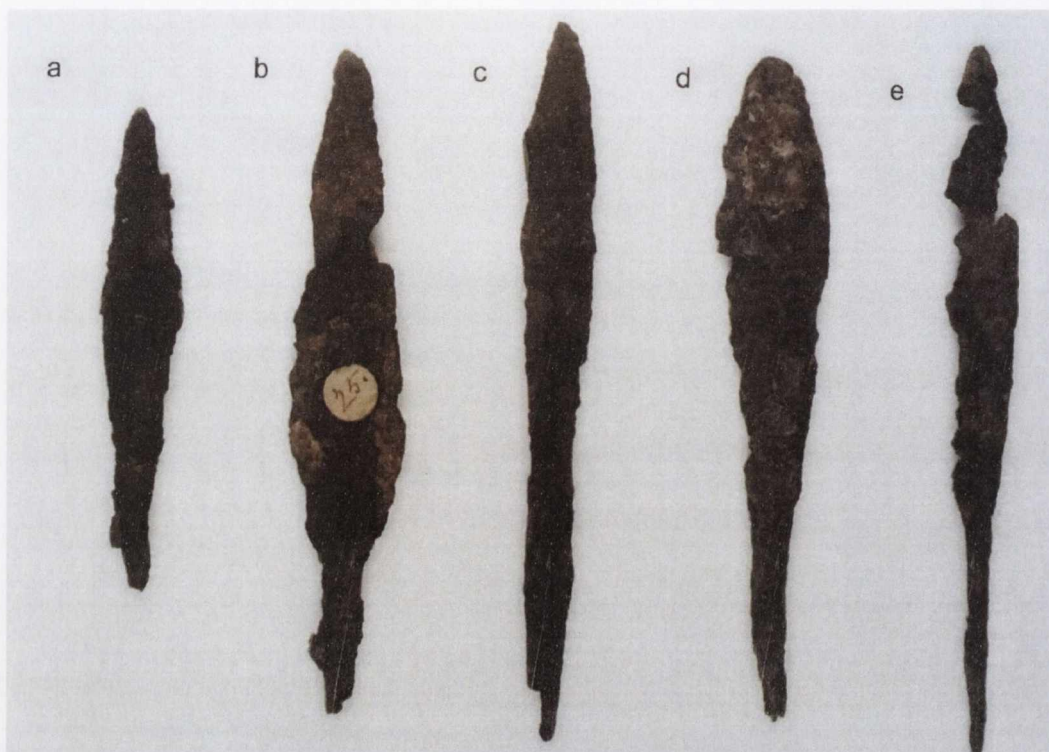


Fig. 4.6 Insular Contexts Compared.¹³¹⁴

	Dublin	N. Scotland	N. England	S. England	NW England	NE England
Total Burials	69	82	56	50	22	34
Weapon	56	34	24	24	14	10
Brooch	6	22	5	1	1	4
Tertiary/Gender Neutral	7	25	27	25	7	20

¹³¹⁴ Data for Fig. 4.4 gathered from Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 295 and 299.

Fig. 4. 7 One Weapon Burials in Context¹³¹⁵

	W. Norway	Central Norway	E. Norway	NW England ¹³¹⁶	Dublin ¹³¹⁷	Britain and Ireland
Total of burials	61%	71%	74%	54%	42%	56%
Axe	29%	28%	32%	0	0	5%
Spear	18%	22%	22%	31%	0	12%
Sword	14%	21%	20%	23%	36%	39%
Shield Boss	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6%	n/a

¹³¹⁵ Fig. 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 are after Solberg, “Social Status”, p.66; and Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 311.

¹³¹⁶ One burial contains fragments modern archaeologists attribute to weaponry.

¹³¹⁷ The calculations for Dublin are estimates because several of the weapon burials were found in groups, therefore dividing weapons is problematic; also this thesis considers shield bosses in it’s consideration of weapon burials.

Fig. 4. 8 Two Weapon Burials in Context

	W. Norway	Central Norway	E. Norway	NW England	Dublin	Britain and Ireland
Total of burials	24%	18%	17%	15%	58%	35%
Sword & Axe	15%	7%	9%	0	1%	3%
Spear & Sword	5%	8%	5%	15%	57%	31%
Spear & Axe	4%	3%	3%	0	0	1%

Fig. 4.9 Three Weapon Burials in Context

	W. Norway	Central Norway	E. Norway	NW England	Dublin	Britain and Ireland
Axe, Sword and Spear	15%	10%	10%	23%	6%	9%

Fig. 4.10 Jens Worsaae's Renderings of Weapons and Brooch from Kilmainham.
After Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes*, p. 61.

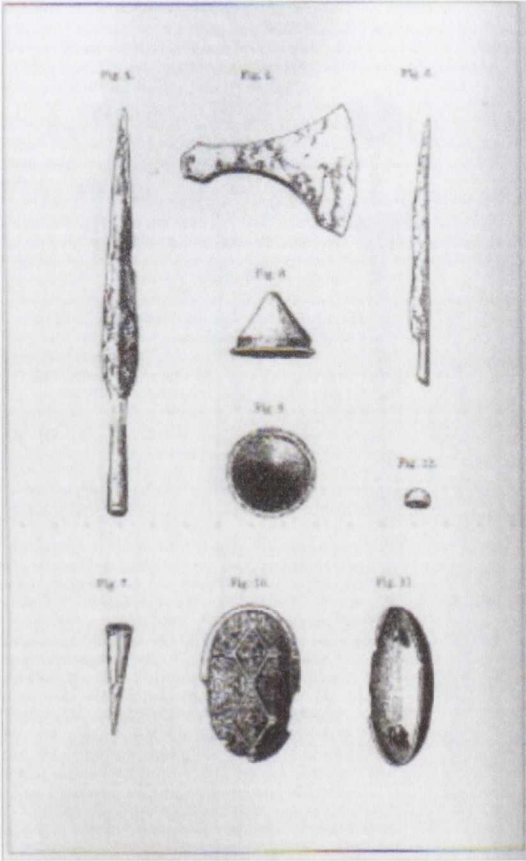


Fig. 4.11 Swords and Weapons from Kilmainham. By James Plunkett, 'Swords found near Kilmainham of the times of the Danes in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy' Watercolor, Ca. 1847.



Fig 4.12 Collection of Viking Weapons. These were found among the burials from Kilmainham and Islandbridge. National Museum of Ireland- Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo by author.



