The difference between a learned and a popular discourse in earlier periods becomes especially visible when it comes to ideas concerning the supernatural. In 17th century Sweden several farmers, soldiers and fishermen were accused of having had sexual relations with nature spirits such as *skogsrået* and *sjörået*. All of them confessed and gave detailed accounts of what had happened. In the court protocols we can see that the court took the confessions seriously and agreed that a sexual encounter with something supernatural actually had taken place. But the members of the court, belonging to the learned elite, interpreted it in a way very different from the farmers, soldiers and fishermen on trial. While the latter group saw the nature beings as representatives of races of supernatural beings, basically physical, living in the woods and lakes, the former, learned, group saw these beings as manifestations of the Devil, in themselves spiritual. This kind of clash of different perspectives and beliefs – and sometimes interaction between them – will in my presentation be traced also in some Old Norse texts about supernatural encounters.