

. XIV .

*Frolics and Freuteries: Norse Magic
and Norn Words*

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The origins of this chapter lie in a talk about Norse magical terms inherited by the dialects of Orkney and Shetland, which I delivered at a Scottish Society for Northern Studies day conference held in Edinburgh in 2010. At that time, Arne Kruse was approaching his presidency of the Society, and it seemed that, given his interest in witchcraft trials and in the culture of the Northern Isles, it would be a suitable subject to revisit in this book dedicated to him.

The Northern Isles have long had a reputation for witchcraft. King James VI of Scotland, in his 1597 dissertation on necromancy, *Daemonologie*, singles out Orkney and Shetland as wild parts of the world, which, along with Lapland and Finland, were places where witchcraft was rife, and where ‘the Deuill findes greatest ignorance and barbaritie’.¹ This reputation lasted long after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1736. For example, Walter Traill Dennison relates that, around 1830, while visiting Leith, he was taken on the knee of an old sailor who quickly threw him off again when he discovered that Walter came from Orkney, ‘where so many cursed witches

1. James VI 1597: 55.

dwelling'.² Belief in witchcraft was endemic in the community too. For example, Edmonston tells us that

Witchcraft is still believed by the peasantry to exist in Zetland; and some old women live by pretending to be witches, for no one ventures to refuse what they ask. About six years ago [c. 1802] a man entered a prosecution in the sheriff-court at Lerwick, against a woman for witchcraft. He stated that she uniformly assumed the form of a raven, and in that character killed his cattle, and prevented the milk of his cows from yielding butter.³

Belief appears to have lasted well into the twentieth century. In 1973, Gideon Isbister of Lerwick told Ernest Marwick about an incident from his boyhood, wherein his mother discovered an old woman pulling grass from the byre roof after having cut some hair from the cow's tail. His mother got very agitated and shouted to her children to hurry and get some water. They quickly collected some and threw it over the old woman, removing her power to do any harm.⁴

It is of great interest, given the connection that James VI appears to be drawing between the Northern Isles and the wider northern world, that in one of the almost contemporary witch trials, there appears to be a reference to a form of Norse magic. In 1633, the Orcadian Marrioun Richart made a water cure for a woman which had been *forespoken*, a Scots word for bewitched. She did this by filling a cup with water into which she put something like salt, spat three times into it, and then

2. Marwick 1991: 368.

3. Edmonston 1809: 74.

4. Marwick 1975: 51–52.

*Scho aundit in bitt (quilk is ane Nourne terme) to [be] exponit into right language, in else mikill as scho did blew hir breath thairin.*⁵

The term *aundit* comes from the Old Norse verb *anda* ('to breathe') and Norwegian Bokmål *åndet* ('breathed'). Why would she breathe into the water? Her breath is obviously imbued with power, and the explanation is surely that, given that breath and spirit are intimately connected conceptually and linguistically in Old Norse, the noun *andi* means both breath and spirit. By blowing purposefully into the water, she is putting some of her own spirit into it. In his PhD thesis 'Gand, seid og åndevind', Eldar Heide argues that breath or blowing lies behind the Old Norse magical concept of *gandr* and, although it can be translated in a range of ways – from 'monster' to 'magical staff' – it has the essential meaning of breath, i.e. the magical practitioner's spirit, being sent out to do magic.⁶

Aundit is not the only Norn term associated with Marrioun Richart. She was also accused of helping a woman to regain the profit of her cow's milk, which had been taken by witchcraft. The woman was to go to the sea and count nine waves coming in, and then she was to collect the water, take it home, and put it in her churn. The phrase Marrioun uses is *tell nyne beares off the watter* ('count nine waves of the water'); *beares* is from Old Norse *bára* ('wave, billow'). It seems to have a Scots plural -s ending. It is noteworthy that supernatural connotations of the ninth wave are common to both Norse and Gaelic tradition: Ægir, the Norse god of the sea, has nine daughters with his wife Rán, personifying waves, and the Gaelic god Manannán was believed to live beyond the ninth wave.