Fig. 5.1: Donnybrook Burial Mound. This is a rendering of the Donnybrook Burial found on Aylesbury Road as created by William Frazer in 1880. After Frazer, 'Description of a great sepulchral mound', p. 32.

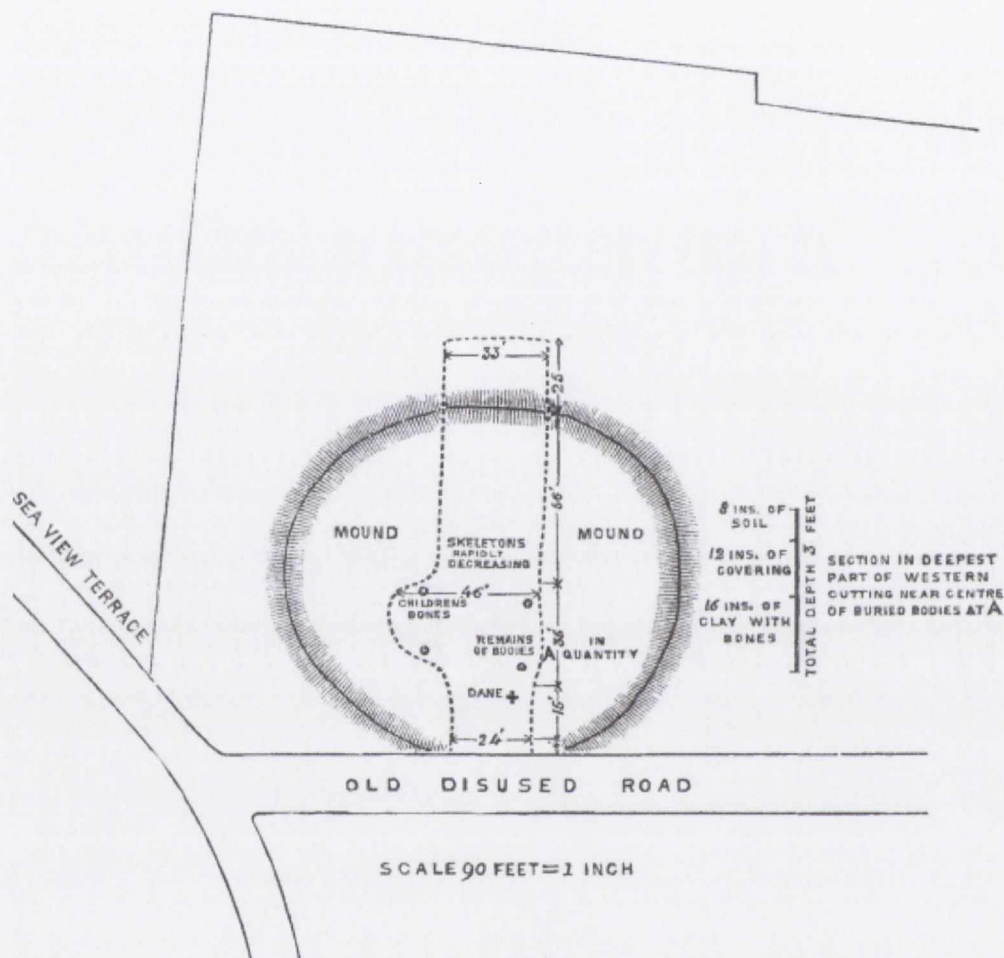


Fig. 5.2: Donnybrook Burial Sword. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 530.
(After R.A. Hall, 1978, figs 3, 4, and 7).

