

SKOGTROLL: BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THEODOR KITTELSEN'S ILLUSTRATION

SKOGTROLL: BREVE ANÁLISE DE UMA ILUSTRAÇÃO DE THEODOR KITTELSEN

Andréa Caselli¹

Abstract: Inspired by nationalist and romantic ideas, Norwegian illustrator Theodor Kittelsen, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, made several illustrations, either single or intended for publication of folk tales. This paper aims to analyze one of these illustrations, called *Skogtroll*. This work portrays important aspects of Nordic landscape, folklore and mythology from the artistic reception. *Skogtroll* is a mysterious and imposing adaptation of the troll that presents mythological meanings from the ancient Norse religion. The Norwegian landscape presents seasonal variations that create different environments, such as the endless days in summer and the mystical icy darkness of winter. This illustration presents the sacred and folklore contained in the landscape, with minimal artistic ornament and Nordic simplicity. The study of images in tales is a source for the history of mentalities and also of sensitivity, as well as for the history of devotion and human becoming about the wonder of metaphor. The historical and political context of the moment in which the illustration was created is observed. However, the cultural representations contained in the drawing are also studied. For this purpose, a theoretical contribution from art historians and Scandinavian researchers was used.

Keywords: Norse mythology. Folk tales. Artistic reception. Art history.

Resumo: Inspirado por ideias nacionalistas e românticas, o ilustrador norueguês Theodor Kittelsen, entre o final do século XIX e o início do século XX, fez várias ilustrações, sejam individuais ou destinadas à publicação de contos populares. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar uma dessas ilustrações, denominada *Skogtroll*. Este trabalho retrata aspectos importantes da paisagem nórdica, folclore e mitologia desde a recepção artística. *Skogtroll* é uma adaptação misteriosa e imponente do troll que apresenta significados mitológicos da antiga religião nórdica. A paisagem norueguesa apresenta variações sazonais que criam diferentes ambientes, como os dias intermináveis no verão e a escuridão gelada e mística do inverno. Esta ilustração apresenta o sagrado e o folclore contido na paisagem, com ornamentos artísticos mínimos e simplicidade nórdica. O estudo das imagens nos contos é fonte para a história das mentalidades e também da sensibilidade, bem como para a história da devoção e

¹ PhD student in Religion Studies at the Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil. Investigator of Núcleo de Estudos Vikings e Escandinavos, NEVE (Federal University of Paraíba). E-mail: adea.caselli@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8241-9283>

do devir humano sobre a maravilha da metáfora. Observa-se o contexto histórico e político do momento em que a ilustração foi criada. No entanto, as representações culturais contidas no desenho também são estudadas. Para tanto, utilizou-se uma contribuição teórica de historiadores da arte e pesquisadores escandinavos.

Palavras-chave: Mitologia nórdica. Contos populares. Recepção artística. História da arte.

The contemporary physiognomy attributed to supernatural beings in Scandinavian folklore, in particular to trolls, is due in part to the splendid illustrations made by Theodor Kittelsen in the late 19th century. Skogtroll, in Norwegian language *bokmål*, means “Troll of the Forest” and gives its name to an illustration dating back to 1906, but which was completed from previous illustrations that began to be made by the artist around 1880. It is a drawing made in crayons, pencils, watercolors and gouache on paper. Measures 363mm. high and 281mm. in width, featuring the artist's signature in the bottom right footer. The work depicts a mountain like a male anthropomorphic head covered by coniferous vegetation, characteristic of Norway, surmounted by a solar circle, with a pale blue background.

