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LGBTQ+ Medieval Literature

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LGBTQ+ Medieval Literature

Chloe Suckow Eng 380

Background

The LGBTQ+ community and being queer are not 21st-century ideas and the ability to show how long queerness has been a part of the world allows for people to be accepted while letting them know they aren't alone and have never been alone. Queerness is a term to define someone who is strange or non-heteronormative and has either discovered their pronouns and/or sexuality or is still experimenting. The topic of LGBTQ+ in medieval literature has been well researched with topics ranging through a variety of centuries and countries. The focus of this is to show how people who are queer in medieval literature with an emphasis on the fourteenth-century anonymous *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*. This Norse saga tells the ancestry and deeds of King Hrolf Kraki, Bodvar Bjarki, and Svipdag against King Frodi, King Adils, and Queen Skuld. Queerness can be read throughout *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* through Bodvar's close relationship with Hjalti and the more strange characteristics of some of the women. Queen Olof is an example of this as she continually protests a marriage to Hrolf Kraki's dad, which could hint at a queer sexuality, and is said to dress in armor while having a cruel temper, both features commonly attributed to men.

Big Questions

How were queer people shown in medieval literature with attention to *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*?

Definitions

Queer

- 1. With *the*: that which is queer (in various senses). *rare*.
- a. Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric. Also: of questionable character; suspicious, dubious. Cf.
- A person who is strange or non-heteronormative and has either discovered their pronouns and/or sexuality or is still experimenting

LGBTQ+

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and more
- It is a spectrum of gender and sexuality, but a person's identity doesn't always have to be decided

Research

- There has been a large amount scholarship about queer and homosexuality during the medieval period
- A variety focus on historical sexuality while others focus on queer close readings of medieval literature
- The focus for my research is looking at *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* through the queer lens
- Queen Olof when looked at through the queer lens could be seen as either non-binary or as a cross-dresser
- Later in the book in a queer close reading Bodvar and Hjalti's relationship could be seen as that of lovers
- Queerness can historically and through literature be found in a wide variety of places such as France, India, the United Kingdom, and so many more.

Conclusion

- While so much has been said about medieval sexuality there is still so much that has gone unsaid or unresearched
- More medieval texts should be researched through the queer lens
- There is such a wide variety of texts out there that strongly read as queer and by erasing that history of LGBTQ+ it alters what people know and learn about it