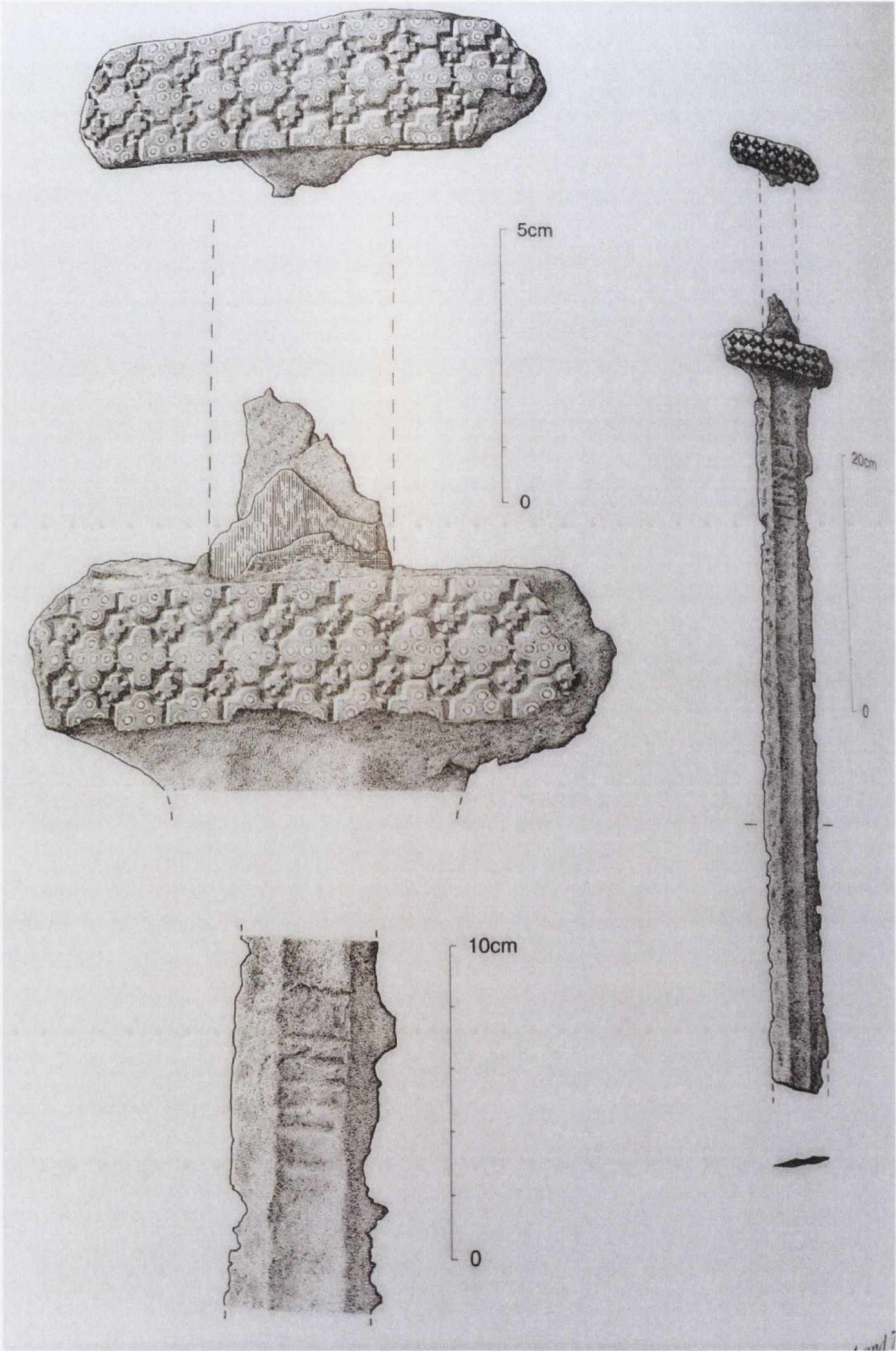


Fig. 6.1: Oval Brooches from Viking Burials in Dublin. This is a collection of three oval brooch pairs housed at the National Museum of Ireland that were found in the archaeological investigations of Dublin. National Museum of Ireland-Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo author's own.



Fig. 6.2 External and Internal Views of Oval Brooch Found Among Kilmainham 1845 Group. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 319.

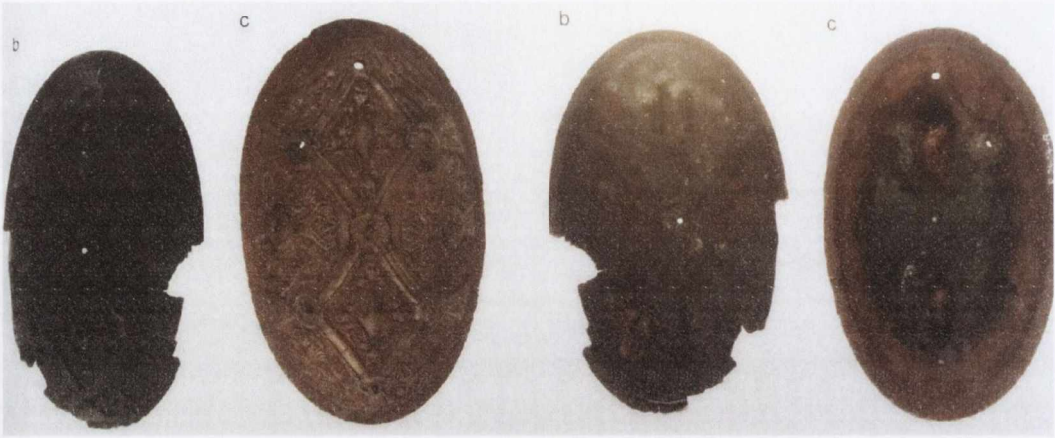


Fig 6.3 Oval Brooches in Dublin¹³¹⁸

Location	Grave Goods	Date of Discovery
Church Street, Finglas	Complete oval brooch, found on the shoulder of the deceased with a fragmented second brooch, bone comb, surviving scraps of textiles from garments, and a bracelet. This burial was deemed to be of a woman because of its grave goods. She was believed to be between twenty-five and thirty-five at time of death and buried somewhere around the tenth century, circa 950 CE	August 2004
Kilmainham	Nine swords, eight spearheads, and one ferrule; two axe heads; nine shield bosses; nine arrowheads, five knives; one oval brooch; one equal armed brooch; one quatrefoil brooch; three ringed pins; one copper-alloy Buckle; one enamel mount; four gaming pieces; five tanged knives; and finally, miscellaneous iron objects	Between November and December 1845
Kilmainham	Six swords; one sword pommel, four spearheads; three sockets; three shield bosses; three oval brooches; one penannular brooch; chain, two beads, a 'roasting spit'; an antler burr, and, finally, a Byzantine Seal. ¹³¹⁹	1845

¹³¹⁸ Details for this Table after Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, p. 79; Harrison, *Furnished Insular Burial*, p. 643, p.657, p. 658; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 533-537, p. 395, p. 396-403, p. 362, p. 385; p. 444-464..

¹³¹⁹ This burial group also originally contained a whalebone plaque in Harrison's first study. . However, Harrison stated that none of these items can be directly related to each other due to the

Islandbridge	Double-edged sword and scabbard guard; spearhead; shield boss; four oval brooches, beads (one ceramic, four glass, and nineteen composite); a balance, two weights, a needle case, two purses (copper-alloy mounts only); penannular brooch ring; copper-alloy ringed pin; copper-alloy stick pin; two buckles; copper-alloy gilt miniature axe; and copper	October 1866
Phoenix Park	Two oval brooches, modified gilt bronze plaque, and another brooch.	Before 1848

source material and antiquarian records for these items. Harrison and Ó Floinn would later attribute the whalebone plaque here with another set of grave goods, those grouped to 1849, so done because of the Royal Irish Academy Minute Book where they were recorded as acquired on 22nd of January, 1849. This reference, however, does not make mention of the whalebone plaque, it is only mentioned in letter that had ‘recently come to light’ from the archive of the National Museum of Denmark, which made note of fragments of a ‘bone chair’ in tandem with the items included in the register. Based on a careful analysis of this work by Harrison and Ó Floinn, it is convincing that the whalebone plaque came from this group, labeled a female burial and in tandem with thirteen beads, a linen smoother, a brass hoop or bracelet, a shield boss, a sword, a possible second sword blade, and a conical mount. Harrison and Ó Floinn, however, referred to the items that were original assigned to this burial group as ‘miscellaneous material from the 1845 railway cuttings, material found at Kilmainham around 1845, and artifacts that were probably found there’ referred to as 1845ms, 1845ca, and 1845pb, respectively. This is the consideration of Harrison’s original grouping composing of some 30 items that they divided along these lines, based on the ‘certainty with which material can be linked to the railway cuttings’. In total for this group of items, Harrison and Ó Floinn argued that this represented a minimum of eight male graves and one female. However, the additional sword included here is the one acquired by the British Musuem, which as this thesis has previously argued, is problematic to state that it constitutes a further burial from Kilmainham.

Fig. 6.4: Wilde's Rendering of Brooch 'No. 2400'. After Wilde, 'On Scandinavian Antiquaries Discovered near Islandbridge, County Dublin', p. 21.



Fig. 6.5 The Volva at the Saga Museum in Iceland. © Dawn- Dawn's Dress Diary



Fig. 6.6 Finglas Brooches Still. From Viking Ireland 4- Viking Women in Ireland video by National Museum of Ireland- Archaeology. Screen shot by author.



