

“The Vinland event, however we read it, was both insignificant and highly important: as a footnote to history it may have been no big deal, but as a chapter in the story of man’s aspirations it has a fascination which will never die.” (Magnusson, 2003, p. 95)

INTRODUCTION

OR: *HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT VINLAND?*

Until some years ago, I hadn’t. But once I touched on the subject I was captivated by Vinland like so many before me. Or rather, I was fascinated by the hold of fascination Vinland had on others. Congruously, it was in Bergen, Norway, that I first came across the Norse Vinland. I was artist-in-residence at Kulturhuset USF and browsing the public and university libraries for material on the Norse voyages across the North Atlantic. I had long been interested in the concept of *Old* and *New World*, a concept which usually emphasizes the differences and discrepancies between the societies and cultures on the opposite shores of that ocean. From a different perspective, however, they represent two ends of the same road. That’s what the Atlantic really became after the first explorers had successfully crossed it: a highway connecting the continents rather than a barrier separating them. And as it appears today, the Norsemen had been those very first adventurers to achieve this crossing about 500 years prior to Columbus or Cabot. Doing so, the Norse seafarers closed the last gap and completed the encircling of the globe by humankind¹. This was certainly an amazing and almost incredible achievement given the lack of navigation aids at the time². But it also appears as an almost natural development if one looks at the history of the Norse western voyages which successively took them to the British Isles, to Iceland and to Greenland which, geologically, already belongs to America. The concurrence of the exceptionality of reaching North America and the implicitness of this achievement in the context of the Norse Western voyages

1 See for instance: *Completing The Circle - L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site*, video produced by Sound Venture Productions, 2012, distributed by Parks Canada.

2 It is more than unlikely that the Norse had the compass on hand and they definitely weren’t able to determine longitude as, to that end, precise ship-board timekeeping is required, which had to await the invention of the marine chronometer in the 18th century (Pope, 2003).

is mirrored in the ambivalence inherent to Vinland where it is both significant and irrelevant (as expressed in the above citation), an ambivalence that is clearly related to the fact that the Norse presence in America was confined to only a few visits over a short period of time³.

So, there I sat at the desk in my studio in Bergen, in the Old World, looking west over the bay. My thoughts travelled on, across the ocean towards the New World, while I read about those adventurers who connected the two realms without even knowing it, as the concept of Old and New World had obviously not yet been conceived. My focus at that time was on the Norse voyages across the Atlantic (the outcome was the 3-channel video titled *fyrir hafvillu fram*⁴). But the continuous re-appearing of Vinland in the context of the destination of those Norse transatlantic voyages in a wide variety of texts, in print and online, planted a curiosity in me to learn more about what seemed to be more than a place, but an event and a concept. And so, a couple of years later, I set out to investigate the theme and its impetus in greater depth.

Vinland in early sources

The earliest extant references to Vinland are made by the German priest Adam von Bremen in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (the Latin history of the Archdiocese of Hamburg and Bremen) from around 1075, and by the Icelander Ari Thorgilsson (“the Learned”) in *Islendingabok* in 1127 (Magnusson, 1965). However, these works only briefly mention Vinland. What has inspired the wide interest in and the large amount of secondary literature from a wide range of disciplines on Vinland are two medieval Icelandic texts which today are referred to as the *Vinland sagas*: *Eiríks saga rauða* (the saga of Eirik the Red) and *Grœnlendinga saga* (the saga of the Greenlanders), of which manuscripts from the 13th and 14th century have survived. These sagas give vivid accounts of the Vinland voyages. In their common parts they tell us that Norse seafarers discovered new shores by sailing west and south from Greenland around the year 1000 and that Leif Eiriksson, son of the founder of the Norse colony in Greenland Eirik the Red, was the first to set foot on the new land. In subsequent years, a small number of expeditions were undertaken by other family members and affiliates of Eirik the Red to explore the new land and to exploit its rich resources⁵.

3 The Norse site at L’Anse aux Meadows could be shown to have been occupied for not much more than a decade (Wallace, 2003b).

