

Anglo-Saxon England in Icelandic Medieval Texts

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MAGNÚS FJALLDAL

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Medieval Icelandic authors wrote a great deal on the subject of England and the English. This new work by Magnus Fjalldal is the first to provide an overview of what Icelandic medieval texts have to say about Anglo-Saxon England in respect to its language, culture, history, and geography. Some of the texts Fjalldal examines include family sagas, the shorter *paettir*, the histories of Norwegian and Danish kings, and the Icelandic lives of Anglo-Saxon saints. Fjalldal finds that in response to a hostile Norwegian court and kings, Icelandic authors -- from the early thirteenth century onwards (although they were rather poorly informed about England before 1066) -- created a largely imaginary country where friendly, generous, although rather ineffective kings living under constant threat welcomed the assistance of saga heroes to solve their problems. The England of Icelandic medieval texts is more of a stage than a country, and chiefly functions to provide saga heroes with fame abroad. Since many of these texts are rarely examined outside of Iceland or in the English language, Fjalldal's book is important for scholars of both medieval Norse culture and Anglo-Saxon England.

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目录:

[Anglo-Saxon England in Icelandic Medieval Texts 下载链接1](#)

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评论

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