At the top center of the illustration is a glowing circle, which can be interpreted as either the sun or the moon, as well as being related to the troll's eye, which glows brightly. The two circles in pale and bright yellow stand out in the illustration and refer to sunlight. In folklore, trolls are known for having an eschatological relationship with the sun, as popular narratives say that, when they come into contact with its light, they can be turned into stone or undergo other types of transformations. Thus, the static and vegetation-filled image suggests a troll possibly long petrified; but it is also possible to interpret that this troll has a powerful spark of life, as its eye shines with intensity. By illustrating the troll with only one eye, Kittelsen takes the viewer back to the myth of Odin. For researchers Rudolf Simek (2007) and Régis Boyer (1997), the morphology of the name Odin is related to a deep knowledge of magic. According to medieval sources - Poetic Edda, Edda in prose and Schaldic poetry (Sturluson, 1986) - Odin's single eye represents the loss of his other eye to acquire the wisdom of the primordial source of the giant Mimir. Thus, the inspiration for Kittelsen can be the most diverse: from the mediabale texts to the ancient pieces such as statuettes and tapestries that represent Odin with one eye. Johnni Langer (2015, p. 347) emphasizes that this single-eyed image of Odin became a mesteriotype in Icelandic sagas between the 13th and 14th centuries.

Odin, having his divine figure claimed by royal ancestors and warriors, is represented in this illustration as a direct analogy to the virile, prosperous and wise ancestry he protects belongs to the Nordic lands.



Fig. 1, *Skogtroll*, 1906, by Theodor Kittelsen. Source: Nasjonalmuseet (https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/collection/object/NG.K_H.B.03222). By the 3rd. Edition of, *Eventyrbok for børn: norske folkeeventyr*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1908. Public Domain.

Kittelsen's trolls gave rise to the troll stereotype that became popular in the 20th century, with a shapeless but sympathetic appearance, surrounded by elements of nature. In his book entitled *Trolldskab* (which translates into English as "Trolleries"), published in 1892, Kittelsen represents trolls as primordial beings that arise from mountains and woods, stay close to rivers, live in mountains and hills, identifying in whole or in part with the elements of the robust and wild Norwegian nature. *Trolldskab* is like a rough and delicate bestiary, in which



texts and illustrations, illuminating, reveal an extraordinary gallery of folkloric beings. Not just trolls, but dragons, elves, sea maidens, witches, giant fights, babies swapped in their cradles, plus *nøkker*, *huldras*, *foragrimmer* and the fearsome *draug*, the spirit of drowned sailors, ready to demand their lifetime homage in the course of storms. Images and stories that reflect the severe and solemn panorama of Norway and, above all, the fjords, with their rocky bays, fishermen's houses, the sea full of rocks; that reveal the love of solitude and the profound fatalism that permeates the taciturn Scandinavian soul.

During the first decades of the 19th century, the spread of nationalist ideals of romanticism promoted, in many European literatures, an interest in the past and in its own cultural traditions, which was accompanied by the rediscovery of legends and tales transmitted for centuries through orality and reading. Scholars and writers dedicated themselves to the collection of this heritage and published it, often for the first time. Folklorists Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe did an extensive work of collecting and publishing traditional Norwegian tales: these had the merit of being seen as the continuity of a literary genre and are up to today great helpers in rescuing Scandinavian pre-Christian history and cosmologies. Asbjørnsen and Moe collected the stories personally, traveling through Norway and walking through the villages, listening to the natives tell their oralities. They published their Norwegian Folk Tales in the Norwegian language in 1841. This was a major political act. Over the previous four centuries, Norway's official written language had been Danish, a bureaucratic arrangement that deprived the Norwegian people of widespread literacy, let alone literature.

For these tales, Kittelsen's illustrations provided an important imagery source for interpreting not only tales, but also beliefs, landscapes, customs, vernacular architecture and Nordic art. The landscapes selected as national, represent the best natural and cultural resources of various regions. National landscapes have enormous symbolic value and are a resource and source of inspiration for defending cultural heritage. The idea of national landscapes dates back to the literature and art of the romantic movement of the early 19th century, reflecting the political and social events of the time. The romantic movement transformed the academic tradition of plastic arts, promoting a break with the rigidity of forms and rules, revealing the artist's identity and individuality. Instead of just reproducing an image through the old established techniques, the artist could finally express his way of seeing the

object of his art and through this create new ways to manifest his understanding in an intuitive way. The way in which biblical and mythological themes were painted and illustrated was left aside to give way to more original features and according to local traditions. The other artists now felt free to put their personal views on paper, as only poets had done before. The tradition of workshops and the artists' academy gave way to individual styles that valued the dreamlike and the fantastic.