5. Black 1903: 117.

6. Heide 2006a: 250.

The *gandr* or breath sent forth by the magical practitioner could take on animal form⁷. These forms could include sea mammals. In the twelfth century *Historia Norwegie*, in the earliest description of Sámi shamanism, a shaman is killed because his *gandus*, which had taken the form of a whale, collided with an enemy *gandus* that had changed into a sharp spike.⁸ In what is surely a direct parallel with this story, in 1645, the Shetlander Marion Pardoun was executed because, amongst other crimes, she had been

[t]ransformed in the lyknes of an pellack quhaill [...] the devil changing your spirit, qlk fled in the same quhaill [...] ye did cum under the said boat and overturnit her with ease, and drowned and devourit thame in ye sey.⁹

Just as spirit can be breathed or blown out, spirits can be breathed or sucked in. Clive Tolley points out that Siberian shamans breathe in spirits,¹⁰ and in Icelandic folklore, according to Jón Árnason, if you want to know the future, you have to catch a *sagnarandi* ('telling spirit') and trap it in a certain way when it enters your mouth.¹¹ In the legendary *Hrólfs saga kraka*, a *seiðkona* ('sorceress') is asked for hidden information, so she starts to perform the magical practice called *seiðr*.¹² After a while, she yawns heavily, and immediately afterwards she can give some information. Somebody tries to stop the sorceress, albeit unsuccessfully, and she yawns again, giving more information. It seems that it is the yawning which gives the *seiðkona*

7. Price 2019: 185

8. Ekrem and Mortensen 2006: 63.

9. Black 1903: 97.

10. Tolley 1995: 58, 71.

11. Árnason 1958–61 [1862–64]: 309.

12. Jónsson 1954: 11–12.

the information. According to Heide, the *seiðkona* yawns in the spirits that give her the information.¹³ Again, the witch trial material seems to provide a parallel. Yawning is recorded as a heinous act. In the trial of Katherine Grant in Orkney in 1623, it is recorded that she *gantit* ('yawned') three times at Henry Janies, before giving him the evil eye

*with a stoup in her hand, with the boddome formest, and sat down right fornent the said Henrie, and gantit [yawned] thrice on him:- and going furth he followit her; and being on the brig-stane, sho lukit over her shoulder and turned up the quhyt of her eye, quhair by hir divilrie, their fell ane great weght upoun him, that he was forcit to set his bak to the wall; and when he came in, he thought the hous ran about with him; and therefter lay seik ane lang time.*¹⁴

What did she believe she was doing? Was she exhaling her spirit, or was she trying to suck in some of Henry's spirit? Maybe she was sucking in some evil spirit to do her bidding? We will never know, but the actual practice of yawning is indicative of Norse magical practice. Katherine *gantit* on another occasion too. After being suspected of infecting a child, she arrived at the house and *gantit* over a cup of water, in which she had put a knife, and into which she spat. Luckily, the child recovered.

Given that, in the Northern Isles, the witchcraft trials appear to show the continuation of Norse magical practices into the seventeenth century – which should come as no surprise, given that the societies were still largely Norse in culture and language – one might expect to see the existence of Norse magical terms in the Scots dialects of Orkney and Shetland, just as one

13. Heide 2006b: 352.

14. Dalzell 1834: 7.

sees the presence of Norn farming and fishing terms. Indeed, words associated with the practice of *seiðr*, *varðlokkur* ('a type of magical song'), and *argr* ('unmanliness') do appear, as do a range of words originating from *gandr*.