4 Old Norse for “onwards, despite the risk of getting lost at sea”; see demo version at <https://vimeo.com/56087698>

5 The attempt to settle in the new land was eventually defeated by the Native inhabitants

Among the resources to be found there were, according to the Vinland sagas, “rolling grasslands, vast stretches of towering timber, an abundance of game of all kinds, rivers teeming with giant salmon, meadows rich with a harvest of wild wheat, and a climate so kind that winterfrosts were hardly known” (Magnusson, 1965, p. 7). But the most prominent of the recorded resources were grapes (Norse *vínber*) that were accounted to grew wildly and after which the new land was named *Vinland*. Wine was extremely precious in the Nordic world and it figured as an important status symbol in the Norse society where power was demonstrated by hosting legendary feasts. Hence, *Vinland* must have sounded to Norse ears like the land of milk and honey. We do not know for sure if the Norse explorers really found grapes on the new shores or if the name Vinland was chosen to impress the people back home (like Eirik the Red did when he named the icy Greenland a generation earlier). Nor do we know what is fact and what fiction in the Vinland sagas. Medieval Icelandic sagas must be looked upon as text-based oral traditions (Sigurdsson, 2004). As such, saga-writing has to be understood as “a unique blend of entertainment and learning, fact and fantasy, history and storytelling, literary endeavor and family pride” (Magnusson, 1965, p. 37). But the fact that the two sagas are roughly concerned with the same events and personages (although the roles of those personages and many details differ), and the fact that scholars suggest they represent two independent transcripts of the same oral tradition (Sigurdsson, 2008, xvii), means they had a sense of basic historicity even prior to their apparent corroboration by archaeological evidence to which I will come below⁶. However, the Vinland sagas are more than simple accounts of an event (be it factual or fictive). Despite their relative brevity⁷, they give inspiring depictions of the places in Vinland with such intriguing names as *Kjalarnes*, *Leifsbuðir*, *Furðustrandir*, *Straumfjörðr*, and *Hóp* (which is sometimes spelled Hope)⁸, and captivating descriptions of the adventures of the protagonists. “They illuminate

history with humanity” (Magnusson, 1965, p. 29) and stir the reader’s imagination. In fact, medieval Icelandic saga writing can itself be seen as an almost miraculous phenomenon in times when, elsewhere in Europe (and beyond), literary manuscripts were only produced in ecclesiastical or aristocratic contexts and almost exclusively in Latin (Björnsson, 2001). And while Árni Björnsson also offers more rational insights into the emergence of saga writing, the genre remains unique not only in its time but across literary history. Before the advent of the European novel, the Icelandic sagas, including the Vinland sagas, were exceptionally well composed pieces that combined the individual and the traditional and gave characters not only the air of heroic prototypes but that of “flesh-and-blood people” (Sigurdsson, 2008, p. xiv).

Genesis of a myth

“Leif said to his men, ‘Now we have two tasks on our hands. On alternate days we must gather grapes and cut vines, and then fell trees, to make cargo for my ship’. This was done. It is said that the tow-boat was filled with grapes.”

(from *Grœnlendinga saga*, Magnusson & Pálsson, 1965, p. 57)

A core feature about Vinland which has remained tantalizingly hazy to the present day, even if we take the Norse voyages to North America as historical events, is its location along the American littoral⁹. The sagas themselves give only vague geographical information through Norse sailing terms, scenic descriptions and hints to environment and climate rather than definite answers to the riddle of the location of the new-found lands (Jacobsson, 2012). And even the information given has to be carefully classified, taking into account the particularities of the saga genre as well as cultural and linguistic features of the time. The uncertainty about the location of Vinland goes back to medieval times: while *Islendingabok* (1127) mentions Vinland as a well-known place, its actual location isn’t given anywhere, and even if it had been known to a small group of people at some point, it seems to have been forgotten already a century after the Vinland voyages when the Icelandic Annals for 1121 report that “Bishop Eirik of Greenland went in search for Vinland”¹⁰ (Magnusson, 1965, p. 28).

⁹ While the most accepted view among scholars today locates Vinland on the shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Wallace, 2009), there are still plenty of other theories circulating. And individual sites from the sagas could nowhere be conclusively identified and arguably never will.