6.7 External and Internal View of Finglas Brooch. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p.135.

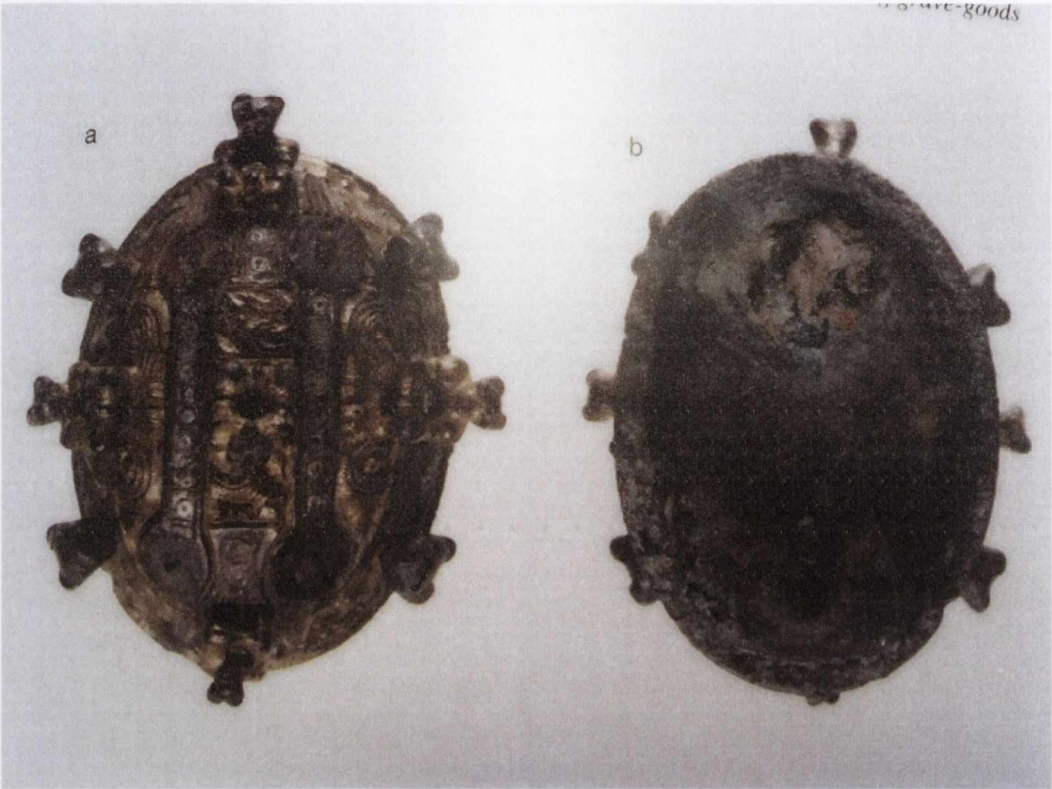


Fig 6.8 The so-called 'Roasting Spit'. Also known as the *seiðr* staff from the National Museum of Ireland- Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo by author.



Fig 6.9 Kilmainham *Seiðr* Staff. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 383

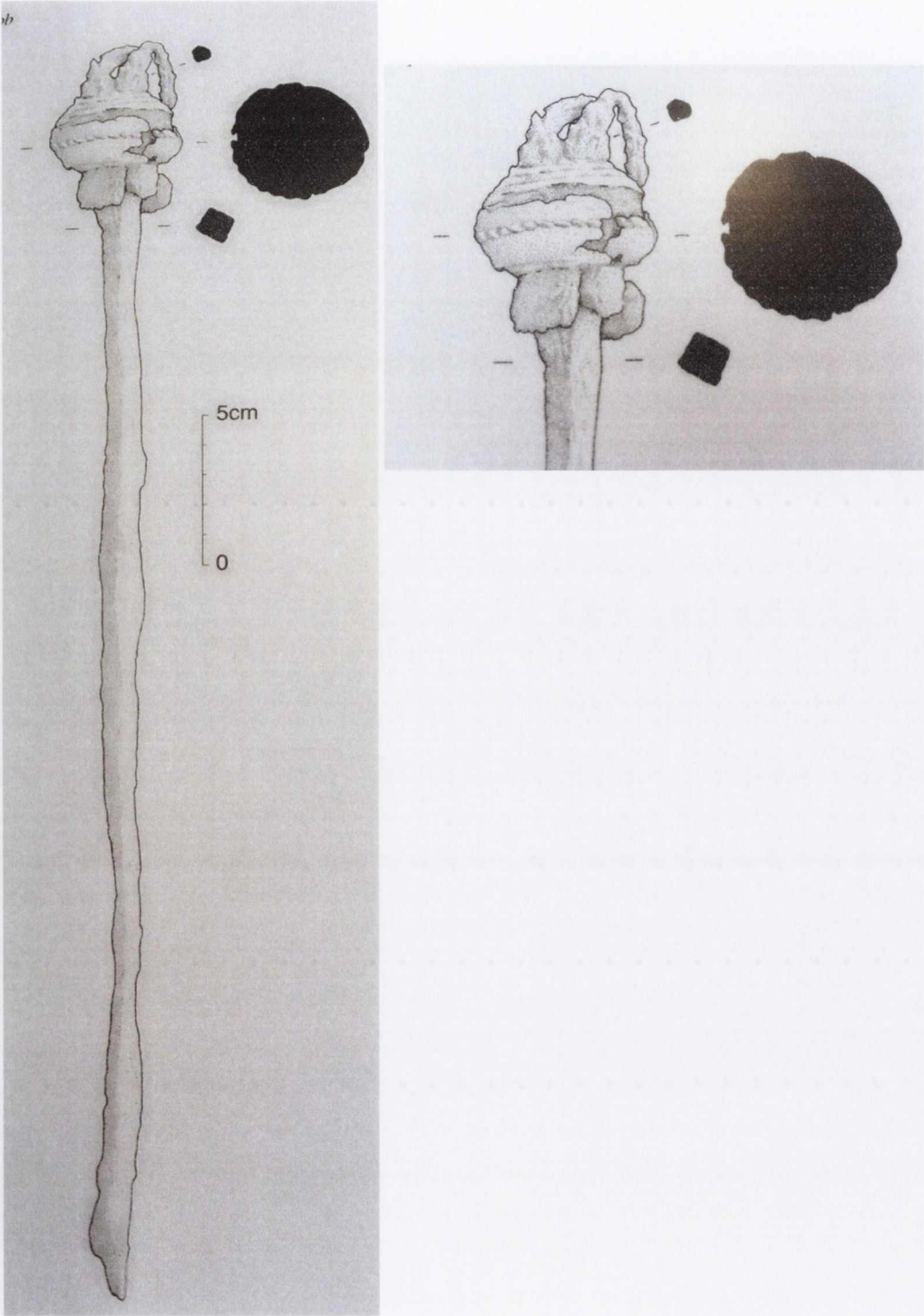


Fig. 6.10 *Seiðr* Staff. From Swedish Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm.
Photo by Berig via Wikimedia Commons.