Jakob Jakobsen, the great Faroese lexicographer, suggested reasonably that the terms *varl* and *verdie* both came from *varðlokkur*.¹⁵ He recorded the phrases *to varl de land*, which meant to take away the profit of a piece of land by witchcraft, which he suggested came from an abbreviated older verb to **varlek* – and *a auld verdie*, an old superstitious formula or custom. In his dictionary, John Graham does not record the survival of *varl*, but he does record a contemporary use of *vaerdi*:

*Dey wir a aald vaerdi i da place at da Toogs wal-water wid cure
rheumatics.*¹⁶

The *varðlokkur* is compared by Anna-Leena Siikala with shamanic songs, the purpose of which was to entice the spirits needed by the sorceress to come to her aid.¹⁷ Magnus Olsen argued that the etymology of the word indicates that it was the 'guardian' spirit, or *vörðr*, that was being attracted.¹⁸ This could be the 'guardian' spirit of a person, farm, or kin group.

The belief in the *vord* or *vardøger* ('guardian' spirits) continued in Norway into the nineteenth century. In western Norway, there was a supernatural being which guarded the farm called a *Tunvord* or *Gars-vor*.¹⁹ The *vardøger*, a personal spirit or a reification of a person's spirit, could take animal

15. Jakobsen 1985: 1029, 1042.

16. Graham 1979: 94.

17. Siikala 2002: 345

18. Olsen 1916: 4.

19. Ibid.: 7.

shape (note the similarity with the *gandr*). They occur in a number of folktales, for example the story ‘Grandmother’s Vardøger Scared the Cows’, recorded in Buskerud.²⁰ Similarly, in nineteenth-century Orkney, there was a belief in the *varðen*. Walter Traill Dennison described how he had heard from very old people about the *meen o’ the Varden* (‘moan of the varden’):

The varden was a spirit which, unseen, and in the shape of some animal, attended every human being. Each individual had a varden of his own, which followed him everywhere [...]. Previous to a man’s decease, his varden sees the approaching calamity, though unknown to mortal ken; and the creature gives vent to its sorrow in low moans, dismal groans, or half-suffocated doleful howlings, which all presage the coming death.²¹

The evidence from Old Norse sources suggests that the magical practice of *seiðr* and the singing of *varðlokkur* was conventionally carried out by women. Men who practised it were open to accusations of *ergi*, the state of being *argr*. *Ergi* and *argr* have a number of unpleasant connotations, including lewdness, lustfulness, wickedness, devilry, unmanliness, and cowardliness. Jakobsen found the word *arg* in the dialect.²² It seems to have retained its connotations of evilness and lustfulness. Its primary meaning was evil or bad as in the expletive *Arga dirt!* but it also meant ‘very desirous of something’, which hints at the earlier meaning of lustfulness.

Unlike the word *seiðr*, *gandr* has left its mark on the Shetland and Orcadian dialects. For Shetland, Jakobsen collected *gander*, *ganfer*, *gandaguster*, and *gandigo*.²³ Marwick recorded *gamfer* in

20. Kvideland 1988: 67.

21. Dennison 1995: 147–148.

22. Jakobsen 1985: 17.

23. Ibid.: 210–211.

Orkney.²⁴ One of the meanings Jakobsen gives for *gander* is a ‘sudden feeling of powerlessness, nausea, sickness at heart’, as in *der’r a ill gander about my heart*, which he is surely correct to interpret as a sickness brought about by witchcraft. For *ganfer*, he says it means a phenomenon in the sky like a mock-sun or a halo around the moon or sun indicating rain, or additionally, an ominous cracking sound in the atmosphere. Jakobsen derived it from **gand-ferð* (‘a company of witches or wicked spirits’) which could be seen in the sky, and synonymous with ON *gandreið* (‘witches’ ride’). Given that in Northern Norwegian *gandferd* is a term for the *Wild Hunt*, also known as the *Oskoreidi*, *jolareidi* in Norway, or *Odens jakt* in Sweden – the storm of spirits sometimes led by Odin – this was probably also the case in Shetland. In his PhD, Heide made a connection between the *ganfer*, *gandaguster* (‘a sudden gust of wind’), and *gandigo* (‘squall of wind with rain’) and the Old Norse word *gandrekr* (‘a storm brought about by witchcraft’). In this wide-ranging and detailed exploration of the relationship between *seiðr* and *gandr*, he explores, amongst other things, the connection between the idea of a magic wind and the practice of magic practitioners sending out their breath to do magic.²⁵