¹⁰ A trip from which he never returned.

who largely outnumbered the Norse newcomers which is why Vinland never figured as the first European colony in the New World in our history books.

⁶ Especially among Scandinavian scholars, the view that the Vinland sagas are historically factual has always been popular since it opened up for a potential for Norse participation in the discourse on the “discovery of America” (Frakes, 2001, p. 159).

⁷ *Grœnlendinga saga* contains 6602 words in standardized Old Norse spelling, *Eiríks saga rauða* 7825 words (retrieved from: heimskringla.no).

⁸ The place names translate to: Keel Point, Tidal Lagoon, Current Fjord, Marvel Beaches and Leif’s Camp. While *Kjalarnes* appears in both Vinland sagas, the names *Hóp*, *Straumfjörðr* and *Furðustrandir* are only given in *Eiríks saga rauða*, and the place name *Leifsbuðir* is exclusive to *Grœnlendinga saga*.

But the uncertainty about its location alone could hardly have inspired anybody's imagination. It is the riches mentioned in the sagas and the adventurous nature of the endeavour as well as the vivid description of its heroic protagonists that touched upon the basic human fascination with discovery, the yearning for recognition and fame, and the longing for a Promised Land. The dulcet name certainly added to the picture. And so, Vinland acquired a mythical status already in the medieval Norse world as is expressed by the tales on which the Vinland sagas are based. Between then and the 19th century, Vinland was not subject to much attention outside Scandinavian scholarly circles¹¹. It experienced a boost in attention and popularity when the English-speaking world was introduced to the subject through the volume *Antiquitates Americanae* in 1837, largely the work of Danish scholar Carl Christian Rafn, that, beside editions with Danish and Latin translations and compendious background information, gives an English summary of the Vinland sagas (Barnes, 2011). Since that day, *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga* have prompted ever new research, discussion and argument, not to speak of the large number of fiction they have inspired. The aura of mystery and promise and the vividness of the saga narratives kept stimulating the imagination of scholars and enthusiastic amateurs alike, carrying the Vinland myth into modernity. To the present day, the Vinland sagas are pored over more closely than any other saga texts to extract some elements of historical truth and to identify the places belonging to Vinland (Haldorsson, 2001, p. 40). A good illustration of the quest to find the different locations depicted in the Vinland sagas is a chart compiled by Gisli Sigurdsson (2004) listing the different places in Vinland at varying physical locations along the North America eastcoast as suggested by different authors between 1837 and 2000.

Thus far, Vinland has much in common with other myths like Atlantis and Eldorado: all are places of legendary riches but of unknown location that stir the imagination of scholars and laymen alike, all represent concepts that bring the basic human urge for knowledge and explanation to light as well as the striving for fame and the longing for a paradisaical place.

An anchor in reality

The parallels between myths like Atlantis and Eldorado on the one hand, and Vinland on the other, came to an end when, in the 1960s, the

11 Two non-scandinavian Vinland-related texts worth mentioning from that period are the *History of the reign of King Henrie the Seventh* (1622) by Francis Bacon that mentions a land on the American continent that had been discovered prior to Columbus' voyage in 1492 and the Latin *Historia Vinlandiae Antiquae* (1705) by Þormóður Torfason (Bergersen, 1997).

Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad and his archaeologist wife Anne Stine Ingstad – with the aid of local residents and on the basis of earlier scholarly research – found and excavated a Norse dwelling at L'Anse aux Meadows at the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. What sounds like a straightforward event actually took many years of preparatory exploration and more years of strenuous work on site after the first discovery of mounds in a local pasture that the Ingstads, from the beginning, took to be foundations of Norse sod buildings. Their theory was corroborated by the discovery of a bronze ring-headed pin and a soapstone spindle whorl both of the type also found in Greenland and Iceland (Ingstad, 1985). But final evidence for a Norse presence in Newfoundland was only achieved after a careful examination of the site as a whole which unequivocally revealed that seafarers had repaired their ships there using iron tools and even producing a small number of iron nails on site around the turn of the 11th century (Wallace, 2009). With the archaeological finds at L'Anse aux Meadows, Vinland had acquired an anchor in reality. One might think that this would have put an end to the quest for Vinland. However, the mythical attraction by and the investigative interest in Vinland was by no means affected by this connection to the real world. In fact, the finds at L'Anse aux Meadows, rather than settling the discussions, fuelled them and created a "flurry of legitimate excitement" (Frakes, 2001) because one thing appears to be evident: L'Anse aux Meadows doesn't give the full picture. The Norsemen, once they had reached this exposed place at the very tip of Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula, would have sailed west and south for further exploration of the new land from there. And so the quest for *Hóp*, *Kjalarnes* and the other Vinland sites continued and does so to the present day.