Fig 6.11 Kilmainham Whalebone Plaque. From National Museum of Ireland- Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo by author.



Fig 6.12 Whalebone Plaque and Linen Smoother From Kilmainham. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 169.



Fig 6.13 Scar Boat Burial Whalebone Plaque. From Owen and Dalland, *Scar- A Viking Boat Burial from Sanday* (Orkney, 1999), Back Cover.

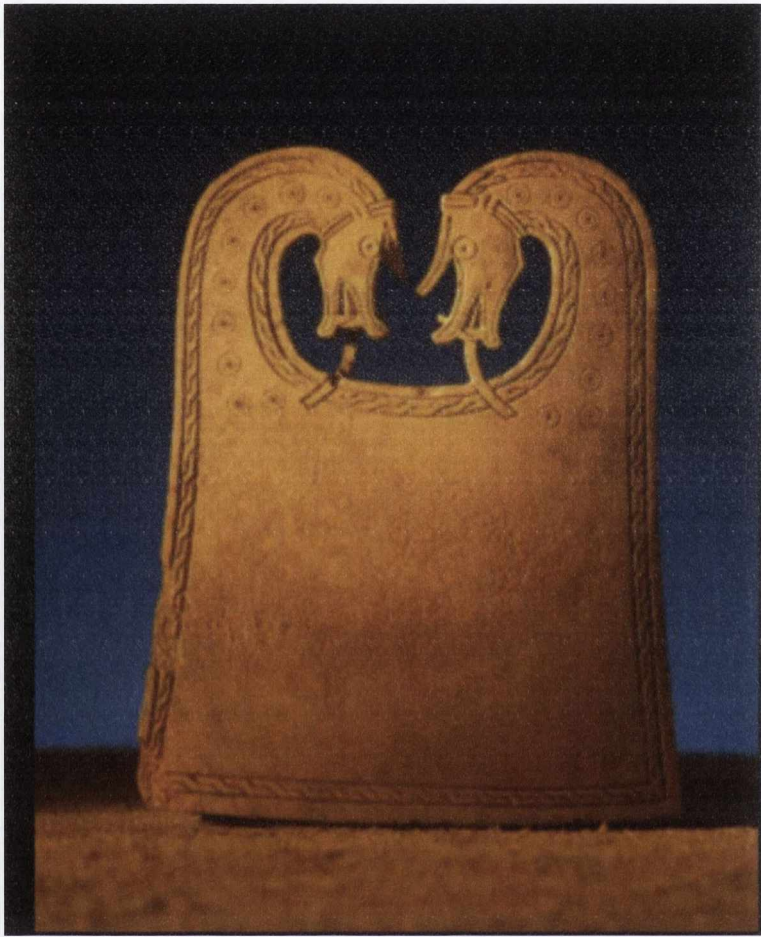


Fig. 7.1 York Burial Image. This is a rendering of the York burial containing the twenty rivets and single *Denarius* coin. After Derek Phillips and Brenda Heywood (authors), M.O. H. Carver (ed.), *Excavations at York Minster* (London, 1995), Fig. 21.