19th century romantic painters and illustrators initiate styles of works that allow the observer to get confused about the paintings, to pay attention to the patches of sun in the meadow in the background and to look at the clouds that accumulate while threatening the storm; painted with such restraint and simplicity, to appreciate the artist's absolute sincerity, his refusal to be more impressive than nature itself, and his complete absence of pose or pretense. The time had come for them to choose between becoming poets in painting and seeking moving and dramatic effects, or to remain faithful to the reason ahead, exploring it with all the insistence and honesty they were capable of 1830 and 40, the Norwegian folk movement was in full nationalist activity. The illustrations of the Norwegian tales shape the aesthetics that surrounds the landscape and the architecture full of the presence of peasants and trolls - uniting the everyday with the wonderful spiritual - expanding the meanings. Philologist John Lindow classifies the belief in trolls (which is currently configured in Norway and Iceland as cultural heritage and something very profitable for the economy and tourism) with the term "folk belief" and explains it as a shared and abbreviated system of cultural interpretations, covering several expressions to be analyzed. Therefore, folk belief specifies that the limits between the believable and the non-believable are constantly debated, but that the essential within the theme lies in the fact that the narratives about trolls or similar phenomena should not be understood merely as folk beliefs, but also as small parts of a much larger discussion about the nature of the environment in which they live (Lindow, 2015, p. 11-28).

It is worth mentioning the first known records of the word troll, which appear in Scandinavian medieval literature, mainly in eddic² poems and in the Prose Edda. The trolls subsequently appear in the sagas of the Norwegian kings, and finally, in the nationalist fashion

² Compilations of eddic poems (mythological narratives in verse) produced by the medieval poet, writer and politician Snorri Sturluson.

of the 19th century they reach great popular literary power. The troll's many meanings are related to the mysterious, the inexplicable and the unknown; always located on the other side, on the irrational side of life. After all, the change of form is one of the magic art of the trolls, who usually change their appearance when necessary or when it suits them. Many legends and folk tales narrate trolls transforming themselves into animals, stones and mountains; or changing color, size and appearance. So, it is not surprising that giants have turned into trolls over the centuries. Late Scandinavian medieval literature produced texts that approach trolls working in the mines, helping to build churches or making deals with kings and saints. This friendly relationship is much more present in tales and folklore legends, which are abundant mainly in the nineteenth century, in which the romantics and folklorists carried out vast production of popular culture. The tales highlight a neighborhood between humans and trolls. These now start to collaborate in the fermentation of beer, placing bells in churches, making Christmas visits and providing material wealth to humans who - in return - offer a cordial friendship.

Lindow points out that although the trolls are ambiguous in nature, they continue to curse / kidnap and belong to the natural environment; good relations and friendly coexistence are, perceived from the 17th century onwards, a constant towards humans, not only in literature, but also in plastic arts and folklore. This tales always show the activities of trolls that appear under bridges, enter king castles and, mainly, maintain relations with Askeladden. There are even tales in which trolls have castles, in where they keep their treasures and kidnapped princesses, and the Askeladden often invades such properties to rescue the victim princesses and take the riches. From the relationship between Askeladden and troll in Scandinavian culture, considering that the former has many similarities with the inhabitants of the poorest area of Norway in the 18th and 19th centuries, being, consequently, closer to the mountains and wild forests and forests, neighbors of the trolls. In addition, Askeladden is the greatest friend or most ferocious killer of the trolls in the tales, having a personality as ambiguous as theirs. Each illustrator depicts trolls in his own way. Usually, they are depicted as having a stature larger than the human one, with large shapes, exaggerated body parts and few costumes containing elements of nature such as foliage and precious stones. However, the differences found between one artist and another are expressed in the diversity of elements

they include; such as games of light and shadow, characters that look very similar to those of trolls (usually inhabitants of the forest) and more or less humanoid forms.

