



HUMSAM PRISEN

Dynamic Mediators and Distant Gods: Familiarized Necrodialogues across Culture

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Are certain meanings, emotions and material conditions tying together the various communications with the dead today? Spiritualist séances, ritualization towards Norse forebears and the dead interacting with the living in popular culture – do these manifestations have something in common, except transgressing the border between the living and the dead? Within the topic of dynamic mediators and distant gods, I ask whether and how necrodialogues are an integrated, cultural trait bridging the secular and the sacred in late modern, Western cultures, and if so, why death and the dead may be given such a role. I look at how the past, the present and the future are articulated within this kind of cultural communication, and I do so by juxtaposing examples from Spiritualist, Viking and Norse past revival and popular culture storytelling contexts. These contexts are often interlaced or tangled in a way resembling the Viking animal ornamentation; it is difficult to ascertain where different entities begin and end. I coin the term “familiarized necrodialogues” to convey how the border transgressing of talking with the dead becomes accessible, integrated into everyday life and various situations, and with a focus on family, relations and healing, exemplifying dynamic mediators and distant gods. Closely linked to the notion of “familiarization” in my material, is the notion of “horizontal” relations and agency, pointing to a dimension being everywhere and all around us, created by humans, including the dead ones, and nature.