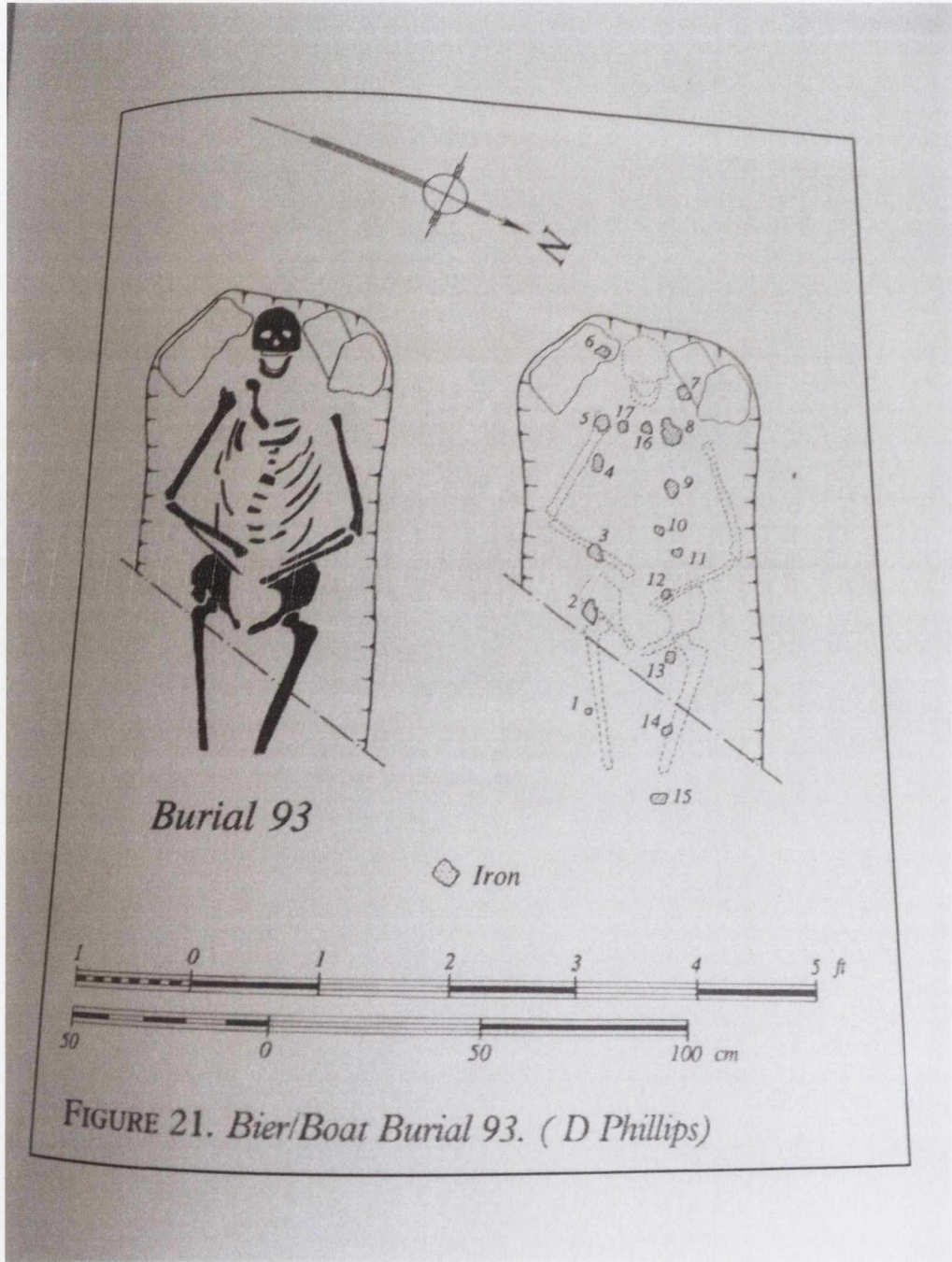


Fig. 7.2 Spindle Whorls. Three stone Viking spindle whorls (labeled 32) found among the Viking goods in Dublin. National Museum of Ireland-Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo by author.



Fig. 7.3 Spindle Whorls Found in Islandbridge, 1866. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 440.

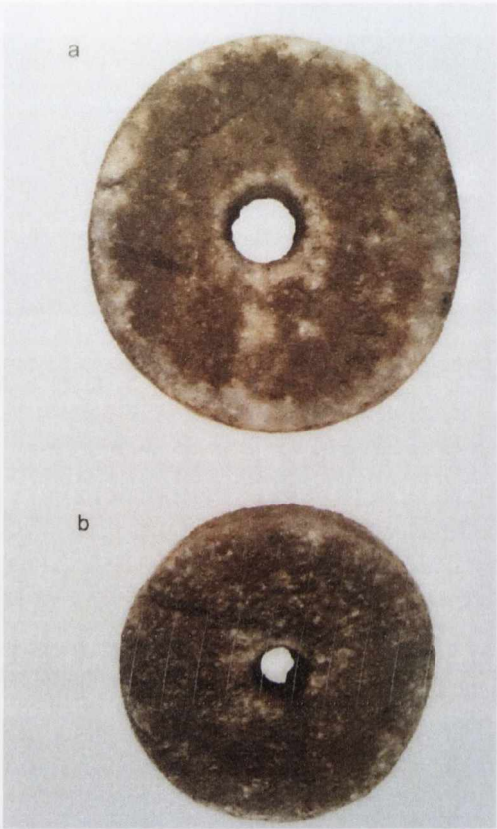


Fig. 7.4 Beads. Depicted here are several different types and styles of Viking beads found in Dublin. Items labeled no. 21 are described as 'Five glass melon beads from Christchurch Place, Fishamble Street'. Items labeled no. 22 are 'Four plain glass beads, Fishamble Street'. Items labeled no. 23 are 'Six multicolored glass beads, Winetavern Street; Fishamble Street' and those labeled no. 24 are 'Three glass discs' also found from Fishamble Street. From National Museum of Ireland-Archaeology, Vikings Exhibit. Photo by author.



Fig. 7.5 Beads from Kilmainham 1845. Pictured here is a set of beads found at Kilmainham in 1845. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 143.



Fig. 7.6 Beads from Kilmainham 1849. Pictured here is a set of beads found at Kilmainham in 1849. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 143.

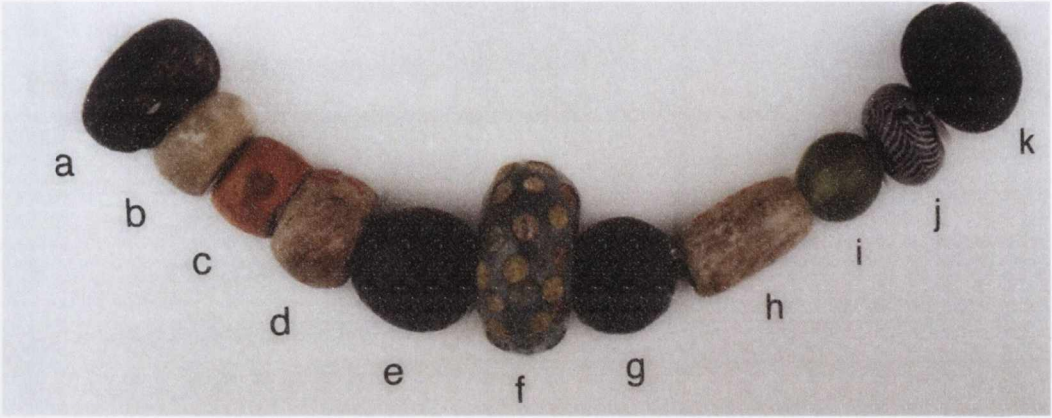
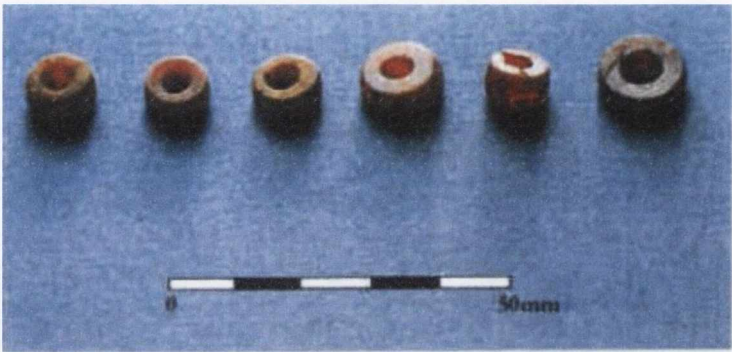


Fig. 8.1 Cloghermore Cave Amber Beads from Female Cremation. After Connolly, Coyne, and Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 133, Fig. 50.



