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A Final Reply to Carrie Roy

As stated before, we agree with Roy that is difficult to cover all important arguments in a conference paper. But we could not have referred to her doctoral thesis instead, as we had no evidence that it existed when we submitted our reply. Roy's 2009 conference paper offers no clue as to the title of the upcoming work. Shortly before the publication of our reply, not even Roy's own university library had registered any thesis of hers. Roy's texts contain leaps of thought and misquotations that not only touch upon the work of others, but that also misrepresent her own production. We will limit ourselves to a few examples.

In *Fornvännen* 2012:2 Roy joins separate quotations from Neiß 2007 and invents a new read-

ing, unintended by the author ("With Neiß's own words, [...]"). A similar method is used to suggest that Domeij Lundborg favours a connection between the Norse gods and animal art, despite the author's objection. This is done by presenting the reader with a limited part of the context. In fact, the original wording intended to underline that animal art could have fitted just as well in a Christian as in a pre-Christian context. The main intention of Domeij Lundborg 2006 was to point out parallels between verbal and pictorial concepts such as binding and gripping in skaldic poetry and in animal art. Contrary to her new claims, Roy 2009 (p. 828 f) actually does make a connection between the Gripping Beast

and spiritual beings such as the fylgia. Finally, how would Roy's oral student report, given behind closed doors in late November of 2007 (according to e-mail from Orri Vésteinsson, Dept of Archaeology, University of Iceland, 18 June 2012) free Roy in 2009 from her obligation to refer back to Neiß (published in September of 2007)? Roy 2009 reviews Neiß 2007 on other topics. Therefore, our question concerning the independence of her work on this point stands.

As to Roy's representation of Helmbrecht's work (2005), Roy fails to see the difference between relative and absolute chronology. Roy's argument ("Regarding chronology, Helmbrecht's research revealed no recognizable chronological development in the Gripping Beast motif's stylistic rendering", 2009, p. 824) implies that Helmbrecht 2005 came to the conclusion that there is no stylistic development within the entire Gripping Beast motif tradition whatsoever, which is a misunderstanding. Of course, there is a considerable development in the rendering of the Gripping Beast motif from the Early Gripping Beast style towards Borre and later styles (Helmbrecht 2005, pp. 241–242). The chronology of the stylistic groups within the Early Gripping Beast style has been established not through analysis of the internal development, but by external means, such as carrier object typology and absolute dating, e.g. dendrochronology and coin dating (Helmbrecht 2005, pp. 274–279). Helmbrecht (2005, p. 240–242) chose the term "Early Gripping Beast style" but did not suggest that the Gripping Beast only occurs during the Early Viking Period (which would clearly be incorrect).

A case where Roy contradicts herself concerns introductions. In *Fornvännen* 2012:2, she states "Many of their [Domeij et al.] accusations misrepresent my empirical work, claiming credit for new theories. This is simply not the case". But in her own introduction of 2009 (p. 823), Roy states: "this paper will briefly address [...] before introducing a new approach and theory". Moreover, Roy's phrase "the issue of subjectivity that plagues any attempt at understanding and interpreting another culture's art" (2009, p. 825) suggests that her method is an approach to overcome subjectivity. We cannot see that we misquote Roy when we point out that her approach is as

subjective as any other. Here, Roy misunderstands our critique of her "sensory evidence" approach. She uses the concept of "sensory evidence" in a biological sense, and thereby claims that human visuality is an objective perspective in image analyses. We agree that the visual system of our species has remained the same over time in a biological sense. Nonetheless, clinical research, psychology and cultural anthropology offer overwhelming evidence that our individual ability to perceive and decipher images derives from learning processes that differ from culture to culture (Segall et al. 1966, p. 32 f.; Hagen 1974, p. 478 f; Sonesson 1989, pp. 252–254; 1992, p. 309 f; 1994, pp. 16, 20 f, 32; Eagleman 2002, p. 923 and refs; Neiß 2012, pp. 35–39 and refs).

On the pre-iconographic level, Roy fails to recognise something that earlier research (e.g. Klindt-Jensen 1965, pp. 24–52; Callmer 1970, p. 270; Wilson 2001, p. 136; Helmbrecht 2005, pp. 244–251 and refs) has pointed out clearly: the hips and shoulders of the Gripping Beasts are often directly connected to their heads, and torsos are seldom presented at all. We find it astonishing that Roy generally interprets the hips or shoulders of the Gripping Beasts as chests, not the least since she claims to base her interpretations on such a profound material study. This is actually a good example of how subjective human visuality can be.

But splitting hairs upon the Gripping Beast has never been our intention. In *Fornvännen* 2012: 1, we responded to criticism that Carrie Roy had directed towards us in print. The matter appeared especially urgent as her account contained errors of fact and misquotations that did injury to fellow researchers. Thus, the main focus of our reply was on academic craftsmanship. Reading Roy's reply, we note with regret that she remains set in her ways, rather than admitting human error.

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