Gombrich says: “In fact, we will soon discover that the beauty of a painting does not really lie in the beauty of its subject” (2013, p. 12). This maxim applies to the horrendous, frightening and enigmatic trolls illustrated with mastery and intentions perceptible in the lines of Theodor Kittelsen. To contemporary eyes accustomed to explosions of color and digital graphics, his art may just look like scribbles. However, there is no greater obstacle to understanding great works of art than a reluctance to discard habits and prejudices. A painting that represents a familiar subject in an unexpected way is often condemned for no better reason than the argument that it doesn't look well-crafted. It is observable that the more often one sees a story represented in art, the more firmly one is convinced that it must always be represented in a similar way.

It became true that art was a perfect medium for expressing individuality – provided the artist had an individuality to express. Gombrich explains that an artist from Ancient Egypt or the Renaissance had little opportunity to express his personality. The rules and conventions of his style were so strict that there was very little scope for free choice. The situation really boils down to this: where there is no choice, there is no expression. A very different situation from the romantic nineteenth century, in which artists who were not content to copy effects from others and would not give a single stroke without asking themselves if it satisfied their artistic conscience (2013, p. 156). In this respect, the history of painting in the nineteenth century differs very considerably from the history of art before it.

Many of the illustrations that give visual meaning to Norwegian short story publications are by Theodor Kittelsen. His art presents a mixture of spirit, nature, people and landscape. As a representative of the last phase of romanticism, he was known for his creative ability to express melancholy and joy simultaneously through fantasy. His art does not, therefore, show idylls or paradises, but the contradiction between rudeness and delicacy that harmoniously composes the landscape of Norway. The constitution of creatures and forces that no human being has really seen, and the change in mood of nature are also part of his works. His art has shaped a nation's perception of what the soul of the Norwegian people denotes and, in particular, his portraits of the trolls have been established as national icons. They are dangerous, but of a good nature at the same time, just as nature is beautiful, but also



insidious and erratic. A deeper meaning can be found among trolls, which differs from the image we have of them today; trolls reflect life's different whims. In describing his art, Kittelsen recounts the appearance of the forest troll:

The wild monotony of the forest is its seal. We have become a part of it. We love her as she is - strong and melancholy. As children, we were looking at the burning pine trees. We followed the powerful tribes with our eyes and soul, climbed between the strong twisted arms and reached the highest peaks, swinging and whistling up there, in the delicious blue. When the sun went down, loneliness and silence spread like long, dense nuts. It was as if the forest did not breathe in overwhelming expectation. When it hammered into our hearts, we wanted more - we begged and prayed for strong and wild adventures for us poor children. And the forest gave us what we asked for. Crawling like a cat, everything that used to get petrified started to move. In the distance, a mountain ridge sprouts. It inspired admiration and terror. She opened her eyes ... she started to move ... she was standing silently towards us. We were terrified, but we liked it! It was the forest troll. In his single huge eye, he offered us all the mystery and horror, all the gold and shine that our childish soul longed for! (1892, without pagination).

Most Scandinavians (Among them: Aubert, 1992; Heide, 2011; Gunnell, 2004; Lindow, 2015) do not dismiss the theory that trolls are cultural descendants of the mythological Jotuns, giants with superhuman strength who manifest themselves in opposition to the gods, although these mythological races often mixed or even took someone from another race for marriage. Their fortress was known as Utgard, and was located in Jotunheim, one of the nine worlds of Nordic cosmology, separated from Midgard - the world of men - by high mountains and dense forests. Those who lived in worlds other than their own seemed to prefer caves and dark places (Aubert, 1992, p. 10-12). The giants represent the forces of primordial chaos and the untamed, destructive and wild nature. Their defeats at the hands of the gods represent culture's triumph over nature, despite the cost of eternal vigilance. Edda (Cf. Sturluson, 1986) describes most trolls as having dark looks and a weak intellect, often comparing them with childish traits.