But does the Norse dwelling at L'Anse aux Meadows really provide evidence for the factual existence of Vinland? It unequivocally proves that the Norse reached North America around the turn of the 11th century. But this is about it. L'Anse aux Meadows is not Vinland. Vinland was a region, not a singular place; and L'Anse aux Meadows does not match the plentitude of resources described in the sagas (Wallace, 2009). Nor does it give final evidence of the existence of Vinland. The Vinland of the sagas could still well be an imaginary place: its kinship with early Irish accounts of lands of plenty in the western seas – like the otherworldly islands described in the Old Irish *immram*¹², or the places visited by the medieval Irish monk St. Brendan on his voyages – with which the Norse would have been familiar, and medieval writing about Paradise, is quite obvious (Sigurdsson, 2008). Already in 1911,

12 A class of tales about fabulous sea journeys written in Ireland between the late 8th and 11th centuries (Speake & Laflaur, 1999).

Fridtjof Nansen argued that the Norse explorations of the eastcoast of North America around the year 1000, which he considered to be factual even before any archaeological evidence existed, have to be seen separately from the Vinland legend of the sagas (Frakes, 2001). Similarly, Magnusson (2003) suggests that “Vinland...may not have existed at all in the strictly physical, geographical sense” and that it “was essentially an intellectual concept, not a place on the map” (p. 83). And yet, the historical character of the sagas and the many realistic features they depict, together with the archaeological evidence that appears to support the saga narratives, make it plausible that the Norse settlement at L’Anse aux Meadows was part of Vinland (Lewis-Simpson, 2003; Wallace, 2008; Sigurdsson, 2008). However, the only thing that appears to be undubitably certain in that whole context is that the unsettled nature of the scenario, the openness of the Vinland subject – its unique situation at the interface of fact and fiction, reality and imagination, historicity and legend – is extremely fertile soil for endless speculation and investigation. And indeed, the efforts undertaken to try and extract conclusive information from and about the Vinland sagas “represent an interesting history of the attempts by learned scholars to solve problems for which no convincing or comprehensive solutions exist” (Haldorsson, 2001, p. 40). Moreover, enthusiasts along the popularizing fringes of the scholarly world who have always participated in the quest for Vinland have carried the theme beyond the institutional organs. As Shannon Lewis-Simpson, editor of *Vinland Revisited*, a selection of papers from the *Viking Millennium International Symposium*, 2000 in Newfoundland and Labrador, puts it: The “readers [of the papers assembled in the symposium proceedings] are invited to draw their own conclusions as to where Vinland might be, or if it is actually a physical place at all, or merely a state of mind, or a dream.” (2001, p. 24)

A transatlantic event

The Vinland myth is unique in two more aspects that are related to its transatlantic character and the corresponding significance it acquired within the concept of Old and New Worlds. In the modern western world, the discovery of the New World from the Old plays a pivotal role for our view on, and understanding of, western history and culture. Old and New World, even if they are sometimes played off against each other by politics, and most recently by economics, form the core of the western world, its values and schools of thought. And while the Norse discovery of America, failing to be followed up by colonization, did not have a lasting social impact, it is – seen from today – still the earliest connection between the two parts