8.2 Cloghermore Cave Spindle Whorl. After Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 110, Fig. 31.

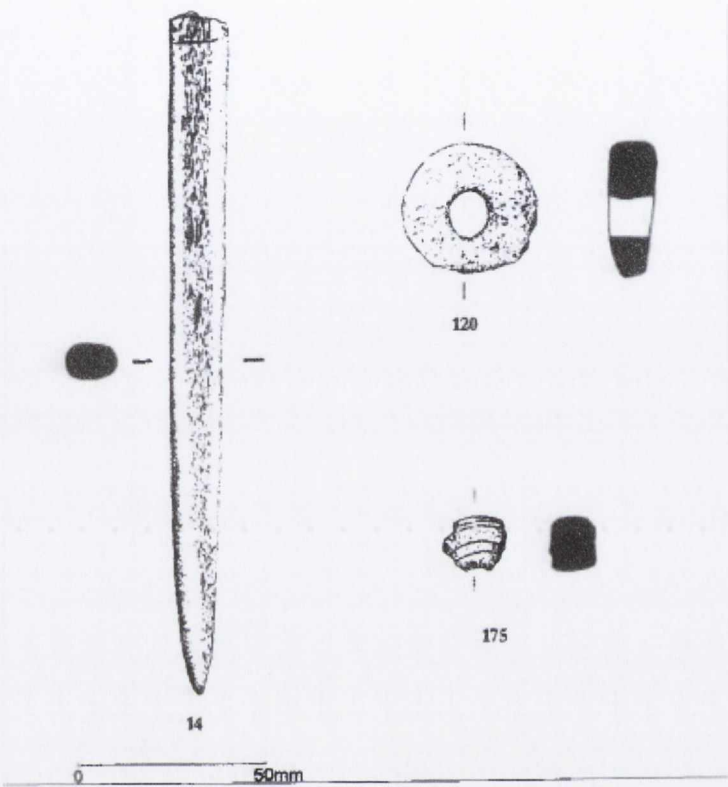


Fig. 8.3 Cloghermore Cave Gaming Pieces and Walrus Ivory Sphere. After Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 111, Plaque 36.



Fig 8.4 Red Jasper. Fragments and pebbles of Red Jasper, items labeled numbers 107, 204 and 222 from Cloghermore Cave. After Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld*, p. 129, Fig. 47.

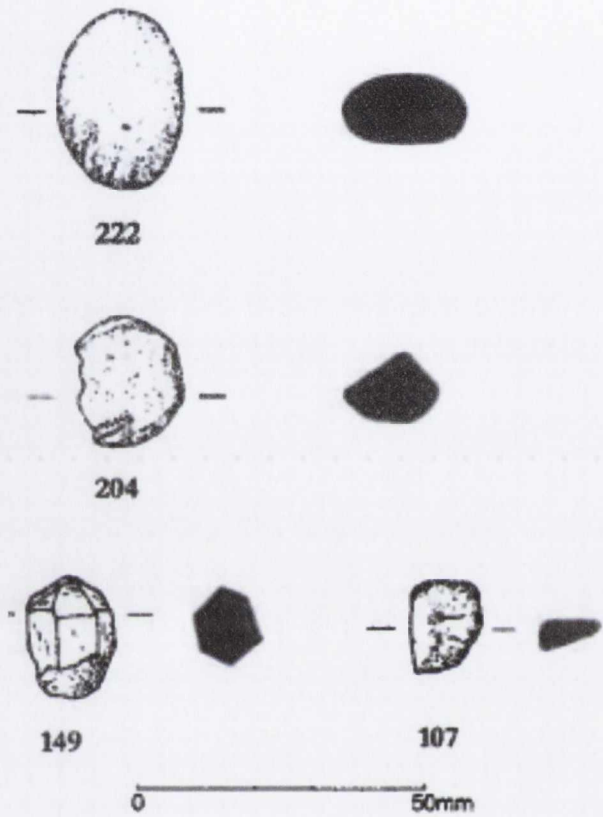


Fig. 8.5 Penannular Brooch from Church Bay, Rathlin, County Antrim. 9th century Norse silver penannular brooch. © National Museum of Ireland-Archaeology, Viking Exhibit.



Fig. 8.6 Post-Excavation Plan of Woodstown Burial. This is the post-excavation plan modified by Harrison of the Woodstown , Co. Waterford, burial containing hegemonic masculine symbolism. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 266.

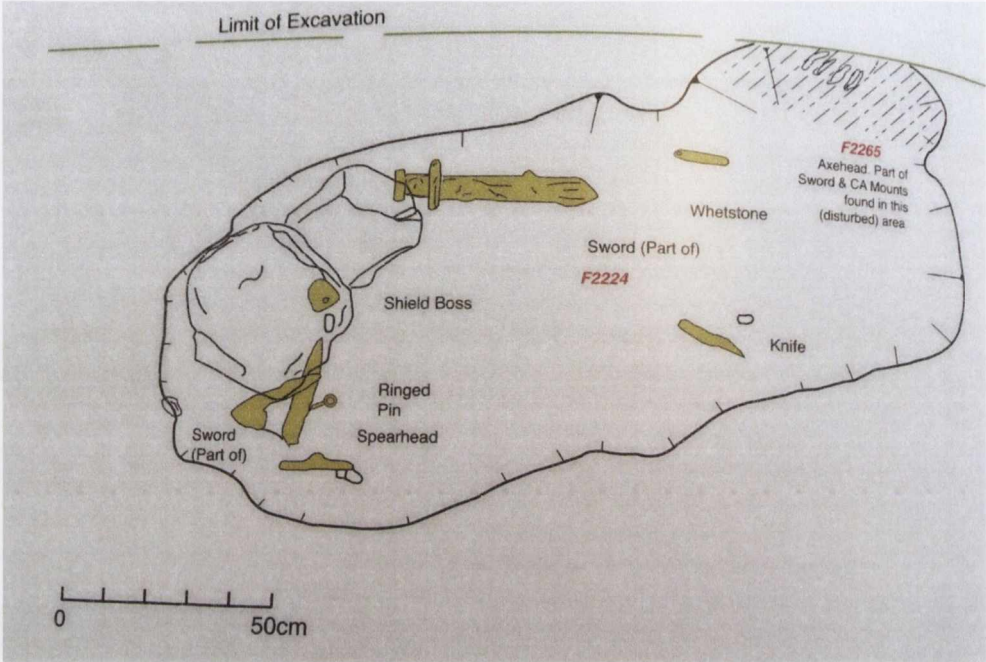


Fig. 8.7 Woodstown Weaponry. Axe head, broken double-edged sword, shield boss, and knife. From © Archaeological Consulting Services.



Fig. 8.8 Woodstown Sword. The Double-edged and broken sword found in the Woodstown burial assemblage. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 91.