Are there other words in the dialects of Orkney and Shetland which have their origins in Old Norse magical terms? In his paper ‘The Name of the Witch: Sagas, Sorcery and Social Context’, Gísli Pálsson listed a series of concepts associated with Norse witchcraft which occur frequently in the Icelandic family sagas.²⁶ A number of the concepts translate as ‘witchcraft’ (*ffölkynngi*, *fyrnska*, and *forneskja*); others refer to the special knowledge and powers of the witch (*fróðleikur* and *margkunnindi*); while yet others refer to the practice of witchcraft (*galdr* and *seiðr*). As already stated, *seiðr* does not survive

24. Marwick 1929: 51.

25. Heide 2006.

26. Pálsson 1991: 158.

in the dialects; however, a number of these terms have been preserved (*Felkyo*, *frolik*, and *galder*). The meanings might have changed a little, but their links to Old Norse magical belief and practice are clear.

One of Pálsson's words for witchcraft – *fjölkyngi* – survived in Orkney as a proper noun. Gregor Lamb records the name *Felkyo* from ON *fjölkyngis-kona* ('woman who knows witchcraft'), which – he writes – was the name of a witch who used to live in the Hillside district of Birsay.²⁷ He also records the word *felkyied*, 'tired looking', which probably originally meant 'bewitched'. This word does not occur in Shetland. Instead, Jakobsen recorded the word *heksi* for witch, which, although it occurs in Norwegian, is a borrowing from Low German or Dutch.²⁸

Another word that occurs in both Orkney and Shetland, and which can be regarded as a synonym for witch or sorcerer, is *finn*. In Scandinavia, those seeking magical help or information might visit the Sámi – *finnar* in Old Norse. The aforementioned Sámi shaman in the *Historia Norwegie* is so named. Visiting the Sámi was called *finnför* and was specifically banned in the Norwegian laws. It did not stop the practice though, and in a fifteenth-century Swedish case, a certain *Margit halffstop* learned the spell for bewitching a man at a distance from *Anna finszka*.²⁹ A parallel would be an old lady in Sanday in Orkney called *Baabie Finn*, who was reputed to have strange powers,³⁰ and *Finnie* from Unst, who 'could do things we canna name'.³¹ According to John Spence, people who were 'supposed to be skilled in the Black Art, were spoke of as Norway Finns'.³²

27. Lamb 1995: 32.

28. Jakobsen 1985: 302.

29. Mitchell 2000: 335–336.

30. Robertson 1991: 336.

31. Saxby 1932: 96.

32. Spence 1899: 26.

One of the words for the special powers of the witch, *fróðleikur* ('knowledge of magic'), appears to survive as *frolík* ('an old, magic rigmarole or formula'), as in the saying *auld froliks*.³³ The word *fron* (a 'superstition, superstitious ceremony, magic formula'), as in *a auld fron*, probably derives from *fróðr* ('well-informed, learned'), the first part of *fróðleikur*.

Galdr, which Price defines as originally 'a specific type of sorcery focusing on a characteristic type of high-pitched singing',³⁴ has left its mark on the Shetland dialect. Jakobsen recorded the noun *galder*, which he defined as noisy, foolish talk, as in *nane o dy galder*; noisy mirth; a high, roaring wind; or a great tumult in the sea, as in *a galder i de sea*. He also recorded the verb, which he defined as to speak in a loud, foolish manner, to laugh noisily and wildly, of the wind to bluster, and of water to rush. John Graham found that it was still used. He defined *galder* as a noun meaning a loud, boisterous laugh – *Hears du da galders o yun eediot*.³⁵ In the dialect, the connotations of the noun and the verb are clear – blustery, noisy weather, loud laughter, or noisy, foolish, unintelligible blethers!

