

**Illusions of Mimesis
(Abstract)**

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This paper will examine the modalities of narrative representation in a variety of texts composed during the latter part of the twelfth century. Following the argument of critics who have shown that all forms of writing, whether their content is real or invented, stand at a distance from what they seek to represent, I will try to show how some of the early works, which traditionally have been characterised as a more primitive type of historical representation than the realistic sagas of the thirteenth century, in fact display a variety of equally sophisticated features, at least when it comes to representing history in a truthful way. Examples will be drawn from *Íslendingabók*, the Norwegian synoptic histories and some of the kings' sagas and the paper will demonstrate how the authors of early Icelandic historical prose created an illusion of mimesis through different choices of point of view, focalisation, and speech representation – an illusion which may be discursively but not qualitatively different from the narratives composed by their followers.