that form the western world, our spiritual home. Moreover, for a number of European Americans, Vinland appears to figure as the answer when it comes to the question of heritage and cultural identity¹³. The real element of the Vinland myth, the archaeological evidence at L’Anse aux Meadows, has encouraged their perception of being connected to the Norse, those ultimate adventurers and explorers from the Old World, by descent or some other ideational relation. Visitors to the Norse site in L’Anse aux Meadows, which became the first UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978, have recurrently expressed such perceptions (Loretta Decker, personal communication, June 6, 2015), and there are locals from the L’Anse aux Meadows area who are convinced that their lineage goes directly back to the Norse (Gabrielle Suley, personal communication, July 21, 2015). The Norse in Vinland appear to resonate ideas of identity and provenance for those who consider an Old World heritage that goes back a thousand years or more as more valuable than one that can be traced only a couple of hundred years or less. While this view is a twofold deception – the Norse are unlikely to have had any direct descendants in the New World¹⁴, and a European lineage from ancestors who came to North America from Europe much later can in principle be traced back to medieval times and beyond as well – the North Atlantic, in this context, appears to figure as a fissure or gap, an element that is perceived as disrupting lineage rather than being a connection. Hence, a descent from, or other ideational connections to, Europeans who were the first to cross that gap over a thousand years ago is intriguing for those who search for identity and belonging in early European traces in the New World¹⁵.

The Vinland Phenomenon

Vinland shares basic features with other myths: the praise for its riches by the few that visited it and the uncertainty of its location surround Vinland with an aura of mystery and promise that calls on the human

13 While I am referring here to a contemporary phenomenon on an individual level, these observations also hold against the background of a populist movement in the 19th century, when white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in North America, with increasing immigration from Ireland and Southern and Eastern Europe, saw their political, cultural and religious hegemony at risk and turned from Christopher Columbus to Leif Eiriksson as the heroic discoverer of their young nation (Björnsdóttir, 2001).

14 Those who came to Vinland only stayed for short periods and their relations to the Natives were problematic and ultimately hostile.

15 Compare the yearning of white settlers for ideational connections to the land that predate and indigenize them described by Terry Goldie (1989).

striving for conclusive knowledge and the recognition for delivering it, and the longing for a paradisaical place, not unlike the myths surrounding Atlantis or Eldorado. The particular nature of the sagas, our main sources about Vinland, their ambivalence as works at the intersection of historical accounts and literary pieces designed for entertainment, their fabric that interweaves the factual with the imaginary and the tantalizing discrepancies that intervene their common threads, enhance the space for speculation and create a special openness for interpretation that defies any final conclusion about the actual Vinland event – what happened exactly where and who was involved and how. What further distinguishes the Vinland myth from other myths is its link to the real world through the finds at L'Anse aux Meadows that rejuvenated and increased the quest for *Hóp* and *Straumfjörðr* on the eastern littoral of the North American continent. This ongoing enthusiasm is further amplified by Vinland's situation within the concept of Old and New World that gives it a special significance related to heritage and cultural identity, at least seen from a modern western point of view. Related to this topicality is the observation that Vinland, unlike other mythical places of past glory, is often considered as still existing somewhere out there: one frequently hears or reads about the riddle where Vinland *is*, not where it *was*, located¹⁶.

The combination and interplay of these aspects make the Vinland myth unique. What I am calling *The Vinland Phenomenon* is the ensemble of perceptions of this unique myth and the imaginative and investigative stimulus these perceptions create. Most of all, *The Vinland Phenomenon* manifests itself in the vast secondary literature written over the last two centuries or so. *The Vinland Bibliography* by Robert Bergersen (1997) lists over 6400 publications related to the Norse in Greenland and America, and the author himself was aware that his compilation was by no means complete when he published it. Authors engaged with Vinland have a wide variety of backgrounds – from literary studies and history over archaeology and anthropology to meteorology, nautical studies and other sciences to self-taught amateurs – and take ever different approaches to assess the primary sources. What they share is the aim to increase our knowledge and understanding of an event or place that defies final determination or identification.

