The Troll Inside You: Paranormal Activity in the Medieval North
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The art known to Óðinn and called seiðr is said to carry “mestr máttr” (the greatest force). Magic is might, therein lies its seductive power, and whoever controls it has momentarily left the great multitudes of fortune’s fools, those battered by and grounded into nature’s elements, taking their place among gods and creators. The allure of magic lies precisely in its promise of the power to override the all-controlling destiny, fates, and limitations that trap man within his own narrow existence. The witch is man as god, an unlimited being, and therein lies both its terror and fascination, just as the undead terrifies by trespassing on the ground of unlimited time.

Existing in the space age, modern man is bound to feel infinitely small contemplating the vastness of his universe, but this feeling of inferiority may not be a wholly modern innovation. In spite of all of the belief systems that place humanity at the centre of creation, individual humans trapped within a fairly limited existence within a vast landscape such as Iceland provides will still, at least on occasion, have felt their smallness in every fibre of their being. The relative dimensions of man and his world, driven home as he stands dwarfed by every mountain, will inevitably not have altogether escaped his attention in spite of all valiant attempts to ignore them.

Thus there is possibly an element of flattery in the constant intervention, some of which has been described above, of paranormal powers into human everyday existence. The occult forces do care, and will visit you in your dreams and inform you of what the future brings for you
and those close to you, and they will present you with ominous portents. They will, somewhat like the Olympian gods during the Trojan war, enhance your importance in the scheme of all things through their perpetual interest in your fate despite the individual’s seeming insignificance.\footnote{325}

Any paranormal encounter sublimates human existence, as the occult powers cast a spotlight on the lone human actor and may have transcendental effect on his life. Even a lowly henchman such as Án ricebelly in 	extit{Laxdæla saga} may receive visitations from magic women in his sleep, proving his worth exceeds beyond the limited role he assumes within the mundane everyday world.\footnote{326}

As noted above, Óðinn the witchfather was said to use his magic to transport himself, indeed fly by his own power as if in a dream — a frequent dream flyer such as the author of this book cannot but feel affinity with the humans who crafted this myth. Gravity can weigh heavily on the human soul, earthbound and exiled from the heavens, the natural abode of the immortals. The ability to fly, even to send your own soul flying while you sleep and thus to be in two places at one, is exhilarating to terrestrials who normally exercise no control over time and space.\footnote{327} No less exciting is the power to affect the lives of others, to reach beyond one’s own fate and make a difference outside of one’s own skin. Óðinn can attain this power through 	extit{seiðr}, and he is imitated by those vicious trolls mentioned in the Sagas of Icelanders, such as Kotkell and Gríma, Þorgrímr Nose, not to mention the undead who in their undead state can, if nothing else, finally attain their lifelong ambition to kill, maim, and destroy.

Örvar-Oddr’s nemesis Ögmundr may be the greatest troll in the Northern hemisphere. It is implied that his power is hardly of this world, but it is certainly a force to be reckoned with in the human sphere. He has attained this power through magic, presumably like all of the other trolls in saga narratives who cause the medieval Icelandic warriors occasionally to pause in the midst of battle and
contemplate that they seem to be fighting against “troll en ekki menn” (trolls and not men). His is an inhuman and grand power, beyond human capacity, and again there is a form of aggrandizement in the paranormal nature of the enemy: Örvar-Oddr alone among the ancient heroes seems to be worthy of such a foe. Thus the troll may paradoxically bring recognition, even consolation, along with horror.

Paranormal powers are the *raison d’être* of the troll. The troll is nothing if not the sorcerous power it yields, a power to be feared and envied and which may even at times be strangely flattering. The troll provides the human with perspective, a much larger perspective. The presence of the troll may thus be a paradoxical aspect of the divine nature of humanity. We may often resemble mere beasts but we are, in fact, divine, and our divinity is proven by the opprobrium of paranormal persecutors that it inspires.