It is interesting to note that, in the eddic poem *Grógaldr*, the dead sorceress Gróa describes to her son Svipdag one way of correctly performing the *galdr*:

á jarðföstum steini
stóðk innan dura,
meðan þér galdra gólk

While singing *galdr* songs I stood on an earth-fast stone just inside the doorway.³⁶

33. Jakobsen 1985: 200.

34. Price 2019: 35.

35. Graham 1979: 28.

36. Munch 1847: 170.

Anna-Leena Siikala reports that later Scandinavian incantations also mention spell-casting on an earth-fast stone.³⁷ She claims this stone was so powerful because beneath dwelt guardian spirits. Earth-fast stones were also important in Shetland traditional belief. John Nicolson records:

On the night when the first winter moon was visible, the lasses were wont to 'rin about da eart-fast stane'. Selecting a large stone that was firmly embedded in the ground, the performer would go round it three times with the sun and three times against, at the same time repeating:-

*Winter, winter, new mune, welcome an' true mune,
Grant me da first wiss 'at I ax o' dae.*

(Here she would repeat the name of her favoured wooer).

*If I ha'e claes frae dee ta wear,
If I ha'e bairns ta de ta bear,
Dan next sight 'at I see o' dee,
May dy face be ta me,
an' dy back to da sea.*³⁸

On the island of Foula, the visiting Norwegian Einar Seim recorded, in his diary in 1934, that when the men wanted a sea-breeze or free wind,

they went to an earthfast stone, laid a silver penny on it (copper would not do) and then went three times round it sunwise, and three times round widder-shins.³⁹

37. Siikala 2002: 276.

38. Nicolson 1912: 125.

39. Torvanger 2016: 45.

In the traditional Shetland house, there were also earth-fast stones called *bustanes*. It was considered good practice for a *bustane* to be incorporated in the wall of the house and of the byre.⁴⁰ Jakobsen records that

Such bustens (or properly the good fairies which according to old tradition lived under the stones) were supposed to bring good luck to the houses to which they belonged. When milking the cow, some drops of milk were sprinkled on the 'bosten' in the byre; likewise at a private baptism, the 'bosten' was sometimes sprinkled with a few drops of baptismal water.⁴¹

In Old Norse, the performer of *galdr* could be called a *galdra-maðr* or *galdra-smiðr*. Neither of these words survives in the dialect. However, in his 1821 novel *The Pirate*, Sir Walter Scott uses the word *galdragon* ('a sorceress or witch').⁴² It is possible that Scott created the word from the Old Norse *galdrakona* ('sorceress'), which was not outwith his ability. However, Jakobsen gave *galdragon* the benefit of the doubt and suggested it was a Norn word.⁴³ It is possible that Scott picked it up on his visit to Shetland in the summer of 1814. However, despite the lack of the word *galdra-maðr*, it is hard to think of a better term to describe Old Yacob in George Stewart's late-nineteenth-century Shetland novel *Shetland Fireside Tales*.⁴⁴ Stewart appears to have tapped into real tradition about how magic was once practised in Shetland, using an old Shetland saw which included Norn words like *vaana* from *vatn* ('water') with the definite article

40. Nicolson 1981: 96.

41. Jakobsen 1985: 89.

42. Scott 1821: 16.

43. Jakobsen 1985: 208.

44. Stewart 1877: 200.

attached. He describes how Old Yacob attempted, unsuccessfully as it turns out, to dampen the winds of a storm:

When they got outside, Yacob placed himself on the ‘brig-stane’ with his face towards the east, and taking his staff in his left hand, raised his right arm, and pronounced the following incantation, sawing the wind with his arm as he spoke:

*Robbin cam ower da vaana
wi’ a shü nü;
Twabbie, Toobie, Keelikin,
Kollickin, Palktrick alanks da
robin. Güid sober da wind*

But the wind sobered not; the spirit of the storm, as if in mockery of such feeble attempts to propitiate his wrath, raged still more furiously, and drove the clouds of salt spray, hail and sleet, with hurricane force, against the earth, so that old Yacob had to beat a hasty retreat to his cottage.