Other manifestations of *The Vinland Phenomenon*, based on the same impetus and wide range of scholarly and non-scholarly motivations, are Vinland conferences, Vinland websites and blogs that are elaborately

maintained and passionately commented¹⁷. The millennium celebrations of the Vinland event in and around the year 2000 prompted a new wave of publications, symposia, telecasts and web activities. In 2016, the news that another Norse site at Point Rosee in the Codroy Valley in southwest Newfoundland might have been found with the aid of satellite imagery has obtained wide media coverage¹⁸. And although the aspirations to find clear evidence for a Norse presence at Point Rosee have not been met, the excitement about the mere possibility is clearly another manifestation of *The Vinland Phenomenon*.

One of the core features of *The Vinland Phenomenon* is that it is not confined to professionally conducted undertakings. A deep fascination for Vinland as a place, an event or an idea can be found among scholars and amateurs of various backgrounds and motivations alike. And while the amateurs, largely having developed a very personal connection to the Vinland theme, do not always stick to rational arguments and evidence, their commitment doesn't lack profundity and seriousness. On the other hand, those who are professionally engaged with the Norse western voyages, pursuing their studies with great rationality and developing theories of high scholarly standards, mostly appear to have some sort of very personal connection to, or idea of, Vinland too that goes beyond their professional interest. Finally, there is the group of people who, while not striving for recognition or publicity at all, are touched by the Vinland theme nonetheless; these have their own ideas about its relevance both for them personally and more generally¹⁹. It is this multifaceted phenomenon, the observation that the fascination about Vinland today does not only reach across disciplines and media but also from

17 Selected Vinland websites and blogs: K. Kris Hirst, "Is Vinland Wineland?" on: *about education* (archaeology.about.com/od/vikings/a/vinland_2.htm); "Where is Vinland?", on: *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History* (canadianmysteries.ca/sites/vinland/home/index.html); "Vinland 2013 A.D." (lavalhallasujah.wordpress.com); *VinLand Blog* (djalmbina.wordpress.com/vikings-erik-the-red-leif-eriksson/)

18 Archaeologist Sarah Parcak and her team had spotted quasi-square structures on particularly processed satellite images and were allowed to do first excavations in 2015. The hints at iron processing on site found that year could not be scientifically corroborated though. Selected media items on Point Rosee: "View from Space Hints at a New Viking Site in North America", *The New York Times*, March 31st, 2016; "Vikings Unearthed", *PBS / NOVA*, TV broadcasting, April 1st, 2016; "New Evidence of Viking life in America?", *BBC News*, Magazine, 1 April 2016; "Das Geheimnis von Point Rosee", *stern*, Nr. 16, 2016, pp. 128-131; "Possible Viking Site in Canada", *CBC News: The National*, published 07/09/2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAOVRhfjQ2A>)

19 See for instance Ruth and Terry Travers in the *Vinland Story* from Little Port, or Ivan Budden in that from Sop's Arm.

16 See for instance the website "Where is Vinland?" (<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/vinland/home/indexen.html>)

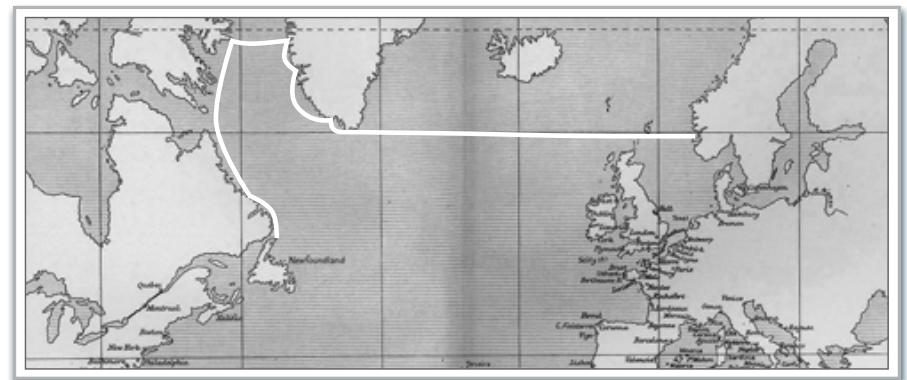
the public and professional into the private and personal realm and from rationality to wishful thinking, that I attempt to convey in the present book.

