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My paper takes its point of departure from some of the media-theoretical positions worked out within the Zürich project ‘Mediality: Historical Perspectives’ over the last three years. A key move here has been a reformulation of the basic question ‘what is a medium’ as ‘what can function as a medium in particular situations and processes?’ (Kiening 2007, 331). One way this expansive conception of mediality opens up new perspectives is by encouraging a move away from models in which (technologically-defined) media shape mentality, in favour of a focus on the self-reflexivity of medieval texts, in particular, the way in which they stage, reflect upon, and problematize the conditions of possibility of communication. In Old Norse textual culture, the enigmatic figure of Mímir is one of the ways into this complex of questions.

I will mainly concentrate not on Mímir as he appears in the poetic and prose Edda, but rather on the narrative of the Æsir-Vanir war in Ynglinga saga ch. 4. Here Mímir, as a hostage sent between two groups of gods, functions as a medium, as something ‘in-between’. As hostage he is doubled twice over, by Hœnir, with whom he is sent to the Vanir, and by Kvasir, whom the Vanir send in exchange for Mímir. Mímir’s relationship to Hœnir could also be seen as having a medial logic, albeit a complex one, in which he first supplements Hœnir, feeding him the answers to questions, then substitutes for him, killed in Hœnir’s place as an expression of the Vanir’s dissatisfaction with the hostage deal. The doublet Mímir-Kvasir is, as a one-to-one exchange, structurally simpler, and as many commentators have noted, implies an equivalence between Mímir and Kvasir. They are usually taken as figures for aspects of knowledge or wisdom, where Mímir, on the basis of the not altogether irreproachable etymology Mímir > Lat. *memor*, stands for memory. Here as well issues of mediality are important, as Kvasir figures not knowledge per se, but its communication and performance, ultimately as poetry.

The Mímir of Ynglinga saga is also, and I would argue quite self-consciously so, a figure of mediation. From Mímir’s ventriloquist communication with Hœnir, to his final metamorphosis into an oracular talking head produced by Óðinn in a laborious technical/magical process, the figure of Mímir stages the medium of the voice in striking and paradoxical ways. Oracular talking heads are an extremely widespread ancient and medieval motif, which could have entered the Old Norse literary system from various directions; what interests me here,

however, is less the source of the motif than its reception, in the form of the pre-history furnished in Ynglinga saga, and how it works within this narrative context.

Kiening, Christian, 2007. ‚Medialität in mediävistischer Perspektive‘. *Poetica. Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* 39: 285-352.