The image of trolls is closely linked to the natural landscape and the ancient religion, being a strong traditional and ancestral element. According to Martine Joly (2007, p. 48) the image is confused with what it represents and can both deceive and educate, through mimesis. It is a reflection of physical or imaginary reality. Life beyond death, the sacred, feeling, knowledge, truth and art are fields to which the simple term image refers to the individual who has memory. Kittelsen's trolls bring to mind what Ortega y Gasset (2011, p. 106) says

about the superior work of art always expressing the tragic condition of existence, bringing together both active elements of combat, action and dynamism; as liabilities that refer to renunciation, inertia and stillness. According to the same author, man's approach to the dangerous and deadly supernatural is a way of dealing with the sacred:

This approximation between the god and the beast has a serious melancholic intention, characteristic of Romanticism. When Rousseau postulated the return of man to Nature he also proclaimed the rupture of civilization. This, the specifically human, is a mistake, a dead end. Nature is more perfect than culture; that is, the beast is closer to god than to man. (Idem, p. 142).

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, it was not art or people that dominated the thinking of philosophers, writers and artists. It was nature that amazed them and made them surrender to landscapes and imagery that arose from it. This situation reflected new political circumstances, the improved means of transport and the growing science of country life. With the growth of urban centers, a simpler relationship with the environment was seen with nostalgia. A life connected with the natural world seemed more innocent than that which they enjoyed in isolated offices. In addition, the idea of nature as an object to be contemplated - and not used or consumed - provided a certain comfort to those for whom the palliatives of religion practiced in cities became increasingly implausible.

Scruton (2013, p.70), inspired by Kant, concludes that the main exercise of judgment is the appreciation of nature. Thus, unlike art, nature has no history, its beauty is available to every culture at all times. A faculty that turns to natural beauty, therefore, has real chances of being common to all human beings, issuing rated judgments of universal force. However, Kant (1995) - in *Critique of Judgment* - describes beauty as belonging to individual and singular elements, which represents an object isolated from other interests. Philosophers such as Joseph Addison and Francis Hutcheson, on the other hand, perceive the beauty of an entire larger landscape that characterizes a horizon. That is, while Kant focuses more on examples of natural beauty of isolated forms and organisms such as trees, flowers, birds, sea creatures with their perfect forms and their complex details; the other two authors place natural beauty in a broader and more crucial place as landscapes, open spaces and views from windows and doors. They are two different experiences. The landscapes are spread out in all directions, are extremely fluid, having uncertain identity criteria. If the observer observes them as individual

elements, that is something that belongs to him, not to them. For even if one manages to limit a landscape by placing high fences, it would not be protected against the aesthetics that surround it, such as a possible suburb, a factory, a highway or a cluster of people at an event; which indelibly mark the landscape with the sign of human presence.

Birds, bees and flowers – for example – are limited and isolated by themselves, their individuality is a deep trait, possessed by them regardless of how we perceive them. Through the aesthetic look, they are elements that manage to be isolated from any relationship other than that of those who study them. Therefore, it is easy to describe the objects and natural beings that can be touched and stored as works of art – and this conditions the type of pleasure felt in front of them. They are like gems and treasures whose perfection seems to radiate from themselves. Landscapes, on the other hand, are very far from works of art, as they owe their charm to their indelible grandeur, their magnificence and an enormous expansiveness in which the content is the observer and not them.

This distinction is important, not only for its historical context, but for the nineteenth-century artistic sense of making nature a safe and common place for humanity and the desire to protect the shrinking wilderness. The art that explores the landscape, open space and the horizon is about the impulse to see the natural world as an object of contemplation, and not as a means that leads to uses and objectives. The domain over nature and the expansion of urbanity were crucial for the development of landscape art and the valorization of the grandiose horizon. For, other times and other cultures often had no reason to adopt a contemplative stance towards the natural world. During many periods of history, humanity faced a harsh and hostile nature, against which it had to be fought in order to ensure its survival. During these periods, she offered no comfort to the spectator's cold, alert gaze.