Price, in his list of Old Norse magical terms, also includes *útisetá*, which was the practice of ‘sitting out’ in special places like graveyards or burial mounds in order to communicate with the spirits of the dead.⁴⁵ This appears to be what Catherine Jonesdóchter was accused of doing. She was *hanting and seeing the trowis ryse out of the kirkyeard of Hildiswick and Holiecross Kirk of Eschenes*.⁴⁶ *Hanting* means ‘haunting or hanging around’ and although *trowis* (modern *trows*) is the common Shetland supernatural being, in this context it means ‘spirits of the dead’. This was a crime for which she was *wirriet* and burned in 1616.

45. Price 2019: 35.

46. Black 1903: 85.

Pálsson suggested there was a conceptual distinction between two kinds of magical practices – between sorcery, which has been described so far, and divination.⁴⁷ Whether or not this is the case, there is plenty of evidence for divination in the Northern Isles and for the survival of Norse terminology.

Jakobsen⁴⁸ recorded the word *frøtt*, which he defined as ‘soothsaying (combined with old phrases and formulas), especially by an old, wise woman, and a superstitious belief, customs or spells, as in *auld frøtt’s*’. The word comes from Old Norse *frétt* (‘questioning’), which includes asking the will of the gods. The collective plural *frootery* occurs in Orkney.⁴⁹ Jakobsen also recorded the adjective *frøtti*, as in the phrase *a auld frøtti saying* (‘a phrase or formula used in soothsaying’).⁵⁰ The word was also borrowed into Scots from Old Norse, but there is no reason to believe it did not go into the dialects directly.

Similarly, the Shetland word *spo*, from Old Norse *spá* (‘to prophecy’), although also borrowed into Scots as *spae*, must, given its pronunciation, have come directly into the dialect. Jakobsen recorded the word *spoben*, a sheep bone, which was used by an expectant mother to predict the sex of her unborn child. She would ask a friend to drop the bone three times into her lap, each time saying,

*Spo ben! Spo ben, whedder my friend is to ha’e a boy or a lass!*⁵¹

If the round side turned up twice, it was to be a boy.

Witchcraft was believed to cause an effect, to impose the witch’s will, perhaps to bewitch a subject and do them ill, as

47. Pálsson 1991: 158.

48. Jakobsen 1985: 202.

49. Marwick 1929: 43.

50. Jakobsen 1985: 202.

51. Jakobsen 1985: 882.

in one of the meanings of *gander* – an illness brought about by witchcraft. These connotations are encapsulated in the word *granderi*, which Jakobsen interprets as ‘witchcraft, sorcery or queer behaviour caused by witchcraft’.⁵² It is a derivative of another dialect word, *grand* (‘to hurt by witchcraft’), as in *hit is no to say, at he was witched, but he was grandet*. In other words, not only was he bewitched, there was absolutely no hope for him! In Old Norse, *að granda* meant to ‘damage or destroy’.

Trollaskod, derived from *troll*, which provides a rich vein of Shetland dialect vocabulary, has a similar meaning to *grandet*. Jakobsen explains that, as well as meaning witch, it properly means ‘one who has been shot by a troll and has thus become bewitched’.⁵³ In Scandinavian folklore, words like *trollskot* (‘trollshot’), *alvskot* (‘elf-shot’), and *finnskot* (‘Finn-shot’) imply that supernatural beings and magical practitioners could cause sickness by firing a magical shot.⁵⁴ Jakobsen also recorded the words *trollet* – which could mean ‘having a sickly appearance’; in other words bewitched – and *trolsket* (‘indisposed, unwell, or drowsy’), from ON *tryllskr* (‘betwitched, being a troll or witch’).