Based on critical comparative analysis of sources of varying scholarly character in print and online and material collected during extensive field studies, the visual and textual works presented in this book gather conceptions, imaginations and manifestations of Vinland in Newfoundland as the only region in the New World where unequivocal evidence for a Norse presence has been found. The work aims at conveying the nature of *The Vinland Phenomenon* through the combination and interplay of different perspectives and representations in four different chapters: a collection of short, illustrated Vinland-related stories collected all over the island of Newfoundland (*Vinland Spots & Stories*); artworks based on the unique Newfoundland scenery which aim at conveying the mystery and beauty of Vinland as well as the ambivalence of the sagas as a blend of factual account and literary fiction (*Vinland Visions*); quotes from interviews with people engaged in the subject through professional or personal interest, residence, or family ties (*Vinland Quotes*); and a photo series which mirrors my own meta-quest of tracing the Vinland quests of others (*The Vinland Questionnaire*). Short introductions on the specific concepts and methodologies precede the individual chapters.

I would like to close this introduction with two observations. First, beside the places appearing in the *Vinland Spots & Stories* there are numerous others in Newfoundland and along the North American littoral which fit the scenic and environmental depictions in the Vinland sagas (Wallace, 2003a). It is thus foreseeable that the longing to find, inhabitate, or “possess”²⁰ *Hóp*, *Straumfjörðr*, *Kjalarnes* or *Leifsbuðir* will keep producing new allocations in Newfoundland and elsewhere. And as we know from L’Anse aux Meadows, possible new archaeological corroboration will not conclude the story but further fuel the quest for even more evidence of the Norse presence in the New World.

The second observation is that, while the aspects and manifestations of *The Vinland Phenomenon* presented in this book focus on the ways Vinland is perceived by individuals and on the imaginative and investigative impetus it creates, this medieval myth can be traced in Newfoundland on a less personal level as well: Vinland is not only exploited by local tourist boards and businesses, but the Vinland sagas have been publicly taken to be closely connected to the island of Newfoundland even before the finds at L’Anse aux Meadows. This is reflected in the naming of two settlements *Markland* and

Vinland that were newly created in the 1930s (Hancock, 1970)²¹, and the same holds for the naming of the paper boats *Markland* and *Vinland* from the Markland Shipping fleet²² which have been calling regularly at Corner Brook on Newfoundland’s westcoast to pick up their cargo for delivery along the American eastcoast in the 1940s and 1950s. Today we find, among other examples, *Vinland Material Inc.*, a bulk raw material supply company in Corner Brook, the annual *Vinland Music Camp*²³ in Lomond, Gros Morne National Park, and the *Skandi Vinland*, the newest vessel by the Norwegian DOF Group in Canada that operates between St. John’s and the White Rose oilfield in the Grand Banks. In the Labrador Sea, on the Norse sailing route from Greenland to America, there is a fracture zone named after Snorri, the first child who, according to Groenlendinga saga, was born in Vinland and thus “the first *Vinlander*” (Sigurdsson, 2008, p. x). It is worth noting that, while, in the respective literature, one often reads about the first child born in Vinland, it is rarely mentioned that, by all means, Snorri was also the last child born in Vinland. This is another manifestation of the widespread perception that Vinland, rather than having ceased to exist long ago, is a contemporary place to be rediscovered and re-explored time and again. These observations lead us back to the quote at the outset. They suggest that, together with the more general fascination surrounding the Vinland myth, *The Vinland Phenomenon* will live on.



Norse transatlantic sailing route

21 See the story from Markland in the *Vinland Spots & Stories*.

22 The Markland Shipping Company was based in Liverpool and became the Bowater Shipping Company in 1959.

23 The *Vinland Music Camp* is a week-long workshop dedicated to teaching and preserving traditional music, storytelling and dances of Newfoundland and Labrador and was started by guitarist, composer and publisher Eric West in 2000. Eric is moreover the director of Newfoundland’s first music publishing company, *Vinland Music*, founded in 1989.

20 See the *Vinland Quote* by Dale Wells, senior Parks Canada interpreter at L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site.