Edmund Burke (1790), in his treatise on the beautiful and the sublime, written in 1756, distinguishes two different reactions to natural beauty: one born of love and the other, of fear. When the individual is attracted to natural harmony so that he feels comfortable and represented in it, the word beauty is appropriate. However, when one is on a precipice taken by the wind, or lonely in the vastness of the sea, one experiences power and the menacing majesty and human smallness becomes urgent, then one speaks of the sublime. The beautiful landscape leads to judgment of taste, while the vision of the sublime invites to another type of judgment, in which the human being places himself under the amazing infinity of the world



and becomes aware of its finiteness and fragility. Both reactions elevate the human soul and distance it from utilitarian and everyday thoughts. Furthermore, the beautiful and the sublime involve the disinterested contemplation that is the heart of the aesthetic experience.

The study of images in tales is a source for the history of mentalities and also of sensitivity, as well as for the history of devotion and human becoming about the wonder of metaphor. Such illustrations are one of the most important records of human attitudes towards culture and the preservation of traditions as they change over time. According to Peter Burke, images are also a means by which historians can recover past religious experiences, as long as they are able to interpret iconography (2004, p. 58).

Comforting or menacing characters, trolls have even turned into playful puppets, so vast is the force of their wild and natural magic. And although they are ubiquitous today, for centuries they were under the protection of the Scandinavian landscape. They were beings from a pre-industrial rather than a globalized environment, but their great shape-shifting magical power made them evolve into illustrations in the Nordic book market and then into theatre, cinema and beyond. Since then, they have never gone away and, in their various forms, continue to spark the imagination around the world. At Kittelsen, trolls are art, nature and human form – all of which invite you to bring this experience of the sacred wild to life, providing a place of refreshment you can always return to.

The Norwegian forest is composed mainly of tall pines which filter the incidence of sunlight on the ground, offering a deep and impenetrable view. The sense of discovery is stimulated by an infinite freedom of movement it contains. The forest is inseparable from people's lives and the freedom of the forest is a journey of discovery. Nordic existence is found precisely in this incessant search for discovery, instead of simply accepting what one is given. Human existence in this environment manifests in the feeling of mysticism that surrounds it, contrasting precisely with this need to accept what is given. The relationship between mountains, forests, lakes, fjords and the sacred allows for the study of how a space is transformed into a place. This is interesting to note specially in Norway, a country whose people live a privileged relationship with the natural environment. The relevance of studying a place for spiritual or religious communion is that they may intensify the meaning of the place, turning it into a space with a specific character, and bringing the material and the spiritual world closer, where experience is also associated. The silence of the woods, the

solitude of a vast sparsely populated territory, a landscape dominated by natural phenomena such as the northern lights, the endless days of summer or the ever-present darkness of winter nights; all these manifestations in the landscape influence the architectural creation, which, in turn, also shapes the place. *Skogtroll* provides an spatial experience of wandering among tree trunks, and rocks in a multiplicity of different and indefinite places found in the Nordic forest. Perhaps this can be classified as a kind of purism, aiming to reinforce the experience of nature.

However, it is the illustrations that best manifests Nordic reality in a more evident way. It brings us closer to the North world, and helps us to better understand its environment. Kittelsen's illustrations reveals the conflict between darkness and light, confirms that the Nordic space is closed and opened simultaneously, shows how it is possible to experience the forest, the mountains, the interaction of the natural with the built and corroborates that the Nordic form integrates voltage. It also shows that the Nordic environment and landscape are manifested in a state of mind, making us live among things instead of confronting them. This presence of the natural thus causes a reflection in Nordic art, with landscape painting having a predominant role, sometimes being a general environment, or at other times a particular moment. The search for a unifying environment that would serve as a support base for drawing and painting, was a hard job that Nordic painters subjected themselves in their attempts to capture the white summer nights, or the starry winter night and the colors of the mantles snow, or the constant fog that turns everything into a mysterious path. This demand leads painters, draftsmen and illustrators to work outdoors, in order to increase the proximity to the natural, and thus being better aware of the processes of light and color and then being able to translate those moments into works of great visual and emotional value. The strength of the natural in this work is visible.