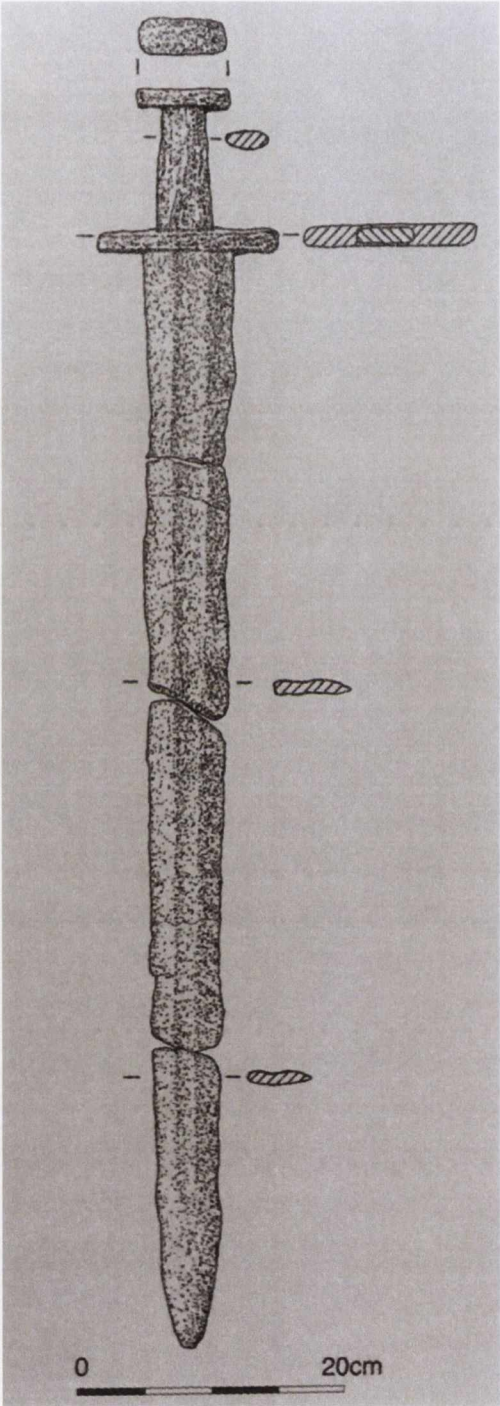


Fig. 8.9 Athlumney Horse Mounts and Bosses. After Armstrong, 'Some Irish Antiquities Unknown Use', p. 7, Fig. 1.

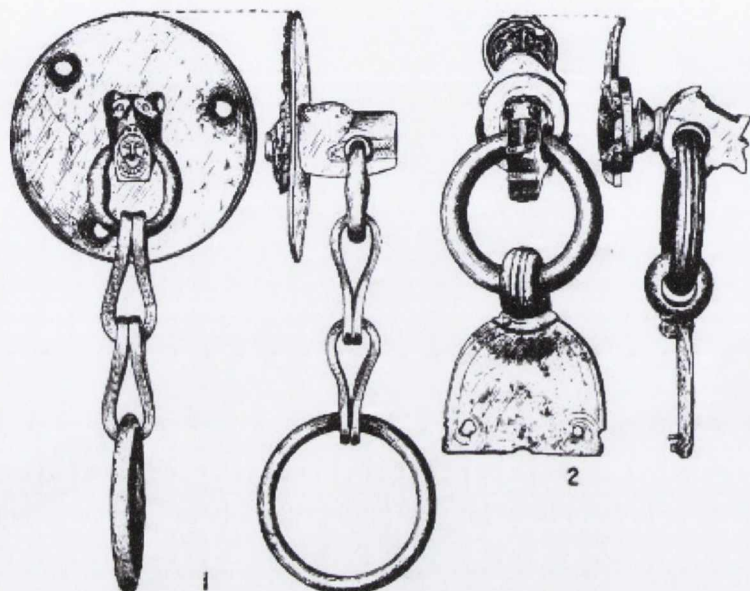
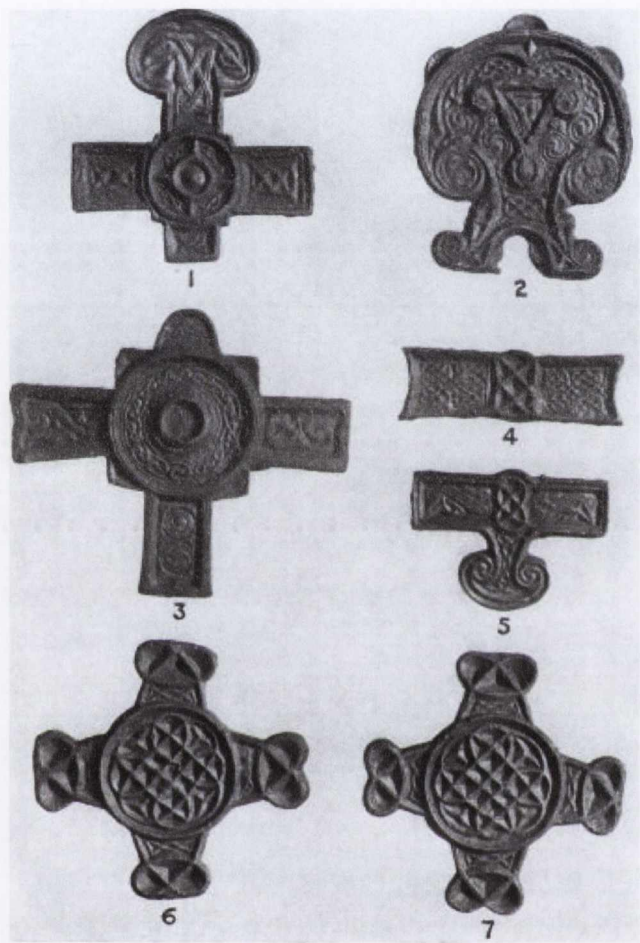


FIG. 1. Bosses, 1 found at Navan, co. Meath; 2 from Kiltua, co. Westmeath (4).

Fig. 8.10 Athlumney Horse Trappings (Plaques). After Armstrong, 'Some Irish Antiquities Unknown Use', p. 8, plaque II.



PLAQUES OF COPPER OR BRONZE, GILT, FOUND AT NAVAN, CO. MEATH

Fig. 8.11 Ballyholme Oval Brooches. After Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves*, p. 602.



Fig. 8.12 Bowl from Ballyholme, County Down. © National Museum of Ireland-Archaeology, Viking Exhibition.