As well as the previous examples, Jakobsen also collected and interpreted the following troll words: *trollamist* (‘a thick, dark mist’), *trollamog* (‘an insignificant person or malicious little fellow’), *trollhotted* (‘troll-like’), *trolliplukk* (‘a poor feeble, slow-moving creature’), *trollmolet* (‘having an ugly mouth or face, like a troll’), *trollslaget* (‘queer, odd looking, originally troll-struck’), *trolleman* (‘a wizard or sorcerer’), and *trollkollin* (‘a hermaphrodite’).⁵⁵ The last two are particularly interesting, and he records that *trolleman* occurs in a Norn refrain *Trolleman*,

52. Ibid.: 259.

53. Ibid.: 967.

54. Kanerva 2013: 15.

55. Jakobsen 1985: 967–968.

trolleman tak vara! ('Wizard beware!'). Unfortunately, he does not provide any further detail about its providence.

He is surely correct in claiming that *trollkollin* comes from *trollkerling* ('female troll'), hinting that there was something masculine about this female magical being. In the Faroe Islands, Terry Gunnell pointed out that in a description of the traditions on Svínøy by the Faroese author William Heinesen – in his short story 'Grylen' – the female troll or *grylen* sports a large wooden phallus which can bring fertility to barren women.⁵⁶ These cases of mixed-gender magical beings might be relevant to a wider discussion around the nature of the *göndull*, the staff employed by magical practitioners – generally female – to send out *gandr* spirits.⁵⁷ *Göndull* can also mean 'penis'.

Heide⁵⁸ explores 'spirit penises' in *Gand, seid og andevind*, where he argues that *gandr* might have been seen as a metaphorical 'spiritual penis' sent out to perform a spiritual phallic attack. He relates that southern Sámi shamans, in the eighteenth century, used to contend with each other by sending out magic projectiles called *nåejtiendírre* against each other. This word literally means 'noaidi's penis' (the *noaidi* was the shaman). If the *göndull* were seen as a 'spiritual penis', then female practitioners might have been regarded, in a sense, as hermaphrodites or mixed gender. However, one does not want to take speculation too far.

Jakob Jakobsen proclaimed that *Norn var også det sprog som heksene brugte på Shetland og Orknøerne i deres trylleformularer og besværgelserie* ('Norn was also the language that witches used in Shetland and Orkney in their spells and incantations').⁵⁹ Clearly, this would have been the case when Norn was still

56. Gunnell 2000: 40.

57. Price 2019: 134.

58. Heide 2006a: 274.

59. Jakobsen 1911: 320.

spoken in the islands. Magical practice, spells, and incantations were part of the islands' inherited Norse culture. Like others before me, I have not been immune to the *vam* ('mysterious magical influence') cast by this example of the Northern Isles' intangible cultural heritage. Elsewhere I have argued that Shetland has an 'identifiable Norse folklore dialect'.⁶⁰ The rich legacy of dialect words and the evidence from the witch trials indicates this is also the case with regard to witchcraft. Perhaps it was not geography alone which caused James VI to lump the Northern Isles together with Lapland and Finland as centres of witchcraft. It is impressive that so many words with links to Norse magical practice have survived in the dialect, particularly in Shetland. It gives us some insight into what has been lost.

To conclude, I would like to balance the Shetland refrain *Trolleman, trolleman tak vara* with one from Orkney. Jakobsen was told a story about the Rousay witch Kada (Katherine Craigie) by Hugh Marwick. She successfully sank a ship by means of sympathetic magic, agitating a cup, representing the ship, in a tub of water. In exultation, she exclaimed *Tá'r a' gort* ('It's done!').⁶¹ Just like this short chapter.

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60. Jennings 2016: 32.

61. Jakobsen 111: 320.

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