Final considerations

Trolls represented in Kittelsen's art are many, but *Skogtroll* was chosen for this research because it symbolizes spiritual and natural ancestry in a single figure that presents important symbols. Such transdisciplinary work can generate growth and new ideas for both sides, in addition to providing a better understanding of cultural origins and constructive traditions. Norwegian space, with its harsh climate, has meant that much of its surface has been virtually untouched by man. People are confronted with nature in its original state and subjected to its

forces. In the forest, mountain and countryside environments, several works scattered around the landscape are visible, discreet, respectful of the natural, in perfect symbiosis, where the place appears as something unique and unforgettable. The Norwegian understanding of the spirit of the place awakens in a mystical, fantastic and spiritualized way of seeing places and landscapes, recalling the importance of cultural tradition and context.

The Norwegian landscape presents seasonal variations that create different environments, such as the endless days in summer and the mystical icy darkness of winter. *Skogtroll* presents the sacred and folklore contained in the landscape, with minimal artistic ornament and Nordic simplicity. The North does not consist of defined masses and distinct spaces, but manifests a continuity of dispersed and fragmented configurations, presented by landscapes of plains, hills and mountains; having a varied vegetation of aspects sometimes cuneiform, sometimes rural. Irregular vegetation, like the troll's physiognomy. The forest is part of people's lives, being deep and mysterious, stimulating the search for discovery, for a freedom of movement within it. Nordic existence is characterized precisely in this feeling of demand, of mysticism for what is around, in contrast with the acceptance of what is given. Literature and its illustrations bring us closer to the Nordic experience and shows us how this unity is constantly manifested as a state of mind. The Norwegian valley and mountain are spaces of vertical tension, like the tall lines that form the mountain-troll figure in *Skogtroll*, where everything is safe at the base, where it is possible to cultivate and build and where the natives find their home. The natural has the domain, with the mountain over the valley, the huge stone that unifies the territory. And when you climb to its top, you feel a freedom different from the security of the valley, because at the top you are exposed. At the top, the wind forces are felt like a storm, and the human condition of fragility is perceived. This mountain climbing has become part of Norwegian culture, being more than a tradition, a way of being, in which a large part of its population performs on a routine basis, thus being a demonstration of proximity to the natural of this people.

References:

Primary Sources:

AUBERT, Francis Henrik. *Askeladden e outras aventuras*. São Paulo: Edusp, 1992.

KITTELSEN, Theodor. *Trolldskab*. Kristiania: Det Kgl. Bibliotek, 1892.

STURLUSON, Snorri. *Edda Mayor*. Tradução de Luís Lerate. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1986.

Secondary Sources:

BOYER, Régis. ROI SACRÉ. *Héros et dieux du nord*. Paris: Flammarion, 1997.

BURKE, Edmund. *Uma investigação filosófica sobre a origem de nossas ideias do sublime e do belo*.
Campinas: Papirus, 1993.

BURKE, Peter. *Testemunha ocular: história e imagem*. Bauru, Edusc, 2004.

GOMBRICH, E. H. *História da arte*. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 2013.

JOLY, Martine. *Introdução à análise da imagem*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2007.

KANT, Immanuel. *Crítica da faculdade do juízo*. 2ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense, 1995.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, José. *Ensaio de estética: Mona Lisa, três quadros de vinho e Velázquez*.
São Paulo: Cortez, 2011.

SCRUTON, Roger. *Beleza*. São Paulo: É Realizações, 2013.

SIMEK, Rudolf. *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007.

HEIDE, Eldar. Loki, the Vätte, and the Ash Lad: A Study Combining Old Scandinavian and
Late Material. *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7 (2011). pp. 63-106.

LINDOW, John. *Trolls: an unnatural history*. London: Reaktion Books, 2015.

LANGER, Johnni. (Org.) *Dicionário de mitologia nórdica: símbolos, mitos e ritos*. São Paulo: Hedra,
2015.

GUNNELL, Terry. The Coming of the Christmas Visitors: Folk legends concerning the attacks
on Icelandic farmhouses made by spirits at Christmas. In *Northern Studies*. 38. (2000). pp.
51-75.